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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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A LOOMING THREAT?

This year has seen an unprecedented morass of caving politics. SSSI, the NCA's "New Approach to Grant Aid", the vacuum left by the demise of Whernside Manor C&FC, etc, etc. Many cavers think there's far too much caving politics, and I couldn't agree more. That may seem strange, considering my Editorials, my "political" reporting in this Journal, and my attending various CSCC meetings, until you consider that the best way to reduce it (or at least try to reduce it) is to become involved - then oppose anything even the slightest bit threatening. Succinctly: use the growing system to control it. Ignore it, and it won't go away. Indeed, it will spread its tentacles ever further into our sport, inventing pseudo posts (like "Development" Officers), finding non-existent problems to mull over in sub-committee, polarising differences of opinion even more strongly and perhaps leading to assorted breakaway factions each claiming to be the true messiah of British caving, and eventually leading to the monopolistic Governing Body rule under the sort of national / local Government rule which so many of us fear. Already, here on Mendip, we have seen what happens when Ministerial - or at least, departmental, bodies are brought into caving without the future being considered properly.

I fear we ain't seen nothin' yet. The NCA agm earlier this year considered the "New Approach" to Sports Council grant applications. The facts and figures I give here were abstracted from the AGM Minutes.

The Meeting worked on a figure of about £66000. Of this, £35000 would be for International Expeditions. Expedition Training: £10000, and general Training £5900 (at least). Though not considered at the AGM, at least some of that would be invested in an equipment pool if some of the ideas put forward elsewhere were adopted. Access funds: about £2500. "Recreational Caving" (you & me!): Nil. That leaves £13000. For what? you may ask. Paperwork:

Development: £5000. Membership Services; £3000. Admin Services: £5000.

I do not know what each of these three headings really means. Nor did the NCA at the Meeting. In fact, nobody could say what a Development Officer would really do - the question of actually needing one was studiously avoided -, though various ideas have been discussed. It was left for future discussion, partly pending the research into re-organising the structure of British caving. Now, the CSCC utterly rejected the DO proposal some time ago. I was present at the appropriate meeting, the mood of which was contained in a comment by one club delegate to the effect that we should have the guts to tell the SC that we will run our caving our way. The NCA AGM debating was juggled around a bit so as allow for the complicated relationships between the various issues. When the proposal that the Meeting accept the principle of appointing a DO was voted on, it was passed 14 for, 4 against, 1 abstention. (Note: the principle: the AGM did not create the post or appoint the Officer.)

The nature of the post was then discussed, inconclusively, as explained above then the CSCC delegation spoke up. Somehow, they had missed the point of the earlier deliberations in the Meeting, and they explained that if they had realised what was happening, they would have acted on their mandate to walk out of the Meeting, rendering it inquorate. I assume this would have killed the DO principle vote, rendering the appointment impossible for at least another year, since the Chairman replied that he was most concerned by the CSCC mandate on the grounds that it could have had a serious effect on all that had been previously decided, including on Grant Aid. (An example of the constitutional control I suggested in the first paragraph?).

Of course, the re-structuring (oh poor English language!) of British caving still waffles on among the empire-builders, self-interests, and others worried by the comparative free-and-easy attitude enjoyed by most cavers, who, rightly are more concerned with actually getting underground than with what is supposed to be an ancillary service. The trouble is, the Sports Council, for no other reason than self-

preservation, keeps trying to woo us with promises of lots of lolly. What it does NOT say, is what it expects in return: this daft DO idea, I think, is theirs or results from their pressure. There are those who say nonsense to fears of strings. I, for one, just do not believe that at all.

The Sports Council is attempting to stamp out the growing - and very serious - problem of top "amateur" and professional sportspeople who cheat by doping themselves. It IS a major worry (not perhaps as bad as that practiced by the Eastern Bloc athletes: apparently some of the women there are so razzled by steroids that about the only feminine aspects of them now are their reproductive tracts: and they've probably wrecked them), but does that entitle the SC's own drugs squad to force random tests on sportsmen and women? Two South Welsh baseball players, match player and team manager, were recently reported to their "Governing" Body by the Welsh SC for refusing point-blank a random test after a local derby cup-match. All right, these officers are not likely to bring their mobile lab to Priddy or Ingleton (can you imagine the result...?), but what could the SC do if we refused to dance to their tune? Anyone know? NO - therein lies the looming threat.

I sometimes wondered if I was a solo crusader, until recently. Quite a few Wessex members, who normally couldn't care less about caving "politics", have expressed similar views to those above. Let's face it: we enjoy going underground, but why should we scrounge taxpayers' money to pay for lots of vaguely-associated paperwork? I don't expect grants towards my model-engineering, I don't see why I should subsidise tennis or golf or the high arts: why should their devotees pay for some obscure committee associated with my desire to explore even the most spectacular and beautiful of primeval drains?

No: we just want to go caving...

CLUB NEWS

UPPER PITTS PROGRESS

Work continues, steadily if slowly (no major step is taken without first consulting the Treasurer). The Ladies' dorm. window has been moved so the new boiler-house (outside, in that odd corner) could be erected. The dorm walls have been rendered (was it supposed to have a flush-rendered fitted wall mirror...?). Tests of the new shower trays showed a fault with the cambering: this is to be corrected (and may have been by the time you read this). The continuously wet patch in one the Gents' cubicles has at last been rectified: the problem turned out to be a cracked cistern.

H.Q. RULES: A COMMITTEE NOTICE

Complaints were made to the Committee following incidents at a Hut party. Accordingly, the Committee stresses that;

The ladies' dormitory is strictly for women only: it is not a sort of overflow lounge; it is out of bounds to men.

Animals may be brought to the Hut but must be properly controlled: they should be kept off the bunks.

W.C.C. CAVE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Closing date now 20th September 1986. Entries to Nick Marachov (or via a Committee member).

CLUB TACKLE

THERE is a quantity of tackle, especially tethers etc, and the Petzl pulleys, missing. Most of it is probably scattered around various members' car boots etc.: Please, if you have any items you forgot to return, take them back to the tackle store as soon as possible.

FRANK FROST PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION

Nick Marachov and Jim Moon are still sorting, copying and collating the photographs, while Mike York is investigating suitable albums. At the last Committee Meeting, Mike explained a problem here worth repeating: plastic coverings, as used in most of the "family album" books to 'protect' the prints, will in fact wreck them eventually. The print emulsion is attacked, over the years, by the plastic: the best form of album uses high-grade manilla mounts recessed so the face of the print is not touched by the adjacent page.

GOUFFRE BERGER

19 July to 1st August 1987. At least, it was, but there now seems to be a problem (3 / 9 / 86): for some reason we have been offered a new, shorter time later in the year so it is possible the trip will be postponed to 1988. More definite announcements will be made as soon as possible.

ADDRESS CHANGE

Martin Buckley is now at 30 Hillgrove, Henleaze, Bristol.

NEW MEMBER (re-application)

The Wessex Cave Club welcomes back

PETER DAVID BENTLEY PO Box 217, Hong Kong.

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Congratulations to Dianne and Dave Walker on the birth of their daughter, Elsie

REGIONAL NOTES

MENDIP

Hopefully the SSSI problem will be resolved satisfactorily in the not too far-distant future, thanks to a tremendous amount of work put into this by many people over the last few months. Some predicted places like G.B. would be always busy, but this not to have been the case so far (Summer is usually a fairly quiet time on Mendip anyway).

Credit is due to the Cheddar River (upstream Gough's) divers Rob Harper, Rich Stevenson and Rob Palmer, for an interesting, previously unheard-of, conservation measure. Those sumps contain lots of little creatures, very easily sent a-tumbling (possibly out the rising) by the passing diver, so the explorers have "taped" the route by running the line tightly against one wall, putting the other side of the sump "out of bounds". R.P. describes this, and the creatures there, in the CDG N/L, and in "Caves & Caving" 33 (August 86), hoping the principle will spread.

SOUTH WALES

Ogof Daren Cilau is still going places! Looking at the survey, its main passages all run nice and neatly across the plateau towards the rising. So what do the BEC do? Find one which goes off NW from the further reaches of the system, then veers off in a huge arc Westwards over the Divers' Extensions towards ...? Seriously though, the BEC's Hard Rock Cafe dig is an excellent find in a fascinating area which, surely, has much more to reveal. The Aggy Rising project continues steadily: the Editor recently spent an afternoon helping there, and was shown various interesting sites near the Ogof Capel rising. Everyone refers to the "Aggy Rising": it isn't actually, it would appear: the Rising pool, a 30+ft deep shaft, is a window into the roof of the main conduit, breached by the Clydach River.

A semantic thought, raised by two Chelsea members: Daren Cilau - or Cillau? The former could be an old map-makers' error which actually is a non-word.

DERBYSHIRE

Some access notes (from DCA N/L 60).

Eldon Hole: Avoid the old, very loose, route down the West side. Eldon PC have installed new belay posts etc. Permission to visit is obtained now from Mr. Furness, at Lane Side Farm, Peak Forest (NGR SK 120 789).

Hillocks Mine: Permission not required. Please use the stile over the wall.

Cascade Cavern: Ask at Rowson House Farm for permission to cross the land. The fixed entrance ladders have been removed (40ft., 15ft.).

Cascade Cavern & Knotlow Mine entrances: spanners for the lids are obtainable from the Village Store in Monyash, signed for, and returned after the trip.

NORTH

The CNCC have pointed out the farmers' concern following the rescues of 3/4 May '86 (including a fatality in Dale Head Pot). Would visiting clubs please bear in mind:

Hammer Pot: Sludge Crawl fills completely in minutes and can take days to empty (There is a warning in the guide book).

Permits must be filled in accurately and handed in at the appropriate place.

Mr. Coates, the farmer for the Hammer/Gingling area, states that if he refuses permission because of bad weather, he will give an alternative date.

PENYGHENT POT: news has arrived of a major find, beyond a bedding plane previously thought to close down too tightly.

WHITE SCAR CAVE is open to cavers beyond the show section: £3 each.

A couple of other access notes: on Leck Fell, only three cars are allowed per permit, please park at the Lost John's car park. Visitors to the West Kingsdale System (Swinsto, etc.) are requested to park clear of the Braida Garth Farm gate, as it is an awkward entrance to manoeuvre in.

A Few Dates:

CSCC Meeting.	29/11/86	Priddy
NCA AGM	21/3/87 10.30am	Hunters.
International Cave Rescue Conference	29/8 - 5/9 /87	Trieste
(Hosted by the Italian Cave Rescue Organisation).		

WESSEX CAVE CLUB ANNUAL DINNER (Menu elsewhere in this edition).

At the Star Hotel, Wells: accommodation may be available at the Hotel for guests wishing to stay overnight there. The Club has not booked rooms, contact the Hotel directly.

Dinner tickets £10. A bus from Priddy to Wells and return will be available. No disco this year, so the Club choristers will have to ensure their throats are well gargled (for after the return to Upper Pitts, One might add ...!).

THE NEW WCC ASSET.

-By The Editor

Noticed a difference in the Journal's typeface? Mike D-York arranged for the purchase of an Electric Typewriter, Editors, For The Use of. Bit more sophisticated than my faithful old portable (second hand when I bought it some years ago). I first had to learn to drive this one. Practising, I pressed the Carriage Return. Several pounds of steelwork rushed off to the right straight towards the widow. "Oo-er!" I thought, mind racing at Warp Factor Eight through the mental Directory of Trades Within the Wessex, searching for "Repairers, Double-Glazing". It stopped, shudderously, with inches to spare. Then I typed a few more ~~words~~ words, started a word and - gulp- nothing happened! Visions of reporting to the rest of the Committee that I had broken it. Mind going through the "Directory ..." (Old Boy!) in Interstellar Overdrive, looking for "Repairers, Typewriters".

Continued on page 256

COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVE CLUBS: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Phil Hendy.

Caving politics is seen by most active - and non-active - cavers as a bore, and of no relevance to the physical act of going caving. That this is not so became patently obvious when Priddy farmers and landowners closed their caves recently, in protest at the heavy-handed way in which the Nature Conservancy Council has applied the regulations related to caves designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The farmers feel, with some justification, that cavers were primarily responsible for designating caves as SSSI, and had the caving politicians been better informed and more vigilant, then none of this need have happened. The CSCC formed a Working Party on May 17th to try to solve resolve the problem, by influencing the NCC to moderate its regulations relating to land use over SSSI caves, and to try to restore farmers' confidence and goodwill.

I have already, as Chairman of this Club and on behalf of the Committee, written to various MPs, including the Secretary of State, and to the NCC, expressing our deep concern over the matter. The Wessex is pledged to assist the Working Party, and to support the farmers in every way it can.

Another aspect of caving politics which must be regularly reviewed is the unnecessarily prolonged existence of special sub-committees or other groups or positions. The SSSI Working Party, for example, was set up with definite aims, and will be dissolved as soon as the current problems are resolved. I view the positions at CSCC level of Novice Training Officer and of Equipment Officer with some disquiet.

The NTO post was created some years ago to co-ordinate co-operation with the Somerset LEA over the assessment of teachers who wished to take their pupils caving. The LEA has now dispensed with CSCC advice and assessment. Similarly, the CSCC as a body does not manufacture or test tackle or equipment: it could be argued that these posts are now defunct and should be abolished. (The NTO, Alan Dougherty, re-elected to the post at the CSCC AGM in May, resigned the day after the AGM, for both personal and policy reasons. The post is still vacant in July, but still exists. -Ed.).

The danger of an officer with nothing to officiate over is that he will create work for himself, invent problems which in fact do not exist, and evolve his own power complex to the discomfort of others and possibly to the detriment of the sport. Whilst such tendencies must be looked out for and actively discouraged, it must be admitted that such officers at regional level can play an important role by liaising with their counterparts on the NCA, and promoting a two-way flow of information.

The question of grant-aid for the Council (and possibly its member clubs) was again raised at the CSCC meeting. The Wessex argued, successfully, that the first and best way of raising Council funds was by subscription increase: cavers should be prepared to finance their own sport. However, the availability of Sports Council funds means there may come a time when the Council decided to take advantage of the offer. This Club's Committee's attitude seems to be that no grant should be accepted unless all efforts to raise the money for a particular project from cavers themselves has failed, and then only if strings attached to the grant do not affect our autonomy. There is still no such thing as a "free lunch". The SC has suggested that grants could be used for administration: the danger here, it seems, is that this can only lead to us being bogged down in more and more bureaucracy.

