

CONTENTS

Editorial, Club News	107
Cave Diving in North Wales	Paul Whybro 110
Installing the Aerial Ropeway in Lamb Leer	A.J.S. MacMillan 112
The Untamed River Expedition (Part 3, concluded)	Steve Gough 114
Memories of a President / The Powers of a Freeman.	R.R. Kenney 117
From The Log.	123
Back Page: (H.Q. Wardens, Riddle Answer)	

CLUB OFFICERS

Chairman	Phil Hendy, c/o Upper Pitts.
Treasurer	Dianne Walker, 90 Chelynych, Doulling, Shepton Mallet, Somerset.
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Asst. Secretary	Julie Bolt, 4 The Retreat, Foxcote, Radstock, Avon.
HQ Administration	Glyn Bolt, 4 The Retreat, Foxcote, Radstock, Avon.
Caving Secretary	Jeff Price, 18 Hurston Road, Inns Court, Bristol BS4 1SU.
Asst. Caving Sec. (Northern caves only)	Keith Sanderson, Heather View, Newby, nr Clapham, via Lancaster.
Gear Curator	Dave Morrison, 2 Westholm, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London NW11.
HQ Bookings	Mike Dewdney-York, 59 Kennington Ave., Bishopston, Bristol
Sales Officer	Pete Hann, 3 Queens Terrace, Sherborne, Dorset.
Editor	Nigel Graham, 60 Williams Avenue, Wyke Regis, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 9BP. (Tel. 0305-789770)
Committee	Jerry (Fred) Felstead.
Librarians	Pete & Alison Moody
Survey Sales	Maurice Hewins, 31 Badshot Lea, Badshot Park, Farnham, Surrey.

Opinions expressed in this Journal are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the Wessex Cave club as a whole, unless otherwise stated.

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Wessex Cave Club Headquarters:

Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane, Priddy, Nr. WELLS, Somerset BA5 3AX
Telephone Wells (0749) 72310

So Whernside Manor "National Caving Training Centre" / Cave and Fell Centre is no more, once the current programme of courses has ended. This establishment has probably been caving's thorniest issue in the last few years, but it may be worth considering the whole question of formal training for cavers, rather than simply discussing Whernside.

The caving courses at the Manor were simply losing money - that is why they have been stopped. The Centre will continue as a field studies centre, though caves will take a far less prominent role. Although many will shed few tears over the run-down, it is to be borne in mind that staff reductions will occur, and one can only hope that in these difficult times, no-one will become actually redundant (they are all County Council employees).

Perhaps this will be seen as a chance to examine closely the role of professional caving training, and indeed its necessity. We are told by those who supposedly know about these things that we need Formal Training: why, I wonder? What is in it for them? Let us be honest: no end of courses in all forms are available for almost any other pursuit or in subjects such as car maintenance or household budgeting, so why not in caving, especially for the more specialised skills such as SRT, rescue techniques or the scientific disciplines?

No - few people can seriously deny the usefulness of courses and of peripheral services such as rope testing, indeed those people I have spoken to on the subject all say they have benefitted from courses. It is not the provision of such services for those who wish to use them that is wrong; rather it is the danger of training centres becoming too big for their regulation wellies. We do not want bits of paper purporting to tell us we are able to negotiate our favourite caves. We do want to be told we shall use this rather than that clothing/pitch technique/lamp etc. Yet that is the danger inherent in the self-perpetuating world of the officially-approved fully-tested totally-sterile Training Scheme,

Whernside's own worst enemies, in the Editor's view, apart from the high costs of courses and a demand smaller than that expected, have been a certain pair of instructors whose hectoring, arrogant and narrow minded writings in "Descent" and "Caves & Caving" may well have made many dedicated cavers realise just what a threat to their favourite hobby these people and their entrenched establishment could become. Nobody denies the technical quality of the equipment and techniques under discussion, nobody denies the over-riding importance of safety underground. We wish to be advised, not dictated to; to make our choices.

Let us hope the Whernside Affair will be a lesson to N.C.A. - and to us all.

What a soggy Summer! Not, however, that that deterred the Wessex from being particularly active, with groups attending the BEC Berger trip, visiting Norway and Ireland and caving around this country (mind you, the awful weather was style-cramping).

To end (last but not least) this Year's last Editorial: thank you to all who have kept me busy and the Journal filled with fine articles. The 1985 / 86 Editor will welcome contributions!

CLUB NEWS

MARRIAGES.

The Wessex Cave Club's Best wishes to
Fred Felstead and Hannah Raehse
Kevin Gannon and Gaja Matukas.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Keith Sanderson has moved to

Heather View, Newby, nr Clapham, via Lancaster.
Tel. (04685) 662

NEW MEMBER

The Wessex Cave Club welcomes the following new member:-

John Glawacki. 324 High Street, Harlington, Middlesex.

SALES

Named Wessex Coffee Mugs: there are still 5 Coffee Mugs awaiting collection from Upper Pitts.

Non-personalised COFFEE MUGS are still available at £4.75, as are GLASS TANKARDS, engraved with the Club Badge, at £2.50 for the pint and £1.75 for the half-pint, sizes. No Club TIE to wear at the Dinner? Black, with suitably discreet dragon motifs, for £2.50. For less formal times, the Wessex T-SHIRT costs £4.00, for colder weather the SWEAT-SHIRT is £7.00; both styles bearing the Club Badge. The same Sweat-shirts, but without the badge, are available at £5.50. Accessories? Try a sew-on CLOTH BADGE at £1.50, or an ENAMEL BADGE at £1.20. Coming soon: enamel CAR BADGES. (The above, of course, all Members-only).

Publications include Hanwell & Newson's "The GREAT STORMS AND FLOODS OF JULY 1968 ON MENDIP" at £1.75, and the U.B.S.S. PROCEEDINGS booklet on CHARTERHOUSE CAVE (£1.50). Cornwell's "COLLIERIES OF KINGSWOOD & SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE" costs £6.95, the collected WCC JOURNAL VOL. ONE, and SUPPLEMENT TO VOL. EIGHT are £1.00 each. For a spot of light relief, Hendy's "MUDDY OXBOWS" caving cartoons book (don't worry, there's bound to be one in there which applies to you...), at £1.25.

TACKLE

A stock take was made on 31 August 1985, which revealed an amount of tackle out but not accounted for. If you have any of the following, could you please return as soon as possible, for re-issue?

5 spreaders and tethers, 5 ropes, the following ladders:-
L 12, 21, 23, 25, 30, 35, 42, 46, 50, 55, 57, 62.

H.Q. WARDEN

Should it again be necessary to form a rota for this duty, for the next Club Year, Members are reminded that they should be at Upper Pitts for the whole of the weekend(s) for which they have volunteered. Clearly, circumstances may occasionally prevent someone doing so, after all the rota is made up months in advance, so if it becomes clear that you cannot after all attend the weekend in question, please try to swap weekends with somebody, or at least let the Club know so someone can cover for you.

Members generally should not need reminding that it is not the Warden's job to do all the washing-up and cleaning after them: the Wardens duty is to ensure the building and its facilities are used properly and left clean, tidy and secure at the end of the weekend.

