

THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

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Contents

Officers and Committee	2
Club Notes	3
Caving Notes	4
Photographs wanted	6
Club handbook	7
A Dive in the Dales	8
Warning	9
Rocky Acres Cave	10
Gunong Api Connection	11

Next Issue More from Sarawak

Due to lack of time in the preparation of this Journal there is no "From the Log" section. An extended section will appear in the next issue.

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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. 1991

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

President	Luke Devenish	Editor	Nick Williams c/o Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane, Priddy, Somerset BA5 3AX
Vice-Presidents	Paul Dolphin Graham Balcombe		
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Hon Secretary	Nick Marachov 5 Daleson Close, Northowram, Halifax, W. Yorks., HX3 7JF	Hut Booking Officer	Roz Fielder, 94 Cavendish Meads, Sunninghill, nr Ascot, Berks. 0344 27166 (9am – 9pm)
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Hut Warden	Howard Price	M.R.O. Coordinator	Nick Pollard, 17A Guilda Close, Whitchurch, Bristol 0272 83746
		Survey Sales	Maurice Hewins 31 Badshot Park, Badshot Lea, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 9JU 0252 29302
		Librarian	Rob Taviner

Club Notes

Telephone at Upper Pitts: British Telecom have notified the Club that they will be changing the Upper Pitts telephone number in the summer of 1991. The dialling code remains the same, the new number will be 672310, which is the old number prefixed by a six. The date upon which the change is to be made will be notified nearer the time.

New Members

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

David Ladell, 93 Sidney Road, Bexleyheath, Kent, DA6 8HQ, 081 303 3439

Stuart Wilkie, EIC 90A, Royal Naval Engineering College, Manadon, Tavistock Road, Plymouth, PL5 3AQ, 0752 553740

Michael Thomas, 14 East Avenue, Heath End, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 0RA, 0252 723361

In Committee

Recent Committee meetings have included the following club matters:

Telephone: the pay phone at Upper Pitts is costing far more to run than it is bringing in as the instrument rental is so high. It is to be replaced with a model which is cheaper.

The club's BCRA caving insurance has been renewed for the new year. The BCRA have renegotiated the policy, resulting in a decrease in cost, and an increase in the amount and extent of cover. People with explosives certificates no longer have to be specially named, and legal costs of club officers are covered for the first time. Further details of the policy can be obtained from the Secretary or direct from the BCRA insurance manager (see *Caves and Caving*).

The top priority for work on Upper Pitts is currently the reduction of damp in the changing area. Extra ventilation and steam boards are to be fitted in the shower area, and if anyone knows of a de-humidifier going cheap would they please contact the committee.

Replacement coin meters for the lights and electric shower (in the Ladies dorm) are being sought since the old ones have either broken or operate on the old style 5p which is no longer legal tender. Again, the Committee would welcome any offers of assistance with finding good, reliable secondhand meters.

Steve Deacon, one of our newer members and a qualified electrician, has examined the hut electrics and done several earth connection tests. These appear to be satisfactory (although the behaviour during the very long dry spell is still giving cause for concern) but some money is to be spent on tidying up a few blackspots and improving the earth leakage protection.

A high priority is the fitting of a seven day electronic timer for the heating which will be mounted in an accessible point in the hut: this will not allow the heating timings to be altered without a key, but members and visitors will be able to see when the heating is on, and turn it on for brief periods when necessary. Following an incident over Christmas when we went through a tank full of gas in less than four weeks,

members are reminded that they should not alter any of the settings in the boiler house without contacting the Committee: in this case the frost protection thermostat was turned right up and since this overrides the time clock, to ensure that the hut never freezes up, the heating was running almost permanently. Gas is the single largest part of the Upper Pitts running costs, and extraordinary usage such as this will mean increases in hut fees if it happens again.

Caving Notes

The following notes have been received from the Council of Southern Caving Clubs. Please spread the news to your non-Wessex friends:

Ubley Warren/ Nettle Pot: The farmer is happy for cavers to visit these caves without contacting him first. However, please observe the Country Code (close gates, do not interfere with livestock, do not leave litter etc.) and park in the layby on the road ensuring that all access points to the farm are left clear.

GB Cave and other Charterhouse caves: The UBSS have been checking all parties visiting GB recently following a serious breach of the regulations. Parties visiting GB are limited to six people, each party having their own key and each member having a permit. No novices are allowed in the caves. Be warned that the Karst Police will pounce if you don't follow the rules! (*Please also see the warning notice elsewhere in this Journal*)

Swildon's Hole: Cavers are still changing in the open despite the recent refurbishment of the Barn. This causes great annoyance amongst the villagers - PLEASE CHANGE IN THE BARN AND NOT ON THE GREEN! Cavers have even been found changing in the School playground: this will upset the villagers even more so PLEASE CHANGE IN THE BARN AND NOWHERE ELSE.

An additional problem is parking. At busy times large numbers of cars are parking on the Green. This is against the bye-laws. It is difficult to find a solution to this problem but additional parking is always available up by the Village Hall on the "Top Green". Recently, however, a van was parked across the entrance to the Hall so people could not get in. Please park with care and consideration for others.

Finally, Robin Maine (the landowner) has asked that cavers should be reminded that novices are not to be taken into Swildon's under any circumstances.

