

THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

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Contents

club/caving notes	34
Pete's Folly	35
Evolution and Caving	36
The Berger - a Personal Account	43
Some thoughts for rescue team members	45
Letter to the editor	46
UIS Congress Information	47
club diary	48

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club/caving notes

New members:

A warm Wessex welcome to the following new members:

Martin Cross, Windyridge, 54 Liskgard Road, Callington, Cornwall, PL17 7JE
Tim Greenwood, 209A Harrow Road, St Leonards on Sea, E. Sussex, TN37 7PR
Alan Jenkins, 37 Court Drive, Hillingdon, Middlesex, UB10 0BN

Fitting of bars on the windows of **Upper Pitts** is almost complete: this was a requirement of the insurance. Other work which has been complete recently is the fitting of a fire door in the ladies dorm, closers on all fire doors, replacement of the window sills in the common room and removal of the caravan. Work which has been delayed for the foreseeable future is the resurfacing of the drive due to the cost.

A good Wessex turn out helped the CSCC project to restore **Compton Martin Ochre Mine** on the weekend of 16 September. To the sound of multiple chain saws, about 20 pit props in the entrance of the cave were replaced using telegraph pole segments donated by British Telecom. The project has now been suspended for the winter to allow the bats to hibernate, but further restoration will take place next spring.

The **Ghar Parau Foundation** have announced that they will be holding a **seminar** for anyone interested in organising or going on a caving expedition anywhere in the world. The seminar will be held on 10/11 February 1996 at Plas-Y-Nant, North Wales and will consist of lectures and workshop sessions in which experienced expedition cavers will help delegates to conceive and plan their own trips abroad. Topics covered will include Choosing and researching a location, fund raising, budgeting and accounting, choosing equipment, food and nutrition, medicine and rescue, diving expeditions, report writing and publishing, photography and video: techniques, scientific objectives and cave surveying

This seminar will be suitable for all cavers interested in caving overseas, from experience expedition cavers to complete novices. Holiday cavers with an interest in Europe, Asia or the USA will also find it of use. Expedition groups who attend the seminar will be able to benefit from a special late deadline for applications to the Ghar Parau Foundation for funding from the National Caving Association/Sports Council and Foundation for Sport and the Arts. Cost of the seminar will be £25.00, including food, accommodation and course notes.

If you are interested in booking a place on the seminar or would just like further details, please contact Nick Williams.

Wessex members who knew **George Cornes** will be saddened to hear of his death on Thursday 7th September 1995, at the age of 85. He was best known as the discoverer of Lancaster Hole in 1946 but had been involved with many other explorations in the Dales. George remained an active caver all his life with the Red Rose CPC and the Northern Pennine Club. He celebrated becoming an octogenarian by doing a through trip from Lancaster to County Pot in 1990. His sense of humour was legendary and will be greatly missed by the many generations who shared some unforgettable trips with him.

Report: John Cordingley.

Pete's Folly

Paul Hadfield

The rain, as usual, was pounding down and I slipped and struggled through the second growth bush, trying to keep up with the rest of the party as I brought up the rear, flagging our route with coloured ribbons of tape. Pete Smith was in the lead, head down, swinging a 36 inch blade Husqvarna chain saw, cutting a trail through the tangle of undergrowth and logging slash. Occasionally I caught a glimpse of him, bent over under a fully laden frame pack with two large coils of bluewater slung over the top, but mostly I moved blindly through the soaking bush, guided by the freshly cut wood with an occasional whiff of two stroke exhaust fumes and the distant scream of the saw while I strung the flagging tape.

The two between us, Carlene Allred and Amy Russell, with both hands free had the easiest part of it, browsing on succulent huckleberries, blueberries and both versions of salmonberry.

We were looking for a sinkhole. Pate had noted it on the map a few years ago, and today, high above Twin Island Lake, in the rain forest of the Tongass, we were going for it.

Still in second growth timber the ground suddenly dropped away in front of Pete. By the time I caught up to him he had a rope rigged and was dropping over the edge into a depression substantially larger than Hull pot. The second growth stopped at the lip, the edge of the cutblock, and below us was old growth forest. Pete called out for us to traverse further round the lip of the drop to a lower angle access point while he climbed back up. Amy led off, and twenty minutes later we were down in the shelter of a natural room formed by the arching root structure of an ancient cedar.

Another hundred feet of scrambling in devils club and fern took us to the foot of the depression, which we crossed to climb up and over a rib that divided it from a further and even larger doline that was almost a small valley. A stream, three times larger than a healthy Swildons stream, ran in from the far side. Directly across from us was

an obvious cave entrance at the foot of a 100 foot limestone cliff. We had to cross the stream to reach the cave entrance and noted that the water sank among large boulders and could be heard falling away below us.

The cave entrance was a rock arch about 20 feet wide at the foot of the cliff. This obvious overflow entrance was plugged by woody debris. Ten minutes of digging was enough for Pete and I to clear a way on into a small chamber. At this point Pete exited to get into full caving regalia and I was left to explore and try and determine the way on through various heavily plugged crevices. After a couple of false starts I eventually realised I was lying on top of the most likely drainage and started to dig out the compacted dirt below me. By the time I had broken through into a tight ten foot of passage where I couldn't get my feet through the far end, I was tiring, so I popped outside to get Pete. He was ready, and being of smaller dimensions than myself, was able to get headfirst into my crawlway and move the rock that was blocking the far end. Fifteen feet of kneeling passage was the reward. At the end, the passage took a 90 degree turn and started to incline downwards through an unstable boulder ruckle. Forty minutes of digging barely improved matters, and by this time the girls had brought the survey into our final cramped passage. The way on was there, but too tight and loose to risk. We would come back in a few years time to see what nature had done. (Oh where are the Mendip diggers when you really need them!)

A careful check of the perimeter of the main sink revealed no hidden entrances and the site of the stream sink was confirmed as impenetrable without a major digging effort. The whole scenario was dismissed by my companions as typical of the Tongass and they quoted me other similar sites they knew of.

The sun was shining on the way out and we feasted on wild berries.

But, the day was not yet over. So we set off on a wild drive along overgrown and disused forest roads to a

Continued on page 48

Evolution and Caving

Dominic Sealy and Andy Morse

At this years A.G.M. there is a proposal by the committee that the Wessex Cave Club should introduce S.R.T. ropes for use by its members. The following article explains the reasons for this proposal and why the authors believe it will benefit the present and future generations of cavers, and ultimately ensure the Wessex retains its reputation as a club at the forefront of speleology.

Caving as a pastime has evolved at an alarming pace over the last 100 years. In the early years caves were explored with whatever came to hand and improvisation was the order of the day. Commonly where pitches were concerned the single rope was the method of descent whereby some poor unsuspecting bod was lowered down the chasm by ten good, strong and trusty men!