On a more positive note, Dave Irwin, CSCC Chairman, is trying to arrange circulation of all NCA reports amongst all the Council member-clubs. For the Wessex, Pete Hann has taken the job of "politics co-ordinator", so that we can better formulate Club policy in external matters. But why not take the time to attend a CSCC or Charterhouse Caving Committee meeting yourself? There are only a few such meetings each year, and anyone can speak at them.

22.5.86

THE NOTTS POT EXTENSIONS

John Cordingley

Having been involved in the Notts Pot project, and as I am one of the apparently growing band of "Yorkshire-based" Wessex members, it seems appropriate for me to offer this short review to let other members know more of what has been happening.

That the downstream sump in Notts Pot had to go seemed obvious to us for years. With a 30m vertical difference between here and upstream Gavel Pot where the water is next seen, and the huge volume of water entering it in flood, there just had to be an open route through to a large streamway. A dive in the early '70s indicated that the way on in the main sump was choked, which was confirmed when serious explorations started in 1985. However the static sump at the base of the final pitch was wide open, at the bottom of a 10m flooded pot.

Despite the appalling weather and bad visibility in 1985 this was steadily pushed by divers from the Northern Pennine Club until December - when it abruptly broke surface after 210m. The divers entered the most significant Leck Fell find this decade: 1200m (3900 feet) of magnificent streamway leading to another sump.

The first half of this passage is largely phreatic, with low gradient and deep, slow-moving water. A knick point is reached, and the floor cuts down in a series of noisy waterslides and rapids until the passage is up to 15m high. Just before Sump 2, the roof descends in a fault chamber to a short crawl which soon sumps. Eighteen inlets in the main streamway have been explored so far, totalling another 1.5Km of passage. One of these is close to the high-level passages upstream in the Lost John's Master Cave, whilst another ends in a high aven beneath the dry valley downhill from Lost John's entrance. Sump 2 was found to be only 10m long, leading to another large inlet (which sumps upstream) and Sump 3, dived for 300m (all shallow) into 100m of streamway to Sump 4, as yet unexplored.

Radio-location indicated that this point is only about 200m from the 63m deep upstream sump of Gavel Pot - so the next dive in Sump 4 might encounter a big hole in the floor! The total extension so far is about 3.5Km (2.1 miles), and when Ireby / Notts and Lost John's / Gavel are finally linked, it will be the deepest cave in the Dales at 245m (796 feet). Apart from this, there are plenty of digs, sumps and avens to be investigated. The largest aven has been named "Oliver Lloyd Aven", and at over 50m high, it stands a fair chance of connecting with the large shakehole above it. I hope a dry way in can be found soon, as the novelty of carrying bottles up and down the Notts pitches wore off a long time ago!

Full details of the extension, together with a large survey, will appear in the next N.P.C. Journal, which should be available at the B.C.R.A. Conference, if not before.

Mr. Bob Comes, of the Nature Conservancy Council Taunton office, has been taken ill, we learned in early August. We wish him a full, speedy recovery. (Mr. Comes was the N.C.C. representative who attended the C.S.C.C. meeting on Ss.S.S.I., in May this year.)

CAVE DIVING GROUP/WESSEX CAVE CLUB RESCUE PRACTICE,
SWILDONS HOLE, APRIL 1996

CAVE DIVING GROUP - Somerset Section

Report on the Rescue Practice from Swildons Hole on
April 27th 1986

Aim:- To recover a victim from Swildons Four streamway, using the Kirby Morgan Bandmask Sump Rescue apparatus through sumps 3, 2 and 1. The idea was to base feed air to the victim from the nearside of the sump and haul him through on a stretcher attached to guidelines and assisted by divers.

Divers:- Jeff Price, Bob Cork, Darny Bradshaw, John Cooper, Rich Websell, Kev Clarke, Julian Taylor, Alan Downton (Victim), Bob Drake.

Report:- This was to be in conjunction with a Wessex C.C. practice rescue from Sump 1 out. The sump rescue apparatus and divers air bottles were taken to Sump 2 the previous day, this took about 15 cavers 40 minutes to get all the kit there. The air bottles consisted of 1 x 80cu.ft, 1 x 60cu.ft for use and spare for the victim, and 4 x 40cu.ft. for the assisting divers, other divers carrying their own air.

All the divers were at sump 2 by 11.10 a.m., where we all kitted up. We decided to re-lay a line through Sump 2 to enable the stretcher to be clipped on, to give a firm guideline. J.P. layed the new line and the existing one was taken out. All the divers went through both sumps and assembled the equipment in Four. A telephone link was set up between 2 and 4. The idea was to run the long hose of the Kirby Morgan back through the sump and connect it to the 80cu.ft bottle based in 3. Here we met three problems, firstly the hose was only just long enough to meet air either side the sump, which gave us no extra to attach it to the victim. Secondly we needed telephone communication between the sumps, which was difficult to set up, and thirdly we had brought half the David Major stretcher instead of the Paraguard stretcher we normally use. B.C. and D.B. assembled the Kirby Morgan, A.D. came through the sumps ready to be rescued, while B.D. tried to lay the hose through the sump. J.C. went back into 3 to try and set up a telephone link. After deciding the base-feed was not going to work B.D. returned to 4. This had taken nearly an hour and divers were by now getting cold. We decided to bring the victim back wearing the Kirby Morgan with the air bottle strapped to him and assisted by B.C. and D.B. The extra equipment was taken back to 2 and the telephone taken in. He was brought through with remarkable speed and comparative ease with B.C. pulling and guiding from the front and D.B. from the feet. The victim was face up and did not help himself at all.

The kit was then packed up and a band of waiting sherpas took it from the cave. We all reached Sump 1 for hot soup and Mars bars by 1.10p.m.

Conclusion:- After many thoughts and discussions the general feeling was that the short sumps, as of those in Swildons, a victim could be recovered fairly easy with the Kirby Morgan with the air bottle strapped to him. As with all rescues a lot depends on the nature of the injuries as this determines the manoeuvrability of the victim in the cave. We have been discussing the necessity of using a stretcher in a sump rescue at all. If the patient can be suitably supported e.g. with splints in the case of broken bones, then the rest of the body's weight will be supported by the water. Not using a stretcher would save a lot of time, which could be vital in

this situation. The problems occur when we have long and deep sumps because there are no facilities to change air bottles underwater, this is a thought for the future. Here also a bouyancy aid would be useful to adjust the victim to the correct weight in the water, this is what has been done previously on the stretcher. The more we use this equipment the more problems we can overcome, this practice has altered our way of thinking towards sump rescues.

Bob Drake

Rescue Practice Report April 27th 1986

Venue - Swildons Hole, Priddy

The aim of this practice was to recover an incapacitated patient from Sump 4 in the main streamway. The practice was organised as a joint venture between the CDG, responsible for the sump rescue, and the Wessex, responsible for conveying the patient to the surface.

The following attended:-

Diving/Diving Support

As CDG Report
above, plus

D. Frew
M. Foyle

Group One

P. Morris
A. Vanderplank
J. Rands
D. Mills
M. Tuck
G. Newton
R. Warman
I. Pearson
L. Smith

Group Two

D. White
R. Tavener
G. Johnson
N. Graham
A. Summerskill
C. Read
R. Fielder
J. Moon
P. Lacey.

Cafe A La Sump 1.

M. Dewdney-York.

Victims -or patients

A. Downton to Sump 1.

P. Hann to surface.

Others attending included:

B. Prewer, T. Large, G. & J. Bolt.

After an initial briefing at the Wessex, the divers departed toward Sump 4 at about 10.00 hrs. The remaining cavers, in two teams, were to enter the cave at 11.30 hrs and 13.30 hrs respectively.

The first team entered the cave at 11.30 hrs, in warm bright weather and "sporting" water conditions, to make their way to Sump 1 to rendezvous with the CDG at approx. 12.00hrs.

At this point, Sod's famous law played a hand, in that an ACTUAL callout request was received, relating to an incident in Goatchurch in which a girl had dislocated her shoulder on the Coffin Lid. The second team, with Glyn and Julie Bolt, departed to Burrington to assist.

Meanwhile, the first team sat at Sump 1. Messages were relayed to and from the divers, who had found difficulties causing substantial delays. (See CDG Report). Eventually at 13.45, the divers arrived at Sump

1. Hot soup and Mars Bars provided by Mike York's Wayside Snack Bar were very welcome as the delays and low water temperature began to show.

At this point, Pete Hann was duly installed in the experimental neoprene exposure bag, roped into the "wrong" stretcher (we had hoped to use the 'Paraguard') and the carry out, behind the retreating divers, began at approx. 14.00 hrs.

It immediately apparent that the stretcher was quite difficult to handle, because it's very narrow base made it very unstable, with a tendency to roll at the slightest provocation. This was rather disconcerting for the patient, who only narrowly missed facial re-arrangement on a number of occasions. Apart from this, the carry to Barnes Loop was uneventful. It was noticeable at this stage, that as the team became more tired, the tendency to bunch around the stretcher rather than think ahead increased. At this stage, members of the second team, with Glyn and Julie Bolt, re-joined the practice after returning from Goatchurch.

After a number of tries at taking the stretcher through the Inclined Rift, it was decided take the patient out through the Loop itself. (We noted, however, that in the case of a genuine incident, two minutes work with a lump hammer would have allowed passage through the Rift.)

After the Loop was passed, and the patient lowered again to the streamway, an advance party was sent to the Twenty to complete and check its rigging, and to form a top hauling party. The patient was temporarily "untethered" to defer the unofficial "christening" of the exposure bag, and to allow him to be repositioned at the lower end of the stretcher in preparation for the Twenty. The Twenty was reached at 15.45hrs.

The pitch was rigged with a pulley block mounted on the stal boss above and 5 metres to the rear of the pitch. A header rope was attached to the stretcher and returned to the bottom of the pitch for the main hauling party. A header rope was attached and guided by the small party at the top. With the aid of one somewhat damp caver (Jim Moon, I think) on the ladder just below the overhang, the pitch was passed in less than a minute, with surprising ease!

Leaving some to de-tackle the pitch, using their teeth on those enthusiastically-tightened Maillons (who did have that spanner??) the main party reached the base of the Old Forty at 16.30hrs. The stretcher proved to be too long to negotiate the 90 degree bend from the chute into the Water Rift, and despite many attempts no further progress could be made without removing the patient from the stretcher.

It was decided to abandon the practice at this stage, because the major hazards had been passed, and many of the rescuers were feeling the energy-sapping effects of the delays experienced earlier in the day. Having volunteered some passing cavers to help remove tackle from the cave, all participants were back on the surface by 17.30hrs.

Issues Arising.

1 The stretcher.

The particular stretcher used imposed limitations on the rescue. It is recognised that any stretcher used on an underground rescue would be a compromise with certain advantages and disadvantages. Is there a better one available?

2 The Neoprene Exposure Bag.

The experimental exposure bag appeared to work well. The patient was semi-submerged on a number of occasions in order to test this; despite this, he remained warm and comfortable(?). The bag remained intact despite fairly rough handling, and sustained little or no damage. Several postulated on the possibility of a similar bag with sleeves, so that a conscious patient could help himself.

3 Comforts.

Cafe A La Sump 1, courtesy of Mike Dewdney-York, was a valuable exercise. Finally, how or where did Jim Rands carry those millions of Dextrosol tablets that he managed to dispense just as we felt the most knackered? Cheers Jim.'

4 Monitoring the Rescue.

Should we have some system of monitoring who is underground, and how long they have been assisting with the rescue, i.e. a tally board in the blockhouse, or is that too formal for Mendip?

Pete Lacey.

The Victim's View of The Rescue

The day started with me helping the divers in with their kit, then standing around for two and a half hours at Sump 2 waiting for the kit to be taken out. When this was done and we were warming up on Mike's soup at Sump 1, my mouth operated before my brain and an army of hands tied me down before I could change my mind.

As the stretcher was incomplete (the "Mauger" drag sheet wasn't brought down) I was trussed on with a rope which at times was very painful. The drag sheet also has the carrying handles attached so tape loops were tied to the frame, changing the centre of balance, making it less stable to carry, resulting in it being carried upside-down, or mostly on its side. The frame is quite comfortable when you are positioned in the right place: from Sump 1 to Barnes Loop I was tied so my head was in the cage at the top; from there to the Forty with my feet on the foot rest, which turned out to be much more comfortable.

The Mountain Rescue Council gave the M.R.O. a 9mm Neoprene Exposure Bag to try out, and Swildons Hole was the best place to try it. The bag is like a cocoon with a waterproof $\frac{3}{4}$ length zip stopping at the shoulders, with hood attached, and proved to be very warm even when totally immersed in water, and very buoyant. Although its design might be very good on a mountain rescue, I feel it could do with a few modifications for cave use.

The Hood:

Putting the head into the hood is done by pushing the head through the narrow neck, as with any diving hood. With an unconscious person, or head injury, this would be very difficult, but if modified so that the neck area was open and then sealed with a flap onto "Velcro" when the patient's head was in position, the hood would be much easier to use.

Sleeves:

The other more important modification for cave use would be sealed sleeves so a conscious patient could help in difficult areas like squeezes and also be able to fend off walls and other items from smashing into the face.

The practice was well worth the time and effort, as you will only learn by your experience, and below are a few things I have learnt:-

- 1 When strapping the patient into the stretcher make sure that the straps don't go across the knees, which causes great discomfort when the stretcher is stood on end.
- 2 When carrying the stretcher, never have anything attached to your belt or hung from the shoulder, as it often swings around, striking the patient.
- 3 Always look where you put your feet when above the stretcher: it's not a foothold!
- 4 Ensure the patient's head is not underwater or under drips when stopped.
- 5 In squeezes and when the stretcher is pulled up climbs, make sure the face is not dragged against the rock.

To end this article, I would like to thank all those who took part in trying to keep me in one piece; to the

many people who thought that rubbing my face on the rock would improve my looks; special thanks to two people who thought that the Sales Officer should get a worms'-eye view of the Wessex Wonder Boot - only £10 - while using his face as a foothold, and to Jim R. for giving me a black eye with an ammo, box!

Pete Hann.

