

THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

VOLUME 20 (NUMBER 225) SEPTEMBER 1990

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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
or of the Wessex Cave Club as a whole unless expressly stated as being so.**

Officers and Committee of the Wessex Cave Club. 1990

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

President	Luke Devenish	Editor	Nick Williams 93 Ashtree Road, Frome, Somerset, BA11 2SE 0373 64311 (day) 0373 51249 (eve)
Vice-Presidents	Mr. P. Dolphin Mr. Graham Balcombe		
Hon. Chairman	Aubrey Newport Bramblebank, Upper Stanton Drew, Bristol, BS18 4EG 0272 333236 (9am - 9pm)	Sales Officer	Aiden Williams 26 Rock Road, Midsomer Norton, BA3 2AQ 0761 412896 (9am – 9pm)
Hon Secretary	Nick Marachov 5 Daleson Close, Northowram, Halifax, W. Yorks., HX2 0EE	Hut Booking Officer	Roz Fielder, 94 Cavendish Meads, Sunninghill, nr Ascot, Berks. 0344 27166 (9am – 9pm)
Hon. Treasurer	Brian Hansford 34 Fleming Road, Weeke Estate, Winchester, Hants, SO22 6EE 0962 882814	Hut Admin Officer	Pete Hann
		Hut Warden	Howard Price 0705 822351 ext. 2113 (work)
		Ordinary Member	Andy Summerskill
		Journal Distribution	Jim Moon
Asst. Secretary (Membership)	Mairi Rands 17 Tillet Close, Stonebridge Park, London, NW10 0QA	Northern Caving Secretary	Keith Sanderson Heather View, Newby, Nr. Clapham, Lancs. 0468 5662
Caving Secretary	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
Gear Curator	Duncan Frew 90 Cheylesmore Drive, Cheylesmore Park, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 5BP 0483 22732	Survey Sales	Maurice Hewins 31 Badshot Park, Badshot Lea, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 9JU 0252 29302
		Librarian	Paul Lambert

Editorial

Astute readers will notice that, with two notable but short exceptions, there are no articles in this Journal which have been written by Wessex Cave Club members. This is simply because it is now over five months since I last received an article (or any substantial news or letters) to be put in the Journal. As a result, it has taken nearly twice as long as it ought to put this edition together, and over a quarter of the total page area is figures and photographs.

It seems to me to be an almighty shame that a publication with the reputation of the Journal, produced by a club with the tradition of the Wessex, should be reduced to this state. Apart from anything else, it is absolutely no fun to do this job if I have to write everything as well. The less feedback and assistance I get from Club members, the more isolated the Journal becomes from what the Club is actually doing.

Club Notes

Submissions are invited for **photographs to be mounted and displayed at Upper Pitts** following the decision to use the money left over from the last club Berger trip to pay for framing and mounting a number of prints for display about the hut. Primary consideration will be given to photographs taken on the trip itself, but good pictures from any other club activity or trip which included Wessex members will also be considered. Please contact any member of the committee if you would like to see any of your works displayed at the hut.

Still on the subject of photographs, part of the club's **Frank Frost collection** has gone missing. Extensive research has traced their whereabouts as far as October 1988 but they have not been seen since then. Anyone who has any idea where they are should contact the Committee as soon as possible.

Wessex People

New Members

The Wessex would like to extend a warm welcome to the following:

Marion Batten, 100 Leamington Road, Blackburn, Lancs, BB2 6HG. 0254 673300

Martin Wise, JCR RCT/RAOC, Azimghur Barracks, Colerne, Chippenham, Wilts, SN14 8QY. 0225 743240 ext 5251/5235

Tony King and Sarah Willis, 16 North Street, New Bradwell, Milton Keynes, MK13 0ED 0908 222452

and also to **Graham Johnson** who has re-joined after about two years with the BEC.

Change Of Address

Please note new addresses for the following Wessex Members on the move:

Keith and Roz Fielder, 94 Cavendish Meads, Sunninghill, Near Ascot, Berks, 0344 27166

Nick Pollard 17A Guilda Close, Whitchurch, Bristol, 0272 839746

Congratulations

To Pete Hann who was married on 8 September. Best Wishes to him and his new wife Sandra.

In Committee

Upper Pitts Progress: Work on the ladies dormitory has been progressing steadily. The floors in the toilets have been tiled, and the plumbing for the toilets and hand basins has been done. A good deal of work, was achieved on the Social weekend, despite a relatively poor attendance. Elsewhere in the hut, Jim Rands and Pete Hann have re-built the boilerhouse roof and it is now waterproof. The lights in the changing area have been replaced with environmentally sealed units, the guttering on the Dormer has been completed and the drain in the changing room has been fitted with a water trap. Thanks to various visits by the Army the kitchen and changing area are cleaner than they have been for some good while, and although there are, as always, a good many minor jobs to be completed, the fabric and structure of the hut are better than they have been for some while. Problems which still exist include the boiler for the showers, which has been unable to keep up with demand recently, and the hut electricity supply: the long dry spell has been giving earth problems. These may be a precursor to the need for some serious work on the electrics, but the Committee are monitoring the situation before making any expensive decisions. The current financial state indicates that we will probably have to raise hut fees next year.

Wessex Challenge: Several Club members have complained about the short notice which was given for this event by the BEC (who organised it this year) as this resulted in the Wessex being unable to get a team together. A letter has been sent to the Committee of the BEC, suggesting that perhaps a two year moratorium should be placed on the event to allow it to regain some originality and the clubs to regain some enthusiasm. This year's event was won by the Axbridge Caving Group.

Poll Tax: We received a bill for about £400, which is about the same as the Rates used to be. This seemed reasonable and has been paid without any questions being raised.

Caving Notes

The UBSS have written with their programme of meetings for 1990/1991:

31 October	Dave Irwin; "The Exploration of St Cuthbert's Swallet"
5 December	Chris Howes; "New Mexico 1988 including the Carlsbad Caverns"
13 February	Rob Palmer; "Cave Diving beneath Cheddar Gorge"

Meetings will be held in the UBSS room on the second floor of the Student's Union, Queen's Road, Bristol, between 8.00pm and about 9.00pm on Wednesday evenings.

"**Candles in The Dark**" is an exhibition of the history of caving on Mendip now showing at Wells Museum. The museum is open from 10.00am to 5.00pm weekdays and Saturdays, and 11.00 to 5.30 on Sundays. The exhibition ends on November 18.

The club booking of **Nott's Pot** on 22 September has been cancelled since the land will be in use for a grouse shoot.

Ubley Hill Pot and **Cow Pot** have been filled in by the Landowner. Efforts to clear the entrances and reclaim the caves are the subject of county council negotiations at present.

Land and access ownership disputes at **Little Neath River Cave** are causing hassle for cavers. If you intend to visit this cave or any other in the area, please be conscientious about asking permission and paying the goodwill fee requested as the farmers concerned have threatened to close the caves.

Reservoir Hole, which has been shut for the last few months, will be re-opened in November.

Wessex members recently assisted with the placing of concrete rings in the entrance of **Ireby Fell Cavern**. Hopefully the entrance is now a little more stable than it has been for a while and the danger of a collapse blocking the cave has receded somewhat.

The **Clydach Project** (see Journal 219) to clear an entrance into the downstream sump of Daren Cilau has been abandoned after the South Wales CRO withdrew their support for the project.

In view of an increase in the price to the Club, a recent committee meeting decided that the **deposit for cave keys** issued from the hut should be raised to £10.00 Also, following a recent incident in G.B., the Committee have felt it necessary to point out that keys are only issued to members and guests on the understanding that they are for the use of the people who book them out. Keys should not be passed on to other people, particularly if those people are not members of the Wessex.

Wessex members visiting **Agen Allwedd** are reminded to please book themselves into the cave as WCC members since unless we can show that Wessex members make at least six trips a year we will be unable to reclaim our own key to the place.

Nick Williams, (Hon Ed WCC etc) was recently elected to sit on the **Ghar Parau Foundation** committee (the BCRA's expedition funding committee) for a four year period. "As the only member of the Committee from the Mendip area, it falls to me to represent Mendip to the Committee and the Committee to Mendip. I would be pleased to advise anyone who is thinking of applying to the Foundation for funding for an expedition, and if anyone has strong views about the Committee, its decisions and its objectives, I would be interested to hear from them, with a view to passing ideas on to the Committee and the BCRA."

From the Log

13 - 16 April

"Ric H., Steve Pickersgill lead a mixed group including two Russians on an OFD through trip. Next day Steve in OFDI and Ric in DY0. On the way out picked up two aussies who had been abandoned by the Red Rose because they did not like the cave. Sunday was Aggy."

14 April 10am

"Maurice Hewins, John Thomas, Jim Rands and Darren ? of PCG. Accepted Alan Thomas's invitation to wine, cake and bread pudding in Swildon's water chamber to celebrate 50 years of the oxbows. Various geriatric teams pushed the inner reaches such as the top of the 20

and the top of the 40 which was being laddered by some fit youths. Jim did most of the trip in candlelight before trying a new method of burning helmet."

15 April 1990

"Fester Hole. Jim and Aiden. 8 Hours digging - approx 2 tonnes of spoil removed. The draught is as elusive as ever and the mud in the entrance crawl is definitely a collector's item."

17 April

"Doug Adams and Jim Moon to GB. Doug's first trip for three months after illness. We

went down we came back. All seems in working order.”

21 April.

“Geoff N., John Stevens (CSS). Retackled West End & Replaced ladder on Aberfan Pot. Ferretted about in a few obnoxious corners but found nothing of any significance.”

21 April.

“Mark and Duncan. Swildon’s 9 via Blue Pencil. Out via Damp Link. Excellent trip, 6½ hours.”

14 - 20 April

“Nigel Graham & Eddie Waters with 8 others (Moldywarps SG). Co. Waterford. Significantly extended Measureless Cave North and found two others. Water levels very low.”

28 April

“Rich Websell & Keith Sanderson Juniper Gulf.”

29 April.

“RW & KS Colin & Steve (BICC) GG Main Shaft via Dihedral. A real Bum-twitcher.”

6 May

“Lycopodium Hole. Murray went for a wallow. Went 10’ in but kit cobbled together so didn’t go any further. Passage seen to continue for another 10’ or so to a corner. Vis rapidly went from 15’ to 6” so interesting reverse out. Thanks to Al for base line. Shall return a little better prepared. Water low.”

5 - 7 May

“Bank Holiday trip to Yorkshire. Over 20 people through Lancaster Hole to Wretched Rabbit. Also various parties through Simpson’s/Swinsto and Tatham Wife Hole. Finish with dangly string session in Alum Pot.”

12 May

“Eddie and Dominic + Rich (Cwmbran CC) - 4 hour trip down to the Northwest Stream Passage in Swildon’s via Sump 1. Nobody told us you need bolts!”

12 May

“Marion, Dani, Sean, Mark & NW. Swildon’s Short Round NW proceeded to get stuck in the sump and fall off the pitch trying to freeclimb it. Trip ¹⁰/₁₀, ducks ¹⁰/₁₀, Williams ²/₁₀”

13 May

“Pete Hann & Duncan Frew. Pierre’s Pot, Twinkletoes Aven. 2 hours of unadulterated muck, pain and whingeing.”

13 May

“Rich Websell & Keith Sanderson. Black Shiver. Hard work trip. The big rift is no fun without a light.”