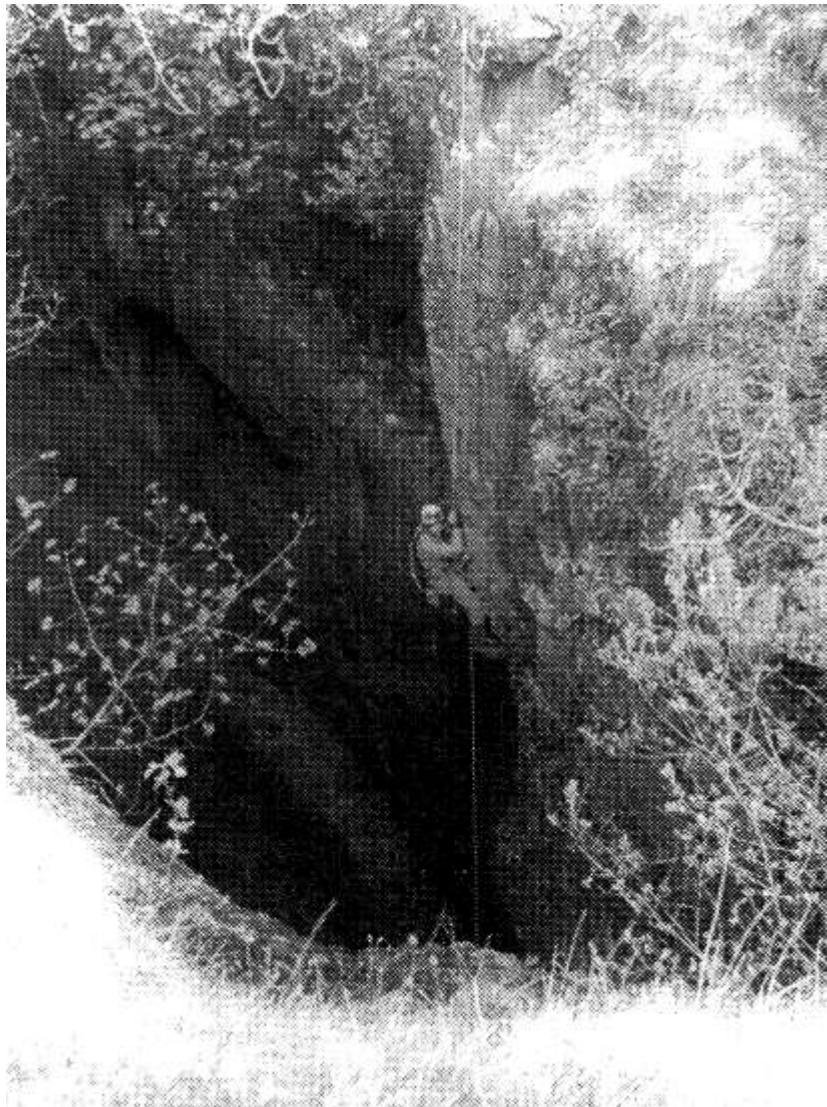
Then the world was introduced to A.E.Martel (1859-1938) and associates Gabriel Gaupillat and Louis Armand. With them came systematic exploration and the adoption of more sophisticated techniques. The rope and wood ladder became the standard and was commonly adopted after Martel's spectacular successes around the world including his second campaign at Padirac in 1889 and his 8th campaign in 1895 at Gaping Gill.

By the early 1950's innovation in ladder design had led to the electron ladder. Now virtually indestructible lightweight equipment was available. (Not surprisingly, considering what had gone before, the caving world adopted these new techniques with glee. As time progressed belaying techniques were improved and the ten strong men were replaced by the body belay.

The success of the development of ladder technologies is such that today they are still often preferred for caves with few pitches.

However at about the same time as the first electron ladders became available the Americans (including Vertical' Bill Cuddington) were experimenting with the amazing Dr Prussiks Knot (first invented by Dr Karl Prussik in 1931). With their large pits a few Americans became ardent supporters of this new climbing system despite initial scepticism from others. As better and newer materials evolved and the potential of this new technique became apparent the Americans adopted it in droves.

Soon European cavers realised the potential of



single rope techniques and adapted the techniques for use in the major shaft systems of Europe. Deep caving suddenly exploded as now small teams using lightweight equipment could explore deep caves as never before. The techniques drifted over to the UK where a few innovative cavers had already been experimenting. This period of experimentation expanded with initial enthusiasm for the new methods outweighing technical knowledge of materials., until a standard system was adopted. Many cavers still active today can look back to their own early trials with horror and amazement that they survived. However the yacht rope, fig of 8s and split garden hose were soon discarded and replaced by the new purpose made materials. S.R.T. became safer thanks to the experimentation and trials of those early S.R.T. cavers.

Now we have the sit stand, European S.R.T. technique used almost universally throughout the world with the exception of the Americans (although even they are now beginning to adopt many European innovations). Walk into any caving shop and you will be confronted by rows of books of a 'how to do nature' and gleaming racks of ironmongery and ropes. All this has led to the modern caver having more options available to him than ever before.

So S.R.T. is now no longer the preserve of a loony few but the mainstay for *all* cavers descending big drops. Every year thousands of cavers the world over use single rope techniques, the vast majority in complete safety. Reference to accident statistics produced by the Yorkshire Dales C.R.O. has not shown any increase in the number of underground accidents as a direct result of the introduction of S.R.T. in fact quite the reverse appears to be the case.

We would contend that S.R.T. is considerably safer than 'traditional ladder' techniques once basic competence has been achieved, as the individual is responsible for their own safety once the pitch has been rigged. Past accident statistics ironically reveal that the most common cause of accidents underground involving injury or death is due to a fall from an unprotected climb or slope.

WE THEREFORE REJECT THE ASSUMPTION THAT SRT IS ANY MORE DANGEROUS THAN LADDER AND LINE OPERATIONS.

Care of equipment

Any caver worthy of the name looks after their

gear. Poor care of equipment can lead to failure whether ladder or rope. Members of the club have always accepted responsibility for the maintenance of ladder and lifelines and just as ladder and line require washing after every trip so does SRT rope. A walk into the tackle store we believe shows the responsible attitude of most cavers within the club.

Ensuring our Safety

Knowing that poor rigging and abrasion can be dangerous when using SRT methods we can ensure the safety of club members by operating a simple leadership system. This system would be operated to ensure that those using the equipment have an understanding of the principles of SRT and can apply them in an underground context. It is proposed that we would adopt a system similar to that of the Craven Pothole Club whereby any individual can use SRT equipment if a club SRT leader, or under a leader's supervision. Any club member could apply to be a leader by simply demonstrating basic rigging principles underground on two occasions to two different observers.

The principle is not to develop an elite cliche but simply to ensure the safety of all users. Initially six to ten individuals should be nominated by the committee and if they are willing and wish to be involved they should produce a short written piece outlining their relevant experience. Ultimately the final decision would have to lie with the committee on the appointment of assessors.

If the club is to adopt SRT rope we believe a separate locked store area and SRT tackle officer would be essential. Initially the club would have to outlay for the partitioning off of the back of the present tackle store, but with the initiative of the members we are sure this could be kept to a minimum. Funds for ropes will have to come out of the tackle budget and thus it will take a few years to form a sizable stock of ropes. Each year one long rope would be purchased and the previous rope cut down to shorter lengths.

The life of a rope is not fixed depending on how it has been used, signs of wear and ultimately how it stands up to a destructive drop test. In fact recent work completed on behalf of the N.C.A. indicates that age alone is of little consequence in determining the safety of a rope as long as it is stored appropriately. One drop test has even demonstrated that one make of rope was still perfectly safe after 15 years of use!

An outline of suggested rules:

- 1 Leaders must agree to the Club regulations regarding SRT equipment.
 - 2 Only authorised leaders may book out tackle.
 - 3 Leaders are responsible for the use of equipment.
 - 4 Rigging must be carried out by leaders or under their direct supervision.
 - 5 Leaders are responsible for checking all equipment before and after trips.
 - 6 On return, ropes must be washed immediately using a rope washer. Damage, falls and loss of equipment must be recorded on the logs and reported to the SRT officer as soon as possible.
 - 7 Ropes must be stored in the approved manner and not left in tackle bags.
 - 8 Maillons and hangers will be booked out in tens and must not be left unscrewed.
 - 9 Permission must be obtained from the committee before taking tackle out of the country.
 - 10 Members wishing to apply for SRT leadership must apply to the committee who will provide them with a list of assessors.
 - 11 Leaders may be required to contribute towards the cost of lost or damaged equipment at the discretion of the committee.
 - 12 Leaders may refuse permission to anyone at any time during a trip.
 - 13 Leaders issuing ropes to unauthorised persons, found to be abusing the rules or withholding tackle for prolonged periods will be removed from the list.
- 1 Ropes should be taken underground in tackle bags.
 - 2 Ropes should be wetted before use.
 - 3 Wet cell ie Nife/Oldham lamps should not be used when using club SRT equipment. Note that the most likely time of contamination is during car journeys if wet cells are dumped next to ropes.
 - 4 Ropes should not be used for pull through trips due to the increased risk of having to abandon the rope due to snagging and increased chance of damage.
 - 5 Figure 8 descenders, Italian Hitch or Belay Plates should not be used as they cause severe kinking of the rope.

