



# THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

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Fissure on Wavering Down

PRESS DATE FOR NEXT ISSUE: 7 March 1990.

**Short items of news and "stop press" can be accepted up to a week after this date.**

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The Wessex Cave Club Headquarters, Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane, Priddy, Nr. Wells,  
Somerset, BA5 3AX. Telephone: Wells (0749) 72310

Opinions expressed in the Journal are not necessarily those of the Editor  
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**Officers and Committee of the Wessex Cave Club, 1990**

Officers whose address does not appear here may be contacted via Upper Pitts

<b>President</b>	Luke Devenish	<b>Editor</b>	Nick Williams 93 Ashtree Road, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2SE 0373 64311 0373 51249 (eve)
<b>Vice-Presidents</b>	Rev. C. Cullingford Mr. P. Dolphin Mr. Graham Balcombe		
<b>Hon. Chairman</b>	Aubrey Newport Bramblebank, Upper Stanton Drew, Bristol, BS18 4EG 0272 333236 (9am 0 9pm)	<b>Sales Officer</b>	Aiden Williams 26 Rock Road, Midsomer Norton, BA3 2AQ 0761 412896 (9am – 9pm)
<b>Hon Secretary</b>	Nick Marachov 5 Daleson Close, Northowram, Halifax, W. Yorks., HX2 0EE	<b>Hut Booking Officer</b>	Roz Fielder 41 The Normans, Wexham Court Estate, Slough, SL2 5TT 0753 31374
<b>Hon. Treasurer</b>	Brian Hansford 34 Fleming Road, Weeke Estate, Winchester, Hants, SO22 6EE 0962 882814	<b>Hut Admin Officer</b>	Pete Hann
		<b>Hut Warden</b>	Howard Price 0705 822351 ext. 2113 (work)
		<b>Ordinary Member</b>	Andy Summerskill
<b>Asst. Secretary</b>	Mairi Rands 17 Tillet Close, Stonebridge Park, London, NW10 0QA	Journal Distribution	Jim Moon
		Northern Caving Secretary	Keith Sanderson Heather View, Newby, Nr. Clapham, Lancs. 0468 5662
<b>Caving Secretary</b>	Nigel Graham 60 Williams Ave, Wyke Regis, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 9BP 0305 789770	M.R.O. Coordinator	Pete Lacy 23 Old Banwell Road, Locking, Weston Super Mare, Avon
<b>Gear Curator</b>	Duncan Frew Brackens, Castledon Road, Downham, Billericay, Essex, CM11 1LD	Survey Sales	Maurice Hewins 31 Badshot Park, Badshot Lea, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 9JU 0252 29302

# Editorial

Due to a shortage of time when going to press, the photographs of the Berger (Journal 221) and Belize (Journal 222) were not credited to the photographer. All were taken by Pete Hann, and I am grateful to him for letting me use them in the Journal.

I would like to see more photographs in the Journal, not only to illustrate articles but also on their own if they are particularly striking. If you have any photographs which you think would look good in the Journal, please do not hesitate to send them in for consideration. Notes on when and how they were taken would probably be of interest to some readers, including the technical details.

Photographers should bear in mind that the photographs will be halftoned (turned into a pattern of dots so they print better) and appear in black and white. Pictures originally taken in black and white will undoubtedly come out best, but colour photographs often work well if they are chosen carefully. Prints would be preferable to transparencies.

From my own point of view, it would be nice to have a stock of photographs upon which to draw in order to illustrate articles when a good opportunity arises. If you have any spare copies of suitable photo's on almost any caving related subject which you would not mind donating, I

would be very grateful to hear from you.

As I said in my annual report to the AGM, there is currently no real shortage of articles to go in the Journal, and I would like to try and decrease the lead time for articles, and increase the frequency of the Journal. The main obstacle to this is the amount of time it takes to type in all the articles which I am sent, as I still receive very few on disc. If there is anyone out there who is a keen typist who has access to an IBM compatible machine or an Apple Macintosh and would be willing to assist me by typing up articles, I would be delighted to hear from them. The work has no material reward of any sort, but none the less it would be worthwhile.

A new feature I hope to include in the next issue of the Journal is a Classifieds column. If you have anything which you would like to advertise, such as items of spare gear, please do not hesitate to send in details of what's available and who it is being sold by. Items should be of a broadly caving nature, but so long as the feature does not take up too much space, I think we can afford to take a fairly wide view of what that definition includes.

*NJW.*

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## Club Notes In Committee

Matters discussed at the 399th meeting of the Committee, held at Upper Pitts on 10 September 1989 included:

**Sales:** There have been problems with some of the new stock of caving boots. The manufacturers are to be contacted.

Matters discussed at the 400th meeting of the Wessex Committee, held at Upper Pitts on 22 October 1989 included:

**Locker and Food Box Fees** were set at £5.00 and £2.00 respectively.

**Other Business** was deferred to the incoming committee as it was felt that the role of the existing committee was simply that of organising a new election for officers as soon as possible.

## AGM Report

The Annual General Meeting of the Wessex Cave Club was held at the Hunter's Lodge on 21 October 1989 at the Hunter's Lodge. Full minutes of this meeting will be circulated to all club members before the next AGM, but a synopsis of the decisions taken was as follows:

**Elections of Officers:** Due to a mistake with the posting of nomination and voting papers, the election for officers for the year 1989 - 90 was held to be invalid, and the existing committee were instructed to stay in office and organise a new postal ballot as soon as conveniently possible.

**Accounts:** A discrepancy in respect of a loan to the MRO was queried by the MRO Secretary, and in the absence of a satisfactory clarification, acceptance of the accounts was deferred by the meeting.

**Journal:** The club is to make funds available for the editor to produce a Wessex Annual, containing the best articles from the Journal over the last year.

**Subscriptions:** The motion calling for an increase in subscriptions was defeated.

**Caving Secretary:** No seconder for this motion could be found and so it was not discussed.

**Upper Pitts:** A general tightening up of the rules in regard to the care of the hut was felt to be necessary, and the Committee were instructed to ensure that persons causing damage to items of Club property were held responsible for their repair or replacement.

## Wessex People

It is with considerable regret that we note the recent death of Sir John Wedgwood, a Vice President of the Club. An obituary appears elsewhere in this issue. Our condolences to his family.

Sadly, we also have to announce the death of John Benham, one of the Club's longer standing members.

**New Members:** We would like to extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Jeffery and Hazel Sage,  
41 Queen Road,  
Street,  
Somerset,  
BA16 0NQ.

**Change of Address:** Maggie McPherson and Gary Smith can now be contacted at: Holm Park Cottage, Lambrigg, Kendal, Cumbria, LA8 0DJ, Tel. Garigg 337. Meanwhile, the Hon. Ed. has moved AGAIN: I can now be contacted at 93 Ashtree Road, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2SE.

## Sales

Aiden Williams, the new W.C.C. Sales Officer, would like to point out that he has a new stock of **keys for Upper Pitts** waiting to be distributed to members. Keys may be obtained from him in return for a **£5.00** deposit. There are also plenty of **club ties** at **£4.50** each, so make sure that you order yours in time for the next AGM. Goods should be obtained by calling at Upper Pitts; if this isn't convenient, contact Aiden to arrange a postal service.

## Annual Dinner

The Committee would like to hear from anyone who has strong feelings about where this should be held in 1990, and also any proposals for a guest of honour.

## Upper Pitts

Howard Price has agreed to take on the post of Hut Warden, and while he will not be at the Hut every weekend, he will be organising a rota of people to look after the hut when he is not there. If you plan to be at Upper Pitts at any time in the next year, and would not mind acting as warden for that weekend, please give Howard a call on 0705 822351 ext 2113/2478 (daytime) to make arrangements.

