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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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# NORBERT CASTERET

1897 - 1987

-Luke Devenish

Norbert Casteret was born on August 19th, 1897, in the Pyrenean village of Saint Martory. At the age of eighteen, he served in the trenches of the First World War.

His twelve books reveal a bold, adventurous spirit which must have inspired youngsters for many decades, and his descriptions of his archaeological finds awakening an interest in many.

The observations he made of bats and their migratory habits must have done much to awaken the world to the fascination of this frequently maligned creature.

His persistent hydrological observation culminating in the spectacular dye test of the Trou de Toro possibly prevented an international incident. His many other subterranean investigations must have benefitted French hydroelectrical projects to the tune of millions of Francs, and alerted engineers to the value of speleology.

When I first met him, four of us were privileged to be conducted round Gargas by him and his daughter. He insisted that as the heaviest member of the party I should test the wooden ladders, which had been rotting for ten years, by climbing them.

On the next day, 24th August 1949, he met the official Wessex party and was invited to become one of our Vice-Presidents.

On my next visit to the Pyrenees I was privileged to have lunch with this charming, friendly and cultured man and his family.

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\*Norbert Casteret was a devoted family man, and indeed of all the many and varied letters he received, he found those from children the most touching. One letter, however, was from a Polish nun who had never been underground but who had been much inspired by his descriptions of the peace and solitude he found there. Norbert himself was deeply religious, his faith sustaining him following the death in 1940 (from illness) of his wife Elisabeth, Four of his five children had later married, and his grandchildren were a great joy to him in his later years. His youngest daughter, Marie, had become a Sister Superior; about 1980 she left her convent to look after him. He died on July 20th, 1987, at Toulouse. Following his own wishes, his funeral at St. Gaudens was very simple, though attended by nearly a thousand people, followed by burial at Auzas, next to Elisabeth.

Norbert Casteret will always be remembered with respect, admiration and inspiration by all who appreciate caves as he did.

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\*Prepared from Casteret's own book "My Caves", and from Johnson, P., "Norbert Casteret", 'Descent' 78 (Oct/Nov 1987) p20.

The death has been announced of MARTIN HARDCASTLE.

Martin was a past Wessex member who as a Clifton College teacher, led his pupils on caving, and other outdoor activities, trips well before school caving groups became widespread.

## EDITORIAL

## REVIEWS: AN ANSWER.

The Hon. Secretary has apparently had some "flak" as he put it, over the Journal Editorials. I have seen reviews which make no mention of the main content of the Journal, the caving reports, but which instead concentrate on the Editorial in such a way as to make me wonder a) if the reviewer has bothered to read it properly, b) read the rest of the magazine (or is caving politics all that matters?), and c) merely sought to discredit the Journal or at any rate its editor.

I am aware that many people disagree fundamentally with my views on caving's controversies, just as many others hold similar views. However, I will state that the Editorial is written by me, not Tav; and is largely my views BUT also an attempt to show the views of other Club members.

I try to show which are statements of fact or of opinion, I try to show which are my opinions, or if not mine necessarily, the source of them (conversations with members, Club policy, etc.). I do not object to people disagreeing with me: to do so would be inexcusably conceited, UNLESS the objection is made personal or destructive (either of which themselves being conceited and certainly self-defeating). I might add that these points are not only raised by this Editorial page: look at the letters in the national caving magazines, or listen to some verbal comments made by various people on contentious matters. Finally I do not regard the Editorial as being the main item in the Journal. The Club Notes give details of Club policy (perhaps with my own comments in the Editorial, NOT in the Notes.). The actual caving articles are really what count.

Having often strongly criticised Sports Council involvement in British Caving - except perhaps for overseas expeditions - as being irrelevant and potentially harmful, I give you something to redress the balance, from the field in which SC is more valuable, competitive sports.

So great are the pressure now on young athletes and team game players to attain increasingly-high artificial standards of performance, that many participants in competition sports now run the risk of physical and emotional damage. The SC and the Institute of Child Health (I think I noted that correctly from the radio report) are to undertake a major study of young players, to assess the scale and nature of the problems they encounter, and hopefully to find ways of ensuring that what is supposed to make one fit and healthy in an enjoyable way, actually does so without having the opposite effect. This is the first study of its kind anywhere: it a most creditable venture, and one which is possibly well overdue.

To return to caving: I would urge all to consider, complete and return as instructed the enclosed NCA form. The NCA is often attacked as being remote, out-of-touch, a self-interested talking-shop, etc., etc. ,mostly unfairly. Well, it wants to know what YOU expect of it: it is after all, YOUR Representative Body.

I wish you all Seasonal Greetings and a fruitful New Year's caving:

May all your troubles be the ones which need baling!

— N.G.

**NEW MEMBERS.**  
The Wessex Cave Club Welcomes:-

MAX MIDLEN. c/o Newleaze, Olveston, nr. Bristol BS12 3DE.  
DAVID WILLIAM HOGGARTH. 22 Cyrson Rise, Kendal, Cumbria.  
FIONA DAWN LEWIS. Simons Close, Bathampton Lane, Bath, Avon BA2 6SU.  
KEVIN JOHN SIMPSON. Frogmore Avenue, Hayes, Middlesex UB4 8AR.  
MURRAY J. G. KNAPP. 23 Gordano Gardens, Easton-in-Gordano, nr. Bristol, Avon BS20 0PD.  
DIANA RUBERY. 5A Madam Lane, Worle, Weston-S-Mare, Avon BS22 9PJ.

## CLUB NEWS

UPPER PITTS PROGRESS. At time of writing (end November), the new heating system is nearly complete, and work on the new changing-room in its final stages. The unisex toilet there occupies a sufficiently large space for its additional use as a ladies' shower-room, with solid doors being now fitted to the three main shower compartments however, this addition is of slightly lower priority. Charging racks and a sink unit, and a kit drying rack will complete the facilities. Members have raised various points about the new central heating, such as mid-week use or frost protection: the Committee has taken all these into consideration in liaising with the contractors.

The next phase of course is the conversion of the old changing-room into a new ladies' room: work will start quite soon in the New Year (after a well-deserved Christmas break for the HQ builders!). Again, the Committee have received some ideas concerning this, involving some, fairly minor changes to the original plan, to be discussed more fully.

The Club is still running the Appeal, with thanks to all who have helped in realising the Appeal's objectives.

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING saw its attendance unexpectedly reduced by about half-a-dozen members called out to a rescue in Swildons Hole. The patient had dislocated his shoulder in a fall at the top of Blue Pencil. The Committee changes were as the AGM Handbook / Officers list in this edition. Nick Pollard and Graham Johnson joined the Committee as joint Hut Wardens, sharing one Committee vote between them. Resolutions passed were that:

- \* The subscription rates remain at the '86/'87 level (based on £16 Full).
- \* £2000 be transferred into the Hut Sinking Fund (on the Auditor's advice).
- \* The use of radios, tape-recorders or TVs being played in the Hut shall be prohibited if any individual objects.

This proposal, from Jim Rands, attracted some debate. Its background was instances of annoyance caused by noisy guest parties, but since a few members do occasionally use radios at Upper Pitts (when working on the extension, or staying alone there, for instance), it was passed with the inclusion of TVs as an amendment. A proposal from the floor to bar all such equipment outright was seconded but received no other support. This has become a Hut Rule, not an addition to the main Rules & Constitution.

## SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE DUE IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY PAID!

The ANNUAL DINNER was a very enjoyable occasion: some members have thought it a pity that a higher proportion of the membership do not attend. Guests of Honour were Mr. Simon Whitmore, Managing Director of Butcombe Brewery, and Mrs. Whitmore. In a highly amusing speech, Mr. Whitmore referred to the inspiration his beer apparently gives to the planning of caving trips, with the opposite effect the next day. Having learned of the existence of a "Butcombe Chamber", he announced a wish to go and see it himself. Phil Hendy retired from the Committee at this year's AGM after long service to the Club: at the Dinner he was presented with a mark of the Club's appreciation of his work; a fine sunset study of a Cornish

mine winding-house, photographed by Pete Hann; from the membership.

APPRECIATIONS received by the Club have been a letter of thanks from Mr. and Mrs. Whitmore, in which he mentions his wish to visit Butcombe Chamber one day; and a receipt and note of thanks from the M.R.O. for a donation from the collecting-box at Upper Pitts.

## REGIONAL NOTES

On MENDIP, the access arrangement for TYNING'S BARROWS SWALLET has changed. Obtain the key from

Mr. D. Reakes,  
Pinelea, Green Ore.

25p per person goodwill fee: please return the key the same day.

Cars are still being broken into at the G.B. layby.

LAMB LEER is still closed; the problem is still to be resolved.

NINE BARROWS SWALLET & SLUDGE PIT, and NORTH HILL SWALLET have had their SSSI scheduling withdrawn. They were scheduled only for their location within the Wookey Hole catchment, and this change followed a site visit by the NCC. The first two caves, however, are still closed at present.

In the NORTH, the major item of concern is the BAR POT scheme. This at first was a proposal to run "adventure" trips to Main Chamber, using fixed ladders, handlines, etc. in Bar Pot. The planning application was refused following considerable opposition from the National Parks Office, the Nature Conservancy Council, caving organisations and individual cavers.

A highly-emotional letter from the applicant - the proprietors of Ingleborough Show Cave - bitterly attacking cavers for wear and tear of the system, and for unsafe procedures (!) at the Winch Meets, did not help to gain support from cavers.

Now, an alternative scheme has been put forward. A tunnel would be driven from somewhere in or above Trow Gill, to intercept Main Chamber high on the East Slope, above flood level (Steve Pickersgill, who passed on these details, explained that tunnelling from the show-cave could give floodwater an all-too-easy outlet). This effectively changes the nature of the scheme totally, to open Gaping Gill as a show-cave, with all the implications for cavers and for the residents of Clapham this presents. The residents do not support it: there is just not the car-parking room to absorb much more traffic. If this application is refused it could well go to appeal, with the risk it would then be allowed whatever the opposition, which is considerable and hardening. This new proposal appears to be the "compromise" solution, a compromise of sorts being wanted by a few cavers including Dave Judson.

Meanwhile, the LECK FELL access problem has still not been resolved properly. The Red Rose CPC has negotiated an agreement of sorts - they are themselves tenants here - but the CNCC as a whole disagrees with its terms as being too restrictive. The agreement is that 6 permits per weekend will be allowed, with a maximum of 8 people per permit.

ERRATA: See Officer list in front. Duncan FREW, not "Fews": sorry, Dunc! [Corrected online]

## A CONTINENTAL CAVING HOLIDAY

Pat & Ric Halliwell

In our damp wanderings on the continent this summer we spent one day near Contina d'Ampezzo investigating the wonders of the Kleiner Lagazuoi. Having been given an English guide to the Via Ferrata of the Dolomites, the Kleiner Lagazuoi sounded like a home from home. It is an 1100m long tunnel blasted upwards for 350m in 1917 (a sort of N Hill swallet in reverse) by Italian sappers who then exploded 33Kkg of gelignite underneath the Austrian soldiers occupying the top of the mountain. The resulting through trip inside the mountain has now been equipped by the cable car company with a handwire down its full length providing an interesting alternative to the cable car. There are several side tunnels but none are particularly extensive.

Tiring of Italian rain we decided to try French rain and visited the Chartreuse for a couple of days. We stayed at La Martinière campsite near St Pierre which looks from the outside to be very commercial but is quite pleasant, the friendly owner told us that he is happy to have groups of speleos staying. We spent most of our time there visiting bits of the Dent de Crolles, all the entrances of which involve 1 hour or so walks to the entrance climbing several 100m from the nearest car park.

On our first day we visited Grotte Chevalier; a climb down a very loose scree of frost shattered blocks off the roof led via a low bit to a large chamber and a short stoop giving on to a large passage. This contained some very impressive ice formations near the start but then just continued as a rather bare large (30mx10m) passage until it stops abruptly after 750m when the ceiling turns through 90 and goes straight into the floor of fill. Day two saw us entering the Guiers Morte clutching a tracing of part of the survey. The large entrance is followed by a low very strongly draughting crawl over sharp breakdown. This eventually led to the Puits Pierre, a 35m upward pitch which was rigged with a fixed (very muddy) rope as promised by the guidebook. A careful prussik up this allowed us to explore a series of large steeply ascending passages with many junctions. Eventually prudence overcame curiosity and we retraced our steps.

The following day saw us at the other end of the easiest through trip, the Trou de Glaz. Again a large entrance led with minimal crawling to the Puits Lantern. These were rigged with enormous eye bolts for pull down abseil through trips but only sparsely equipped with anchors for an in and out trip. We descended the three pitches but the length of passage between the second and 3rd meant that we could not do all 3 on one 90m rope as we had hoped but had to put our other rope on the 3rd pitch. This in turn meant that we could not explore as far as we had intended along the route towards the Guiers Morte. I believe that with another day or two it would have been possible by pushing from each end, to have reconnoitred a route through the maze of passages between the Trou and the Guiers Morte thus permitting a through trip.

Then it was a short drive to the Municipal Campside at La Chapelle en Vercors. I have always used this site when in the Vercors and have found it cheap, clean and very handy for shops, bars, etc, and for meeting other cavers.

We decided to start with an easy rope trip down Scialet de Malaterre (a French Alum Pot). Basically you tie your rope to a metal footbridge over the shaft and abseil down 60m to a rebelay and then another 5m to a bigish ledge. Here a Y hang, and a rebelay 2m lower form the top of a 55m pitch in the same large shaft. We had attempted Malaterre last year and Ric had reached the knot at the end of the rope half a metre above the floor but been unable to get off the rope because if he had the contraction in the rope would have taken the end out of his reach. However we were still doomed not to bottom the hole because we found a 3rd pitch of which we had been unaware.

On the way back to the campsite we stopped to look at Grotte de la Cheminee, a simple 89m deep, 156m long walk in large passage with several stal bosses larger than the Beehive in Lamb Leer. If one stood in the right place at the bottom it was just possible to see daylight between the stal pillars.