AN APOLOGY to Dr. D.M.M. THOMSON for mis-spelling his name in the last issue (18. 205, p83).

CORRECTION - or rather, completion, and apology to the M.R.O. for omitting part of the M.R.O. Report. Ref. WCC Journal 18. (204) p74,

"Thursday 19th July FAIRY CAVE QUARRY "

The owner of the car reported, was found to have been injured in a game at the Wessex.

UP NORTH

Nigel Graham.

Being A Miscellany Of Trips, Compiled From The Log.

From 25th May to 1st August 1985, a large group of Wessex members stayed, some for the Holiday weekend, some for the week, in Yorkshire, variously visiting a good selection of caves.

Personnel were:-

Beth Yates, Pete Watts, Keith & Roz Fielder, Nick Marachov, Nigel Gosden, Liza -, Richard Acton, Geoff Newton, Andy Summerskill, Duncan Frew, Chris Glover, Doug Boomer and Nigel Graham.

Many of those present were SRT training for the Gouffre Berger trip, using BULL POT (Kingsdale) and ROWTEN POT. Rowten was rigged from the eye hole, using a single 400ft rope, giving a traverse and several change-overs, the first of which was only a few feet below the lip of the entrance. Practising changeovers on a rope hung from a rigid ladder leaning against the house wall is one thing: doing your first "real" changeover 8ft down a shaft like Rowten is quite another: I was a quivering wreck by the time I reached the ledge (a huge bridge) 60ft down, thankful for Keith's instruction! Once I'd sorted myself out however, before prusiking very slowly out from there, I found the shaft a very impressive place.

Bull Pot has not, of course escaped the Red-ringed Bolt Rash everyone has been going on about lately: I changed my views on the matter down there. Provided those inserts are used properly and nobody tries to keep removing them, there is nothing objectionable about them beyond the intrusive red markers.

LARGE POT was entered from RIFT POT: I remained on the surface, in the rain, where I was met by a worried farmer concerned about flooding.

The LANGSTROTH POT trip was a failure, not so, however, BAR POT to GAPING GILL, with a tour into Mud Hall and Whitsun Series, during the Bradford Pothole Club Winch Meet. Although the Main Chamber floodlights, installed that week for film making, dispelled the daylight effects of Main Shaft, they illuminated the huge chamber completely - a most impressive display.

"A motley crew using an outrageous collection of tackle that had to be stretched to the limit", was Pete's Log description of the five-man trip in KING POT (8 hours), while Beth and Nigel walked overhead, up Whernside.

K.M.C. VALLEY ENTRANCE to ROWTEN SUMPS and the gloomy Mud River Series pleasantly completed the week for some, whilst on the same day Pete & Beth, who had also visited OLD ING and DISMAL HILL caves, met Jo Beckett and two Craven members for a tour of CHERRY TREE HOLE.

In August, the writer travelled North again, spending a week with Pete & Elaine Ryder (Moldywarps S.G.) at their home near Corbridge, in Northumberland. A lot of wandering around various moors near Alston, peering into shakeholes and poking in various swallets produced no new cave. One entertaining afternoon with Pete and his young son, and Graham Stevens (WCC member, back in the 60's) saw HUEL CRAG RIFTS, large slip-riffts in a disintegrating sandstone crag, surveyed. I did get underground in limestone: two small but pleasant streamways, both resurgences into Ireshope Burn, in Weardale.

Then a week in rain-soaked Dales: walking with BPC members, visiting steam railway museums (Carnforth and York), and a dampish TATHAM WIFE HOLE SRT trip with the Navy team, the Thundergrounders, before a gentle return home via Mendip for a tourist trip in Charterhouse Cave.

CAVE-DIVING IN NORTH WALES

Paul Whybro

North Wales is unjustly ignored by most cavers, which is unfortunate both for them and the area, which would benefit from outside influence.

Diving in this region has been a sporadic activity, the earliest activists being Tony Jarrett and the ubiquitous Martyn Farr.

It has had to wait for the 1980s for large discoveries to be made, notably the extensions in Ogorf Hesp Alyn by Chris Milne and Pete Moody. Although O.H.A. is the only site to have gone to a major extent there still remains Ogorf Llyn Ddu and a few loose ends.

The area has been much modified by the driving of adits to de-water the mines, so the caves have also been affected. The principle example of this is O.H.A., which consists of large, muddy, phreatic passage, two short, perched sumps providing the key to the main way on. The sumps are of 10 metres and 3m. Other sites remain in O.H.A. but do not seem promising.

After diving these sumps to large and major extensions, the W.C.C. team discovered the North Wales Caving Club had decided to help explore the extensions by siphoning the sumps - without telling the Wessex...

Near O.H.A. is another interesting site, POACHERS' CAVE, quite a nice place with an active streamway. The lower series takes water which soon disappears into boulders. Caveable passage continues via muddy passages and rifts, soon reaching a small sump which proved to be completely choked. Exactly where the water entering the sump comes from, and whether or not it is the streamway water is not certain. There is a possibility of a connection with O.H.A.

Upstream on the bank of the Alyn is PONT NEWYDD RISING, the North Welsh equivalent of Porth-yr-Ogorf, except that it is smaller, muddier and terminates where the passage splits into a low, but diggable, passage and a dangerous-looking bedding, 83m from the entrance. An impenetrable flow resurges in flood conditions. Depth: generally 5m or less in passage 2m by 1.5m, except for the entrance which is a bit of a wriggle. Tony Jarrett was the original diver here, to the second airbell at 30m. Martyn Farr plus team reached the present limits in 1974. Sinks uncertain.

Moving South to Llanarmon-yn-Lal, an interesting phreatic cave was discovered in the back of a quarry: OGORF PISTYLL GWYN. A short length of streamway was discovered ending upstream and downstream in sumps. Downstream has not been investigated, the water resurging about 100m away. Upstream yielded a 10m dive to -3m with a low passage off at the lowest point, requiring digging. Neil Robertson undertook this task, not without exciting attempts at underwater blasting. Ten metres depth at fifty metre in has been gained here, in difficult conditions.

Moving over to Minera area, there are two good sites.

WORLD'S END RESURGENCE CAVE. Previous dives by Tony Jarrett and Martyn Farr. A siphoning attempt by local cavers failed. The sump is not far from the entrance, but a nasty duck must be negotiated. The sump stream flows over a 1.5m rock step into the final chamber. Diving on involves a wriggle to an enlargement, followed to the base of a rift, with good vis. Surfacing here, a rift may be climbed to a tiny inlet. The way on lies at floor level underwater at the base of the rift, where the flow comes from gaps between boulders.

OGORF LLYN DDU. The main interest in diving the downstream sump in O.L.D. was the hope of re-discovering the fabled Llyn Ddu, recorded by 18th Century miners.

Most trips in the downstream sump tend to be unpleasant affairs due to quantities of oil from the quarry draining into the cave. Chris Milne and I dived here in October 1983. After a summer of trips great

variations in sump length were noted, due to water level fluctuations. The passage explored by diving was found to have drained on a subsequent trip. The way on is blocked, but access to mine workings may be possible by digging at the head of a small aven in an oxbow.