19 May.

(Various members assist with Gough’s push.)

10 June

“Aubrey, Nick, Murray & Alison. Demonstrated to Nick how Rolling Thunder got its name!”

10 June

“Malc went down White Spot”

16 June

“Wookey Hole. Malc Foyle, Robin (Whisk) Brown, Andy (Fins) Goddard, Phil Murphy, Kev Little, Rob Murgatroyd, Jim Arundel, John (Floppy) Bonwick and Dave Brock (Mostly ULSA). Put A Goddard into final sump where, unfortunately, he had a valve failure at -25 metres. 10 Hours.”

20 June.

“Nick, Mark, Aubrey. Drunkard’s Again. Nick says it’s better not to have a bright light – you see too much to stay happy.”

20 June

“Portland Perfidy Caves I + II. Dominic, Eddie, Nigel, Wayne, Phil Strong, Martin Crocker. New caves found in quarry.”

7 July.

(Gough’s again.)

22 June.

“NW, Richard Blake, Vince (BEC) Welshe’s. Shit everywhere and then some. Nearly lost my 600x16 drill, but a good successful bang. Took three hours to clean all the gear.”

14 July

“Wayne, Mike Read, Nick W, Leg, Keith Savory, Otter Hole. End and back in 8 Hours, Fantastic.”

14 July

“Nick Pollard & Tav. Chartist Cave (Llangynidr). Poking around with a crowbar. Stonking draught, nice passages.”

22 July

Cobbet J., Richard Stevenson + Support . Gough’s. Lloyd Hall to Bishop’s Palace and back to keep my name on the active list. Where does all the mud come from?”

23 July

“Maesbury. Max, Graham, Vince & J. Rat. Interesting wriggle.”

25 July.

Nick Pollard, Eastwater Morton’s Pot with Graham Tav and Vince.

12 August.

Nick Pollard, Nick Williams, Tav. Llangynidr. Unnamed cave. NP Entered shaft to enter 15’ x 4’ boulder chamber. Quickly joined by Tav & NW. Stopped digging due to the fact that the boulders we were digging were holding up some of the large boulders which threatened to fall into the tight entrance shaft and block our exit.

28 July to 19 August.

“ The Wessex go to Norway” Jim, Nigel, Eddie and Trevor & Keith. 2.8 km of new caves. Six sets of gear very much the worse for wear. Had a great time.

Letter

The following letter was recently sent by Bob Lewis to the Planning Dept of Somerset County Council:

Sir/Madam,

The notice concerning de-registration of yet another part of Priddy Green (Priddy, Somerset) is noted.

Now the last time I saw the aforementioned Green it looked to me like a building site; I presume everyone wants to live in Priddy because it’s a quiet spot (it won’t be, if the local authority carries on as it has to date: we’ll be looking at trips into Bristol to get away from the crowds!)

Since it obviously the full intent of Mendip DC to permit both authorised and unauthorised buildings in the village of Priddy, principally as dwellings, might I suggest that they consider a scheme to erect a tower block on the Green itself? This could accommodate most of the people planning to live at Priddy, would enhance the prospects of local traders and, as long as it did not exceed seventeen or eighteen stories would not intrude upon the aspect of the Cheddar limestone quarries as seen from the South-West.

Yes of course I object to further de-registration. The place is becoming unrecognisable!

R.G. Lewis (Mr)
Horfield,
Bristol.

Explosives

A change in the law

Nick Williams

A recent article¹ on potential changes in the law on the storage and use of explosives prompted me to make some further enquires with my local Police and with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Explosives (HMIE). The following may be of interest to anyone else who might be worried by the effects of the legislation.

The vast majority of the legislation relating to explosives and the way they are to be handled and stored is intended to try to keep them out of the hands of people whose objective is to cause injury or harm to others. With that in mind it is primarily storage and accountability which concern the authorities rather than their actual use. Only two sports which involve the use of explosives spring readily to mind - these are caving and wreck diving. In both cases, the chances of anyone other than the actual users of the explosive coming to any serious harm are relatively small, as also are the numbers of people engaged in the activity in the first place. The authorities' claim that the new legislation seeks to control the use of explosives within quarries and other large scale establishments rather than curtail their use amongst private individuals is therefore both credible and deserving of cavers' support. To put it bluntly, the Police want to be sure that the chances of explosives or detonators falling into the hands of terrorists are minimised, and so long as cavers and other small scale users do not represent a significant risk in this respect, they are likely to be able to continue usage with little change.

The Government's ideas for changes in the law were published in the form of a consultative memo from HMIE. In this particular case, the Health and Safety Executive, of which HMIE is a part, does not have the power to issue and enforce regulations without the authority of Parliament, so a new Bill based on the discussion document and any representations made as a result of its publication is currently being prepared. This has not yet been published, but the anticipated time scale is for the legislation to go before

¹ Mehew, Bob, "Explosives: a change in the law", *Descent* No. 95, Aug/September 1990, pp 32 - 33

Parliament in January of next year, and a best guess for the introduction of the new regulations is April 1991. The key point here is that by no means every idea which appeared in the discussion document will actually be in the new legislation, and those proposals which are will only make it onto the statute book if they are not modified in the passage through Parliament. Theoretically, therefore, it is not yet too late to make representations to Members of Parliament but whether this would actually do any good is, of course, questionable bearing in mind the power of the other lobbies involved.

There are three main thrusts in the proposed new legislation. The first of these is to ensure that every person who handles explosives is certified as being fit to do so. At present, a licence is issued to, say, a quarry manager. However, who then actually uses the explosive within the quarry is entirely at that manager's discretion. The new law will require that every person handling the explosives from the point of manufacture to the point of detonation is vetted to ensure that they are fit to be involved in this work. It will thus become very difficult for anyone with any kind of serious criminal record to gain access to explosives or detonators by any legal means.

The second objective is to try and simplify the paperwork which the Police have to complete for the purpose of issuing licences. At present there are seven different certificates which the police issue according to the circumstances of who, how, why and where the explosives will be purchased, stored and used. The proposal is to rationalise all of these into one certificate of 'fitness to use', with conditions of storage etc. being specified by the Police according to the nature of the application.

Thirdly, the new bill will put forward a requirement to document fully where and when explosives were obtained and used. Given the current possibilities for placing chemical tracers in explosives which can be detected even after the explosive has been detonated, the implications for discovering the source of explosives used for illegal acts are obvious.

For cavers, the effects of any changes in the regulations may not be too serious. Any current holder of a licence has already been vetted and approved as a fit person within the meaning of the new legislation, and the proposals regarding the changes to certificates and storage really only simplify and formalise the *de-facto* regulations which the Police already apply. Storage of small quantities of explosives for use by the licence holder is likely to be unaffected, and larger stores already have restrictions including local authority

regulation. The one thing that will change is the need for cavers to keep records so that they can account for where they obtained and used all their supplies. A final point worth making, however, is that the period between now and the time the new legislation receives the Royal Assent is likely to be very sensitive should any misdemeanours by cavers come to light, particularly if they are licence holders, so people who have access to explosives should make damn sure that whatever they do is above board and legal.

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 the effect may be lost in printing. 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 in the size at which they are to be printed.

If you copy drawings or photo's, 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, Richard Kenney for his assistance with the typing 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**

The 1990

Wessex Cave Club Annual Dinner

will be held at the

Fenny Castle House

Castle Lane, Wookey, nr Wells on

20 October 1990

Three Course Meal

£12.50

Coach from Upper Pitts leaves 7.15pm

£2.00

meal 7.30 for 8.00

Guest of Honour: Gerry Brice

The Frank Frost photographs will be on display.

Raffle

menu and tickets from:

Andy Summerskill

12 Witten House,

Sheephouse Way,

New Malden,

Surrey,

KT3 5PP

Enclose an SAE with any correspondence

EQUIPMENT FAILURE REPORT

BMM ANCHOR FAILURES

There have been a number of 8mm anchor failures reported recently. One of these, at a re-belay in Rowten Pot, resulted in serious injury to the caver concerned. It is clear from the reports that there are increasing numbers of these anchor failures and that more are likely to occur.

The reason for the problem appears to be that the anchors were not designed to have the bolts repeatedly removed, inserted and re-tightened, especially in the dirty cave environment. Many of the existing anchors have been in place for over 10 years and are simply wearing out.

The NCA Equipment Committee is urgently investigating an alternative which will be permanent and will minimise damage to the cave environment. It is also investigating the best means of extracting existing 8mm anchors to re-use the same sites.

For the present we would recommend the following safety precautions be taken:

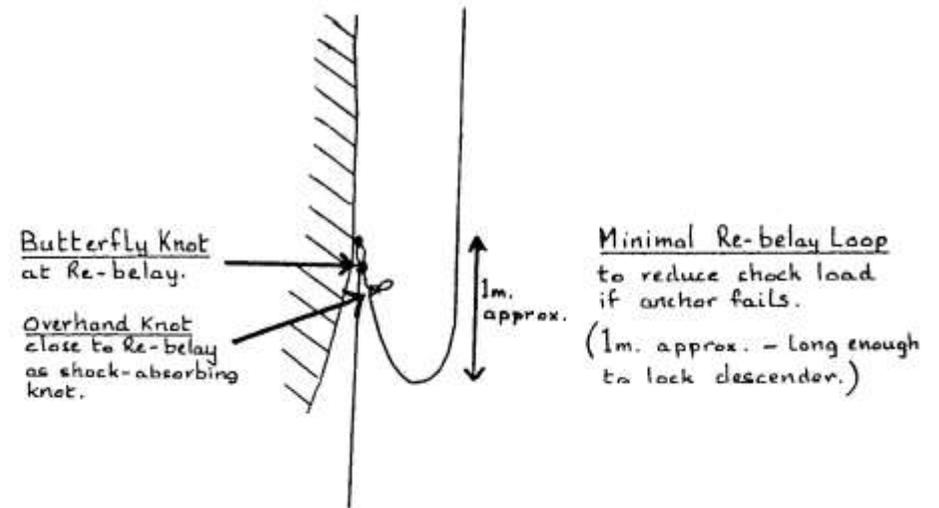
1. Bolts used must have a clean and undamaged thread.
2. The anchor itself should be checked as far as possible to ensure that it is clean and the threads are undamaged. Excessive movement of the bolt in the anchor is a warning of worn threads.
3. Care should be taken not to overtighten the bolt.
4. Cavers should use a shock absorbing knot (butterfly knot) at single bolt re-belays and a bowline on the bight at twin bolt re-belays. At single bolt re-belays, rather than add to the existing environmental damage by placing additional bolts, consider using the shock absorbing system shown in the diagram overleaf.
5. Ensure that all main anchor points are backed up.

Please forward information on failures to:

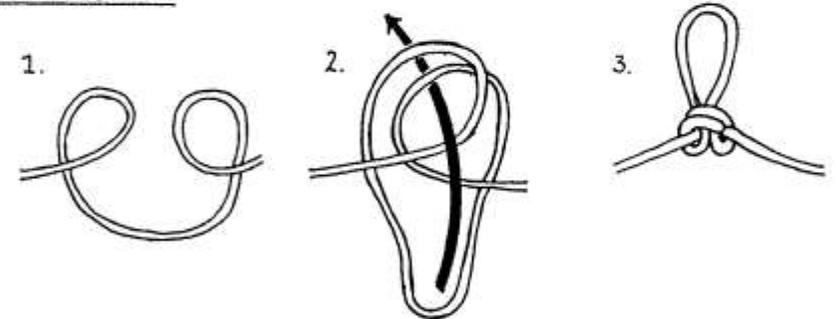
NCA Equipment Officer,
 Dave George,
 21, Aspen Court,
 Mansfield,
 Notts. NG19 0ND.

