



FOREWORD

Following instructions from the A.G.M., the committee has examined and discussed the position of Honorary Members, and the majority opinion is in favour of these members having the rights of full members. At the same time it is felt that such members should only be elected at an A.G.M. or General Meeting, and not by the committee as such.

The two other subjects, Subscription and Hut Sinking Fund are interrelated, and it has not been found possible to divorce one from the other. A suggestion has been made that the Club take out a policy at a cost of about £4 per year for a return of £100 in twenty years, and that some members may be willing to guarantee to pay a proportion of the annual premium. Another view is that the subscription should be such that it is possible to allocate sufficient money each year to cover replacement and depreciation of the hut. It has been pointed out that with good maintenance the hut should last another 15 years, but taking the present day value of say £400, and the size of our membership remaining as now, it will cost about 3s 6d per member per year to accumulate a sum that will enable us to replace the hut. We are very anxious to obtain members views on the above, and make the earnest request that you write to the Secretary giving your views on these important matters.

A. Fincham and M. Grimmer plan to hold a camp/dig meet in the summer, and request that any members interested should write to them.

A. Fincham, East Preston Vicarage, Nr. Littlehampton, Sussex.

M. Grimmer, R.M.C.S., Shrivenham, Nr. Swindon, Wilts.

Sec. Frank Frost, 22, Wolesey Rd., Bishopston, Bristol 17.  
Phone Bristol 44221.

Treas. G. Williams, 1, Redhill Drive, Fishponds, Bristol.

We welcome the following new members.

A. Blackwell-Jones, 46, St. Johns Rd., Clifton, Bristol 8.

N. Brooks, 392, Victoria Rd., Ruislip, Middx.

R. Collingridge, 24, Melrose Grove, Southdown, Bath.

J.G. Gosling, The Anchor, Filton, Bristol.

M.S. Green, The Garage, Compton Dundon, Nr. Somerton, Som.

W.G. Harrison, 15, Pen Lea Rd., Weston, Bath.

A.J. Morrison, "Candons", Mountway Rd., Taunton, Som.

R.M. Kennedy, R.M.C.S., Shrivenham, Nr. Swindon, Wilts.

P.I. McLaren, Hestercombe House, Cheddon Fitzpaine, Taunton, Som.

R. Pyke, 88, Redland Road, Bristol, 6.

J. Thursfield, Bitterne, Gwernesvey, Nr. Usk, Mon.

A. Webster, "Wind Aloft", Wellow Lane, Peasedown, Som.

Joint Member.

Mrs. H. Kenney, Tudor Lodge, Beryl Lane, Wells, Som.

Hillgrove Hut. The committee has decided to refelt the roof of the hut, and the Secretary will be pleased to hear from any member who is willing to give a hand with the work. A date will be fixed to suit the helpers. Would members please note that the "Elsan" should be emptied when it is about a third full. The drill is to dig a hole in the next field and empty the contents into this and then replace the turf. A note should be made in the log each time it is done.

The Hut Fees have been increased as follows-

Hillgrove. Members. First night. 2s., with 1s. for the second and any following nights. Visitors 2s 6d per night.

Eastwater. Members. 1s 6d first night, with 1s. for following nights.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Sir,- Let me not detract in any way from the splendid record in the January issue, "The Thirteenth Chamber of Wookey Hole". Let me acclaim the exemplary diving conduct and the outstanding courage of the diver so unfortunately trapped by the all-obliterating mud. But do let me add that although the way of Thirteen rises quickly again above the 30 ft. danger depth and a line is laid, it does not follow that it is now safe to use oxygen equipment there. It only means that provided the passage is made quickly the risk would only be very slight. However, if anything should happen to delay the diver - and our record shows how a trivial thing can upset the plans of the finest diver - then a very dangerous situation would inevitably arise. Bob Davies, outstandingly the C-D.G.'s. ordinary member best informed in physiology, would be the first to agree with this, and the C.D.G. itself will most carefully consider the risks and how to combat them, before deciding how, or whether to follow on oxygen to the new chambers.

Yours, etc.