Some Carrier's Observations

The practice was followed by a lot of somewhat heated debate on our collective performance, with various people saying how chaotic it all was etc, etc. Well, perhaps it was, but as Pete has pointed out, one learns by one's experience:-

An eye shield would make things little more pleasant for the patient, and here I would make a point regarding batteries. Not only is there a risk of clouting the patient with the battery case when stepping or crawling above the stretcher, but leaking electrolyte is the last thing the patient wants dripping on him. I believe there has been a case of a patient receiving electrolyte burns in this way.

Pete Lacey touches on the problem of people bunching around the stretcher when they should have been working forward. Additionally, it was not always clear who ought to have been doing what where. Apart from slowing things down, an air of apparent confusion among the carriers cannot be very reassuring for the patient. When an awkward manoeuvre is about to be performed, would it also be an idea to inform the patient exactly what's happening next? (These points would be of greater importance on a "real rescue.)

On equipment: Would it be practicable to supply the Kirby-Morgan apparatus with additional hoses equipped with suitable couplings, to facilitate base-fed air arrangements? Perhaps Pete Hann's suggestions regarding the Exposure Bag design could be taken up: some experimenting may be necessary? (On an actual rescue, giving the casualty freedom to use his arms and hands must be a bonus.) How about the stretcher? There was some discussion on designing a cave rescue stretcher, perhaps the Club engineers could look into this?

Finally, confusion may have reigned supreme at times, but as one or two people pointed out, if it had all gone perfectly - we wouldn't have learned much!

Nigel Graham.

To end on a lighter note, some Quotes...

As the stretcher was wiggled round some constriction :-

"That was easier than Hannticipated..."

Julie Bolt.

On learning which clubs the respective patients belong to:-

"I suppose it wouldn't be very wise to have a BEC victim for a Wessex rescue practice"

John Cooper (CDG / Chelsea).

"It's monumental chaos down there - but it's all good fun isn't it?" Brian Prewer.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

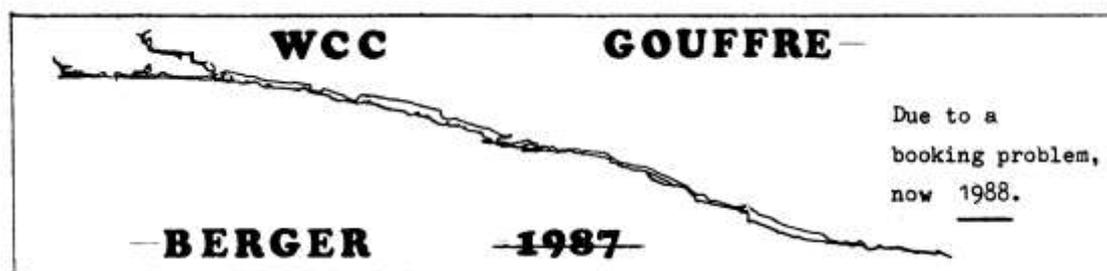
The Cave Diving Group and the Wessex Cave Club are grateful to the Main family for their assistance and co-operation in the organising of this Rescue Practice.

THOSE P.D.O.S

As members have asked the Editor what these controversial "Potentially - Damaging Operations"* affecting the Priddy area are, a summary is given here.

It should be remembered that these are for the "Priddy Pools & Priddy Caves", the former being surface SSSI (biological), the problems stemming from the NCC applying the entire list to the entire area. The list is condensed: it goes into some detail. Thanks are due to the proprietors of the 'Mendip Heights' shop for the loan of their copy, which was on display in the shop.

Standard Ref. No.	Type of Operation
1 to 4	Cultivation, stock grazing & feeding, mowing.
5 to 7	Dumping or applying any materials on the land, including natural or artificial fertilisers, etc.
8	Burning.
9, 10	Releasing into, removing or killing any wild animal, including pest control; releasing any plant or seed.
11, 12	Any woodland management work (or cessation thereof).
13a, 13b, 14, 15	Altering any drainage (including moorland gripping) modifying watercourses, altering water tables and levels, including irrigation, abstraction, storage, boreholes).
13c	Managing aquatic & bank vegetation for drainage reasons.
16	Freshwater fisheries, including sporting angling.
20	Mineral extraction, including topsoil, subsoil, spoil.
21 to 23	Building and earthworks (temporary or permanent); storing materials; pipelines, drilling, engineering works.
24	Modifying natural or man-made features (including cave entrances), clearing boulders, loose rock or scree, battering, etc. of cuttings, filling in pits.
26	Using vehicles or craft likely to damage or disturb features of interest.
27	Recreational or other activities likely to (ditto).
28	Game & waterfowl management and hunting practices



EXTRACTS FROM THE N.H.A.S.A. LOGBOOK

MANOR FARM SWALLET

EDITED BY BRIAN PREWER

Part III CONCLUDED

13th December 1972

Pete and Ian alone again. Small hole open for 4ft in front of digging face. Cleared out hole for stream to flow across dig. P.S.

26th December (Boxing Day)

23 buckets of mud and stones removed from dig. Slight water flow over the top of the dig. N.T., P.P., Tim Large. P.P.

3rd January - 1st February 1973

Steady progress down and forward with the stream, with two bangs needed: "And the whole world did fall asunder". P.P., B.E.P., N.T., F.J.D., Alb, "Funny, these names sound familiar"

3rd February

Inspected damage done on Thursday (1st). A hole 6ft by 3ft and 2ft deep had been punched out of choke and a large amount of rock and sludge removed. Tony Boycott (U.B.S.S.), Bill Cooper, N.T.

N.T.

7th February - 6th June inclusive.

Nine sessions of steady progress through mud, boulders and bovine excreta. On one session, "Reckless use of bucket plus industrial injury reduced quantities of mud removed". BEP, PP, NT, Alb, Ed?, J.M., Dave ?, John Ham, J.M.'s son, Algol, Barabobath, Rex E., Son of Devenish, Gwyn Thomas, John Hunt, D. Taylor.

13th June

Solo digging! 11lb of "Forcite" (Canadian 85% blasting agent) applied in pipe at face of dig. N.T.

20th June

Removed bang remains and some large rocks. Still finding pieces of salt-glazed pipe. J.M., Alb, J.H., N.T.J.M.

25th July

Good evening.'s digging. Nigel's bang very successful. Martin Bishop played at Atlas, holding up the roof with his back. Much spoil removed: looks promising for next week. Alb, B.E.P., Martin B. M.B.

28th July

More bang applied. Anon

15th August

Nine diggers - nearly through!! Stream only feet away! Only one more bang and we're through. J.M.

22nd August

Three pounds of plaster. J.M., Alb. J.M.

29th August

Removed more rock and mud. Hit streamway! J.M., J.H., M.B., B.E.P., Alb. JM

5th September. 1973. BREAKTHROUGH

Digging continued at end of mud-filled passage. Hole opened and cleared. Entered approx. 500 feet of cave passage, well decorated with a particularly fine curtain. A 20ft pitch was reached and free-climbed. Several small waterfalls lead to a sump pool.

Alb, B.E.P., M.B., J.M., P.P. B.E.P.

9th September.

Gardening in new chamber - many loose boulders removed. Taped curtain in "CURTAIN CHAMBER" (originally named "Wednesday Chamber", but this was quickly dropped in favour of Curtain Chamber).

A Alb, B.E.P., J.M., P.P. B.E.P.

12 / 13th September 1973

Party down to sump pool, subsequently named "ALBERT'S EYE". Hammer and chisel used to remove stal floor. M.B. squeezed through, followed by Albert and the rest of the party including Mr. Jefferie's (the farmer) son. Large rift entered, over 30ft high.

Stream passage followed for many feet to climbable 15ft pitch. Large passage with 40ft aven enters on right. Small stream (drought conditions) enters at aven. Left turn into large stream passage descending at 30°. A chamber with large boulders was entered. One of these boulders trapped John Ham' foot for half-an-hour after sliding against the wall. (JOHN HAM'S CORNER). Rift continues with stream and many sections of false floor, then narrows and ends in a boulder choke.

A high-level route with some decorations leads to a large bedding-plane passage, NHASA GALLERY, 30ft wide, 15ft high, and still descending at 30°. Much mud on boulders on floor. Stream re-enters. More high-level passages found, all phreatic with mud. A 20ft pitch was descended with no way on. Stream could be followed in boulders. Much more exploration to be done.

Length of cave so far: c2000 feet, depth roughly 400 feet.

Those present on the trips of 12 and 13th:-

P.P., Alb, B.E.P., N.T. (late), J.H., Pete Rose, Nick Chipchase, and three of the Jefferies family.

Also explored on the 13th was a 400ft ascending stream passage at the top of the round trip in Curtain Chamber. End is a chamber with a couple of maypoleable avens. M.B., Chris Batstone. B.E.P.

17th September

Pete and Brian took executives Mike and Jim on a "look and see" of the new cave system. Pottered to final mud halls and returned, having a look at aven inlet upstream of T-junction. Jim made a tentative compass-line survey with estimated lengths. We reckon the system is c.2000ft long and c.450ft deep. It appears developed along the fault shown on the Geological Survey 1:63360 map, hence it passes under Velvet 'Bum' towards the wood SW of Warren Farm. Jim has drawn a tentative sketch plan. J.D.H.

19th September Afternoon Shift

An impressive piece of digging. Took right turn at T-junction and went upstream - found aven. 5 pitons, about 7 Clogs, 2 ropes and 2½ hours later, one man reached the top. An impressive fall by "Black Death" when piton placed by B. Woodward came out.

Beautiful grottoes above the cascade, right side of aven as you face it, but no further progress possible. Abseiled off leaving rope as Fred due out for dinner at 7.30p.m.

Left side, where water emerges, not yet reached. Traverse will probably need more aids.

Quick downstream run but we did not find NHASA Gallery. Tis a weary uphill drag on way out. "Black Death" (A.M.), Brian Woodward, F.J.D. F.J.D.

Evening Shift

Large unruly mob descended carrying large quantity of hardware (maypole). Maypoled into cascade - much activity - reached Hunters' on time. Alb, N.T., P.P., B.E.P., N.C., P.R., Ted Popham, G. Price, farmer's son, Bara, Algol, Prof. Tratman, plus UBSS. Barab

26th September

Removed wooden railway track. F.J.D., B.E.P., J.H.

B.E.P.

3rd October

Small chamber with a large number of straws, up on right in streamway before Ham Chamber. Albert moved some boulders on way. Remains of wooden railway removed. More water in cave this time. B.E.P., Alb, F.J.D., J.D.H., NT.

24th October

Party down to Aven Inlet. Prusiked up rope left by FJD. We went to the end of inlet series - about 150ft of passage. The way on is visible but would require bang. There is probably little point in pushing this passage. It is suggested that when the survey is completed the rope is removed.

P.R., Gwyn and Christine Thomas, Alb, B.E.P., M.B., C.B., G.V., D.Gill.

Note 1: The stream flow has increased over the last week and the streamway is somewhat more interesting.

Note 2: The sump pool below Curtain Chamber (Albert's Eye) has shown signs of backing up. It could, in wet weather, sump completely. B.E.P.

27th October

Banged high-level inlet before NHASA Gallery. Ken James, N.T.

N.T.

31st October

Conducted tour of various swallets on Mr. Jefferies' land: not very promising. Survey continues.

B.E.P.

4th November

Inspected inlet passage - a small amount of debris removed - will wait until we can get some tamping bags laid on. Entered large and fine inlet below Velvet Bottom Junction on right. This could well be pushed. Placed five shots in boulder ruckle at bottom dig. Phil Hendy, N.T.

N.T.

9th December

Boulders removed from left-hand choke at far end of cave. Upward direction of passage: seems promising. N. Chipchase, P. Rose.

N.T.

12th December

Continued digging at choke but stopped by boulder wedged in passage, which supports choke. Could not remove this with crowbar. N.C., P.R.

P.R.

Removed all tools and maypoles. Apart from the 12ft rift ladder and the entrance ladder the cave is now clear of bits and pieces. The rift ladder and entrance ladder will be removed on completion of the survey. Alb, John Hunt, B.E.P., G.V., D.Gill.

B.E.P.

2nd January 1974

Poked around at bottom left and right branches. Feasible for Wednesday evening dig, say 20-30 minutes each way. Roy Bennet, Colin Clark, Martin Webster, Dave Turner.

9th January

Got through boulders at bottom of left-hand passage, first passed by Chipchase on Saturday. R.B., C.C., M.W., D.T., N.C., Phil Kingston.

16th January

Pulled down boulders - very exciting - banged to break them up. Did hammer and chisel work on right-hand rift. R.B., C.C., M.W., D.T.

23rd January

End digs. LH rift - boulders pulled down. RH rift banged. R.B., M.W., D.T., C.C., P.K., John Riley, B. & J. Woodward.

24th March

Removed debris from Wednesday LH dig bang and cautiously banged again. Much small stuff came down but missed bang wire. Repaired dry stone wall round stile on approach path. R.B., P.K., C.C., D.T., Pete Eckford.

R.B.

3rd April

Boulders forced in aven. Boulders counter-attacked. Banged again. All rather dodgy. Some tapes removed and replaced. Tony Boycott, P.K., C.C., R.B. R.B.

10th April

Original digging team returned to tidy up. Curtain Chamber has been retaped and a route defined up to the upstream passage off Curtain Chamber. Some of the retaining walls below 12ft rift need repair.

Alb, B.E.P., John Miell and Dave.

B.E.P.

17th April

Forced boulders to a sizeable rift along a fault line. Nothing obvious leading off. R.B., P.K., C.C.

R.B

General rebuilding of collapsed walls in passage above Curtain Chamber. Removed metal stakes from top of 10ft drop in Curtain Chamber. Knocked off a few loose boulders and slates. B.E.P., Alb, J.M., Dave-?

Dave

18th April

Returned to rift and climbed to pretty grotto at South end. Nothing open leading off. Main rift about 80ft long by 50ft high. R.B., P.K., C.C., J. Manchip.

R.B.

8th May.

Climbed up near middle of rift and loose jammed boulders (sic). Left peg to return. R.B., P.K., D.T.

D.T.

15th May

Re-ascended rift and continued to roof. Did not traverse out to small hole because boulders hanging from roof looked rather unstable. R.B., C.C., P.K.

RB

22nd May 1974

Photographs taken by Phil. R.B. and C.C. tried to establish audible connection between S. end of rift (hole in floor) and original dig below: none established. R.B., C.C., P.K.