April 1990

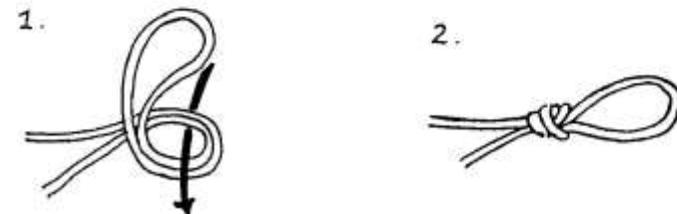
Shock Absorbing Knots at a Re-Belay



Butterfly Knot



Overhand Knot



The Butterfly Knot at the re-belay gives some shock absorption. The additional Overhand Knot in the "dead" rope at the re-belay gives more shock absorption should the anchor fail.

On The Trail of the Wolf

NORWAY 1989

Clive Gardener

“Don’t be put off by the fact that it looks impossible. You can get in feet first by lying on your side”. Geoff’s words of encouragement led to a caver lying 30 degrees off horizontal, head uppermost, surrounded by a narrow rocky rift with his boots clunking on a solid wall at the invisible bottom end. At this point the passage turned through a 90 degree bend before closing down to nothing. The problem was that 3 days worth of survey notes lay 4m down somewhere at the bottom of the rift.

After proving that it was possible to wriggle back out again more encouragement resulted in the caver slipping down the rift to a wider mid-level section. With a folding up of the feet and a half-rotation of the upper body it was possible, with some discomfort, to look down at the 90 degree corner. A couple of rock flakes barred access to the lower rift which could only be entered by descending vertically at this point.

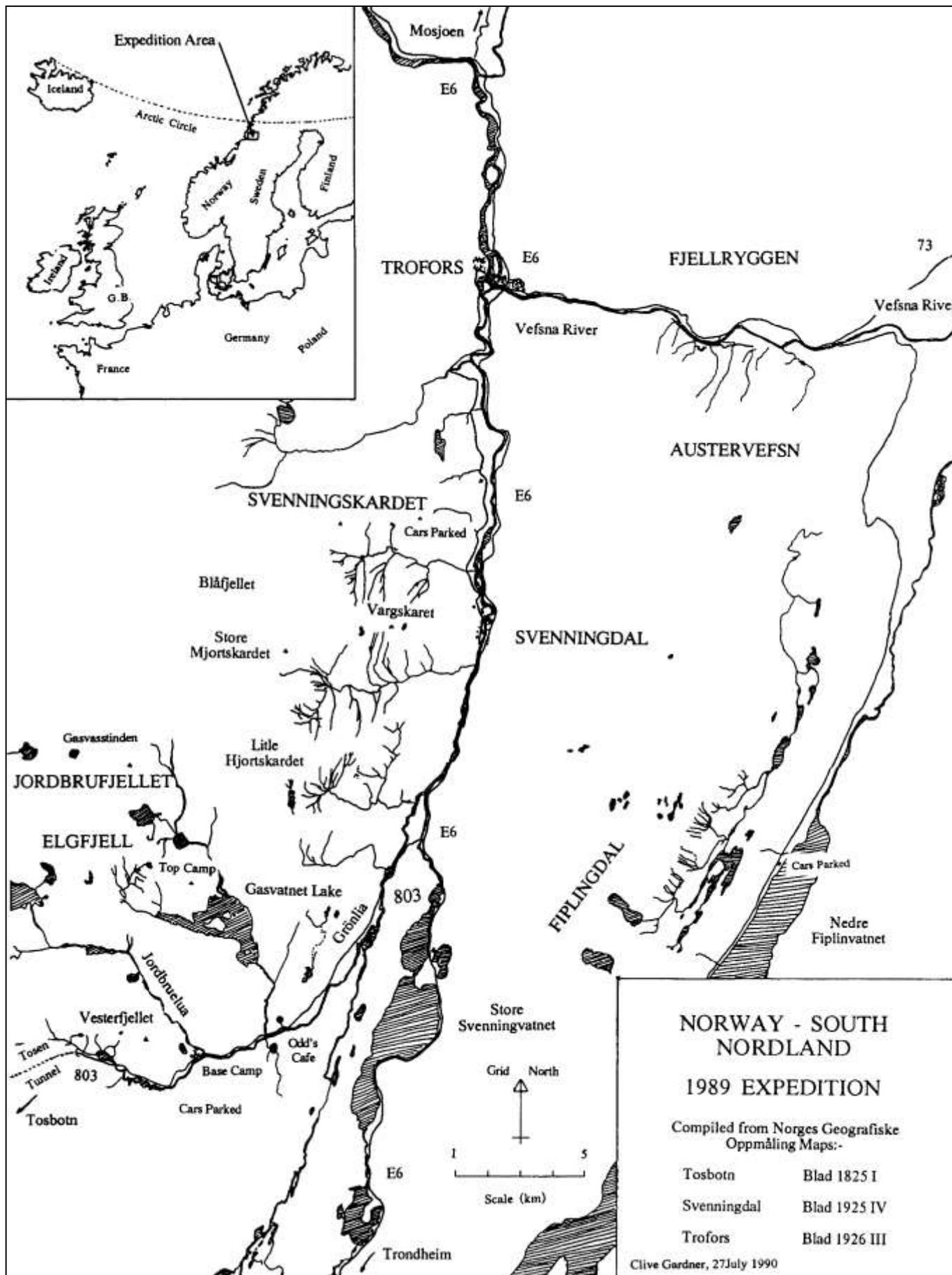
Crash, crash, crash! The lump hammer

returned the familiar sulphurous smell of freshly split limestone. With a lot of heat generation and careful wriggling of the waist it was possible, with the assistance of gravity, for the caver to slide down to the bottom of the rift. The “snug” fit was deemed too snug for the return and so from a standing position, and a carefully aimed swing of the arm...crash, crash, crash!

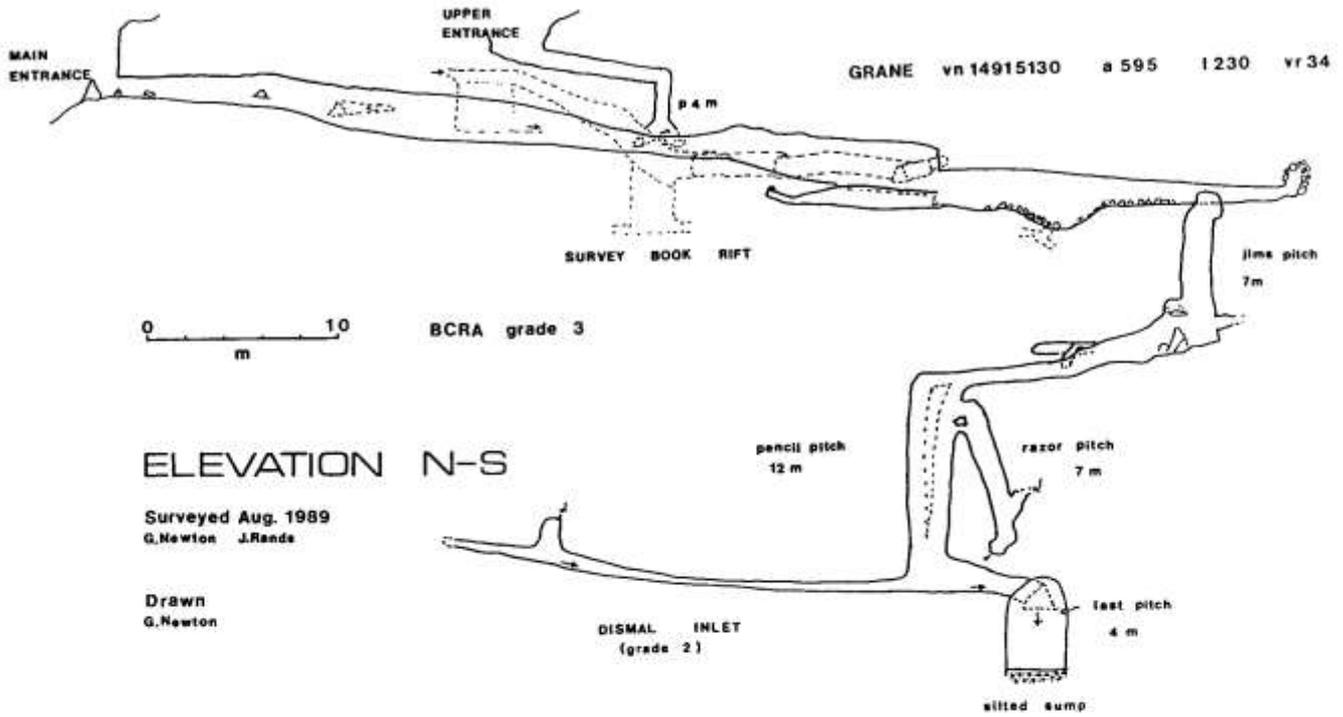
Geoff’s desire for regaining the lost survey book seemed for the time being to have been replaced by a genuine concern - a concern for not having to organise a cave rescue from one of the world’s more remote caving regions. “Don’t go down unless you can get back out again” echoed rather belatedly round the narrow rift walls. Looking around at the bottom the “corner” turned out to be a T-junction with a rift leading to the top of a large vertical shaft, some 2m in diameter and 10m+ deep. The rift in between was too tight and more interesting than the survey book...crash, crash, crash!