4th March, 1956

Graham Balcombe

## LETTER TO THE SECRETARY

Dear Frank,- as we are still getting requests from cavers for permission to go down G.B. Cave on days other than the official Guest Days, I wonder if you would like to publish this letter in the W.C.C. Journal. The rule laid down by the owners of the cave, the Axbridge R.D.C., is that only members of seven specified clubs are allowed down G.B. and then only on Guest Days, which are selected six times a year by the U.B.S.S.. These clubs are the Axbridge, B.E.C., C.D.G., M.N.R.C., South Wales C.C., Wessex, Westminster, and their affiliated clubs. The U.B.S.S.

has to observe the conditions laid down by the owners and we find it imperative to obey this rule rigidly, so as to avoid any ill feeling or suggestion of favouritism. On the other hand, we would like it to be known that in the event of clubs arranging a meet on Mendip well in advance, (say three months or more) who let us know, we would do our best to arrange that one of the Guest Days coincided with their visit,

Yours sincerely,

16th February, 1956

D.A.S. Robertson,  
Hon. Secretary, U.B.S.S.

### FUTURE EVENTS

The following are the G.B. Guest Days that have been arranged so far this year.

Sunday 11th March, 1956 at 2.30 pm.

Whit-Saturday 19th May, at 3 pm.

Sunday 1st July, at 2.30 pm.

Saturday 15th September, at 3 pm.

There will be the usual tackle fee of 1s. per head.

### READ'S CAVERN

The following note has been received from the President of the U.B.S.S.

Frost action has once more caused considerable falls of boulders at the entrance to this cave. About half a ton is lying loose on the entrance slope and there is probably more to come down. The entrance is now unsafe. It does not seem much use doing anything yet till we know just how much more damage the frost has done, but in the interval it would be as well to avoid visiting the cave.

E.K. Tratman.

## FIFTY YEARS OF THE M.N.R.C.

On the 2nd of January, 1906 the Mendip Nature Research Club, as it was then called, was founded under the presidency of the Rev. E.B.Cook of Wookey. As he put it, it "consisted of a small body of workers, with their head-quarters in Wells, who had undertaken to watch natural history events past and present in North Somerset, and collate those records". (Report, 1908, p.11). It was over a year before Canon Church, who was Chairman of the Wells Natural History and Archaeological Society, got to hear of it; but as soon as he did (wise man that he was) he set about arranging an amalgamation between the Club and the Society. This was effected during the course of 1908 and resulted in the Club becoming a Committee of the Society, from which it drew its members (and a small income) and on whose behalf it did nature research work. It was a semi-independent body, with its own officers and meetings, but the Society undertook to publish the Committee's report of its work as an addendum to the annual report of the Society. Even to-day, anyone wishing to join the M.N.R.C. has first to join the Society. The latter is often called "the Parent Body" by members of the Committee, but the circumstances of the Committee's origin, as outlined here, are not generally known. It might, however, be described as a "Foster Parent".

The earliest of the Reports contain long and interesting articles about the excavations carried out at Wookey Hole by H.E. Balch and R.D.R. Troup, with descriptions of their finds; but during the first four years of its existence the M.N.R.C. under the Rev. Cook's presidency pursued many-sided researches and published accounts of the flowers and birds of Mendip. There were also meteorological reports, which remained a constant feature until 1941. However, in 1910 the Rev. Cook left Wookey to take

up work in the North of England and Balch was elected to his place.

It was inevitable under Balch's leadership and keen inspiration that Archaeology and Cave Exploration should become the principal activities of the M.N.R.C. and we find that within a very few years the bulk of the Reports is devoted to these matters. The Wookey excavations were still being continued and in 1911 (Report p. 39) is a detailed account of the mysterious cave noises to be heard there. In 1912, but above all in 1922 and the years following, excavations were carried out in the rock shelters of Ebbor, while the 1928 Report carries a description by J. Wilfrid Jackson of some of the late Pleistocene fauna which were found there. Similar finds made at Chelm's Coombe Rock Shelter were reported in 1926. R.P. Parry's excavations at Cheddar, particularly in Gough's Cave and Soldier's Hole, were reported in 1928 and 1929. The latter is one of the few Mendip sites in which implements of Proto-Solutrean culture were found (Parry's "layer 4.").

