



THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

VOLUME 22 NUMBER 237

MARCH 1993

PRESIDENT	<i>LUKE DEVENISH</i>
MCE PRESIDENTS	<i>PAUL DOLPHIN</i> <i>GRAHAM BALCOMBE</i>
CHAIRMAN	<i>AUBREY NEWPORT</i> Bramblebank Upper Stanton Drew Bristol BS18 4EG 0275 332401
SECRETARY and HUT BOOKINGS	<i>ROZ FIELDER</i> 94 Cavendish Meads Sunninghill Ascot SL5 9TD 0344 27166
TREASURER	<i>BETH YATES</i>
EDITOR	<i>NICK WILLIAMS</i> 71 Pendle Road Leyland Preston PR5 2UN 0772 021119 (eve) 0695 21155 (day) 0695 50286 (fax)
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY	<i>DUNCAN FREW</i> 90 Cheylesmore Drive Cheylesmore Park Camberley GU16 5BP 0276 22732
NORTHERN CAVING SECRETARY	<i>KEITH SANDERSON</i> 05242 51662
CAVING SECRETARY	<i>ANDY SUMMERSKILL</i> 0252 875453
GEAR CURATOR	<i>MARK HELMORE</i>
HUT ADMIN OFFICER	<i>PETE HANN</i>
HUT WARDEN	<i>STRUAN MACDONALD</i>
LIBRARIAN	<i>MIKE DEWDNEY-YORK</i>
COMMITTEE MEMBERS	<i>COLIN MASTERS</i> <i>JIM RANDS</i>
MRO CO-ORDINATOR	<i>PAUL LAMBERT</i>
SURVEY SALES	<i>MAURICE HEWINS</i>

Contents

Club notes	18
Caving notes	19
Notes for contributors	20
Letters to the editor	21
Caving politics	24
Audex 92	29
Leck Beck Head	29
Working weekend report	30
Club diary	30
Sunday Prayers	31
25 years ago	32

The article on cave digging promised in the last Journal has been held over to the next issue due to lack of space.

WCC Headquarters, Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane, Priddy, Somerset, BA5 3AX.

Telephone 0749 672310

© Wessex Cave Club 1993. All rights reserved. ISSN 0083-811X

Opinions expressed in the Journal are not necessarily those of the Club or the Editor.

club notes

Suzannah Fellowes, a member of the WSG who was amongst a party of four staying at Upper Pitts, was killed in a road accident while walking back from the Hunter's Lodge on the night of Saturday 9 January. The circumstances of the accident are not entirely clear, but Suzannah was one of a number of cavers who were walking around a group of parked cars at the bottom of the Belfrey drive on their way back to Upper Pitts at about 11.30pm. Aubrey Newport, who had previously left his car and was walking back from Upper Pitts to take part in the digging barrel at the Belfrey, was also hit and thrown into a hedge by a car which was coming out of Priddy village and apparently swerved to avoid walkers in the road. The moving car hit two of the parked cars and eventually came to rest facing back towards the village. Suzannah was hit and died a short while later while other cavers and members of the Somerset ambulance service were trying to resuscitate her.

Our deepest sympathy goes to Suzannah's family and friends. The accident serves to illustrate only too graphically the dangers of the road between the Hunters and the bottom of Eastwater Lane on a dark night, and people who take the sensible option of walking to and from the pub are strongly advised to wear light coloured or reflective clothing and carry lights. This is not the first accident on this stretch or road in the past twelve months although luckily previous incidents have not had such tragic consequences. Please learn the lesson and do not let Suzannah's death be in vain.

We note with regret the death of **Bill Little** of the South Wales Cave Club shortly after Christmas.

Wessex People

Congratulations to Douglas Boomer and Clare Jarvis who announced their engagement at Christmas.

Get well soon to Aubrey who has had appendicitis, to Struan who chipped a vertebra in a car accident, and to Murray who has recently been in hospital.

Change of Address: Graham Bromley has managed to escape London and is now at 4 Naishcombe Hill, Wick, Bristol, BS15 5QW (0272 372542) and Gen, Tav and Michael have moved to Lower Fosse Cottage, Fosse Road, Oakhill, Somerset, BA3 5HX (0749 840797)

New members: The Wessex extends a warm welcome to the following new members:

Dave Hall, Strathallan, Todlaw Road, Duws, Berwickshire, TD11 3EW, 0361 82754

Michael Hyland, 33 Pinewood Ave., Hillingdon, Middx., UB8 3LW, 0895 441583

Harold Bampton, Broxbourne, Merton Rd., Slough, SL1 1QW, 0753 538154

Jamie Rawlings, 31 Chiltern Close, Warmley, Bristol, Avon, 0272 476054

Denise Stoodley, 4 Diamond Cottages, Warren Row, Near Wargrave, Berks., 062882 6702

Sales cupboard: Colin has ordered some more sweatshirts. As well as black and blue you will see five colour choices around Upper Pitts. We are also clearing the old sweatshirts with the new style logo at a premium rate. Only 12 (medium size) of these remain, so hurry for a special deal while stocks last. As the weather gets warmer you will also see the new WCC T-shirt in light blue and light green. Small, medium and large sizes are available at £9.00 a piece. Yet to come are car stickers, polo shirts and sweaters and we may have a new supplier for ankle boots. Watch this space!

Club training weekend: 'Caver training' has proliferated in the last few years, maybe as a result of the number of people with nothing better to do than attempt to gain some form of employment out of their hobby. One of the results is that the demand for training from within clubs such as the Wessex has reduced somewhat. However, the Wessex is (probably) the second largest caving club in the UK and has amongst its members a depth and breadth of experience to rival any other. It should be able to provide its members with all they need by way of introduction and experience to any aspect of caving without them having to pay for the privilege. To that end we have designated the first weekend in June a training weekend. Any member of the Club who feels they would like to know more about any aspect of caving they have not yet had the chance to try is urged to come along and get involved. Quite what we will get up to depends very much on the demand, but SRT training and photography have both been suggested. Other possible subjects might include expedition organisation, radio-location and surveying, cave digging and even cave diving. Whether you are a new member or an old hand, if there's something that interests you contact Andy Summerskill or any other member of the committee to let us know what you want to have a go at.

New hut keys: The lock on the front door of Upper Pitts has been changed to the new key pattern. The remaining lock, on the changing room door, will be changed over the Easter weekend. New keys are available for a deposit of £10.00 by contacting Pete Hann - existing key holders can replace their key by returning the old key with a cheque for £5.00 to cover the difference between the new and the old deposit. Pete is at 49 Greenhill Road, Yeovil, Somerset, BA21 5ND (0935 410197)

Committee Notes

The **shower unit** in the ladies dormitory has recently (thanks to Pete Slater) had a 20p coin meter fitted. The three shower meters in the changing room will also be changed to 20p piece operation in due course but in the meanwhile old style 10p bits (alright, florins for you *really* old people) are available from under the stairs.

Proceeds from last June's **Tuska's Tour** have been split between Dave Morrison's digging activities and the club digging fund.

We are still missing a set of **survey instruments** - please could the member who borrowed it without signing it out return it!

A recent visit to Upper Pitts by the local Fire Officer has left us in something of a quandary over the proposed work on the kitchen, since we have been told that we qualify as a hotel and must therefore have a valid **fire certificate**. Improvements required before this could be issued include the provision of a proper fire escape (complying with building regulations), replacement of all foam mattresses, fitting of several extra fire doors, an alarm system and installation of a fire barrier in the kitchen ceiling. While there is considerable doubt over

whether the regulations really do qualify the hut as a hotel there are obviously several points here which do need addressing and this will tie up money which had been earmarked for improvements to the kitchen. This is a top priority matter and spending on all other major projects has been suspended until it is resolved.