After the weekend we went to visit TSA, the local caving equipment factory/shop to purchase some short lengths of rope and to our delight we found that the new guidebook had finally been published (even later than Mendip Underground). Then it was off to Scialet 1 du Pot du Loup, a simple series of pitches close to the road. The first pitch of 19m can be bypassed by using an alternative walk in entrance but we didn't bother. The next pitch is 37m with a Y hang and a deviation about 3m down giving a clear hang well out into a superb large shaft. There is one rebelay before two large ledges, each of which is followed by a pitch of approximately 15m. The bottom of the cave is a 10m diameter shaft with no way out. Unfortunately we surfaced to find that French caving is similar to English caving in one respect; our car had been broken into and our passports, other documents, much caving equipment and guidebooks had been stolen. Several hours in the Gendarmerie ensued as we struggled to find the French words for a furry suit, wellingtons, wet suit hood, etc whilst the next day was taken up with driving to Lyons to obtain emergency passports from the Consulate.

Andy Hayter, Chris Hoggarth and Steve Pickersgill arrived from Chamonix that day and, after buying another copy of the new guidebook, the next day was spent entrance hunting. That evening a Gendarme arrived at the campsite and over a beer explained that he had searched 10km of forest road and had found about one third of our stolen equipment abandoned in a ravine. After a washed out day of continuous heavy rain we decided that we would introduce Andy to his first Vercors cave in the shape of Grotte Favot which we knew would be dry; he was suitably impressed both by the long steep climb up the side of the Bourne Gorge and by the magnificent entrance tunnel. The afternoon saw us going into the Bournillon. The strongly flowing entrance lake, where none of us had seen a lake before, persuaded us to just go in and out of the main river passage rather than to undertake the round trip via the upper entrance. The large stream which we encountered sinking into boulders just beyond the connection between the upper and lower entrances proved the wisdom of this decision.

The following day we returned to Malaterre and set off down with extra rope. Unfortunately the final member of the party to descend the entrance had considerable difficulty with the rebelay immediately below the bridge and aborted his descent. As he was carrying the rope for the fourth pitch we again failed to bottom the cave even though Ric and Steve found the pitch head. Steve photographed the impressive entrance shaft (all 118m of it) on the way out and we emerged to a French caver who insisted on telling us how impressive the cave was beyond the 4th pitch!

The following day was spent down Scialet du Toboggan, a new cave to all of us. The guidebook states that a 35m rope is useful for novices(!) on the entrance climb and squeezes. Although Ric managed to free climb the entrance he had to climb back up to put a rope on one of the climbs for the rest of us. After retrieving the rope for use further down the cave we set off along crawling muddy passage before two more short pitches led to the bigger stuff. Andy and Chris turned back partway along this whilst the rest of us dropped down a further pitch (with a 'nice' bolt belay which could be pulled out and inspected before it was used!) into a fine streamway with a 'V-notch' weir. The stream was followed to the sump where, after a cursory look for the bypass, we turned round and returned to Andy and Chris who were stranded at the bottom of the entrance climb until Ric climbed up and dropped a rope down.

It was agreed that Andy and Chris needed some more SRT practice in an easy cave and so a return was made to Pot du Loup for this. Pat practiced rigging and Steve took lots of photographs.

After this easy day it was off to Trou qui Souffle where we found a group of 8-10 year olds at the entrance. Their instructor screwed two "clowns" to the rock and then krabbed a Y into them before lowering the kids through a descendeur (à la YRC at the turn of the century). Then he dropped a ladder down the entrance krabbed to another clown, and finally he tightened all 3 bolts up before descending himself. We followed and overtook them before the 30m pitch which was quickly rigged as were the climbs which follow it. Andy and Chris retired at the fourth pitch and returned to the entrance to hear the following subtle discussion between an instructor and one of the children: "I'm afraid. I cannot climb the ladder. Pull me out" "No" "What will happen if I do not climb the ladder" "You die!" Meanwhile the rest of us eventually managed to find a sump (from the 3 supposedly down the cave somewhere in the maze of passages) which we later

identified from the guidebook as the one at -220m.

The final trip before Andy, Chris and Steve departed was into the Gournier with Dave Shearsmith, a caver from Grimsby who we met at La Chapelle. Dave had a major asset, a dinghy, and this was used to cross the lake into the Gournier by all except Ric who insisted on swimming the lake (with fins and a hood). The first access was located by the loud roar of the stream below but we carried on to the second access to the streamway. The stream was considerably higher than it had been on our visit last year and several of the traverse wires were broken. We continued as far as the 12m cascade where the thin rope dubiously climbed last year had totally broken and been replaced by a new traverse rope which required prussiking gear which only Dave had with him. We had no choice but to retrace our steps passing a large group of Spaniards, a small group of Belgians and a group of French cavers. We just managed to all cross the lake before it began to take on the appearance of Piccadilly Circus as the other groups with their dinghies began to exit.

The following day was spent wandering up and down the side of the Bourne Gorge looking for Grotte Merveilleuse without success. Slightly more successful was the final day when after 4 hours of searching, Dave Shearsmith found the Trou del'Aygue and he and Ric descended the middle entrance as far as the lake. What a muddy hole!

All in all a pleasant few weeks of tourist caving with nothing really difficult. A few more people to carry ropes and better weather would have been an improvement. Maybe next year we will finally get to the bottom of the Malaterre.

## Reading

- Chiron, M "De la Bourne à Herbouilly" Privately published 1978
- Davies, C "Via Ferrata - scrambles in the Dolomites" Cicerone 1982
- Delannoy, J-J "Speleo Sportive dans le Vercors" Edisud 1987
- Lismonde, B et al. "Grottes et Scialets du Vercors" Tomes 1&2 CDS Isère 1985
- Lismonde, B et al. "Chartreuse Souterraine" CDS Isère 1985

## ‘MENDIP UNDERGROUND’

REVIEW:

(2nd Edition)

Geoff Newton

So the long-awaited, much publicised, Second Edition of MENDIP UNDERGROUND is here, about 10 years after the First Edition was published. Although the pace of discovery on Mendip seems to be currently much slower than in South Wales and Yorkshire, a comparison between the two editions reveals that a lot of new passage has been found on Mendip during those 10 years. It is also very pleasant to be able to say that Wessex members have played a major part in finding most of the new caves and passages in the new edition. Indeed the Wessex Librarians did not feel able to review this book as they had been too closely involved in much of the new text and survey detail!

It is even more pleasant to be able to say that the 2nd edition is already out of date. A third edition would have to include Welsh's Green Swallet, and larger entries for Pierre's Pot and Hunters' Hole.

I came across the First Edition long before I joined the Wessex, when I was caving secretary of a small club based in Bedfordshire. I found "Mendip Underground" invaluable for organising trips, and with a little local advice we were able to explore everything we wanted with a minimum of fuss and difficulty. The new edition is still a splendid guide for the sporting caver and will be much appreciated by cavers based in other areas. (Wessex members will not need to consult it, of course ...?)

What extra goodies are in the new guide? The major new finds are all there: new caves like Charterhouse and Pierre's Pot; and significant extensions like West End Series, Watergate, Renascence, Passchendaele; and new bits in Lionel's, Longwood (now Mendip's deepest cave) and East Twin will all be of great interest. There are also a large number of "minor" sites like Rickford Farm Cave or Goons' Hole, which have been included for the first time. These will interest the caver who has "done everything", or the digger. However the coverage is not complete enough to supplant "Complete Caves ..." as the diggers' bible. There are now also surveys for Rhino Rift, Dallimore's, Cuckoo Cleeves, Quaking House, and upstream Brownes' Hole, which were not previously included.

This time, the editors have included all major caves regardless of access. This seems a sensible precaution, as there may well be many openings and closures in the next ten years, if recent events are anything to go by. The current access restrictions are however dealt with thoroughly with suitable warnings that situations can change. They could perhaps have suggested that locally-based clubs be consulted for up-to-date information.

What complaints have I? The surveys are still mostly of the black-blob type which are less attractive and legible than the usual format. The survey captions are full of errors. For example, Sump One in Swildons is still misplaced, and the captioning on the Eastwater and Banwell surveys will cause general hilarity, if few problems.

An opportunity has also been lost to revise the text, for example, forty feet of ladder is rather excessive for Dolphin Pot in Eastwater, and the reference to the Baker's chimney bypass is so oblique that another generation of cavers is as likely to be as confused as the previous one.

A guide which tries to be as comprehensive as "Mendip Underground" will inevitably face criticisms of omission. For example, if something as obscure as Caliper Pot (Swildons) is included, why is there no mention of the new BEC extensions around Approach Passage (in an area where the survey is a joke). All this is merely nit-picking, and to some extent this type of criticism is rather subjective.

(Cont. p123)

## NHASA INVITED TO WINDSOR

Richard Kenney

To devotees of the Somerset and Dorset Railway, Windsor Hill is the site of the twin single-bore tunnels, but to cavers it is the area in which the first "pretty" was found on Eastern Mendip, now known as the Windsor Hill Quarry Cave. By the late 1970's much had of course been located in that general area, and expectations were high for the Windsor site in particular. The railway and its associated quarries had closed and general access had become easier.

The Windsor Quarry area is roughly three-quarters of a mile by a half, and lies at a mean height of 600 feet. The surface streams, when present, drain South-West towards Croscombe, passing through Ham Wood. It is a quiet area peaceful in its new role as an industrial archaeology site, with the exception of the regular vandal who tried to destroy our winching systems. The tree that supported our derrick was nearly destroyed by an explosion, and several efforts were made to cut it down.

As usual, interest was developing from several sources. The BEC, represented by Albert Francis, Mike Palmer and others, dug on the North side of the railway in the late 60s, and one would expect others to have tried their luck as well. In the early 70s Hedley Hill, Shepton Mallet Scout leader, was looking for a dig site, and his ploy when approached by members of NHASA, was to pretend that he was the landlord. Mike Thompson spotted the site on a walk down the valley, and he and Jim Hanwell followed up with a spot of dowsing. NHASA then adopted it after abortive efforts at Doubleback and Rock Swallet.

The site comprises a little valley whose Southern side is a minor scarp slope at right angles to the dip, and the other side is the railway on a small embankment. At the head of the valley is a culvert emerging from the railway. The floor drains down to a quarry, and there are open holes for the water in the scarp and also adjacent to the embankment. Our site lay in the valley floor and may have been opened by the railway engineers in the 1870s - now there's a thought for the record books.

Say seven years' work, or about 350 Wednesday evenings, and it can all be summarised in a few words. One can write pages of detail, but unfortunately it must all be compressed into a few phrases. We work as a team, and each person contributes their skills and talents, so it isn't generally necessary to mention any particular name in relation to any incident or bit of kit.

The first stage of the dig was to enlarge the entrance downwards to expose fully the dominant surface features. This left us with a hole some ten feet deep, five feet wide and fifteen feet long. A right turn was taken along the strike in a Westerly direction, but this was abandoned after a rock nearly killed our future MBE, Bob Whitaker. We then attacked the dip in a direct line with the entrance, for ease of hauling, and dug Southwards at a 30 degree slope.

The passage exhibited a half-tube in the roof, and we dropped the floor to give ease of passage, such that it varied from three to six feet high. Where necessary the tunnel was wall or roof-lined by our building expert, Albert, using S&D coal-ash for his concrete. For some distance there appeared to be a fill between the roof and floor, and spoil could be freed without too much trouble. In one section we gained six feet by entering open passage. This bit gave trouble in 1980 when there was a minor roof fall, and Albert and Prew were stuck on the far side. Fortunately they could come out after a few minutes' heaving away at the debris.

We used the traditional Mendip "Sauceboat" for transport to the entrance but not the guss and crook. Spoil was transferred to a simple bucket hoist system to reach the surface. As time progressed the sauceboat had to be pulled by a winch-assisted, pulley-guided method, which became very labour-intensive and had an enormous drag-factor.

The culverted stream caused trouble in Winter and many efforts were made to get rid of the water down adjacent beds and holes. It was an odd experience to divert a large stream and see it sink away. The chief gardener made us build all sorts of walls and dams to control the flow, and at one time we tried to bypass

our hole and send the water further down the valley by trenching it and lining the trench with polythene tubing. Despite all this, there many occasions when digging was impossible by virtue of excessive water. With so much quarrying in the vicinity the water carried a good load of silt, and at times it could refill the space that had been laboriously dug the previous week. When diverted down an adjacent hole it could be heard from our dig face, and it sounded just like the old "Forty-Foot", as we kept telling the youngsters.

Eventually the half-tube disappeared and we found ourselves staring at a bedded face with no obvious prospect. The lure of the water sound led us to deviate Eastwards and follow some thin gaps in the beds. Blasting became necessary to give us a decent height, and this was our downfall, for having cleared last week's debris we had to drill and bang again. Windsor Hill rock is hard, very hard, and we made slow progress. Plaster charges were tried but they did little work, and minds were tuned to alternative procedures.

Windsor Hill was probably the first caving site where a compressor owned by the diggers was a regularly-used piece of equipment. It was an intelligent cave, for provision was made for the telephone line, the air line, the bang wire and the spoil transport system. One day, at some dig or other, we shall have an injector, and we will have a cement line as well.

The first compressor to which we had access was a small model designed for underwater use, and it had a hydraulic action needing a return as well as a supply hose. It made a useful hole but was not really man enough for our purposes, neither could we afford to buy one of our own. So, we ended up with the navy's friend, the typical noisy but effective compressed-air version. It did us proud and is still a good investment after use at other sites. Earmuffs are essential gear, for the risks to hearing are well-proven. The hydraulic compressor, with its enclosed oil content had to be sited close to the entrance, and this was a disadvantage to the social life of the dig. The ideal situation is to find a dig where the compressor can be sited at a reasonable distance.

No measurements were taken, but the length of the main hole, down-dip, was about seventy feet when we rebelled at the transport system in use and made the experts do something. A monorail was devised, being lengths of timber say five feet long by six inches by two inches, were fixed centrally in a line down the passage, with the six-inch measurement in the vertical plane. The sauceboat was fitted with bogies which had one wheel resting on top of the monorail, which latter was steel-capped to reduce wear, and one on each side. The leverage on these side ones was acute from a loaded boat, but the thing worked well. However, unlike mountain railway systems, there was nothing to stop a runaway, and the loaded projectile was potentially lethal, especially as it had pointed ends. Up top, a new winch was provided that had two or three handle positions at different gearings, to suit varying stages of decrepitude.

Our deviated Eastern passage gave us a further problem. The floor was very rough and solid, and spoil had to be passed bucket by bucket to the main passage. Eventually a lightweight monorail from which the buckets could be hung was suspended from the roof. All mod. cons, in fact.