The outstanding discoveries in cave exploration were made in Eastwater and Swildon's. In 1910 occurred the great flood which imprisoned a party in Eastwater. The best account of this, however, is to be found in "Caving", by E.A. Baker (1932, pp. 25-38). In 1913 Balch effected what he described as one of his "rare visits to the profound depths of Eastwater Cavern", and this he did for the first time by means of rope ladders. He wrote of those, "one is bound to say that they introduce a degree of comfort in the descent and return, quite absent from the strenuous rope work of other days. Yet the fatigue of transport is great." It was on this occasion that Jack Brownsey, "a man who possesses a body designed expressly for exploring midget passages," first

entered the system, which has recently been extended in the direction of the Mud Escalator.

Swildon's Hole, like Eastwater, was originally opened by Balch before the M.N.R.C. was formed, but exploration was held up by the then owner of Manor Farm. In 1910, however, we read that permission to explore was once more obtained, and in 1912 was published the famous photograph by J.H. Savory of the Old Grotto. In 1914 was recorded the first successful descent of the 40 ft. pot, but the party led by Dr. Baker was held up at the 20 ft. pot by lack of tackle. It was not until the dry summer of 1921 that this too was descended and on the August Bank Holiday another party penetrated the cave to the first sump. On November 12th the Grotto now known as Trat's Temple was first entered by E.K. Tratman, and the photographs of both this and of Barnes' Loop made by Savory are classical examples of their kind. In the former we see how many pillars have since been broken, in the latter we can admire the pure white of the stalagmite floor, which is now a dirty brown.

Another successful trip to the sump was made in 1922, when it is recorded that Mrs. Dobson was the first lady to make the descent. On this occasion they found more water "pouring down the forty foot descent than had been the case the previous year. A scheme was devised for muffling the waterfall inside a large canvas pipe forty feet in length and after some delay this was effectively fixed in place and rendered the descent comparatively easy". (Balch, M.N.R.C. Report, 1922, p.21). The canvas pipe was in regular use for a number of years and is now in the Wells Museum.

By this time the greater part of the Committee's

activity was devoted to cave exploration, but Balch gave an occasional backward glance, as in 1932 (Report p. 44) where he wrote that it was "perhaps unfortunate that the activities of this group of members of our Society never enter other fields than that of exploration of the caves and shelters." At its birth it was thought that botany would become a strong section and that other departments of research would follow. "It is regrettable," he wrote, "that with so strong a society as we have become this has not developed." He need not have regretted; his achievements speak for themselves.

The M.N.R.C. has always extended generous recognition to other Mendip clubs with the same interests. In 1913 (Report p. 42) it records the formation of the Bristol Spelaeological Research Society and describes the setting up of apparatus in the first rift chamber in Eastwater for measuring the rate of evaporation. This Society, however, became defunct on the outbreak of war and never published any of its results. The M.N.R.C. Reports, however, record of the Eastwater experiment in 1922 (Report p.22) that "even in that saturated atmosphere evaporation is proceeding, and that by 1923 we should be in a position to say definitely at what rate it is doing so." Unfortunately, no record of the 1923 figures was made. In 1934, however, the Report says (p.65) that in Lamb Leer, where similar apparatus was installed by the B.S.R.S. in 1913, no loss by evaporation was shown.

The University of Bristol Spelaeological Society was formed in 1919 and the M.N.R.C. Report for that year carried a summary of the Society's first year's work. In 1920 they exchanged visits to their respective territories, while the descent of Swildon's in 1921 was accomplished by members of both clubs. There was also cordial co-operation between the

M.N.R.C., the U.B.S.S. and the relatively new Wessex Cave Club in the task of reopening the shaft of Lamb Leer and making the cave safe. This is described in the Reports for 1936 and 1937.

The welcome given to the Wessex in 1934, when it was first formed is interestingly worded. "It may be appropriate here to report that a Caving Club for the many who approach the caves from a purely sporting aspect has been formed and has a large and growing membership." (Report p.66). In times like our own, where the distinction between the sporting and research aspects of caving has become blurred, this statement has an unreal sound. Nobody reading of the great exploits of the Committee in Eastwater, Swildon's or Lamb Leer could mistake the enjoyment which Balch and his fellows derived from the "purely sporting aspect" of caving. It is hard nowadays to draw a line between this and cave research. Exploration, surveying and photography are now done as a matter of course by the sportsman. It is often considered a point of honour for the discoverer of a new cave to publish a survey of it. Archaeology and cave biology are however specialities which will always remain the prerogative of research workers, however much the sportsman may assist.