Lamb Leer: There is no access to Lamb Leer at present, and the entrance is locked. Do not attempt to force the lock as any damage may result in the permanent closure of the cave.

A letter from **Wealden Cave and Mine Society** (formerly Unit Two Cave Research and Exploration) was recently received at Upper Pitts. Writing primarily to bring the change of name to the attention of the Wessex's members, Graham Christian, the Secretary, also points out that the Society's extend beyond caving into mines and "man made underground features". The Society is based in Surrey, and can be contacted at Knole Croft, Longfield Road, Dorking, Surrey, RH4 3DF, Tel. 0306 883486.

A very limited number of places are available on an Otter Hole trip on 28 April. Places on the trip are limited to four: please contact Steve Waite (0734 411249) for further details.

Club Diary 1991

23 February	Club weekend	Visit some of Mendip's smaller Caves. Novice Ladder and SRT instruction Rescue Gear demonstration
24 February	Committee meeting	
2 March 3 March	Yorkshire booking	Ling Kin - East/ Rift Pot Grange Rigg/Christmas Pot
16 March	Golden Oldies Film Show	
13 April 14 April	Yorkshire booking	Disappointment Pot Stream Passage/Flood Entrance
20 April	Hut Working weekend	Spring Cleaning Weekend - Barbecue and Barrel
21 April	Committee meeting	
28 April	Otter Hole Trip	Very limited numbers - see Caving Notes
4 May 5 May	Yorkshire weekend	Top - Sink/Lancaster Hole Long Kin West
25/27 May	Yorkshire weekend	
2 June	Committee meeting	
8 June 9 June	Yorkshire booking	Gingling Hole County Pot
15/16 June	Devon weekend	Visit Devon's main caves. Digging and diving too!
22/23 June	Wales Weekend	Details to follow
22 June 23 June	Yorkshire booking	Ireby Fell Cavern Marble Steps Pot
6/7 July	Portland Trip	Seaside and caving
6 July 7 July	Yorkshire booking	Little Hull Pot Hammer Pot
14 July	Committee meeting	
27 July to August 18	French Trip	Caving and walking in the Dordogne. More details to follow.
31 August/ 1 September	North Wales weekend	Walking, but caving can be arranged!
1 September	Committee meeting	
7 September	Yorkshire booking	Birks Fell
15/16 September	Derbyshire weekend	
29 September	Committee meeting	

5 October	Yorkshire booking	Dale Head Pot
19 October	AGM and Annual Dinner	
2 November 3 November	Yorkshire booking	Juniper Gulf Gaping Gill Main Shaft
30 November 1 December	Yorkshire booking	Rumbling Hole Hurnel Moss Pot
29 December 30 December 31 December	Yorkshire booking	Lancaster Hole Lost Johns Cavern Notts Pot.

Please contact Keith Sanderson (address at front of the Journal) if you wish to attend any of the Yorkshire bookings.

All trips will include novice instruction if requested - contact the Caving Secretary or another member of the Committee.

If you have any ideas for a Club activity, contact the Committee for help with organising and publicising it.

PHOTOGRAPHS WANTED

Members of the Club who have photographs taken on Club trips abroad (especially the last Berger expedition) are invited to submit them for display at Upper Pitts.

Costs of reproduction and mounting will be borne by a special fund which the Club has for this purpose.

Please send your negatives (and prints) to Nick Marochov. They will be returned when copies have been made for display.

The Anno Domini Prize

Part 2

Readers of Journal No. 223 dated January 1990 will remember that I offered a prize of one 25' ladder and tethers to the writer of the best Mendip caving article during the following year.

Richard R. Kenney

To be honest, I am surprised that it had no response, for the only qualifying article was the 'Belize 1989' by Duncan Frew. He thus wins the prize, but the condition is that I be allowed to criticize his article, and the type of caving that it depicts.

'Mendip caving'. Belize is rather far from Upper Pitts, but perhaps some of our members prefer to be at that distance. If not actually on Mendip then I can assure my readers that I realize that at least Mendip caving methods were in use. Who else but an idiot Mendip caver would try to exist on 248 tins of sardines. I'm darned if I would join the trip to Crete this year. Who fancies living for a few weeks on 500 jars of Stuffed Olives?

Now, what's all this nonsense about 'Actun'? It's nothing new, for we were going around Mendip early in the War shouting 'Achtung - cave!'

Then we are led to believe that the caves are large, based on one photo of an entrance. It looks to me just like the entrance of Little Neath River Cave taken with a telephoto lens.

The skeletons were, of course, members of The Other Clubs. They were people who went caving but were too bone idle to come out again.

Snakes, fancy being afraid of them! I saw

many snakes, and elephants too, in Hunters years ago.

Just a note for the map readers. Many years ago, in Malaya, I drew maps of jungle areas from air photos. With a high rainfall it was assumed that every valley carried a stream and that their locations could be assumed to lie at valley bottom. Part of the country was mapped by surveyors in London, and their assumption was that rivers did not exist unless they could actually see the water. The result was a complete blank series of maps which had to be hastily redrawn whilst the Emergency in Malaya was continuing. After all, there are rivers in this country that dry up in a drought summer. And let no one forget, the end of GB never floods and the water there is never more than a few inches deep, cos that's all that I have ever seen!