Our final session was on November 28th 1981. Everything that had been brought out the previous week was back in situ again, and we retired, disheartened. The area is still full of Eastern promise, for few sites have been worked.

We all have our own interpretations for failure to find a cave, and it is worthwhile listing a few, for they can also relate to other sites:

1. The Theory of Open Joints. Perhaps there is no cave, for a hole the size of Swildons' entrance, say three feet by three feet, can also be represented on a surface 50 feet long by 24 feet wide. If the width contains 9 bedding joints each  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch wide, then Swildons' water can in theory disappear within this area, and limited erosional features can lead to wishful thinking about a theoretical cave.

2. Surface Disturbance. At Windsor the stream may have been diverted when it was culverted under the

railway, and this happened twice as the line was originally single-track, then doubled. Any stream near the quarries would have been used and possibly diverted for steam-raising in machinery or for shunting engines.

3. Streams that appear to sink in well-established holes within the quarry area may in reality have had a short life.

4. If one cannot actually follow a stream then the adjacent parallel bed may be too low or too high in relation to the theoretical cave.

5. The labour force required to work the dig became too large. No spoil could be stored part-way to the surface for the stream merely washed it to the bottom again.

6. One of the best possible sites was too near a possessive cottager.

Yes, we benefitted from this experience. Our current dig has several localities that can be used as temporary dumps with a small labour force. All spoil is put into poly. bags so that it cannot be washed down again; and we don't have a stream - but that's a different story.

There is much more to N.H.A.S.A. than weekly cave dig may suggest.

Our average age is high, because we have been around for some time, and we are no longer in the first flush of youth. We don't do epic trips, we just have epic spells of survival between trips. This aspect of caving is not often mentioned, but we have helped one member of our group to overcome severe depression, we have convinced another that there is caving after severe illness. We have helped each other to give up smoking, and we cope with all the other ailments to which middle-aged gentlemen are prone, like a lack of an excuse to go to the Hunters' mid-week. Some of us are young, though, and romance can blossom among the buckets, boats and compressors. Brian and Lucy will have many happy memories of Windsor. We encourage doctors, for we specialise in odd accidents; or how to cut your eye with a caving helmet, or burst your thumb with a lump of honest limestone.

It is a rule that in order to attend the NHASA Dinner one must do some digging, and it is amusing to note the faces that appear at infrequent intervals. Some of these people are normally busy at their own digs, others are members of the Craven 'A' Team, to whom we play host, and others are noted for their shy and retiring habits. All are welcome, for we are all equal participants in my last statement.

Wednesday evenings are a period of sanity in a doubtful world, and if we find a cave, well that's a bonus.

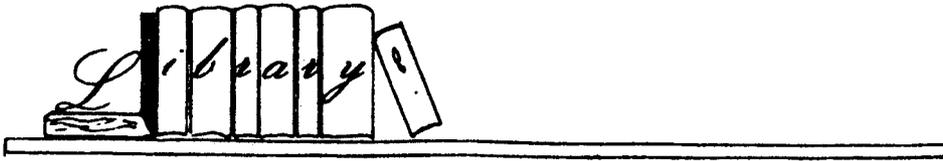
Author's footnotes:

(Note for new cavers) N.H.A.S.A., the North Hill Association for Speleological Advancement, was formed in the '60s, when N.A.S.A., the National Aeronautical & Space Administration, was a new and upwardly-mobile entity in the USA.

This paper has been submitted simultaneously to the WCC and the BEC.

© NHASA: it can be copied, quoted, mis-quoted or forgotten (I hope not ! -Editor) by any interested or disinterested party. September 1987.

- R.K.



## Club Library Additions & Book Reviews to 31st October 1987.

### Caving Journals

#### **Axbridge Caving Group Journal**

(Summer '87)

Winning entries to the ACG's photographic competition are reproduced, a notable shot of the Swildon's streamway below Sump 3 scooping first prize. (What happened to the Wessex's competition this year?). For bibliophiles a list of the ACG's library collection. (Do not ask when you are going to see the Wessex's).

#### **British Cave Research Association**

##### **Cave Science**

Vol. 14 No. 2 (August '87)

Devoted to surveying.

##### **Caves & Caving**

No. 36 (Summer '87)

The majority of this issue is taken up by news of foreign caving and Llangattock developments albeit with Mendip (and Wessex or ex-Wessex) cavers often to the fore. The only article directly about Mendip caving is a piece on Swildon's Hole, the first in a series describing the exploration of classic British systems. I am afraid it is not a very auspicious start to the series, Peter Johnson's chapter in his book 'The History of Mendip Caving' is better than this garbled and inaccurate affair. The editor's plug for the new series can surely not have been written with his first author in mind.

##### **Current Title in Speleology**

1986

I can fully agree with this editor's blurb; 'CTS is an indispensable reference work for all cavers, scientists and others wishing to trace articles dealing with caves and limestone world-wide.'

##### **Bristol Exploration Club Belfry Bulletin**

No. 440 (July '87)

Two long articles here, one on the Trou de Glaz republished from an Axbridge journal and the other on the history of Gough's Caves, a re-write by Dave Irwin of papers he published in the UBSS Proceedings.

No 441 (Sept. '87)

Along with AGM reports Richard Kenney tells us of the exploits of NHASA in relation to the Windsor Hill Dig plus details of the unsuccessful Terminal Rift Dig in Eastwater undertaken by Keith Bentham in the early seventies.

##### **Cambrian Caving Council Red Dragon**

No. 14 (87/88)

A major article by Sean Heaver on bat investigations on Mynydd Llangattwg giving details of, and the results from, his automatic bat counter. Also the tale of how a Croydon Caving Club stake out of the Porth-yr-Ogof car park trapped a thief and led to the recovery of 60000 pounds worth of outdoor equipment.

##### **The Canadian Caver**

Vol. 19 No. 1 (Spring '87)

Plenty about Canadian cavers' exploits around the world but not much on caving in Canada. Contains a brief mention of some of our members who were in New Zealand last year and also details how to repair Suunto instruments (any takers to fix the Wessex's survey gear?).

##### **Cave Diving Group Newsletter**

No. 84 (July '87)

##### **Cerberus Spel. Soc. Journal**

Vol. 17 No. 3 (May/June '87)

A dissertation on the hydro-chemical characteristics of the St. Dunstan's Well drainage system is the main piece in this issue.

##### **Chelsea Spel. Soc. Newsletter**

Vol. 29 Nos. 8-12 (May-Sept. '87)

The September issue features an interesting log of the CSS's expedition to Czechoslovakia and a first account by Arthur Millet of the BEC & LAD's trip to Austria this summer.

##### **D.C. Grotto Speleograph**

Vol. 43 Nos. 1-5 (Jan-May '87)

We have been exchanging with the District of Columbia Grotto for the last eight years. They produce an excellent monthly newsletter which nearly always contains articles describing the discovery of staggering amounts of new cave. The highlight of this batch is an account in the April/May issue of exploration in the Fisher Ridge System - it's well worth a read next time you are at Upper Pitts. The February issue totals the number of caves over a mile long in the States; Tennessee comes out top with 112, Kentucky next with 100

and West Virginia third with 81, together these 300 odd caves total nearly 1500 miles. Mendip can boast 7 'milers' totalling about 17 miles. Still as it is always worth reminding our Welsh colleagues its quality not quantity that matters.

**Devon Spel. Soc. Journal**

No. 136 (July '87)

**National Spel. Soc.**

**NSS News**

Vol. 45 Nos. 4-9 (April-Sept. '87)

We should all read NSS News to have our insular views on cave conservation thoroughly shaken up. The July issue discusses the art of 'caving softly' to minimise our impact on caves. There are precious few caves on Mendip which have not been, to use an Americanism, trashed. We may try and prohibit beginners from the likes of GB and Charterhouse but there are far too many experienced cavers who huff and puff and thrutch, thrash and scrabble their way around caves and hence far too many formations smashed and muddled by sheer clumsiness and carelessness. The article goes on to discuss a game we could do well to adopt alongside beer races and sofa rugby where an obstacle course of delicately balanced objects is setup on the floor through which one must crawl without touching anything.

I bet when the LADS gave their tongue in cheek interview to the freebee, the Bristol Journal, to publicise their Mexican expedition they did not expect it to be picked up by NSS and given States wide coverage. If they had, I believe they would have chosen what they said a little more carefully and not sounded quite so much like a right bunch of wallies.

**The NSS Bulletin**

Vol. 48 No. 2 (Dec. '86)

A paper in this the scientific journal of the NSS, describing the origins of water spouts in karst regions has a dramatic example of the effects of air pressure in a cave. An artificial shaft was drilled into the Mammoth Cave System and lined with a 5m. long corrugated steel pipe capped with a locked metal lid. In 1984 a rapid flood resulted in a stage rise of 30-40m. within that portion of the cave. The displaced air moved up towards the new entrance and although the lid was not airtight it hampered the air flow sufficiently that the resulting pressure 'shot the 140kg. pipe out of the hole, flipped it upside down and banged it against a tree 6m. away.'

**Royal Forest of Dean Caving Club Newsletter**

No. 99 (Aug. '87)

**Shepton Mallet Caving Club Journal**

Series 8 No. 2 (Spring '87)

Anyone caving in France should include a copy of Martin Mills article 'Le Jargon Speleo Francais' in their baggage. By far the most complete glossary of French caving terms I have seen it should avoid those disastrous trips where the linguist of the party has confused *perce* (swallet) with *porche* (entrance), assumed *ressaults* were free climbs (climb/pitch of any length may require rope, ascenders etc.) and believed that the cave ended at the *syphon plongant* (duck).

**University of Bristol Spel. Soc. Proceedings**

Vol. 17 No. 3 (1986)

The usual high quality production from the UBSS, this time with a preponderance of weighty archaeological papers. Gough's Cave figures strongly.

**Westminster Spel. Soc. Newsletter**

No. 52 (Aug. '87)

Report on the WSG Romania expedition and news of a planned expedition to Cuba. Also a description of a weekend trip to the Holloch, Switzerland.

Other library acquisitions

We have received three very useful donations of assorted journals and surveys from Jim Hanwell, Jeff Price and Adrian Vanderplank, many thanks. Only one purchase has been made, the new edition of Mendip Underground.

— PETE MOODY.

## 50 YEARS AGO

FROM W.C.C. Circulars 26, 27, 28 (Sept, Oct, Nov, 1937).

The three Circulars were mainly AGM and Meets notices. 26 contained advertisements for "Caves & Caving" (first published June 1937, a quarterly costing 4/6 for a year's subscription), and for membership of the British Spelaeological Association. Wessex membership stood at 141, and "Members are urged to make a special effort to bring this number up to 150 by the end of our year", (i.e., by November 20th 1937)

The Annual Dinner was to be held at Wickendens Restaurant, Wells, tickets cost 3/- each, and lounge suits were the order. The AGM that day, held at Wells Museum at 5.15pm (the Dinner was to start at 7.30pm...), was to discuss among other motions, the proposal that:

"After 'Hon. Secretary' add 'Gear Curator' " in the Rules.

Forthcoming events advertised were a Club Supper at the New Inn, Cross; a S. Wales weekend; attending a UBSS evening at which C. Wyndham Harris was to talk on County Clare; another UBSS talk on "Recent excavations on the Cotswolds", by Mrs. E.M. Clifford; a Geological Field Day, led by Prof. Wallis. Caving meets included Wookey Hole (non-show areas), Eastwater, and "Tight Squeezes in Burrington: come and see how slim you are!"

A new discovery was announced:

BANWELL CAVE During the course of Ochre Mining a small cave has been opened up between Banwell and Sandford. The chief features of interest were mud bird nests clustered around what must have been the original entrance. There is little stalactite but in one chamber a good deal of coral (splash deposit) is evident. Members who wish to visit this cave should apply to the Hon. Secretary as it is locked."

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"Mendip Underground" Review, cont.

There is a school of thought that guide books are a bad thing because they increase traffic in caves and cause conservation problems. There is some validity in this, but a world without guide books would deprive a lot of people of a lot of enjoyment, and in the long term, would reduce the rate of discovery. In any case, it is impossible to stop "progress" and there are ways of minimising damage by access control, taping and education. This book does its best to introduce cave conservation to its readers, but a few 'before' and 'after' photographs, as in "Complete Caves ... " would give it more impact and substance. Pictures speak louder than words!

To sum up; this is a very comprehensive, well-balanced guide to sporting caving on Mendip, and good value at £5.95. It should also encourage a healthy suspicion of the printed word.

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On a lighter note, one of the problems of writing a guide book can be likened to forgetting to do up your flies: everybody has a good laugh at your expense but nobody tells you what's wrong!

To encourage feedback I have proposed two competitions:-

1) The winner will be the person discovering the most genuine factual mistakes in "Mendip Underground". Grammatical mistakes and points of opinion will not count.

2) The winner will be the first to discover all the mistakes in this article which have crept in as a result of my atrocious handwriting and Nigel's shaky typing (here, hang on... -Ed.).

Competition Rules and Prize ("Prise" in the M.S. -Ed.) details in the next edition. (Oh?? -Ed.)

# EXTRACTS FROM AN AUSTRALIAN DIARY

## CAVING IN THE NULLARBOR DESERT

NICK HAWKES

Part 1

... POLICE CHECKPOINT!! Oh no!! "Would you please blow here". Luckily Alison had not had a drop of alcohol to drink all night, and to our complete amazement the good old cop totally ignored the fact that there were three people in the front and five in the back of this small car. It is ILLEGAL not to be wearing a seat belt in a car whether you are in the front or the back, in Aussie. This fortunate occurrence rounded off a really good evening at 2.30a.m.

Sunday 19th April 1987.

At 7.15am, just as I was beginning breakfast, the doorbell rang and John Taylor and Ken Boland (a priest!) were waiting with the truck outside. I had to say rapid goodbyes and everyone came to see me off. As I got into the cramped little utility truck I began to wonder whether this Nullarbor trip was going to be any fun after all, compared with being with these really friendly people: will I ever see any of them again and when? Still, we were off and it was too late to change now, so it was just settle down to the next phase of travelling and enjoy it!

We had a full day's driving ahead. It's pretty flat around Melbourne, and the roads fairly straight, but interesting driving through these little Australian "towns" - Ballarat - Horsham - and then on towards Adelaide. We stopped briefly at Keith for a snack, then on, and on, long, long, straight roads with odd homesteads every 10-20Kms. Reached Adelaide about 4pm, then on towards Port Pirie. A water pipe runs along the side of the road for miles and miles carrying water from the Murray River, just before Adelaide, right up to Ceduna! A VERY long way. We stopped just after dark on the coast in the Spencer Gulf, a dry place in dune grass lands.