Keith Bryant checking the valley numbers to locate new areas for prospecting (photo: Author)

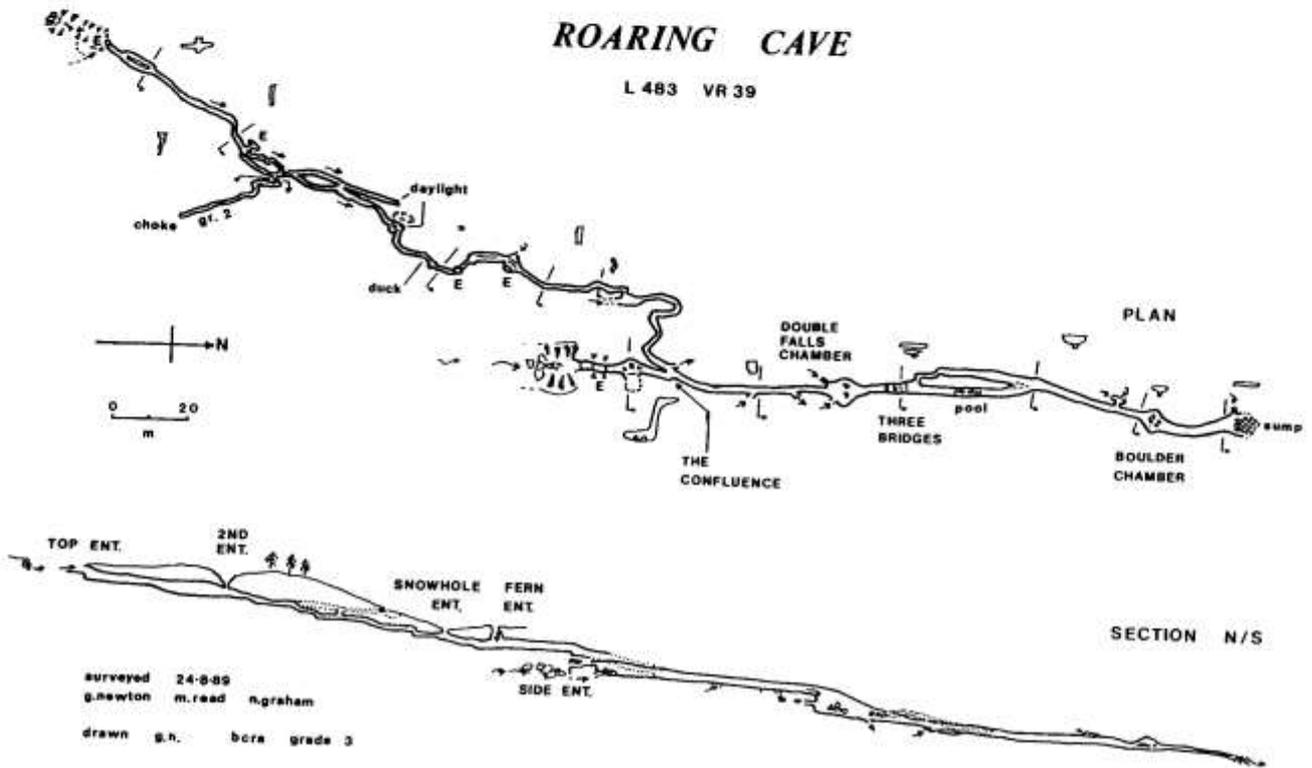


Cave of the Brown Stains



ROARING CAVE

L 483 VR 39



“Have you found the book?”. A quick look around on the floor confirmed the presence of mud, limestone chippings and not much else. “Where did it fall?”. “At the bottom somewhere, I think it might be covered in mud by now”. Digging fingers into the smooth wet mud an unnaturally flat surface was eventually uncovered. After pulling the plastic coated object out the caver wasted no time in carefully squeezing back up the vertical rift. Waving an arm through a tiny slot into the main passage above he calmly enquired, amongst deep less-controllable inhalations of air to his lungs, “Is this what you were looking for?”.

NORWAY - SOUTH NORDLAND expeditions have been taking place since 1978 initiated by the efforts of David and Shirley St. Pierre and led by Trevor Faulkner. This year it would have been traditional to take the biennial break, however Geoff Newton was so fired by the 5km+ of discoveries made in 1988 that he felt compelled to return with a team of his own. The object was to complete the exploration of Elgfjell and carry out a reconnaissance of the Hjortskardet mountain side and the central Fiplingdal raised valley lakes area.



Mike and Andy route finding through birch scrub on the 8km walk up to top camp on Elgfjell. (photo: Nigel Graham).

After 4 days exploration on Elgfjell it was becoming apparent that more emphasis needed to be placed on finding new areas. Bad weather also appeared to be settling in and what was at first an idyllic heavenly paradise, with squeaking lemmings running around everywhere, was starting to become a potential survival threat for those less well prepared with wet weather gear. In the exploration of leads in our nicknamed “Cold Cave” (Sarvenvaartoehullet) it was not only bitterly cold outside, having just come off a snow field and stood in the rain to eat lunch, but the air inside the cave felt as if one’s breath should freeze on coming into contact with it.

With the planned arrival of Nigel Graham, Mike Read and Andy Summerskill and a need to return to base camp for more provisions it was decided that Clive Gardener and Keith Bryant should strike from top camp and spend the next 4 days working from base camp - hopefully locating a new area to push.

During their walks together Keith and Clive decided on a shorthand method of describing the caving potential of the regions they were prospecting in: they were either taking photographs for a mythical talk at the B.C.R.A. or the Rambler’s Association. In fact the Rambler’s Association did extremely well out of the next few days! Keith was an old Chelsea member from the 1970’ s and was first introduced to Clive in mid 1985 just before he left to take up permanent residence in Sweden. His claim to fame was as the first person who had actually camped in Daren Cilau when the Entrance Series was really desperate to negotiate! A packet of margarine left at the inside end of the Entrance Series was famous in subsequent years for the height of the mould growth climbing from its wrapper towards the passage roof!

The expedition was 3 days driving from London with some 1,000 miles covered on the road and a 23 hour North Sea ferry crossing taken from North Shields to



Panorama of the Elgfjell Plateau from the summit of Gasvasstinden. Top Camp was next to a small lake to the left of the ridge in the centre of the picture, (photo: author)

Bergen. From base camp it was a further 6 hour walk with full packs (carrying all eating, sleeping and caving provisions for 4 days) following an 8km+ route to top camp. With 450m of ascent and 160m of descent the route varied in terrain from a deeply rutted forestry track to trail blazing through unspoilt birch scrub and was often accompanied through the marshy sections by a swarm of hungry mosquitoes. According to the salesman's pitch Black's insect repellent "Shoo!" was more environment-friendly than the deadly "Jungle Formula", but after an hour or so the mossies were back and a new coating was hurriedly called for.

Initial prospecting for Keith and Clive on Elgfjell had yielded Gryke Cave (25m of fluted hands and knees crawling passage), the Snake Pit (6m deep pitch fully explored by Mike and Nigel leading to the top of a boulder slope at the start of a narrow steeply descending streamway with jagged rock. A total of 40m ending in a too tight active stream passage) and Summit Cave (the highest cave in the area at about 900m - a vertical fault plane entrance leading to the head of a 6m deep part boulder walled shaft with water sinking through cobbles at the bottom).

These discoveries paled into insignificance against Jim Rands' and Geoff's

"Cave of the Brown Stains" (216m long: A walking sized phreatic passage with curious brown stain marks on the wall and a number of smaller side passages including the lost survey book rift. A 7m deep pitch leads to a lower series which includes three further pitches and some crawling passages with digging potential) and Nigel, Mike and Andy's "Breathing Cave" (334m long: Consisting of a roomy stooping phreatic tube descending to a silt choke with side passages and a large oxbow series. An 8m pitch in banded marble leads to a lower level crawl soon silting up completely) and "Secret Stream Cave" (58m of large ancient passage ending in a silt choke with sump debris around, but no stream. However, through a dry hole in the wall a stream could be heard).

There turned out to be quite an important set of ingredients for finding new caving areas: a topographical map of at least 1:50,000 scale, a compass, a good pair of socks (and boots!), a crowbar, a head torch, a picnic and a geological map. However the geological map was missing and this could have proved disastrous if it wasn't for the arrival of the local speleologist/cave guide, Odd Johansen.

Odd was first introduced to caving by



The impressive entrance to “Secret Stream Cave” which had not been found in 1988! (photo: Nigel Graham)

Paul Whybro and Karen Jones in 1986. A keen hunter with various “interests” in the area, including running the local caravan snack bar, we arrived in 1989 to find that he had built a large timber cafe close to the river and about 1km down the road from our base camp. This was constructed by his own efforts. On the final day we visited him with his wife and children at their modern “farm” house and saw a stuffed Lynx cat with vicious fangs and standing 1m high by 1.2m long. He had shot this a couple of years ago near the river bridge where our camp was based! However this year, just 500 yards up the forestry track from our base camp, he had carefully covered over some fresh bear print marks which showed where 500 kilos of fur and claws had leapt from the tree cover of the woods before plunging into the river, a few days before our arrival...

Odd knew where to find cloud berries and caves: he told us where the caves were. There was one story, well covered with newspaper clippings, of how two young bank robbers had been driving up the dirt road past Odd’s farm. Apart from the fact that people just don’t rob banks in Norway (unless they are young, daring and stupid enough) the roads are not at all well designed for speedy getaways. Having been alerted by the police, Odd

set a tractor across the single track roadway outside his farm and with the help of deep snow everywhere else he had successfully blocked the route.

Following some sort of confrontation which involved Odd, his loaded hunting rifle and the armed robbers there was a realisation that diesel tractors didn’t start very well in winter when you had never driven one before and the police were about to turn up and arrest you. The two youths chose to flee up the mountainside into the Norwegian winter’s night. Provisioned with a little food and just one sleeping bag between the two of them they duly returned, ready to be arrested by the police, just before the following dawn!

Odd welcomed us to his cafe at all times with as many free cups of coffee as we could drink. We repaid the debt with duty-free whisky and as a result had to assist him from the camp fire to stagger on his way back home, lurching quite euphorically from tree to tree. In his cafe, on the wall amongst newspaper clippings of great caving discoveries with surveys and photographs of the local caves was a 1:250,000 geological map for the area - Mosjoen. This formed the basis for all our treks into unknown areas and Keith was soon seen making copious notes prior to our day’s scouting trip to the raised lakes of Fiplingdal.

The water in Norway is everywhere, from fjords to lakes, streams to rivers, cascades to waterfalls and rain to underground streams. Fiplingdal was a beautiful fisherman’s Garden of Eden complete with a timber hut for eating and sheltering in. From the caver’s point of view however, completely disappointing. A large sink with a huge resurgence bode well for new discoveries until it was found that the two were separated by just 100m of limestone. A couple of sinks were spotted but they both had short runs to the nearest lakes.

The most exciting discovery of the day was made on the return journey home and consisted of the sighting of a large black arch high on the Austervefsn hillside above the Vefsna river with its somewhat sporting canoeing potential. The river itself appeared to have black recesses in the cliff walls of the far bank. However, the only access was via a "Raiders of the Lost Ark" type iron bridge hiding through the trees and undergrowth. The bridge was leaning heavily to one side and consisted of broken and missing wooden planks across its arched walkway. Keith and Clive both failed to inspire each other to cross it!



The entrance to Rainbow Cave on the high flanks of the Wolf Valley (Vargskaret) (photo: author)

The next day saw the discovery of this year's and next year's major caving area: Vargskaret (Wolf Valley). Norwegian mountain walks should never be underestimated for the quality of the spectacular views they offer, the unremitting slog of trail blazing across unspoilt and untamed natural landscapes and the agony of being bitten all over by ravenous mosquitoes (providing it is an "in" year for the airborne blood suckers).

After 4 days in a row of extensive mountain walking the visit to the Wolf Valley started late at 3.30pm in the afternoon. For the first time a large part of the route followed a path, up through the forest, past an impressive waterfall and cascades then through the water meadows adorned with cloud berries. Beyond this an inaccessible cave entrance was found half-way up the vertical wall of a rocky gorge. Cave finding was not going well. Then the thunderstorm struck with full force. Wondering how the rest of the team were faring on Elgfjell the two crouched under the rather inadequate cover of a scrub tree and proceeded to get very wet.

Cold and disillusioned, now on the bleak exposed upper slopes of the Wolf Valley, it was time for tea. Keith had found a potential cave with

3 entrances but Clive was so convinced that there was nothing up there that he misunderstood the hundredth call of "I've found something" for being as optimistically hopeless as the rest and so continued pacing shakeholes without stopping. Pausing for a rest on a limestone block the rain steadily drizzled down.

After tea there was a choice: to run for home or try and reach the col before darkness fell. Tomorrow the two were not going to be good for much and Keith planned a canoeing break anyway. Saturday the others would be down from top camp asking after the new area they had found...what new area?

