



FOREWORD

This is the last issue of the journal for 1951/2, the club year ending on July 31st. Members will learn with regret that Phyllis and Leslie Millward have informed the committee that it will not be possible for them to continue the work of preparing the journal. They were the instigators of the change from a single sheet circular to the present form and it is not going to be easy to find others who will undertake the task with so much keen interest and work as hard as they have during the last two years.

Talking about hard work leads to the subject of Hillgrove. Owing to other demands on their spare time those members who have done the work of erection and fitting the hut have had to severely curtail their activities in this direction although there is plenty of work outstanding, and we will be very pleased to hear from any member who has not so far given a hand there. The hut had to be closed to the general membership during one weekend in June to enable the floor to be treated with polish but unfortunately it was only possible to cover half the area.

We are still hoping that members can come to our rescue with the gift of a couple of folding camp beds. Fixed bunks to sleep nine persons have been erected, and with an extra couple of beds twelve could use the place in comfort. Under no circumstances must any member's personal property be left at the hut and no caving clothes or gear taken into the building. The door of entry is that furthest from the entrance to the field. Accommodation must be booked with the Hon. Secretary. After the end of August the key will only be available from the same address.

At the moment of going to press we find we have no articles for future issues of this journal and unless some are forthcoming soon it is going to be difficult to keep up the standard of the last two years. Members, it is up to you.

Hon. Secretary

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HON. SEC. LONDON Mrs. J.H.D. Hooper, 92 Station Crescent,  
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NEW MEMBER:

P. Davies, 151 Cheltenham Road, Bristol 6.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

E.J. Waddon (late B.A.O.R.) 7 Haydon Rd. Taunton, Somerset.

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

In the June issue of the Journal we gave the procedure to be adopted in the event of an accident in a cave. Since then there has been an accident in G.B. cave and it has been considered desirable to emphasise that the Procedure should be followed as closely as possible. The person detailed to report the accident should be fully conversant with all the known facts of the incident so that the wardens on the receipt of this information will be in a position to decide just what steps should be taken to deal with the situation,

Another point is that when reporting the accident to the police it should be made quite clear to them that they must make a note of the name of the caller and the number and situation of the call box or telephone. On the occasion of the recent G.B. incident the police failed to pass on to the warden the telephone number from where the call was made and David Willis was left high and dry wondering why he was not called back by the warden.

CLUB BADGES

An order has been placed for 100 cloth badges and these will be available to members at a cost of about 2/6.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Subscriptions for 1952/53 are now due. These should be sent to the Hon. Treasurer: G. Williams, 1 Redhill Drive, Fishponds, Bristol.

Full Membership: 7/6. Family: 10/-. Affiliated: 1/6.

Nominations for Officers and Committee and notices of motions for discussion at the Annual General Meeting must be received by the Hon. Secretary by September 20th 1952.

## THE OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE OF THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB

The Club year ends on July 31st. It is usual to hold A.G.M. during October. As we have had a number of new members join the club in the last twelve months it was considered that it would be of interest to these and other members if we gave them some details of the Committee and its activities.

The Officers consist of a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Asst. Secretary, Gear Curator (all Hon. of course) and nine members of the Committee, one of whom may be the Club Librarian. The Hon. Sec. of the London Group is also a member of the Committee and a sub-committee of three deals with circular matters.

The Committee meets once every month on a Tuesday evening at No.5 Oakfield Road, Bristol, but during midsummer we try to arrange for the meetings to be held on Mendip.

Without any doubt the success of the Wessex Cave Club in the past has been due to the great interest shown in the Club's welfare by the members of the Committee, but there must come a time when the old stalwarts feel that it would be in the best interests of the Club if they made way for younger members to take an active part in running the Club.

The qualification required for a good W.C.C. Committee man is that he is prepared to put a little more into the Club than he takes out and that his main caving interest centres around the Wessex Cave Club.

### FUTURE EVENTS

FULL SWILDONS: Particulars from the leader - David Willis, 18 Church Road, Hanham, Bristol.

STEEP HOLM: If sufficient support is forthcoming a day trip to the island will be arranged for a Saturday during September. The cost of the boat to take twelve will be £5. Members who are interested must send their names to the Hon. Sec., as the name and address of each person must be sent to the agent of the owners.

WATER DIVINING FIELD DAY: Tentative date September 14th. Names to Asst. Hon. Sec.

A.G.M. & DINNER: October 18th - Wells.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ROCK CLIMBING IN CHEDDAR GORGE (CONTINUED)

By D.N.YOUNG

The Climbs I

French Pinnacle

The Pinnacle is on the left of the Gorge, above a disused quarry. It offers several routes. Care should be taken as the rock is in places loose.

Beriel Route.