It must have been some such feeling of exclusiveness, on the part of the research workers, that prevented the M.N.R.C. from growing as fast as it should have done both in the 1930s and in the post-war years. The membership was 35 in 1935 and 32 in 1949. This stagnation was reflected in a falling-off of output by its members, and though some fine cave surveys by W.I. Stanton were published in 1950-1952, his magnum opus of Swildon's Hole has not yet been published.

The fact is that most people are attracted first to the sporting side of caving and then, under the influence of men like Balch they take up research work. It was probably a realisation of the truth of this that led the M.N.R.C. about two years ago to open its doors more widely. Its membership is now over 84 and the promise for the future is great. If, however, any of its members are looking for a little piece of work to do, that would be of more value than anything they could do down a cave, I can make one suggestion: provide your Reports with an INDEX.

Oliver C. Lloyd.

List of Cave Surveys published by the M.N.R.C.

- 1913 Lamb Leer, by J.H. Savory.
- 1924 The Tickenham Rock Shelter, by J.H. Savory.
- 1925 First part of Poulmagollum Cave, by Dr. Friedrich Oedl.
- 1932 Hollwell, by C.D.F. Long.
- 1935 White Spot Cave, Cheddar, by J.W. Duck.  
Windsor Hill Cave, Shepton Mallet, by J.W. Duck  
Great Oone's Hole, Cheddar, by J.W. Duck.
- 1937 Lamb Leer, after McMurtrie 1830 & Balch 1904  
- Resurveyed by J.W. Duck & E.W. Sharpe, 1936-7.
- 1938 Wookey Hole, by J.W. Duck, E.W. Sharpe and A. Wadsworth.
- 1950 Downhead Swallet, by C.H. Kenney & W. I. Stanton, 1951.  
Bos Swallet by W. I. Stanton, 1951.
- 1951-2 The Cheddar Caves (Cooper's Hole, Soldier's Hole, Gough's  
Old and New Caves, Long Hole, Great Oone's Hole & Saye's  
Hole), by W.I. Stanton, 1951-2.
- 1953-4 Badger Hole, by H.W.W. Ashworth.

## HILLIER'S CAVE; SUICIDE PASSAGE EXTENSION

On October 22nd, 1955 Phil Davies and I paid a visit to Hillier's Cave with a newcomer to caving, Miss Gillian Horn. As sometimes happens, the presence of a novice provided the necessary incentive for new discoveries. We were able to force the squeeze at the end of Suicide Passage, considered impenetrable after three determined attempts had been made on it, two of these nearly causing accidents, as related in Journal No.51. It transpired that the squeeze could be forced if it was entered in a most improbable attitude, any deviation from which caused one's body to wedge itself immovably in the boulders. Each of us suffered the unpleasant experience of having a boulder roll gently upon us, while we were struggling in the squeeze, but fortunately we were able to avoid being damaged unduly.

There was only time for a quick look round on the first trip, but we investigated the passage beyond as far as a pile of boulders. The next day we returned with a party of the Beechen Cliff affiliated club, and we completed the exploration to the 5th Boulder Choke, M. Hartham and R.J. Rebbeck accompanying us through the squeeze. When the party was through, a little gardening was done to make the hole larger, and the resulting avalanche of stones completely cut off our retreat, until strenuous efforts with a crow-bar and finger nails had restored the status quo. The squeeze is now of manageable proportions.

The way opens into a tiny cavity, out of which another squeeze leads into a large passage similar

to the so-called "Stream Passage." Above this is a grotto, which is really the "upper storey" of the passage, containing quite good formations, many of them a rich red colour characteristic of this part of the cave. On the side of the grotto nearest the squeeze, and almost directly above it, is a climb to some 70 ft. above the floor, with unstable earth slopes near the top. At the end remote from the squeeze is a drop into a "stream" passage largely filled with unstable boulders, and the end of this merges into the 5th Boulder Choke. This will presumably require the presence of another novice before it can be passed! The total length of the passages is in the region of 300 ft., the farthest point reached being about 100 to 120 ft. from the end of Suicide Passage in a straight line.

The main point of interest, to be settled by a survey trip, is whether the passage runs E. or N. If it is N. then the 5th Boulder Choke is so near St. Dunstan's Well, that we are in imminent danger of running out of the hill. In fact another 100 ft. would leave us in grave doubts about the accuracy of the survey! Moreover, there is no water in the new passage and no evidence of any sort that the Well is so near. If, however, the passage runs E., as seems to be the majority opinion amongst the explorers, we have by-passed the Well and are heading for the inner chambers of Stoke Lane Swallet, about half a mile away.