## The Stephen Nunwick Memorial Lecture

The 1990 lecture entitled "A third of a century in and under the Yorkshire Dales" will be given by Harry Long, Underground Controller with the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association at 7pm on Friday, 23rd February 1990 in the Middleton Hall of Hull University. Admission is free and any cavers who live near enough are welcome to attend. Please contact Ric or Pat Halliwell, Academic Office, The University, HULL HU6 7RX (0482 465948 or 46569 1(w) 441070(h)) for further details.

## Caving Notes

There will be a club caving weekend in Yorkshire over the May Day bank holiday (5 - 7 May 1990). Accommodation will consist of camping at the Hill Inn, Chapel-Le-Dale. The emphasis will be on caves which do not require single rope techniques, to try and encourage people who want to just get a taste of a different part of the world. For further details, and to arrange transport and accommodation if you are interested in coming along, contact Nigel Graham or Nick Williams - addresses at the front of the Journal.

The Royal Forest of Dean Caving Club has recently requested that all booking for Otter Hole made in the name of Wessex Members should be made through the Caving Secretary.

In Yorkshire, a new entrance to **Low Douk cave** on Ireby Fell has recently been expanded to be man sized (the original entrance collapsed completely some time ago). The main objective of this work is to allow access to digging teams who are pushing the connection with Rift Pot. A radio location done at New Year established that the distance between the caves is now less than twenty feet, and it will probably have gone by the time you read this.

Elsewhere in Yorkshire, plans are afoot to expand the **White Scar** show cave by driving a tunnel through to the Battlefield, and running a train up it. The tunnel will run from just inside the entrance of the existing show cave, and the management hope it will be completed by the Summer. Meanwhile, for those looking for a real caving trip in White Scar, the access is simple: just turn up when the show cave is open and speak to the manager. Cost is a little steep at £3.00 a head, but if you are properly prepared to see the whole cave (there's at least three miles of it) and make a day of it, it is worth the money. A wetsuit is essential, as the 200 foot long lake has to be passed: this does not actually involve much swimming but is over six feet deep in places.

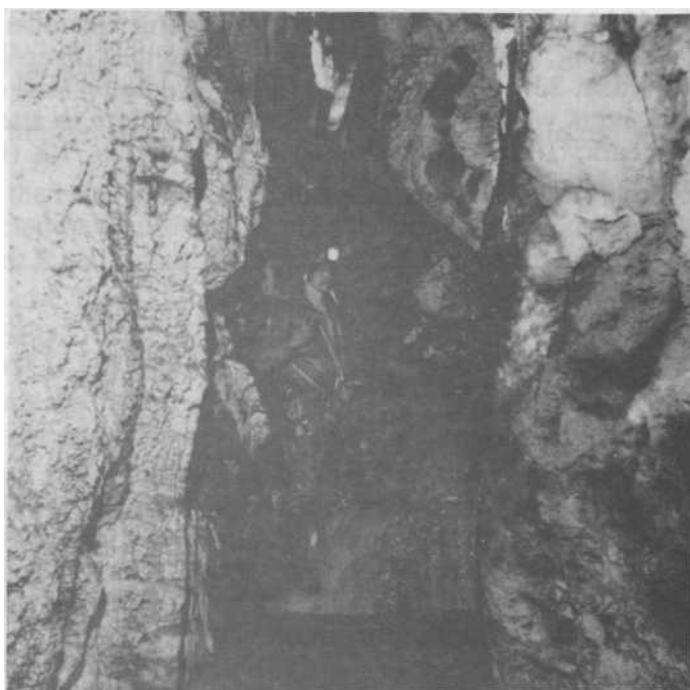
On a Christmas/New year trip to Yorkshire, a number of Wessex members met up with and caved

with a bunch of cavers from the Speleoclub de Schaerbeek, of Brussels in Belgium. It has to be said that they pretty well wore the Wessex contingent out in a week of pretty hard trips, but we got our own back in the Hill Inn! They are intending to be back next Christmas, and a trip to Belgium might well be in the offing. Anyone looking for contacts in Brussels should contact the Editor or Malcolm Foyle for further details. We hope to have a bit more about the Belgians in the next issue of the Journal.

A recent foray by Wessex member John Cordingly (aka Superted) and Russel Carter (alias Spotty) resulted in the discovery of over 200 feet of extremely well decorated passage, found in the roof of a passage visited by thousands of cavers and non-cavers every year, and not a million miles from Club H.Q. John and Russel gained access to the passage, named "The Mendip Beer Monster's Secret Tap Room", with the use of the infamous Bosch drill and a few bolts. In order to protect the formations the rope was removed after the passage had been photographed with the Beer Monster in residence. The location is, of course, a secret.

Yorkshire cave bookings for 1990 are as follows:

10 March	Cow Pot, Easegill
5 May	Top Sink, Easegill
6 May	County Pot, Easegill
13 June	Gingling Pot
7 July	Hammer Pot
8 September	Birks Fell
9 September	Pool Sink, Easegill
6 October	Dale Head Pot
10 November	Pen-y-Ghent Pot
11 November	Little Hull



The Mendip Beer Monster's Secret Tap Room, complete with Beer Monster. (Photo - Pete Hamm)

Persons wishing to use the permits should contact Nigel Graham (Caving Secretary) for full details of the arrangements. Permits for Leek Fell and The Allotment will be published in the next Journal.

## From the Log

17 October 1989: Upper Flood. Tav, Vince, Steve Redwood. "½ hour hammering broke into a small rift chamber (an upward continuation of the rift that runs throughout the length of the furthest reaches). Called Black Aven as it's black through lead tailings run-in. About 20ft long, 5ft wide, 25ft high, passage at top runs for 20 odd feet in either direction to chokes."

18 October: Cuckoo Cleaves. Scotty, J & H. Sage, J. England, S. Padgett. "2hrs, strong draught."

21 October: Eastwater Beechen Series, Geoff N., Howard P. "At the top of a 50ft aven is

a squeeze into a short crawl (apparently only ever passed by one unknown person before). At the end of the crawl is a tight climb down to a keyhole passage pushed for 10 ft or so to where it needs either hammering or a midget to push further. I think this bit is new."

22 October: Hillgrove Dig. Damian and Aubrey Newport - "Rock to dust (I hope!)"

25 October: "The Wednesday nighters dump yet more liquid shit on passers by in Swildon's Water Chamber."

28 October: "Fester Hole digging team dinner at the Burcott. Jim and Aiden. We both went. No guest speaker this year."

30 October: Swildon's. Rich Websel, Rob Harper. "Got as far as sump four which Rob declared unfit for human penetration. Loads of people coming out - these dummy diving bottles work a treat in getting people out of the way - "stand back, divers coming through"."

1 November: Coffin Hole. Nigel, Phil, Martin. "Horribly loose, but draughty choke. We re-surveyed the cave."

4 November: Little Neath River Cave. Rich Websel, Rob & Helen Harper (BEC), Pete Slater, Robin Brown. "After ignoring Mr. Foyle's advice went down a very flooded Little Neath. Entered Bridge with Pete Slater who came as far as the sump where the rest of us dived through. HH's first cave dive "I don't know what all the fuss is about!" 4 hours ish."

5 November: Charterhouse. Pete H., Nigel, Mark. "The draught was cold and strong."

8 November: Cuckoo Cleaves. [Crew as 18 October] "Dig slumped in. 2hrs digging - another hour will see us back where we were."

8 November: Drunkard's Hole. "The Wednesday nighters. Cave dripping with water and the bloody dig has slumped in."

11 November: Peak Cavern. [Vast Crew] "Dive to speedwell aborted due to high water."

"Various bottle carrying and tourist trips."