The upstream sump was first dived seriously by Chris in 1982; this is an altogether more pleasant place than the downstream. Diving here reached 135m from base passage, the deepest point at -26m, rising to -20m in a 1.5 by 5m elliptical passage. The depth and distance of dives were made more bearable by the use of a drysuit. Air was provided by twin 94 cu.ft. cylinders. As these cylinders weigh 17kg each diving trips became more complex affairs with sherpas being required.

Water levels had increased with Winter, resulting in a shallow 50m sump having to be dived to get to the deep sump. On traversing the 50m, a 2m drop into a pot gives access to the deep sump. This drop provides difficulties for a diver with heavy equipment. Until a handline was installed another diver provided assistance.

The present limits are at 280m from the pot, at virtually zero depth. The end seems to be where a mud slope reaches the roof. Lower water conditions are necessary for a conclusion to be reached. Dives involve decompression; a 1hour 30minute dive was required on the last trip.

The above represent the main natural sites. Odd resurgences remain, and probably kilometres of flooded mine levels, slate quarries, spar mines - if you like that sort of thing.

FROM THE LOG (Continued from p124)

24 August. Little Neath River Cave. M.M., K.C., S.W. Moderate flood: entered by very interesting Flood Entrance and exited by Bridge Cave.

1 September. Longwood. Geoff Newton, Jim Moon. Tourist trip. The Wet Chimney isn't as wet as it used to be. Shame! Then to Valley Sink to laugh at the diggers. (Ahem... Ed.)

14 September. G.B. Cavern. N. Marachov, R. Acton, H. Graham, N. Williams plus two. Grand trip as far as Main Chamber, photographing. First attempt at 3-d photography. Lots of hot brew and biscuits kept spirits high, and hopefully will get some good pictures. N. Marachov.

9 September. Duncan Frew and George Huppert (University of Wisconsin). A brief trip to show our visiting geomorphology lecturer a British cave other than show-caves. Swildons to Double Pots, George much impressed, very knackered! But many photos of caving huts and cave blockhouses will be shown Stateside. Despite all their shortcomings, it seems British sprouts are a touch tougher than their American equivalent.

Installing the Aerial Ropeway in Lamb Leer

A.J.S. McMillan

The decision to install the Aerial Ropeway in Lamb Leer for the British Speleological Association Conference at Bristol University from 23rd - 27th July 1937, was taken during the previous year after a great deal of discussion about the best way to make this cave accessible to those attending the meeting. There was a substantial minority opinion in favour of installing a fixed chain ladder which would be useful for many years, whereas the steel rope for the aerial ropeway would only last for a short time. However, it was considered that the vertical chain ladder, approximately sixty feet long, would be too difficult for inexperienced to negotiate. It was thought that the signal ladder in the entrance, installed in 1936, would be quite enough for them.

There were severe constraints on the design of the ropeway, mainly imposed by the dimensions of the manhole cover over the entrance, only about 22 ins. by 18 ins., through which everything had to pass. So far as I can recall, the main design and planning was in the hands of Austin Wadsworth, the local representative of Brook Motors Ltd. and a member of the Wessex committee. He was assisted by a good friend, Mr. Evans of Marshall Hunt Ltd., lift manufacturers of Milk Street, Bristol, who did the actual design and manufacture.

The platform and scaffolding presented little difficulty as these could be taken down the entrance shaft in pieces and assembled in place. The actual carriage that was suspended from the rope was also constructed so that it could be taken apart and re-assembled on the platform. As I recall it, the actual winch that was used to wind the carriage back and forth, was one of the biggest problems that Mr. Evans had, but he managed quite a workmanlike design.

The major task was taking the wire rope down and mounting it. As many hands as possible were mobilised to manhandle it down the shaft and into the Main Chamber. It was a most unpleasant task as it was covered in thick, black grease and had projecting wire splinters, and we had to wear gloves to handle it. The rope was taken down the entrance shaft, past the Beehive, over the platform and down into the Main Chamber, with people every few yards to handle it and to keep it moving. So far as I remember, the instructions were shouted along (no walkie-talkies!) and all went without a hitch, the wire rope finishing up laid out on the floor of the Main Chamber. The far end had to be fixed first, then the rope end was hauled back to the platform by means of a tensioner fastened near the foot of the entrance shaft. The aragonite slab had to be cut away so that the rope could be looped around it and fastened with a shackle. The carriage was mounted on a pulley that ran along the rope and another rope, passing round a pulley at the far end, was used to move the carriage along by means of a winch. As the far end was quite a bit lower than the platform, the catenary was downhill for most of the way and it was quite hard work winching people back to the platform. Another platform of scaffolding was erected at the lower end with a ladder down to the floor of the Main Chamber.

The people attending the B.S.A. Conference were delighted with the trouble we had taken to give them access to one of the most spectacular caves on Mendip. They were particularly pleased by the sensation of floating across the Main Chamber in mid-air, and in being able to look down on the many firefly-like lights of the people on the floor of the Main Chamber. On the day of the official visit, Sunday the 25th July, it was estimated that over 100 people were present in the cave. Everyone who could manage it was present to act as guides and assistants to the visitors. Austin had installed powerful acetylene lights on gas cylinders in the Beehive and Great Chambers, and pressure paraffin lamps were provided by Bertie Crook on the platform and in the Cave of Falling Waters, so that everyone could see what they were doing. The Wessex was deservedly congratulated by the visitors on the excellent display they were given and on the hard work that had gone into providing it.

ADDITIONAL NOTES & REFERENCES (Compiled by the Editor)

Lamb Leer first entered by miners in late 17th Century, their entrance shaft 'lost' from mid-18th C. to 1879, when it was rediscovered by Nicholls, a miner, responding to a £100 reward from a Waldegrave Estate agent.

Circa 1914 - 18, Nicholl's shaft (not precisely the first shaft?) collapsed. Re-opened by M.N.R.C. in January 1934, but found unstable.

August 1936: M.N.R.C., U.B.S.S. & W.C.C. licensed to re-open cave and granted joint tenure. New (present) shaft is in a chimney first investigated from below by C.W. Harris, following suggestion by H. Murrell and surveying by J.W. Duck et al. Two weekends' work opened this entrance, in what turned out to be the first (Beaumont's) shaft.

The entrance shaft ladders were installed by Harris.

July 22nd, 1937: Aerial Cableway "officially opened in the presence of Mr. Barnes and others, by our old friend Mr. Balch, suspended in mid-air from the centre of the Great Chamber"

- Baldwin N.V. "Engineering Underground - a Description of the Lamb Leer Cableway" (Illus. E.K. Tratman) 'Caves & Caving' Vol 1 No. 5. November 1938 pp180 - 183.

June 1st 1938: W.C.C. pass new bye-laws on the use of Tackle, to the effect that only parties including at least one Qualified Member for the chosen cave, may use Club Tackle in that cave. The purpose of this was primarily that of assisting novices to become proficient in using tackle by ensuring the abilities of the trip leaders. Those Qualified to use Club tackle in Lamb Leer at that time were:- Messrs. Baldwin, Braithwaite, Crook, Dell, Duck, Frost, Greenwood, Harris, Humphries, McMillan, Murrell, McLaren, Sharpe, Strachan, Todd, Weaver, and Misses Johnson & Johnston.