Start: On north face of pinnacle directly on the left of the main crack.

Standard: 1B

Length of rope: 40 ft.

Climb: Follow the crack on the left of main crack upwards and out to ledge on the outside face of the pinnacle. Then straight up to the top.

Mariette Route.

Start: At the lowest left hand corner of the pinnacle.

Standard: 2B

Length of rope: 60 ft.

Climb: Climb obvious crack above to the top of the arete. Finish straight up to the top of the pinnacle.

Elizabeth Route.

Start: In the main crack on the right hand side of Pinnacle.

Standard: 1B

Length of rope: 40 ft. (if used).

Climb: Climb crack to platform between main wall and the pinnacle itself. Straight up the back of the pinnacle.

The Climbs II

Jackdaw.

Start: On the prominent shelf at the right hand end of the reservoir, on the east wall of the Gorge.

Standard: 1B

Length of rope: (If used). 40 ft. 80 ft. is useful on 3rd pitch.

1st Pitch: Up right hand crack for 15 ft, then change to the left hand one and behind tree to stance.

2nd Pitch: Traverse right for 10 ft.

3rd Pitch: Follow crack where shelf meets wall till tree gives running belay or inadequate stance. Straight up to finish the climb.

## Easy Gully.

Position: The gully splits the south-east face of the Gorge just below the reservoir. It is a prominent landmark.

Start: The entrance from the road is marked by a small scree fan.

Standard: 1A

Length of rope: Not needed.

Climb: For two thirds of its height one scrambles up a clay slope set at a steep angle. In the upper third the gully narrows, and its rocky character makes the ascent easier. One can traverse left at almost any point. The gully is used as an easy method of descent or of reaching the upper cliff.

## FROM COM. P.B. LAWDER:

I am very interested to see the article on Rock Climbing and am looking forward to the future instalments. The following remarks occur to me as a result of my own experience on the climbs.

I have always thought that the extreme smoothness rather than the softness was what rendered it unsuitable for nails. This smoothness is the reason why, when wet, no form of sole will give a really reliable grip. Besides your shoes will pick up mud on the grassy ledges between climbs which will make them even more slippery. Rope soles or stockings are the least bad under these conditions, but I feel that it is much the best to avoid climbing altogether.

Anyone climbing in sight of the road is sure of an admiring and/or horrified audience.

I fully agree that the lower portions of the Gorge should be avoided and was not aware that any police permission had been given and indeed do not know whether it would be within their province to do so.

## AN AFTERNOON IN LITTONDALE, YORKSHIRE.

Compared with the caves of Ingleborough, Littondale caves are small, but they are interesting, particularly in the manner in which they demonstrate some of the methods of cave formation. Although Norman Thornber, in "Pennine Underground" mentions most of these caves, very little description follows the name, yet a visit to the caves to be described, and to others in the neighbourhood, is well worth the time.

Boreham Cave is to be found in the lower westerly corner of a field about 1½ miles from Arnecliffe on the Halton Gill road. The entrance, some 5 feet in diameter, can be seen from the road, and is separated from it by a field. A small streamway, represented by a few puddles in weather suitable for caving, dries up completely some thirty yards from the cave.

Inside the cave, the first eighty feet or so is easy going, filling the explorer with a transitory sense of security, but just beyond a pile of boulders the passage, until now dry and more or less constant in height, lowers its roof by four or five feet and becomes a succession of ducks connecting small solutional cavities. The water is static and rather cold, but this passage, about a hundred feet in length is good fun. Care is required to avoid dowsing acetylene lights. Eventually the inevitable sump is reached. We had no rope with us, and did not care to try and conquer it without some sort of guide line for the return journey, but judging by the nature of the first part of this canal the sump is a short one and there may well be quite a length of passage beyond it.

On the return we looked for branch passages, but did not find any. This little cave is quite typical of resurgence caves and should repay further investigations. If anyone does know what is on the other side of the sump, their comments would be interesting.

Cote Cave has an impressive entrance 300 yards farther West along the edge of the hill. Our dislike of this cave is probably due to the thorough soaking we received in Boreham, but the water is flowing and seems much colder. Inside the entrance a ten foot waterfall must be climbed, the stream sinks a few yards away through a stony bed. A dam has been built across the stream passage which follows, and one walks up a U-shaped tunnel produced by enlargement of the bedding plane which can be seen in the roof.

At first one walks in six inches of cold water, but gradually the floor becomes less hollowed, and soon one is on one's hands and knees in a low, wide passage, with much scalloping on the walls and floor, and progress becomes uncomfortable. The general direction of the cave is straight into the hill, but the passage curves one way and then the other.