12 November. Pierre's. Mark Madden and Pete Moody. "Diving trip to the upstream series. Mark did the pushing and wrote off the static sump - definitely too tight. He also had a look at the active upstream sump but was unable to get through the squeeze 10 ft in. It would appear from the direction that the sumps take that they must connect."

18 November: Southbank (Eastwater). Pete and Alison Moody and Howard Price. "Fast trip down to Whitehall where we found Waterloo sumped. It took a good hour to bail our way through, thus rather reducing the time available at the dig. We put in a 2½ hour session and shifted a fair amount of gravel, it looks very promising."

18 November: Penyghent Pot. Rich Websel, Dalek + 2 (BPC). "Cave was rigged with dubious SRT stuff. Went to Hunt Pot inlet where Dalek was intending to bang an alternative way into Friday 13th. Unfortunately, he couldn't find the bang site."

19 November: Middle Flood. Mark and Duncan. "Short trip to see the lake - it wasn't there."

22 November: Drunkard's Hole. "Cleared out most of fill - we are now ready to build a retaining wall."

29 November: Low Douk (Masongill). Nick W., Bob Mackin. "A low and squalid entrance was expanded somewhat with ½ Kg of Powergel. This stuff gives an extremely satisfying bang - every home should have some."

16 December: Swildon's Short Round. Andy Summerskill (Leg), Howard Price, Keith Fielder. "Plenty of water and no novices. Excellent!"

27 December: Geoff Newton. "No Wednesday nighters turned up so went down pub early."

29 December: Dan-Yr-Ogof: Jeff Price, Babs Williams and Tim Large. "Through Greenlands to rising and out via abyss. Low water conditions."

# Obituary

## Sir John Wedgwood Bt.

Vice President, 1983 - 1989

Sir John Wedgwood, who died in December at the age of 82, had been a member of the Wessex since 1951, and a vice president since 1983. Harry Stanbury remembers a trip down Gaping Ghyll with him in 1948, but he first became acquainted with other Wessex members on a joint meet with the Stoke-on-Trent Caving Club in September 1950. The Wessex contingent included Luke Devenish, Don Thomson, David Willis, Harry Stanbury and the late George Williams, Frank Frost and Howard Kenny. In fact, Howard refers to this trip in his Caving Log (published by the Wessex in 1984), and if the writer is not mistaken, John Wedgwood (he had not then succeeded to his title), is standing on the extreme right of the photograph on the fourth page of Volume 2 of this Log. John, at that time deputy Chairman of his family's famous pottery and porcelain company in Staffordshire, was already a keen potholer, together with his professional rival Roy Midwinter (also in the aforementioned photograph).

Following that joint trip John wanted to explore Mendip, and on a visit to the West Country on business, he called at Wells Museum to ask for a local contact. As Vicar's Close was just around the corner, Herbert Balch directed him to the Kenny brothers, and it was through Howard that John began caving on Mendip, and consequently joined the Wessex in 1951.

Sir John Wedgwood, the former Deputy Chairman of Josiah Wedgwood Ltd, was one of four young directors (all cousins of the fifth generation) responsible for the courageous decision to abandon the historic, but rapidly subsiding, Etruria factory and to build a modern electrically-fired pottery in a garden estate at Barlaston. This far sighted plan, which was put in hand in 1938, when the foundation stone of the factory was laid, was interrupted by the Second World War.

The Etruria and Barlaston factories were run in tandem during the war, the manufacture of earthenware being started at Barlaston in 1940 and bone china production continuing at Etruria until 1949 when the new factory was completed. In the years immediately after the war, John Wedgwood was Sales Director, travelling extensively in the United States, where he was always a popular lecturer, and in Europe where his knowledge of modern languages was of particular value. In 1955 he was appointed Deputy

John was often abroad, as he was a prodigious traveller, but he tried to be in England each October in order to enjoy a weekend caving and attend the Wessex A.G.M. and Dinner, when he was often invited as a guest speaker or to toast the health of the Club. One such occasion is recalled, when Frank and the Committee were extremely perturbed because, although John's speech was long and excellent, he omitted to toast the Club! Fortunately this did not deter the Committee from inviting him to be a vice-president in 1983, an office he felt privileged to accept and thereafter he attended the A.G.M. and dinner whenever possible, always taking an interest in and donating generously to the Club. In fact, after this date Sir John was a more frequent visitor to Mendip, as in 1982 he had married Dr. Pamela Tudor-Craig, the art historian who was consultant to the Wells Cathedral West Front Appeal. Sir John and Lady Pamela often came to Wells and always visited their caving friends, they had hoped to be here last September, but Lady Pamela wrote to say that Sir John was not able to travel, but he had a very happy memories of his visits to Mendip in the past, and likewise the Wessex Cave Club have happy memories of his association over the last 39 years.

*Edith Kenny.*

Chairman with special responsibility for public relations and in the following year he succeeded to the baronetcy on the death of his father. He left the company in 1966.

John Wedgwood was a great great grandson of Josiah Wedgwood, founder of the world's most famous pottery company, and Dame Veronica ("C.V.") Wedgwood, the celebrated historian of the seventeenth century.

Born in 1907, he was educated at Winchester and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he read history, economics and mathematics. In 1931 he joined the family firm. His father, Ralph, had enjoyed an exceptionally distinguished career in the First World War, rising to the rank of brigadier general as director of docks and being appointed CB and CMG. As a territorial army officer, John Wedgwood was called to the colours in 1939, and was part of the abortive expeditionary force intended to aid the Finnish army in its gallant resistance against the Russian invasion of

1939-40. He served with the Fifth North Staffordshire Regiment in Italy, and as an instructor with the SOE. He was demobilised in 1946 with the rank of Major.

The Wedgwood Archives, comprising some 75,000 manuscripts, form one of the most important primary sources of industrial history in the world. It was at John Wedgwood's instigation that this unique collection, formerly housed in a Nissen Hut at the factory, was deposited on loan to Keele University, where it is now being professionally conserved and catalogued. Of all his contributions to the company, this could prove to be the most enduring.

"John Ham" as he was known to the family to distinguish him from other Wedgwoods, among whom the names of Josiah, Tom and John are endemic, was a man of great charm and good humour. His wide diversity of interests, notably a passion for travel, mountain climbing (his conquests included the Matterhorn and Mont Blanc) and potholing, prevented him from channelling his energies sufficiently to achieve the success of which he was capable. He stood unsuccessfully for parliament twice, in 1945 as a

Liberal, and 11 years later in the Conservative interest, and it was a disappointment to him never to be Chairman of his great family firm.

He nevertheless remained intensely loyal to the company for the rest of his life and as an ambassador for it he was unequalled. He was attractively eccentric, entirely lacking in pomposity and excellent company. His response to being told that he was occupying an insalubrious bedroom in Ireland from which Parnell had once escaped was characteristic: "I don't blame him."

*John Hamilton Wedgwood, businessman and mountaineer, born 16 November 1907, Deputy-Chairman Josiah Wedgwood and Sons Ltd, 1955-66, succeeded 1956 as 2nd Baronet, married 1933 Diana Hawkshaw (died 1976, three sons, one daughter and one son deceased), 1982 Pamela Tudor-Craig, died 9 December 1989.*

Robin Reilly Reprinted by permission of *The Independent*.

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## The Anno Domini Prize

Richard R. Kenny

Five years ago I turned up for our Wednesday evening dig and found that our sludgepit ladder had 14" rung spacings. I think that even Balch would have been displeased. Down I trotted to Rockspout and bought my own set of kit. It has been used about twice and has been carried on a few more trips.

The years have come and gone and I am no longer likely to use it again so I am offering it as a prize to Wessex members.

### The Prize

One 25' ladder, 10 inch rung spacing and 'D' links at each end.

One 24' single tether with D links at each end.