Monday 20th April.

Up at dawn, a quick breakfast, packed camp, then off. We stopped at Port Augusta for more provisions, then off again. The scenery gradually changed to low scrubby forests of stunted eucalypts and she-oaks, then to the wheat growing regions. For hours and hours we drove at a steady 100Kmph past wheat fields, and each little town of ten or so houses had a huge wheat silo in the middle which one could see ages before one got to the town. Talk about boring driving. Seemingly endless straight roads look wiggly on big maps of Australia, but could be straight for up to 100Km in one stretch! - and the vegetation changes were very gradual. We all shared the driving, so I experienced some of this mindless driving, just sitting there holding the wheel still, no gear changes, nothing!

We stopped for lunch just before Ceduna, at the last place, almost, where there is a public water tap which one can get a reasonable amount of water from. We filled up all our water containers here then continued, stopping briefly in Ceduna to look out over the clear blue sea, then on and on. On mostly through low stunted forests, until suddenly, just before dusk, all the trees disappeared and the land seemed as flat as a pancake, just covered in salt bush (knee-high, blue-green bushes). This was the start of the Nullarbor Plain.

We continued for another hour before looking for a camp spot in the dark. Ken knew a site and we found the turn off. He had thought it was about 1km. from the road, but we only went some 400m before Ken stopped. We jumped out, walked on 7 feet and there – ah! a 200ft cliff: the Great Australian Bight, huge limestone cliffs - a good thing we stopped!

We set up camp 100m or so back from the edge. It was rather cold with a strong wind blowing in from the sea, but the most amazing stars, including a good view of the Supernova.

Tuesday 21st April.

Up at dawn again and back onto the long, straight roads. At Eucla we picked up Mark, a policeman who was going to squeeze into the back with us for the last 200Km. At Mundrabilla we turned off the main, sealed road and onto a single-track dirt track, and off with a cloud of dust behind us. Then on and on we went; we saw one 'roo, then about four more came bouncing alongside the truck as we drove along. We stopped for lunch, then on again, stopping again to pick up some wood by the last few trees before the Nullarbor Plain (literally "No trees") proper.

We stacked the logs onto the truck, then off again, back to the track and another 50Km to reach the cave.

**OLD HOMESTEAD CAVE:** a collapsed doline surrounded by NOTHING in all directions. All that is visible is salt-bush scrub on dusty red sand, and very occasionally on the skyline one can see a lone, stunted shrub / tree. After setting up camp it was about 4p.m. A vehicle belonging to some Caving Exploration Group of South Australia members was at the cave when we arrived, but no people; they were underground. A large group of "Venturers" / Scouts were also there, but left as we arrived, without even saying "Hello": rather odd after not seeing another soul for the last 150Km+, to see this group of people who just ignored us and drove off!

Ken decided to take us for a quick look in the cave, firstly the South Cave. There are two caves, North & South, depending on which side of the collapsed entrance doline one goes in. It led into a large, dome-shaped chamber, down a rock pile, all red in colour except for a few white areas, and totally silent: no drips, no stream, a very empty type of hole and very dry. We went only about 200m in, through a couple of large chambers, clambering over boulders with a couple of low bits between, then we came out and went for a quick look at the North Cave.

This had a 10ft fixed wooden ladder just at the entrance, then a little further on a 25ft caving ladder down a hole which had been dug by the owners of "the old homestead". They had set up their home in this desolate place thinking they might get water from inside the cave, but they hadn't, and only a couple of bricks and an iron water tank remain of the homestead. Anyway, we descended this ladder, just like our well at home with the red rock and square-cut shaft, into a series of crawls which C.E.G.S.A. had dug a couple of years back, into a nice sandy-floored passage for about 10m and back to boulders in fairly small (5m x 5m) passage or less, and some tight crawls which Ken sent me down to use up a bit of energy. It wasn't terribly impressive but it is different, with an almost eerie silence.

It wasn't long after we came out that the four C.E.G.S.A. members emerged: Graham Pilkington (to whom I had written originally, asking about the trip), Max Meth, Gary and Brad. Talks around a camp fire followed before turning in at 10 - or 10.30 - or 11, depending whether we were using Victoria time, S.A. time, or W.A. time. The stars are just amazing here, with a completely flat horizon one has perfect viewing and cloudless sky is fairly common. It gets dark around 7p.m., and from then on, without much dusk, the sky lights up with stars. Two more people arrived this night: Tom and Mary. Mary was a girl from the U.S.A., whom I had met in the drains of Sydney!

Wednesday 22nd April.

Up early, in time for the sunrise as it popped up over the flat horizon. It's cold at night but warms up by 10, and mid-day it's HOT! (Although everyone here keeps reminding me that it's Winter and it's not hot at all. Thank goodness it's Winter, that's all I can say!)

Brad and Mark 'piked' for the day's caving while the rest of us split in into two survey teams. I teamed up with Graham, Ken and John. All of us headed into the North Cave, though at first we went no further than we had the day before. Our surveying started near the entrance in a revolting little side passage, full of very loose boulders, which seems to be a feature of the cave in general. I was given the tape, so had the exploration job, i.e. all the grovelling in little passages. Graham is incredibly meticulous as a surveyor so

there was no missing any side shoot, however horrible! The only consolation for the morning was finding some rather nice salt and gypsum crystals in an extremely tight little passage which naturally didn't go.

We had lunch, then after one more little passage, moved onto another area a bit further in, passing the other group, Tom, Mary, Max and Gary. The next lot of surveying was much better, big passage so some good long survey legs, rather than the 2 and 3 metre stretches we had had in the morning.

The cave has already had a line traverse survey done through to the furthest known point, but no passage detail, so we had to survey along both sides of this long, large passage, this time ignoring most side-shoots. It was still close to the entrance though, and the cave goes for about 3Km., and continues into the unknown after that. C.E.G.S.A. however seems to like to make us suffer a bit first and get us to do some surveying for them!

After some eight hours down there we came out. Eight hours is no problem in this cave as it is warm and dry, a very different story to eight hours' cold, wet surveying. Light was fading fast when we got out, so it was soon back around a camp fire to keep warm.

Thursday 23rd April.

Surveying again. This time Tom, Mary and myself in North Cave. We were sent to a short - 50m or so - side passage quite close to the entrance for the morning. However it turned out to be nearly 200m when we had pushed all the tight little tubes, finally finding ourselves doing a loop back around into the main chamber again. This short stretch took all day! As it is surveyed a 'sketch' plot is drawn up, plotting measurements reasonably accurately, something almost impossible for a wet cave but fine for these dry holes. The others had gone on to survey further on and to try out some R.D.F., Radio Direction Finding (radio-location), however the equipment was "crock" so they gave up and only managed to survey 50m of passage. They are unbelievably fussy with their surveying here!

Friday 24th April.

Graham and Max decided on a rest day since they had been going for four days before we got there, so suggested I led a trip into the North Cave for photography, and carrying a few litres of water for a 'push-trip' later, while Ken took a trip to the South Cave to try out the R.D.F. work again.

I went with Tom, Mary, John and Mark, first to look at the salt crystals and take photographs, then on into the cave to a place called Point N to where we had surveyed, then on further and the passage becomes really good, big passage. The nice, sandy floor has amazing mud cracks and calcite formations of two main types:

"CROCKERY" - looks like broken crockery, formed by the calcite and mud layers where the mud has dried up and curled up the calcite.

"BOXWORK" - calcite had infilled mudcracks, and the mud has subsequently been washed away.

We then left the water and had a leisurely trip out, taking piccies.

Saturday 25th April.

Big push Day No. 1 is arranged, for tomorrow, and it was just more surveying close in today, so since it is supposed to be a very special experience walking off into the desert from here I decided to do that today. John also took this option and we headed off to the North, past the old homestead ruins and off into the desert.

We hadn't gone far before we came across a "blowhole". These are common all over the Nullarbor, but particularly here, holes with howling gales roaring out of them. We dug the entrance out and I slipped into

this tiny passage which quickly blocked. It was really nice to get down it though, as it was so hot outside and this had a beautiful cool draught.

John came down too, then we went off again walking and walking until the camp disappeared from view over the ridge. One has to introduce a whole new concept as to what ridges and valleys are over here: a rise of over 1m in 100m would be a ridge. It's just a different world, trees mean so much more to you! Anyway back to walking, picked up a couple of Abo' flints, and next excitement was a pussy cat - a feral cat, a moggy gone wild. It's quite incredible how tough little moggys are, there's no water here for 100s of Km., yet there it was wandering along. It just lives on lizards and little birds and that presumably gives it all the water it needs. We were down wind, so it hadn't noticed. John was cursing that he hadn't got Mark's pistol: everyone hates wild moggys as they destroy the native wildlife, making it very unlikely that we would see a lizard for at least a couple of square kms.

We headed off in another direction to go to two cairns we had seen, both of which turned out to mark blowholes, to which we paid a visit and crawled around in. The first was just a hole, and the second had a bit of passage with red-black spiders in, no fun in shorts and tee-shirt, especially with only one torch between us!

Then we made our way back to camp - ah ha! - I almost forgot, we also saw three 'roos bouncing around. They are difficult to spot even in low salt bush as one just sees a head popped up until they bounce along.

From 10 o'clock till 4 we sat inside the doline in the shade, fighting off the flies. I'm glad I bought a hat. Then John, Mark and myself went for another short walk to look for more blowholes, and found one where we needed to dig for 15 - 20 minutes to get in. Finally I slotted through into a tiny one with a roaring gale coming out of a very small hole at the bottom. Still it was the second brand new cave in a day, and we left it with me having been the only person ever to have been down it.

Sunday 26th April.

A long, long day for the big push to the end. Ten of us were on the trip: Max, Graham, John, Ken, Mark, Gary, Brad, Geoff, Ruddi and me, so it was a slow-moving party. The breeze in the cave which often is quite strong was very poor, so it was much warmer than it might have been. Various R.D.F. points were set up through the cave; at 250m in is point N, another 250m is Point A, another 250m Point B., etc. to Point F, another 500m Point H, and a long nasty 800m or so to the known end.

It took a long time getting to the end, hours trogging along, everyone sweating as it was so hot. We had 8 litres of "communal water", and some of us had brought our own to supplement this. I was lucky in that I had a litre of my own plus two 250ml cartons of fruit juice. Others, however were not quite so well prepared (although they should have known better!).

We had a rest at Point D, then on to near Point H and another rest (i.e. water break; with 10 people, 8 litres doesn't go far!) We left 2 litres for the return journey, and trogged on. When we finally reached the end we stopped for lunch and more water. I was roasting. It's much hotter further in the cave as there is no noticeable draught right at the very end. Our stops allowed the sweat to dry off for the next lot of moving. It didn't take much movement before a good sweat broke out!

## CAVE DESCRIPTION

Up to Point N was mostly grovelly boulder piles except the last bit, "Yokes and Away Passage", which got into the big passage. N - A was low, sandy passage, partly crawling, then A - E was generally big passage and reasonably easy going, rock-hopping over boulders or just walking on sandy floors past boxwork and mudcracks; generally fairly pleasant with lots and lots of side passages, easily mistaken for the main passage except for the draught through the main route. F - H got a little harder, a few little up and over or

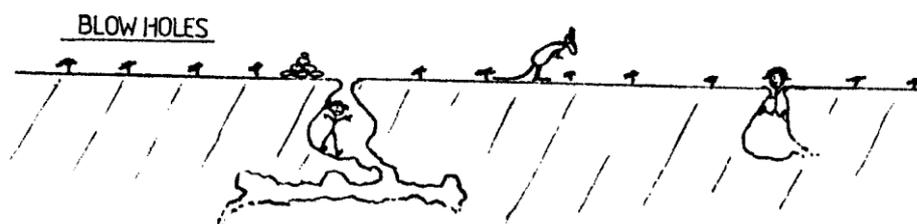
crawl under climbs in a dry streamway. Then H onwards just got smaller with some nasty grovelly crawls and flat out sandy crawls, nothing too bad but it is a long way from home by this time!