Conclusions

Modern caving is changing, no longer are cavers so regionally bound as was once the case, individual SRT competence is now seen as an essential caving skill. We have a choice to embrace the newer techniques and remain at the forefront of speleology as once our innovative predecessors did or bury our heads in the sand and allow the best range of techniques and thus recruits (our future) to pass us by. We believe we can face the challenges of the future and overcome any intervening problems. Ultimately we the Wessex can boldly go where no dwarf has gone before and enter the single rope zone!

Guide Lines

These guidelines are intended to minimise damage to SRT ropes. Although not hard and fast rules, damage caused by not following these guidelines may require the leader to contribute to their replacement (Rule 11) and expulsion from the list (Rule 13)



Free - but how about a donation to the local Cave Rescue Service?

Equipment and Safety

NCA ROPE TESTS, JULY 1993 TO JUNE 1995

(Summary of Owen Clarke's Report)

The NCA rope test consists of a series of drops of an 80kg weight onto a nominal 1m length of figure of 8 knotted rope. The Fall Factor is increased during each series of tests to give a steadily rising maximum stress in the rope, which assists in grading the residual strength of a used rope. The series of Fall Factors is 1.0, 1.25, 1.5, 1.8 and a final 1.8. A useable rope survives the 1.0 and 1.25 Fall Factor tests.

Tests have been carried out on 78 used SRT ropes and, for comparison, on 13 unused SRT ropes. 1 unused length of dynamic rope and 2 ten-year-old cows tails have also been tested. The results are detailed in the report.

HOW THE NCA TESTS RELATE TO THE PROVISIONAL EUROPEAN STANDARD FOR NEW LOW STRETCH ROPES, DRAFT Pr EN 1891.

EN 1891 calls for a sequence of 5 tests at a Factor of 1.0 with a mass of 100kg on a knotted rope length of 2 metres. This drop is approximately equivalent to the NCA 1.25 FF with 80kg mass. The acceptance test is thus similar, although there are naturally more repeats with a new rope than for a used: 5 against 2. The function of EN 1891 is to show that a new rope has an adequate reserve of strength to allow for weakening in use: the function of the NCA test is to find out if that reserve has been used up and, if not, how much reserve still remains. It is interesting that all the new 11mm ropes have survived the full sequence of the NCA tests, including the greater forces at 1.8 FF. This appears to indicate that the other requirements of EN 1891: knotted strength

15kN and unknotted strength 22kN. give a good safety margin in the drop test.

RELATIONSHIP OF THE NCA TEST TO A FALL DURING SRT

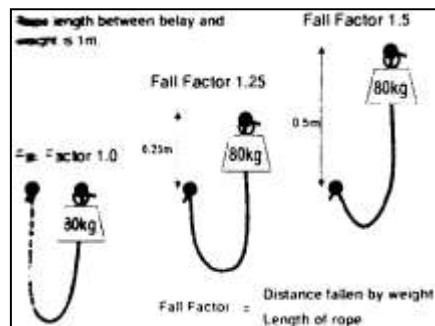
The 80kg 1.25 FF is equivalent to 100kg 1.0 FF. or an 80kg caver with 20 kg of tackle and gear falling from a point level with the anchor. Two safety factors are produced in an actual fall. The knots only take one fall and the forces on the first fall are 70 – 80% lower than those in later falls due to energy going into tightening the knot. Also the weight is rigid, while the human body and sit harness are deformed, reducing the energy to be stored in the rope and thus the peak force on the rope.

The conclusions drawn from the tests so far were summarised in SPELEOScene No. 18. A full copy of Owen Clarke's report can be obtained by sending him an SAE. his address is on p4. The Rope Test Rig will be there at the BCRA Conference so bring along a 2.5m length of any rope you would like tested.

PUZZLED BY FALL FACTORS?

It's a way of explaining how much stress the rope takes during a fall and depends partly on the length of rope available to take the strain and partly on the distance fallen. The higher the FF. the greater the stress.

In the normal way a caver is unlikely to achieve a FF even as high as 1.0. That would require falling from a point level with the belay - most likely to happen at the top of a pitch or when passing a re-belay: a drop of only $\frac{1}{2}$ a metre could do it! A drop of 5m when you are hanging at the bottom of a 100m rope is theoretically much less serious since the FF is only 0.05.



NEW RESIN FOR ECO-ANCHORS

With Hilti due to discontinue the C50 resin, the hunt has been on for an alternative. Tests by NCA Equipment Committee members on Sunday. 17 September will demonstrate whether a new resin made by a Derbyshire firm will prove successful. The installation technique is the same (avoiding the need for re-training) and the new resin promises to work better with stainless steel, allowing the DMM P-anchors still to be used.

CAVE RESCUE

THE Gaping Gill Tragedy

In July this year a group of Scouts were on a walking trip and stopped on the moor near the Main Shaft of Gaping Gill. Some were allowed to explore nearby cave entrances, using a cigarette lighter since they had no torches. They chose Jib Tunnel and, not seeing the open shaft here, one boy fell to his death in the Main Chamber. Two cavers exploring the system were within metres of where he landed and assisted the C.R.O. in retrieving the body. The adults in charge of the party included the boy's father.

PROBLEMS IN OFD II

West Brecon Cave Rescue Team report that a recent incident involved parties overdue on through trips from Cwm Dwr to OFD II. Experience of previous incidents predicts that these groups are likely to be found trying to locate the climb up from Maypole Inlet. They don't come far enough up the passage, and start looking for the ascent too early. The question, from WBCRT's perspective is - what to do about it?

WBCRT has no remit to tell cavers how they should plan trips. On the other hand an incident like the one described can involve a large number of people and is preventable, all that's needed is for cavers to be aware of the landmarks. So WBCRT is going to remind cavers via the caving journals of the need to be familiar with the route on these fairly standard trips. In this way, hopefully, they don't have to buy a barrel and WBCRT members can enjoy their Sunday dinners at home.

(From: SWCC August New sheet)

NATIONAL MOUNTAIN RESCUE SUPPORT ORGANISATION

Anyone with any knowledge of this organisation (formerly the Milton Keynes Mountain Rescue team) is asked to contact the British Cave Rescue Council Secretary. They have set up as a charity and there is some concern about their operation and where the money they raise is destined. The MRC is investigating the matter.

BCRC Secretary: Pete Allwright, Pearl Hill Farm, Dent, Sedbergh, Cumbria, LA10 5TG Tel 015396-25412.

E-mail: 100104 2642@compuserve.com

Access and Conservation Round the Regions

MENDIP

Regional Council - COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS.

For queries about access in the region, please contact CSCC's Conservation & Access Officer: Jon Roberts, 1 Vauxhall Walk, London, SE11 5JT. Tel. 0171-7350331.

For information on CSCC, send S.A.E. to: Hon. Secretary, Dave Cooke, 33 Laverstoke Gdns., Roehampton, London, SW19 4JB. Tel. 0181-788-9955.

CSCC HANDBOOK & ACCESS GUIDE

Updated to September 1995. Price £1.00 plus A5-sized 19p SAE. Available from CSCC Hon. Secretary.

NEW CSCC SECRETARY

At the meeting on 9 September. Dave Cooke took over as Secretary of CSCC from Dave Bell. The updated CSCC Handbook (see above) was produced in time for the meeting so. if you've previously written to Dave Bell to ask for one and not yet received it. you'll be getting the new edition soon.