Two 1' tethers with D links at one end and eyes at the other.

**THIS PRIZE MUST BE WON!**

### The Rules

The Prize will be awarded to the author of the best Mendip caving article by a Wessex full, joint or affiliated member who has not previously appeared in print, exceptions being Club notices etc. This article to be anything printed or received since the 1989 AGM and up to the 1990 AGM.

The Chairman and Editor, or the members acting in those capacities, to be the sole judges. Myself to arbitrate if necessary.

An author may submit any number of articles for consideration between these two dates.

Hopefully the Editor will have plenty of material for the next few issues, but we must leave that to his discretion.

The prize to be presented AFTER the AGM to encourage members to be present at the former.

The condition of the tackle is as seen, and no responsibility can be accepted either by me or by the Wessex Cave Club or its officers or ordinary members in the event of anything that may happen when it is in subsequent use.



# Standing in a Waterfall

Alan Hemming

1957. Bristol. My first teaching job. A pupil covered with dried mud. "What've you been doing?"

"Caving"

"What's it like?"

"I've been sliding down a tube full of mud"

Sounds fearsome if not impossible. I decide to try caving.

Another new teacher had the same idea. This colleague would say, "Come for a walk?", and we'd find ourselves clambering in our everyday clothes up some fearful rock face in the Avon Gorge. I'm still grateful to a particular bit of root sticking out of its scrap of earth up there: I reckon it saved my life, or at least my face.

Our first caving adventure ran true to form. Swildon's sounded interesting. We had a candle each; my friend, a pipe smoker, kept the matches. Down we went as far as the head of the 40-foot. Wonderful, marvellous. I like caving, must do much more of it.

"I think this is the way out" says my friend. My stomach shrinks in panic. We are lost. I am getting my full shilling's worth. We reach a small misty chamber with a flat ceiling from which water drips. It is like a half hearted cloud burst. The candles won't stay alight. I follow my friend's voice towards a roar of falling water, and begin climbing the only fall back, banging my shin. A column of cold water crashes down on my bare head. Is this it, is this the way out? "I'm standing" I yell "in a waterfall."

"Well, get out of it then" is the impatient but sound advice from the darkness above. I climb again and soon we see daylight. Outside we look at each other with a ghost of what-might-have-been in our eyes. "Next time" I suggest, "We'll have proper lamps."

A shiny brass one from Casswell's cost me 13 shillings and 11 pence and a compressed fibre helmet exactly the same - I have the 1958 price list in front of me. Later the helmet went up to 14/6d. With a few spares (flint lighter; 1/6d, burner brush; 5d, rubber ring; 3d) I felt confident and fully equipped. Barrington's 'The Caves of Mendip' (6/-) gave me hours of food for imagination and an ambition to explore all the caves in it.

Goatchurch next, where we followed each other round and round the tall rock in the water chamber expecting to find a way on. The floor at the end of the Drainpipe was then quite smooth and flat - a good place to sit in the darkness, silent or chewing sweets. One master with a large party of boys, not relishing a head on collision in the middle of the drainpipe, called out, "is there anyone there?" No answer. "Come on boys," he says, "follow me." At the end he discovers two lovers, one male, one female, sitting holding hands in the dark. "Good evening," he says. They do not reply. The chamber fills up with muddy, sweaty cavers. "Well, Goodbye," says the master, going. Still no reply from the lovers.

One time during supper, a master inspired by the school grub says, "Let's go caving." Gertie, my first car, my sporty little Standard 8, with its fold back hood, creaks a bit and settles low under the weight of the masters. Goatchurch again. I am last back through the Drainpipe. In front of me the hips of a well padded master, a former test driver for Jaguar, fit the tunnel like a cork in a bottle. "Ergh, ergh," he pants, trying to free himself. Though he blocks off my own escape route I find the show amusing. "Ergh," he huffs, "ergh." Should I apply a naked flame to the wedged parts? It never fails. He blames his trouble on an apple in his trouser pocket.

Swerving back down the Combe, we give the Rock of Ages or some other part of Earth's crust a near miss when my muddy boot slipped off Gertie's brake pedal. "Sorry, my foot slipped." Nobody else says anything, especially the test driver. They are too busy praying.

A good way of spending a day off alone was to take Barrington (the book) and locate the minor caves. How many WCC members have done Tunnel cave or Witcombe's Hole? Or Toad's? In one small cave I went down through a hole where the stream ran, setting my acetylene lamp down in front of me. A moment later there was a flare up. I thought the lamp had set off some flash powder. It wasn't flash powder: it was my hair. I'd set light to my own hair. In trying to back out, my clothing snagged up on a fossil rock. A bizarre situation.

After the caving there was always the good old Mendip Gate Cafe, a large wooden hut in those days. The proprietors didn't mind too much about the mud. Perhaps their tolerance helped to build it into the swish place that it is today.

By now an experienced caver and a member of the WCC (Frank Frost, Secretary), I take parties of boys in Gertie pretty well every weekend. Only fourteen miles each way. It is very popular; we could fill a double-decker bus, not just a car.

The prep, school boys made four 25-foot ladders, using converted bolt cutters borrowed from the Club.

The Bristol Wire Rope Co. spliced on the thimbles, the garage man pointed the wires for easier threading, but the boys did everything else, even making their own C-links out of a length of chain. We slung one of the ladders to a fire escape. Nobody would do the cave who couldn't first climb up and down the ladder four times non stop (only one person had to give up). We had plenty of practice in lifelining, the one on the ladder often floating limply into space on purpose.

On February 20th 1961, blood chit duly signed and deposited, Barry, Gay, Wethered, Oakley, Knapp, Hill, Williams, Watkins, Macey, Nicolson and Sharman (I clearly remember you all as you were then - you're about forty years old now - older than I was on this trip - where are you today?) and another master and myself lowered our new ladders down Lamb Leer's big pitch. The excitement of the caving itself was added to the satisfaction of having helped to make the ladders from which you were now

dangling in the dark. The boys shinned up the ladders so fast the lifeliner had a job to haul in - and they weren't even puffed when they arrived. I did my best to hide being out of breath myself. On a later trip to Lamb Leer, masters only, one caver having roped up walked round the ladder before stepping on to it. Near the top he found himself bandaged to the ladder by the rope. His solution was to untie it and climb the last few feet, where the ladder runs over a rock, without the confounded lifeline.

One time a matron and I took what seemed like dozens of very small seven- and eight-year-olds to Goatchurch, just in at the Old Entrance and out at the New.



Photo: Pete Hann

Feeling more like being sick down it than climbing in, I had to say sorry and take the would-be cavers back to school with promises (fulfilled) for another time.

But before I knew Eastwater at all well I thought I could lead a group of masters down there merely by memorising the map. My expert guidance fizzled out with my memory somewhere round the Traverse, so we climbed on to a starlit, snow-covered Mendip to wash away our frustration with copious draughts of bottled beer in the hut.

I witnessed the personal triumph of one

They were late back for tea, in spite of the old Morris Commercial doing its best, and I got a wiggling from the Headmaster.

Always a great experience was Eastwater, every feature of it on a large scale. A boy briefly wedged tight said patiently, calmly "Sir, do you think I'll ever get out?"

One Sunday I felt bilious, but having promised to take a party here didn't want to disappoint them.

We got as far as the grille over the entrance.

young caver at Longwood. Last to start, he sat quaking at the top of the entrance chimney, afraid to climb. I went below him, guiding his feet to the best ledges. To the Great Chamber and so back to the surface, whereupon the same boy said "Sir, when can we go again?"