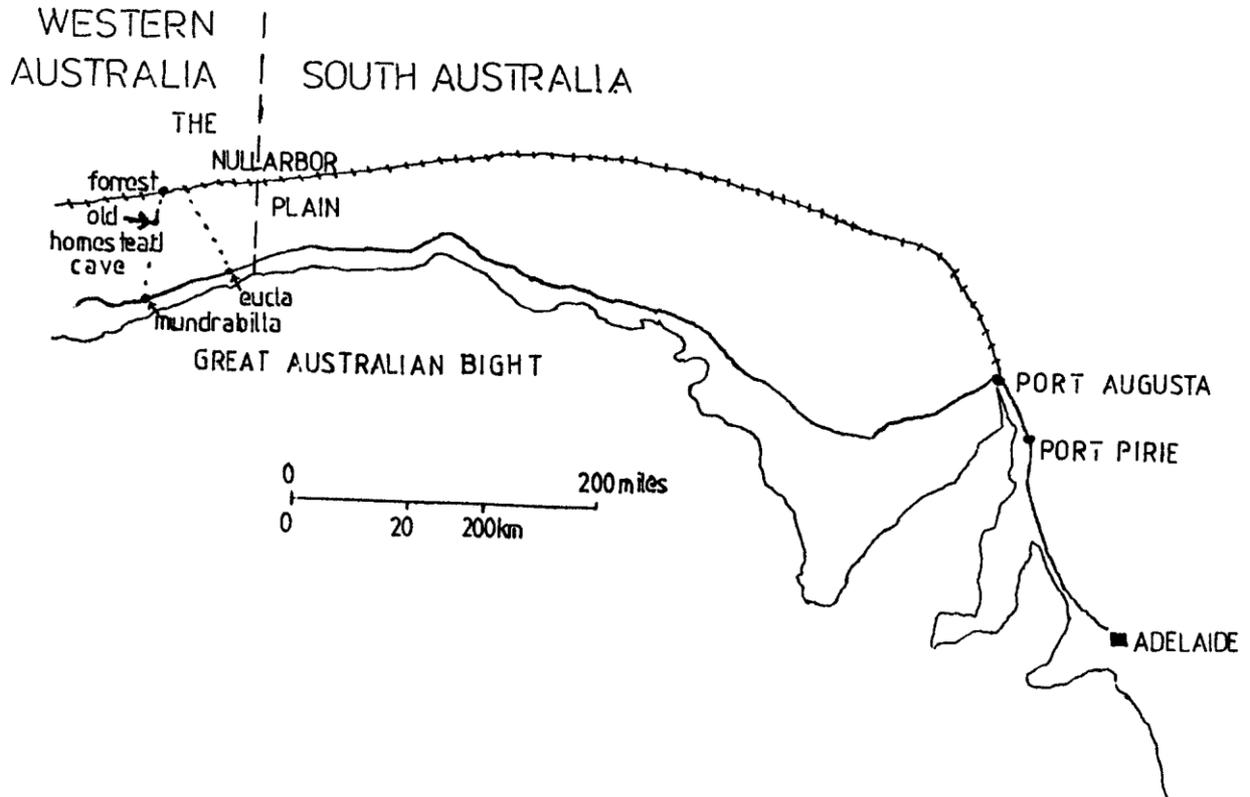
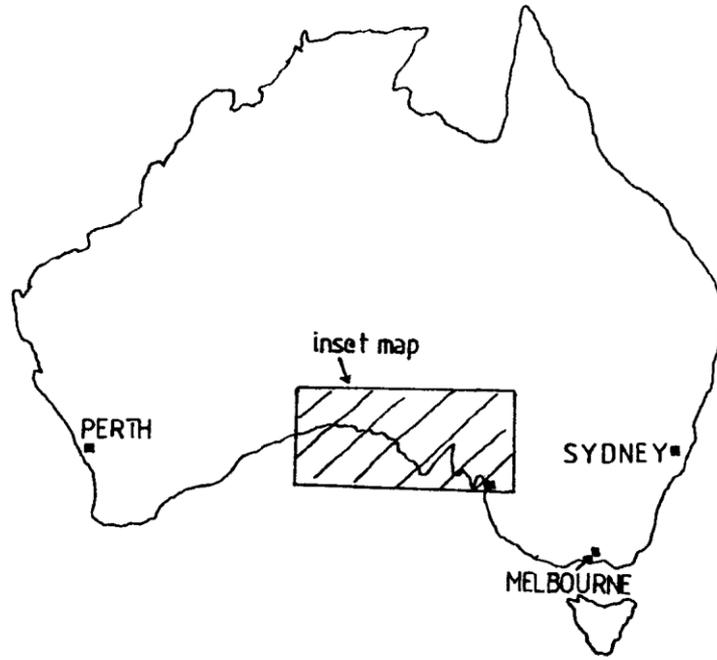
Eventually, after lunch, we organised ourselves into survey teams. Only about six people were needed, so the rest of us were gear sherpas. Being in this situation, with unexplored cave ahead I took advantage of it and raced off to explore. Unfortunately there was no obvious way on so I quickly had the job of finding it. This I did, crawling through a long, low tunnel over lots of very sharp gypsum crystals growing out of the clay, then up into one chamber, through a very tight squeeze into another, digging into the next, then back to the others to head on behind me. All the energy involved, in doing this required ¼ hour rest to recover or 'dry out' - yuk!

Then for a while I was on tape duty with the surveying team coming into the new chambers I had found. At the final chamber there seemed to be no way on, but I did a short dig and it soon revealed another three chambers, with the most immense mud cracks, 3" wide, incredible drying! Some dried-out white calcite pools and boxwork where calcite was around the mud, but the mud hadn't yet been washed out. It was good! I rested for a while, while the others surveyed into them. We looked and looked, but couldn't find any way on from the final chamber, except a possible route through a calcited crawl, however the survey team hadn't reached it by 7.30pm and that was go home time. Some of the others came to look at the 'end', then we started on the long, long trog back.

Some people were very weary, I was O.K. luckily, especially due to having a little bit extra water than most people, some of whom were feeling very dehydrated. They struggled on however, and with each 100m nearer the entrance the breeze improved slightly so that made us feel better. Eventually, just after midnight, we emerged, weary but happy to get back to water and find it had actually been raining, fairly rare for this place.

To be continued.





## More Trifles in France

— Tony Bennett  
Part II

Easter 1987 saw me back in France, this time with Christine King of SUSS. The plan was go climbing, caving and skiing during a ten day stay. In the event, the climbing was abandoned when we saw the 'crag' at Buoux. In recent years this has taken over from the Verdon Gorge as the vertical playground for international hard men who like to do one arm pull-ups and talk loudly about 'dynos' and 'mono-doigts'. When I'd arranged to meet some climbing friends from Sheffield down there, I hadn't quite appreciated what I was getting us into. This vulgar display of muscle definition was too much for me so we moved on rapidly in search of some caves.

Our first stop was Fontaine-de-Vaucluse to see the famous rising. This is much bigger than I'd ever imagined. In flood, water 'exsurges' at rates of up to one hundred cumecs. The day we saw it, only a paltry 30 to 40 cumecs cascaded down into the village. During dry periods the level of the water drops 20m, flowing out at springs lower down the valley. The flooded pothole has been dived by numerous people since 1876 including J.Y. Cousteau (to -74 m), J. Hassenmeyer (to -205 m) and most recently by a 'robot' to -308m with no sign of levelling out.

Nearby, the Federation Francais de Speleologie have constructed a fibre glass show cave. The guided tour through this finishes with a display of incredibly beautiful speleothems collected by Norbert Casteret during his explorations 'sous la terre'.

The caves of the Vaucluse plateau which feed the rising tend to be of a rather serious nature with three over 500 m deep [1, 2]. The Aven Jean Nouveau for instance, has a 167m entrance pitch. Fortunately we only had 153m of rope, so we carried on our way up to Vercors.

Our arrival there was greeted with leaden grey skies and drizzle. Despite this weather and anxious for activity we set off to go down the Trou Qui Souffle or 'hole which blows'. The cave is 220m deep, not much by French standards, but has a number of routes in the lower sections. Its entrance is a hole in the side of the road, from which an icy draught emanates in summer. In 1980 we had belayed the ladder for the first pitch to the axle of the club bus. This didn't impress the local cavers who considered an 8 mm anchor preferable to a 3.5 ton van. This April the road to the cave was closed for the 'ski du fond' until 1st May (as are many of the forest roads in Vercors). Thus we were forced to use 8 mm anchors of which there were an abundance, including one marked with a strangely familiar red ring.

There was some delay in descending whilst two other French parties came out. Standing in the rain for an hour and a half I began to curse them. I had expected better from the French - after all, they did invent the sport. The problem was clear when we reached the bottom of the pitch and found a 20m ice flow covering the floor. Apart from providing some amusement and bruises, this 'toboggan' also used up the rope needed to bottom the cave.

The second, third and fourth pitches can be rigged as one, with two rebelayes, giving a fine, airy 40 m drop away from the water. The fixed aids in the cave had improved since 1980, and as well as a number of useful traverse lines, an iron ladder now exists on the 8 m pitch into the 'Salle de la Vire'. We poked around the passages at the bottom of this for a while and found pitches we didn't have enough rope for, so went out for tea. The Trou Qui Souffle provides a pleasant trip and is a good introduction to French caves. The local cavers use it as a novices trip!

We spent a couple more days in Vercors, including a day skiing above Correncon, around the Grand Moucherolle and Deux Soeurs. The pistes are not as extensive or challenging as the alpine resorts to the east, but nevertheless provide an easy and pleasurable way of seeing this very beautiful part of Vercors. We

also watched a couple of folk climb the 300m high cliffs above the Gournier. This all looked too heroic, so we moved on north again.

Another cave which I'd wanted to visit for a long time was the Grotte de la Diau. This is situated about 10 km east of Annecy and is a 2.5 km long resurgence cave. In 1976 this was linked to the Tanne du Bel Espoir, 600 m higher on the Parmelan Plateau to form what has since become a popular through trip. I knew of a number of folk in SUSS who had done this and had also read a report of the BPC's visit in 1981 [3, 4]. Unfortunately, I hadn't thought to take any of this information with us so when we arrived at the entrance of the Diau having navigated through the forest using 1/8" of a Michelin 1/200,000 road map, I felt pretty smug. In fairness, the track is sign-posted, but we missed the second one. Even so, the walk took only 20 minutes, half that suggested by the sign.

The stream cave appears to be rigged permanently and there is no shortage of traverse wire ('fils de fer') and iron ladders. Of the former there are two types in the Diau. There is the thin 'fence wire' common in many French caves, and some more-reassuring 'GG winch cable' which is about 1/4" diameter steel hawser anchored with 10 mm or 12 mm expansion bolts. In view of the fact that neither of us can swim, the use of winch cable was especially comforting on the tyroleans across the foaming river. It turned out that while we were in the cave it was flooding from the afternoon melt on the Parmelan. The water in the entrance lake had risen about a metre by the time we came out, forcing us to traverse even higher up the wall. The furthest point we reached was about 1/2 km into the cave, a little beyond the 'Grand Soufflerie'. This is an aptly named dry rift through which one can actually hear the wind blowing through the passage. Route finding was no real problem. There are large arrows on many walls to show the way out.

April is certainly not the best time of the year to undertake a complete traverse of the Bel Espoir - Diau system. There was a lot of water in the cave (maybe in excess of 2 cumecs). In summer it is apparently possible to walk in parts of the streamway and swim the lakes. This would have been pretty suicidal during our visit. If you want to experience some of the thrills of a 'bigish' river cave, without the expense of going to New Britain, the Diau in flood is to be recommended.

## References

- 1) Luc-Henri Fage, 'Speleo Sportive dans les Monts du Vaucluse' Edisud, (1981)
- 2) S. Worthington, 'Vaucluse Plateau', J. Sheffield University S.S., Vol 3, no. 1, p 36 (1979/80)
- 3) S. Worthington, 'France 79', J. Sheffield University S.S., Vol 3, no. 1, p 32 (1979/80)
- 4) B.J. Smith 'Tanne du Bel Espoir - Grotte de la Diau' and G.W. Crossley, 'Tanne du Bel Espoir Through Trip', both in J. Bradford P.C. Vol 6, no. 5 pp 2-12, (1984)

## FROM THE LOG

### Charterhouse Cave

12th July. Pete Hann, Duncan Frew. Playing with the boulders: a big one in floor needs bang. There is a fair amount of movement beyond.

2nd August. P.H., Aubrey Newport, Andy Summerskill, Nigel Graham. Broke a boulder in the bottom. Tourist trip for Andy.

6th September. P.H., N.G. Checked the result of the bang. Boulders didn't move much but the offending one was turned to dust. A bit of digging revealed a hole in the floor with large gap between boulders. This could not be entered as it is VERY unstable. Cement put in various places to start the stabilising, will take 3 or 4 more trips before we can get down.

20th September. P.H., D.F. Digging at the end.

27th September. P.H., Graham Johnson, Rob Taviner, N.G. underground with Brian Prewer and D.F. on surface. While N.G. collected gravel (by now becoming harder to find! - N.G.) the others set up the "Grunterphone" at various places down the cave: Splatter Chamber, Bottom of Citadel and Singing Stal Chamber were radio located, with very good voice connection between U/ground and surface, at all points. S.S.C. is just beyond the Great Swallet depression, to the left. U.B.S.S. fired a charge at their Great Swallet dig, but it was very quiet (at Singing Stal). More cement in end boulders as well.

4th October. N.G. led three Reading Uni members for a tourist trip, taking sand and cement in with us. On exit, met P.H. and D.F., Nigel then going down cave with them, carrying yet more sand. More cement in end boulders, another few feet depth added to dig. -N.G., (rest by P.H.)

### Eastwater Cavern

#### RIFT CHAMBER

25th July. Nick Pollard. Solo to First Rift Chamber to commence digging a roof passage. Moved some boulders from the passage, which is small and a bit awkward to work in. Can see on a couple of feet.

28th September. N.P., Graham Johnson, and:

3rd October, with Matt Tuck (BEC). Digging in Rift Chamber.

#### WEST END SERIES

5TH September. Pete Moody, Steve Milner (BEC). Quick visit to the sump below Blackwall Tnnel, found it dry, but digging required to clear a way through.

6th S. P.M., S.M., Lawrence ?, Nick Pollard, Graham Johnson. Spent 2-3 hours in atrociously muddy conditions (worse than Welsh's Green according to G.J.) clearing silt from the sump area. The drainhole was excavated as much as possible and an explosive charge placed down in it. Hopefully the blockage has now been blasted out and the sump will remain broken when the rains return. Replaced the BEC tackle which had been on the Greek St. pitches for many weeks. -P.M.

14th September. N.P., Martin Palfrey (SBSS). Fine trip to Blackwall Tunnel, having finally been shown the way on the 6th. Martin's 1st trip to West End; he was thoroughly impressed, especially with Dolly and Lolly Pots. Looked at the sinkhole blasted on 6th, but couldn't really tell if the bang had had any effect, we didn't hang around because my lamp was playing up. Fine trip. -N.P.

19th September. P.M., Geoff Newton, S.M. Sump / duck still open but no real test as to whether the problem has been solved as stream still not flowing. Big digging session bagging up sand and gravel from the drain hole. No-one very optimistic that it's not going to sump come the rains. -P.M.

### Lionels Hole

30th August. Pete & Alison Moody. Following up earlier trips to push upstream from East Low Level. Altogether made about 25ft progress through a badly-choked sump, presently dry, to reach a clean-washed

rock tube. Some work with a lump hammer is required to get further. Cannot see very far, passage maybe closing down. -P.M.

## Portland

### GROVE CLIFF CAVES

24th June to 14th October: 7 trips logged, plus 1 or 2 more. N.G., Phil Strong, Martin Crocker. Trips divided between digging down boulder choked rift in "GROVE CLIFF DIG" - now given actual name "ALLOTMENT DIG" in deference both to its location and to the Portland caving tradition of word-playing names, - and surveying the whole 3-cave system. One evening saw Martin AWOL or ill, and Phil about to become a father (mother & daughter doing well!), so Nigel soloed into GUANO RIFT, the central one of the group, to start putting up an SRT practice route high in the roof of the entrance section of the rift.