The whole article tries to convey a sense of intrepidity but it's not long since that I read about a woman climbing the Eiger whilst 5 months pregnant, and about another fellow who at 88 was doing his 100th ascent of Ben Nevis. What then makes a good caving trip, expedition or Journal article? First, the drive and initiative that lead people to try something new, either to them or just new in general. Then there is the fun of the thing — the zest for life that we all should have. In my age group when thrutching is done with crutches etc I found that the most appealing aspect of this article was the tale of companionship. Hopefully we all get the chance of making friends within and outside the Wessex, and the knowledge that this is still an attractive feature of caving is great. Many thanks, Duncan, for a first class article, and perhaps you can use my tethers to fix up a better tent ridge than that shown in your grotty photo. I suggest that you use the ladder also along the tent ridge to hang clothes on.

CLUB HANDBOOK

Following comments at the 1990 AGM
a new issue of the handbook is due for publication later this year.

Would those people who had corrections or comments on the last edition please send them to the Editor (via Upper Pitts) as soon as possible.

A Dive in the Dales

CRASH!! John Cordingley bursts into the members bedroom of Greenclose, home of the Northern Pennine Club.

"Morning"
 "Err Brew"
 "Get up, time to go diving"
 "BREW!"
 "All right".

Off goes JNC to endorse some tea bags. Meanwhile I roll over and go back to sleep.

Ten minutes pass and he's back accompanied by the gentle clinking of tea cups.

"Here, now get up, I'm off to pack my kit".

"BREW!"
 came the response from the various coloured slug like forms on the bunks.

By Russell L. Carter

John goes to strew his gear around the car park leaving the bedroom to its usual morning chorus of belching, farting and slurping of tea. The Ass-taking given to Pete Riley, who's just had a plaster cast taken off his arm and been left with one musclebound arm and one weedy childlike arm, is interrupted intermittently by calls from the car park to get up. Eventually John is persuaded to make another brew. By now he's packed and jumping around trying to get people moving. He buggers off to cook his breakfast, leaving us in peace. Ten minutes later he's back with coffee, he must be keen today I think, bringing this many brews. However, JNC's plan has worked, the volume of tea

drunk now exceeds the capacity of my bladder and I'm forced to get up for a piss.

Whilst partaking of a Veggies nightmare for breakfast we try to persuade the visiting club that carrying down Kingsdale would be better than going to Ireby, ever the old favourite of "you're holding back the frontiers of speleology" mob, but this fails to motivate them.

We arrive at Bernie's, with a mountain of kit and one sherpa. Colin, one of the young Ingleton lads, is spotted. Waving him over he's informed that "This task's got your name on it".

"OK" came the response, "can I finish my game of pool?"

"OK, where's Dave?" asks JNC.

"Digging his Grandma's garden" said Colin.

John sets off to rescue him. Howard Price strolls down the street. His CDG sweatshirt is spotted, and he's informed he's carrying as it's the only way he'll get his name in the CDG Newsletter these days.

I don't know, the things that you have to do to get Sherpas nowadays, when you are not famous. They all want to be on the telly and win a sweatshirt,

thanks to Cheddar.

At Valley entrance we block the way in with a gear delta. People are only let in when they've picked up some gear. We soon arrive at the sump, to find the lead stock pile has been nicked. This means we have to dive separately. As I kit up, Alien (Andy Goddard) arrives looking green. He'd planned to dive down the active route found earlier this year but, scuttled off to be sick again. Obviously he's been practising for another session with the Beer Monster.

Application for Membership of the WESSEX CAVE CLUB

Full Name (Capitals) RUSSELL LEE CARTER
 Address S FARNHAM CLOSE, MICKLESOVER, DERSY, DE33RE
 Telephone Number 0332 513148
 I hereby apply for membership of the Wessex Cave Club and agree (if elected) to be bound by the Club Rules (especially Rule 10, a copy of which is given below) so long as I shall retain my membership of the Club. I am not less than 18 years of age. I am not, to the best of my knowledge, suffering from any physical defect or illness.
 I enclose £16.00 (one year's subscription) and understand that this will be refunded if I am not elected.
 Date 6/8/90 Signature X
 I am aged 18 years or over (please tick box) Date of Birth if aged under 18 _____
 If applicants under the age of 18:
 I, the undersigned, as Parent/Guardian (delete as appropriate) of the above named, give my permission for him/her to apply for membership of the Wessex Cave Club, and on his/her behalf, I accept the provisions of the Club Rules, including Rule 10.
 Date _____ Signature _____
 We, the undersigned, propose and second the application for membership of the Wessex Cave Club, and vouch for his/her suitability to be a member of the Club.
 Proposed (Capitals) J. CORDALEY Signature _____ Date 6/8/90
 Seconded (Capitals) M. FOYLE Signature _____ Date 6/8/90
 Previous Experience (please state caves visited, with whom, and over what period of time)
I HAVE BEEN POT-HOLING SEVERAL TIMES, PARTICULARLY UNDERWATER
I AM VERY FOND OF BEER AND DRESSING IN RUBBER SUITS. I AM INTERESTED IN LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (IE HINDI/SANSKRIT). BOB PALMER ONCE STOLE TO ME. I SOMETIMES PUT 'HOT, NO BEE' TAGS A LONG WAY
 Membership of any other Caving Club/Organisation IND SUMPS, ORPHEUS C.C./NORTHERN PENNINE CLUB/TECHNICAL SPELEOLOGICAL GROUP/CAVE DIVING GROUP/BCRA/B.S.A.C./BEER MONSTER FAN CLUB
 Reason for Seeking Membership of the Wessex Cave Club
I HAVE BEEN GOING OFF POT-HOLING FOR NUMEROUS YEARS AND HAVE DEVELOPED A TASTE FOR WARM FLAT MOUNTAIN BEER AND WOULD SHAVE IT. I'D ALSO LIKE TO LEARN TO DIVE A CHARLOT (HAVING HAD PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH THE "BATHING OF DEATH")
 Occupation PLANNING/PHILIP RETAILER "CAVE DIVING SERVICES" PARTNER
 Application Accepted Date 21/10/90