What might have been a more serious incident at the same cave turned into mere tiresomeness. Wet conditions, a holdup at the squeeze, and some shivering. "Right," I said, "We're going back out." A UBSS party had waited without a murmur while we descended, now - and this seemed more embarrassing at the time than making the decision to pull out - now we had to ask them to wait another age while my party climbed out. A week later a girl died down there of hypothermia, only it had a more prosaic name.

In October 1961, Norman Petty of the BEC led five of us grown ups down St. Cuthbert's Swallet. I don't mind some responsibility but this time it was pleasant to let someone else take over. The BEC logbook read: 'To sump via cascade and Curtain Chamber. Out through Rabbit Warren.' Thank's, Norman. Are you still caving? (but if you're BEC you won't be reading this).

The newly discovered Rickford Cave, a pristine, milky-white rift, slowly turned brown and scuffed over the months. Spoiled by cavers: perhaps they couldn't help it. Can you go there now? I don't believe so. A pity. Another pitiful thing was the slow chipping away of the streaky bacon curtain in Rod's Pot. At first someone made a small hole so that you could put a light through and admire the colours. The hole gradually got bigger - for souvenirs? - and now there's nothing but hole. The three long stalactites in Sidcot Swallet grotto have gone too. Sandford Levy was fun, and a different sort of underground experience, until the farmer got tired of the cavers and blocked it up.

Another cave I was privileged to go down (May 1959), but now you can't, was Pen Park. Since moving to Cheddar this year I met an old boy of the school who showed me his logbook entry of this trip, with the names of those who took part in it. It was an outcast of a cave, too far North. We used a condemned rope ladder. I remember the lake and the mud formations resembling hens' eggs embedded vertically side-by-side on the walls.

We paid quite a few visits to Stoke Lane. This was before Weill's Disease struck down a well known caver, and prior to much talk of pollution of the stream. But only once did I do the sump, in company with my Swildon's colleague

and the Headmaster's son. On the way back the latter (ignorant of Barrington's warning - my fault) did dive too far and did get under boulders. His body brushed past my legs. Why didn't he come up? A nervous moment. I put my hand under water and feeling a head of hair floating like weed I grabbed and yanked. Up came the lad spouting water like a submarine but none the worse.

After Mendip, caving in Yorkshire and Wales. And only a few weeks ago with a small group down Goatchurch again. What, no rubbish down there? Our thanks to the grand people who do make a habit of cleaning it out.

More people than ever, it seems, go underground, not put off by talk of Radon seepage, a danger we in 1957 didn't know we had to worry about. I must have led literally hundreds of trips, and thank God - I mean that - none of my cavers ever had an accident.

My dream of discovering a cave, to be named after the School, didn't come true. My theory was that if I wandered around on Mendip in extremely wet weather I'd find water pouring down a hole no one had ever noticed. Down this hole would be the largest and finest cave in Mendip - in Britain - in the World. But I never did the wandering. Perhaps the weather was never wet enough.

*Alan Hennings  
August 1989*

## Frank Frost Prize

The winner of the 1989 Frank Frost prize is Geoff Newton for his article "Cenotaph Aven," which appeared in Journal 220 (March 1989).

An account of the discovery and exploration of the further reaches of Eastwater, brings to life the fact there's plenty of hard caving to be had in the Mendips. Well worth a look if you have not already seen it.

Geoff will be receiving his prize in due course, and the winner of the 1990 Prize will be announced in January 1991. In the meanwhile, Richard Kenny has offered a very attractive prize to new authors whose work is published in the Journal before the next AGM. See The "Anno Domini Prize" (Page 104) for further details.

# The Mystery of Tynning's Farm Swallet

Trevor Shaw

Although G.B. Cave was discovered just 50 years ago, in November 1939, and Charterhouse Cave some 43 years later, they came as the culmination of efforts made since the early 1920s to discover cave systems beneath that patch of gruffy ground. Tratman already foresaw their existence in 1922:

“A little more work will probably see us through into large cavities, which from the nature of the ground must exist here.”

Digs took place at the points where the two Tynning's streams sink. The dig at the easternmost sink, close to the entrance of Charterhouse Cave, was in 1922 and 1923 and led to the discovery of Read's Grotto.

Not unnaturally the more obvious swallet received attention first and excavation at Tynning's Farm Swallet (ST47645622) sometimes called Tynning's Stream Swallet, began in 1920. The cave was entered on 6 August 1923 (Perry, 1924) but the entrance became blocked a few years later, probably in the 1930s (Blenkinsop, pers. comm.). No survey was made. Present-day reference books give a total length of 150 or 200 feet and Mullan (1987) has pointed out that there is 'great difficulty in fitting this amount of cave between the sink and the boulder chamber in G.B.' Hence this examination of the contemporary record, some of it very little known, which suggests a length significantly shorter than 150ft.

The photograph showing a working party at the dig was lent to me by the late L.Y. Baker, who was present. It shows that digging took place under the right-hand (further) miniature cliff face, some 5m (16ft) beyond the point where the water sinks at the end of the stream bed. The former entrance is blocked mainly with earth slumped from the grassy slope to the right, close to the largest of the present hawthorn trees.

The only statement of length made at the time appeared in the magazine of the students' union (then Guild of Undergraduates) at Bristol University (Tratman, 1923):

“In the larger of the two swallets a still more difficult passage leads after about 60 feet to a wider passage ending in a vertical drop of 20 feet; beyond this the passage is large, but very soon becomes almost completely filled with sand brought in by the stream.”

Perry (1924) omits the length but adds some compass directions:

“...access gained, after negotiating two pot-holes, to a fairly easy passage, which terminates in a 20 foot drop, from here a broad passage leads west, and then turns south, following the line of the original passage, and ending in a very small water way through a vein of spar. It is hoped to enlarge this passage, which should, from the general signs of the cave, soon widen out again.”

Thus the primary sources provide no information on the overall length of the cave except that it was significantly greater than 60 feet.

The more recently published lengths of 200 ft (Barrington, 1957) and 150ft (Barrington and Stanton, 1970) cannot be substantiated. Barrington (pers. comm.) cannot remember the source of his 200 ft. The 1970 figure of 150 ft had been obtained in conversation with Tratman (Stanton, pers. comm.). These recollections would have been some 35 years after the event, however, and do not accord with Tratman's earlier letter (1958) in which he stated that 'about 40 feet of very difficult passage ending in a choke are known.'

*Trevor Shaw*



The dig at Tynning's Farm Swallet in 1922 or 1923. E.K. Tratman, right foreground; L. Y. Baker, behind him with spade.  
Photo H. Taylor. Copied by Chris Howes.

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# Memories of the 10th International Congress of Speleology

Ric & Pat Halliwell

When we heard that the 10th ISC was to be held in Hungary the combination of good memories of our visit to Hungary in 1978 and happy memories of previous Congresses made us determined to attend. As we drove into Hungary it was obvious that there had been some changes in the intervening decade; international road signs rather than Hungarian ones, a few advertisement hoardings, fewer fruit stalls on the hard shoulder of the M1 - although for half its length there is still only one carriageway laid even though all bridges are built for both carriageways. A large street plan of Budapest purchased on the previous visit proved invaluable in finding our accommodation quickly rather than the 2 hours and 50 miles of driving within the city on our last visit. The map was interesting in that very cunningly hidden in microscopic symbols was the fact that some streets had flights of steps partway along them. It also didn't save Boyd and Jenny Potts (Orpheus CC) from going the wrong way up a one way street meeting a police car head on and being given ten 50 forint fines (a grand total of £5).