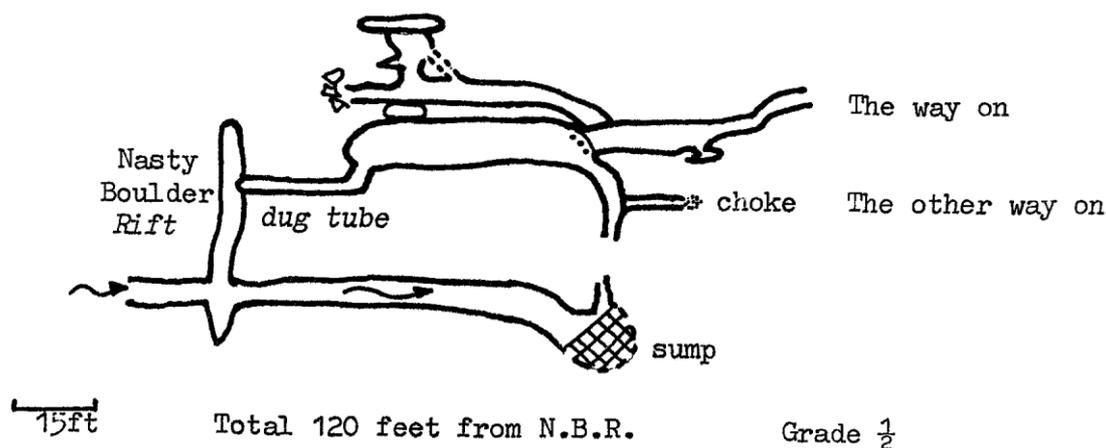
-N.G.

## Pierre's Pot

16th June. P.M. As most-of the time and effort spent digging the roof-tube downstream was backing out with spoil, acquired the biggest boat with which it is still possible to reach the digging face. Rapid progress made, and some 20ft from Nasty Boulder Rift, broke out into the side of a large passage. Several leads noted, one of which appeared to be the other end of Alison's sump passage dig.

17th June. P. & A.M. Checked the passage found yesterday. Going off the tube leading down towards the sump another rift was found, it went 20ft or so to a cobble dig. A climb at the end of the main passage went to a staled-up tube, a hole in the floor looked too small. Also found a draughty cobble-choked passage heading steeply upwards.

20th June. The Moodys. Pushed the draughty passage. It went about 20ft then split, one way into boulders, the other a very tight vertical rift. Alison checked the hole in the floor: no way on there. Staled tube found to be the best bet. Stal is only thin over cobble/gravel fill. Using a hammer, progressed 5ft or so, then put a charge on to crack up a thicker coating further on.



21st June. P. & A.M., D.F. Dived upstream sump again (previous dive 5th April). Weighted line and went through feet first. It turned out to be fairly roomy. The passage the far side however was not big enough to turn in and after blundering into silt banks I decided to come out. It would be worth someone "having a go at it head first. I gave Dunc a quick tourist into the new bit, and we tried for an aural connection with Alison waiting by the downstream sump. All that she heard, faintly, was Dunc hammering on the wall of the descending tube.

12th July. P. & A. The Way On looks pretty difficult digging now. Decided to promote The Other Way On to principal dig and began opening up the entrance to the rift to ease access.

20th September. P. & A. M. Digging very badly choked, rather aqueous, passage by downstream sump: not very feasible proposition.

27th September. P.M, Attacked high-level downstream choke. Opened the dig up by removing very large rocks embedded in the floor. Things did not look too promising straight ahead so removed some calcited cobbles in roof to emerge into a relatively open rift. Above was a mass of staled-in boulders, one could see along the rift for ten feet or so but digging required to open up start.

3rd October. P. & A.M. Big breakthrough failed to materialise. Rift was smaller than it looked. After an hour or so, work was stopped by what appeared to be a load-bearing rock jammed, in the passage. Decided to remove it chemically rather than risk getting splatted by large boulder in roof.

4th. October. P.M. More digging, hanging deaths in roof still threatening.

10/11th October. Pete. Progressing slowly along a boulder-choked rift of indeterminate height and width. Way on is blocked every few feet by slabs which have come out of the roof. Just hope the stuff we're digging under doesn't decide to drop out. -P.M.

## Swildons Hole

### ROLLING THUNDER

21st June. Aubrey Newport, Graham Johnson. Fired & retired.

26 & 27th July. A.N., Nick Pollard. More thunder. As on:

16th & 23rd August (with G.J. on 16th.), while on-

26th August A.N., N.P., G.J. Rolling Thunder, without thunder. Similarly 2/9

27th September. A.N., N.P. Fired a charge. Actually had cave to ourselves.

30th September. A.N., N.P. Digging, but unable to bang.

### BARNES LOOP DIG

7th October. John Scott, Merv Ingram. Fired & retired. 1½ hours: long time no see, hope to be back again.

15th October. Scotty & Merv. Cleared some of last week's spoil, fired, ret'd

17th October. Max "von Dunbar", "Miss Spoil". Removed spoil from 14/10 bang.

-Jacky Ridewood

### MUDDY SUMP DIG

1st July. Pete Hann, Graham Johnson. Down to bang the bottom of the aven. Water low, mud as bad as ever, charge laid and fired, then quick out.

2nd September. Similarly.

9th September. P.H., G.J., J.S. Inspected bang of 2/9. The rock must be very tough, or the bang rubbish, as this is the second time it has failed to put even a small dent in the rock. Felt really p - d off so went and blew the sh t out of the stal bank at the Twenty-Foot dig. -P.H.

## Tween Twins Hole

3th July. Jim Rands, Denyse & Gary Shorrocks. Don't give up hope with this one, there's still a chance the left-hand hole will go. Ideal digging conditions: dry and sunny for the haulers; dry, sandy spoil for the digger. Mega session; only the time stopped us, no-one wanted to stop digging as the passage was going. It has just started turning into the hill, dipping down at approx. 15° and is now approx. 10ft long, 2'6" x 2'6", rock on two sides. Fifty boats of spoil removed, and the site landscaped to keep UBSS happy.

7th July. Tav & Gen. Widened the passage for the hell of it. I couldn't find a left wall - I don't think there is one! Unless the passage turns dramatically right, it will just come out into the Combe.

18th July. Dunc. A quick shufti and grot gained another couple of feet. Hard to say where it's going, but there is room for manoeuvre - and some lovely mosquitoes who enjoyed breakfast in bed. Heavy rain quickly turned Mr. Rand's lovely spoil into sludge.

2nd August. Jim, Gary & Ben. The early shift, joined later by Zippy and Dunc, in time for the barbeque and last drop of booze. 103 buckets of spoil removed, good easy progress, now encountering cobbles and heading more positively into the hill. A touch of CO2 build-up at the end of the 8-hour session: it must be getting good!

5th August. Jim, Dunc, Aidan and some young lads. Hole still going South, two walls and a floor now. Passage approx. 5ft wide filled with sandstone cobbles, limestone cobbles and sand. Looking good. 5 hours.

## Welsh's Green Swallet

(Resume of Log entries, as a report and survey so far is in preparation -Ed.)

Twenty trips from 21st June to 21st October, by Graham Johnson plus Merv, Aubrey, Pete H., Kevin James, Scotty, Jacky ("Miss Spoil"), Andy, Max, Tav, Dean, Sandra McKenzie, Clive Barlow, Nick Pollard, Matt, N.G., Jim R., Dunc, C. Blake, Paul Lambert, of whom about half are, as one entry has it, the "usual lot". Steady progress along enlarged streamway continues, now via a wet pitch into a circular chamber, whose outlet is similar passage to that from the entrance shaft and aven: wet crawl. Maypoling reached a roof-passage opposite the pitch, quickly choked: "Hann-In-The-Roof". Despite difficulties caused by the mud, the cave has been surveyed so far.

21st October. Welsh's again. G.J., P.H., Miss Spoil. Welsh's Mining Consortium is proud to announce the share offer of the century: ignore the City - our choke is not slumping!

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20th AGEN ALLWELD. Nick Pollard, Geoff Newton, Duncan Price (B.U.S.S.), John Stevens (C.S.S.). Down Southern Stream to Snowboat dig. Dug here for 5½ hours. Then Nick and Geoff went out via Grand Circle, looking at terminal sump, Fifth Choke, etc. fine 12 hour trip. Many thanks to Geoff for superb trip.  
-N.P.

24th June. WOOKEY HOLE. R. Stevenson, R. Warman. Photographic dive 0 to 1. Vis. 10 metres.

27th June. NAMELESS CAVE. Pete & Alison Moody. looked at Nameless Cave, opposite Aveline's Hole. "Complete Caves" describes it as being near the top of the hill, whereas it's nearer half-way up. Not very impressed with the sight: it looks like another Tween Twins.

29th June. DAREN CILAU. Nick Pollard, Martin Palfrey (S.B.S.S.). Down to Terminal Sump.

1st July. CHARTERHOUSE CAVE. Jeff Price, Derek Sanderson, Terry Waller. Tourist and photographic trip. 2hrs.

1st July. SWILDONS HOLE. Tav., Dean, Nick Pollard. Fired around Short Round Trip, then to pub.

1st July. PORTLAND. Nigel Graham took the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme mob to an unroofed rift at the Bill, for ladder/lifeline training. C.20ft pitch, with an undercut to make it awkward, and the odd breaking wave (sea-cave) to make it wet and them witter. They didn't do too badly.

3rd July. Upper Pitts. New changing-room tiling: under P.H. and M.F.'s direction, D.F. & N.G. - more grout in end tiles "Wessexhouse Extension" - PH' comment; "Beats Charterhouse". Blame the M.N.R.C. for that! Seriously though, it was a bloody good party ...  
-N.G.  
"I don't remember a party ... should I?" -D.F., in shaky handwriting.

30th June. SPAR POT. Tav & Gen. Quick thrutch about. -Tav.

4th July. SWILDONS HOLE. To Sump 2. Following a foolish request from Denyse Shorrocks, Den & Gary, Jim R., Dunc, Martin Lockyer, Andy Doran (K.P.S.S.), set out to prove that Swildons isn't always crowded - very late at night! A good time was had by all, the streamway was crystal clear, the showers were

hot: perhaps it ain't such a bad time to go caving!  
4th. July. Upper Pitts. Cracked windows repaired.

-J.R.

4/5th July. B.C.R.C. Cave Rescue Conference, in South Wales (DYO and Penwyllt) Witnessed Mr. Drake & co. demonstrating sump rescue techniques in 6" of water, spent two days practicing for the Dordogne. One or two useful ideas but on the whole got the impression that no-one knew what they were doing. Too many people who liked the sound of their own voices (not to mention lots of commercial gadgetry, fine for buildings, u/s for cave rescue.). PH, DF, NG. - D.F. / (N.G.)

5th July. "Hello, who am I speaking to? It's Brian Prewer here". Dolly goat stuck on Cheddar cliffs above Horseshoe Bend. Retrieved quite easily by D.F., P.H., P.P. Lovely view but we were all leaking: good job the farmer drove us up in Landrover or we wouldn't have gone! Serves us right for coming back from the Conference early! We made the national Press and radio. -D.F.

4th June. EASTWATER CAVERN. Tav, G.N. and Chris from the campsite. Tourist trip of Upper Series for Chris, looking at digs. Stream has dried up; another couple of weeks of good weather and West End might be on.

-Tav.

4th July. DALE HEAD POT. "Gold Top", "Prong", "Stumpy", Nick, Gary, Maggie, Gordon. "So they scraped and scratched and scabbled and scrooged, and then they scrooged again and scabbled and scratched and scraped, working busily with their little paws and muttering to themselves, up we go! up we go!, till at last, pop, their snouts came out into the sunlight and they found themselves rolling in the grass of a great meadow"

or as Prong would say, "How can you scrooge when some knobhead's run off with ladder!?"

( -with apologies to Kenneth Grahame for this adapted quote from "The Wind In The Willows"! One member, unimpressed with this Log entry, suggested that such entries ought not appear in the Journal!!

-Editor.)

5th July. SELL GILL (GOBLIN SHAFT) As Dale Head party, less Maggie, were playing about on string, this time rigged sensibly (no Parrot).

5th July. Sshhh! ... Tav & Gen, G.N., Mike Hearn. A look at a secret site in East Mendip, needing a couple of dry weeks to be leasable. Then...

CHARTERHOUSE CAVE. Tav, Martin Lockyer, Andy Doran (K.P.S.S.), Susan Ind. Tourist trip. -Tav.

6th July. SWILDON'S HOLE. Denyse & Gary. Early morning photo hunt. Took 24, hope at least a couple turn out half-way decent, more or less like the couple who took them.

6th July. GOATCHURCH CAVERN. Jeff Horlock & Lynne Byrne. Stopped off on our way from Fishguard to London. Have got engaged and am changing "home-20". Took Lynne down Goatchurch on her first trip, and showed her a few pubs. See you all soon. -Jeff.

P.S. Will someone please explain how to get "HOT" water out of the showers?

(In a different hand:) "Turn the hot tap on and put a coin in."

10th July. DAREN CILAU. Nick Pollard, Graham Johnson, Merv Ingram. Fine trip down to World's End sumps.

11th July. Upper Pitts. P.H., D.F. Ran out of tiles, 20-odd short, last box was different colour. We're getting there but we'll be glad to see the end.

12th July. EASTWATER CAVERN. Tav + 5. Short round trip: Primrose Path, Canyon and occasional detours. A few grunts and groans from assorted crowd but they all enjoyed getting out. Good festering trip. -Tav.

12th July. SWILDONS' HOLE. M. & E. Hewins accompanied J. and M. Thomas to top of Twenty then spent frustrating hour trying to take photos. What can you do about the fog from wet bodies? J. & M. returned from Tratman's and we all surfaced together after 2½ hours.

18th July. SWILDONS' HOLE. Sarah Mitchell, Roz Hall, Pam Binnie, Nick Thompson, John Deal, Tony Bennett, Steph Gough. Swildons One or Two, rich in incident though less so than last night's rescue.

19th July. LONGWOOD AUGUST. Thompson, Bennett, Gough. In, out, shook it all about. 2 hours.

18th. July. LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE. Rich Websell, Malc Foyle, Pete Watts, Kevin Gannon, Dave Martin.

"There is a tide in the affairs of man, when, taken at the flood, leads to fortune, but omitted all their voyages are bound in shallows and misery, on such a full sea are we now afloat, to take the current where it serves or forever lose our ventures".

It would be more appropriate if it came from a "Comedy of Errors", but - the biggest error was attempting it in the first place.