- Wessex Cave Club Circular No. 33, April 1938.

March 1939: Lamb Leer Joint Committee, concerned about the lack of regular maintenance on the Cableway, balloted all members of the three Clubs on the proposal to remove the installation. Accompanying the ballot slip was a list of the pros and cons of removal and of retaining the cableway, and the ballot read:-

- 1) Are you in favour of scrapping the cable way?
- 2) If you answer "yes" to the above are you willing to assist in its removal?
- 3) If you answer "no" to question (1) are you willing to do your share of maintenance (greasing etc.)?
- 4) 4 Any Comments?

signed.....

(With W.C.C. Circular No. 43, March 1939)

Refs.

Duck, J.W. in 'Caves & Caving Vol. 1 No. 3 Jan 1938 pp104 - 109.

Irwin D.J. & Knibbs A.J. "Mendip Underground" pp70 – 73. (Mendip Publishing 1977).

The Untamed River Expedition

Leader: D.W. GILL

APPROVED BY THE ROYAL GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY



Patron: The Rt. Hon. Lord Shackleton, KG, PC, OBE.

Steve Gough

EVEN the most avid reader of this Journal must have grown weary by now of the doings of this Expedition to the other side of the world. Additionally, the subject of caving techniques has become in recent years source of a great deal of lustreless, self-satisfied verbiage. So I shall try to be brief.

1 S.R.T.

The ultimate truth of SRT systems is that they are a question of personal preference. I do not think that it is controversial, however, to say that the basic sit-stand system is the most versatile available. The Petzl "Stop" is the most versatile descender, but does not meet all situations. The Gibbs rope-walker is a very useful thing to have around, as it works on muddy (and, I am told, icy) ropes, and on ropes rigged horizontally or diagonally. Plenty has been written elsewhere about pitch-head rigging and repays study. I have only two points to make as a result of my experiences in Papua New Guinea. First, when rigging a complex pitch for a long period of time with new rope, remember that the loops will shrink out. Secondly, the new BEAL S.R.T. rope, which we used throughout, stood this severe test extremely well. (The ladder v S.R.T. controversy is irrelevant to pitches of 800 feet plus.)

2 TRAIL FERRY

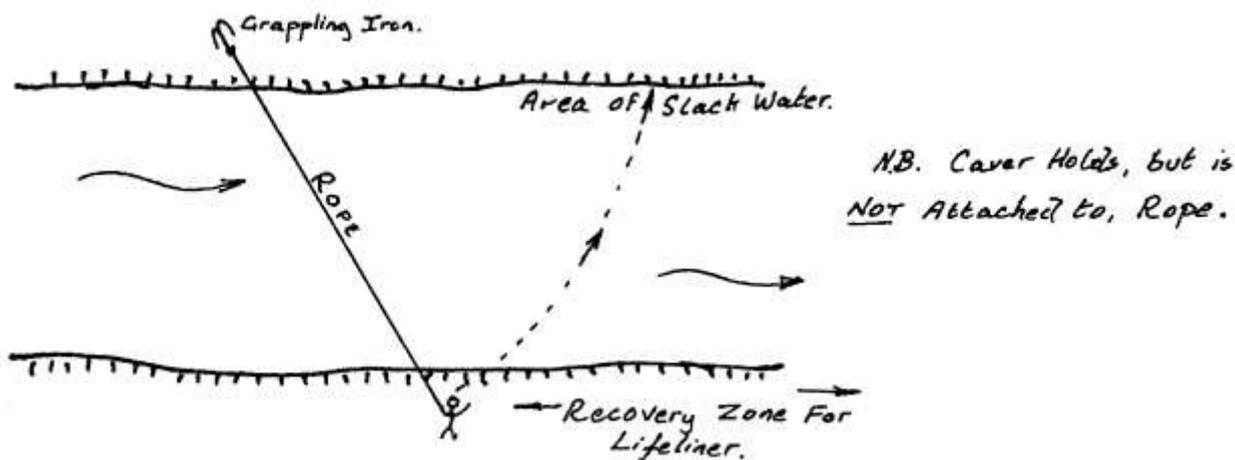
The application of this technique to caving situations is limited to those in which a big river is present. It is dangerous, so this is just as well. First, a rope must be thrown across the water and made to catch on the opposite bank by means of a grappling-iron, bunch of chocks, jammed knot or whatever, at a point upstream of reasonably slack water on both banks. The banks must be sufficiently easy-angled to permit climbing out in a half-drowned condition (Fig.1)

The caver then holds the rope, preferably by means of handhold knots. He does not attach himself to this line in any other way, for it is essential that he is able to release it. Any surplus rope is cut off. The caver is attached to a lifeline, which should be of polypropylene, as this floats. He leaps into the water, and hopefully is swept to the slack water on the opposite bank. He climbs out, his equipment is fed across on the rope, and he rigs the far side of a Tyrolean crossing. (Naturally he would not carry anything which might snag underwater). If he fails to be swept to the opposite bank - or if the grappling-iron should come adrift - he lets go of the main rope and is fielded by the lifeliner.

It is found that as long as the man in the water is upstream of the lifeliner's position, the lifeliner can pull him back towards the bank without causing him to submerge. He may find difficulty in taking in rope fast enough, owing to the speed of the current, and will be forced to do so hand-over-hand. Once the man in the water is downstream of the lifeliner, any time the rope comes tight it will cause him to submerge. The lifeliner must therefore "fish" his man in, by first holding the rope tight, then allowing slack, so that the "victim" can come up to breathe. As breathing is only possible while moving with the current, time and space may be short. A man held on a rope from upstream always goes under. In these circumstances, the lifeliner needs a good stance and a Sticht-plate or similar device, as the pull on him is likely to be violent. It is extremely difficult for one man to fulfil both these lifelining functions. Perhaps the best arrangement is to use two lifeliners: one, equipped with a Sticht Plate, should be level with the starting point, and the other, ready to take in quickly, should be downstream. In any case, three is the minimum party size, and

one needs not only long ropes but also a long neck. I wish to make no secret of my own success at avoiding the job of jumping in, and am still speechless with admiration for Tim Allen, Alan Gamble and Dave Gill, who took this on. If you think you might need these techniques, talk to these men, and invite them to join you.

Fig. 1 Trail Ferry



3 TYROLEAN TRAVERSES

When the configuration of the banks is unsuitable for the trail ferry method, a crossing may be effected by grappling a point as high as possible on the far bank, preferably with two separately-anchored ropes, and crossing by the Tyrolean method. Tim Allen got over the Andrea Doria tyrolean in this way, after some nifty work with the compressed-air gun we had with us. There is, so far as I can see, no way of making this technique very safe: it is, in any case, an immature art.

Tyrolean traverses are rigged using secure anchors on both banks as high above the water as possible. It is essential to tighten the tyrolean rope, as if it is too slack, the caver may be trapped underwater on the vee. The tightening method is shown in Fig.2. The rope should be full-weight S.R.T. rope, should be slackened off after each sortie, and may need regular retightening. If it is too tight the anchors will fail, for as the angle of the vee approaches 180°, the load on these becomes infinite (Fig3). In other words, there is a fine trade-off between keeping out of the water and breaking the rope. For the same reason, fixings need to be checked regularly for wear.