R.B

(Sketch plan, traced from Log, overleaf)

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

After the discovery and exploration of Manor Farm Swallet, NHASA turned its attention to the Windsor Hill area, near Shepton Mallet, quenching their 'apres-dig' thirst at the Downside Inn. The Logbook remained at the Hunters' and regrettably became forgotten. After seven years at Windsor Hill, NHASA returned to the Priddy area, digging at Twin Ts - what of the Logbook - perhaps that should go back to the Hunters' again: after all, it has been calculated that it will take NHASA 10 000 years to remove all the mud from Twin Ts.

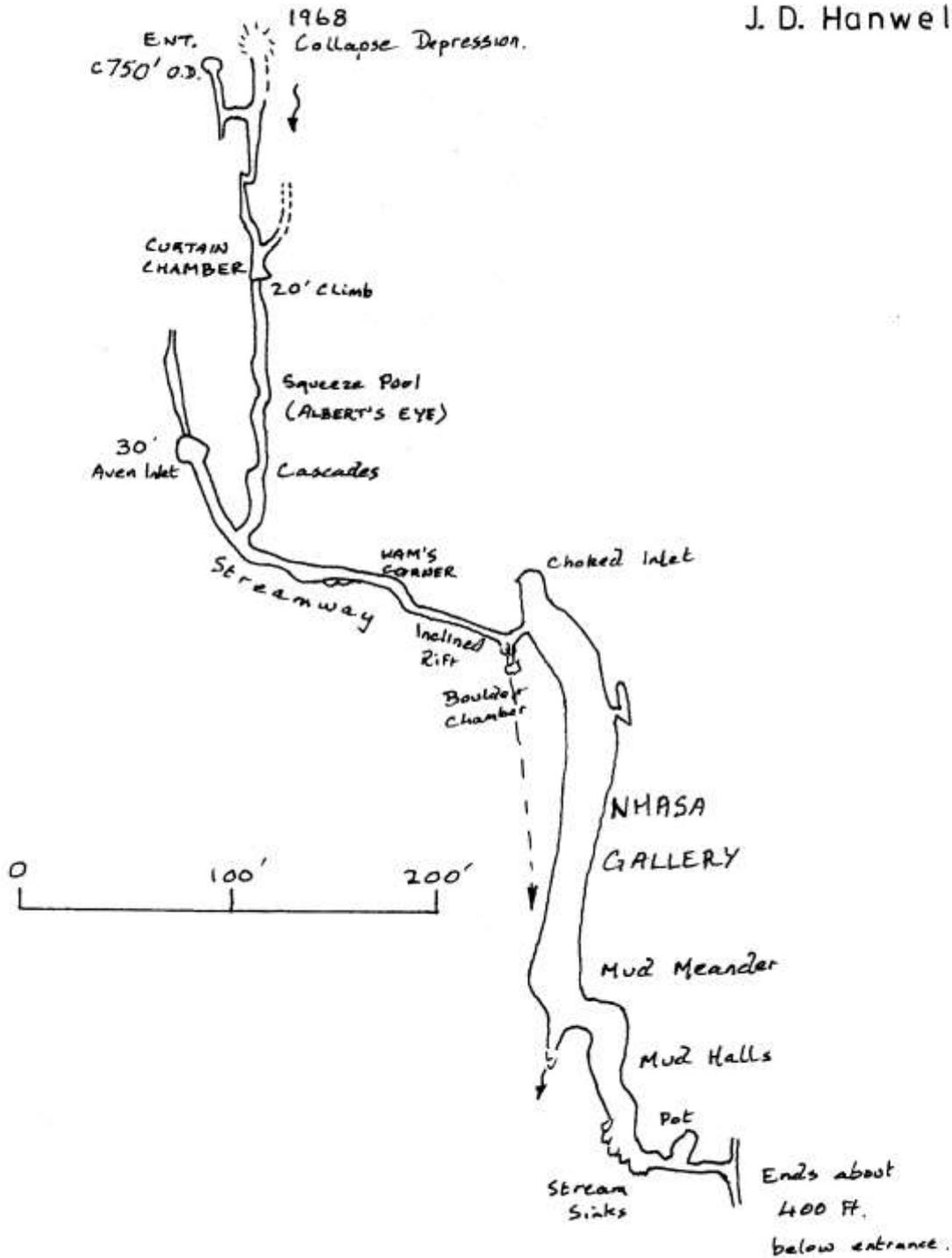
Finally, I must acknowledge all the diggers who have taken the trouble to record their exploits in the NHASA Logbook, and to Jim Hanwell for his Logbook preamble.

B. PREWER

MANOR FARM SWALLET

Sketch plan drawn by

J. D. Hanwell



VISITS TO THE DORDOGNE, 1985

PAUL WESTON

Early in 1985 I had an idea to combine a trip to the 24 Hour Motorcycle Endurance Race at Le Mans with a visit to Roffignac and Lascaux II in the Dordogne, thence to Peche Merle along the River Lot. This is an account of the trip and the impressions Val and I had of Cave Art, early in May 1985.

An inauspicious start occurred just a mile or so off the ferry at Le Havre, when the Ducati's gearbox sprocket came off its shaft at some traffic lights. As the machine had just had a full professional (i.e. paid-for!) rebuild, the engineering firm responsible was not too popular at the time... However, after some twenty minutes' work with a hammer we were on our way again.

The Le Mans Endurance Race is a real spectacle, with all the works teams competing. The race is a continuous twenty-four event, the bars on the circuit stay open all night, and the French Army supplies huge quantities of wood for pyrotechnic campers. We camped at the circuit for two nights, then, very tired, set off for the Dordogne.

Our first expedition was to Rocamadour and the Padirac. Despite the crass commercialism of its touristy shops, Rocamadour is in a truly beautiful position on the side of a vast cliff. I thought the view overlooking the village idyllic. The weather by this time was roasting hot.

At the PADIRAC, advertised as "The Premier Show Cave of France", the vast entrance shaft seemed like a miniature Gaping Gill. With two separate lift rides to the bottom, it is pretty deep. Along a bit, a collection of sturdy red-faced boatmen, complete with paddles and lifejackets, await the happy tourists. Judging by the number of pipes that snake along the canal, the water level is maintained artificially, though according to Jeff Price, the canal is natural. On the return trip a battery of flashlights plus cameramen on a raised platform snaps every passing group in order to extract just a few more Francs "for the Padirac". However, once off the boat the usual vastness of French show caves presents itself, and it all seemed well worth while. There really is nothing to compare with walking through huge chambers of stal., gour pools, and the sort of formations we all hope to find.

On that day we had also hoped to have a look at the Gouffre du Re'vellon. From the photos and description in "Grottes et Canyons" this seemed well within our limits, but we had forgotten the torch and carbide lamp. Mrs. Weston didn't seem too disappointed, though!

Bums and thighs were by now becoming sore and tired so the American air-seat was fitted, result, immediate relief. Actually it could be used underground in an emergency, as a flotation device.

The following day we visited ROFFIGNAG, where the authenticity of the cave-art continues to remain in question. When we arrived, the cave was well locked and the sign outside unclear to Brits. A good look in nearby litter bins suggested it had been visited earlier, so we waited. An American couple arrived, then a coachload of French children, then some French tourists and finally the guides. A visit to Roffignac is really just a train ride through wide, flat passages. It was "discovered" in the mid 1950's, and there are large numbers of black outline drawings and engravings on the walls and roof. The animals depicted are rhinoceros, ibex, horse, bison and mammoth. None of the paintings appear to be under stal., and knowledge of them in the 17th and 18th Centuries is considered by some authorities still to be circumstantial.

It is worth reading up all of this before a visit since few of us can follow comments of a French cave guide satisfactorily. We considered our visit well worth while at 16F each although inevitably 99% of the cave is beyond on a tourist trip. The area is very beautiful with wooded valleys, windy roads and rocky cliffs. Traffic in early May, when we were there, is light, and the proprietor of "Les Cheyne Verts" (The Evergreen Oaks) near medieval Sarlat allowed us to stay at his camp site free of charge as it wasn't really

open. Much to his delight, we gave him a bottle of wine when we left.

Later in the day we got in on the last group of visitors to FONT DE GAUME, near Les Eyzies. I was the only visitor to bang his head going in, thereby depositing a piece of the Wessex! The entrance is reached by climbing up a rocky path along the side of a hill leading into the Saint Cyprien valley. Numbers of visitors are limited but there did not seem to be a rush of people waiting to get in. Font de Gaume is a small, narrow cave which is not particularly well lit, but it is well worth a visit because of its location, art and importance in its field. It was discovered in 1901, and a full detailed publication appeared in 1910. This publication is considered one of the landmarks in the study of cave art. The paintings and engravings in Font de Gaume depict bison, mammoth, horse, rhinoceros and reindeer. Colours are brown, black and red, some paintings and engravings overlap and overlie each other.

That night Val and I had a good "blow-out" in Sarlat that filled us almost to overflowing. On our last day before setting out again across France, Val and I packed up quickly in mist and rain and set off for Lascaux II, not knowing if it was open. Some dismiss a visit there because it is not the real thing. The cave is situated near Montignac, a small, pretty town which had bad roads for motorcyclists, i.e., deeply potted and with lots of gravel.

A visit to LASCAUX II is treated by the authorities as serious affair. The guides exude a sort of elitism, being young and smart, and there is a brief lecture while going through a modern museum. Once "underground", the visual and spiritual effect is mind blowing.

The paintings are substantial, carefully arranged, and stretch along a main hall and gallery. They are on both walls and on the ceiling. Large horses, bulls and cows abound. Two bulls measure 14 feet and 18 feet long respectively. There are also deer, bear and bison, as well as the strange "unicorn". Lascaux was discovered in 1940, but due to deterioration was closed in the early 1960's. Its modern re-creation took about twelve years to plan and build. I place it alongside putting man on the Moon - a modern miracle of creation and technology. Very well worth a visit.

Unfortunately we did not manage to visit the GROTTA PECH-MERLE until later in the year. This is another very beautiful cave, with two large dappled horses, in the lovely River Lot area. While there Val obtained a leaflet which details many French show caves, and I'm hoping the Editor will be able to reproduce this in the Journal.

EDITOR'S footnotes:

The leaflet referred to, "BELLES GROTTES DE FRANCE" could not in fact be included in the Journal. Apart from the question of copyright, and of whether or not its inclusion would infringe the Club's policy of excluding commercial advertisements from the Journal, the author actually submitted two rather faint photocopies of the leaflet. These will, however, be offered to the Club Library: published by "The National Association of Managers of Caves Equipped for Tourists" - it says - the "Belles Grottes" is a brief directory of show caves, giving location, opening times, etc.

Paul states the problem of not fully understanding French guides' comments: some French show cave proprietors do issue "foreign"-language leaflets about their caves (though I once told a guide at Choranche, in halting failed-O-Level French, that as cavers, all our party understood the cave!).

JOINT MEMBERSHIP: A Committee Report.

Phil Hendy and Jim Moon
(on behalf of the Committee)

The question of rights, particularly voting rights, of Joint Members of the Club was raised at the 1985 Annual General Meeting, at which time the Meeting was split equally in its views, and the Chair ruled that the status quo should prevail for the time being. The Committee was asked to prepare a report for further consideration before and during the 1986 AGM: this is it.

Richard Kenney summarised the historical situation very well in a letter to the Chairman :-

"...The Club Rules, over the whole lifetime of the Club, show that Joint Members have only one vote. The problem occurs when both Joint Members seek election to the Committee. The result, as defined by the Rules, is that only one person may vote, and only one person counts towards a quorum. It follows logically, but is not defined, that the other member is nullifying therefore a Committee vacancy.

There is a lack of awareness, amongst some members of the Club, of the principle of Joint Membership, and it will do no harm to summarise the situation as it developed over the years.

When the Club was formed there were few women who were interested in the practical aspects of caving. However, because the average caver age was higher due to availability of transport, higher adult than junior pay levels, etc., there were more married members whose wives wished to socialise as far as possible. To assume that this meant 'tea-making' was as offensive in 1938 as it would be in 1985.

It was recognised that wives would not be a financial burden on the Club, hence Joint Membership was offered at a reduced rate but with only one Journal and only one vote. Honour and the practicalities of life were thus satisfied ..."

The present Club Rules may be seen by some to be ambiguous:

5 ...(Committee) posts are honorary and must be filled by Full Members of the Club.

8. ...Married couples may become Joint Members and shall enjoy all the amenities of the Club, except that they shall receive one copy of each Journal issued, and one vote only.

It has been argued that the vote referred to in Rule 8 should apply to the AGM only, and that if Joint Members (ie, paying a joint subscription) both sit on the Committee, they should each have a vote. The financial aspect is summarised as follows: At 1985/6 subscription levels, the difference between one joint and two single memberships is £9.50, but the saving in Journal costs is around £7, so the club would 'lose' £2.30 in income. This, it can be argued, would be more than compensated for by the presence of a willing joint couple on the Committee. The argument continues that to be effective, each Committee Member must have a vote.

A survey of other clubs (caving, car, student union, climbing, hang gliding, photographic) revealed the following:-

1. Each club's members, through the AGM, decide whether or not to offer joint membership. Such membership is overwhelmingly available to married couples.

2. Fees for joint membership seem to depend on the resources provided by the club. Low (IE half or less than half of the full individual membership subs) subs are the rule in 'administrative' clubs (EG. hang-gliding), in which the individual members provide all their equipment and resources. High (ie more than

half the individual sub) joint subs are evident in clubs providing other facilities - huts, accommodation, equipment and tackle, eg. caving clubs, student unions.

3 Status. Among the clubs contacted, joint membership generally seems offered for the social advantage of married couples, allowing the 'less active' partner to join the 'active' member from time to time in pursuing the aims of the club, rather than seeming to offer a subscription discount for 'bulk membership'.

4. Politics. Most (but not all) of the clubs contacted permit each joint member an individual vote at general meetings. Most clubs have not really addressed the question of joint member voting status on executive committees. Of those few which have legislated on this point, one club allows joint members serving on the committee to exercise individual votes; three clubs allow individual votes in general meetings, but insist on committee members (elected or co-opted) having paid their full individual membership subscriptions.