The usual pig of a carry but with 28s this time (we're learning). The dive in through Bridge Cave was pretty uneventful apart from Malc stealing the vis again, then the usual gentle stroll down to 2 where a stop was made to repair valves etc. Being the lucky one Dave stopped here due to duff equipment. Not being so lucky the others went on through 2. Richie laid a new line, thank God; the other one was atrocious, and was then followed by Pete, Malc and Kevin. Vis in 2 was good but there's a lot of old line that needs taking out.

We kept the same order of diving for 3. The vis in there was non-existent and the line was so bad no-one really wanted to touch it. Sump 4 was a bit clearer but the line was just as bad.

A nice bit of streamway between 4 and 5. At 5 Pete gave up with exploding ears but Malc, Richie and Kev carried on through 5 to New World Series.

The vis coming back was a bit better due to increased water flow, but it was a pig finning against it. At this point a new problem arose with the water. A horrible taste of (1) Creosote? (2) Paraquat? (3) Sheep-dip? Not having ring-worm (3) doesn't matter, having wet-suits we didn't need (1), and we'll tell you next week if it was (2). All we know is that it was horrible! A fag stop was made at Sump 2, where we picked up Dave. The stream had risen by about 8-9 inches and it was a real struggle slogging back up the stream. Had to use the Canal Bypass on the way out as the Canal was sumped. Bridge sump on the way out was a real bastard, or as Malc said, "character building": no vis, impossible to fin against the current, lights getting washed out of helmets, reaching the end of the line and finding yourself still under water, getting hit by boulders, bottles being washed out of harnesses, you name it, it happened. We finally crawled out at 10.15pm after the longest 11 hours I can remember. I don't think anyone would argue if I said we were all knackered, because we were: and finally - only just made the pub. -P.W.

("Descent" 78 Oct/Nov 87, p7 carries a report by Ron Smith of Croydon C.C. of his observations of a flood in the little Neath valley on May 30th 1987. Light rain all that day had ended a 2 week dry spell. In 1¼ hours, the river rose from being dry to the LNRC resurgence to a raging torrent which entered Pwll-y-Rhyd at 4.45pm to sump Town Drain at 5.30pm. -Ed.)

19th July. G.B. CAVERN. Tav, Kevin Simpson. Tourist trip for Kevin whose previous caving experience was in New Zealand. Seemed to enjoy himself and bought me a couple of beers and a Turkish Delight. I might set up my own business doing this! -Tav.

19th July. G.B. CAVERN. Jan Hoggy, Jan & Paul, Devil's Elbow Route, Ladder Dig, back out the normal way. For a Sunday, we met very few other people. -Jan.

19th July. SWILDONS' HOLE. Keith & Roz Fielder, Dunc. To Sump Two. Suffered chemical warfare! When will the Geneva Convention ban carbide?!

18th July. DAREN CILAU. N.P., G.N. Another superb trip: Man In The Roof, Antler Passage, Far Epocalypse to the chokes. Poked about in the main choke, then looked at the Eastern choke. Fired on out via Epocalypse Way, both suffering from light pox.

21st July. EASTWATER CAVERN. N.P., Martin Palfrey (S.B.S.S.) Dolphin Pot and Ifold's Series. Same two people:

23rd July. SWILDONS' HOLE (Black Hole Series - fine evening trip.

25th July. CHARTERHOUSE CAVE. N.G., Andy Ward., Tourist / photographic trip.

25th July. SWILDONS' HOLE, Vaughan Thomas, Lynne Robinson, Ed + Ed the Naval Men. Short Round Trip. V.T. has food poisoning, Ed's + Ed's first trip. Went in Mud Sump extension and came out like chocolate brown mice.

25th July. WOOKEY HOLE. Rich Websell, Malc Foyle, Kev Gannon, Dave Pike. Dave to Twenty, rest to Twenty-Two. 2 hours.

26th July. G.B. CAVERN. Vaughan, Lynne, Ed +Ed (RN). To end of Bat Passage. Out to find a car window smashed; went back down cave to find BEC? owner. Valuables taken: Police said it was the second that day.

25th July. DAREN CILAU. G.N., Clive Gardener, Simon Ward, Mike Green. To Clive's dig off Red River. After an hour or so digging a hole was exposed which draughted strongly. Later we reached a small chamber with a choked rift in the floor. Further digging exposed a 20ft high streamway, still draughting strongly, wide open but only 4" wide. Clive took some photos then we gave up and carried on to look at Frosty Passage. This is in an interesting position for a possible Aggy connection, but it looks pretty long term. Left this to look at Neglected Passage and started another dig. Finally to the Source of Time to do some taping. Then out, moderately knackered. 14hrs. -G.N.

25th July. DALES DIARY(!). Ken Dawe, Bob Pyke, Jim Moon. Camped at Selside, Moon's first, long-overdue, trip to parts Northern. Down WASHFOLD POT on Saturday - entertaining struggle with unremitting cave, witnessed Dawe's acrobatics and hanging around at top of 135ft pitch. Ascent likened to "vertical drowning". An entertaining 8 hour trip, we didn't miss much cave.

Sunday morning trip down LONG CHURN, out via ALUM POT main pitch. Three hours of great fun: lovely entry via Dolly Tubs into Alum Pot, superb prusik out. Dawe & Pike kept giving Moon the "geriatrics' trip" self-effacing rubbish - don't believe a word of it! -J.M.

1st August. G.B. - or the way to it! Jim Rands, Denyse & Gary Shorrocks. Set out for trip down G.B. Car ended up in tight squeeze under a tractor. Car in a nice mess: good excuse not to cave. Gary is thinking about putting his name down for Driver of the Year Award! (He's got a lot of competition!)

1st August. LONGWOOD. Standard trip into cave, to sump, back via August. No surprises, no problems. (except for the Editor in attempting to decipher the 4 names! -Ed.)

1st August. NORTH HILL SWALLET. A. Summerskill, D. Boomer, G. Newton. Horrible! Entrance pitch O.K., but not a classic trip! 1¾ hours. -A.S.

3rd. August. DAREN CILAU. N.P., M.P. Another fine tour. Old Main Chamber, Big Chamber Nowhere The Entrance, Man In The Roof, Antler Passage, Far Epocalypse chokes, out via Epocalypse, pausing to look at Urchin Oxbow.

4th August. LONGWOOD AUGUST. M. Tuck (B.E.C.), G.J. Nice change from Welsh's Green Swallet.

5th August. SWILDONS Muddy Sump Dig. Pete Hann, solo to check on bang of 1st July. The muddy duck is a lot lower but the bang only took off a lump the size of my fist. Will try again. Sump 1 is almost a duck again, only 1 inch of rock under water.

7th August. Upper Pitts. Jim & Dunc. Friday, the first peaceful day of the week. We had thought we would have the Hut to ourselves for the week, but our illusions were shattered on Monday. Still, a lot of work done: new fire-escape door frame, glass temporarily repaired, roof tiles replaced, "hay" cut and the obligatory foray into the drains.

7th August. OGOFF FECHAN. N.P., G.J., Matthew Tuck (BEC). Went to Sump 2, the guide book proved wrong - next time we see the author...! Then LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE, an excellent trip! Then WHITE LADY CAVE, then the pub - the Hunters', it is worth getting up early! What was the BBC up to - "East Enders" down Porth-yr-Ogof??

9th August. CHARTERHOUSE CAVE. Tav, Gill & Tim Fawkes (MEG). Leadership training for Tim, plus photo session, one asthma attack, and much mirth when Gill failed to spot an overgrown depression until she was at the bottom!  
-Tav.

11th August. Enter the Hot-Air Balloon Rescue Organisation, checking on a couple who hit the ground rather earlier than intended, bang slap in the middle of the Mineries. Seemed to me they do this all the time. (From Millfield School I gather).  
-Tav & Gen.

16th August. OTTER HOLE. N.P. plus assorted MEG cavers. Fine trip, two of us managed to go to the very end. Also had good fun diving (free) Sump 2 then looking at Sump 3. Many thanks to Tav for arranging the trip for me.  
-N.P.

14th - 29th August. DORDOGNE. Pete Hann + Sandra MacKenzie, Rich Websell, Sarah Dore, Malc Foyle + Fi Lewis, Tav, Gordon Kaye, Lynne Crockart, Gary Smith, Maggie McPherson, Dunc Frew, Geoff Newton, Nina Wilson, Dave Pike (BEC) and Nigel Graham sampling caves, wine, sights, wine, etc. of Perigord region. Lot of varied and very pleasant caving ranging from a local "Goatchurch" (complete with weege!) to long streamway and 10 easy pitches of Gouffre du Saut de la Pucelle, and the 200ft entrance shaft and beautiful stals of the Igue de St-Sol. Show-caves visited included the Gouffre de Padirac (superb) and the Grotte Rouffignac (bit of a disappointment). Great time had by all.

20th August. EASTWATER CAVERN, West End Series. Derek Sanderson and Tony Waller. Using existing tackle; Lolly Pot ladder looks a bit corroded. Good 3 hour trip.

23rd AUGUST. Two SWILDONS HOLE trips:

Andy Ward, Mark Lunn and Arthur Witchell, to Tratman's, and a few photos. Arthur's first trip, seemed to enjoy it.  
-A.M.W.

Clive Barlow, Nibs Montgomery. Good trip through Sump One: Nibs enjoyed the experience, could be a convert from sappy football!

26th August. Bob Lawder, Alan Thomas (BEC) for evening ramble in top Swildons. Reminded of entry in Chamonix Log-book:

"Ascended the Aiguille Blanc in 2 hours, and found the rocks very easy." followed by,

"Descended the Aiguille Blanc in 3 sec. and found the rocks very hard."

31st August. SWILDONS HOLE. N.G., Phil Strong, Martin Crocker, Anthony Ward; Grove Cliff Dig Works Outing; N.G. & M.C. up to Renascence approach, still sumped to about 2" above the arch. P.S. & A.W. visited Swildons Two.  
-N.G.

31st August. STOKE LANE SLOCKER. N.P., G.J., M.T., Simon, Sally and Martin (Kingston Poly). Fine trip to Main Chamber, Throne Room, etc. While Simon, Sally and Martin went out, Nick, Graham and Matt visited Bailey Ward Series. Fine aquatic caving, plenty of ducks and gobfulls of sewage. On our way out we removed the line someone had put in the sump.

3rd September. DAREN CILAU. G.J., M.T., C. Blake (ex-WCC). Epocalypse, Antler and a few other bits that we didn't know in search of the above.

5th September. WOOKEY HOLE. Rich Websell, Kev Gannon, Malc Foyle. Well we talked about it and now we have finally done it. The dive from 9 to 19 was different. We could see where we were going for a change. We de-kitted and got out of the water!! The chamber in Twenty is very impressive and there is a lot more passage there than I had thought. Rich pushed a squeeze at the end of Twenty, into a small, very loose passage. He pushed it for about 30 - 40ft and it's still going, we might go back for another look. A good clear dive out. 3½ hours.  
-Malc.

20th September. WOOKEY HOLE. Same team as on 5th, tidying line and clearing rubbish from 9 to 20. Good vis.

21st September. EASTWATER CAVERN. N.P., Martin Palfrey (SBSS). Tourist trip to Regent Street, had a good poke about, then took a taxi to Waldorf Street.

27th September. WOOKEY HOLE. Same three. Planned trip to 24 but owing to some technical problems like losing boots and high-pressure leaks Malc only managed to pass 23. Kev and Rich reached 24 just, so we have all got to go back again and finish the trip. Good diving. 23 is great for the first one through, the rest get nil vis. 5½ hours. -Malc.

3rd/4th October. Upper Pitts. After Aubrey had done such a good job of tidying the extension I felt that strange urge to make a mess of it again, ably assisted by P.H. & M.F. Things progress... -Dunc.

4th October. WOOKEY HOLE. Malc Foyle, Pete Brooks, Rich Websell, Keith Savory. Two pairs dived separately to 20, on a training dive. -R.A.W.

10th October. THRUPE LANE SWALLET. N.P., M.T., Tony Nagle, Jim Eaton. Fine trip: Nick & Matt did Avalanche, which was b-y wet. Then all four to top of Atlas Pot, then out.

10th October. Arrived at the Hunters' to be accosted by Brian Prewer - "I want you, you, you and you and ... "Party lost down Singing River Mine for eight hours. Their leader answered to the name of "Coo-ee!" Surfaced to find beer and fags which was a nice touch making up for the loss of drinking time (thanks, Fi). P.H., N.G., D.F., M.F., J.P. & Tav underground, and B.P., Bob Drake, Dave Pike (BEC), Al Taylor + mate, Mr. Mitchell the landowner making tea and receiving apologies (from someone who'd inadvertently crossed his lawn??). Party were found 30 feet from entrance. -Tav.

15th October. CUCKOO CLEEVES. N.P., G.J. Quick trip.

17th October. SWILDONS HOLE: Nine. R.A.W, M.F., K.G. ...

We saw the film,  
We read the book,  
We s\*\*t ourselves,  
We bought the T-shirt,  
And Malc didn't make it!

Disgusting trip, diving in liquid s\*\*t. Lost in Sump 6. Sump 7 had crud with white mould on it. Outwards, we met a rescue in Blue Pencil. Good 7hrs fun.

17th October (not in Logbook). SWILDONS HOLE (rescue). Several members involved in assisting out from top of Blue Pencil, someone who had dislocated a shoulder. Out in time for the Dinner, which was delayed a little while for them.

20th October. WELSH'S GREEN SWALLET. Graham Johnson, Nick Pollard. Tourist trip!!!

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A diver nearly drowned in Wookey Hole recently, during a sump rescue practice / demonstration. Dave Pike (BEC / CDG) was wearing the sump rescue kit, and during the tow through the sump, the mask flooded. The air supply had been set to free-flow, Dave not using a mouthpiece. The accompanying divers rapidly pulled him clear. He had lost consciousness, and was resuscitated and taken to hospital, subsequently making a full recovery.

THE  
WESSEX CAVE CLUB  
HEADQUARTERS BIRTHDAY APPEAL

Nearly twenty years ago, our members raised the money to build Upper Pitts. They also gave freely of their time, energy and enthusiasm.

For the last few years, our present members have shown a similar generous commitment to the improvement and expansion of caving facilities. The work progresses well, but slowly, through a lack of money.