A highly successful **hut working weekend** was held on 20/21 February. Work completed including modifications to the library, tidying up the car park and moving the caravan to make more space, finishing the concrete outside the changing room and much other work, including levelling the drive (thanks to Vince Simmons of the BEC for paving materials). Many thanks to all those who came and helped: the next working weekend is on 26/27 June.

Two fairly regular visitors to the hut, **Peter Wilkinson** and **Kirsty Veale** (neither of whom are club members) stayed at Upper Pitts on 17 January but did not sign in the hut logbook or pay any hut fees. There is good reason to believe they have done this on other occasions and at other huts. Since they used Charterhouse permits we have their address and they will be sent a letter to request the payment due. In the meanwhile they have been banned from the use of the hut and other clubs are being warned to keep an eye out for them.

caving notes

At the last AGM, Andy Summerskill was requested to report on the CSCC meetings he attends as the club's representative:

The latest meeting of the CSCC was held on the 23rd January and a lot of time was spent on discussion of access and conservation matters. Dave Morrison (CSCC conservation and access officer) suggested that a conservation and access sub-group be set up, due to the time taken discussing such matters. This idea was approved in outline.

There was debate on the alternatives for establishing and maintaining good access arrangements. One of the major stumbling blocks when negotiating with landowners over access is their position on liability. Proper insurance cover to protect the farmer is available; in fact, clubs insured though the BCRA scheme have the cover required, the Wessex included, apparently.

It was suggested that a body ought to be set up to buy land that becomes available, and contains caves. A similar venture has been tried in the past, with SCC Ltd.

A report was given on the access arrangements agreed with the local council concerning Pen Park, a cave in a residential area of Bristol. Six leaders have been appointed, two from the Wessex (Mark Helmore & Tav.), two from the BEC and two from the UBSS. The main points of the agreement are:

- 1 - Six persons per trip (inc. leader)
- 2 - No carbide
- 3 - No changing at the entrance

If everything goes well, it is hoped that the number of leaders will be increased in a year's time.

The proposals of the NCA special committee on structure (chaired by Nick Williams), due to be presented to the NCA AGM, were discussed at length. It was decided that any possible amendments to these proposals would be considered at the next meeting. This will also allow the Wessex committee to examine these proposals (*see following article - NJW*).

We are planning on holding a club training weekend on 5-6/6/93. Many of the newer members may be interested in learning basic SRT skills or even having their ladder

technique assessed. It is also hoped that some of the more established members will want to get involved: been caving for years and want to try your hand at cave photography? If you want to take advantage of this weekend, then get in touch with myself or any other member of the committee and let us know what you want to do.

The venue for the Spring Bank Holiday Yorkshire meet has now changed. I have made arrangements for us to stay at the Craven Pothole Club cottage in Horton. Numbers are limited so please let me know if you want to go. Some people may still wish to stay at the Hill Inn campsite, however.

Members wishing to make use of our Yorkshire bookings (see club diary) are reminded to contact Keith Sanderson directly.

Andy Summerskill

As noted above, **Pen Park Hole** in Bristol is once again open to cavers. Visits to the cave can be made by contacting one of the Club's two leaders (Mark Helmore, 0761 416631, Robin Taviner (Tav), 0749 840797). It is an interesting hour or so's tourist trip, and will be free to club members although a small charge to cover the costs of maintaining the entrance will be levied on non members.

Meanwhile, elsewhere on Mendip the BEC's activities in Wigmore Swallet and in Whitepit have met with more success. **Whitepit** is now about 600ft long and includes several pitches. Digging continues - contact Tony Jarrat or Tim Large of the BEC if you want a trip. **Wigmore** has now gone to twelve sumps and ends in a 10m pitch followed by some open passage and a horrendous boulder choke ("grand pianos suspended on tennis balls of mud"). Work, as they say, continues.

The **1993 Caver's Fair** has been arranged for the weekend of 10/11 July at Pindale Farm in Hope Valley, Derbyshire. Last year's mix of activities will be expanded and improved and plans for an amazing stomp are already well underway. Don't miss it this time!

Closer to home but later in the year, this year's **BCRA conference** will be in Bristol. The Association is urgently in need of people to help organise this event which looks likely to be biased more heavily in favour of cave science that we have recently been used to. If you think you can help please contact Clive Gardener on 071 987 8820.

A recent circular from the Cambrian Caving Council brings home the problems of inexperienced parties getting into difficulties in **Porth Yr Ogof**. Following the deaths mentioned in the last Journal, the coroner in South Wales has basically stated that he will ask the Police to consider charging the leader of future trips which get into difficulty with criminal negligence. Meanwhile, signs in the cave are to be changed and parties visiting the cave are asked to ensure that each person is equipped with a wetsuit and buoyancy aid, that every member of

the party is a confident swimmer and that provision is made for a suitably equipped life saver to be watching.

An earlier CCC newsletter also brings to light the fact that rats have been spotted in Porth Yr Ogof. This raises the possibility of cavers contracting Weil's Disease after visiting the cave. Other news from the principality includes news that a fossil resurgence has been discovered in **Clydach Gorge** and a warning of the dangers of flooding in the far reaches of **Carno Aedit** in wet weather. In particular, Full Moon Crawl becomes impassable.

The only news from Derbyshire recently is of the closure of **Ball Eye Mine** to cavers. Apparently this is being re-opened for working although whether this is for mineral or for water extraction is unclear.

More news from Yorkshire, however. Firstly, the Red Rose have won their long court battle to stay in residence at **Bull Pot Farm**. The judge concluded that the club was organised 'in a business like fashion' and thus their lease should be considered as a business lease. Even better the Judge awarded the RRCPC costs! Brief notes from other caves in the Dales include the news that the farmer at Selside has become annoyed that visitors to **Alum Pot** are not paying the courtesy fee (please do) and are leaving litter (please don't); the owner of the land around **New Goyden** is annoyed that people are walking on his grass (please walk down the river bed) and the owner of **Cote Gill** gets annoyed if his water supply is disturbed (please do not cause pollution or dirtying of the water if you visit the cave). Finally, access to **Strans Gill Pot** is now unrestricted during the summer months if the weather is dry, but **Skirwith Cave** is very unsafe and cavers should keep clear until stabilisation work has been completed.

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Submissions of any caving related material from members are welcome for the Journal. If possible, please type your manuscript on one side of the paper using widely spaced lines. However, hand written submissions are perfectly acceptable so long as they are clear. It sometimes helps to print names and other difficult words! If you use a word processor, please send your submission on disc - I can convert from most formats of computer including MS-DOS, BBC and Amstrad. Please make sure that you include a hard copy of your submission as well as the disc since this helps to spot errors and odd characters.

Line drawings, sketch maps and diagrams are all welcome. They should be supplied in the size at which they are to be printed. Make sure that lettering is large and bold.

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.

I would like to thank Richard Kenney for his assistance in the preparation of this issue

NJW

letters to the editor

Dear Editor,

I should like to comment upon the letter copied to you by Mr. Corns of English Nature, which apart from seeking (apparently) to attribute to me sentiments which are not mine, seems to lack substance in certain respects.

I am pleased to note the Management Grant available for “coppicing” from that paragon of ecological care known as the Forestry Commission. If the FC gave me money, I must admit that I’d be tempted to ask myself what was in it for them, but I guess one source of income is as good as another. I thought I understood what coppicing was until I saw it in practice at Avon and found that it included slash-and-burn techniques, driving of new vehicular accesses, felling of indigenous trees and poisoning of root-systems and stumps.