SWILDONS ENTRANCE

Swildons Hole was closed on 10 September as the entrance boulders had become unacceptably dangerous. Work has been done to stabilise this now but the area should still be treated with caution. Pumping from the Water Board pumps has now re-started.

TRIPLE HOLE, SANDFORD HILL

The carcases which were tipped down are now being cleared gradually by the maggots which were tipped after them! It will be a long job but eventually it is hoped there will be an access agreement with A.R.C. Avens Cave Exploration Group will be installing fencing in due course to facilitate this.

COMPTON MARTIN OCHRE MINE

Poles taken to the entrance are now being cut to size so that they can be used to replace the ageing props. This job was started on 16/17 September - if you'd like to help, get in touch with the CSCC Secretary on 0181-788-9955.

ACCESS TO CHARTERHOUSE CAVES

Following the formation of the new Charterhouse Caving Company, access is now available for visiting clubs. No need to book in advance, simply go to one of the member clubs and pay a small charge to obtain your temporary permit. These clubs are: Axbridge C.G.. B.E.C., Cerberus S.S., M.C.G., M.E.G., M.N.R.C., Shepton Mallet C.C., Toby C.C., Wessex C.C. and South Bristol S.S. The main caves requiring permits are: GB Cave. Longwood/August. Rhino Rift. A leader is needed for Charterhouse Cave. If you have any difficulty or you require a mid week permit, write with S.A.E. to the Pemilt Secretary: Mike Hearne, 14 Davies Court, Wells. BA5 2FQ

DERBYSHIRE

Regional Council - DERBYSHIRE CAVING ASSOCIATION.

For queries about Derbyshire access, please contact DCA's Conservation & Access Officer: Pete Mellors, "Fairview", Station Road, Edingley, Newark, Notts. NG22 8BX. Tel. 01623-882515

For information on DCA, send S.A.E. to: Hon. Secretary, Jenny Potts, 3 Greenway, Hulland Ward, Ashbourne, Derbyshire, DE6 3FE. Tel. 01335-370629

KNOTLOW POLLUTION

Very severe pollution was reported in Knotlow in August, affecting almost all the lower parts of the system. NRA have been informed and they have asked DCA to provide samples which may provide sufficient evidence for prosecution.

MALTBY AREA ACCESS

Three caves. Rasputin's Rift. Norwood Cave and Norwood Overhang, are quoted in DCA N/L 87. p. 10. as having "no known access restrictions". They are in fact on land owned by the Earl of Scarborough near Roche Abbey and unauthorised access for caving, climbing or digging is not encouraged. The matter is being looked into.

ACCIDENT AT MASSON QUARRY

The caver involved. Tony Wood, was preparing to enter the Masson complex and apparently disturbed a large rock in the quarry which fell on him and broke both his legs. Many of the mines and quarries in the area have unstable rocks which can fall and squash you - so be warned!

CUMBERLAND ENTRANCE

This has again become unstable but some repairs and reconstruction have been done using oildrums.

RECENT ANCHOR PLACEMENTS

The following Derbyshire sites have had anchors placed recently: Maskhill Mine, Oxlow, Long Rake, Nettle Pot, Merlins.

THEFT FROM DEVONSHIRE MINE

Whitehall O.P.C. had a survival bag stolen in June from Devonshire. They had "stashed" it inside the entrance while they went further in. Suggest that, if you are going to hide equipment inside a cave / mine, you fasten the gate behind you on entry to deter possible thieves.

CAVE CONSERVATION COMMITTEES

DCA will be setting up a series of Cave Conservation Committees on the lines set out by Pete Mellors in the Report he gave to the DCA Council Meeting on July 15. If you have an interest in the conservation of a particular caving area and would be interested in acting as an "Area Convenor" or if you have ideas on caves / areas which should be the subject of a Cave Conservation Plan, you are invited to contact Pete Mellors.

WALES

Regional Council - CAMBRIAN CAVING COUNCIL.

For queries about access in the region, please contact CCC's Conservation & Access Officer: Mrs. E. Little, Hennoyadd Villa, Hennoyadd Road, Abercraf, Swansea, SA9 1UR. Tel. 01639-730331

For information on CCC send SAE to the Hon. Secretary: Frank Baguley, White Lion House, Ynys Uchaf, Ystradgynlais, Swansea. SA9 1RW. Tel. 01639-849519.

CCC PUBLICATIONS

Currently available from the CCC Secretary: CCC Handbook - £1.00 + 52p postage.

Red Dragon No. 22, 1995-96 - £2.50 + 70p Index to Red Dragon, 1 to 20 - £3.00 + 29p

ACCESS TO DAN-YR-OGOF

From 14 July SWCC are again controlling access to Dan-yr-Ogof on behalf of the Dan-yr-Ogof management. Access to the cave is open to parties led by SWCC members or recognised guest leaders from other clubs. The only rule to change relates to party size, which is now limited to leader plus 4 (a reduction from 6). At weekends permits may be obtained from the SWCC Headquarters and you do not need to write in advance. Mid-week a key and permit may be obtained from Elsie Little (see address above).

There are plans to set up a Cave Advisory Committee at the end of 1995. at the request of Ashford Price, and this new Committee will be controlling access to Dan-yr-Ogof.

OFD / CWM DWR ACCESS

Access to OFD / Cwm Dwr requires a permit from the OFD Management Committee, which must be obtained in advance and presented at SWCC Headquarters at the weekend in order to obtain a key. Please write with SAE at least 2 weeks in advance of your visit to Sue Mabbett, 2 Wyndham St., Tongwynlais, Cardiff. CF4 7LN. (Letters only, please, no phone calls.) Sue will deal with the issuing of ALL permits but, if you need to collect a key for a mid-week trip, you obtain it from Elsie Little (see address above) and not from SWCC.

Visits to OFD 1 require a leader and the party size is limited to leader plus 4 (a reduction from 6).

For information on how to become a guest leader for OFD 1 or Dan-yr-Ogof. send SAE with your query to Sue Mabbett.

CWMLYSTWYTH MINE

In Level Fawr a polypropylene rope attached to a cross-timber is in a dangerous state and. if used, could bring down tons of material. If you visit the mine and the rope is still in place, it should be cut free and taken out. (The last visitors, who reported the hazard, were unable to untie it and didn't have a knife.)

Access and Conservation Round the Regions

THE NORTH

Regional Council - COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS

For queries about access in the region, please contact CNCC's Conservation & Access Officer: Phil Parker, 11 Manston Gardens, Cross Gates, Leeds, LE15 8EY. Tel. 0113-2933852. (Note new number.)

For information on CNCC, send S.A.E. to Hon. Secretary, Les Sykes, 49 Manfield, Ashurst, Skelmersdale, Lancs., WN8 6SU. Tel. 01695-728673.

CNCC PUBLICATIONS

ECO-RESIN RIGGING GUIDE, NO.1

Price £3.00 from Inglesport. Bernies and Over & Under. Profits will finance the next stage of the bolting programme.

CNCC HANDBOOK - NORTHERN CAVING

Price £2.00 + 40p postage. From CNCC Secretary or from Bernies, Inglesport. Over & Under and Penyghent Cafe.

CAVERS GUIDE TO THE ECO-ANCHOR

11-page spiral-bound booklet. Price 50p from Bernies or Inglesport.

NCA Changes Continue

This year's NCA AGM will continue the changes begun last year to bring clubs into direct membership of the Association. After last year's election of Convenors of Special Committees, this year clubs will be able to nominate and vote for the rest of the officers.

It is intended that, eventually, one third of NCA's officers will retire each year after a 3-year term. (The maximum will be 3 consecutive 3-year terms.) Hence for this year the principal officers: Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, will be elected to serve for 1, 2 or 3 years, with the next term to be for 3 full years. In order to keep the system going for other officers, the Equipment Officer, who already been in office for some years, comes up for election, the others don't.