Re-vitalised by the chocolate bars and Keith's surprise iced cherries the two set off for the col across a snow filled gully. There is quite a bit of excitement generated as boots sink into the crunchy snow - is there an unsupported void below and if so how far down? Once on Gasvasstinden on the way back from Summit Cave a 15m void carved by a stream in a gully floor was iced over with a wedge of snow and the two had had to cross it. Fortunately, there were no disappearances into crevasses this year!

On the far side of the snow field the sun had come out and a large rainbow was arching its multi-coloured rays across the valley below. At that moment the first entrance to a sizeable active stream cave passage was discovered: Rainbow Cave. Further on a rift in the hillside led to more active stream passage. Up over the col yet more entrances were encountered: One with a 5m drop down into a turbulent white foaming underground river. Interesting! Returning down the right hand valley flank the sink hole entrances to upper and lower Virgin's Cave were found. Then other holes and resurgences went into the note book as Keith and Clive wondered in amazement how such a complete transformation of the landscape could have taken place since the walk up! Twilight did descend on the upper valley and by the time the two were in the marshes they had got completely lost. Stepping from dry tussocks with the inevitable occasional plunge of the foot into a deep pool the two were regularly halted by the slow snake-like meanders of the river. Once on the track in the fields all looked better, but then they were off it again in the woods. It was getting darker and darker.

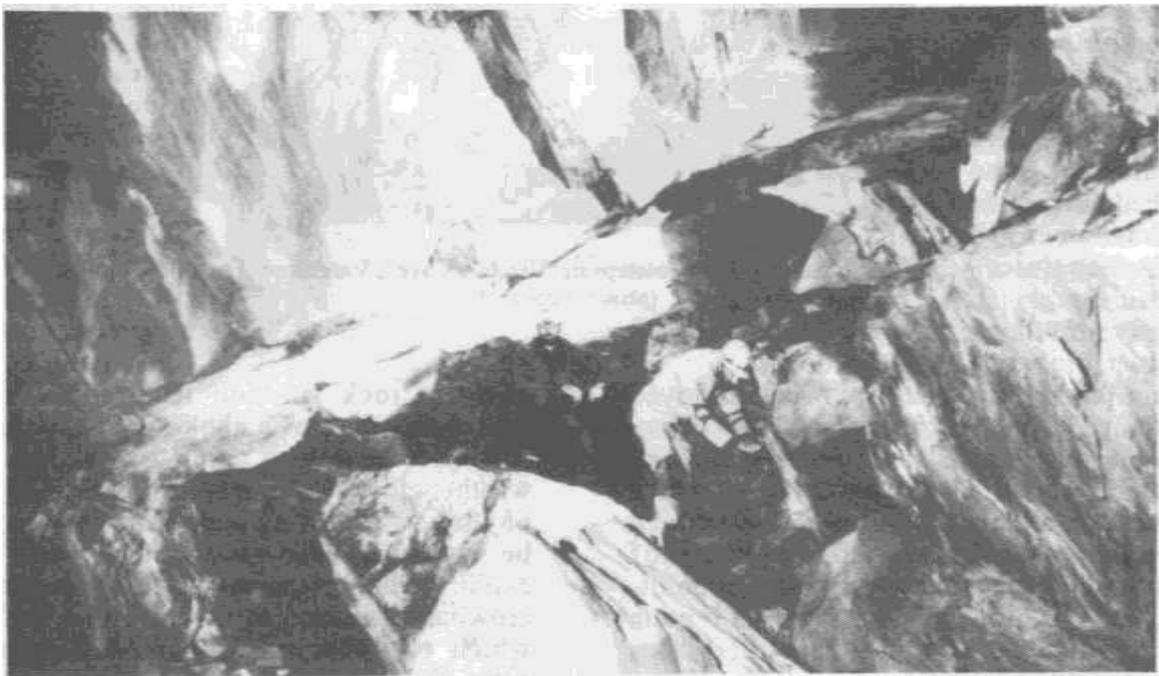
That night at Odd's the coffee was well earned!

Apart from Odd Johansen's contribution to locating new areas, Edgar Johnsen paid a fleeting visit to the team on Elgfjell. Unfortunately in attempting to photograph mud

formations, which he was collecting samples of in Elgfjellhola, he succeeded in drowning his camera and flashgun in the streamway. The entry into this cave had been somewhat spectacularly achieved with the use of a pick head as a belay and an electron ladder - the only moderately safe way of entering via the snow hole which gave a 6m drop into what last year had been a walk in entrance at the foot of a small cliff.

On his return to base camp, in advance of the others so he could photograph the moon's reflection in the enormous Gasvatnet lake, Edgar assisted Clive in cave hunting. The two set out to check the black arch high above the Trofors to Fiplingdal road. In the steady rain they found lots of cloud berries, some limestone and just one cave which was really a solution feature no more than 2m deep. Nature had dropped a permanent rock safety curtain on the potential archway cave. Edgar set off home late but happy with his cloud berries. Clive looked at the dark sky and returned to camp.

The rain came down in earnest through the night and by 6am in the morning water was lapping near the top of the riverbank, just inches below the level of the tents. The unusual bedside noise of swift flowing water caused Clive to leap out of bed - it wasn't worth dressing as dry clothes would only get wet. Wading up to his knees in ice cold water and getting wet everywhere else from the rain he managed to save the remains of the



Just inside the entrance to "Antler Cave", The longest system on Elgfjell. (photo: author)

fridge: Food suspended in a Tesco's bag at the old river level which was now rapidly re-emerging from the depths and floating off downstream.

Meanwhile at top camp Nigel's tent was equally as wet inside as out. Jim's store tent had succumbed to the high winds and was dripping water in at several places through the roof. Sleeping bags were soaked. There was nothing for it but to pack in the rain and take the first break in the weather to start the walk down.

The river crossings were to provide altogether quite a different challenge to that encountered on the way up!

On the re-turn of Geoff, Jim, Mike, Nigel and Andy a total of 1283m of new passage had been explored and/or surveyed in 26 different caves. It was also Nigel's and Leg's birthdays so a champagne celebration was called for and a happy evening spent by all exchanging news at Odd's Cafe.

The following day a large stream sink was pushed for 7 m to a chamber with waist deep water - ahead was a tightly packed boulder blockage where explosives would best be employed sometime in the future. Today, Odd's dream of a new local active

stream cave to take visitors to was not to be realised. From Sarvejaella and its single cave at Saeterbekk (181m) to the de-forested desolation of Gronlia the lack of results was disappointing. The expedition members were now quite anxious that on Monday the Wolf Valley would yield something more positive. Time was fast running out.

Odd led the way up the forest track and then onto the hunter's path which had a habit of becoming invisible on the way down! He knew many entrances which Keith and Clive had missed on their previous visit. Some looked extremely dubious and bordered on Odd's occasionally unrealistic view that British Speleologists could magically turn a flooded drainpipe sized hole, or animal burrow proportioned clay dig, into a humanly accessible

cave system! Others had foaming streamways cascading just out of reach through deep round holes in the hillside.

Once halfway up the Wolf Valley pieces of birch scrub were being gathered for Odd to light a fire. The sunny morning's walk had turned into a cloudy and chilly afternoon's push. Odd's hot coffee was now a more than welcome start to the day's work. The group split into two: Keith, Clive, Nigel and Odd went off to explore, survey and photograph lower Rainbow Cave - a meandering twisting stream way with all manner of phreatic rock solution features and the passage ending at a choke with the water disappearing into a sump below. As the weather closed in

and the realisation dawned of just how cold these melt water caves could be, it was decided to abandon plans for exploring the upper valley and col. Instead a crowbar was taken to lower Virgin's Cave which was methodically opened up and named by Odd.



Odd Johansen's first footsteps in "Virgin's Cave", Vargskaret.
(photo: author)

A 3m climb down led into a beautiful white marble streamway with one starkly contrasting wall of black mica schist. A second short climb down led into a bedding plane strike passage taking a sizeable stream into the sump. The limestone in the area consists of bands of marble running North/South and dipping almost vertically to the west. In places the limestone thins out to a wedge and caves suddenly end with the

(133m left with 5 open leads due to rather high water levels!), upper Virgin's Cave (45m) and then Roaring Cave (483m) which became the major new discovery of the expedition. Roaring Cave was a very exciting place to explore - as one goes downstream the passage gets bigger and wetter and it becomes more difficult to overcome the obstacles without getting soaked! "Wow! This is more like it!" commented Mike before sprinting off down the hillside in his wetsuit.

Three days later a slight break in the fast approaching autumnal weather allowed the team to make their way back for a final day's pushing, surveying and photographing. Odd stayed at home to prepare the farewell feast. Jim took up his tent and ran the canteen providing endless hot brews and rounds of sandwiches. He even allowed some frozen cavers to come inside and shelter from the cold and the rain whilst changing back into walking clothes. Without Jim's Cafe the icy cold conditions inside the caves would have precipitated a far less productive day. A total of 874m of new cave was explored on Vargskaret, the larger part of which was surveyed under quite hostile conditions.

By 9.25pm smart clothes were brought out and everyone gathered slightly washed at Odd's Cafe. A superb elk meal was produced and the table full of wine, which had been bought in Mosjoen, ensured that no one went to bed sober. In the early hours Odd fell off his chair with a crash.

There were just a few hours left to pack the next day, but Odd had one more cave up his sleeve. In neat clothes, armed with one cigarette lighter and a flickering Mighty Light, 10m of Farewell Cave were explored. The full exploration of this cave and

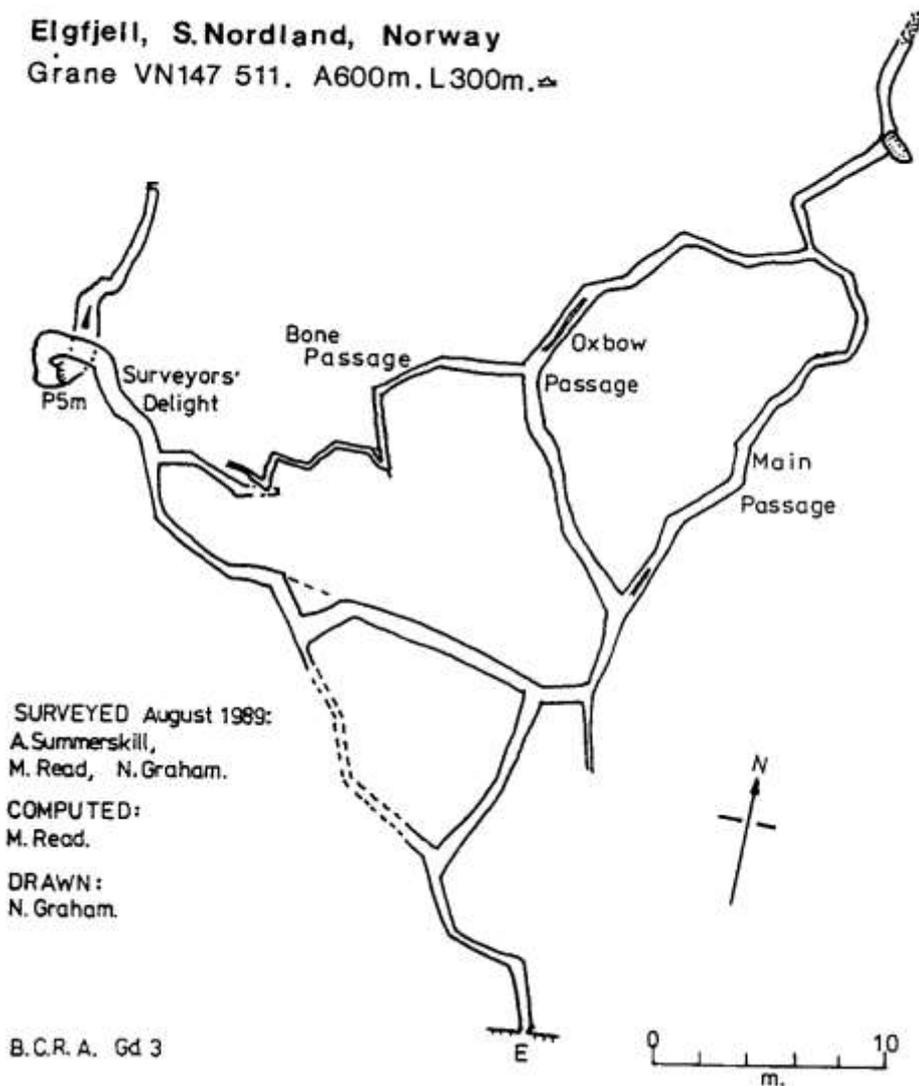
Vargskaret remains to be carried out in 1990...