The best way of attaching oneself to a tyrolean line is open to debate, but we all used a pulley as a main attachment, in conjunction with a Gibbs ropewalker on a hand-loop to pull oneself along. This method is quick and reversible, however, it will not work on steeply-angled tyroleans. A lifeline party stands by to haul the caver out if the line goes slack. If it breaks, you are in big trouble as you are likely to be trapped on what is left. One avoids carrying bags on tyroleans.

4 WHAT TO WEAR

A wetsuit is not required in an equatorial river cave, but a buoyancy aid is. "Lifawear", covered by a light "Daleswear" over suit, was found to be ideal. For prusiking up the shaft, one dispensed with the over suit and padded one's crotch. Rubber boots do not rot, and "Damart" socks are a good idea. The "Petzl" carbide / electric lighting system is unsurpassed, although it does attract a lot of moths when prusiking "daylight" shafts at night. Still, so would anything else, and the large jet is capable of incinerating all but the largest.

Fig. 2 Tightening Knot

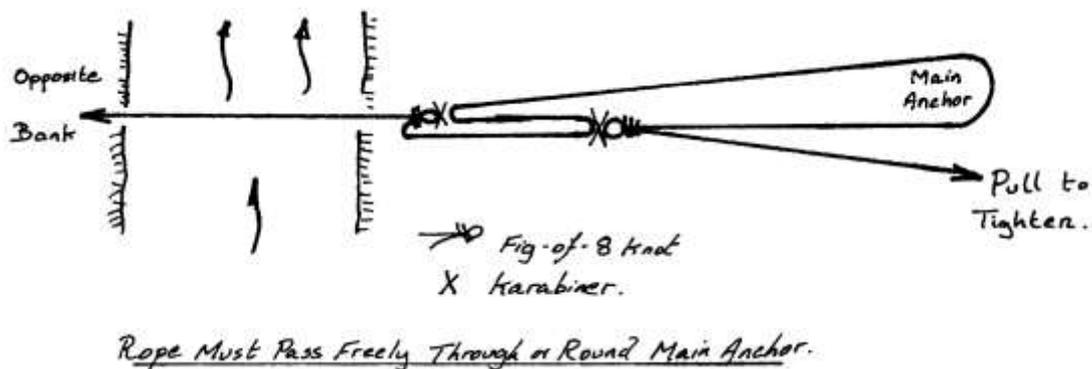
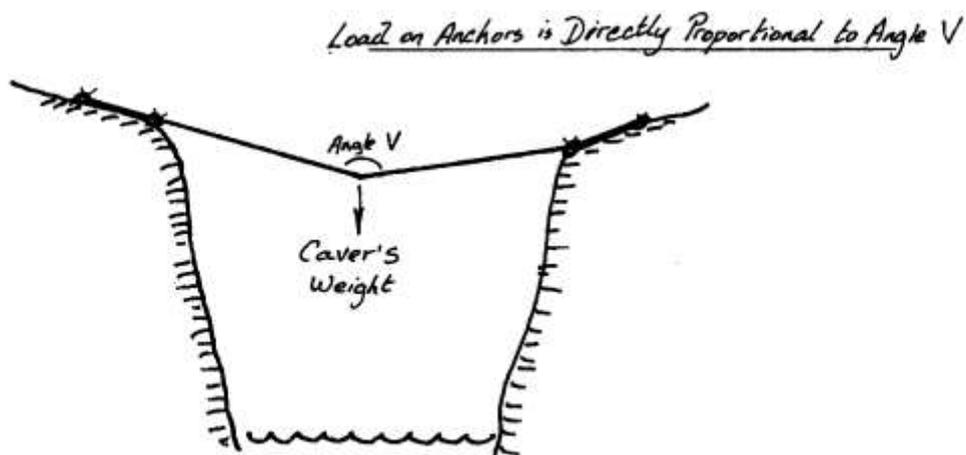


Fig. 3 Tyrolean Traverse



5 CONCLUSIONS

Though this is the merest outline, I have already written more than I intended. I could go on for pages about radios, telephones, ropes, food and living in the jungle. I would not even venture to discuss medical matters. The only sensible course is to do as we did, and take a doctor in the party.

Even if you have struggled through all of my three articles on the Untamed River Expedition, it is, I regret to say, unlikely that you have been able to form a true mental picture of the Naré. This is due both to the impossible grandeur of the place and to my feeble abilities at describing it. I have been at pains not to exaggerate my own contribution to our success, so that I hope you will spare me the accusation of "bullshitting", when I say that I started caving with the Wessex eight years ago, and am very proud to have been its representative on this unlikely, exciting, and spectacular adventure.

Memories of a President

R.R. Kenney

I imagine that the average caver who reads the Wessex Journal turns first of all to the articles that describe new discoveries. From the writer's point of view, although I have not been so lucky, it is a reasonably straightforward task to submit this sort of work. One lists the people who were present, the events that transpired, a description of what was found, and, at a riskier level, its significance for the future.

My present role, however, is not so easy. How can you describe the person who was the first President of the Wessex Cave Club? We are all cavers, but again we are not. We are fathers, we are sons, husbands, doctors, musicians, toilers at the bench or office desk, and all of us follow a host of other occupational or hobby interests. One cannot pick out five minutes and say, "He was a caver for that instant". No, life is too subtle for that approach, and if we must pen a few lines about an old friend then it has to be in the nature of a broader picture.

Children, with their uncluttered minds, can categorise people into one of three groups. The first and largest contains all those wretches whom we don't really wish to know, and it includes of course those people who treat children as inferior adults.

The next group is made up of parents, uncles and aunts from whom the lucky child receives presents as well as love. We don't necessarily expect gifts, but are never surprised when they are offered.

The final group is full of magic and wonder. The people who introduce us to the mysteries of cider, poaching, the natural environment, railways, and all the other great things in this great world of ours. We remember these people, the retired railway signalman; the old and grubby alcoholic; the sprightly ex-schoolmaster, for the rest of our lives. We never look for, or expect, any gain from them except true friendship.

When I started school in 1934 my journey took me past the Museum and I was soon to meet Mr. Balch. Yes, no doubt about it, he rated Group 3 on first acquaintance!

I wrote the following article for a wider public as my tribute to the 40th anniversary of his gaining the Freedom of Wells. Every story must have its theme and the following is no exception, but in terms of the qualities that Mr. Balch possessed that made him such an obvious choice for the Wessex - well, I won't change a word!

The Power of a Freeman

R.R. Kenney

In recent times we have become accustomed to the sight of ships' companies and regiments exercising their Freedom of our larger cities and garrison towns. They are privileged to march with bayonets fixed through the centre of the shopping and commercial districts, whilst some local dignitary takes the salute, and they inevitably attract much attention. The practise is still extant of offering Freedom to worthy citizens, but as this happens mainly in the large conurbations, and is often a recognition of a national nature, we may know little about the custom.