On the first evening there was a reception in the main marble floored and columned hall of the Congress Centre (the Karl Marx University of Economics). We were welcomed with trays of brandy and other spirits and then after a couple of short speeches it was time to start on a magnificent spread of food (although life was hard for the vegetarians). Our small British group quickly grabbed several bottles of wine to hold as a reserve in case we ran out but this proved an unnecessary precaution as the wine and food just kept coming. A very pleasant evening was spent eating, drinking and talking to cavers from around the world (nearly 700 people attended from 38 countries), many of whom we had met at the Congresses in England and the USA. At some stage during the evening the larger than life seated figure of Karl Marx at one end of the hall acquired a large Hungarian style hand-held carbide light which seemed to delight the Hungarian dignitaries as much as the visiting cavers.

The following morning saw the start of the paper sessions but we didn't go to a single one,

we went caving every day instead. A bus was provided from the Congress Centre to the Cave Centre where all the trips started. Our first trip consisted of just the two of us plus Laszlo Balazs and Peter Galambos (a very good Pete Seed look-alike) as our guides to Ferenc-Hegy Cave. After a 20 minute walk through city streets in full caving gear we arrived at such a well locked cave that any Mendip blockhouse would have hung up its bolts in shame. A pleasant scramble through the cave in a somewhat hungover state was enlightened (if that's the right phrase) by Peter having permanent light problems whilst at times of difficulty Laszlo would whip out his pocket Hungarian-English dictionary.

The rest of the week followed with caving trips every day but one, video and film shows in the evening and eating out with friends from around the world in Budapest's very cheap restaurants. Particular memories include an American who thought all his Christmases had come at once when during the 20km drive to Solymar Ordoglyuk cave, two attractive young Hungarian females flung themselves across his lap. A few minutes later he was disappointed to discover that they had only been hiding from the police because we had 14 people in a 12 seater minibus. He maintained an avid watch for policemen after that. On another day Jozsef-Hegy Cave, which had been specially opened from its normally very restricted access, was visited and the truly magnificent formations admired. These included a gypsum covered cracked mud floor, calcite plates cemented together to look like snow covered fir trees, one metre long gypsum flowers, 10cm long aragonite crystals, equally long gypsum needles and snow white, 10 to 20cm in diameter, bunches of calcite grapes. The formations were of such delicacy and beauty that they were just indescribable, no wonder access is so strictly limited. The trip out of the cave from the formations at -50m was somewhat slow as we ended up assisting a rather unfit American up the squeezes and climbs with us behind him pushing whilst the manager of Jenolan Caves (Australia) pulled from the front!

Apart from caving, the rest of our week in Budapest included (on the one day we didn't

cave) a visit to Estergom with half the Congress sailing up the Danube and coming back by a fleet of 14 coaches whilst our half went by coach and came back by boat. Andy Eavis and friends went both ways by boat and maybe that is why the boat ran out of booze 20 minutes short of Budapest on its return trip. A superb display of paintings and engraving of caves had been organised in one of the city museums and was well worth a visit. At the Grand Banquet towards the close of the Budapest week Karl Marx not only had a hand held carbide but also a helmet and cap lamp. There was even more booze than at the welcome party and soft drinks were at a premium. A waiter on his way to the band with a case of soft drinks was ambushed and only had one bottle left by the time he reached the stage. Equally as people left at the end of the evening to move on to the party at the campsite the people walking out with 3 or 4 bottles of wine weren't stopped. One person who had poured a bottle of wine into a Cola bottle so that he wouldn't be too obvious taking it out with him was stopped by the security people who were desperate for a soft drink and demanded to know how he managed to get hold of one! Our final day in Budapest was the 20th Anniversary of the Hungarian Constitution and the evening ended with a magnificent 45 minute long firework display put on by the army.

The following morning we drove NE from Budapest towards the Bukk Mountains for the speleo camp we had elected to join from the many choices offered by the Congress. We eventually arrived at a factory owned hotel up a dirt track in the middle of a forested national park where we were treated to the first of a series of large meals. In the afternoon the Hungarians asked us to do an SRT test on two ropes in a tree to see how competent the collection of 4 British, 6 Swedes, 3 West Germans, 2 Australians and 1 Canadian were. Then another large meal and compulsory wine before it was outside to a large log fire and more wine and talking. After several hours of wine Alan and Becky Weight emerged from the darkness having navigated across Hungary to the hotel with only a 6 or 8 word description from me, all I had been able to obtain before we left Budapest and they left England. In the inebriated state of the gathering they were welcomed, taken off to meet the manageress and told they could have a 4 bedded room to themselves with full board for the week for US\$49 (£28) each, was that alright?! Yes they agreed and came back to join in the wine.

The following day the Hungarians split us into 2 groups with 1 group going to visit Diabaz Barlang (Cave) whilst the other went to Kiskohat Zsomboly (Pothole). Diabas had a few scrambles and climbs to some nice pretties after which the less competent were shepherded out whilst the rest of us were taken to look at the other end of the cave which had some fixed iron ladders including a most interesting 30m one. This was hung from a belay at the top and went off at an angle near the bottom with no intermediate belays and so it got a nice sway on near the middle as you climbed. We emerged to find our leader stood at the entrance with a 2 foot diameter white enamel bowl over his head to keep off the heavy rain. After an enormous packed lunch in a nearby caving hut the two groups swapped over and we set off down Kiskohat. This was an SRT trip with a 40m entrance shaft leading to a squeeze and a very large chamber followed by a further 50m shaft into some dead end digs. There were lots of rub points on the ropes and only Alan, Becky and ourselves went down the 50m shaft (well it was new rope). When we talked about the rigging and said that it wasn't how we would have done it, the Hungarians explained that the morning group had taken so long to pass the rebelay that they had taken them out but normally they rigged 'Mike Meredith' (obviously Hungarian is one of the many languages into which Mike's book has been translated). That night, after another large meal, we were given a choice of 4 caves for the 4 days remaining and told that we should sign up in groups of 4 or 5 for the trips we fancied. The 2 of us plus Alan & Becky quickly signed up for trips on all 4 days but other people didn't seem quite so keen.

Our first day was down Fekete which had a superb omega shaped concrete entrance - as Alan said it's the first time he has seen a cave that looks like the symbol on the maps - followed by a series of nice shafts to a lengthy rifty passage, another pitch and a squeeze to a pitch where we couldn't find any rigging points. Our guide (Peter, a french-speaking Hungarian), after he and we had struggled in the rift at the head of the pitch assured us that there was only 10m of passage at the bottom of the pitch anyway so we agreed to give up. We had already forced him much further along the rifty bit than he had wanted to go.

The next day saw the four of us plus Boyd Potts, Peter and another Hungarian called

Greg setting out early for Istvanlapai Barlang which was described as the hard trip of the week. The 210m deep entrance series consisted of a series of climbs and fixed iron ladders varying from 2 to 20m long sometimes with strange changes of direction partway down them. Once at the bottom there were some quite large passages which led to a series of avens and traverses. We went up a couple of ropes and over an interesting "both feet on one wall both hands on the other" traverse about 50m up and got to some nice formations. Pat and Boyd waited here with Greg (and later went off to visit a sump) whilst the rest of us set off on what we were told was a round trip and which seemed to be a succession of 20/30m pitches up to a knife edge, over the top and back down the other side only to start all over again. Eventually after a particularly "that would be a swine if we had to go back that way" climb Peter announced that all that remained was a 30m pitch up to look at some loose boulders. This we declined and he said OK well now we go back the way we came! We met the others at the bottom of the final rope and wandered back to the base of the entrance series for some food and to telephone the surface! Then, having been told that we needed cowstails for the 'pont suspendu', we set off in the opposite direction. After crossing a couple of large chambers and shuffling along a superb hading fault passage we reached the 'pont'. It was 2 wires at shoulder level and a third for a tightrope walk, 20m long and 30m above a soft mud floor. With the cowstails it was in fact quite easy and would have made a superb photograph if only we had had a camera. A short way beyond the bridge were a couple of bivouac camps used by diggers but we had to turn round before reaching the river passage because we had run out of time. In the entrance series Greg raced ahead with all of us trying to keep up with him and Peter at the back saying that we moved tres vite. We reached the surface as a sweating mass in 1¼ hours from -210m with honour satisfied on all sides after a 9½ hour trip.