In summary, there seems to be no clear commonality of analysis of joint member status for the Wessex to consider. Each club approached has made its joint membership decisions via open discussion and a vote at a general meeting. The following questions seem to have been debated:-

- a. Is it desirable to offer joint subscriptions at a reduced subscription to married couples?
- b. Is such joint membership offered for the social advantage of (usually) non-participating spouses, or is it offered as a discount subscription for two new members who happen to be married?
- c. Is it acceptable to the Club, that joint members, having paid at a reduced rate, should then exercise to the full all the rights and privileges of individual members, who have paid their full subscriptions?
- d. All the individuals contacted (informally) thought that joint members usually had joint opinions, and asked whether it is desirable to offer 'two votes for the price of one' in executive committees other than general meetings.

The Committee will be tabling motions for discussion at the forthcoming AGM in order to stimulate discussion on the subject of joint membership, but this does not preclude any other member submitting his or her motion. Clearly, there is more female participation in caving than there was 50 years ago, and it is not unknown for the female half of a married couple to be the more active caver. It is hoped that this question can be settled, at least for the foreseeable future, either by a rule change or by a ruling at the AGM.

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OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED (Nigel Graham).

(Note: The Journal is completely independent of this discussion; any opinions I express here are my own as an individual member, not as Editor or as a Committee member.)

The Committee will submit a motion at the AGM for debate, based on its own discussion of the various points above, including the retention or otherwise of joint membership (with clarification of the voting rules), the retention of joint membership for social purposes only (regarded as hard to police), and the retention of joint membership with the proviso that joint members joining the same Committee revert to full individual membership for the time they are both serving on the Committee (possibly with a Journal discount if the couple still receive the one copy of each Journal).

It may be relevant to remember why this matter came up. A Joint Member couple joined the 1984/5 Committee, each partner carrying out totally different work from the other (Subs. admin, and Hut Admin.). Since many of the Committee decisions are arrived at by consensus, the voting problem was not

immediately apparent. (They also voted against each other on occasions - amicably I might add!). Early in the Club Year, the Committee suddenly discovered that it might be infringing the voting rule, and study and discussion on the rule failed to clarify the point, so advice of several long-standing members with a great deal of Committee experience was sought. Their view, expressed by Richard Kenney's letter to the 1985 AGM, was that the Committee had indeed bent the rules, albeit unwittingly, so the matter was put to the AGM for discussion, as described above.

In the meantime, three Committee members (Julie Bolt, Nigel Graham and Pete Hann) drafted a proposal, voted out at the AGM, designed to answer the problem. Pete was the proposer, N.G. preparing the wording which was revised to its final form by J.B. The proposal was that all Committee members, full or joint, have one Committee meeting vote, but that the existing rule will stand at general meetings (the latter point is important: it rules against joint Committee members having an unfair advantage over their joint non-Committee fellow members at general meetings, especially in any contentious matters when the voting could be nearly 50/50). At the AGM, the proposers stressed that the purpose of the proposal was simply to facilitate Committee business, by providing an "extra" vote.

None of us, in preparing the proposal, could have foreseen the problems which arose!

JOINT MEMBERSHIP: (A Letter to the Editor)

Further to the debate on Joint Membership, we suggest the following modification to the Rules.

"A married couple may on application to an AGM, be granted a special subscription of twice the yearly single member's rate, less one year's Journal cost, and that this special subscription should continue to allow both partners full voting and membership rights and be reversible upon request.

This would:

- i in no way undermine the financial position of the Club,
- ii provide a welcome cash relief to married members and thus help to ensure a more stable Club membership,
- iii remove any outdated voting anomalies within the present system,
- iv allow all members to serve or retire from the Club Committee with far less complications than at present.

Glyn & Julie Bolt.

AGM
&
ANNUAL
DINNER

STAR HOTEL, WELLS

7.30 for 8

18
OCTOBER
1986

MENU

Chef's Home-Made Soup of the Day

Smoked Kipper Pate

Breast of Turkey cooked in Mushroom & Brandy Sauce, served with selection of vegetables in season.

Pavlova OR Cheese & Biscuits.

Coffee & Mints

CAVING IN THE 1940'S

Richard Kenney
Part 3
(Concluded)

ROADS AND BIKES

The road pattern on Mendip owes its origin to the Enclosure Acts that eliminated the Mendip 'Waste', or common, by the turn of the 18/19th Centuries. There are notable exceptions of course, the most interesting being the indefinably old road from Priddy towards the Miners' Arms, named Nine Barrows Lane.

Some of these roads, e.g Green Ore to Cheddar or Miners' Arms to Burrington, were already carrying reasonable traffic by the '30s and looked then much as they do now. Others however, such as that between Rookham and Harptree Hill, less the Miners' Arms/Castle of Comfort portion, were nearly as the Enclosure Commissioners had left them.

The metalled roads were barely wide enough for two vehicles to pass, and were probably less than a third of the width between the boundary walls. This style kept road maintenance costs to a minimum, but allowed traffic to deviate round impassably muddy spots. This was an old custom, and its results can still be seen in the multiplicity of tracks that accompany modern roads across the chalk downs. The Commissioners were cautiously following older practices. Also of course, sheep or cattle droving was made easier.

Coming over the brow at Rookham the view was Mendip in all its glory: the narrow road seemed to stretch towards infinity and gave a great depth to the landscape.

Cycling was easier then, for I am sure that the British Standard surface dressing has changed over the years. Then, it was fine river gravel with a sand and tar binder, but now it is the inevitable product from a limestone quarry, also of a larger size to bear modern weights. Its effect is most marked on power loss, and tyre wear is significantly greater.

Only certain stretches of the A-roads were comparable to today's standards of levelling. Even from Hillgrove to Priddy it was an uncomfortable ride in an Austin 7 at speeds above 40, and Howard used to complain and slow down on his unsprung motorbike. Super-elevation was unknown. This meant that all corners on supposedly high-speed A roads were flat, or at best had a little half-road width camber. This didn't affect us, but the surveyors' markings after the War, just prior to its introduction, now make me conscious of this road factor and of how complex it becomes on a roundabout that carries medium-speed traffic. White paint was rare and cats'-eyes were unknown, but on the main roads there green or red studs let into the kerbstones on the corners.

The road gangs kept everything neat and tidy. Each gang of about half-a-dozen men, would cut the hedges, trim the grass verges, remove weeds from the pavement or gutters, and sweep up before moving on. Today's horrible plastic litter, so noticeable to my generation, had no 40s equivalent. The proportion of broken walls was much lower, and a ride up the main Bristol road from Wells gave the impression that the turnpike builders had only recently moved on. Each road had its telephone poles with many wires, but there few overhead power circuits spoiling the view. The GPO wires, prior to the use of conduits, meant that badly-filled trenches on the roads were a rarity. There were no signposts. The advance route indicators on every main road today were not in use then, and all the fingerpost signs had been removed in 1940. Were they all eventually put back in the right places? Is there a misplaced "Charterhouse 5" that strikes unwarranted despair into today's cyclists?

Cave location: The M.N.R.C. Library in Wells Museum had a set of Mendip 1903 six-inch maps that were annotated by pre-war cavers. We learnt our way from these and from the one-inch maps that were

still available at 2/- each. Each one, acquired for the first time, opened the mind to an unbelievable wealth of ideas, and cycling became a relentless pursuit of new and ever more intriguing routes.

Eastern Mendip was a closed book in our early years and my comments cover Western Mendip only.

Traffic engineers detest 'Y'-junctions and bend one road to form a 'T'. This happened with the Harptree road at Castle of Comfort and with the Priddy road at Townsend Pool. At the latter one could go straight across from Priddy Hill Farm, and the pool itself was on a traffic island. At least two localities have been levelled where the road passed over minor depressions. These were near Townsend Pool going towards Priddy Hill Farm, and near Castle of Comfort approaching from Lamb Leer. In both cases there was a sudden short dip of say three or four feet.

In preparation for D-Day some roads were closed and used as parks for British Army 3-tonners. The activity centred on Yoxter Camp and the roads definitely closed were Cheddar head junction to the Castle of Comfort/Nordrach road, and Nordrach/Castle of Comfort. Yoxter crossroads was open to farm traffic but not to the general public. One could shoot down the hill with ease and pass the irate guard, but it wasn't worth trying it in the opposite direction. This MT moved after D-Day, but once a locality became a defence area there was no reverse legislation to restore the status quo quickly. Neither could the regulations permit the general public to penetrate a defence area, which was the case at the crossroads. It was mad, because we could go to Yoxter Camp as Army Cadets, over grease each axle, crash the gears, kangaroo each lorry five yards down the road, and move on to "maintain" the next one.

Of the three routes from Wells, only the main Bristol road could be cycled in its entirety, but not with a load of caving gear. Rookham was tackled by Balch as a lad, using the zigzag technique, but he could never reach the top. This was the preferred route, by virtue of the spring and associated tap opposite the now-renovated gamekeeper's cottage. Mendip is far from being the flat plateau that injudicious contours can portray. The last hill from Hunters' up to Rookham is a sod, when tired, equally detestable is the climb from Yoxter to Priddy Hill Farm, but without a doubt nothing beats Burrington. The top of the Combe is merely the prelude to an agonising climb for a further mile. There is no way that you can 'learn' a landscape from a car. Cycling gives one great appreciation of the countryside, and allows one to cover a reasonable mileage per run.

Howard had a bike that was larger than normal with 28" wheels. It was almost impossible to ride when one was really tired, but the rest of us envied the gears which were unusual on a standard bike. Naturally, the dynamo gave a good output, and the spot bulb gave a better light than that on my BSA Bantam of later years. One could buy a new bike, from old stock, until say 1942, but after that they became very scarce and the second hand market thrived, as did the family 'hand-me-down' system. It's odd, but I am much more afraid of losing my car or its contents on Mendip now than I was of losing a bike in those days. We never locked them up, partly because locks and chains were unavailable.

RIOTING ON MENDIP

Should I write this article? (Should I publish this article? -Ed.) Perhaps because I am thinking back about 40 years I may be covered by some statute of limitations. Vandalism is a difficult subject to categorise, we all deplore it but most of us seem to become involved in it from time to time. Hence I find great difficulty in deciding what reaction should be made by responsible adults.

One could arrive on Mendip either in caving mode or yob mode. The latter was reserved for Saturday evenings and required the gelling of a mob in Wells first. Our usual primary destination, via the bus, was Pen Hill. One of our group had access to the Home Guard stores: "Let's try a smoke bomb!" With a gentle breeze from the West we effectively blocked all traffic on the main road for a few minutes.

Why did they always pick on me? Then as now I enjoyed my pint, but couldn't afford a second one. Howard, in a too-loud voice, was saying, "Let's get him drunk". "Fine", I thought, provided they bought

the booze: I will drink all that is put in front of me.

The current theories on obtaining Nirvana detailed two approaches. The primary one was mixing the drinks. Start with a pint of George's Home Brewed (Bristol), add shorts of varying texture as the quantity of liquid diminishes. A bit of blackcurrant will keep the colour going for quite a while. I can never remember if I finished that pint... The second approach was cheaper for the participants but as other people were operating on the first principle I never really appreciated the difference. Just add cigarette ash when my attention was diverted: I am sure that I caught the hint of Turkish every once in a while.

I am proud of the fact that I have slept on the floor under the shove-ha'penny board, I can also remember Uncle Dors looking down at me as I slid under the bench outside the front door. ("They youths", no doubt... -Ed.)

Never underestimate the powers of the true, or the pseudo-, Welsh. Howard once said the wrong thing, and with one bite his tie was severed a couple of inches below the knot.

Up to Pen Hill again, across the fields to the Hunters' and back down the Rookham Road. This time we just reached Rookham then collapsed onto the verge for at least an hour. Why was Howard always the most sober? He managed to stop a car and pushed me in. I was just about with it to follow events in principle. The car stopped in College Road for a very long time, until signs of activity in the Cathedral School had died down and I was then deposited in the Vicar's Close. I had never before seen so much grass strewn all over my bedroom floor. Howard had gone and on stuffing it down the back of my neck. Comfortable to lie on, I suppose, on the roadside verge.

The last yob trip always has to be the rowdiest, I imagine. Smoke flares had become a bit tame, so how about a thunder flash? We drank our quota and I had reached my usual condition. When's this bomb gonna be used, huh? I didn't have long to wait. I was a few yards down the road, and there was an almighty bang.

It had gone off in the corridor. To this day I have never met anyone who was inside at the time - how many people dropped their pints? It was a few years before I returned from overseas service, thank Goodness. (Landlord, please send the bill direct to the author... -Ed.)

One other odd incident at the Hunters'. Before the porch was fitted, the front door was fitted with a latch, and was usually kept shut. We all have those latches, with their thumb-action levers, on our sheds or on barns we visit on our caving travels. I found myself bleeding but fast and furiously. Generation after generation of drinkers had worn that latch so smooth, just as the stone steps are worn in an ancient building, and I had caught it at the wrong angle.

My debt to Society had been paid.

.....

(This older generation, what were they coming to...? -Ed.)

CONCLUSION

We cannot escape change in any field of human activity, and we would be silly to make the attempt. Before considering the changes in caving over the years, let's just list a few of the incidentals that make our approach to the subject easier than it was in the past. Even if I limit the list to start from the 1940s, it is still impressive.

There was no National Health scheme. One paid into a 'club' that was tied to some insurance company in exchange for certain benefits. Broken glasses were replaced from the same fund. I remember my first use of penicillin and how impressed everyone was with the speed of recovery. Today's cuts and bruises do not seem to have the same significance as they did then, for we are financially protected to a better degree.

Modern transport has probably wrought the greatest change, but don't forget that evening trips were rare because most people worked until 6pm. Long Saturday trips also suffered because morning work was also normal. The holiday season lasted only one week.

What, then, has been the fundamental change in caving since the '40s? An easy question to answer if we split it up a bit.

1. Modern equipment, with its lighter loads, allows us to move faster and save time.
2. Better clothing, both over and under water, allows us to conserve energy.
3. The first benefit is that better "tourist" trips can be organised as evening events.
4. Time and energy savings can, and have, been used to solve cave problems on Mendip that would have been virtually impossible in the past. The change has been gradual and the limits have been stretched from an exhausting day's trip into Swildon's Paradise Lost to an evening's pleasure trip that that route now represents. A full day in Eastwater on the verticals is now merely the prelude to passages that I shall never see. Diving in Wookey Hole for example, has probably shown a greater rate of change than any other aspect of caving, for it is an amalgam of many improvements.
5. The ability to attempt and often to succeed in extreme conditions worldwide. Caving is now allied to the art of expedition procedure. Everything has to be evaluated, financed, acquired, tested, transported and organised on site. It is an extremely serious business, but the highly successful "Charlie" or "fun expedition" to the Gouffre Berger in 1985 showed the method can be used in lighter vein in a way that is enjoyable to all participants.