Changes suggested by the Structure Committee would amend the Constitution to:

- **Introduce club representation on the National Council and rationalise existing rules**
- **Permit ballots to be announced in advance and ensure that notice of General Meetings is published in advance of the meeting; ensure that persons attending the AGM are properly representing clubs**
- **Clarify the procedures for announcing the results of ballots and postal voting**
- **Further establish the independence of the Association as an amateur organisation and remove the possibility of direct influence by paid officers etc.**

If you have any queries about what's going

GREYWIFE HOLE, NEWBY MOSS

The collapsed entrance was re-opened by the Yorkshire Ramblers at the end of 1994 so access should now present no problems.

AYLEBURN MINE CAVE, ALSTON

The mine level giving access to the cave has been completely blocked by access work on the road leading to the adjacent coal mine. This is being investigated.

BOXHEAD POT, LECK FELL

Tim Allen has successfully dealt with stabilising and securing the entrance to Boxhead Pot. Access is now available via the normal CNCC system - Leck Fell Permit Secretary's new address is in SPELEOScene No. 17. No Eco-hangers at present, only rather elderly spits, but this will be dealt with in due course.

LECK/CASTERTON AREA ACCESS

Recent meetings involving CNCC, the area landowners and English Nature have made useful progress. It is hoped to agree a route across the fell to the caves which will be less susceptible to damage than at present. A further meeting is due shortly.

DEVON & CORNWALL

Regional Council - DEVON & CORNWALL UNDERGROUND COUNCIL

For queries about access in the region, please contact DCUC's Conservation & Access Officer direct: A. Neill, 25 Lipsom Road, St. Judes, Plymouth, PL4 8PL.

For information on DCUC send SAE to: Hon. Secretary, Mike Hunting, Old Farmhouse, Kelly, Lifton, Devon, PL 13 OH J. 0182-287453.

1995 DEVON & CORNWALL UNDERGROUND CONFERENCE

This will be on 14 October at the River Dart Country Park, Ashburton from 9.45am to 4.30pm. Full details were in SPELEOScene No. 18. Contact for information is John Whiteley. Tel. 01626-834623.



BCRA NEWS CONFERENCE 1995

Last call for bookings: 25 September is your deadline. If you've already booked, acknowledgement and details will be with you shortly.

If you are coming but haven't yet booked for field trips, contact Conference Bookings Manager, Pete Cousins, on 01543-251791.

A campsite is available within walking distance of the Hall - in fact it's better described as a "short swim from the Hall", being the other side of the lake. The ground is mainly sand and a nominal charge will be made. There are no facilities but a cafe across the road will be serving breakfast. There will be limited security arrangements on the site from Saturday morning until late Saturday night but none on Sunday.

CREG NEWS

The Cave Radio & Electronics Group, one of BCRA's Special Interest Groups, will be holding its AGM at the Conference: 1pm on Saturday. The October 28/29 CREG Field Meeting will concentrate on Communications and Photography. The Group is considering arranging a Cave Radio Conference in March 1996 in Leeds, contact Dave Gibson if you are interested: his address is on p.4.

BCRA PHOTOGRAPHY GROUP

There is a suggestion that cavers might be interested in forming such a group and Dave Gibson, CREG Secretary, is producing a "dummy" Photography Group Newsletter to canvas opinion. (He emphasises that he himself doesn't want to organise the group, just to see what interest there is.)

Dates for Your Diary

COURSES, CONFERENCES, ETC.

Bank Holiday Sundays. OFD II Columns visits. 10.30am front South Wales C.C. Cottages.

Sept. 28/Oct. 1 - BCRA National Conference: Floral Hall Complex, Southport, Lancs. (See p. 3)

Oct. 14 - Devon & Cornwall Underground Conference (sponsored by BCRA). River Dart Country Park. Ashburton. Details in SPELEOScene No. 18.

Oct. 28/29 - BCRA Cave Radio & Electronics Group. Field Meeting. Details front David Gibson at 12 Well House Drive. Leeds. LS8 4BX. Tel. 0113-248-1218. Internet <gibson@nicrosolv.demon.co.uk>

Nov. 4/5 - DCA / NCA Cavers' Workshop. Booking forms now available front Nigel Atkins, Wharfedale House. Springfield Road. Midway. Derbyshire. DE1 1 ODB. or from DCA Secretary.

1996

Sat. 24 Feb. - BCRA Science Symposium, Octagon Computer Centre, Staffordshire University. Full details in November issue of SPELEOScene.

Sat. 4 May - BCRA Spring Meeting. Full details in a later issue of SPELEOScene.

MEETINGS

Sept. 22 (Fri.) - Council of Northern Caving Clubs Meeting: 8pm. Community Hall, Hellifield.

Sept. 23 (Sat.) - NCA Equipment Committee Meeting: 1pm. Shrewsbury Arms, Eastgate St., Stafford.

Oct. 7 (Sat.) - NCA National Council Meeting: 10.30am Stafford C. C. Social Club. Eastgate St., Stafford. followed by NCA Conservation & Access Group Meeting: 2.30pm.

Oct. 28 (Sat.) - Derbyshire Caving Association Council Meeting: 10am. Monyash Village Hall, Derbyshire.

Nov. 12(Sun.) - BCRA Council Meeting.

Nov. 18 (Sat.) - NCA Training Committee Meeting. Possibly NCA Equipment Committee Meeting?

Dec. 2 (Sat) - Council of Southern Caving Clubs Meeting: (Time & venue to be confirmed)

1996

Jan. 6 (Sat.) - NCA National Council Meeting: 10.30am. Stafford C. C. Social Club, Eastgate St., Stafford

Jan. 20 (Sat.) - NCA Structure Committee Jan. 21 (Sun.) - BCRA Council Meeting.

Jan. 27 (Sat.) - Devon & Cornwall Underground Council AGM.

Feb. 3 (Sat.) - Derbyshire Caving Association AGM: 10am. Monyash Village Hall, Derbyshire.

Feb. 10 (Sat.) - NCA Training Committee Meeting.

Feb 24 (Sat.) - Council of Southern Caving Clubs Meeting Mar. 3 (Sun.) - Cambrian Caving Council AGM.

Mar. 16 (Sat.) - NCA AGM: 10.30am. Stafford C. C. Social Club. Eastgate St., Stafford

April 21 (Sun.) - British Cave Rescue Council AGM: Derbyshire Police Headquarters, Ripley, Derbys.

May 11 (Sat.) - Cave Diving Group AGM.

May 18 (Sat.) - Council of Southern Caving Clubs AGM.

INTERNATIONAL EVENTS

24-25 November 1995 - 14th. International Festival of Speleological Films and Videos. Barcelona, Spain.

Organised by Speleoclub de Gracia. Phone +34-3-456-9704 for more details.

10-17 August 1997 - 12th International Congress of Speleology. La Chaux-de-Fonds, Neuchatel, Switzerland. For your copy of the "1st Call for Participation" form, write to Sublime, P.O. Box 4093. CH-2304 La Chaux-de-Fonds. Switzerland.

DEADLINES FOR FUNDING APPLICATIONS

For details of Ghar Parau and DCA Cave Discovery Funds, see. SPELEOScene No. 18.

We aim to make this Diary section as comprehensive as possible and would welcome news of events you would like all cavers to hear about. Send or phone details to the Editorial Address below.

National Caving Association - Member Clubs' Countdown to 1996 AGM

Note that Nomination Papers. AGM Agenda. Ballot Papers, Officers' Reports, etc. will be enclosed with your club copy of SPELEOScene, so make sure we have the correct address to send it to.

Mid-November 1995 (with SPELEOScene No. 20) - Form for nomination of NCA Officers sent out.