NOTES
 1. "Rule 10. That every person, whether a Member or not, making use of the services of a guide or guides or taking part in any activity or expedition organised by the Club or in which any Member of the Club shall take part, shall do so at his or her own risk, and he or she or his or her legal personal representatives or assigns or dependants shall have no claim or right of action against the Club or any Member thereof in respect of any damage, loss or injury (including death) sustained by whatsoever and howsoever caused notwithstanding any negligence of the guide or any Member of the Members of the Club."
 2. The Proposer and Seconded should be responsible persons of Wessex, who have agreed with the applicant. It will help the Committee in considering the application if they write a short note on the applicant's suitability for membership on the back of this form.
 3. Married couples applying for joint membership must each complete an application form.
 4. No application for membership shall be considered for any person under the age of 18 years who is accepted.
 5. Members who join the Club are required to complete a new application form, accepting the provisions of the Club Rules (including Rule 10) when they reach the age of majority.

sec 1 8.1.88

Entering the water, I'm soon through the low dog-leg section at the start of the sump. Cruising along in the murk, being able to see about 2m, an eye is kept open for pickings. A remarkable number of people must hop out of Kingsdale judging by the number of wellies half buried in the silt floor.

Splitting from the active route, the line passes through a remarkable eyehole that the original explorers struggled through. We've found that you can reach around it, and so miss out one epic. Steady swimming through peat stained, tea coloured areas of water, soon finds me at Useless Yorrut airbell (340m from base).

Dropping a stage tank here, I try to recall what JNC had said about the next bit, I'd not been into the new East Kingsdale Branch he'd dug into before.

Wallowing to the end of the airbell, I set off again, squeezing round a rock in a bedding. I scuffle my feet round to drop down a pot. Gradually edging backwards the dug out squeeze is slowly passed into a rift. The next bit is the tightest and is a descending rift. Sure enough I'm soon jammed. Moving the cylinders allows a little more progress. Whilst wondering why the hell I'm doing this, I wriggle one arm behind me to move the tank some more. By now the viz is zero. A little more pushing and I'm through, thinking that that will be fun on the return. I turn round and head off up a passage like the roof tunnel on the way into Kingsdale.

Cruising along at -13m I'm finally starting to get it together at last. Weighting some loose line with rocks on the way I ascend a pot to -9m. From the top a short way leads to a ramp down to -21m, the roof out of sight in the blackness.

Tying on at the previous limit, I'm faced with a choice, straight on or right into the blackness. Opting for straight on, the left wall in sight, I set off. After 3m a sandbank slopes upward covered with deep ripple marks. Studying them it dawns on me which way the water had flowed, so following them I rose upwards to -16m. The walls close in and just as it looks useless a passage develops.

Belaying to a spike on the floor the clean washed passage grows to 2m across. Weighting the line with rocks as I go an area of crystal blue water is entered. Shit, static water, I'm off route. Dropping to the floor it falls away to -18m, the water beer coloured again, back on route. A rift appears ahead closing down with a pot in the floor — THE WAY ON.

A check of the gauges dictates a return thanks to a clumsy sherpa knocking tank valves open. The reel is tied off and wedged securely in a rift, just in case John doesn't get there and the weather breaks meaning a delayed return. Cruising back, the squeezes are soon reached and passed easier on the return.

At the airbell a quick message is written for John on my slate. Steady finning passed several junctions and I met John who's borrowed some lead from Alien. Shoving the message under his nose a glint appears in John's eye and he sets off into the murk.

Surfacing after 1½ hours the tale is told and retold to the sherpas as the kit is packed for the worst bit - the trip out. Emerging into the darkness the gear joins the chaos in the car boot and a wetsuit is donned, whilst necking a welcome brew.

Back at the sump a 10 minute wait for JNC. Helping him dekit he tells his story. Another 60m of line laid, on top of my 50m, 15 mins decompression with the end large and open at -25m and getting deeper.

John's gear is whisked out of the cave and after a search for the car keys, we head to Bernies. CLOSED. But Steve makes a brew anyway as we tell him the tale.

The new passage is now the deepest in Kingsdale, running out under the valley floor and is already past Kingsdale Beck.

Dye tests are planned (with the BCRA Hydrology Group) to sort out whether Crescent Pot water also enters the Keld Head complex here. Either way the diving should prove to be interesting — IF WE CAN FIND SOME SHERPAS.