One great difficulty in this sort of discussion is the presence, here or there, of rare or desirable species. One cannot announce that *Ophrys apifera x insectifera* (*O. x pietzschii*, *Kumpel*) is at x and must be protected from encroaching scrub, or that *Diapensia lapponica* is at y and is threatened by collectors of rare alpinists, without increasing the risk to those flowers from obsessed or profit-motivated people who did not hitherto know the location thereof. When one has reasonable experience of identifying natural forms, however, one begins to see the threats to them. This is analogous in caving terms to the gradual but inevitable deterioration of cave environments as a result of visits by cavers, however well-intentioned; this can be learnt, of course, but the longer you spend caving the more that realisation forces itself upon you - you know it. The same is true of Nature Reserves except that the potential pressure on them is greater and visitors do not need lights or special equipment in order to explore. Into this scene has come the official nature-conservationist, sometimes with scanty knowledge of what is in situ, occasionally no more than some guy that has a chain-saw. That would be fine if work was sensitively done and all variables and facts taken into account - but are they? Let us take some real-life examples.

I know that *Cortinarius (M) ochroleucus* exists at Cheddar. I know that *Tricholoma resplendens* exists at Avon. I hereby invite Mr. Corns or any other supporter of the felling at Avon Gorge NNR or Cheddar Gorge to let us know, in writing, what provision has been made by the official conservation bodies for the preservation of these fungal species during operations to fell and remove timber. If as I suspect the question is unanswerable (because fungi as an example of a valuable and

interesting type of plant life have not formed a part of the equation employed by the National Trust and English Nature - or for any other reason), then it will follow that the conservation bodies are acting without all the necessary facts! If that turns-out to be true for uncommon fungal species, for what else may it be true? I don't think I need to invoke the insane removal of roadside trees on level ground at Cheddar or the undesirability of motor-cars being driven inside the Avon Gorge NNR, in order to bolster this view, though both are happening.

Finally, (I think!), I did not suggest that you or we as readers of the Wessex Journal should enquire of persons “managing” NNRs why such “management” is necessary; what I said was that if we see people interfering with natural habitats we should “ask them what they think they’re at”. It may well be that the readers of this Journal, or some of them at least, far from receiving wisdom at the feet of English Nature, may be somewhat better-placed than their Somerset Conservation Officer implies.

Yours sincerely

R.G. Lewis (Mr.)
Horfield
5 November 1992

Dear Nick,

Both Bob Lewis and Bob Corns are wrong in some respects, and in ways that divert attention from the real problems surrounding conservation and management of sites such as Cheddar Gorge.

Lewis is wrong in stating that the flora of the area has “managed” quite well without Man’s interference for millennia. This is simply not true. Archaeology tells us that Man has lived at Cheddar since the last Ice Age and that he has been manipulating his environment for as long. Consequently the species mix of the flora of the area has always (meaning since the last significant change of climatic conditions) been dependant on Man’s behaviour both directly, in terms of woodland clearance, coppicing, etc. and indirectly, in terms of, for example, the control of grazing animal species. This means that what I imagine most people would mean by a “natural” environment has never (see “always”) existed at Cheddar.

However, Corns is also wrong. It is all right for him to state that it is necessary to “manage” such areas, after all

Man has "always" done so. But nowhere does he state the purpose of his management policies. They cannot, for the reasons stated above, be to re-create a totally natural environment. He must therefore say what they are if it is going to be possible to tell whether the techniques employed are successful in reaching and maintaining his objectives.

Yours sincerely,

Graham Mullan
Westbury on Trym,
2 January 1993

Dear Mr Williams,

I would like to make the following comments [on Graham Mullan's letter]. Mr Mullan is of course correct in his statement advising that little or no 'natural' habitat actually exists in the British Isles. With very few exceptions, habitats have all been modified by man for millennia. On this basis the term semi-natural is applied to such habitats where native species are exploited by man to a particular end.

In the case of Cheddar Gorge historical evidence together with the presence of certain species suggests that the area has been managed, largely as a grazing area, for hundreds of years.

This management led to a diverse assemblage of plant and animal species including some rarities such as the Cheddar Pink. It is also clear that while such management resulted in the creation of a unique habitat, such a habitat was totally dependant upon grazing for its maintenance. The climax vegetation in lowland Britain was and remains broadleaved woodland. Once grazing ceased within the Gorge in the 1930s the stage was set for a reversion to the natural climax and this change can be easily verified using aerial photographs.

By the early 1980s it was clear that the majority of the open grasslands and the communities of plant and animal species they support would become woodland within a 50-100 year period.

It was therefore considered necessary to reverse this trend and reintroduce traditional grazing management on the following grounds:-

- 1) that the Gorge supports a much wider range of vascular plants and animals under a grassland regime than as a broad-leaved woodland;
- 2) that a number of the rarer species were dependant upon open ledges and cliff edges and largely unvegetated screes;
- 3) that the most cost-effective management of the mosaic of gorge habitats is that of a low intensity grazing using sheep and/or goats.

Clearly the success of such a scheme can be measured by monitoring the presence of plant and animal species together with the extent of particular habitat types.

In an ideal world, a balance would be maintained and grassland scrub and broad-leaved woodland would be retained within the site, each contributing particular species to the whole.

What is clear is that without intervention many of our traditionally managed landscapes would revert to climax woodland with the resultant loss of many plant and animal species from these islands.

Yours sincerely

Bob Corns
Conservation Officer Somerset,
English Nature,
Taunton,
13 January 1993

Dear Editor,

What is going on? I arrive in the Hunter's to find Bob Cross buying a round of drinks (under duress, admittedly, but the sight of the moths flying from his wallet desperately searching for their sunglasses was a pitiful sight). But worse was to come. I learnt that Mr. Trevor Hughes, a fine upstanding chap, late of Her Majesty's Royal Navy (need I say more?) had been banned from the salubrious surroundings of our esteemed headquarters. Fearing the worst, I made enquiries. Had he belched before one of our lady members, known to be of sensitive dispositions? No, it had been his turn. Had he been improperly or inadequately attired? Had he been the worse for sobriety? No, none of these things. He had, it seems, been Senior BEC Member present when a small amount of damage was caused, doubtlessly accidentally, to a notice board by some young headstrong Belfryites. Offers to make recompense by repositioning the notices to conceal the damage was rejected, and Mr Hughes was banned.

I decided that as an ex-Committee member of some years standing (and several lying down), I would invite Mr Hughes back to Upper Pitts for some post-Hunter's refreshment. What should I find there but the instigator of the ban amusing himself by pouring diesel oil onto the lounge fire from a saucepan (To the next user of said pan: that explains the funny-tasting scrambled eggs). That made the ban even more ludicrous.

Have the young fuddy-duddys taken over the Wessex? I hear that they have even banned barrels from Upper Pitts, and the BEC have followed suit. No trumps here, I fear. Even more disturbing, the Wessex have allowed the BEC to win the 1992 Digging Barrel contest (I say, chaps, steady on!) and another venue will have to be found for consumption of same. I hear that the Shepton are likely to host this event. Let us hope their capacity for beer is as large as their membership list.

Fellow lunatics, are we going to let the warders run the asylum? Mike York for Hut Warden! Let your watchword be Nil Taurus Excretum, and let's have some more good old-fashioned FUN at Upper Pitts.

Yours bewildered,
Phil Hendy
Evercreech
23 December 1992

PS. A few hundred metres of Wessex discovery in 1993 would be nice as well.