If reference is made to the plan of the cave in Journal No.51, it will be seen that the new extension runs off the plan on the right hand side. The discovery of the passages beyond West Sump has already done the same for the left hand side, so that the printed survey is now well out of date.

We have now completed the survey of Hillier's Cave three times! The total survey length with all the recent extensions exceeds 3000 ft., inclusive of fairy Cave.

Denis Warburton.

## ON HAVING GONE THROUGH SUMPS

### AN UNEQUAL NUMBERED OF TIMES

One day during the dry August of last year, Oliver Wells and I decided to explore the other side of the St. Paul's mud sump. Fortunately the weather was dry; so dry in fact that we got no further than Ludwell Cave. The entrance looked comparatively inviting and we decided to look around and see if it had changed.

First we went and saw the farmer. He said he didn't mind who went into his cave, provided they didn't leave it in the dangerous condition in which the first party had left it. And while you are looking up the June and August 1951 editions of the Journal to identify the culprits, would you, gentle reader, acquaint yourself with the features of the cave to save me unnecessary description.

The sump was at a low level, even lower than it had been after the pumping operations of 1951, and I went through, panting and bubbling in the suddenly cold water. Oliver followed feet first in a flurry of legs, splashes and more bubbles. As parties have done before, we had a good look round the Wet Chamber to see if we could find the water inlet; without success. Then through the constriction into the boulder connection with the Dry Chamber. We had to move a few boulders to pass through comfortably.

Here we were not a little surprised to find daylight. Apparently somebody had succeeded in doing what we had failed to do, and had driven a connection between the Cave Shelter, or Upper System, and the lower, active system; not unnaturally, we came out this way. After changing we had a further chat with Mr. Milliar, the farmer. We found one thing of interest, cleared up an observation which has been puzzling us for four years, and learned quite a lot about the manners of cavers. Let us take the last first.

Members who attended the 1954 A.G.M. will remember a discussion about cave digs. No definite conclusion was reached about how long a dig remained one person's property, but the general consensus of opinion seemed to be that anyone digging where others had scratched before should ask the permission of those who started. I have the greatest respect for the school group who trespassed in this cave, and permission and some advice would willingly have been given. They are to be congratulated on a successful dig, but they will not have made amends for their sins until they submit to the Editors an account of their exploration and work.

When we first entered the Dry Chamber in 1951 we were very surprised to find bat guano, in fresh condition, with no sign of an entrance passage other than through the sump. (I have found no records of amphibious bats.) Before Willie Stanton cracked the sump in August of that year, a dig in the Cave Shelter had broken into a narrow, flat passage with a pool of water at the end. It was open for quite a long time before falling in, but was closed before the cave was entered. Presumably the bats came down this passage and

left their evidence. The "pool" must have "been the Wet Chamber.

The source of the water has always been a puzzle. Under flood conditions this resurgence produces enough water to flood over the road, and yet there is no sign of a passage in the Wet Chamber. On this last visit the connecting passage did look slightly like the bed of a stream passage. Is it possible that the stream flows entirely through boulders into the Dry Chamber? David Hunt's photographs in Ffynnon Ddu show that an incredible amount of water can flow through a boulder ruckle without dislodging it. With this new entrance it should be worth while to remove all the flaky Triassic boulders from the Dry Chamber, especially if flow were seen there during wet conditions.

There are important features of this cave and it ought to have extensions, judging by the water flow. It should now be easy to make an accurate survey, which was not without difficulty before. It would be very interesting to compare a new survey with the original one. It is always useful to know about Mendip's numerous digs, and it is to be hoped that people will publish details of their projects in the Journal -- that's what it's for.

Donald Thomson.

Congratulations to

Donald and Dianne Thomson on the birth of a daughter,

and to

Jack Waddon on his forthcoming marriage.

## MENDIP NOTES

### Ludwell Sump

"Cheramodytes" has been "creeping into a hole" again, this time at Ludwell. Reluctant, as ever, to go through sumps, he was delighted to hear that the Sidcot boys had dug their way into the Dry Chamber, so he went and looked. There was a water hole at the foot of the entrance, but only one chamber instead of two. He measured this and found it to be 30 ft. long, whereas Thomson's survey (Journal No.31) made the cave 50 ft. long. So he wrote to Thomson and asked whether the cave had shrunk or whether he had missed something.