And what loss has occurred? Well - in those days a Swildons trip became hard work immediately inside the entrance, but now on a "tourist" trip one feels that the effort only begins at some point in Paradise Regained, for example. But this is not really a loss, for we still have our memories. We will never forget the stupid struggles at silly places, nor forget the cursing that we gave to old equipment. We will never forget what it is like to have uncontrollable shivering spells. We will never forget the fear of a ten-foot drop illuminated by a candle, for it is just the same as the fear that is felt today in changed circumstances. Nothing is really any harder or easier, just different, but cavers, as always, come in all shapes and qualities.

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Although this concludes the series "Caving In The 1940s", a sequel has been prepared. Originally intended as part of this series, "Rescues" stands as a separate article both chronologically (it refers to incidents in 1951), and for reasons which will become apparent. "Rescues" examines and explains events in that year, of considerable significance to Mendip caving, but should be set against the background of Richard Kenney's foregoing series.



W.C.C. IN G.B. CAVERN C1949-1952



- | | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Cdr. Lawder. | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 Paul Dolphin. | 6 |
| 7 Don Thomson. | 8 Frank Frost. | 9 |
| 10 Jean Dolphin. | 11 Phyllis Millward. | 12 Leslie Millward. |
| 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 16 P.I.W. Harvey. | 17 George Williams. | |

If anyone can identify any of the other eight people here, please let the Editor know: it would be nice to complete the list.

Photograph by

Letters to the Editor

Bristol

Ss.S.S.I.

Dear Sir,

In the course of an interesting evening at the Hunters', Priddy, on 22/ 5/86, I was acquainted with the broad aspects of the current turmoil surrounding the issue to landowners of a document or letter setting out conditions and qualifications regarding agricultural and other activities which might be deemed by the Nature Conservancy Council to threaten the subterranean Sites of Special Scientific Interest. (1)

Without having seen the NCC letter, I am unable to comment on it. It seems to have irritated the farming community. In particular, according to Mr. Roger Dors of Hunters' Lodge Inn, it may be viewed as unwarranted interference with the legal rights of freeholders. (2)

Now I can well understand Mr. Dors' personal concern, for the following reasons:-

1) The only significant cave system so far known to exist under Mr. Dors' land is Hunters' Hole, a straightforward, moderately important site which appears to be of no more scientific value than hundreds of other minor caves and potholes in the British Isles. There is nothing exceptional about Hunters' Hole and one is frankly puzzled by the decision to list it as an SSSI. (3)

2) Even when considered as a "sporting/leisure" site, Hunters' Hole, whilst not irrelevant, is noted above as no more than moderate importance. Its loss as a caving place, if Mr. Dors were to destroy it in some way, whilst regrettable would not, I think, create a furore throughout the Mendip caving or scientific fraternity. (4)

3) Mr. Dors is in a unique position in respect of Mendip caving information and rapport. He has been what cavers would call an exemplary cave owner: he is not likely to pollute Hunters' Hole by draining or tipping waste into it,

neither will he be inclined to dispose of used motor vehicles or other trash (something which cannot be said of Bristol Waterworks Company, for example, or some other cave owners), in the entrance doline. (5)

Nevertheless, there are dismaying aspects of the Mendip reaction to the NCC strictures. These deserve mention, especially as the major Mendip caving clubs are overtly taking the side of the landowners. The decision of the caving clubs to do so is probably a mistake! (6)

A designated SSSI should be what it purports to be - something of outstanding importance, biologically, geomorphologically, or whatever, (if the NCC has designated sites on the basis of ill-informed non-specialist opinion, then the NCC is either foolish or under-staffed. They'd probably claim the latter, with some justification!) Granted that an SSSI is correctly designated, then the interests of the landowner must be subordinate to the interests of the community notwithstanding personal disadvantage. A correctly designated SSSI represents, often, not merely a preservable curio or asset, but something unknown elsewhere, something irreplaceable! The SSSI is the jewel in the conservational crown, if such analogy be permitted. It is imperative that SSSI designation be accurate in this respect,; and it essential that protection to the SSSI and their contents be provided and where necessary enforced. Any action by the NCC to these ends has to be welcomed, if not by all farmers and owners then at least by those of us who regard the surviving pockets of British wilderness as valuable. I had assumed that cavers were of similar persuasion. (7)

My experience of Mendip landowners suggests to me that they are sympathetic to responsible visitors / trespassers and to that which exists on or under the land. This is not so everywhere. There have been serious transgressions of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981: a large number of SSSI have been damaged or lost; magistrates have declined, for the most part, to convict offenders (mostly farmers or unscrupulous developers such as at Udden's Heath in Dorset). It became quite clear from 1981 to 1984 that loopholes in the Act's provisions required urgently to be closed. This has been done. The matter of enforcement (since most agricultural development is NOT covered by planning legislation) remains. It would be unwise to assume that the problems have been solved. If the NCC is seen as "heavy-handed", well, what would you wish it to be? Would you wish it to present a limp facade in the face, very possibly, of the bulldozers? The fact that this consideration does not apply right at the moment at, say, Eastwater or Swildons, is no future guarantee. There has to be a generally acceptable mechanism for the regulation of development, be it agricultural or anything else. This, I am convinced, is what the NCC seeks. (8)

I can understand the reluctance of responsible landowners to calmly accept an implied criticism of their methods, or an intrusion on their legal rights. Had NCC been more expert in their selection of sites (if NCC is responsible, something which has not been clarified to my satisfaction, for one), some difficulties might have been avoided. If, as seems likely to me, the NCC was guided by caving "expertise" which in the event proved fallible, then it high time they consulted experts whom they can trust. But that is not the whole story, for no doubt, there will always be a tendency to resist that which is intended to preserve the non-profitable! (9)

The decision taken by, or on behalf of, the caving community, albeit a pragmatism well-appreciated by those who live on the Mendip Hills, is dubious in this: that it results directly from the power of a landowner to refuse access to a cave. In general, such power is, on Mendip, never exercised. The landowners and tenant farmers controlling the major sites are amenable to reasonable requests for access - indeed, I have thought for many years that they were more amenable than caving clubs and councils, on balance. Certainly I have had very few problems, even holding the views which I do, except where a caving organisation was involved. I do not say that is because caving interests are involved - there might have been access worries anyway owing, say, to the pressure of numbers of caving parties - but it's how I've found it. I always, where possible, prefer to deal with the owner of the land or cave. It is much simpler and does not lead to aggression. (10)

There are however, instances in which it becomes a moral obligation to understand what is at stake: the short term benefits must not be permitted to outweigh the possibility that natural habitats will be destroyed or so reduced as to be worthless. It is, in part, the duty of NCC and their like to ensure this. It is also our duty as cavers and as farmers. We should all think on that. (11)

Yours etc.,

Bob Lewis (WCC, SVCC)

cc. Dr. W. Stanton
Mr. J. Hanwell
Mr. T. Large

N.C.C. (Cheltenham) (The appropriate NCC office is at Taunton -Ed.)
Mr. D. Turner (B.E.C.)
"Descent" magazine (pub. in N. 71, July/August '86)
Wells Journal. (12)

Editorial reply:- (by paragraph numbers)

3 (1) Hunters' Hole was included as part of the Wookey catchment area.

5 Can Bob Lewis substantiate his accusation against BWW? Is he implying that the other Priddy area (or other) landowners are likely to damage their caves? If I was one of the other Priddy landowners, I would find this paragraph insulting.

6 What does Bob want – a rift between cavers and farmers? This point is totally at odds with his subsequent remarks concerning his dealing with farmers directly. We are not “taking the side” of the owners: we do not regard it as a matter of taking sides (the NCC seem to though), since Mendip caving’s strength has always been its good relations between caver and farmer. If some outside individual or body tries to upset that, then obviously we will do all we can to help each other. The caving community committed an unforeseeable blunder in involving the NCC without considering all the consequences, now it is up to us to do whatever we can to relieve the NCC’s strictures on the farmers.

7 Nobody doubts the real value and purpose of SSSI protection, nor do they question the need for such protection to work. To claim the NCC's information was incorrect is a slur on the people who selected the sites, nationally, for scheduling. The co-ordination of the entire scheme was handled by such people as Dr. Waltham: caving professional geologists like him would not pass on to the NCC work they considered faulty! Apart from the question of personal integrity and competence, who on earth do you think understands caves and karst if cavers don't?

8 The salient points here are not in doubt either. The problems on Mendip arose from the way the NCC went about its designation: to prevent sites being damaged or destroyed, it has found by experience that the best way is to first protect the site by blanket measures then to selectively relieve these restrictions. The trouble is, on Mendip, farmers suddenly found themselves saddled with awe-inspiring lists of "Potentially Damaging Operations" the majority of which have nothing to do with cave protection: NCC had simply applied the whole range of surface habitat PDOs (partly because, it seems to think, of an overlap of cave and biological SSSI: the Mineries). Effectively the farmers suddenly found themselves needing consent to farm, despite the fact that their normal farming did not affect the caves, as a rule.

10 The actions of the CSCC do not "result directly" from the cave closures. The closures introduced an urgency into the situation, but the practical response would have been much the same if Swildons etc were still open. Bob's views on access are very well-known: what, I wonder, would he say if the NCC decided it wanted CSCC to run an Agen Allweld-style management scheme for Swildons, though?

11 Quite so, but we still wish to visit Swildons, etc. -and to eat...

12 Bob Lewis is as free as anyone to hold controversial views and to express them in print: that's partly what this Journal is for. Nevertheless, I feel he should not have put the Club's initials after his name, in other periodicals, since his are not necessarily the views of the Club as a whole. Indeed, what he seems to advocate is completely opposite to the course of action taken by the CSCC, which has the Wessex Cave Club's support. In essence, the CSCC Working Party seeks to introduce to the NCC a new list of PDOs applicable to caves and karst features, which would protect the caves without needing the ludicrous excesses of the present system, whereby a large field can be scheduled merely because a) part of a designated cave passes a couple of hundred feet below one corner, and b) the entire field has to be included to suit the Land Registry! The Working Party is also working with the landowners to try to regain the trust they had in their caving guests: this idea of mutual confidence and goodwill appears alien to the distant inner recesses of NCC, who have been trying to see us as two totally separate, opposing factions.

Finally, a general point, regarding "Letters To The Editor", (or indeed, the Journal as a whole). Although it is primarily a forum for Wessex Cave Club members, non-members may contribute letters or papers on subjects covered in, or otherwise relevant to, the WCC Journal. Letters from the landowners would be particularly welcome.

Severn Aven (Swildons Hole)

Dear Sir,

I refer to the report by Mark Madden in WCC J. Vol. 18 No. 209.

Severn Aven was investigated fully in 1964, contrary to your recent reports. From a position at the top of the ladder it was clear that the main aven closed, as confirmed.

The alcove (sic) on the right-hand side was entered by combined tactics. I distinctly remember having trouble getting back from it.

Yours etc.
Bob Lewis.

Wrighton

Training

Dear Sir,

You really ought to get your facts straight before publishing such sensationalist rubbish as in the Editorial of WCC Journal June 1986 (18. 209). Regarding the Editorial as an attack upon myself I shall treat it with the contempt it deserves.

A number of false claims must, however, be addressed in order to prevent readers from formulating opinions based upon erroneous information.

The proposed Peripatetic Caver Training Scheme was NOT Sports Council Inspired. The scheme was proposed by the NCA Training Committee, after careful deliberation of a number of options, to fill the gap left by the demise of Wherside Manor.

The scheme has NOTHING to do with the provision of certificates for club cavers. NEVER have I heard such a suggestion made at an NCA Training Committee meeting. The Committee administers the Cave Instructors' Certificate and monitors/supports suitable Local Cave Leader awards STRICTLY IN A PROFESSIONAL CONTEXT.

The distinction between award-bearing training and assessment for professional use, and technique training for the club caver is surely not a difficult one to comprehend!

In no way do the NCA Training Committee proposals merit the paranoid outburst of your editorial.

Yours Faithfully,
Alan Dougherty.

Editor's reply: That Editorial was not intended as a PERSONAL attack on anyone, but an attack on POLICIES. Perhaps I could have been a little more moderate in my presentation, but having re-read it, the only error as such was my confusing the origin of the training scheme and the grant-aid work. I'm sorry if the Editorial seemed a personal attack: that was not the intention, though I still consider Alan Dougherty's comments to the NCC Representative at that CSCC meeting to have been better not said (true enough though they were. He is right of course in his description of the Peripatetic Training Scheme: indeed I have said there is nothing intrinsically wrong with such schemes PROVIDED they are FUNDED, ADVISED & ADMINISTERED by CAVERS. Mr. Dougherty can give no assurance that that state of affairs, clearly intended by the NCA, would continue in the future, if we start giving agencies like the Sports Council a foothold in caving. The Editorial this edition examines this in detail. No, Mr. Dougherty, we are not paranoid: many of us are genuinely concerned.

FROM THE LOG

Charterhouse Cave

20 April 1986. Trevor Faulkner, Jackie Westcott, Nick Dallman, Nigel Graham. Tourist trip. After this, N.G. teamed up with Pete Hann, Alan Marshall and Aidan -? for useful digging session (more concrete in end boulders). N.G.

7 June. P.H., Julie Bolt, Pete Watts, Duncan Frew. After a false start (I left my cell & helmet at the Hut) the usual thing happened: collecting gravel and cementing boulders. P.H.

25 June. P.H., P.H., Plus two guests with the temerity to think it was a tourist trip were handed a shock and three heavy articles for Mr. Hann's death-wish dig. Only then were they allowed to look at the dangly bits and underground flamingo nests that abound in places. P.W.

6 July. Jo Sparrow, N.G. Jo's first trip in the cave, also an opportunity to take a gallon of sand to the dig. Noted taped-off mud floor in Citadel approach has been trampled. N.G.