While Phil's letter has been couched in typically humorous terms, it nonetheless raises some serious points and deserves proper consideration. I have taken advantage of my position as Editor to include this reply but I should point out that it is my own personal view and not that of the committee.

First of all it is only fair to those other members of the club who are not 'in the know' to state that I was the person guilty of using diesel to light the fire in the Wessex cited in Phil's letter and by implication of instigating the barrel ban. Equally, Trevor Hughes was not in the end banned from Upper Pitts, he was merely asked to account for what happened on the evening in question.

Having been pretty instrumental in some fairly wild evenings at Upper Pitts I guess I stand justifiably accused of hypocrisy in this case. In retrospect maybe I haven't been too clever about this, but perhaps I can explain my reasoning.

Upper Pitts, while maybe no longer the ultimate in caving accommodation that it once was, is still a valuable and important resource both for the members of the Club and for the other individuals and groups who stay there. In the last insurance review it was valued at over £150,000 and represents a very significant responsibility for the Club's Committee which is charged with taking care of it. Both maintenance of the fabric of the building and paying for running costs are substantial expenses and we rely heavily on continuing custom from outside groups in order to be able to afford them.

On the other hand, right or wrong, I have always believed that the Wessex was a club set up by cavers for the benefit of its caving members. There are doubtless people who can spend hours analysing the causes and effects but suffice here to simply point out that cavers can be a pretty wild and boisterous bunch and tend to relax in ways which would make those of the population of a lesser constitution turn tail and flee in horror. Upper Pitts provides a venue for just the sort of parties that one would not be allowed to have at home, and that is an important part of its function.

The continued good health of the building, and to some extent the Club, therefore relies on striking a balance between these two functions. The unenviable task of

maintaining this balance falls to a large extent to the Committee. The balance always has been and will continue to be dynamic, but one thing it does rely on is that if any damage is done to the hut or its fittings it is put right quickly, and by those who did the damage in the first place.

Wild evenings at the Wessex are almost always good natured affairs and while they may result in considerable, if temporary, damage the long term effect on relationships within the club is usually minimal. The ban on barrels was brought about by one particular evening which was distinguished by an ugliness not normally associated with Wessex barrels and after which the committee received an unusually high number of complaints about certain club members' and other peoples' behaviour. Further, there was damage done, albeit minor, which was not followed by any attempt to repair the following day.

It has often been said on the Hill that the Wessex has the best barrels, and I would contend that it will continue to do so. However, I believe that a good barrel is a special barrel and if the level of destruction and abuse which was seen on an almost weekly basis leading up to the ban were allowed to continue the novelty of barrels and thus a good deal of their fun would very soon wear off. The purpose of the ban was simply to provide a cooling off period. When it is over the Wessex will return to its normal wild ways, but hopefully that fun will have returned.

For all that, Phil, I think you have a valid point and the message in your letter is not wasted. As a junior member of club I appreciate the need to ensure our senior members are properly cared for, so if you need ever need a volunteer to check your saucepan is free from diesel, you have only to ask!

Nick Williams
Leyland
9 March 1993

Working Weekend Report

Continued from page 30

squeeze machine at a modest 6.5 inches. Fortunately there was an abundant supply of labour to remove him from the offending article, this time.

Eventually we crawled to our bunks and was woken by Brian Hansford's bladder. Not wishing to navigate the stairs, he decided upon the fire escape. Halfway through his relief, he peered over the fire escape having heard an unfamiliar sound, and realised that, unless the molecular structure of the grass below had changed, he was in fact washing Mike Dewdney York's Volvo. (Mike had parked it there for safety).

I feel sure that the next working weekend in June is bound to be an epic and I cannot wait

Stoodley

Caving politics

The following is an annotated account of the proposals of the NCA's Structure Special Committee to the 1993 AGM of the Association. The meeting is on 20 March so by the time this is published it will have taken place, and I will report the results in the next *Journal*. Even so, there is plenty of time for negotiation on these issues before these proposals start to have an effect on grass roots cavers such as members of the Wessex, so if anyone has any particular comment or requires any further clarification of these points please do not hesitate to contact me. After all, this process is all about trying to produce a national body which can serve individual cavers better than the existing arrangements do at present, so the more individuals who get involved, the better. *NJW*

All proposals in Section 1 involve changes to the Association's constitution, and thus will be subject to the requirement for a 90% vote in favour before they can be passed into the constitution. Any individual Constituent Body can therefore effectively veto any one of these proposals, but if they are passed they become a rule to govern the action of the Association until changed at a subsequent AGM.

The purpose of the Association's constitution is to provide it with a set of guidelines upon which to base its work. Not only does this provide it with authority in dealings with other bodies, it also puts limits upon the action which the Association can take. Any constituent body which can demonstrate that the Association has acted outside its constitution can require the Association to take steps to remedy the situation, and the existence of the constitution also provide legal means by which any other body or individual can take action against the Association, its constituent members or its officers if it or they 'overstep the mark'. Conversely, the constitution also provides a means for protecting constituent bodies and officers so long as they act within it.

Proposals in sections 2 to 12 are simply organisational changes, and will require only a 75% majority to be accepted at the AGM. In effect they are recommendations to the Executive Committee of the Association, and if passed the Executive will be expected to put them into effect in the coming year, either directly by its own action or by ensuring that a subsidiary body (a Special Committee for example) acts upon them. Unless the proposals are particularly specific the Executive will be able to interpret these as it sees fit, and may modify them so long as the general gist of the proposal is followed through. In practice the Executive will remain answerable to the 1994 AGM (and thereby the constituent members of the Association) in the case where these proposals are ignored, but it has the freedom to tackle implementation of them in any way it chooses. Given the limited resources the Executive has at its disposal this is an essential safeguard.

It is absolutely vital to realise that these proposals are not trying to provide cover for any hidden agenda, and despite any information to the contrary (for example the schedules which were published in 1992 as part of the work of the structure committee) the NCA is still only able to do what is permitted within its constitution. This position pertains regardless of the wishes or proposals of any body or individual whether they are proposing change or not. It is well known that there are individuals and groups in the caving community who have opposing views as to what the NCA should be doing in the longer term, and many of these issues have yet to be resolved. Every side of these arguments has been represented on the Structure Special Committee and the proposals which follow are working towards changes which will eventually resolve these issues. The recommendations presented here, however, are

explicitly intended to try to avoid any conspiracy to introduce changes without their effect or intention being considered by every constituent body of the Association. What you see is what you get: while every point of the constitution is open to interpretation, that is as far as the flexibility goes. Some of the following recommendations certainly pave the way for greater changes to come but no one is being asked to accept these later points blind at this stage: they will be the subject of further debate and proposals to subsequent AGM's. At every stage the Special Committee on Structure will represent those constituent bodies who choose to send delegates, and any of those delegates is empowered to argue the case for or against proposed changes.

1. Constitutional changes

Proposals 1.1 and 1.2 will be added to the section of the constitution headed "Aims". The purpose of this section is to provide the Association with a definition of the purpose of its work. This not only gives it a clear purpose when dealing with outside bodies (for example in securing funds for caving activities, where an external body can see from the aims of the Association's constitution that it is a worthwhile and appropriate means for distributing funds) but also provides a measure of control. Any action which is not encompassed by these aims or is in direct contravention of them is clearly outside of the powers of the Association and can be stopped accordingly. Inaction in a matter which is within the remit of the constitution is also prevented.