Thomson replied as follows: "the explanation of the 'shrinkage' is both simple and sobering and is what I expected. If you refer back to the survey you will notice a choke near a little opening into the Wet Chamber. You went down through that choke, now opened, and landed up in the 'dry' connecting passage. What you took to be the sump is the entrance to the Wet Chamber, now completely full of water. If you had tried to dive the sump, you would have gone the complete length of that chamber, plus the length of the sump, plus the length of the entrance passage. In view of occurrences previously described you would probably have come out without any hair after a journey of 42 ft. 6 ins. It's just as well you didn't try."

### Stoke Lane Swallet

As a result of observations made by Derek Ford during visits at fairly constant intervals over a period of four years, it appears that the drainage

in Stoke Lane is gradually changing. A higher proportion of the stream, now much cleaner, thanks to the sewage filter, appears to be flowing down Browne's Passage after each winter flood period, instead of largely sinking beyond the other end of the Stony Crawl, as it did in 1951. Presumably this is due to silting of that sink and a consequent ponding of the stream. As a result the Nutmeg Grater is now very wet as well as awkward, and any party can be assured of a fairly thorough soaking before the Duck and Sump I are reached. It is suggested that a small dam constructed at the upstream end of the short dry link between the main stream passage and the Stony Crawl would clear the blockage and redirect the bulk of the stream into its old course.

### Wookey Hole Botany

When on the 11th December, 1955 the Cave Diving Group recovered a small line reel, which they had lost on the 29th June, 1953 in the 9th Chamber, they found it to be growing algae. These were submitted to Dr. F.E. Round of the Dept. of Botany, University of Bristol, but neither he nor any of the experts were able to identify it. It disobeyed all sorts of rules, such as by refusing to produce chlorophyl in the light, and I now hear that the x-ray diagrams of its wall structure do not fit into any known type. So until it reproduces, if it ever does, they will not be able to identify it with any degree of accuracy.

Accordingly on the 4th February, 1956 Dr. Round himself came to the diving meet at Wookey Hole and received a great many specimens from the divers, who were John Buxton, Oliver Wells and Luke Devenish. Unfortunately none of the specimens yielded anything of interest. One of them was obtained from the pool

around "St. Michael's Mount" with great difficulty by Wells, who had taken off his lead weights and so found it impossible to sink. It appeared to be an alga superficially resembling that found in Wookey 9, but on subsequent microscopical examination has turned out to be almost dead Bryophyte protonema.

Not many archaeological specimens were found, but Devenish did manage to get two pieces of a left human ulna from the 4th Chamber. It was in the same condition as those he found in December, which was erroneously described by me as "fossilized". Apparently Romano-British and Iron Age bones are never really fossilised.

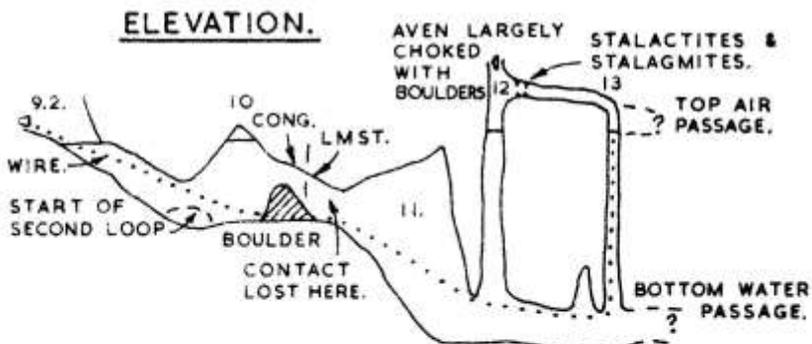
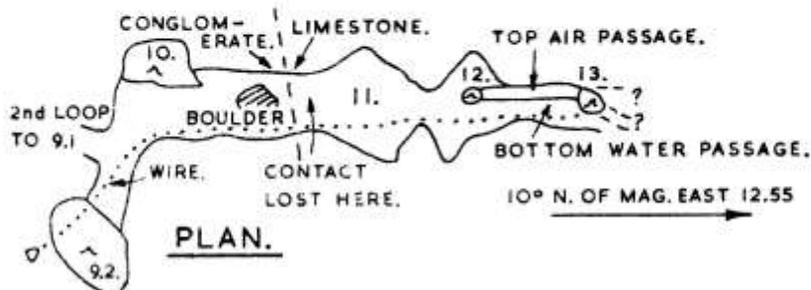
Mrs. Hodgkinson invited the Daily Mail reporters and camera men to be present, because they had missed the big "scoop" in December, when Bob Davies was nearly lost. But when one of us suggested to the divers that they had better toss up to see who was to get lost this time, they returned a rude answer.