At last it is possible to leave the water and emerge into a rectangular chamber with a few calcite formations, but almost immediately the water must be entered again through a mud-bank, and a rift in the roof leads to a low water filled passage, the roof of which is covered with tenacious, slimy mud. There is six inches of air space, so theoretically progress is possible, but nobody liked the look of it, and we departed for the sunlight.

There are several other caves in this region; most of them are worth looking at, but this part of Yorkshire is rather neglected by cavers. But even if one does not feel like caving, there are plenty of pleasant bits of scenery to look at.

D.M. Thomson.

## AN UNDERGROUND TUNNEL AT STREET

or

### THE BARONS BACK DOOR.

#### Part One.

Certain of my readers may already have remarked sarcastically; "Where's Street?". If they haven't, I hasten to deprive them of the pleasure by stating that this charming old country town, some eight miles South of Wells, is delightfully situated on the gentle North slope of the Polden Hills, overlooking the sparkling River Brue. There, now.

It is traditionally held that there are underground passages connected with several of the older buildings, but only one is known to me. This is at The Grange, a large house which is of considerable age, though I am not prepared to venture a guess as to its precise antiquity. (Indeed, the historical side of this narrative should be regarded with suspicion). The tunnel, which leads off a barn contemporary with but separate from the house, had been explored for some distance on several occasions. It was locally believed to lead to Glastonbury Abbey, although the actual explorers considered that it was simply a drain.

In 1951 considerable alterations were being made to the Grange and its outbuildings, and the approaches to the tunnel were cleared of debris. Mr. Bancroft Clark, the owner, invited the local troglodyte to make a thorough exploration.

Thus it was that Luke Devenish, Bob Sellers, and I descended on the Grange one June afternoon. Our appearance was sufficiently workmanlike, with the jeep well hidden beneath ladders, picks, bars, small bottles, and similar exploratory and "scientific" equipment. Several illustrious persons had assembled to watch the three characters become subterranean, and Mr. Ronald Barber was stationed at the tunnel entrance prepared to afford assistance (of an un-defined nature) in the event of our being buried alive or overcome by noxious gasses.

To enter the tunnel one descends a few steps into a cool stone cellar underneath the barn. There are some curious alcoves or shelves on one side, and at the end of a branch passage is a well, now dry and nearly filled with rubble. In the North wall is a rectangular opening about four feet high and two feet wide, neatly built in blue limestone. Immediately inside, the passage enters the solid rock and contracts slightly.

It is less than ten feet below ground level. The Blue Lias hereabouts consists of alternating bands of soft shale and hard blue limestone, and the local villains (or is it villeins?) who dug the tunnel were fortunate to find a shale band over three feet thick so close to the surface. It was not difficult to excavate, the the resultant passage was roofed and floored with firm rock.

We decided on a quick exploratory trip to be followed by the necessary surveying, and set off after a little juvenile fun popping carbide lamps. At first it was quite easy to walk in a stooping position, but soon an increasing amount of mud on the floor necessitated the dirtying of knees. Only sixty feet from the entrance we had turned three right-angled bends and passed a walled up shaft, evidently leading to the surface, but blocked with debris. The walls were patchily coated with a fur of fine crystals, possibly of gypsum. On the floor were many small footprints.

In a few yards the height decreased still further. We approached deep sloshy mud, and soon the magic word "Puddles" was passed back from man to man along the line. There was a muddy splash, and when the spray had settled our erstwhile tame biologist was observed way in front, in that position of "head down and bottom up" which he has described so feelingly in a recent number of the Journal. Immediately there were joyful shouts of "Lice", and "Niphargus" (really), and "How surprising!". An unlimited supply of mud was within reach, but alas, a cave surveyor must cosset his stooges, so on this occasion I sat on my hands. Luke was comparatively disinterested, but a trifle too compressed for vigorous action. So Bob filled his bottles in peace and thought what nice people. Over his shoulder I observed that some but not all of the puddles were covered by a film of calcite about 0.1 millimetres thick.

After a while the murmurs of discontent had their effect, and we moved on. Three more corners, another walled shaft which had partly collapsed and formed a squeeze, lakes of mud - these were our milestones. At length the passage ended blankly, but six feet back was a tiny hole in one wall. It was very tight, but some of us squeezed through into a larger and less muddy tunnel, choked after several yards by a heap of rubble. This appeared to mark the collapse of a third shaft to the surface, here thirteen feet above our heads.

Our intrepid explorers now retraced their discomforts to daylight, where they were greeted with relief and cups of tea. Shortly afterwards certain members of tile party remembered pressing engagements elsewhere. In order not to raise old scores I will simply put it on record that we finished the survey some four hours later, and are now once more on speaking terms!