Clive Gardener

BREATHING CAVE

Elgfjell, S.Nordland, Norway

Grane VN147 511. A600m.L300m.↔



water disappearing into impenetrable fissures. Such was the premature end to Virgin's Cave.

Geoff, Jim and Mike explored Compass Cave

Cheddar Lost River Cave Exploration

19 May 1990

The following text is taken from the computer log that Mike Hearn (Dive Controller) kept during the dive. Surface photo's by Nick Williams. Sheppard's Crook photo's by Gavin Newman.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 9:04 Enter cave
 Howard Price Richard
 Websell Nigel Graham
 Mark Hel more Mike
 Duck Pete SI ater Andy
 Farrant 2 Oxygen
 cylinders Telephones

19/05/90 (Saturday)
 Beryl Brett Duncan
 Frew Chris Bishop
 Steve Redwood + 5 BBC 9:42 Enter cave

19/05/90 (Saturday)
 Gavin Newman Malcolm
 Foyle Phil Churches
 Pete Hann Robin
 Williams Andy Tv1 er
 Carole White Paul
 Lambert 10:10 Enter cave



19/05/90 (Saturday) 10:25 Message Gavin Newman arrives at Makin' Progress.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 10:17 Message
 Richard Websell leaves Lloyd Hall

19/05/90 (Saturday) 10:27 Leave cave Mark Hel more Andy Farrant

19/05/90 (Saturday) 10:22 Message
 Howard Price 2 valves Failed.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 10:30 Enter cave Andy Farrant with replacement valves [for Howard! belonging to Malcolm Foyle.



19/05/90 (Saturday) 10:39 Message First team ot sherpas leave Makin'Progress.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 10.45 Message Howard Orice leaves Lloyd Hall.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 10.47 Leave cave
 Nigel Graham
 Chris Bishop

19/05/90 (Saturday) 10.54 Leave cave
 Andy Farrant

19/05/90 (Saturday) 10:59 Message
Gavin Newman dives to Bishops Palace

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11:00 Leave cave
Andy Tyler
Robin Williams
Carole White

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11:12 Message
Request for spare high pressure hoses.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11:14 Enter cave
Robin Williams with spare high pressure hoses.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11.19 Leave cave
Jim Rands
Beryl Brett

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11:21 Message
Molephone communication established with Howard and Richie in Bishops Palace.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11:29 Message
Websell leaves Duck Ponds to rendezvous with divers at Bishops Palace.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11:35 Message
Malcolm Foyle and Phil Churches leave Lloyd Hall.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11:36 Enter cave
Richard Stevenson
Rob Palmer
Robin Brown
Andy Tyler
Ian Brown
Ian Farrington
Steve Hounsell
Yanto Kelly

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11:58 Enter cave
Jim Rands to extend phone cable in Lloyd Hall

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11:58 Leave cave
Steve Hounsell

19/05/90 (Saturday) 11:59 Message
Gavin Newman left Duck Ponds expected at Sheppards Crook 12:20-30.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 12:01 Leave cave
Rob Palmer with second flat fx2 base!
19/05/90 (Saturday) 12:08 Enter cave
Rob Palmer with 2 charged FX2's
19/05/90 (Saturday) 12:26 Message
Molephone communication established with Sheppards Crook - Gavin Newman.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 12.40 Leave cave
Andy Tyler
Robin Williams
Paul Lambert
Duncan Frew
Ian Farrington
Yanto Kelly
Steve Redwood

19/05/90 (Saturday) 12:44 Leave cave
Steve Hounsell
Jim Rands

19/05/90 (Saturday) 12:50 Enter cave
Mark Helmore with Brew Kit -for Bishops Palace.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 12:58 Message
Gavin Newman set up in Sheppards Crook and ready to photograph.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 13:24 Message
Richard Stevenson and Robin Brown have dived to Bishops Palace.
Palmer will be about 15 mins.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 13:28 Message
Gavin Newman reports a diver approaching at Sheppards Crook.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 13:47 Message
Bishops Palace report that both divers have left for Sheppards Crook (Malcolm Foyle and Phil Churches)

19/05/90 (Saturday) 13:49 Leave cave
Mark Helmore
Keiron O'Neil

19/05/90 (Saturday) 13:51 Message
Two Sheppards Crook support divers arrived and are sorting gear.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 13:52 Message
Rob Palmer has dived from Lloyd Hall, all sherpas and BBC will leave the cave.



19/05/90 (Saturday) 14:59 Leave cave
Pete Hann
Mike Duck
Pete Slater
Ian Brown
+ 4 BBC

19/05/90 (Saturday) 15:25 Message
Richard Stevenson arrived at Sheppards Crook,
Rob Palmer in transit (Not Quackers' transit)!

19/05/90 (Saturday) 15:45 Message
Rob Palmer arrived at Sheppards Crook.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 16:20 Message
Robin Brown diving to Sheppards Crook taking
excess equipment.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 16:37 Message
Robin Brown arrived in Sheppards Crook - dive
time 9 Mins.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 16:40 Message
Notified dive proper to start 7:00pm to 7:30pm
after sorting kit -
dive control to be contacted at half hourly
intervals.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 17:27 Message
Notified Robin Brown kittingup to leave
Sheppards Crook in approx 15 Mins.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 17:36 Message
Fat controller says "Everybody out!". [A
request that Malcolm Foyle and Phil Churches
both leave as soon as the pushing divers
enter sump 3.]

19/05/90 (Saturday) 17:46 Message
Sherpas required at Lloyd Hall at 7.00pm

19/05/90 (Saturday) 17:54 Message
Robin Brown is to leave Bishop's Palace to
arrive Lloyd Hall at 7.00pm will bring 4
bottles.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 17:57 Message
Gavin Newman will wait at Sheppard's Crook
until Stevenson and Palmer return, and will
then exit the cave ahead of the push divers in
order to get his film developed. He will not
require assistance to get his gear back to the
surface. He will abandon anything which he
cannot carry himself.



19/05/90 (Saturday) 18:00 Message
Robin Brown and Richard Websell have left
the Duck Ponds and will be returning to
Bishops Palace E.T.A. 18:30. The pushing
divers will be another hour before diving
sump three.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 18:13 Message
Robin Brown requested a bottle of milk
at Lloyd Hall.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 18:13 Enter cave
Beryl Brett
Tom Chapman
Steve Redwood
Henry Bennett
Sarah Macdonald
Andrew Farrant
Robin Williams
Andy Tyler
Mile Barrington
Chris Bishop
to collect Robin Brown
Malcolm Foyle
Richard Websell
Phil Churches
Howard Price

19/05/90 (Saturday) 18:16 Message
Bob Mackin and Lisa at dinner ----- Nick
Williams and Pete Hann manning car-park
molephone.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 18:19 Enter cave
Ian Brown to join sherpa team.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 18:24 Message
Miles Barrington at Lloyd Hall.
Reports visibility good in the sump and that
the traverse line to the second dive platform
is badly abraded.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 18:43 Message
Richard Websell arrived Lloyd Hall. 3 x 28 cu.
ft. bottles and 1 x 45 cu. ft bottle on the
platform at Lloyd Hall.



19/05/90 (Saturday) 18:51 Message
Howard Price reported that Richard Websell and Robin Brown have left for Lloyd Hall and that he [Howard] would wait for Malcolm and Phil at Duck Ponds.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 18:53 Message
Gavin requested a local pizza delivery company to deliver a deep pan ham and mushroom within the hour to Sheppards Crook.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 18:57 Message
Robin Brown arrives at Lloyd Hall.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 19:09 Message
Pushing divers are being kitted up and expect to dive in about 20 minutes.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 19:24 Message
Robin Brown and Richard Websell are at Makin' Progress and are leaving the cave.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 19:45 Leave cave
Ian Brown 2 x 50 cu. -ft. bottles.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 20:09 Message
Sherpas will leave Makin' Progress and standby at cave entrance. [Because there was still no word of the imminent return of Foyle and Churches.]



19/05/90 (Saturday) 20:12 Leave cave
Sarah Macdonald
Andy Tyler
Robin Williams
Henry Bennett
Beryl Brett
Andy Farrant
5 x 50 cu. ft. bottles and 1 tackle sack.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 20:19 Leave cave
Chris Bishop

19/05/90 (Saturday) 20:20 Message
Pushing team have now dived.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 20:26 Leave cave
Tom Chapman
Steve Redwood
Miles Barrington

19/05/90 (Saturday) 20:58 Message
Two support divers returning from Sheppards Crook, Richard Stevenson returned at 20:45 after buoyancy problems but has returned to the water to gain experience of the sump. Palmer has continued with the molephone.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 21:05 Message
Richard Stevenson has surfaced in Sheppards Crook [after passing the low point in sump 3 and experiencing valve problems] and will remain just in case Rob Palmer returns to change stage tanks.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 21:07 Message
Support divers have surfaced at Duck Ponds and are preparing to cross Bishops Palace.



19/05/90 (Saturday) 21:16 Message
Rob Palmer on decompression stop - Richard Stevenson has gone down with slate to get the story.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 21:25 Enter Cave
Sherpa's gone into cave to get Phil Churches, Male Foyle and Howard Price.
Miles Barrington
Tom Chapman
Henry Bennett
Sarah Macdonald

19/05/90 (Saturday) 21:31 Message
Rob Palmer is at 6m deco stop .. the way on appears to be choked at -21m on far side of sump 3. More info to follow.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 21:34 Message
Ian Brown and Miles Barrington arrived at Lloyd Hall.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 21:42 Message
Rob Palmer reports a choked passage at -22m in a large passage. Prospects appear good. Richard has left the water as his decompression times are mounting up. Rob Palmers decompression times are a total of 122 minutes... 11 min at 9 m, 22 min at 6m and the remainder at 3m. Total dive time of 148 minutes.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 21:49 Message
3 divers have left Duck Ponds and will require sherpas in about 45 minutes.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 22:18 Message
Nick Williams reports that a second molephone link has been established with Bishops Palace.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 22:30 Message
Lloyd Hall sherpas report Henry Bennett flying around Lloyd Hall on the hauling rope.
[All these Lloyd Hall sherpas subsequently flew around and greeted Malcolm Foyle with a flying display as he surfaced in Lloyd Hall.]