Warning

BREAK-INS AND THEFTS from cars parked at Charterhouse (both Longwood and GB parking areas) have recently been on the increase. In one case, on the weekend of 15 February, three cars and a minibus were all broken into, most of them having one or more windows smashed in the process. The thieves do not seem to be fussy about what they take: caving gear, clothing and books have all been stolen along with more usual items such as cameras, car stereos, wallets and chequebooks.

You are advised to change and leave your valuables safe at the Hut.

Rocky Acres Cave

News from the Devonshire digging scene with Peter Glanvill

While finishing off the exploration of Skullcap Cave at Chudleigh (See Descent, Christmas 1990) we began to search for pastures new for evening digs in the same general area. One of the most enticing areas is that to the east and north of Kingsteignton. Here exists a large enough area of limestone to have developed a karst type drainage pattern with significant vertical differences between sinks and the main rising. However, the landscape has been so modified by man that only juvenile swallets are readily identifiable and digs have been so far been unsuccessful. The only major cave system is the 300m long Coombesend Cavern which lies, typically for Devon, in a disused quarry now being used as a waste disposal site.

However, above the rising is the disused Rydon Quarry which breached a large cave passage over thirty years ago. The cave was reputed to contain several rifts descending to water level but accounts are sketchy and what remains of the cave lies under forty feet of overburden dumped during the construction of the nearby by-pass. A number of small cavities were revealed by topsoil stripping and the landowner, John Jones, who became fascinated by the story of the original

cave has spent six years digging in them.

Assisted by members of the PCG and DSS he concentrated mainly on one cave now dubbed Rock Acres which by the time we first visited it last summer had reached a depth of 15 metres and a length of thirty metres. This was achieved by using a compressor powered rock drill and rock splitting wedges (plug and feathers) to enlarge the narrow phreatic rift. What has lured the diggers is the draught which the cave emits plus the fact that, although narrow, it is still going. On cold, frosty mornings steam billows from the entrance.

Our contribution [with chemical assistance provided by the WCC and BEC - Ed] was to start blasting through a particularly hard band of limestone at the head of a narrow rift. Progress has been rather slow but I am confident that patience will eventually be rewarded. Anyone is welcome to give a hand but please let me or Tony Jarratt know so that the efforts are co-ordinated. Do not visit the site without asking the landowner first - he likes cavers, but dislikes trespassers!

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 CP/M and MS-DOS (IBM) disc, as well as ASCII BBC Model B and Apple

Macintosh.

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.

The Journal is produced on an Apple Macintosh Plus computer using a Western Digital 20AP hard disc, Microsoft Word 4 software and a LaserWriter II SC 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 Richard Kenney for his assistance with typing.

Editor
**Nick Williams,
Upper Pitts,
Eastwater Lane,
Priddy,
Somerset,
BA53AX**

Gunong Api Connection

This summer saw five Wessex/Craven members and two pure Craven Pothole Club members heading off to Mulu in Borneo to continue the exploration of this cavers' paradise.

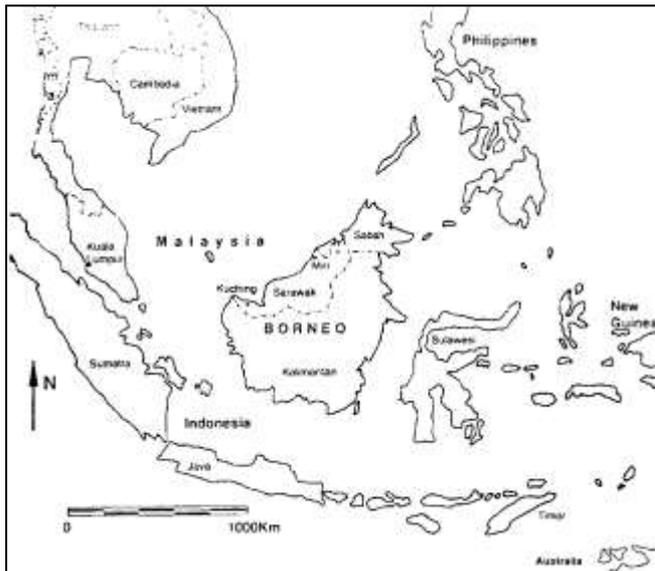
By Ric Halliwell

Nick and Tony had travelled out a few days early to meet Steph in Brunei and spend two days buying food and camping equipment in Miri. They even bought enough dried milk to get 3 free Ninja turtle watches as expedition equipment as well as lots of strange looks from the hotel and shop staff. Alan, Becky, Paul and myself flew out on 18 August from Heathrow where our problems started. The Security people confiscated the battery packs which we intended to use with the Bosch drill and underground video lights and said that they would have to travel with the pilot. As they were being taken away it did strike us, with hindsight, that short of writing bomb on the outside of the battery tubes we couldn't have managed a better resemblance.