1.1 *NB at the 1992 AGM clause 3.01 was amended to read:*

To support Constituent Bodies in obtaining, ensuring, maintaining and encouraging the development of access agreements at regional and club level in accordance with regional/club practice, and to support cave conservation, cave science, caver training and caving equipment safety, directly or indirectly, through the Constituent Bodies.

This clause safeguards the existence of constituent bodies within the Association, both by requiring that the Association carry out its work through them, and by requiring it to support its constituent bodies in going about their normal business.

1.2 Add new clause 3.06:

To maintain a harmonious relationship with professional cavers in the training and equipment retail areas, whilst regulating the degree of influence such specialists can exert.

The Association should continue to work with those who take

payment for their caving activities, but should not allow itself to be run (to the detriment of amateur cavers) by such individuals.

- 1.4 Add new section, GUIDING PRINCIPLES consisting of the following:

The guiding principles are basically a statement of the existing arrangements for caving in this country. In recognising the guiding principles the Association acknowledges the existence of the different groups and individuals which comprise the caving community, and must therefore take account of them in all its actions.

- 1.4.1 That caving in Britain is organised within a diversity of clubs or bodies, either based in a specific region or with membership drawn from particular localities. Caving is also undertaken by unaffiliated individuals and groups with independent interests.
- 1.4.2 That regional interests are focused in a diversity of regional bodies made up of member clubs and individual cavers.
- 1.4.3 That interest in specific facets of caving is concentrated in a number of national specialist bodies.
- 1.4.4 That the nature of exploration and conservation of caves, and thus access to them, is based in science and technology, inextricably linked to the sporting aspects of the pursuit.
- 1.4.5 That the owners and tenants of property containing caves have the right to grant or withhold access. Where caving bodies have control of access delegated to them by the owners, such access should be obtained and granted as freely as possible for all responsible cavers, within the terms of those agreements. When obliged to make new agreements, the appropriate body should endeavour to ensure that this freedom is maintained and improved.

Hopefully no one will disagree with the view that, in an ideal world, access to all caves would be completely free and all cavers could come and go as they pleased. In an ideal world cavers would never do any damage to caves or to the land they have to traverse to get to caves entrances, caves would never become choked by numbers of cavers, and all people underground would be courteous and considerate to each other. Unfortunately we also all know that this is not an ideal world, and that access agreements are a fact of life for many caves if any access at all is to be maintained. This clause recognises this fact, but tries to encourage those establishing access agreements to make them as liberal as possible. What, in practice, is possible of course depends on balancing the needs of the landowner, the local cavers, visiting cavers, conservation of the cave and many other factors. This clause certainly does not propose the wholesale re negotiation of access arrangements.

- 1.5 Add new section INTERPRETATION consisting of the following:

It is important that the constitution includes a definition of how it should be finally interpreted for those cases which are not completely clear.

- 1.5.1 A General Meeting of the Association shall be the final interpreter of this constitution.

- 1.5.2 Any matter not provided for in the constitution shall be dealt with by the Executive Committee, pending endorsement of the action taken by the next General Meeting of the Association.

- 1.6 Add new section LIMITATIONS consisting of the following:

Limitations are those parts of the constitution which specifically prevent the Association or its constituent bodies from engaging in undesirable activity.

- 1.6.1 The Association shall not interfere in the affairs of a Constituent Body unless specifically requested to do so by that body and shall not mediate between constituent bodies unless requested to do so by those bodies.
- 1.6.2 The Association shall have no call upon a Constituent Body's assets or property other than for debts due, or incurred during membership. Nor shall the Association be responsible for the liabilities of a Constituent Body other than for those expenses incurred with the Association's approval.

This clause and the preceding one explicitly exclude the Association from interfering in the affairs of its Constituent Bodies.

- 1.6.3 No one shall use the Association's name without the Association's expressed permission.

This clause is particularly aimed at individuals who might wish to use their connection with the Association to further their personal ends, to the possible detriment of the good name of the Association.

- 1.6.4 The Executive Committee shall have the right to suspend the privileges of any individual acting with the authority of or on behalf of the Association acting against the aims of the Association or its interests.
- 1.6.5 The Executive Committee shall have the right to suspend or remove from office any Officer or Convenor acting against the aims of the Association or its interests after full consideration of the matter at a meeting.
- 1.6.6 A General Meeting of the Association shall have the right to suspend or expel any Constituent Body acting against the aims of the Association or its interests. The constituent body's rights and assets in the Association may be forfeited.

The preceding three clauses provide for the removal from office or position of influence of any individual or body which is working against the interests of the Association. For suspension or expulsion to take place it will be necessary to show that the Association's aims or other constitutional requirements have been breached, or that a significant misdemeanour has taken place. In the case of an individual or officer this is probably most likely to involve fraud or theft from the Association but might also include disruptive

behaviour at meetings or misrepresentation of the Association or the individuals relationship with the Association. In the case of constituent bodies expulsion can only take place at a General Meeting of the Association which means that the normal requirements for circulation of agenda and representation at the meeting apply. Such an expulsion would not be a constitutional issue and would thus require a 75% majority in favour before it could occur. To all intents and purposes, therefore, it would be impossible to throw out a regional council unless every other constituent member of the Association voted in favour of the expulsion (assuming the constituent body concerned voted against). Before deciding whether or not this clause should be accepted as part of the constitution, it is necessary to weigh the balance of the ability to expel against the advantages of not being able to. If you believe that your constituent body is more likely to want to expel another than to be expelled itself, the logical course of action is to accept this proposal.

1.6.7 Any suspended body or individual shall have a right of appeal against an order of expulsion or suspension. Such an appeal shall be heard at a General Meeting of the Association.

No expulsion or suspension is irrevocable.

1.7 *Add new section DISSOLUTION consisting of the following:*

Dissolution is the one section which everyone who ever writes a constitution hopes will never be needed. Consequently it is often left out. However, the worst time to have to write dissolution clauses into a constitution is when it looks like they might be needed, so it is important to take this opportunity to tie up this aspect of the Association's constitution.

1.7.1 The Association may be dissolved by a vote of 75% in favour of those present and voting at a Special General Meeting of the Association convened to consider the matter. Such a meeting shall also consider the disposal of the assets of the Association.

The balance of voting is against the dissolution of the Association - the constituent bodies must really want it to happen for it to be able to take place.

1.7.2 In the event of dissolution any assets of the Association remaining after the discharge of any proper debts or liabilities shall be disposed of by the Trustees, but under no circumstances shall they be passed to individual members of any constituent body.

The trustees are given the responsibility for disposing of the assets so they are not left in limbo following the dissolution. No individual will be able to profit from them.

1.7.3 The Trustees shall have regard to the aims and objectives of the Association when considering the disposal of any of the Association's assets.

Any assets will go to a body with similar aims and objectives to the Association if it dissolves.

1.8 Make the following amendments regarding finance:

Proposals 1.8.1 and 1.8.2 firmly establish the Association as an amateur organisation, and ensure that the Executive Committee has full control of any funds which are given to the Association.

1.8.1 No person shall receive payment in respect of work undertaken by the Association excepting in the case where expenses incurred by individuals on behalf of the Association are re-imbursed.

1.8.2 (The above) shall not apply in the case where the terms of such payment have been previously agreed by the Executive Committee of the Association.

1.8.3 All accounts holding NCA funds shall have at least three signatories, one of whom will be the Association Treasurer. Encashment of any funds shall require a minimum of two signatories.

Proposal 1.8.3 is a normal safeguard for accounts relating to corporate bodies. It not only helps to protect the Association against misconduct, it also protects the individual officers charged with responsibility for funds from unwarranted accusations of misconduct (it spreads the blame and provides witnesses). The administrative burden is negligible if properly handled and it is how the main accounts are handled in the Association already.