### Black Hole Belay

For a long time the piton, which had been driven in by the original explorers, on the near side of the Black Hole in Swildon's has been loose, though reasonably efficient. Now, however, the University Spelaeos have fixed an eye-headed rawbolt. This has been put on the left over the drop in such a place that it can be used equally well for a straight ladder to the bottom or for a U-shaped ladder to Thunderbolt Depot on the far side. The belay was fixed on the 18th February, 1956.

Cheramodytes.

WOOKEY HOLE, SOMERSET.  
 (VERY) PROVISIONAL PLAN AND  
 ELEVATION OF 10.TH., 11.TH., 12.TH., &  
 13.TH. CHAMBERS.



FROM SHORE IN 9.2 TO 13 IS 202 FEET.  
 FROM 9.2 TO RIM OF 11 IS 75 FEET.  
 COMPASS BEARINGS GOOD FOR 11-12 & 12-13.  
 ALL ELSE IS OF LOW GRADE ACCURACY.

3.1.56 R.E.D.  
 TRACED T.D.F.  
 20.2.'56 *OCW*

## THE DIARY OF A CAMBRIDGE CAVER

Tuesday, 6th December, 1955

So large a party had gathered at the Hill Grove hut that on this first day it was decided that we should split up and descend two different caves.

Bill Marks had rashly informed us that he "knew" Eastwater. He led a party of five more or less experienced cavers in that direction, while Oliver Wells took a larger party to Lamb Leer. The Eastwater party went down the mud slope (I think) and up the thirteen pots (I know). Forgive my vagueness, but I had only been underground on one previous occasion and was occupied more with my immediate surroundings and the necessity of maintaining my equilibrium therein than with the broader outline of things. I was, however, able to observe that Bill wore no more clothing than a shirt, jeans and plimsols for this particular descent.

Beer in the Hunter's that night was enlivened by Oliver's story of the lone caver emerging from Eastwater, who had taken considerable time to negotiate the boulder ruckle. "I had noticed", he said, "that all the loose boulders were marked with red paint and had difficulty in avoiding them all."

Wednesday, 7th December

This day Cobber Johnson arrived to do a little quiet wood-chopping and reading, expecting to find an empty hut. How unlucky one can be! Don Thomson ("the brutal and licentious soldiery") was also with us at this time and a descent of Swildon's was organized. A high speed sumping party, led by Oliver Wells and consisting of Bill Marks, George Mitcheson and Paul Dyson went down first and laddered up. The rabble followed at a more leisurely pace under the control of Don Thomson who, ominously, was

carrying a camera and wearing an iron hat. Alec Wells had made a last minute appearance and was included in the party, which eventually arrived at Sump I and sat around in a semicircle, brooding. A few of us had already determined to have a go at this sump. I had previously received instruction in its negotiation. "Let your head run along the ceiling," they said. "It will eventually strike an obstruction. Duck under it and rise up. There will be air." There was.

Shirley Townrow and Lavid Bowen followed and we departed at a brisk trot, getting nearly as far as Sump II (as we later discovered) before returning and emerging once more in front of that semicircle of unwinking lamps, like an M.G.M. film unit round a jungle waterhole. We decided to push on to the surface and dry clothes, while Don's party waited for the genuine, constructive sumping party. However, we got sort of lost in Upper Swildon's, eventually chimneying up a waterfall (the short wet way?) and insinuating ourselves into the main traffic stream flowing along overhead. Thus the whole party eventually emerged as one unit after a most satisfying day. Oliver's party had discovered a new, small, muddy and I understand rather repulsive oxbow in the Approach Passage.

Thursday, 8th December.