The survey, at C.R.G. grade five, showed the tunnel to be two hundred and twenty feet long, with a fall of nine feet along its length. It follows a winding Northerly course, down the very gentle dip of the strata. The entrance and the three shafts are in a straight line and roughly equidistant from each other, and it is clear that the shafts were sunk first, to the wide shale bank, and then connecting tunnels were driven from shaft to shaft through the shale. This ensured that the excavated debris was never carried more than forty feet underground. It also accounts for the bends, since the direction of digging was probably determined by guesswork and by tapping through the rock. The first two shafts were offset from the tunnel so that they could be walled off and filled in without blocking the passage. The squeeze near the end marks an imperfect breakthrough between two tunnels, the villains contenting themselves with pulling faces at each other through the hole.

Assuming that the terminal choke was a collapsed shaft, we inferred that the tunnel must continue beyond. There was much discussion as to where it would lead, and soon three schools of thought emerged:

1. The Materialists, or Sewer Men.
2. The Romantics or Bolt-Holers.
3. The Monks.

The first category comprised the present owners and most of the explorers, past and present. They held that the tunnel was simply an extensive drain or sewer, citing in support of their argument its steady fall, its constricted passages, its lack of finish., and the fact that if continued for another hundred yards it would emerge once more where the ground above slopes steeply down towards the river.

The second party refuted these arguments on the grounds that people didn't worry about sewers in those days, and would never have gone to so much trouble to dig one. They considered that the tunnel was originally an escape route for the early occupants of the Grange, to be used as a last resort in case of trouble. More recently, perhaps, the shafts were closed and the whole adapted for drainage.

The third school was composed of locals whose Dads had told 'em that the tunnel led to Glastonbury Abbey, (some two miles distant). There was considerable support for this belief, intensified when some joker supplied the information that the Grange was contemporaneously in use as a convent or nunnery!.

In view of all this Mr. Clark decided to unblock the final shaft, in order to reach the continuation of the system. It would have been both difficult and dangerous to attempt this from below, so a survey was made above ground and the position of the final shaft plotted in a field North of the house. Needless to say I was rather nervous of saying "Dig here", especially as there were no surface indications of anything going on below. Also, when the underground survey was made there was a good deal of iron scaffolding strewn about the ground close overhead, and I was uncertain of the effect this might have had on the prismatic compass. So I reluctantly wallowed down the tunnel with a hammer, while my companion, an adherent of school No.2. (this is irrelevant) listened for tapping above ground. As a result a stake was driven in about ten feet West of the survey point, and we sat back to await events.

(Another gripping instalment next week).

W.I. Stanton.

## LAMB LEER DIG 1952

The yearly dig in the great chamber at L.L. took place from 24th to 27th July inclusive. Those taking part being the Murrells, Railtons, Little and myself.

The tunnel was reported to be flooded, but in fact there were only two shallow pools and a lot of well-puddled clay. The water was baled away in a few minutes. The nearly liquid clay was more troublesome and the best method of moving it from the far end was by a human mud plough, pushing it in a flowing heap down the passage. This done, the clay at the working face was found dry, the water in the tunnel being due to a small slow trickle down the wall of the passage about three feet from the end. Work then proceeded quickly the clay being kneaded into balls and thrown from hand to hand down to the opening. On the afternoon of the 25th July gas (CO<sub>2</sub>) became troublesome, stopping work frequently, though it soon cleared. On the 26th July the air pump made by P.B. Lawder from a Baby's gas respirator and cycle inner tubes was found useful but not quite sufficient to keep up with the gas. The 27th July was devoted to cleaning up at the face, and digging and grading down to sand level.

The tunnel is now 37 ft. long from the entrance and starts with a shallow water-worn arch then continues about twelve feet under a low broad bedding plane and then, after a short left hand turn, along a water-worn passage, filled with clay except for an occasional air pocket in the roof. Probing with a thirty inch blade shows that at the point reached the passage, instead of continuing on the strike bends left and so will tend to rise. This should be favourable. The end of the passage is now thirty three feet in at right angles to the rock wall.

### The Great Chamber

Some points may be of interest.

- (a) The output of gas is so far not nearly as bad as in the dig begun some time ago, higher up, by myself and the Lawders and abandoned because of gas.
- (b) The so called 'Boulder Slope' consists of a surface fall of boulders over a clay slope. The trench made in the Great Chamber shows approximately:-
  - (1) Scattered boulders on the surface.
  - (2) About ¼ inch of calcite layer.
  - (3) Three feet of clay with a few boulders in the first two and a half feet.
  - (4) An egg shell layer of calcite.
  - (5) One foot of clay.
  - (6) Grey sand usually waterlogged - depth of sand at least two and a half feet.

In the tunnel we have the clay over sand. About six ton of clay have been moved from the tunnel.

E.A. GLENNIE