The other trips were in some ways an anticlimax, Szepesi was a similar but smaller version of Istvanlapai and is linked to it hydrologically. Hajnoczy Cave had a GG type annual family encampment at its entrance where we were treated to wine and given free surveys when we emerged from a muddy cave but one with very nice formations in its lower reaches. The one trip which wasn't an anticlimax was the

visit to the Miskolc-Tapolca thermal water cave. These public thermal baths were specially opened for us outside normal hours and after changing into swimming costumes and flip flops we set off to visit the new tunnels which were being blasted. Then it was into the public parts, a natural cave area with lights, and a concrete floor with just over a metre of warm water covering it. Some of the hot water came in down a series of waterfalls which of course we all climbed to look at the cave pearls which had formed over the last 3 years. Squeezing between the bars which separated the two levels of the cave in order to jump (by numbers and in groups in the case of the Swedes) into the water. Climbing up the walls in bare feet only to fall off into the water. Drinking Champagne out of the bottle whilst floating along, playing knights on horseback in 4 foot deep 30 degree C water. What a memorable, mad, evening. I wonder what normal people do when they visit these baths?

Our final night in the Bukk was a large meal again, wine, an outdoor slide show, more wine then singing by country. Hungarians, Swedes, Germans, British, the Colonies and then start again. The Hungarians were much impressed by our all action Swing Low Sweet Chariot; the Swedes sang in English about how you can always tell a caver because he puts carbide in his rum; Australia gave a superb micky-take of Waltzing Matilda all about an English Gentleman walking his Bulldog and everybody provided words for "John Brown's Body" and "I like the vino". There were a lot of hangovers the next morning.

After packing the cars and bidding farewell to the others Alan, Becky and ourselves drove through low cloud to spend the night in Aggtelek at the Dripstone Hotel. We had managed to arrange a trip through the Aggtelek/Josvafo system, a 7km walk through mostly on made up paths. We had done the trip before in 1978 but it was new for Alan and Becky although even they said the large formations got boring after a while. A short diversion up Radeke (=Radish) passage was a pleasant interlude with smaller formations looking like radishes covering the roof. It was interesting to note how the floor was being washed out leaving large 8' long columns hanging 6" off the present gravel floor. As we came out of Radeke and back to the main passage our guide apparently became so fed up with the problems that he was having with his carbide light that he

tipped the water out, removed the pipe from his generator, pulled 4 large lumps of carbide out of the generator and walked out the rest of the way with no light carrying the carbide in his hands! After a brief stop in the large chamber at the Josvafo end to listen to Pink Floyd beating out from large speakers we emerged to a dull drizzly day some 4 hours after going underground. Our hosts kindly provided transport back to the Aggtelek end of the cave and then we started the long drive south west.

We arrived in Postojna 1½ days later and were met by Franc Maleckar the organiser of the Yugoslav post Congress camp. We two were the only people out of those who had originally expressed a wish to join the camp who actually turned up. Together with Alan and Becky and a French Canadian (Jean-Luc Martel) we were a reasonably experienced caving group but we could not get this message across. Several of the trips we had been promised just didn't happen, possibly because of the high water levels but in our view probably because of the bad organisation. We had a trip into Planinska Jama which was fairly impressive but it took some argument on our part to convince the guide to go as far as we did.

The following day we had a trip round the Postojnska Jama show cave with its long train ride followed by a trip into Jama pod Predjamskim Gradom. This was mainly fairly easy walking with some big muddy slopes and some nice formations. Our guides insisted that we would get very wet and loaned Pat and Alan thigh length waders like the ones they were wearing, Ric tried out his pontonniers for the first time, Becky and Jean-Luc insisted that they wanted to get wet and refused the waders. In the event the deep water was two pools roughly knee deep each 6 feet long!

The programme for the next day was a visit to Krizna Jama and this was probably the highlight of our week. Our guide showed us a lot of bear and other animal remains near the entrance before we embarked in 3 boats and paddled our way upstream between impressive formations. There are about 20 lakes separated by short shallow sections with the longest lake being 100m. We went as far as Kalvarija, a large well decorated mound at the confluence of two rivers. We wanted to carry on here but our guide was adamant that he had been instructed by Franc Maleckar that we had to turn back here - just over half way along the cave.

A trip down Lipiska Jama the next day was memorable for the size of passage and the decorations but was maybe more memorable for Franc's style and equipment. He insisted that he lifelined everyone down the 35' entrance shaft using a body belay, without a twist round his arm, whilst he sat with his legs round a large tree! On the way out Ric had the novel experience of having a rung slip 6" while he was stood on it but Franc didn't seem that bothered.

The following day we were joined by Steven Craven on what should have been a trip into Skocjanske Jama. We did visit the show cave which has been much improved since our last visit and with its large river canyon must rank as one of the best tourist caves in the World. However our caving trip didn't arrive; we were told that the water was too high - we protested that the traverse route was 30m above river level; we were told that the traverse wires were unsafe - we protested that this had been known when the trip had been advertised; finally we were told that UNESCO wouldn't let us in - we had to admit defeat on that one. As a special treat we were told we could go down Divaska Jama, more large passage, large formations and paths, a showcave without lights which took very little time to 'do' despite the funereal speed of our guide.

Our final day in Yugoslavia saw us heading for Martinska Jama together with 9 other English cavers and Franc. He again insisted that only he was allowed to lifeline the one pitch on which he had put the same ladder we had used earlier in the week. However, no doubt as a safety measure, he had put the slipped rung at the bottom so that it was only 7 feet off the floor. The cave again had some interesting and attractive formations which no attempt had been made to preserve but the trip was rather ruined by the 2 hours it took to get everyone down and up the single 30' pitch.

Thus ended our continental caving and, apart from a couple of days walking in northern Italy at 10000+ feet, our holiday. In summary the Congress was great, the Hungarian cavers were very friendly and it is a very cheap country. If we can organise an exchange visit we ought to do so. Yugoslavia was a different matter, Franc Maleckar is trying to take over access control for Slovenia and charge a lot of money for the privilege of caving. Much as we object to this it was made even worse when he didn't deliver what he had been paid for. Maybe Hungary had

been so good that our expectations were too high, all we can say to anyone contemplating going to Yugoslavia is be very careful in any dealings with Mr. Maleckar.

*Ric and Pat Halliwell*

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## Notes for Contributors

If you have any article, letter, comment, news, photograph, or anything else which you would like to see published in the Journal, please do not hesitate to send it to me at the address below. Preferably, text should be typed on one side of the paper only, with wide margins and double spaces between the lines, but I'd rather have it scrawled on the back of a cigarette packet than not get it at all.

The main requirement for photographs is that they should not have too much contrast as otherwise they are unrecognizable when printed. Prints in black and white or colour are acceptable, but bear in mind that they will come out as black and white prints when they appear, so if the colour is an important feature they will not be a lot of use when printed. Please make sure that your prints or transparencies are clearly labelled, and send the appropriate captions for each label on a separate sheet.

For those who have access to a wordprocessor, I may be able to accept contributions on floppy disc. Please give me a ring so that we can discuss whether or not your software is compatible with mine - at present I can handle contributions in ASCII on all formats of MS-DOS IBM disc, as well as Apple Macintosh. ASCII/BBC Model B format may also be possible.

Line drawings, sketch maps and diagrams are all welcome. They should be supplied at the size at which they are to be printed.

If you copy drawings or photos, or quote, from another publication, please make sure you inform me before publication so that I can make arrangements regarding copyright.