For this year the nominations required are: Chairman - to serve for 1 year; Hon. Secretary - to serve for 2 years; Hon. Treasurer - to serve for 3 years; Equipment Officer - to serve for 3 years.

6 January 1996 - Closing date for nominations and proposals (including amendments to the Constitution) to reach the Secretary for inclusion on the Agenda for the 1996 AGM.

Mid-January 1996 (with SPELEOScene No. 21) - AGM Agenda. Officers' Reports and postal ballot papers sent out plus authorisation form for Club representatives to NCA AGM. (Last date for issue is 3 February 1996) **16 March 1996** - Closing date for return of completed ballot papers to Secretary.

Mid-March 1996 (With SPELEOScene No. 22) - results of postal ballots announced.

16 March 1996 National Caving Association AGM at Stafford.

SUBSCRIPTIONS TO SPELEOScene

(3.00 for 6 issues. Cheques (payable to N.C.A.) should be sent to SPELEOScene Editor at the address in the next column. Note that all correspondence for NCA Member Clubs will be enclosed with the Club copy of SPELEOScene, which is posted free of charge to all NCA Member Clubs.

ANY PART OF SPELEOScene MAY BE COPIED AND DISTRIBUTED WITHIN CAVING BUT WE'D WELCOME ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

N.C.A. OFFICERS

FOR 1995-96

Chairman:

Mick Day,
118 Whitmore Road,
Harrow, HA1 4AQ.
Tel. 0181-422-9668

Hon. Secretary:

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White Lion House,
Ynys Uchaf,
Ystradgynlais,
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Tel. 01639-849519

Hon. Treasurer:

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Tel. 01495-773175

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Legal & Insurance Off.

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SPELEOScene

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Tel. 01335-370629
Deadline No.20 -
31 October 1995

The Berger - a Personal Account

Andy Summerskill

First things first: I didn't bottom it.

I think the main reason for this was that my first intrepid steps into the cave were on a bottoming trip. Doesn't sound logical? Let me explain.....

This bottoming trip wasn't only a bottoming trip: it was also rigging trip.

The team consisted of Max, Mark Helmore, Rob Delacour (previous biggest trip – Swildons to sump 6, but also an Iron Man triathlete: not any old triathlete though, but one who takes triathlons so seriously that he wears a medallion to remind him that he is a failure, for collapsing just short of the finish line in one!), Dom Sealy (SRT wizard extraordinaire and (ex?) outdoor activities instructor) and myself. We set off, assuring ourselves we were going to 'take it steady' to Camp One but Mark and I were instantly coughing and spluttering in the cloud of dust left by the others whose idea of 'steady' showed a close resemblance to a Le Mans starting grid. However, we caught the others up at the top of Aldo's and they were by now shivering frantically. After a quick recital of 'The Hare and the Tortoise' we made good progress, as a group, to Camp One to be greeted with Les Williams' now famous words, 'Do you lot have to make so much noise; there are people here trying to get some sleep.' We were stunned into silence! Once woken, Les gave us a brief(?) account of their trip. Guffaws of laughter all round when told how long they had taken. Little did we know

After a quick brew and Mars bars we were off again. Through the Hall Of Thirteen, which was nice but not as impressive as I expected, down to the Calcite Slopes, the ascent of the slopes just below the Hall Of Thirteen are hellish steep on the way out. We eventually made it to the Canals, the bit I was most worried about. To say it was a piece of cake would be an exaggeration, but we got through it safely. Why doesn't anyone tell you there's no point in struggling to keep your feet dry (which didn't work anyway) when you have to wade through a pool immediately on the far side?

After the Canals comes the narrow, wet, sporty bit (of which more later) followed by Claudines with its traverse out to the pitch head on a bit of iron pipe. You've got to admire the determination and tenacity of those hardy souls who brought it in. (Bleeding nutters!) In next to no time we were at the Grand Gallery, looking down to Camp Two, remembering the tales of the CPC member who fell on the rope climbs the previous year. The rope climbs are a piece of cake, no exaggeration. At Camp Two, another brew stop. Everyone was in good spirits. Apart from Rob asking if he should wait here for us to come back, everyone was confident of making the bottom. It was here that we picked up tackle: well they did. The old, old rule that old B'stards don't carry tackle came in to force, resulting in Mark and myself being relatively unburdened. Camp Two also saw the rigging topo come out. Fatal mistake that.

Fed and watered, we were on our way again. The cave narrows down again here, but under the prevailing conditions, easy caving. Down Gache's with its warning, 'Defense de Mort'. Down Result de Singe Result De Mat, passing through the -800m barrier to the Grand Cascade. Looking up that waterfall is my greatest memory of the cave: the noise of the water hitting the pool below, the



Photo: Pete Hann

sight of a caver edging along the wall to keep out of the debilitating force of the water. A superb pitch.

It was here we started rigging. Traverse round to the left and descend in small stages. No problem. Descending down a boulder strewn streamway. Caving at its best. A great spirit in the team. A bit of route finding trouble but we found the crawl that took us through to the top of Little Monkey. Every one was excited - only two more pitches to go and we were there. The thought of coming up Hurricane was at the back of my mind, but no problems, I was feeling pretty fresh.

Dom climbed up on the ledge and started rigging the the traverse line, then Max followed him. Mark and myself found a sheltered spot out of the draught and stream and started chatting. Rob followed Max up onto the ledge to watch the rigging progress. Half a hour later we were still there, starting to get a little cold, starting to give Dom verbal abuse. 'Haven't you rigged it yet?' 'No, I need to look at the rigging guide. Who's got it.' The answer. None of us. We'd left it at camp Two. Dom wasn't sure whether he should go straight down, using a deviation on the opposite wall and into the water, or use a dubious 'piece of string' to traverse out further and avoid the water. Mark was saying that he would be quite happy just to go to the bottom Hurricane; well it's near enough the bottom. I was thinking about the out trip now. Going down was easy enough but the return wouldn't be quite the same. I was happy enough just to get to the bottom of Little Monkey. No, happy enough to have got here! If someone had told me, before I went to France, that I'd get to the top of Little Monkey on my first trip into the Gouffre Berger, I'd have been happy with that. Anyway, I could always bottom it later in the week. Dom went to have another look at the pitch. He was not happy with continuing the traverse. If that cord broke then it would be curtains for him. He didn't like the idea of dropping into the water either.

Almost to the second we all realised we weren't going to bottom it. No need to kill ourselves. We're not even letting the expedition down: Messers Sparrow and Websell should be at Camp One by now, resting before the first 'tourist' bottoming trip. The descision was made. Time to start the outward journey. No one was overly dissappointed, or not openly. It would still be there tomorrow. The journey back to Camp Two uneventful, but time for a rest, a hot drink and some food. After watching the pace setters go off in the wrong direction, I

slowly started climbing the Grand Gallery. Steady does it, still a long way to go, but I got to the top no slower than anyone else. It was easy going all the way to Claudines. The traverse back along the pipe was easier than on the way down. Only the Canals to worry about now. I was wrong there.

I crabbed into a tensioned line across a deep pool and started prussiking up the rope. My jammers were not moving freely and my weight was on the crab and I put a twist in the rope when I crabbed on. Disaster. The maillon through which I thread my chest-harness had come undone and straightened itself out. After a half hour struggle I sorted myself out. Prat! I thanked Mark for waiting, but that performance completely knackered me so the rest of the return was very steady. Eventually the Hall of Thirteen came into view. The columns looked beautiful now.

I was starving. Instant mashed potato and tinned fish were on the menu. The instructions said add 400ml of boiling water but I must have added a litre so I sat down to potato soup! 23hrs from entering the cave to getting back to Camp One: we weren't laughing at Les now. Time for bed. My light-weight approach to the camp had its advantages, but a biwi, fleece sleeping-bag and a couple of layers of clothing left me just on the edge of my comfort zone.