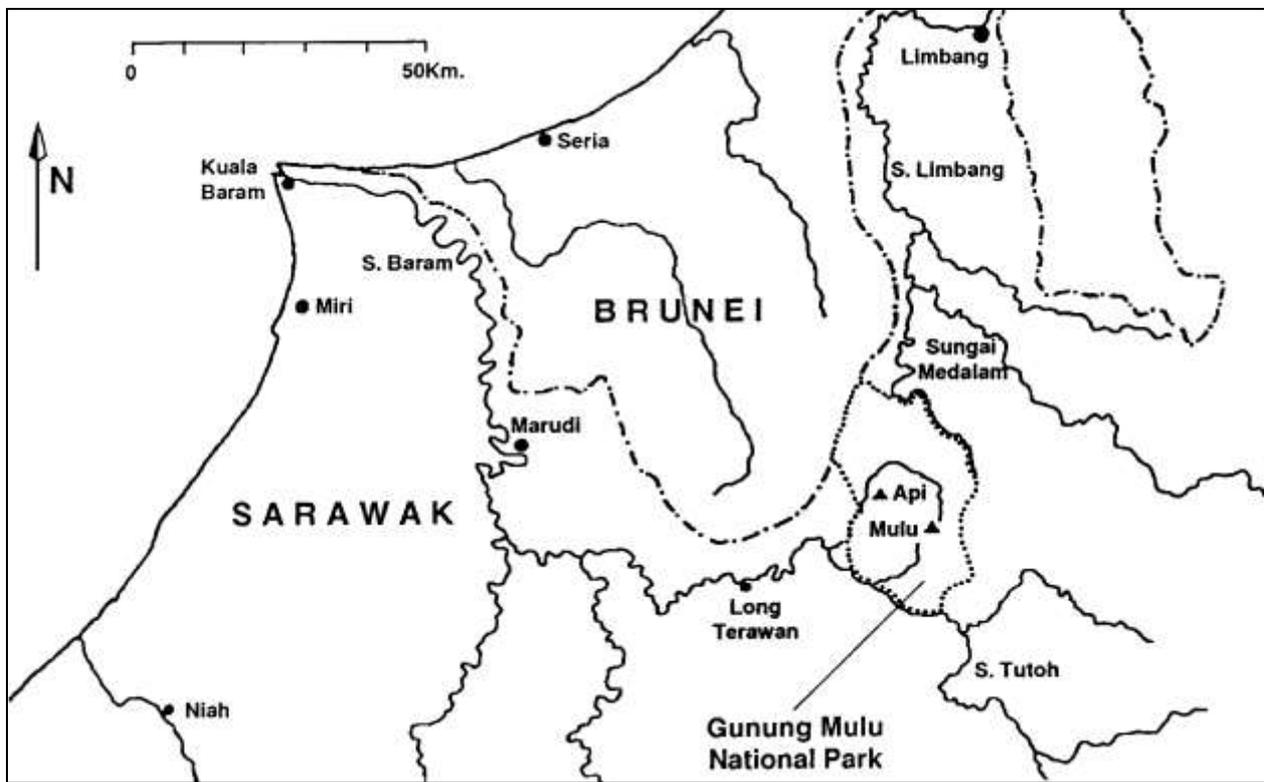
We were late arriving in Kuala Lumpur and were much heartened to be met

by an MAS employee who said "We are holding the connecting flight for you, your baggage will be on the next flight". With that we were bundled onto our own bus and driven across the airport to where our plane was waiting to take off. When we arrived at our next port of call, Kuching the capital of Sarawak, Alan and Becky were due to stop off to see some government officials. Paul and I were told that even though we were on a through flight we had to leave the plane to clear Immigration because they were closed in Miri on a Sunday. So it was off the plane through Immigration Control and back to the same seats on the plane! When we arrived in Miri not only was Immigration closed but so was Customs. When, much to our disbelief our luggage arrived half an hour or so after us, we just collected it with no Custom's clearance at all. That is all except for the battery packs. A visit to the lost luggage office revealed a telex saying that the bag with the batteries in it was missing and would be arriving later. By this time Steph had arrived and, because of all the equipment, we set off in a taxi each for the very pleasant Park Hotel. After dinner we visited Tropical Adventure, the tour company who were making all the arrangements for us, to finalise the plans for the morning.

Morning came early with a 5am breakfast followed by loading of all the expedition equipment into a very full transit van, with us following in a second transit, for the drive to Kota Baram and our first express boat. These boats are about 25m long and 3m wide with an enormous engine which drives them noisily and at high speed up the river. After noting the large number of boxes of chicken wings (marked "Keep Frozen") stacked on the roof of the boat, we occupied almost the entire remaining roof area with our equipment which we then sat on. After 3 hours or so we reached Marudi where we had to change to another express boat. We also purchased several gallons of paraffin and two 100kg drums of carbide which was gaily rolled through the streets and dropped onto the front of the boat. Then it was off up the river again for another couple of hours until it was again time to change boats.