It is certain that in the distant past the powers of Freemen were considerable, but during the 18th Century and early into the 19th. their rights became inextricably interlinked with the current political scene, and they were one more prop of the edifice that we know under the headings of Rotten Boroughs, Political

Bribes, Open Voting and Under-representation of the Electorate. From the passing of the early Reform Acts in the 1830s it was a long step to the emancipation of women or the rights and obligations of general jury service. We now see this as a continuing process and hopefully are able to recognise new political requirements as our society evolves

The bench-marks of this story are the Municipal Corporations Act of 1882 and the Honorary Freedom of Boroughs Act of 1885. If or how they have been amended by our present system of District Councils I know not, but in the 1940s there was a strong feeling in Wells that Mr. Balch should be so honoured.

"By the rights invested in me as Mayor I grant you, Herbert Ernest Balch, the Honorary Freedom of the City of Wells, and I signify the Act by the gift of this casket containing an illuminated scroll."

'Mister Balch', as he was known to friends and pupils of all ages, must have reflected on his past life as left the Town Hall that day in 1944 and walked across the Market Place, passing the Post Office where he had started work as a boy of 14 in 1883. His working life was unique, for every time that he was due for promotion his friends and colleagues in the city pleaded with the authorities to allow him to remain in their midst, and so by stages he rose to become Postmaster before retirement came in 1931.

Passing through Penniless Porch, he could see the Museum on the other side of the Cathedral Green, and he knew that his life had really revolved around its foundation and its contents, for which he was responsible as Curator. Not without reason did the Wessex Cave Club title his biography "Pioneer Under The Mendips" when it was published in 1969, eleven years after his death. As an amateur geologist he became fascinated by the variable underground watercourses of the Mendip limestone, and he was one of the founders of the caving movement in this country. His predictions about possible routes for the water and older, abandoned ones, were often proved correct in his own lifetime. Even in 1982 his prediction of deep watercourses below the level of the known caves at Wookey Hole proved to be correct as cave divers reached new record depths at the limit of present technology.

But caving was not enough. Mr. Balch was deeply interested in people. To him the inhabitants of the entrance chamber at Wookey Hole were real people although they lived at the dawn of history in Somerset. The Bronze Age people who roamed the wastes of Mendip and built their barrows or tumuli, those low, rounded mounds that dominate the skyline at Priddy, were his friends, and he was determined to learn more about them.

His search led him to associate with professor Boyd Dawkins, the noted archaeologist, at the turn of the century, and he was eventually responsible for the excavations at Wookey Hole that have filled Wells Museum with relics of a by-gone age. He was a quick learner, for his results were presented in meticulous form, and were published in several books and papers which are treasured to this day and now have an international reputation. He was honoured with an MA from the University of Bristol and with a Fellowship of the Society of Antiquaries.

Visitor after visitor who entered the Museum fell under his spell, and successive generations of youngsters were influenced by him to follow the Natural Sciences, and all were to learn, from his example, how to conduct themselves in their relationships with family and friends.

As he mounted the steps and crossed the road to the Museum he must have been glad and thankful that all the work of a lifetime had now been recognised and adopted by the city of Wells, and that by this Act the future of his beloved Museum would be secured for all time.

The thought just would not have occurred to him that a Freeman wields immense powers, greater than any power enjoyed by the elected representatives, greater than all the powers enjoyed by most of us who attended that ceremony, and greater than all the powers of most of his associates through a long and happy life.

The journey home from school is one that many of us can easily remember. Unlike the daily experience of an adult, who often adopts a mind-numbing routine to start the day, that of a child is open to all the imagination that an eager young brain can muster. Oakleigh School, opposite Wells Bus Station, is at the bottom of the mountain, and the fifty-foot climb to the Vicars Close through the city represents the route to the top.

Out through the school gates and onto the pavement. Turn right, head down, hit the ground hard with the flat of each foot, and "chuff-chuff" the heavy train is hauled into motion. The tarred parts of the route are the easier bits, but the hard paving stones ring out with the slogging notes of the engine.

Over the double G.P.O. culvert covers which rattle a bit and represent some intricate point-work. That rectangular patch of tar is the platform. "Chuff-chuff" through the city, still with head down, and over the various level-crossings. On one journey a car driver saw the train coming, failed to clear the crossing and stalled in the middle. "Chuff-chuff" - and "Bang!" The engine spread-eagled itself over his car bonnet. Silly man.

Round the corner and up the steepest part of the route, Sadler Street. Here the engineers were faced with a hill too steep to negotiate directly, so the line curves around the layby as it passes opposite the Swan Hotel.

"Chuff-chuff" and with a roar of full superheat, clanking big-ends and 45% cut-off the engine plunged its way into the tunnel under Brown's Gate. On the uphill side the line passes along a high embankment with a sloping stone face to prevent it from slipping. This was often the scene of spectacular derailments in later years. Nearly at the top now and

"Oh, here's the Museum. I wonder if someone can tell me anything about this coin that I have found?"

Through the large wooden door and into the dim and mysterious hall. A large table is set on one side and behind it sits an old man who rises as I enter.

"You must be Richard from the Vicars Close."

"Yes, and I have a coin for you to look at."

The Emerald Isle, the Harp, Celts, peat bogs, no politics, the green and moist countryside, the people of the island and much more besides. All from one penny!

..... "Chuff-chuff" and there are two more tunnels to negotiate. Into the Vicars Close where a thoughtful gas board has marked a straight line right up the middle of the road.

"Do you have a sore throat, dear?"

"Mm". How can I tell her that my clack-valve stuffing-gland is in need of re-packing?

"Ah'ha! I wondered if you would come back, Richard. Let me introduce you to the Witch of Wookey." The picture on the wall showed an old crone sitting on the floor of the cave. In the dim surroundings her eyes reflected the light from some visitor's flaming torch like the eyes of a cat by the roadside. Lice-ridden, filthy, evil or mad, illiterate and incoherent, she induced fear in all who saw her. Why should I want to know her? Little did I realise that after a few years I would enter the Museum, see her as an old friend and exclaim, American style, "Hi!"

"Richard, come here and let me show you the Wookey Hole Room. "Here are the bones that were carved

with much care to form combs." "Here are the bone splinters turned into needles". "The cave dwellers had to perform all the chores that we ourselves must do." "They lived in family groups like ourselves." "They were human and frail, like ourselves."

"Richard, I speak as the National Trustee of Tor Woods. Do you know who pushed down that wall?"

You were so demanding, Mr. Balch. Richard this, and Richard that! But we were all individuals to you and I know that my experiences were shared by many of my contemporaries. You never lectured, but you never ceased from teaching.

Many of the incidents that I can recall were the result of my footsteps carrying me direct to the Museum. I had no particular reason to call, but what would I learn? How could I be of service? What would I discover today that would be recalled with pleasure, in the future?

"Come upstairs, Richard, and we will look at the exhibits of common British fauna". No, that lesson didn't work. I can never understand how small things such as birds can be identified in the field. To me, they all look like twin-plumed rabbit hawks. But I remember the afternoon. He was perched on a stool, and pointed at the glass-fronted case:

"That's a Jay, the rascal!"