Authors may obtain a laser-written copy of their article for the production of further off-prints by contacting me, although I may have to make a small charge for this service.

The Journal is produced on an Apple Macintosh Plus computer using a Western Digital 20AP hard disc, Microsoft Word 4 software and a LaserWriter IISC to produce camera-ready artwork.

I would like to thank Nick Marochov for the use of his LaserWriter in the production of this issue, and Paul Lambert for his assistance with the photographs.

Editor:

Nick Williams,  
93 Ashtree Road,  
Frome,  
Somerset,  
BA11 2SE,  
0373 51249

Daytime Tel No: Frome 64311

**OP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS! STOP PRESS!  
STOP PRE**

**The weekend of 28/29 April has been designated a Club Social Weekend. No guest parties are booked in and members are encouraged to turn up for a general get together. Tickets for a buffet and barrel will be on sale a few weeks beforehand, cost will be £5.00. For yours, contact a committee member or write to Upper Pitts, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope. If you would like to offer assistance with the buffet please contact**  
**Boz Fielder**

# Harry Savory and John Hassall

## Some Notes

Richard R. Kenney

We are exceptionally lucky, on Mendip, to have the early history of modern caving so well documented, published and researched by modern cavers and the publication of *The caving diaries of Harry Savory 1910 - 1921* by his son John is an excellent piece of work deserving of our gratitude.

I came under the spell of Savory's and Hassall's work at an early age and it is only now that I can piece together the significant parts of the story. Where does caving stop and where do other hobbies begin? One of my other hobbies is railways, and by coincidence I had a book in front of me that discussed John Hassall just as I was also reading Harry Savory.

In these notes my easiest approach is to discuss the diaries page by page bringing in other factors where relevant.

The title itself, *A Man Deep in Mendip*, is evocative of the language used by Balch and his contemporaries and it points straight to the fact that John Savory that John Savory was sensitive to the task that lay before him and his explanatory notes are invaluable.

On page 1 Harry describes walking across the 'moor' from Rookham to Eastwater in 1910. Here we have a description of Mendip agriculture before the Great War induced much needed improvements. The stone walls were certainly present from the land enclosures of an earlier age, but obviously the land in some fields was in a bad way and in other totally abandoned.

Page 5 refers to a train arrival at Wells from Yatton at 10.30pm in 1910. This was not in the 1886 timetable, nor in that for 1922 or 1949 so I am intrigued, because the last arrival from Yatton is usually listed as 8pm. Even in these early years there are many references to motor transport, and its rapid introduction stressed railway management to the full.

The description of the forcing of Swildon's Hole entrance, on page 6, is a fine piece of descriptive writing and it is far superior, on this event, than anything published by Balch or Baker. A diary writer can be very descriptive, but an author of a published work must cut the material to the bone.

The descent from the 12x8x6 chamber by Balch reminds me that forty years ago it was a tight hole down to the start of Binnie's Link and that the floor of this chamber has now been on the move for at least 80 years.

Page 15 mentions the coral formation between the Water Chamber and the Old Grotto. I suggest that had this been photographed by modern methods and cameras it would be classed as important as anything else in *Mendips Vanishing Grottoes*.

The Eastwater photo on page 40 gives me my first good view of the pointed boulder at the entrance to the boulder chamber since I last went this way many years ago. Do we become too cautious at times? Surely this route is no more dangerous than many other 'hairy' places? Recent rock scratch marks on the walls of 'Aggy' when I last went there in the 70's caused me concern, but I have no personal experiences of that sort in Eastwater.

The explanatory notes on page 63 are a good starting point to discuss Balch's Wookey Hole book and the part played in its production by Harry Savory and John Hassall. To do this we must return to the world of railways. In Great Britain the railways were the first large commercial companies, by today's standards, they were soon to realise that the mass movement of people to and from the seaside, first of all by day trips and then later by weekly holidays, was a highly profitable business. After this had developed the General Post Office also found that their restrictive license arrangements for what could be accepted by Post needed to be amended, and then was born the custom of sending postcards - "wish you were here" and so on.

Commercial art, as we know it today, just did not exist, and the vacuum created by the G.P.O. had to be filled rapidly. There were three sources of material. Firstly, lithographic printing was used to produce scenic views and so on. This art reached new heights and it saw the use of clever techniques that gave an almost stereo effect to the print. Print styles became florid, and

a perfect example can be found in the *Wessex Cave Club Occasional Publication Series 1 Number 3, The Caving log of C.H. Kenny*. The subject is a poster advertising Speedwell Cavern, and the result sets me in mind of a new user trying out a computer printer. Free drawn print styles were also in vogue and everyone must have thought that they contributed to a successful sale.

Fine art printers, like the firms owned by the Savory family, were in a happy position at the start of the postcard genre, but for the moment - back to the railways. Who but the best artists were in a position to supply material for railway station posters? The Victorians set a great store by the niceties of social standing, and all the leading artists were offered commissions. John Hassall, a member of the Royal Academy, achieved fame by his *Come to Sunny Skegness* poster which must have been produced in tens of thousands of copies. The printers then set to work and plastered these masterpieces with their print artistry and ended up with a Victorian muddle that we know so well. So - perhaps John Hassall's name was familiar then as Saachi and Saachi is now.

Lithographic printing, fine art work, what next? Photography of course. There are references to the negotiation of contracts with Gough's for postcards, and Harry Savory was one among many who utilised this art form for their postcards. Every village in the land became a subject. The railways could sell one a card showing the West Hartlepool steam breakdown crane in action at Chester-le-Street, or the level crossing on Wells Priory road. At a local level in Wells, the form of Dawkes and Partridge soon got cracking and were able to stock their own shop with their own cards. Phillips also did well, and their collection is now in Wells museum. I remember in my younger days buying sets postcards of Wells cathedral to take away with me on my travels.

The personal relationships between the Savory family and the leading artists of the day enabled Harry Savory to secure John Hassall to illustrate the *Wookey Hole* book, and the result was:- the best cave archaeologist, the best cave photographer and the best artist.

Given a choice I would always select the photo on page 79 as being Harry Savory's finest, but I suspect that much of his other work would be selected by other cavers.

Page 80 describes an exposure time of two hours in *Wookey Hole*. Photography is not my

subject but I can appreciate the dedication and skill required.

The story on page 94 is quite hilarious, and although written for a personal diary it displays writing skills of a high order. I find it doubly amusing for several relatives of mine have had bed and breakfast at that farm.

Page 95 uses the term 'banks' to describe the structure that we know as the Lamb Lair platform. 'Banktop' is a well known mining expression for the top of a shaft, but I have never heard of its use on Mendip.

Page 101 made me sigh with regret. There is a photo of the bar in the Priddy New Inn. Why was it necessary to move the table and settle when Mrs Speed's tenancy came to an end. They both occupied the same positions in 1945.

Page 115 shows a group in Swildon's in the Water Chamber. Nothing remarkable about it except that Balch is seen as of an average age with his companions. So - what of it? Well, - I accepted him as leader because he was an imposing old man, but here he reveals himself as an average physical character but possessed of a nature that made him a great natural leader.

By 1921 the Great war agricultural revolution had peaked, and the 'moor' described on page 11 has become 'the fields' between Eastwater and Rookham.

I wish that I had met Harry Savory in my younger days, for he could have added to the 'spell of Mendip' that I learnt by degrees. There is no doubt that everyone concerned in the production of this book can be congratulated on a fine effort, but I will leave you with a final thought.

The photograph on page 79 entitled *The Witch of Wookey* is printed in a far superior form as the frontispiece to *Wookey Hole, its Caves and Cave Dwellers*, this was produced by the *Vandyk Printers Ltd, Bristol*. Harry Savory's firm.

*Richard Kenny*

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