2. Financial changes

2.1 The 1993 subscriptions of Constituent Bodies who are Regional councils will be adjusted to take account of the number of members of the Regional Council. The subscriptions of Constituent Bodies who are not regional councils will continue to be levied as in previous years.

The Association is currently faced with the absurd situation that one of its constituent bodies which has over a hundred member clubs pays the same subscription as another which has only seven. Not surprisingly the smaller body cannot afford the current subscription, but if the Association is to continue to represent cavers nationally it cannot just sit back and let the smaller regions drop out. This is not an easy problem to solve, since the substantial rises in subscriptions which would result from simply paying membership rates on a club by club pro-rata basis would clearly be unacceptable. This is why this proposal is not put forward as a constitutional one, since the executive Committee is now given the flexibility to find a solution. Our financial reserves are such that we can afford to spend some time to get this right, but it is a problem which must be faced sooner rather than later and thus this proposal is put forward.

2.2 In the period following the 1993 AGM the Special Committee on Structure should concentrate on improving the administration and finance arrangements for the Association.

A greater degree of independence from the Sports Council and more efficient use of funds is already long overdue.

3. Membership changes

3.1 Approaches should be made to potential new members

with a view to broadening the range of caving activities represented by the Association.

There are many cavers who are not represented by the Association's current constituent bodies. For its long term health and effectiveness this is a situation which the Association must take steps to rectify.

3.2 The 1994 AGM should introduce the necessary changes to create direct club membership of the Association.

3.3 The 1995 AGM should introduce a class of individual membership for the Association.

The latter two recommendations are one of the major differences of opinion in the ongoing structure debate and the arguments for and against have been extensively aired elsewhere. Inclusion of these proposals in the non-constitutional section of the recommendations ensures that the changes will only take place after the issues have been fully aired and this will be the subject of much further work by the Special Committee on Structure.

4. Organisational changes

4.1 The number of Executive Committee meetings held in a year should be increased from four to six.

The workload on the Executive committee is substantial and increasing. Four meetings a year are simply not sufficient to get it all done.

4.2 A review of the terms of reference and manner of operation of the Special Committees of the Association should be completed by 31 October 1993.

The Association has severe trouble in getting individuals to help with tasks which need completing. This is, in large measure, due to the reluctance of suitable helpers to spend weekends travelling to Stafford or other 'central' locations to sit in meetings. Also the work which is being done by the different committees is in danger of becoming confused and lacks direction. The purpose of the review will be to examine ways in which more people who can assist in the association's activities can be encouraged to take part, and to give the Special Committees a new sense of direction and fresh objectives. The review will include targets and measures which can be used to assess success, and will involve the existing members of the committees as closely as possible.

5. Employment of personnel

Proposals 5.1 to 5.4 have been subject to much discussion since the publication of the agenda for the 1993 AGM, including feedback from the Sports Council. They will be subject to some modification by amendment at the AGM, including changes to extend the time-scale to the end of 1993. However, the objective, which is to provide a more direct line of reporting for the Association's paid assistant(s) and to get them involved in more aspects of the association's activity than simply the training programme, remains the same.

5.1 As of 30 September 1993 the post of Training Coordinator should become redundant.

5.2 By 30 September 1993 the Association's Special Committee on Structure should have defined the terms of reference of, invited tenders for and placed a contract for, a newly created post of Development Officer. In doing this the Special Committee should have taken advice from other governing bodies who employ personnel.

5.3 The Development officer should report to a sub committee of the Executive, comprising the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer.

5.4 Contracts for the position of Development Officer shall be for three years. The maximum number of contracts awarded to an individual in any twelve year period should be two.

6. Equipment

The activities of the Equipment Committee have been a great success in the last few years. However, this work must be consolidated and extended if it is to achieve the long term acceptance amongst the caving community which it needs. While the Equipment Committee will be amongst those reviewed under recommendation 4.2 above the following guidelines can already be established.

6.1 The Association should continue to develop its role in the provision of fixed aids for cavers.

6.2 The Association must introduce some form of safety audit in respect of fixed aids attributable to its activities. BS5750 might be appropriate in this context.

6.3 Explicit negotiations with the Association's insurers should be undertaken to ensure that adequate cover exists for the Association's liability in this regard.

6.4 The Equipment Committee should investigate the introduction of an equipment testing and accreditation scheme.

Science in caving

As noted under proposal 1.4.4, science and technology are inextricably linked with caving as a sport. The importance of science to a wide range of cavers is in no doubt, but the implications of that for the funding and management of scientific activity, not to mention the scientific aspects of issues such as training and conservation, are far from clear. Science, in every sense, must be considered right from the outset in any review of the structure of caving in this country and the Association is very fortunate in having constituent bodies who are well placed to assess the meaning of science to caves and the impact they can have on it and it on them.

7.1 BCRA and WPCST should be commissioned to provide the Association with an assessment of how the role of scientific activity in caving should be developed. The report should include consideration of the role of professional academics and of the implications of science for conservation and access. The report should take account of the work already done by regional councils on conservation.

8. Publication and information services

- 8.1 The NCA should adopt the BCRA Library as the National Caving Library. BCRA should take steps to capitalise on this designation.

This is not a proposal for the Library to be renamed or for the arrangements for its management to be changed in any way, save that the NCA should explore additional ways of funding it and using its influence to give whatever benefits are possible (e.g. acquirement for depositing information). Where possible, the existence of the BCRA Library as the premier national source of caving information should be promoted and ways of using this designation to raise additional funds to develop the Library and its services should be explored. Under no circumstances should changes be made which do not have the full support of the individuals who currently administer the Library.

- 8.2 Constituent Bodies should investigate the possibilities of basing their newsletters and communication with members around SpeleoScene and report their findings by 31 September 1993.

The development of SpeleoScene as a common backdrop for NCA constituent body publications has possibilities. The existing funding and reproduction arrangements may need to be reviewed and changed.

The Association performs poorly in distributing information about itself and in collecting information about what is going on amongst the caving community. While recent developments (particularly SpeleoScene and the work done by the Special Committee on Structure) have done a lot to help the situation there is a need to consolidate and extend this work. The establishment of a Special Committee will give this work a formal structure within NCA.

- 8.3 A Special Committee on Publications and Information Distribution should be established.
- 8.4 The post of Information Officer should be created, with the objective of developing the Association's knowledge of the numbers and habits of all cavers, and the analysis of this data for the purposes of forward planning. This will be a responsibility of the newly created post of Development Officer.
- 8.5 The Association should recognise the need for, and take steps to implement, a national cave register.

Funding for this activity from sources outside the Association may well be available. By providing a focus for the activity the Association should help to attract such funding and avoid duplication of effort.

9. International affairs

Despite considerable overseas activity, British cavers are poorly served by their national bodies in international affairs. Those individuals who are making efforts to develop international links are working largely unaided. The caving scene is now truly international, and the NCA should be ensuring that British caving's international importance is given its due recognition both in the UK and overseas.

- 9.1 Funding provided to Expeditions via the Ghar Parau Foundation should be clearly tagged as having come from the Association, in addition to the Sports Council and other bodies as at present.

- 9.2 A Special Committee on International Affairs should be established.

10. Conservation

Conservation is the biggest issue facing the sport in the future. Faced with ever increasing numbers of cavers using a largely fixed resource the damage done to caves in this country is constantly increasing. Further, several aspects of conservation (for instance the preservation of important scientific sites or biological habitats) are largely unknown to sporting cavers.