The word spread quickly around the streets of Wells. Mr. Balch would give an evening's demonstration of all the methods known of raising fire. He knew perfectly well that no boy could resist this call. Interest was heightened because at that time, 1941, books were in short supply, and the local public libraries were quite small and had no glossy works of the type that are so appealing to today's readers. The schools had limited facilities as well, and mine had no laboratory. With no television either it meant that all our knowledge had to be gained at the theoretical level, as Mr. Balch was well aware.

The chairs in the Museum lecture room had been pushed back against the wall, the radiators were humming with heat, and illustrations of long-gone cathedral clerics surveyed the scene from the walls. In one corner stood a globe of the Earth, about the size of a football. In the opposite diagonal corner was the Moon, at true scale and distance, and at lectures we boys would sit and stare at Earth, Moon, Earth - will it ever happen.

"Look at that!" - "Oh, there's some sticks of wood!" - "Oo! Is that tinder?" There were exhibits all over the place and in no time at all we were busy, sitting on the floor, rubbing sticks together and banging away with bits of flint and stone. There were lovely big waterproof matches to play with, and Mr. Balch moved from group to group offering advice and telling us that they were better at it some thousands of years ago at Wookey Hole.

"Well boys, we have all had an entertaining evening. Now, would you like to come and help me with my archaeological digging at Badger Hole?"

"Can we use real picks and shovels, Mr. Balch?"

"Yes boys, and you can carry buckets as well."

We were delighted.

"Richard, you are now a member of our Society and I must show you our Library." He unlocked a door at the end of the Museum alcove and another door opened in my life.

"You must read that book about Egypt." "Look .at these illustrations of huge beetles in the 'Illustrated Natural History'." "Here is the geology of the River Severn Railway Tunnel." "Now that was a task of daring and endeavour."

The door is open but each book has its own cover which are like doors to other rooms. What secrets and pathways will they enable me to follow?

"Today you are coming with me to Tor Woods to chop up a fallen tree." Out came the handcart with its wheels that seemed so huge to my motor generation. Oh golly, how can I find the energy at 13 to keep up with this septuagenarian?

"Push the saw harder, Richard: I'll make a man of you yet!"

"Richard, you are progressing well as a caver as the years pass."

"Be a good fellow and cycle up to Priddy this evening."

"Some Museum visitors would like to see Swildons Hole"

"Don't come near my bees if you are wearing Brylcreem."

Oh blast, I'm going, for two stings are more than I can endure.

"Richard, a piece of zinc nailed over the top of a gatepost will protect it from the rot."

"Never plant peas more than one inch deep, Richard."

Absence from Wells in the Armed Forces was no barrier to communication and - "Many a time and oft my thoughts have turned to you, frequently in the Watches in the Night"...

"I found an article on the great unmapped and unsurveyed wilds of Africa. I at once thought, that is what Richard will be doing presently."

No, I did no work in Africa, but the trail led to Malaya, Indo-China, Borneo and the Antarctic.

You were always thinking of others: "if you write, send a special word to those old faithful diggers at Badger Hole and I will see that they get it."

On my return from the Antarctic I was invited to give an illustrated lecture to the Wells Natural History and Archaeological Society. Oh yes, I showed all my slides, but I too became a member of the audience.

"Richard, tell them about so-and-so." Richard, don't forget that incident you told me about." "What about that time....?"

It was fascinating to see the energy and enthusiasm in that otherwise tired old frame, for he retained these faculties to the end of his life at the age of 88 in 1950. He was the sort of person who could have reached the top in any profession or skill by channelling his thoughts in one direction or the other. However, he chose to enjoy the fellowship and friendship of family and friends and to remain true to his roots.

A memorable evening. The last of many.

The faint smell of hay in the air as the neighbouring countryside drew attention to itself and to the continual process of creation. The gravel path of interminable length. The professionals with padding in their jacket shoulders, ready to offer their unrequired services. The hurt in my shoulder that is the hurt that I will bear for the rest of my life. The joy and gladness in my heart for the gift of a friendship that I shall always treasure. The sharing of a task and thoughts with my fellow cavers as we move slowly along. The lesson that if Mr. Balch has gone then we must also go. The solitary Mendip flower that accompanied him to his last rest.

It is 11 o'clock in the evening in the mid 60s. Mr. Balch had always emphasised the point that there must be many high-level passages at Cheddar awaiting discovery. For years our leader, who was also a qualified geologist and had also fallen under Mr Balch's spell, had been working in the caves of Cheddar Gorge, and now we emerged from the small hole into the darkness of the night.

Above us were the familiar constellations, the snake-like sky being framed by the cliffs. The cliffs shut out the orange glow from the lights of Bristol and Weston, and we were in a timeless void. No moon, but the skyline with a few trees here and there was highlighted by the stars.

As we changed from wet and muddy clothes in the roadside layby all the cold air from the Mendip plateau drained through the Gorge and filtered through our legs. An owl hooted and we replied. Its second call denoted a state of acute psychiatric stress as it attempted to decipher our message.

"Do you think that he is here, then?"

"Of course he is!"

"All right then: on the count - 1, 2, 3,"

"BALCH!"

"BALch. BALch. Balch," said the cliffs, and we grinned at each other in the dark, and went home happy.

It is another Wednesday evening but this time in the Winter of 1982.

It is an evening of old friends, a cave, mud, water and a mixture of equipment ranging from the ubiquitous bucket to tele-communications and air-compressors. The task, as always, is to pursue a cave to its ultimate limits in the hope that new discoveries can be made. Passing through Wells I switch off the car radio so that I can listen to that other channel.

"Richard, that was once a seashore with its sloping beach still visible." "Richard, I placed a stone there to pond the water back for the horses." "Richard, I tried to bicycle up this hill." "Richard, we dug there but naught availed us." Richard, the Licensee is Mr. Dors."

"Richard, Eastwater was a difficult cave."

Yes, Mr. Balch, and I am now looking at your photo on the wall of our caving headquarters at Upper Pitts, and long may the Licensee's descendants in that other establishment hear your name.

When I begin My Great Experience, will I hear a voice saying,

"Richard, come over here, there's a good fellow, and let me tell you all about"?

I am sure that I shall.

FROM THE LOG

Charterhouse Cave

8 September. Petes Hann & Moody. Fired bang in end boulders.

15 September. Pete Hann, Julie Bolt. More cement in boulders, and we are thinking of going up into what looks like a space. At least it will make a change as straight on looks really horrible.

Eastwater Cavern

25 August. J-Rat, Geoff Newton, Duncan Frew. Down to the S-Bend (West Ends Series). This was well sumped off and backed up to an impressive extent. The cave was pretty wet: Lolly Pot was a bit like a real Yorkshire pot. Streams entering and leaving in all sorts of unusual places. A long, lean and hungry leech was observed above Lolly Pot. The cave is now tackled in readiness for the draining of the sump; only a ladder for Dolphin is required.

Swildons Hole

WATER CHAMBER DIG. Graham Johnson, Pete Hann, Clive Barlow, Merv Ingram Aubrey Newport, John Scott.