Eastwater Cavern

4 May. WEST END Rob Taviner, Dean Nute, Geoff Newton. To the sumped S-bend with three gallons of cement. Found a smallish yellow frog in the said s-bend - perhaps he lives on the beetles swimming around in the sump? Fortunately we could find no stones and little gravel so the three suckers were able to postpone civil engineering and exit. It was Rob and Dean's first trip to West End, and I suspect it may be their last for a little while, however they said they enjoyed it. Gladman's Pitch is now detackled. G.N.

("...last for a little while...": unconscious prophecy, indeed.)

Pierre's Pot

29 April. Andy Sparrow, Pete & Alison Moody. Andy in the dig with the crowbar, me removing the rocks he got out and Alison cementing them in securely out of the way. Excellent progress until just one more boulder had to be removed, at which stage a huge boulder peeled away from the wall onto Andy. Fortunately as he moved down away from it, it jammed on the far wall and he was able to come out safely. A rather ashen-faced Andy suggested we finish for the day.

30 April. A.S., P. & A.M. No digging: just cementing everything in sight.

14 May. Same 3. Removed the boulder which tried to squidge Andy the other week and also the one below it which was blocking the way to the Master Cave. A good cementing and clearing session now required. P.M.

Portland

25 June. GUANO RIFT. N.G. plus 3 local independent cavers: Phil Strong, Martin Crocker, Antony Ward. Guano Rift has long been known as a short but wide rift ending choked by a huge block, with a short crawl under this, and with water worn features in the walls. Tried to dig crawl: low, rubbly, disintegrating. No success ahead, but did reveal two openings between boulders supported by psychology and guano, over the downward continuation of the rift... N.G.

2 July. GUANO RIFT. Same crew. Decent-sized bolt put in wall, "new" pitch descended: about 15ft with slightly awkward take-off among boulders. Lovely spacious rift, about 3ft wide, decaying splash stal on crumbling walls, enticed one on round a few bends, to a T junction. Impassable left. Right, pulling loose rocks off wall allowed about 20ft thrutching to a complete choke. Anthony and Phil scaled loose wall to investigate source of good draught - a shattered, possibly water worn tube high in the rift roof (like most Portland's rifts, Guano is a mass-movement cave). Total length of extension, c.80ft., "old" cave c.50ft.

Swildons Hole

ONE STREAMWAY

20 April. E.F. Newport & I. Jepson. To continue "Rolling Thunder". On this occasion however, sans thunder, due to the fill being uncommonly easy to work. 2h

27 April. Do. As per entry for 20/4. However, suspect thunder will be heard on the next trip. 1½hrs. I.J.

SHATTER POT DIG

19 April. N.G. Short session ½hr digging).

MIDDLE FAULT DIG

3 May. G.N. Restarting this dig after a year's lapse. Mostly spent derabbing Still looks pretty long-term: a better prospect than Shatter Pot Dig? (Ahem! -NG)

SWILDONS FIVE

26 April. G.N., P.M. Our wizard prang to Jubilee Aven on 4th April had done the trick, and a short crawl led to the base of another clean-washed aven. At the top of the easy 20ft climb the stream was found to emerge from a narrow canyon. It was possible to see along it about 10ft, with no indication that it opened out. P.M

HEAVEN & HELL

20 April. P.M., G.N. The bang of 6th April had demolished the eyehole and easy access to the caverns beyond was obtained. The extension proved to be all of five feet long! So the bad news is there is no hope; it's solid chert. The good news is we don't have to go back. Swildons was pleasantly wet and sporty. P.M.

15th. May 1986. Due to Nature Conservancy Council proposed restrictions on the use of land in and around Priddy in the form of SSSI on caves, the landowners, with great reluctance, decided to close the caves on their land, i.e. SWILDONS, EASTWATER, SLUDGE PIT, NINE BARROWS, NORTH HILL SWALLET, HUNTERS' HOLE.

As might be expected, these closures did have some effect on the Club's activities for a few weeks, although they did occur at the start of the normally quiet Summer months. The rather small group of regulars at Upper Pitts, denied the good old "standby" - and their various digs - spent more time working on the Hut than caving, then started to look further afield. The Logbook itself contains some pretty odd entries for the first few weeks, then "away" trips become clear.

BURRINGTON COMBE: Various (in chronological order.)

3 May. LIONEL'S & GOON'S HOLE. P & A.M. A Burrington grot trip to see if we could find anything off the Lionel's Boulder Chamber leading towards Spar Pot. Drew a total blank so on to East Low Level to try digging upstream. This not very successful either, the stream being fairly high and the passage rather constricted. After the joys of Lionels, on to Goons. The entrance had become partly blocked with scree but this didn't take long to clear. The squeeze at the start of the cave caused a little more problem. Finally both of us got to the end where a very draughty and eminently diggable crawl leads on. The cave is thought to connect with Lionel's, there does seem a chance however that it may pass over the top of it.

5 May. P.H., D.F. Looking at various small holes: TUNNEL CAVE, WHITCOMBE'S HOLE, TWEEN TWINS HOLE, which might be worth a dig. Also found something horrible down Goon's Hole - the Moodys & Mr. Newton! P.H.

4 May. P. & A.M. Grotting in GOON'S HOLE. Did bit of digging in flat-out crawl at end. Fairly loose gravel fill but very awkward to dig.

5 May. P. & A.M., G.N. GOON'S grotting. Yesterday's excavations had filled with water thus making conditions quite delightful. Managed to rabbit in about 15ft over the two days. Can see on another 15ft - very low - looks worth a go.

24 May. G.N. Solo poke around DRUNKARD'S HOLE and elsewhere. Failed to find SUPRA-AVELINES SHAFT, but didn't look too hard. Strolled in WEST TWIN ADIT.

28 June. G.N. Working with lump hammer at bottom of terminal rift. Enough progress to want to go back again.

19 July. P.H., D.F. What better way to spoil a good day's festering in the sun than to start a new dig. An inauspicious start to a new chapter in the search for the Burrington Master Cave: 1) both of us forgot our helmets and lamps, 2) We couldn't find the stupid hole. After parading up and down the Combe with pickaxe and shovel we finally found Tween Twins and set about it. Much gardening around the entrance and 20 twenty boats of spoil removed until the lack of illumination stopped play. B.M.C. here we come... D.F.

26 & 27 April. SWILDONS HOLE Rescue Practice and its preparations. (See separate report). Log entry mainly list of participants, by P.H.

3 May. SWILDONS: WATERGATE Round Trip. Duncan, Dean, Tav. A lot of water in upper series meant hard work opening up Lower Fault, much to Geoff's hilarity. It also meant several near drownings on the Short Round when boredom set in after very little bailing. A good muddy trip, also very cold.

4 May. SINGING RIVER MINE. Ian Pearson, Kermit. Complaining sherpa but nice splash around in quite high water.

4 May. M. Hewins with John & Michael Thomas for sporting Swildons trip, to Double Pots. Hope the water is not radioactive!

5 May. SWILDONS HOLE. Marc and Greg -? (I'm sorry: I can't make the surname out! -Ed.). Attempted Round Trip but Mud Sump flooded over dam. Spent a few amusing - and some hairy - moments exploring avens of Swildons One, including a climb above Barnes Loop to find green sumped chamber.

10. May. WOOKEY HOLE. Annie Milne and Clive Westlake took John Cordingley to 24. An excellent trip in a fine cave.

10 May. SWILDONS HOLE. E. Fitti-Newport and I. Jepson to former's dig below Old Forty. "Yea, and the Thunder Rolled a Fifth time" I.J.

17 May. DAREN CILAU. Andy Bland, Jo Beckett, P.W. Through interesting Entrance Series to White Company and The Antlers, and out in 6 hours. Despite careful taping by the Chelsea, it's a shame to see broken stal at White Company (happened since Jan 86) PLUS grubby little paw prints on some of the Antlers. Cave conservation is supposed to be continuous, not just in specified years!! Re-entered the civilised world at 7.30pm to find sunshine and blue skies and a superb view across the valley: please note, it doesn't rain all the time, everywhere I go! J.B.

ALSO: Jim Moon, Doug Adams, 'Boris' Glowacki, 3 Kingston Poly students. Usual stroll through spacious Entrance Series, then through Man In The Roof, Urchin Oxbow (both sides), Antler, Epocalypse and return 6 hours - tired students, 7 hrs ("Bollox" was one student's remark here: someone tell him it's "..cks" -Ed.). I agree with Jo (above) It's a shame to see such beautiful decorations damaged by grubby and ignorant visitors, especially in view of the loving work of C.S.S. in taping good, close viewing and access routes. J.M.

May & July. YORKSHIRE, various members and caves (for collective article in next edition).

14 May. SWILDONS HOLE. Colonel Gadaffi & squad (John Scott, Merv Ingram, P.H.) Banged Barnes Loop dig. Unfortunately this could be the last time in Swildons; hope to return to dig it out. 2hrs.

25 May. WINDSOR HILL & VIADUCT SWALLETS. G.N., Chris Monk (Kingston Poly). Gentle sight-seeing trip. The caves are in a very pleasant wooded area full of wild flowers, old quarries and old railway remains. Both caves bear witness to a lot of hard work over the years.

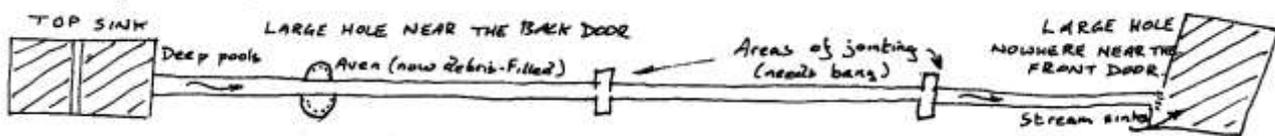
Windsor Hill is short (approx 150ft) but pleasant, reminiscent of Tributary Passage in Longwood, but ending in a sumped gravel choke. The NHASA overhead railway and assorted digs are very impressive.

Viaduct is an interesting place with streams appearing and disappearing all over the place. There are 4 or 5 'ends' to the cave. OK so long as you don't mind the odd loose bit or muddy bit. Some leads still look worth a dig. G.N.

1 June. UPPER PITTS

AM (morning, not Mrs. Moody): P.H. & D.F. to U/P Shithouse. Having replaced the "air"-tight gate and dammed the stream, got stuck into replacing the leaky cistern. However due to flash flooding the site needed pumping out several times before the mission was accomplished.

PM (afternoon, not the other ruddy one): Having returned from the pub - honest, we had only one - P.H. & D.F. were joined by Malc (Foyle) and N.G. Frustrated by the NCC we set about digging in U/Pitts lawn. Quickly broke through into heavily silted passage. The fill had accumulated over 20 years with samples from every cave on Mendip and a few others as well. After a few hours experimenting with horizontal SRT the drain was cleared but there's still a bloody great shaft needing further work to stabilise it. It is also flooded now because it takes a good stream in wet conditions - we hope! The precise location of this site will not be printed so NCC cannot schedule it. However, here's the survey:



Survey notes: CRG Grade 0.75 using rag, rope, drain-rods and Minivan. D.F. & PH.

9 June. GB CAVERN. Jim Moon, Kev Gannon. Kev's first trip after recovering from housemaid's knee (!). A simple thrutch: Devil's Elbow, White Passage, etc., to Ladder Dig Extension. Dug out Bat Passage duck a bit to get through but didn't really fancy it on a Monday night, so finished the trip in the Hunters'.

12 June. LONGWOOD. J.M., K.G. Well, there's nothing for it, GB was fun so here we go down another mid-week hole! Straightforward touring, a bit caught up in an MEG riggers' ruckle at Swing Pitch, but otherwise very simple. 1½ hours to Reynold's and back to the car: Kev's knee seems to be OK!

1-2 June. DAREN CILAU. Geoff Newton plus BEC: Steve Allen, Henry -, Mark Lumley, Jim Smart. Digging at end of Hard Rock extension. Broke through after 1 hour to gain large passage. At this moment Mark and Jim appeared. It took another 2 hours to enlarge the squeeze so Mark could pass it. Eventually we all set off to explore ½ kilometre of new, spacious passage mostly covered in crystals: roof, walls and floor. Eventually emerged on surface after 16 hours underground. It's a long way from the entrance.

7-9 June. DAREN CILAU. G.N. and loads of BEC etc went in Friday night to camp. Found Mark Lumly in his pit in the early hours. Set off at 10.00am. Mark to start taping, G.N. digging major passage heading North. Broke through after 5 hours to gain a whole 30ft extension. Joined Mark digging in high-level passages and gained 300m of sandy crawl heading back to rifts in the breakthrough area. Back to camp for more whiskey, etc. Short sleep and out in early hours.

14 June. DAREN CILAU. G.N. & CHELSEA: Arthur Millet, Clive Gardener, Dave Ramsey, Paul Tarrant, Chris -. In with Paul and Chris who visited Terminal Sump and went out. G.N. to dig site: wrote it off and looked at terminal choke. Needs bang. Met Arthur etc. on way out. Wasn't needed for survey so went out after climbing rifts near breakthrough. Rift blocked by boulders: needs bang. Out after 12 hours. G.N.

21 - 22 June. DAREN CILAU. G.N., Steve Allen. Digging in side passage heading for Divers' Extension. Gained 80ft, still low, much sand to remove. Climbed aven near 12 O'Clock High Chamber. Leads to rifts blocked by small boulders. Another aven nearby needs bolting. Terminal choke draughting. Hard Rock extension now totals over 1 mile. Steve camped Saturday night, I struggled out overnight. Extension heading towards Aggy., still has three "open" digs, one aven to bolt, two chokes to bang and several potential digs.

G.N.

14 June. LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE. Jim, Kev, Boris, Dave Dancer ("F Troop"), UBSS divers (Marco + 2). Into Bridge, portering for Kev & UBSS. Out to Flood Entrance; 1½ hrs glorious sunbathing.

Down Flood (enough water to be fun) to Sand Chamber and look at other end of Bridge Sump. Met 2 UBSS divers on way out, someone nameless had dropped a vital line reel in the Canal (luckily they found it on way out), so Marco and Kev went wet touring instead of pushing Eight (or was it Six?). Boris, Dave and Jim continued leisurely stroll with much fun in ducks and wet bits to Sump Two to wait for divers. We got cold! One diver emerged, waited, got cold, went to look for other one. Two divers emerged, one whinging about a leaky demand valve. A steady porter back to Bridge Sump, wave bye-bye to divers, then exited, wally-like, with a big tackle bag the divers couldn't manage. 3-4 hrs, all good fun.