SOUTH EAST ASIA



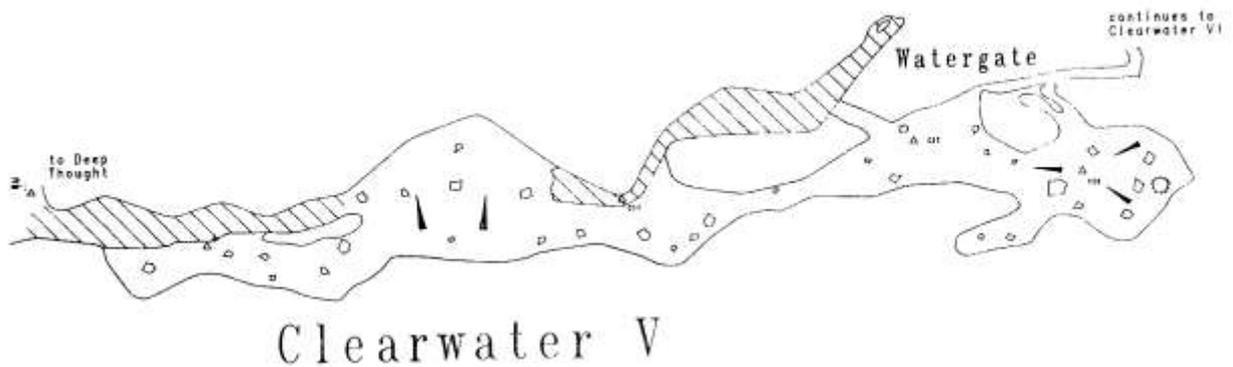
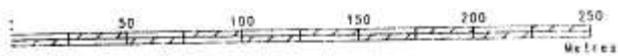
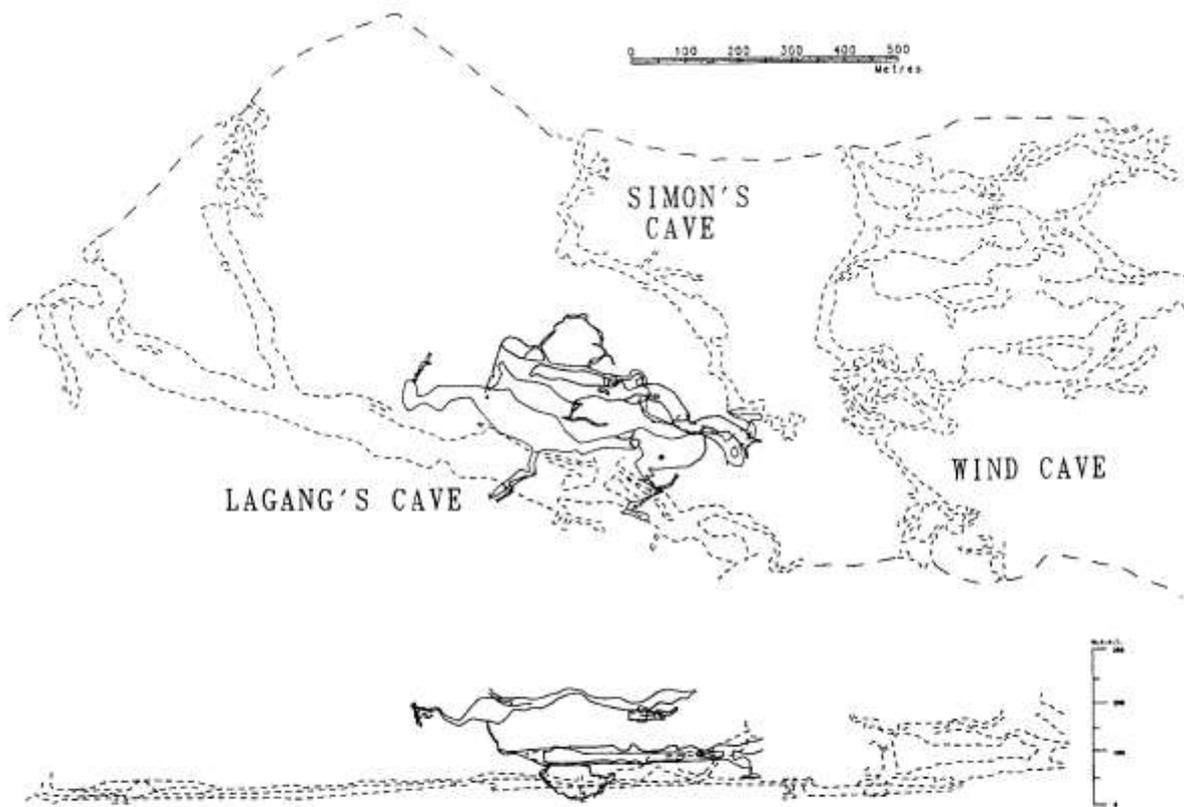
Gunung Mulu National Park Location Map

This time into a large steel longboat, 15m by 1.5m with 3 outboard motors (total 90HP) on the back. This was a much more pleasant way to travel with two people steering, one bailing and a little old lady at the front who was stoically eating her way through a large bag of Rambutans. We only had to get out to push the boat once but I picked the wrong side and ended up waist deep in the river, an early introduction to the considerable advantages of warm water. Just after dusk we arrived at the Benerat Inn at Long Pala on the edge of the Mulu National Park. After unloading all the equipment we went to eat and discovered where all the chicken wings had been going.

The following day in a smaller longboat we made our way up river with Paris, our guide from Tropical Adventure, to the National Park HQ. Here we hit a problem because the Warden had gone down river the day before and his Deputy (Victor) was unwilling to give us permission to cave in the Park until he had discussed it with the Warden, met Alan and Becky who were due that night, and received his own copy of our papers. He kept telling us how impressed he was by a Prospectus he had received from a Korean group seeking permission to cave in the Park.