19/05/90 (Saturday) 22:37 Message
Richard Stevenson will stay with Rob Palmer overnight and will come back in the morning. Rob Palmer is still decomposing at 3m. Stevenson's dive computer is showing a 12 hour decompression penalty.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 22:52 Message
Malcolm Foyle is now in Lloyd Hall.



19/05/90 (Saturday) 23:07 Message
Rob Palmer surfaced in Sheppards. Correction on depth - choke at -19m Perhaps missed the way in the sump ... passage size big.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 23:12 Message
Phil Churches surfaced at Lloyd Hall.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 23:15 Message
Howard Price surfaced in Lloyd Hall.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 23:18 Message
Bob Mackin requested clarification [from dive control] on a babysitter for RAS and RAP.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 23:23 Message
Malcolm Foyle leaving Makin' Progress.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 23:25 Message
Molephone 2 asked about availability of sherpas in approximately 3 hours time to remove Gavin from Lloyd Hall.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 23:37 Message
Howard and Phil leaving Makin' Progress

19/05/90 (Saturday) 23:42 Message
Lloyd Hall cleared, Ian Brown on his way out.

19/05/90 (Saturday) 23:59 Enter cave
Robin Brown [to babysit pushing divers!]
Carol Tapley
Steve Hounsell
Pete Hann
Nigel Graham
Paul Lambert
Steve Redwood

20/05/90 (Sunday) 0:09 Message
Robin Brown and Carol Tapley at Lloyd Hall -
message passed to Robin - contact surface on
molephone 01:30, Carol to wait -for Gavin's
return before leaving cave.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 0:12 Leave Cave
Ian Brown and Miles Barrington out.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 0:30 Leave cave
Steve Hounsell

20/05/90 (Sunday) 0:38 Leave cave
Steve Redwood



20/05/90 (Sunday) 0:50 Message Fat Controller
sustained severe injuries in the line of duty
- caught with his fingers in the pie ! ! ! !
!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
[Mike Hearn burned his fingers trying to
dissect a steak and kidney pie that had been
reheated on top of the tilley lamp at dive
control. It bloody hurt!]

20/05/90 (Sunday) 0:53 Message
Robin Brown and Carol Tapley leaving Lloyd Hall
for Bishops Palace.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 1:05 Leave cave
Paul Lambert
Nigel Graham
Pete Hann

20/05/90 (Sunday) 1:48 Message
Robin Brown leaving [Duck Ponds] for Sheppards
Crook.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 2:15 Message
Robin at Sheppards Crook issuing orders -
requirements in the morning for divers 2 FX2
bases.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 3:07 Message
Diver surfaces.... it is Carol, (in
Lloyd Hall)

20/05/90 (Sunday) 3:11 Message
Gavin on surface [at Lloyd Hall] now.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 3:29 Message
Gavin, Carol and Jim leave Lloyd Hall.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 4:00 Message
A11 leave the cave.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 7:49 Message
From molephone base - people are expected to
be underground by this time - Mike to contact
molephone base.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 8:07 Enter cave
Carol Tapley
Phil Churches

20/05/90 (Sunday) 8:08 Enter cave
Robin Williams
Andrew Farrant
Andy Tyler
Mark Helmore
Beryl Brett
Yanto Kelly
Nigel Graham

20/05/90 (Sunday) 8:28 Enter cave
Howard Price

20/05/90 (Sunday) 8:45 Message
Molephone waiting to receive call at Bishops
Palace.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 8:57 Message
Divers leaving Sheppards Crook.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 9:01 Message
Request for Phil's [missing] diving gear to be
carried in from entrance asap.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 9:07 Message
Carol Tapley left Lloyd Hall for Bishops
Palace.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 9:14 Enter cave
Ian Brown taking Phil's diving gear.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 9:17 Message
Pushing divers have left Sheppards Crook -
Robin is packing up the kit and expects to leave
within half an hour. [Robin sent message to the
Fat Controller to say the he'd done the washing
up and made the beds!]

20/05/90 (Sunday) 9:19 Message
Phil's kit has arrived in Lloyd Hall

20/05/90 (Sunday) 9:28 Message
Howard dived.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 9:43 Leave cave
Ian Brown.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 9:52 Message
Howard arrived in Bishops Palace.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:00 Message
Phil has dived.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:01 Leave cave
Yanto Kelly
Mark Helmore

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:07 Message
Rob, Richard and Robin at Duck Ponds
requesting breakfast and a pint on arrival
at entrance. Expect to reach Lloyd Hall in
approx. one hour.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:09 Message
Team of sherpa's leaving Makin' Progress for
entrance.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:18 Leave cave
Beryl Brett
Andy Tyler
Nigel Graham
Robin Williams

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:20 Leave cave
Andrew Farrant

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:39 Message
Rob, Richard and Robin ready to dive to Lloyd
Hall.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:40 Enter cave
Ian Brown
Pete Slater
Biddy

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:42 Enter cave
Steve Hounsell
Pete Hann

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:44 Enter cave
Quackers

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:46 Enter cave
Steve Redwood
Sarah Macdonald
Paul Lambert + milk for Robin

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:49 Enter cave
Andy Summerskill



20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:51 Enter cave
Miles Barrington

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:56 Enter cave
Henry Bennett

20/05/90 (Sunday) 10:59 Message
Quackers and Pete Slater on dive platform.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 11:10 Enter cave
Carol with Rob etc - they have BBC camera and
are ready to dive.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 11:13 Message
Howard closing down mole phone at Duck Ponds
to move to other end of Bishops Palace.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 11:31 Message
Richard apparently in Lloyd Hall.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 11:33 Message
Robin also at Lloyd Hall.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 11:35 Enter cave
Andy Tyler to take photos.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 11:42 Message
Rob surfaced in Lloyd Hall with BBC's camera.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 12:12 Message
Robin and Richard in Makin' Progress.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 12:21 Message
Rob and Bidy on the way to Makin' Progress

20/05/90 (Sunday) 12:22 Message
Phil, Howard and Carol out of the water in Lloyd Hall.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 12:23 Message
Mole phone base [at sump lb end of Bishops Palace] closing down.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 12:25 Enter cave
Nigel Graham
Andrew Farrant
Robin Williams
Yanto Kelly
Beryl Brett
Carole White
Jim Rands - to photograph near entrance then head on to Makin' Progress.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 12:27 Message
Richard, Rob and Robin leaving Makin' Progress.

20/05/90 (Sunday) 12:39 Leave cave
Robin [Brown]

20/05/90 (Sunday) 12:41 Leave cave
Richard [Stevenson]

20/05/90 (Sunday) 12:43 Leave cave
Carol Tapley

20/05/90 (Sunday) 12:48 Leave cave
Biddy
Rob Palmer
Howard Price
Steve Hounsell
Sarah Macdonald
Henry Bennett Andy Summerskill
Phil Churches

20/05/90 (Sunday) 13:30 Leave cave
Quackers (In a Huff)

20/05/90 (Sunday) 13:37 Leave cave
Yanto Kelly
Jim Rands

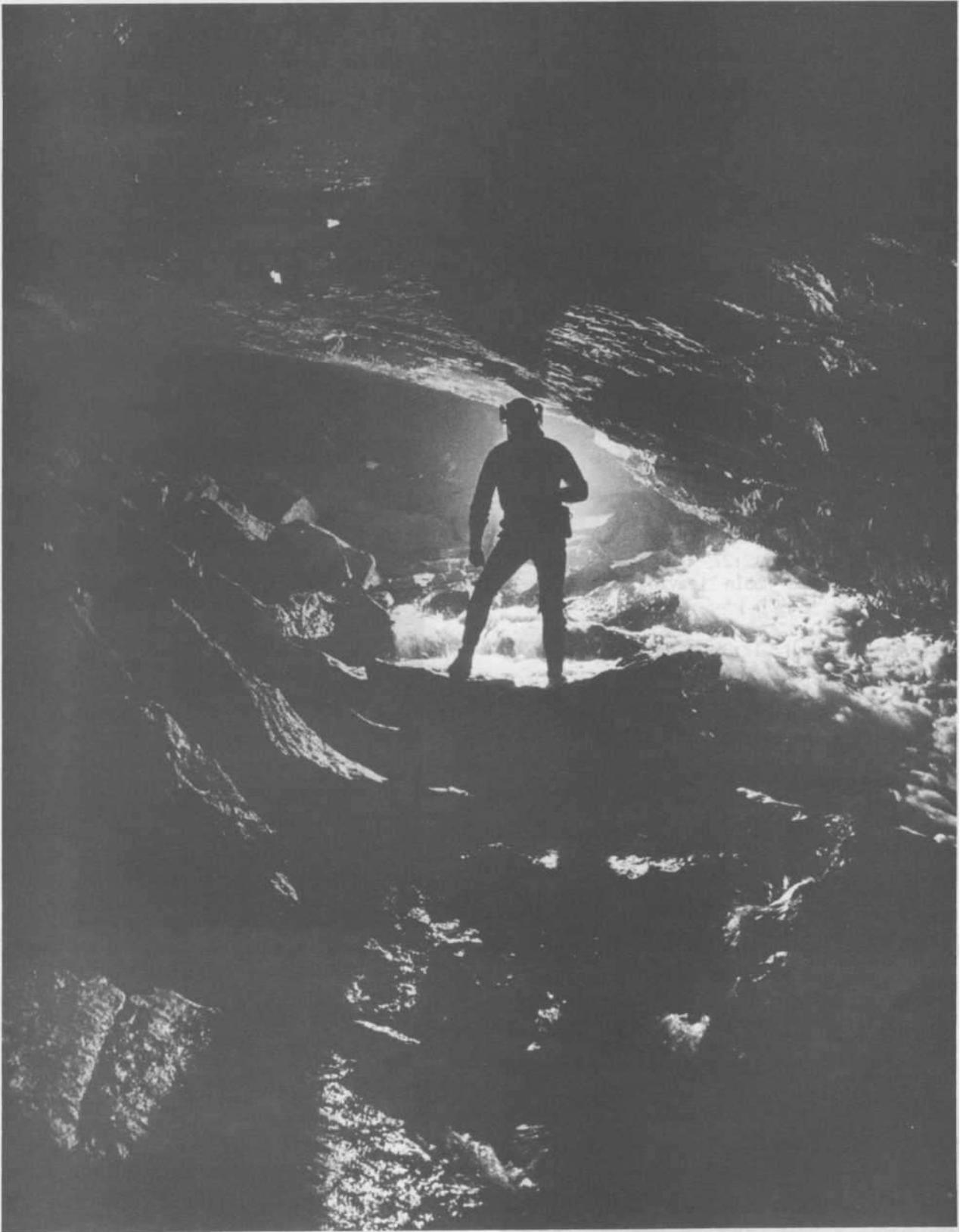
20/05/90 (Sunday) 13:38 Leave cave
Miles Barrington
Andrew Farrant
Beryl Brett
Paul Lambert
Steve Redwood
Ian Brown



20/05/90 (Sunday) 13:39 Leave cave
Nigel Graham
Robin Williams
Andy Tyler

20/05/90 (Sunday) 13:40 Leave cave
Pete Hann
Pete Slater

Expedition ends.