3 July. Personnel as above. Apart from the water, it's quite a nice dig Lots of mud removed.

10 July. P.H., M.I., J.S., Pete Watts. Lots more spoil removed and a small air space over fill for about 4ft. The passage is slowly dipping down and turning slightly left.

17 July. P.H., G.J., M.I., J.S., Steve Hall. All the water has now drained away and digging is easier. Passage is getting wider, about 5ft, and looking very good. The main problem is CO₂, after about ½ hour the air gets bad and after an hour, is too bad to work in. Two feet of progress made in an hour-and-a-bit, and a very good headache.

24 July. G.J., P.H., M.I., J.S. Lot of spoil removed, passage now turning left, dig face dry.

31 July. G.J., P.H., M.I., Nigel Graham. Dig under two feet of water. A poke around with a long bar failed to drain it: an early night in the Hunters'.

7 August. G.J., P.H., C.B., M.I., J.S. Thinking the dig would be flooded, decided to have a night off and go to Two. The dig was looked at on way down, and wasn't flooded. Could have been dug, but with no tools we carried on down the cave.

14 August. P.H., M.I., J.S., C.S., a guest. Dig under 6" of water, but slow progress before it got too bad to work, i.e. lying flat-out in water using the shovel at arms' length with your nose just out of the water. We'll have to wait for the dig to dry out before more work can be done.

11 September. G.J., P.H., M.I., C.B., A.N., J.S. The dig still under water so a long-handled shovel was used in the hope that bank could be lowered to let the water drain: no luck. Will have to find a way of draining the dig.

HEKSLER'S DIG. Nigel Graham.

31 August. Spent about 1½ hours lowering the floor.

ST. PAUL'S / PARADISE REGAINED. Geoff Newton, Pete & Alison Moody.

26 (?) August. Abortive trip to survey Black Chamber in RENASCENCE SERIES. The U-tube sump was

well up. Diving through (with bottles) it was found to be a good 15ft long, and some slumping of the mud climb on the far side has occurred. So went on to Fault Chamber, recovered an entrenching tool from Lower Fault and had a quick look round various digs before returning to Muddy Oxbow and clearing all the debris from the blast some months back.

SHATTER POT DIG. Nigel Graham. About 2 hours digging.

PALMER'S DIG (TYNING'S FIELD DIG). Pete & Alison Moody.

1 September. Continued digging across the bedding plane found in July and discovered two "open" passages. The first went down to the left but ended at a blank wall, the other continues straight ahead for at least 10'. It's some 4ft deep but very narrow, will require banging.

7 September. P. & A. M. Afternoon trip to clear out the end rift, and get a charge in.

8 September. P. & A. M., Duncan Frew. Cleared debris from yesterday's charge, stacking the spoil back in the entrance gallery. Put another charge in before leaving.

15 September. P. & A. M., Geoff Newton. Little progress made. We are now out the soft shales and into good solid Blackrock Limestone.

LONGWOOD VALLEY SINK.

14 July. Rich Whitcombe, Simon Meade-King, Nigel Graham, Duncan Frew plus one. Some two hours very useful progress. Floor is claggy mixture of small boulders and sticky mud.

1 September. R.We., S.M-K., Clive North, Dave Morrison, Duncan Frew, Nick Marachov, Alison Ibbotson, Richard Hoggard, Adrian Dawe, Colin Baker a great turnout of enthusiastic diggers. About 30 trolley loads excavated necessitating a new dumping site. Right-hand wall now extending to about 5ft under the upper level and still going. Debris as claggy as ever but some good lumps of red ochre, as well as water worn chert turned up. The farm dog turned up to assist but fell out of favour when he overturned the communal brew-up. Amanda.

BURRINGTON. Phil & Lynne Hendy.

25 & 26 August. BATH SWALLET stream and dig now practically full of stream debris; the rest is full of water. Main dig still looks inviting - must find time to continue with it.

FOXES HOLE Some pillocks have spread several bales of straw all over the floor, together with the obligatory fag packets, beer bottles, etc. It's a bloody mess! Dig site looks promising, roof looks dangerous.

PIERRE'S POT Much of the tufa is now a dirty muddy mess.

TWIN TITTIES Muddy. Stone walling round dig at bottom almost complete.

Above trips photographic: two trips as I ran out of film on the first!

28 July. O.F.D. II. Chris, Annie and Siân Haywood. To the bottom of Maypole Inlet. The Main Streamway was flowing chest deep so an about turn and a sporting ascent of Maypole Inlet was made.

31 August. Ogof y Darren Cilau ("Killer"). Mark Madden, Kev Clarke, Sean Walsh. A strange mixture of Ion, narrow bits and big, boring bits, with copious quantities of stripey tapes. Boring bits were very Welsh. Taped bit was very reminiscent of the M1. Did not find the pitches but(but) got to some very pretty pretties. 6hrs. Kev.

Cont. on p111

BACK PAGE

UPPER PITTS WARDEN ROSTER

SEPT 27 Glyn Bolt
OCT 4 Phil Hendy

OCT 11 Fred Felstead
OCT 18 (A.G.M./Dinner w/e)

Protect bats in lofts – warning

PEOPLE treating timber in lofts where bats are roosting must seek advice from the Nature Conservancy Council, the N.C.C. has warned.

The advice comes on the heels of the organisation's successful court action on Monday against a Dorset firm which was convicted of spraying a poisonous fluid on a house roof used as a bat shelter.

Pinebury Ltd. of Shaftesbury was fined £1,000 with £500 costs at Devizes Magistrates Court, Wiltshire, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which gives full protection to all 15 species of British bat.

Dorset Evening Echo 21 August 85.

BONFIRE PARTY

UPPER PITTS

Sat November 2nd
after the Hunters'

* £1.60 *

per TICKET (exchanged for Food)

* FIREWORKS *

* BRING YOUR OWN BEER ETC. *

Refuse tipping plan thrown out

COUNTY planners felt they could not condone illicit tipping which has been going on in a natural hole in the ground on Southover Heath, Tolpuddle, by giving permission to a building firm to use it for tipping sub-soil and construction waste.

At their meeting in Dorchester members were warned by assistant county planning officer Andrew Price that if they allowed this it could set a precedent for other similar holes to be filled in.

This natural hole measuring 100ft. by 130ft. was in an attractive, remote area used by walkers and riders. Householders and local businesses had been tipping refuse into it and it was now quite unsightly, members heard.

Dorset
Evening
Echo

10 September 85

Mr. Price pointed out that swallet — underground stream — holes similar to this one extended all along a ridge with mature forestry land on three sides and open farm land to the north. The best known of these was Cullpepper's Dish.

Both the Council for the Preservation of Rural England and the Ramblers' Association were opposed to the application.

"We feel strongly that this is an inappropriate activity and that the county solicitor should be asked to find some way of getting the unsightly tip tidied up," said Mr. Price.

Asked Mr. Eric Webb: "How would we stop local people using it once the site has been cleared up?"

County planning officer Alan Swindall replied that once the site had been tidied up and there was no rubbish there he felt people would not go on tipping.

ANSWER TO LAST EDITION'S RIDDLE:

NARÉ RIVER CAVE.

The songs were: "Old Father Thames", "Ole Man River" and "Wild In The Country".