This told him what each of the 25+ persons on the team would be doing each minute of each day. It also explained why they wanted a generator to power the freezer they needed for their food. He wanted to know why we hadn't prepared a similar Prospectus! We refrained from telling him and he finally agreed that we could visit Simon's Cave. This had been surveyed late in 1989 and recently extended by two National Park guides, Simon Lagang (after whom it was named) and Wilson Bala.

After waiting a little while we were joined by Simon and with much pushing we sailed up the river to Simon's Cave. This was our introduction to the joys of Mulu caving, the enormous size of the passages, their temperatures (25°C), wildlife (15cm spiders, 30cm crickets, 2m snakes, bats and swifts), and the smell of the swift/bat guano. Unfortunately due to a misunderstanding we had not taken our SRT kit with us and it turned out that this was necessary for the pitch up into the extensions. Throughout our visits over the next few days none of us could work out how this pitch had been free climbed/levitated to rig the fixed rope. Alan and Becky arrived that evening armed with more paperwork collected from officials in Kuching.



The following morning started with what was to become a familiar routine, a visit to Victor to discuss our access, pick up Simon and push the boat up the river to Simon's Cave. Tony, Nick and Simon went into Simon's cave to start the survey whilst Alan, Becky, Paris, Paul and I went into Cave of the Winds to investigate passages on the survey which looked to be heading towards Simon's Cave. We had some route finding problems with what we thought to be solid walls turning out to be enormous boulders in the middle of passages. Eventually we located the hairy looking climb we had been searching for but we agreed that time was getting on and it was too awful to tackle at that moment. However whilst searching for it we had found a shortcut back to the entrance and after 5 hours getting it in took 10 minutes to get out. On a later visit Alan and Paris scaled the climb and it proved to be only a high level oxbow.

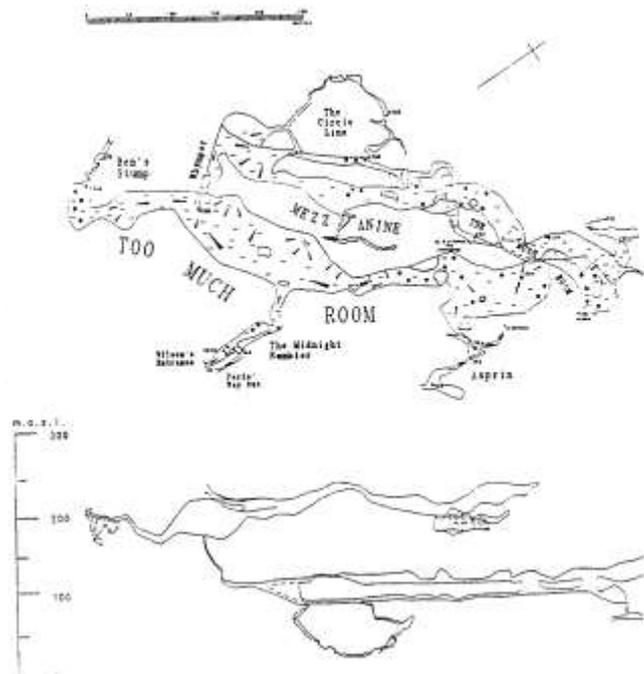
Next day all the teams went into Simon's Cave. Tony, Simon and I started surveying up an enormous boulder ramp. With Simon in front carrying our lunch and the front end of the tape, we surveyed ever upwards at an angle of 40 to 50 degrees. As we whimpered and cursed our way up some of the climbs it occurred to me that this must

have been what it was like for the early alpine explorers and so the double entendre name of "Whymper" was coined. At the top of Whymper was the large chamber cum passage we called "Too Much Room". This was up to 70m wide with 20m high stalagmite columns. Meanwhile the others were busy surveying the "Mezzanine", a middle-level

of similarly large passage. During the next few days and again towards the end of the expedition further pushing trips were undertaken to try and link Simon's Cave to Cave of the Winds to the north and Lagang's Cave to the south. All these trips were to no avail in spite of the fact that we were over the top of Lagang's Cave with a series of pits in the floor. An idea of the size and complexity of Too Much Room, and the difficulty of finding the 1.5m diameter hole in the floor which leads to Whymper, can be gained from the fact that Paul and Wilson were lost for two hours whilst on a photographic trip in the chamber. All in all we surveyed 3.5km of passage in a 3D maze with several leads left unexplored and at least 0.5km explored but not surveyed due to lack of time. Meanwhile one evening back at the Benerat Inn we received a message to say that the batteries

had been located and could be collected by the manager of Tropical Adventure if we would send him a piece of paper giving him permission to do so. This Paul did but by now we had finally received permission to setup our jungle camp. This was very efficiently built for us by the local Penan people working under the direction of

Wilson and the wondering gaze of Paul and Steph. The rest of us walked in the next day together with the last of our equipment which had all been carried in for us by the Penan. The camp was very close to Berang's Entrance to the enormous river passage of Clearwater III which had been discovered in 1984 and remained virtually unvisited since.



Although most of us had to admit that we couldn't have found our way back to the National Park HQ without a guide, short of walking down the river round all its bends, it was a superb campsite and according to our

guides it was situated under the fifth tallest tree in the world!.

To be continued

AND FINALLY



The Wednesday Nighters go to church!

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No further Journals will be sent to the people listed below.

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