It is felt by the members of the 1986/7 Committee that the H.Q. could - and should - be completed for its Twenty-First Birthday in 1990. This would represent a "Keeping of Faith" with past generations of cavers, and a clear investment and encouragement for the next. To this end, we appeal to members to make this project a reality:-

Firstly, in the form of outright gifts of money.

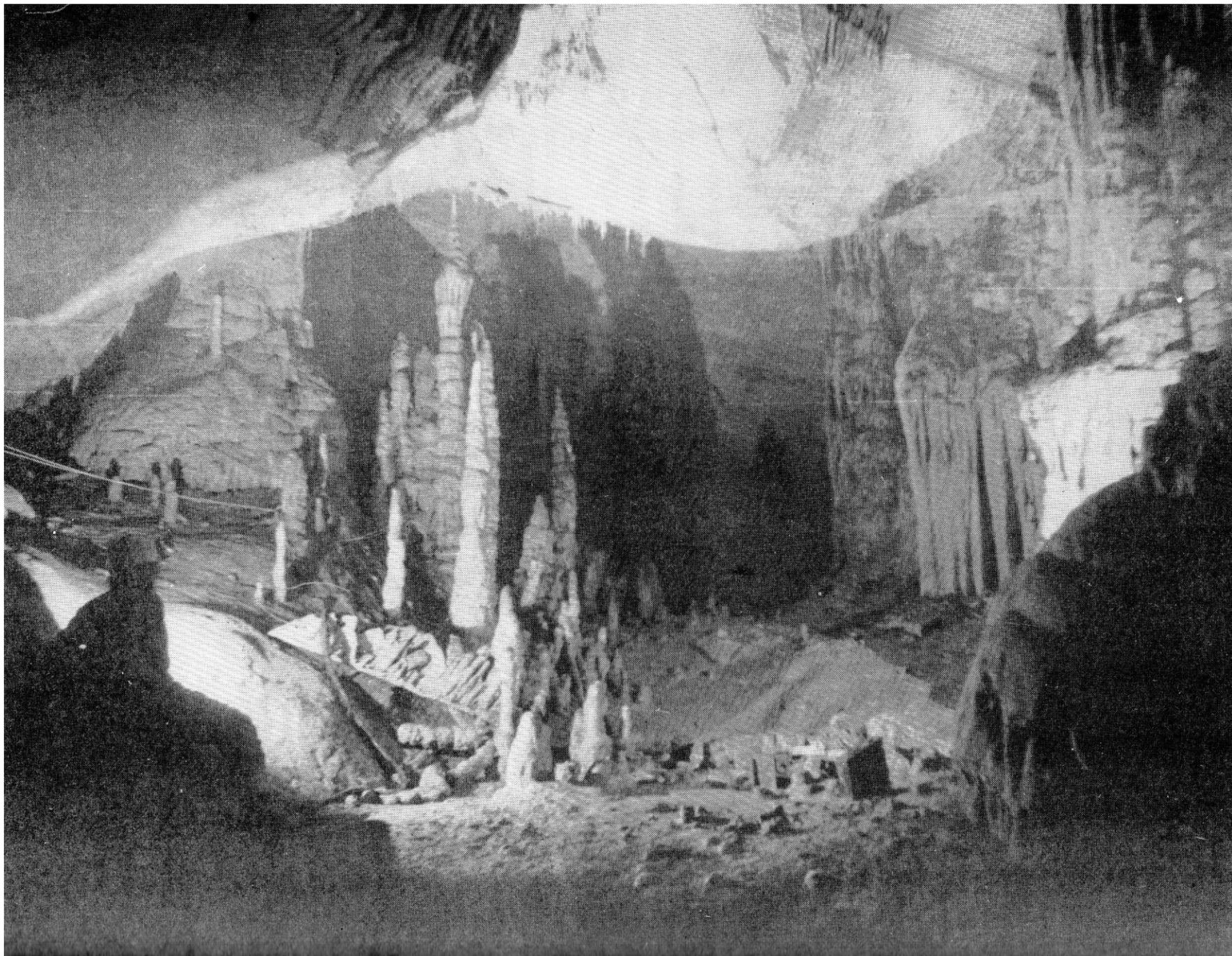
Secondly, in the form of interest-free, short-term, covenanted loans, in multiples of £25, repayable on Oct.1st 1991

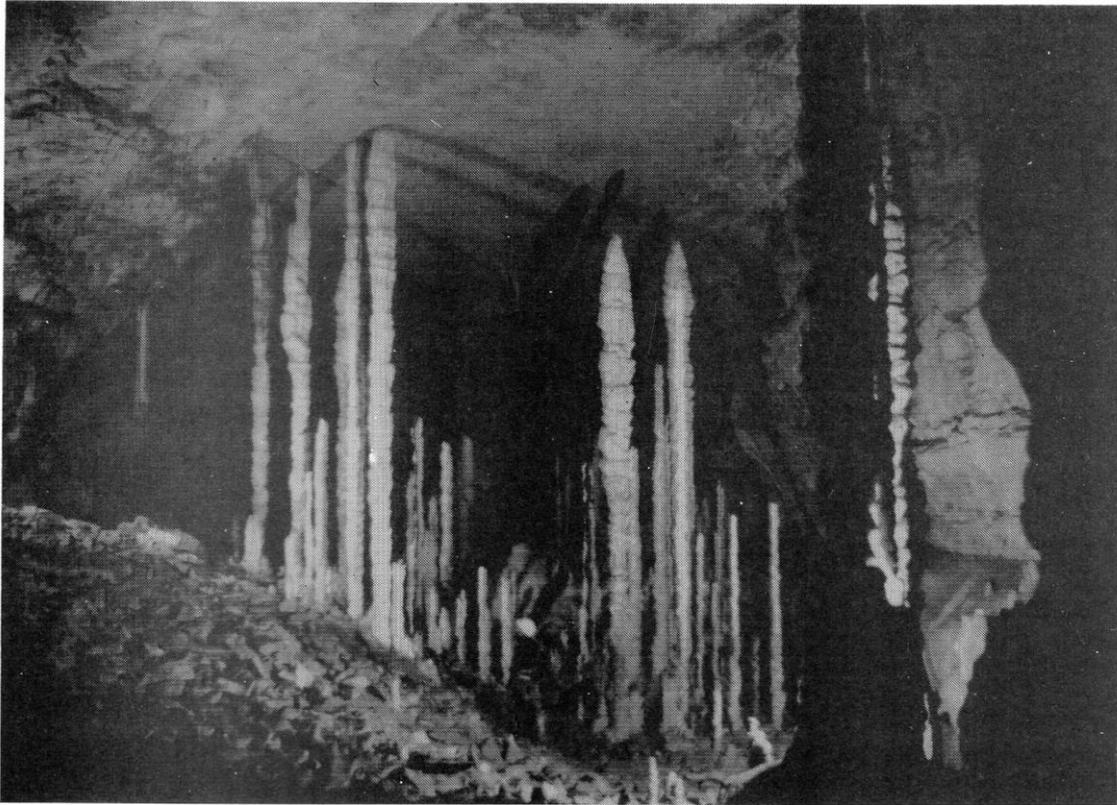
We seek at least £2000 to complete the work as soon as possible.

The Hon. Treasurer has worked out a budget for the next three years to enable us to make regular, fixed repayments of money lent, into a special account supervised by the Chairman, Hon. Treasurer of the day and one of the Trustees. They will supervise the Repayment Account, and of course the redemption of the loans.

If you are able to make a donation or a loan, or have any specific enquiries, please contact the APPEAL SECRETARY, Michael Dewdney-York, on 0272-46835, between 8a.m. and 8p.m., or by letter to;

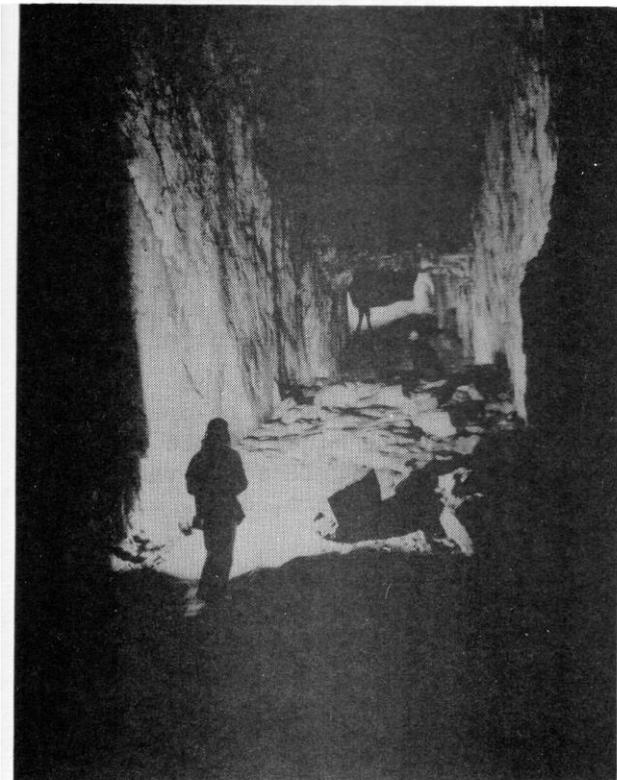
Michael Dewdney-York,  
23 Northumberland Road,  
Redland,  
Bristol,  
BS6 7AZ.



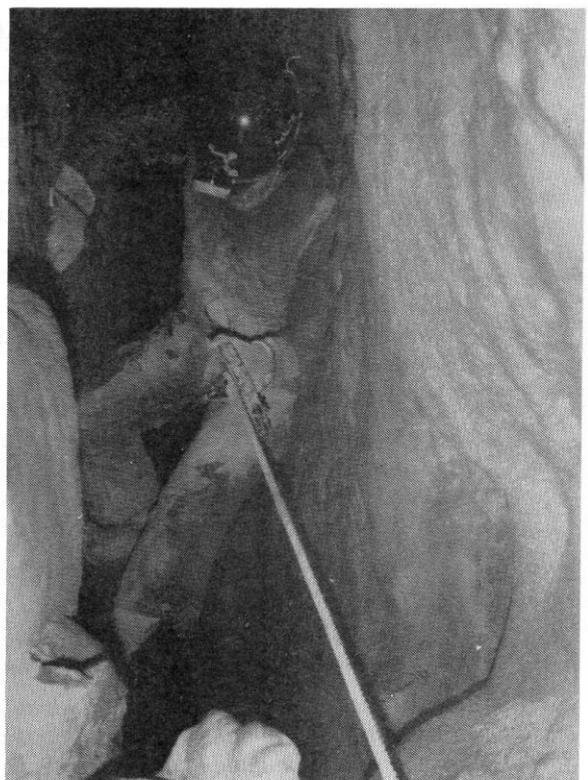


GOUFFRE DE GRANGES - MATHIEU: Salle Des Milles Colonnes.  
(from a transparency by Nigel Graham)

SPAR CAVE, Isle of Skye.  
(from a transparency by Pete Ryder, M.S.G.)



Roger Cooper traversing in STEVE'S ENDEAVOU  
(Portland). (from a colour print by Nigel Graham  
taken on an M.S.G. surveying trip).



THERE will be a MEMBERS + PERSONAL GUESTS ONLY  
weekend: June 4 / 5th 1988, Put it in your  
diary now! All cave-related activities  
admissible: caving, digging, etc.,  
drinking (afterwards)! There  
will be a barrel afterwards  
for those of us who haven't  
reached a contented state  
by 11p.m.

Watch this space !!

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#### PHOTOGRAPHIC PAGES.

These two pages are intended as an experiment in publishing photographs more regularly in the Journal. They were chosen on photographic as well as subject grounds to assess "printability", particularly of slides and colour originals. (Colour printing as such would be prohibitively expensive: I investigated this a couple of years ago.). Hopefully, then, we should have at least the occasional illustrated Journal. There is no lack of suitable material in the Club: caving and cave diving, in Britain and abroad, Club social events, the HQ work, etc., etc. ...

The Editor

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#### TILLY WHIM CAVES — Still no takers.

The 18/19th Century Tilly Whim "Caves" stone mines, in the Dorset County Council's Durlston Country Park (on the Purbeck coast) were closed a few years ago after many years as a tourist attraction.

The mines were declared unsafe by mining consultants called in to advise on the heavily-cracked roof and walls. The square-cut galleries, which are not very long, lie in the Portland Stones, and are entered by a slope adit from the surface, but open out onto large quarried ledges on the cliff face. Stone was transported by boat, loaded from the ledges by a simple crane called a "whim". Tilly Whim mine closed in 1812, but has always been a point-of interest to the public since.

The County Council have been investigating having the mines re-opened commercially by inviting entrepreneurs prepared to render the mines stable and safe for the public. To this end, a glossy brochure was circulated to various influential people, Government and tourist agencies, developers, etc., but only one submission was received by early October '87.

This submission proposed cutting tunnels between the "caves" (two parallel galleries, the Editor seems to remember from distantly-past visits), and grilling the cliff entrances to prevent the public gaining access to the ledges, though they would still provide the view.

The council admitted that this was "not something which lent itself to entrepreneurial activities", to quote County Planning Officer, Mr. Richard Townley.\* And there, for the time being at least, the matter seems to rest.

\* Source: "Dorset Evening Echo" October 9th 1987.

## BACK PAGE

### DIARY DATES

* January	9th	Committee Meeting + Working Weekend.
February	20th	Committee Meeting.
* March	26th	Committee Meeting.
May	14th	Committee Meeting.
June	6th	MEMBERS & GUESTS WEEKEND
June	25th	Committee Meeting
July	16/26th	GOUFFRE BERGER
August	6th	Committee Meeting
September	10th	Committee Meeting
October	15th	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING + DINNER
October	16th	Committee Meeting

All Committee Meetings are on the Saturday, except Oct.16th (Sunday).

The September Committee Meeting date is provisional so far, changeable so as not to coincide with the BCRA Annual Caving Conference.

\* The Editor hopes to be able to put subsequent Journal issues in for printing during the week following these Committee Meetings. Caving trip dates - particularly Berger training meets - will be announced as soon as possible.



DORSET EVENING EHO Friday October 16, 1987

Farming the Mendips for nearly 500 years

Former Bridport Congregational Minister the Rev. Lionel Brown turned the clock back to the 16th Century at a meeting of the West Dorset branch of the Somerset and Dorset Family History Society.

During his lecture on the Browns of Somerset, he said his family had been farming the Mendips from 1500 to the present day.