21 June. G.B. Cavern. Julie Bolt, P.W., Tufty, Littler: a joining of forces if not minds between the Wessex and the MNRC in a kind-hearted conspiracy to show Julie's friend Ken the delights of G.B., and to give him the benefit of our good nature, wit, humour, tolerance (stupidity). (His aside, not mine -Ed.) These terms did not apply to everyone else we met down there. A 4½hr trip made longer by the outrageous antics of Rupert the Rock.

P.W.

27 June. G.B. Guano Rift crew + N.G. (their first Mendip trip). Cave dry, empty.

27 June. Upper Pitts. Two bunks replaced, portable bed stored. M. D-York, P.W.

29 June. VIADUCT SINK & WINDSOR HILL SWALLET. GN., N.G. Another ferret around Eastern Mendip, but in much drier conditions. Actually found another 20ft or so of passage at top of aven between the two halves of Grimpen Mire (in Viaduct), by rearranging boulders. Further progress will require bang. We also dug into 35ft of stream passage elsewhere in the cave, but this proved to be a rediscovery of passage recently silted up. Unlike my previous visit (25 May), Windsor Hill was bone dry and a totally different hole.

G.N.

25 June. WELSH'S GREEN SWALLET. G. Johnson, J. Scott, M. Ingram, A. Newport. 2hrs digging, applied - ½lb bang and retired to pub.

2 July. G.J., J.S., A.N., P.H., Pete Golding. 2hrs, another ½lb bang. Looks good.

2 July. LONGWOOD. P.W. + 1. It was wet! Lots of whining and wimping. Could have been mistaken for Swildons, or Marble Steps, or (Etc etc) - anywhere, but not West End.

P.W.

5 July. M.N.R.C. CELEBRATIONS (WESSEX CHALLENGE TROPHY). A very smelly ride around an ingenious sedan-chair race course. Most of the smell courtesy of the BEC rotten eggs, cowsh and bangers bunged into the chair. The Wessex Dragon's Chinese cousin had a good outing. Fine festivities, sofa rugby (outdoors - with goals!), piggy-back jousting. Sedan chair race was won by BEC in a rather slinky little sporting number. Let us just say the Wessex almost came last: the less said the better...

D.F.

The Wessex participated with dignity. So little was achieved by so many, but at least we did it with style!

P.W.

Is that what you call it? If there is a next time, perhaps I could be carried forwards.

D.F.

4 July. G.B. P.W. + 1. As punishment for making me go caving, the '1' was made to do Devil's Elbow, but it dry, so that wasn't much fun. Attempt No. 2 resulted in much slipping, sliding, grovelling and thrashing about in mud. This was more fun until I realised it was my kit that was getting ruined. Punishment No. 3 next week.

P.W.

1 2 - 1 3 July. PORTLAND. The Wessex Cave Club Goes to the Seaside; and find two mackerel and 40ft of rift. Armed with lots of diving kit and two bendy-boats, Jeff Price, the Moodys, the Drake family, the Bolts, the Milnes, the Fielders, the Gannons, Doug & Jackie, Pete Slater, 'Kermit', Ian Pearson and the Hon. Ed. (who already lives nearby anyway) invaded the beaches and waters of Portland Harbour, diving, spinning for mackerel (they caught a couple) and sunbathing.

On Saturday morning, Pete Gass and John - joined Alison for a tour of BLACKNOR HOLE.

On the Sunday, Malc Foyle and Nigel visited the same cave. After some fun & games on the entrance abseil (NG overshot the hole - much to Malc's amusement) we made our way to the end dig for a token scratch. An 'ole appeared. It got larger. It revealed a rift! "Big deal" I thought: it's the streamway continuation we want. Further gardening of very loose rock allowed entry: a scramble down into a narrow rift perhaps 40ft long, choked both ways and at roof level with boulders, and no obvious sign of the water worn passage anywhere. Unless it's among all those stal. & moon milk cemented boulders.

N.G.

14 July. SANDY HOLE (Portland). N.G., Phil Strong. To dig end choke of Ammonite Passage, the southerly extremity of the cave. Lot of loose boulders etc. to remove (waterworn passage "invaded" by crossing mass-movement rift), but looks moderately hopeful. Prospects good.

N.G

16 July. LONGWOOD. P.W. + 1. "Crime & Punishment" part 3. "1" wanted to go somewhere wet, but being given a furry suit and shoved down August created even more whimpering noises: it was even wetter than on 2/7. P.W

17 July. PORTLAND, WestCliff Area. N.G., Mike Read. Surface survey from head of Blacknor Hole pitch to Sharbutts Rift & Main Entrances of Sandy Hole, to close Moldywarps undercliff survey. Cliff height, Sandy Hole to top measured by dangling tape, to enable altitude to be obtained from Mike's previous levelling.

26 July. OGOF FFYNNON DDU (various numbers!). The first obstacle could have been the last: how to get a permit from the S.W.C.C. when you are only a "quite well-known club" (Son of Wessex bites back). The long-forgotten art of diplomacy was applied and off we went to Top Entrance. The Gang Of Four (Websell, Foyle, Price & Watts) re-united, closely followed by their attendants for the day (Duncan, Keith & Roz, the Hon. Ed.). We took an awfully long time finding Maypole Inlet, but once we did, off and running. Various acts of aquatic frivolity were performed in the deep pools we forgot live in the streamway. Thank God for the Berger MK 1 waterproof bag box.

Armed with a survey and lots of confidence! we headed towards OFD 1. Mistake No. 2. Divers' Pitch was found reasonably easily, Malc nearly died going into hanging-death looking for the Letterbox, Pete found it (the only part of the cave I recognised), but could we find the connection to OFD I Streamway? 3½hrs later we managed to find Dip Sump, and we actually wallowed in the water that, it later transpired, leads into the boulders that lead to this and to that and to OFD 1. So near but so far: a mere 100ft from the stream. Decision time: wait to be rescued? NEVER! Top Entrance or Cwmdwr.

Yes we all know the way to Cwm Dwr, don't we? Remembered the slippery climb, and the Smithy, but as usual, - the boulder choke defeated us until we actually got into it. Home & Dry - nearly. A very serious discussion as to whether the hole in the floor really was the crawl to freedom. Joy of Joy - it got bigger! but 1 out of 8 is not democracy. Nine-and-a-half hours, but it seemed longer. The best thing that can be said, was, everyone caved to the best of their ability.

P.W.

Many thanks to the Westminster S.G. member (we stayed at Caerllwyn) who said he'd give us to Dip Sump, and warned us not to try climbing down Pwll Twch.

NO thanks to the SWCC member who told us we should have gone down Pwll Twch. Pete commented that that climb would probably be fatal.

N.G

(The grapevine, we learned a week later, was a-buzz with how the Wessex got "lost" in OFD: perhaps, but we found our own way out...! Within the E.T.)

30 July. MANOR FARM SWALLET. M.F., P.W. Took out 2nd mortgage, 15min to end of NHASA Gallery, 30min to get out. It had to be that quick: lots of brown runny stuff from the farm descended with us. P.W

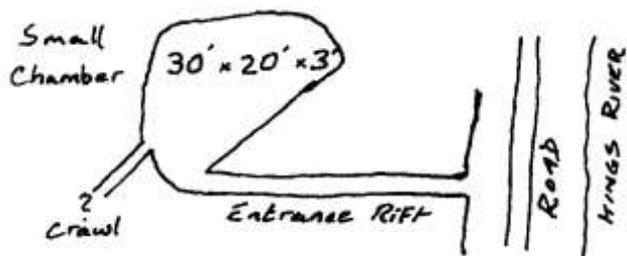
2August. LAMB LEER. P.W., M.F. Bring back fixed iron ladder!

2August. GOATCHURGH. M. & J. Hewins. 1½hr geriatric potter. Set up some nice photos but came out with nasty feeling I'd set the camera wrongly.

2August. U/Pitts. Mike D-York removed fittings from ladies' dorm (radiator etc.) to prepare for builders' work.

3 August. Burrington. Jim & Mary Rands, Denise & Gary. GOATCHURCH: couldn't find the Drainpipe - "what a leader!". Then first good look round SIDCOT SWALLET since 1957. Quick look around PSEUDO JOHNNY NASH'S 4hrs. J.R.

JULY '86. CALIFORNIA. Paul & Val Weston. CRYSTAL CAVE, Sequoia National Park. BOWDEN CAVE, King's Canyon South Fork, and an un-named cave near the latter. Rough plan:



Location: opposite Bowden Cave car-park, King's Canyon National Park, California.

In area of granite and marble.

Kit: sun hat, jeans, shoes, and a torch borrowed from cave guide.

Mrs. Weston became very anxious: her encouraging words were, "There's no-one here to drag you out if you get stuck!"

9 August. Split Rock. Foyle, Price, Watts: now that we've scared ourselves stupid, we can start doing it properly.

14 August. GOATCHURCH. Bob & Anne Lawder, Roy Barton. Grand Annual Caving Expedition: 3 middle-aged fools risk their lives for an hour.

16 August. BLACKNOR HOLE. M.F., N.G., Phil Strong, Anthony Ward. Visited extension recently found by Weymouth & Portland Venture Scout Association (Mike Read's lot). Ref. 13 July above...

Yes: it was among all those stal. & moon milk-cemented boulders... Some 500ft passage, mainly low but wide, entered through horrible boulders (one swings like a door). Attractive patches of orange formations (caret), crawls over cross-rifts. Eventually ends, surprisingly for Portland, in a fine down-cut canyon terminated by a scramble over boulders down into a bell-shaped pot some 20ft high and 10ft diameter (estimated: WPVS have already surveyed it to Grade 5) Floor of aven is rubble: no obvious way on, unless there is anything in the boulders in the roof. Nearby continuation checked but found very heavily choked, very long-term dig. A very interesting 5 hour trip, number of photos taken. Only hope a) those boulders don't bite anyone (need stabilising) and b) the local weege groups don't invade it (the best stals are very vulnerable). N.G.

One problem on exit abseil: rope too short one end! M.F.

Long enough when I followed you down! N.G.

17 August. BURRINGTON. M.F., N.G. In decidedly festerous mood after yesterday's hands-and-knees romp on angular chert lumps, so held a jeans-&-T- shirt trip. To Upper Goatchurch, and Avelines. N.G.

With apologies to Hugh Morren & "The Sun":



50 YEARS AGO

From W.C.C. Circular No.15 July 1936.

"Forthcoming Events" were to be visits to Coral Cave, etc., a "Cave Camp at H.Q. under leadership of Padre Watson", and another, weekend, camp later. Trips to be arranged for these included Swildon's Hole and Stoke Lane Slocker.

On the Committee, Jack Starke was appointed Hon. Treasurer (his predecessor had: retired from the Committee); Frank Frost was elected Winscombe District Representative (replacing Kenneth Cowling, who had moved away from Mendip).

The Committee, announcing the forthcoming marriage of 'Jumbo' Baker, "feels that something ought to be done about it" - inviting contributions for a wedding present fund. (Married on August 1st 1936: noted in Circular No. 16).

From, W.C.C, Circular No. 16 3rd September 1936*

The main news was the Lamb Leer project: negotiations by the Bristol Speleological Society, the Mendip Nature Research Committee and the Wessex had resulted in the granting of a joint licence to these three societies, to re-open and explore the cave. The Club Committee appealed to members to subscribe towards the expenses incurred in gating and shoring the entrance shaft; "You will enjoy the amenities of the cave when it is open, so what are you going to do about it?"

"HATS Hard hats, which are particularly recommended for cave work, can be obtained from the Hon. Secretary at 2/6d. each. Post Extra."

From W.C.C. Circular No.17 October 1936.

This Circular contained notice of the AGM, held at Cliff Hotel, Cheddar, followed by the Annual Dinner: tickets 2/9 each. "It is hoped to continue the festivities at H.Q. afterwards..."

The Lamb Leer fund so far had received only a few donations (membership 100) and an appeal for more contributions was made.

RESCUE ORGANISATIONS. "At this suggestion of the Club a Committee has been formed with other societies to set up a Rescue Organisation similar to that which was started a couple of years ago in the north. Details ... should be available shortly".

An Inland Water Survey was under way at this time, the British Speleological Association carrying out the "underground portion", via local committees. The Club's representatives on the scheme were Messrs. Frost and Baldwin.

Continued from Page 221.

Suddenly I remembered: Mike had told me it has an anti-tangle device, to stop the type bars fighting each other should you inadvertently press two keys simultaneously. I spotted a key with an unfamiliar symbol, and cautiously pressed it. "Click" said the machine. I pressed a letter key: Eureka! Well, it's just typed its first WCC Journal, it's getting accustomed to me, and its spelling is improving.

Cheers, Mike!

N.G.

BACK PAGE

UPPER PITTS WARDEN ROSTER 1986

Sep 5 R. Drake
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20
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27 / 28
Oct 3
4
10
11 / 12
17 M. Dewdney-York
18
Nov 1/2?
15 / 16
Dec 6/7
Volunteers for unclaimed
Warden weekends most welcome
(no Hut Pees charged to Wardens
on their duty weekends!):
contact Bob Drake.

CLUB MEETS &c.

OTTER HOLE / PENYGHENT POT

WCC Committee Mtg.

MRO Anniversary w/e.

TOP SINK / PIPPIKIN

DERBYSHIRE w/e

WCC AGM & DINNER

MONGO GILL

QUANTOCK HILLS w/e

YORKSHIRE w/e

For further trip details, contact
Jeff Price.

RIDDLE

Solution to last edition's (Mark well & think wisely):

CAIRNGORMS

This Riddle took some composing: the Editor is hardly Poet Laureate!

Some clues : the solution is a major cave, the area is suggested by one of nine clues within the poem, another gives the cave name, while the other seven give the names of seven features (all on the survey) in the cave.

Of Carrara I sing, where dark water flows,
And Slavic ways. Of rural ribbons and bows,
And Celtic lands where the planetary dog
Doth swim while shrimps shoal in hidden pools, silent
Below cloudless, moonless, sunless firmament

£1 for first all-correct (9 names) solution received by & opened Sunday 19th October (morning after the Annual Dinner). (Close: 12.00 pm 18th Oct.)