On waking up, the thought of putting on wet kit was almost unbearable for us all, but once on it wasn't too bad. Going up the Great Rubble Heap was enough to tell me that one night's sleep wasn't enough time for a complete recovery from the previous days exertions. By the top I was knackered. The way out was a slog and carrying a bag through the meanders is probably the most frustrating thing a tired caver can do. I had had enough of my pack and dumped it at Cairn Hall. Getting out was great, especially with Brian Hansford forcing cups of tea on us.

A classic cave and an excellent trip. Total time underground - 39 Hrs.

I would like to congratulate Max, Dom & Rob, who all bottomed the cave later, Dom & Rob in the fastest time of the trip (about 12 hours).

Thanks, too, to the organisers and everyone else who took part to make it, for me, a most enjoyable and memorable expedition.

Some thoughts for rescue team members

Alan Wood of the West Brecon Cave Rescue Team recently circulated the following thoughts on the financial and legal implications of being a rescue team members. It might be considered particularly relevant to Club members who are involved with cave rescue on Mendip since MRO has a less rigid structure than some of the other UK cave rescue teams and this could result in more nebulous claims against team members.

Mike Fanning, of the Lake District Search & Mountain Rescue Association recently produced some comments regarding liability of team members over possible claims of negligence whilst conducting rescues, together with other matters that he felt ought to be brought to the attention of their members.

As the remarks made are just as relevant to members of Cave Rescue Teams the W.B.C.R.T. Executive thought it a useful exercise to bring the information to the attention of the members of the various Clubs who form the W.B.C.R.T. whose members could be called on to assist in a Rescue, either in our own area, or in another area where they may be caving or live.

Some of the following comments have been taken verbatim from Mike's notes, or adapted to suit the purposes of this article.

Negligence

The difficulty of giving any specific guidance with regard to the question of negligence is that the subject is largely a theoretical area, and until tested in court will remain so. There would appear that there is no reason in law why an action against members of a cave rescue team should not succeed. In the case of a registered charity, such as W.B.C.R.T. any action would be brought against the trustees, and cannot be defended without the permission of the Charity Commission.

Given that the success of such an action would deal a devastating blow to voluntary mountain and cave rescue teams in this country, it is to be hoped that any court considering such an action would dismiss the action on the grounds that to allow it to succeed would be contrary to public interest.

However, although this would at the current time appear the likely scenario, it should not encourage complacency. Any caver asked to assist in a cave rescue should ensure that they are adequately

trained to carry out any task or treatment they are contemplating.

It should be realised how important that the first action in any rescue incident is to follow the correct procedure for contacting the police, as only then will cover on the police insurance policy take effect. Without carrying out this procedure, it could be argued that any action was being undertaken outside the auspices of the team by a group of individuals and any liability held by the persons concerned. W.B.C.R.T. is currently looking at the question of public liability insurance over and above the insurance that is obtained from the police.

Bearing the above points in mind it would perhaps be useful to outline the principles of the law of negligence and how it would affect a cave rescue team and its members.

Negligence is proved where a court is satisfied:

1. That the injured party was owed a duty of care by the defendant;
2. That the defendant has failed to discharge that duty;
3. That the defendants failure has caused a loss or injury to the injured party that can be attributed to the defendants failure.

All three elements must be proved to establish the defendant's negligence. The standard of proof is on the balance of probabilities - i.e. was it more probable than not that the defendant was at fault.

Dealing with each question in turn:

- a. Duty of Care?

There is no duty upon a cave rescue team to undertake the rescue of any person. However, the moment a team accepts a call for assistance the duty of care will be established. There is still no obligation for a rescuer to place his life in peril whatever the circumstance. A recent court decision concerning a delayed rescue undertaken by the coast guard service lends weight to this decision.

- b. Failed to discharge duty?

In practice, an injured party will allege medical malpractice on the part of his rescuer, or a failure in

the mechanics of the rescue itself.

To answer whether such a failure has occurred, the court must establish a standard against which to judge the action of the rescuer. The relevant standard may be any of the following, when placed in the same situation as the rescuer:

- i. The ordinary reasonable man;
- ii. The ordinary competent caver;
- iii. The ordinary, skilful, careful and competent cave rescue team member;
- iv. The ordinary skilled man exercising and professing to have that special skill

At the present time no decision exists directly affecting cave or mountain rescue. It would be prudent to assume the standard as being that set out in (iii) above. However, the more specialised the techniques used by the rescuer the more likely it is that the relevant standard will be that of (iv).

c. Loss or injury?

The injured party can only succeed with his action if he or she can demonstrate that they have suffered loss or injury as a result of an action or inaction, on the part of the defendant. Their condition must deteriorate as a direct result of the defendant's intervention. This will always be a simple question of fact.

As stated at the beginning, until such time as a case is brought to court it is difficult to know what the outcome of any action would be. It is better to be aware of the potential and plan for it, rather than stumble along hoping we would not be the test case.

Personal matters affecting Cave Rescuers

1. Wills

Every person in the UK should have a will. Cave rescue can be inherently dangerous and the family of a team member killed in the course of duty, so to speak, will receive a not inconsiderable sum via the various insurers involved. Suffice it to say that the current intestacy laws would be woefully inadequate in this situation. This, in turn, will cause further - avoidable - heartache for the family involved. The cost is not too great; a couple should be able to obtain wills for less than £60 + VAT.

2. Endowment / Life Assurance / Accident/ Medical Policies

A great many team members, certainly those with mortgages, will have one or other such policy. Failure to notify the insurer of that member's involvement in cave rescue, or failure to pay any increased premium will void the policy should the member be injured/killed while on a rescue. This would cause horrendous problems to a member who is unable to work or to his surviving family in the event of his death. The advice to the insurance company should be specific of rescue work over and above pure caving activity. It would be wise to get confirmation that you are covered in these situations in writing, in order that there could be no way the insurance company could deny having been told at a later date.

3. Individual Vehicle Insurance.

Those Team members who may travel in their own vehicle to the scene of a callout should notify their insurer of that fact or run the risk of finding their cover limited to 3rd party only in the event of an accident.

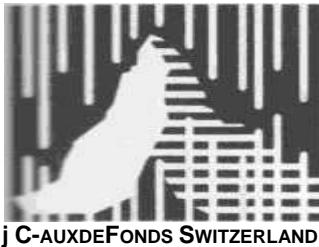
Dear Nick,

We have been approached by a farmer near Wincanton in Somerset regarding a cave in one of his fields approx. 1 mile NE of Chilton Horthorne. The previous owner of the land has told this farmer that some cavers from a Mendip caving club (sic) once explored the cave - the time scale seems very vague - and pushed a squeeze about 10m inside the entrance to a big chamber and a substantial stream, the resurgence of which could not be found. We have surveyed and photographed that part of the cave that we have entered but wondered if you have any further information in your club records or know of anybody within your club who may have been involved in the project.

Many thanks in anticipation.
Regards,

Paul Meredith

Hon Sec. East Dorset Speleological Society
88 Tarn Drive, Creekmoor, Poole, Dorset, BH17 7DQ, 01202 604349



1st CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

12th International Congress of speleology and “6^e Colloque d’hydrologie en pays calcaire et en milieu fissure”

(6th Conference on Limestone Hydrology and Fissured Aquifers).

La Chaux-de-Fonds (Neuchatel, Switzerland)

August 10 - 17, 1997



Organization

- Swiss Speleological Society
- Swiss Academy of Sciences, Speleology Commission
- Center of Hydrogeology, University of Neuchatel, Switzerland
- Geology laboratory, University of Franche-Comte, Besançon, France
- Prehistory Seminar, University of Neuchatel
- The Town of La Chaux-de-Fonds

Which Congress ?