- 10.1 The work done by the Association's Conservation and Access Committee to develop an Association policy should be extended to include all areas of the Association's activity. A time table for implementation of this policy should be established by 31.12.93

- 10.2 By the 1994 AGM the Association should formulate a policy on the development of caving with particular emphasis on balancing caver numbers with resources bearing in mind the needs of conservation.

11. Access

- 11.1 Current arrangements with regard to access should remain the responsibility of local bodies.

There is no reason to believe that current arrangements regarding the negotiation and administration of access to caves can be improved on by any sort of centralised policy making or action. However, perhaps regional councils and other localised bodies can make better use of the Association in furthering their own objectives.

- 11.2 The Association should take steps to ensure that information on access from constituent bodies continues to be regularly published in SpeleoScene.

Improved publication of access arrangements should be to the benefit of regional councils and should relieve disruptive pressure on access agreements.

12. Training

The Association's training activities currently concentrate very much on rope and ladder technique, and the development of the instructor certification schemes. While these are valid activities there are other aspects of training which need further development. In particular the challenge of conservation in the future needs to be addressed. The Caver's Fair events have set what appears to be an important precedent, but the Association must take more of a proactive role in training at all levels and in all subjects.

- 12.1 A radical review of the Association's policies on, and future activities in the area of, training should be

Continued on page 31

Audex 92

John Cordingley

Seven Wessex members and a few extras spent two weeks in France last summer. The main objective was the Trou Du Vent Du Caousus No. 1, (refs. 1 & 2) near Belestia in the Department of Ariège. Here five pitches have been explored to a section of streamway. Downstream leads to a sump feeding the famous intermittent sprint of Fontestorbes and upstream leads to a short sump and a further noisy streamway ending at sump 2. British cavers pushed this to an impassable restriction in 1989. It is possible to climb into 200m of flood overflow passages ending in an undived and normally static sump. The 1992 expedition explored this laying about 100m of line to 21 m depth in a complex maze like area which became too tight in all directions.

However, nearby a further dry extension was discovered ending at a hole down from which emerged the draught and the roaring of the unexplored streamway beyond sump 2. Despite the best efforts of our most determined diggers access could not be gained to the streamway but a return with explosives would reap great rewards. On the plus side the first complete survey of the whole cave has been produced, various other promising resurgences in the area received preliminary dives and previously unentered caves high in the gorge walls were gained by some quite serious rock climbing, although none turned out to be of any great length.

The expedition then moved north to Chervieux-Cubas in the Perigord region of the Department of Dordogne as guests of the Speleo Club de Perigeux.

The first of two objectives here was the Fontaine De La Doux at St Raphael, a short resurgence cave ending at an unexplored sump. On the first day this was pushed through three short sumps to a larger fourth. Extensive freak storms over the next 36 hours then flooded this cave and prevented any further work here before we had to leave. The floods also stopped us from diving in our second objective, the main downstream sump of the Trou de Huguenot (ref. 3). This has never been explored and is 5km from the resurgence with a considerable difference in altitude.

Further details of the trip, including surveys, can be found in reference 4.

Expedition members: Russell (Bruiser) Carter, John (What can you say) Cordingley, Malcolm (Beer Monster) Foyle, Murray (Baldrick) Knapp, Struan (Get it right next time) Macdonald, Dominic (Lad) Sealey, Mark (Shepton Man) Sims, Nick (Gadget) Williams, Richard (Student Grant) Patrick, Jenni (Fiver a time) Brooks

References:

1. Cave Diving Group Newsletter No. 89, Oct. 1988 pp 39 - 41
2. Fontestorbes, La fontaine intermittente" *Societe speleologique Du Plantaural*, May 1980
3. La Trou Du Huguenot, Andrew Kay, *Speleo Dordogne No. 3*, Speleo Club de Perigeux
4. Cave Diving Group Newsletter 105, October 1999 pp 38 - 41.

Leck Beck Head goes big

Leck Beck head is the resurgence for all the water from Casterton and Leck fells, and includes the water from Britain's longest cave, the Lancaster Easegill system. The known cave was 50m long but has recently been extended to a horrendous boulder choke at about 7m depth after a further 50m.

Wessex divers John Cordingley and Russell Carter have been pushing the end of the system through the bottom of the choke and on 6th March gained large open passage at up to 24m depth. The end of the cave is now about 380m from the end of the line in the downstream Lancaster Hole sump and hopes are high that a connection can be completed. However, John described the choke as "suicidal - we've been digging it at arms length and the whole world keeps coming down around

our ears; its collapsed three times since we've been digging it. Basically it's a pile of 2 feet cubed cannonball shaped cobbles".

John and Russell have done just enough surveying to work out where they are in relation to the surface and now intend to spend some time stabilising the choke and creating an alternative entrance before attempting any further exploration. Thanks are due to Malcolm Foyle, Struan Macdonald and Dominic Sealey for portage.

Working Weekend Report

The weekend of 20th - 21st Feb. was designated as a Wessex Working Weekend and to all intents and purposes appears to have been very successful, including some highly amusing incidents!

One of the main aims was to extend the car park by dismembering the local hedgerows, or 'productive pruning' as it is known in the trade. Phil Hendy furiously set about the hedgerows, with the awesome destructive power of a chainsaw and the finesse of a 'blind Irish navvy performing open heart surgery with an excavator'. Goodness knows what could have happened if Nick Williams had been there with his chainsaw too! None the less, the car park task was achieved and now we can look forward to the occasional rally racer turning around, or being blocked in by two cars instead of one.

At around on 12.00 Saturday morning, the car-park was invaded by the club's very own New Age Traveller, i.e. the Fielders arriving, per usual, in the mobile mansion and sporting a newly constructed trailer with go faster stripes - large enough to accommodate the entire ships company of the Ark Royal. Keith promptly set about mutilating the grass outside the Wessex, down the lane and then had to stop because the Wessex combine only does four acres to the gallon - hence the size of the trailer.

(Anyone wishing to join the WCC Young Farmer's Club see Fielder).

The concreting of a ramp between the changing room and the car-park was carried out with great delicacy and pride. It was so well done that the canine contingent promptly marched across the newly laid concrete to personally congratulate Brian Pitman on the smoothness of the surface. Brian described what he would do with any canine if they crossed him again in the next 24 hours, such as would require being surgically removed from Brian's nether regions!

After a successful day, we retired to sample Jim Rand's (chef unique de la Wessex), chilli con carne. The following morning the meal had distinctively weaved its way through the unsuspecting digestive systems, with major odorous side effects; something for the Egon Runny Guide. It left with the same velocity as Concord on after burners leaving Heathrow.