Postscript: A follow-up dive by Rob Palmer on 6 July 1990 confirmed that sump 3 ends at -20m in a boulder pile which appears to be at the bottom of a steeply ascending shaft. No viable way through the boulders was found, but accurate radio locations were made of the end of the dive and of Sheppard's Crook itself. Attention has now switched to surface sites in the Gorge, in the hope that a dry entrance can be found to the rest of the Lost River.

Obituary

Bob Drake

Bob died tragically from heart failure after a dive in the sea off Brixham, Devon, on Friday 1st of June. His untimely and unwelcome death at only 40 years of age came as a great shock to the caving community on Mendip in particular, and also in other limestone areas such as South Wales where Bob was well known.

Mary, his wife, and both her children have our deepest sympathy and support.

Bob's loss is inexplicable and his leadership of the family business in Bristol and at Sheldon's Engineering in Wells is irreplaceable. So, too, are his sound and sensible contributions to the Cave Diving Group, Wessex Cave Club and Mendip Rescue Organization especially. He worked hard and with commitment for them all. That almost three hundred of us attended his funeral in Bristol on Tuesday 12 June gives some indication of our respect for Bob and his family. It was the largest "call out" that I recall on Mendip, and one that we could well have done without.

Bob began caving at the Badminton Road Youth Club in Downend, Bristol, in the mid 'sixties. The club had a cottage above Crickhowell and he became smitten by the intricacies of Aggy and other caves at Llangatock. He joined the

Chelsea Speleological Society and was often at Whitewalls. Back in Bristol, he instructed at the Severnshed Centre. On marrying, he and Mary went to live in Paulton on the edge of Mendip and Bob joined the Wessex. At his first club dinner in 1973 at the Bishop's Bam in Wells he and other "innocents" were pressed in to digging

Hillgrove Swallet by Alan Mills. The dig refused to yield but the team developed into a close knit group. Several joined the Somerset section of the CDG and Bob emerged as the natural leader and organiser of their diving activities. He even formed a club to get access to the diving sites of Portland: called Hillgrove Sub - Aqua No. 188. The same qualities were evident when he became Secretary of the Wessex, a post he held twice, and as an officer of the CDG.

When Oliver Lloyd died in 1985, Bob took over the co-ordination of cave diving at

Wookey Hole Caves. He did this job impeccably and enhanced the regard for such activities there with the management and the new owners especially. As a MRO warden throughout the 'eighties, all knew that we could rely on Bob for he was tireless in the very special and difficult business of Sump rescue training and equipment development.



Despite all his contributions, Bob Drake remained modest and more concerned for others than himself. The gap he has left is much bigger than we appreciated when he was with us. For Mary, the hole must be huge and unfathomable. She scattered Bob's ashes at the Hillgrove dig where they found so much to enjoy together, and

asked for contributions to the MRO in his memory. At the time of writing, this memorial fund has reached over £950. Bob's legacy as a friend is, however, priceless, and his influence endless.

Jim Hanwell
Wookey Hole.

The following text records the Valediction given by Jim Hanwell at Bob's funeral in Bristol on Tuesday 12 June 1990 to a gathering of his family and friends totalling some three hundred people.

"In 1936 at the AGM of the first Cave Rescue Organisation, E.E. Roberts, doyen of early caving in Yorkshire, said that rescuers did not like the job at all. This is the most unwelcome "call-out" I can remember in my own forty years of involvement with caving and rescue work on Mendip. Ironically, they are the same forty years that were allotted to Bob.

"I can hardly say 'Welcome' to you, therefore, nor even bid you 'Good afternoon'. Yet, I am privileged to be asked to say 'Thank-you to you all. As befits Bob's love of caving and diving, I shall do it in threes.

"My first thank you is really from Mary, her two young children and all the family: for your presence here today and the support given to her by all of Bob's many friends and acquaintances. Knowing the caving community as I do, and Bob's part of it, I am confident that this support will go on. It needs to! Although it is that which stems from bewilderment at what has happened, we also believe in overcoming any grief and pity through strength in numbers and, dare I say, hope and even cheerfulness. Bob himself would want all of the latter, and the size of this gathering shows how highly regarded he is on Mendip.

"My second thank you is from all of us to Mary and her family. Not only has she joined in herself, especially with diving, but she has enabled Bob to take such an active part in organising and contributing to everyone's enjoyment of their own caving and diving activities. We all know that he was not just a committee man but a fully committed one. We wish you to know, Mary, that the latter is irreplaceable and will not be forgotten.

"My third, and sadly final, thank you, is for Bob himself. He was quiet,

modest and even retiring about his own contributions, and so I will speak for him

"It all started at the Badminton Road Youth Club in Downend back in the mid- 1960's Here he met Mary and fellow club member Mike Plumley. The club had an outdoor centre above Crickhowell, and it was in South Wales that Bob became smitten by caving. He got to know Aggy very well and became a regular at the Britannia Inn - well remembered for his liking of Mann's Brown splits! He joined the Chelsea Speleological Society and was often at Whitewalls.

"On Marrying Mary, they ventured South of Bristol and went to live at Paulton. Soon, he was on Mendip and joined the Wessex. He attended his first Club dinner at the Bishop's Barn, Wells, in 1973, and, with several other was pressed by no less than Alan Mills to assist him in digging at Hillgrove. We can all picture the occasion and, no doubt, there were rash promises of "caverns measureless to man"! But, alas, this is the eternal dream of the Mendip cave digger, including even NHASA. And so it was that the social and wider scene of the Hillgrove Dig became rewarding to Bob and Mary.

"Several of the team joined the Cave Diving Group, and started sea-diving under Bob's leadership. He even formed a club to get access to good diving sites on the South Coast, and would be proud to know that all the members of Hillgrove Sub-Aqua No. 188 were here today. Bob's ability to organise and lead by example as a workmate rather than as a manager has been legendary both professionally and at play. It saw him become an invaluable Hon. Secretary of the Wessex, the only person to do this job twice, and a much respected member of the CDG in Somerset.

He also took over the diving at Wookey Hole Caves following Oliver Lloyd's death in 1985, and he has been an MRO warden for most of the 1980's. As a near neighbour living just down the River Axe from me, his advice on many things was practical, wise and welcome, for he understood people above all and did not impose upon them. Indeed, he was always willing to put himself out for others and wanted everyone to work together for the benefit of caving rather than any personal gain. This will remain Bob's special legacy to us all.

"There is much to remember and appreciate about Bob Drake, then, and it is difficult to do justice to his many attributes on this occasion. That so many of us have come together here today says far more than I can about him.

"Quite why this should have happened to such a competent person who put safety first is inexplicable. A higher authority may be able to reassure us more convincingly. We are here today because we care - as Bob clearly did."

On Friday 1st of June Mendip Caving suffered a very great loss. Very many people were saddened to learn of the death of Bob Drake whilst on holiday with his family at Brixham in Devon.

At the time of his death he was diving off the breakwater and it seems he died of heart failure. Bob had a wealth of experience of caving and diving and was always willing to pass this on to anybody interested. He was also the kind of man who would get a job done rather than sit around thinking about it.

Until recently he spent several years on the Wessex Committee as Secretary with a special interest of getting Upper Pitts jobs organised and also helping with practice rescues. One thing Bob loved to do was to go diving in the sea or in a cave. He was Secretary for the Somerset Section Cave Diving Group and also their Publications and Library Officer and he was always keen on

looking after new trainees on their first dives as well as booking Wookey Hole Cave for exploratory dives. Also in being a Cave/Diving Warden for the Mendip Rescue Organisation he was always willing to give assistance when needed.

Bob did a lot of part-time work for Avonquay (formerly Severnshed), the outdoor pursuits centre run by Avon County Council, being the instructor in charge of Caving in 1974. Hillgrove digging/diving group was formed and every Wednesday evening he could be found digging at Hillgrove Swallet and later on that evening in the Hunters.

Bob's enthusiasm and knowledge will be sorely missed. We have all lost a very great friend. Our deepest sympathy must go to his wife Mary and the two children Michelle and James.

Jeff Price

John A Benham

John A. Benham, a member of the Wessex and also of the Northants Caving Club, died on 14th January after a massive heart attack.

John was a very active caver, he was also a founder of the Northants Caving Club. When we first met in 1976 there were only seven members in the club, and they met in John's front room in Wellingborough every Thursday night. After we married in August 1977 the meetings were held in the pub. After a few years the membership grew - to date there are now about 45 members, who now meet every week at the embankment club, Wellingborough.

John was always happy when a scout group or other young people's club would ask him to give a slide show on caving, while hoping to fire them into becoming fellow cavers at the Northants Caving Club.

John is sadly missed by myself and Dawn (aged 11) and everyone who knew him.

Annette Benham,
Kettering,
23 June 1990

Cecil Cullingford

The Rev Cecil Cullingford, who has died aged 85, seemed destined to become a leading clerical headmaster; but when he was forced by domestic circumstances to abandon this career he became an international authority on speleology.

Originally introduced to speleology through his interest in archaeology, Cullingford came to believe that the exploration of caves by groups of schoolboys had great educational value, since it combined scientific discovery with physical demands and experience of team-work.

Cullingford wrote and edited several books on caving, some of which are now standard works on the subject, instructive for beginners and experts alike. To all he emphasised the importance of responsibility and the need for scientific judgement rather than foolhardy risk when venturing into unknown territory.

His own extensive caving experience was ill-starred, as his important pioneering work, mainly in South Wales, had to be curtailed just before spectacular breakthroughs were made by others.

Cecil Howard Dunstan Cullingford was born at Battersea on Sept. 13 1904 and educated at the City of London School and Corpus Christi College, where he had a brilliant academic career, taking a first in both parts of the Classics tripos and then in History.

Thus equipped he became a sixth-form master at Brighton College. But in 1932 his evangelical convictions took him to Clifton Theological College, Bristol - where, curiously, he held the office of vice-principal while preparing himself for ordination.

Cullingford stayed on for a time as assistant chaplain, but his heart was still in school teaching, and in 1935 he became chaplain of Oundle.

Having joined the Reserve of Officers, he was among the first Army chaplains to be called to

active service in 1939, and was soon in France, serving first with the Grenadier Guards and then with the Welsh Guards.

He returned to England via Dunkirk in 1940 and was senior chaplain to the 79th Armoured division when the 21st Army Group under General Montgomery drove through France and the Low Countries and into Germany in 1944 and 1945.

On demobilisation, Cullingford was appointed headmaster of Monmouth School, conveniently placed for the Mendips and the cave systems of South Wales. He brought to the school an invaluable combination of intellectual gifts, teaching skill, pastoral sensitivity and wide experience.

But in 1956, after his wife Olive, whom he had married in 1933, developed a distressing mental illness, he felt obliged to resign the headmastership.

After a three year spell at the Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, where he lectured on naval history, Cullingford became chaplain of St John's School, Leatherhead, from 1960 to 1964, then of St Michael's School, Lymington.

The most important of his books were *Exploring Caves* (1952), *British Caving* (1954), *A manual of Caving Techniques* (1969) and *The Science of Speleology* (1976) which he co-edited with Trevor Ford.

In 1967 Cullingford moved to north Norfolk to join a rural ministry based at Blakeney, where he had particular responsibility for the parish of Stiffkey with Morston. On his retirement in 1972 he served for a time as rural dean of Beccles and assisted in several Suffolk parishes.

His first wife died in 1971, and the next year he married Penelope Wood-Hill.

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