The 12th International Congress of Speleology will take place in La Chaux-de-Fonds (canton of Neuchatel, Switzerland) heartland of the watchmaking industry, a town of 40,000 inhabitants located in the karst of the Jura

The main guidelines in the preparation of this congress are:

- to bring together cave explorers and scientists.
- to organize a regional attraction for the general public.
- to do everything possible to turn the International Congress back into the four yearly speleological get together event it should be.

The congress itself, the associated general meetings, and UIS commissions, will be held in the city college building or within 2 miles of that central location. Most of the lodging and camping will also be located in that area. Access by train, road or even by special flights from Geneva or Zurich airport will be arranged depending on the needs.

Scientific Program

The Congress backbone will consist of a rich program covering all aspects of speleology and karst study. Every one is called to present his / her discoveries in caves, karst, or other related fields of study in form of an oral or a poster presentation. Workshops and public round tables will be organised to allow everyone to share his / her experiences. Oral presentations, posters, workshops and round tables will be grouped in sessions for which themes will be defined in order to facilitate discussions and exchanges. Some of the themes defined in the various fields linked to speleology can already be named: in the geomorphology session: "Karstic Fill and Paleoclimates", "Speleogenesis of the Large Alpine Systems"; in the exploration speleology session, "Exploration in Tropical Areas", "Alpine Speleology"; in the topography and techniques session: "Under-



ground Topography: What's new?", "Cave Diving Techniques"; in the archeology session: "Man and Caves: 200,000 years of Dialogue", etc.... The biospeleology session will emphasize bat studies.

All the "Hydrogeology" part of the Congress will be integrated into the traditional "6^e Colloque d'Hydrologie en pays calcaire et en milieu fissure" organized for the 6th time by the Universities of Neuchatel and Besançon. A couple of themes have already been defined: "Hydrogeological Behavior of Karst Aquifers" and "Use of Speleological Observations and Measurements to the Karstic Hydrogeology".

A more regional symposia will treat, through conferences, expositions and excursions, the various aspects of the karst and speleology in the Jura mountain, the area in which the Congress will take place

Excursions and Camps

One day dedicated to field trips will be included in the Congress in order to allow the participants to leave the conference rooms.

Before the Congress (from July 27) and after (until August 30) scientific excursions and camps will be organized in Switzerland and across the border: Sieben Hengste, Holloch, Jean-Bernard, Parmelan, Dent de Crolles, Franche-Comte, Slovenian Karst and many other systems and well known regions will be waiting for you...

During the Congress, tired participants and companions will have the opportunity to take underground breaks during the day (or the night).

Attractions

- Opening gala and closing banquet for everyone.
- Multi-media festival August 7 - 9 as an introduction to the congress.
- Howdy party in a pure Swiss style (food and attractions) for everyone to get to know other cavers.
- Diverse program for participants and companions featuring touristic excursions, competitions and exhibitions, meeting places with live music, etc.
- In addition to the usual gear and book selling booths on the congress site, specific exhibitions will be featured throughout the town:
 - Speleology and biospeleology at the Natural History Museum;
 - Cave paintings and engravings at the Museum of Fine Arts;
 - Cave books and documents at the Documentation Center of the U.I.S-S.S located in the town's library.
- Pass to the regional museums: The International Clockwork Museum in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Archeology and Ethnography Museum in Neuchatel, Underground Water Mills in Le Locle.

Food, Lodging and Transportation

- Lodging is planned to accommodate all participants (approximate fees per person and per night in Swiss Francs): Camping, dormitory (10 to 25), Guest room (25 to 50), hotel room (single 60 to 140, double 40 to 110).

- Food service is planned for the lunches at the congress site for 7 to 10 SFR. Other meal arrangements will be available in the 89 restaurants in town. It will also be possible to cook (barbecue) your own meals at the campground.
- A pass to the town's public transportation services will be available during the Congress.
- A children's day care service is also planned.

Registration

The registration fees for participants will be about 120 SFR.

- Prices for the extras will be announced in the second call for the Congress.
- Only those who will have returned the pre-registration form below, will receive the second call brochure in early 1996 which will allow their firm booking.
- Congress address: SubLime, P.O. Box 4093, CH-2304 La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland
- Pre-registration is possible through the Internet to: <http://www.unine.ch/UIS97/>
- E-mail: congress.uis97@chyn.unine.ch

Calendar

- Pre-registration as soon as possible in order to receive the second call for participation with the congress program (by returning the form below)
- Second call brochure for the Congress with complete information and firm registration form will be available March 1996
- Deadline for abstracts of the announced presentations June 30.1996.

Pre-Registration form to return as soon as possible to:
SubLime, P.O. Box 4093,
CH-2304 La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland

LAST NAME

First

name:

Address:

Speleological Affiliation:

Institution:

Intend to submit a presentation J YES J NO

Theme:

Other contributions (slide show, film, exhibition, etc.):

Personal suggestions:

club diary

Pete's Folly

Continued from page 35

spot that overlooked a valley, with muskeg sloping down to the valley floor and the far side covered with old growth forest. Jutting out from the forest, below the rim of the valley, was a limestone cliff that we could see extended for about a kilometre along the flank. The cliff was about eight hundred feet high, and there, nestled just two hundred feet below the rim was a large black "L" shaped hole.

Your author, promptly dubbing this next objective the "Ole to 'Ell", was immediately ostracised from the group and once more consigned to bring up the rear as we traversed first the muskeg and then the forest to reach the base of the cliff. Here, we found a wonderful deer trodden pathway under the shelter of a twenty foot overhang at the base. However, it was not until we reached this point that we really became aware of the scale of the cliff, and the logistics that would be required to install a rope in position to permit a rappell into our hole. We made a tactical withdrawal determined to return.

So, just another day's caving in the Tongass. This season the main thrust was on Heceta Island where two major caves, "Moon Probe" and "Arabica" were found and explored along with another twenty or so minor holes. Both "Moon Probe" and "Arabica" contain 300 foot drops, the former is a nightmare of loose boulder ruckel whilst the latter, about 1.8 Km of it, is full of handsomely sculpted gleaming galleries. Next year's Tongass trips will be continuing to focus on Heceta Island and to work on going leads in the alpine caves of El Cap on POWI.

We are still walking into open, unvisited caves in the Tongass. Pretty soon though, I expect this era to come to a close and we shall be working more and more on leads left open by overworked survey teams and the more promising dig and dive sites. This year a team of Florida cave divers was here trying to pick up a few plums. So, if you want some of the glory, give me a call and arrange a trip out here. The '96 season is provisionally scheduled to start around June 20th with the boat leaving for camp on Heceta on or around that date.

October

- 14th: Yorkshire Booking: Penyghent Pot
15th: Yorkshire Booking: Little Hull Pot
21st: AGM and Annual Dinner
28th: CDG Rescue Practice, Wookey Hole

November

- 12th: BCRA Council Meeting
18th: Yorkshire Booking: Lost Johns
19th: Yorkshire Booking: Rumbling Hole
25/26th: Speleologioal Film Festival, Barcelona
26th: MRO Wardens Meeting, 8.00pm, Hunter's Lodge

December

- 2nd: CSCC Meeting
30th: Yorkshire Booking: Notts Pot
31st: Yorkshire Booking: Lost Johns

1996

January

- 6th: NCA Council Meeting
21st: BCRA Council Meeting
27th: DCUC AGM

February

- 10th: Ghar Parau Expedition Seminar, Plas-Y-Nant
24th: CSCC Meeting
25th: Ghar Parau Committee Meeting

March

- 16th: NCA AGM, Stafford

June

- 15th: BCRA Forest of Dean SeminarII

August

- 3rd - 9th: 1996 NSS Convention, Salida, Colorado

1997

August

- 6th-20th: UIS International Congress of Speleology, La Chaux de Fonds, Switzerland.