After sampling this culinary delight, we set off for the Hunters to oil the path of the Chilli. On returning to the Wessex Aubrey distributed whisky rations. The effect this had on Colin was the speed he approached the squeeze machine, similar to the coaxing Joan Collins needs to remove her undergarments. Colin was sadly under the misapprehension of having a waistline equivalent to an anorexic stoat, and was stuck in the

Continued on page 23

club diary

April

- 4th: Committee meeting, 10.00 am at Upper Pitts
- 9th-16th: Easter meet in Ireland: Contact Andy Summerskill for details
- 24th: Yorkshire booking: Pool Sink - Lancaster Hole
- 25th: Yorkshire booking: Bar Pot

May

- 1st-3rd: May Bank Holiday meet, Wales (WSG Hut, Penderyn)
- 2nd: Columns open day, OFD, South Wales
- 15th: CSCC AGM, Hunter's Lodge
- 23rd: Committee meeting, 10.00am at Upper Pitts
- "Late May" MRO hauling practice at Split Rock
- 29th-31st: Spring Bank Holiday meet, Yorkshire. Accommodation at Craven Pothole Club, Horton
- 30th: Columns open day, OFD, South Wales

June

- 5th-6th: Club training weekend - see caving notes section
- 12th: Yorkshire booking: Hurnell Moss Pot
- 13th: Yorkshire booking: Ginging Hole
- 26th-27th: Hut working weekend
- 27th: Committee meeting, 10.00 am at Upper Pitts

July

- 3rd: Slaughter Stream Cave trip: limited numbers: contact Nick Williams or Andy Summerskill
- Yorkshire booking: Hammer Pot
- 4th: Yorkshire booking: Little Hull Pot
- 10th-11th: 1993 Caver's Fair at Pindale Farm, Hope Valley, Derbyshire
- 25th: Committee meeting, 10.00 am at Upper Pitts

August

- International Congress of Speleology, Beijing, People's Republic of China
- 14th: Otter Hole trip, Limited numbers, contact Andy Summerskill
- 23rd-26th: National Association of Mining History Organisations annual conference, Douglas, Isle of Man
- 29th: Columns open day, OFD, South Wales

Continued on page 31

Sunday Prayers

Dominic Sealey

Sunday morning and Nick Williams is seen out of bed before 9am! We were staying at the N.P.C. and the previous evening had involved the consumption of a reasonable quantity of ale. Nothing as yet had been planned for the day, however, the previous evening I had pestered NJW suggesting we should go and do some dangly SRT.

Having seen NJW up and about, I felt shamed into moving from my pit. I got up and went down stairs. "How's about Black Shiver?" he said. Oh I must be dreaming, I must still be asleep, 9am on a Sunday and NJW is suggesting we go and do Black Shiver, it can't be true. It is true!!*?@|-*-<!,!

"Yes" I said.

Next stop Bernie's Cafe for breakfast. A weather forecast is obtained: clear with the possible chance of thunder in the evening. As long as we did not take all day it would be OK. With that thought we set off. The walk up from Chapel-Le-Dale was followed by 20 minutes or so attempting to locate the entrance. It was soon found and we struggled into our clothes in the heat of a warm summer's day. At the start of the crawl:

(NJW) "Here you go, have the sack"

(DS) "err"

(NJW) "Well you said you needed the practice rigging" (Oh did I).

Like a lemming I set off down the passage, Nick grunting close behind. Soon the first pitch was rigged and we set off towards Blood Pot. This was followed shortly by the constricted pitch head above Black Dub. The deep pool was quickly crossed albeit rather wetly (yes there are advantages to being Nick sized!) Next came the Black Rift, entered via a crawl on the left which gave access to the Eagles Nest perched precariously above the 260ft drop. A traverse line was rigged and I was joined by NJW. (NJW) "It's down there"

(You don't say!)

He presented me with one of his toys: a halogen spot lamp, the sort that turns night into day, and said it would be helpful to find the bolts and adding that it would also give a good view of the pitch. Thanks. I set off down the pitch and about 20ft down I flicked the switch on the lamp. Below was the Bridge, a large rock platform straddling the shaft and beyond the shaft shone into the blackness.

Reaching the bridge, a re-belay (Y-hang) was installed and I gingerly lowered my weight onto the rope. I could not see that much, engrossed in what I was doing, but could sense a large void beneath me. As I continued on down I became aware of its size and about 80ft below the rebelay I flicked the lamp on again.

(Oh Shit!)

100ft below I could just make out the floor. I soon arrived and unclipped but we were short on time and did not want to be late in case the weather changed! Having had a quick look about I began the long return climb. Reaching to the top of the shaft I was greeted by a grinning Nick

Williams. "Good isn't it?" Why does he have to state the obvious? The last of the pitch was de-tackled and we made our way out. Soon we were once again on the surface and congratulated ourselves on a good trip. (NJW) "Perhaps now you will stop pestering about dangling my arse over large voids and let me do some digging!"

(DS) "No chance"

club diary

continued from page 30

September

4th: CSCC Meeting, Hunter's Lodge
5th: Committee meeting, 10.00am at Upper Pitts

18th-19th: BCRA Conference, Bristol University
18th: Yorkshire booking: Pen-y-ghent Pot
19th: Yorkshire booking: Birks Fell Cave and County Pot.

October

2nd: Yorkshire booking: Juniper Gulf
3rd: Yorkshire booking: Gaping Gill main shaft

16th: Wessex Annual General Meeting and dinner

30th: MRO Underground hauling practice in St Cuthberts Swallet

20th: CSCC meeting, Hunter's Lodge

November

13th: Yorkshire booking: John's Cave
14th: Gavel Pot

Caving politics

continued from page 29

commissioned. Terms of reference for this review should include the development of conservation as part of the culture of British cavers. Consideration should be given to the development of ability in all cavers and caving activities. The review should report by no later than 31 October 1993.

12.2 The Association should take a lesser role in the direct provision of training to cavers in those areas which are adequately catered for by the professional sector. Instead, the Association should concentrate resources on the development of training in areas currently provided only by amateurs (e.g. rescue, diving, explosives) and on the staging of innovative training events.

12.3 The Association should continue to develop schemes for professional cavers and in doing so aim to exert influence on the quality of training provided and the use of caves as resources for training.

25 years ago

CLUB NEWS

ing has been at a low ebb over the last two months to minimise risk of spreading the Foot and Mouth infection to Mendip. It has been necessary to cancel the planned programme of Club trips until March 1968, when it is hoped that restrictions may be eased. As it appears that the epidemic may be dying out and not spreading southwards we hope to reopen Hillgrove to parties who have not come from or through the affected areas. However, it is emphasized that (at the time of writing) there is still Government restriction on access to agricultural land, and so way leave to caves is not guaranteed. Until the order is lifted things cannot get back to normal. ... techniques currently in use, in which the American are more suited to American caves.

All in all a very good book, quite the best general book on American caves that has come my way. At the moment they seem remote and inaccessible, but who knows, perhaps Concorde will do for the caves what the Severn Bridge has done for the South Wales ones!

The disaster of June 24th at Mossdale Caverns, Conistone Moor, will be remembered as the most tragic accident in the caving history of this country, leading as it did, to the deaths by drowning of a party of six very experienced and well equipped cavers, amongst whom were some with the most intimate knowledge of this arduous and complex cave system. The sense of shock and grief has spread very far and deep amongst both relatives and friends alike and will be a bitter memory for the rest of

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

British Speleological Expedition to Rumania
Organisers: Queen Mary College Caving Society
(University of London),
Mile End Road, London E.1.

speleological expedition to know, Rumania is virtually their own speleo-conditions are only

lives asking; why did this happen? Could it be done in the circumstances? What should we ensure that it will never be so, through long experience with who died, finds himself at some answers must be circumstances and result matters in which the

CLUB NEWS

society is organising a mc the summer of 1968. As caving territory. Although institutions in Cluj and the cave sciences Hateg area l There w ze of

If we want a new Headquarters we have to pay for it. Well, we have to pay half of it, as we have been assured of a 50% grant the total cost from the Department of Education and Science. On represents over £2000, and we are still at least £500 short of Members will not be surprised to learn that fund raising activity feature prominently in the Committee's deliberations. Some, if sale of Nife cells, brought lavish profits while providing a w service to members; others, like the Barbecue were pleasant so sions but only covered their costs when the empties were r

like to remind members about the per- commit one's subscription You can