This day was rather similar to the previous one, with the mud sump replacing the water sump as the scene of operations. The theme had other variations, too. Oliver, suffering from a mild attack of 'flu (lightning diagnosis by Don Thomson at a range of not less than 10 ft.) stayed in bed. Derek Ford, who had appeared the previous evening, led David Bowen, George Micheson and Bill Marks through the mud sump with the intention of digging in the passage at the top of Oliver's maypole. A small party

with Dick .Kirkland was instructed to haunt Upper Swildon's, while Paul Dyson and Don took the rest of us down to the mud sump. The level of this, we discovered, had risen appreciably (as had that of the rest of the water in the crawl approach to the St. Paul's squeeze) and it did not take long for us to persuade one another that sumping was all very well, if you had something important in mind, but that sumping for the hell of it, particularly when the level was higher than any of those present had previously seen it, was not what one did on the third successive day of pretty strenuous caving. So we retreated in good order. Someone produced a lump of wet bread, with which Paul cleaned the mud from his glasses and which he then courteously offered round. Very good bread it was, too. Cobber had partially to undress to get through St. Paul's and by judicious use of his rolled-up overall I was able to keep fairly dry in the crawl beyond. It took a long time to get everyone up the 40 ft. pitch, and we emerged (by yet another route) in dribs and drabs.

When we were reunited we learnt that Derek's digging had not been particularly successful, which was a pity. Also, Dick Kirkland told us that a party of schoolboys and one of airmen had also been down during the afternoon. What an accommodating cave it is!

We are grateful to the Wessex Cave Club for having extended to us their hospitality at Hill Grove, so that we were able to enjoy these three days caving.

W.J.Spowage,  
Cambridge University Caving Club

## BOOK REVIEWS

THE CAVES BEYOND, by J. Lawrence & R.W. Brucker.  
(Funk & Wagnalls, N.Y., 1955) 283 p., Maps, plans, illus.,  
\$4.75 (£1. 16s)

This is a most readable account of an important American cave exploration. In 1954 a National Speleological Society expedition spent 12 days at Floyd Collins' Crystal Cave in Kentucky. Camps were established deep in the cave and 50 people remained underground for an average of nearly 93 hours each. This was the first undertaking of such a size in the U.S.A. and the many mistakes that were made are honestly described. As a whole however, the operation was a success, due largely to sound planning. (1½ tons of supplies had to be carried into the cave)

The narrative is excellent though not over popularized, and is told with almost English humour. The American touch creeps in, however, when the assistant expedition leader decides that morale is low, and he accordingly injects humour by appearing at the underground camp dressed in a lounge suit and carrying a complete baked ham on a plate. Some of the specialist reports, published as appendices, are disappointing. There seems to have been insufficient observation to fill them and they are padded with elementary material, that must surely be known to anyone interested enough to read the reports.

The photographs are many and good, largely of the "candid" type which show more expedition than cave. Criticism must be made of the survey presentation, though. There are detailed plans of certain sections of the cave but for the system as a whole there is only a confusing perspective drawing. There is no list of plans and no reference to them in the text, so that for the first 55 pages the reader is needlessly perplexed. Even the total

length surveyed is not stated, but a recent letter (November 1955) from one of the authors states that the surveyed length amounts to 23.1 miles, with an estimated 10 miles still unmapped.

T.R.S.

JOURNAL OF THE CRAVEN POTHOLE CLUB. Vol.2, No. 1, 1955.

(5s. from 10 Sheep St., Skipton, Yorks.)

The C.P.C. Journal is still one of the few caving periodicals in this country to be printed professionally. This latest number contains 57 pages of text, of which all but 8 pages are devoted to potholing. There are 8 plates.

The principal exploration reported is the discovery near Kettlewell of the link between Providence Pot and the comparatively new Dowber Gill Passage in Dow Cave. This brings the length of the complete system to almost  $1\frac{3}{4}$  miles. One page gives an account of the C.P.C. visit to Mendip at Easter 1955. The other contents include an article on the early exploration of Gaping Gill, a report on the Rat-Hole descent of 1935, some notes on the principal caves between Trieste and Postojna, a comprehensive article on belaying, and accounts of La Cigalere (France) and the Waiiau Caves (New Zealand).

T.R.S.

NOTE: Where an English price is quoted for a foreign book it is based on the actual cost in this country, rather than a true conversion of the local price, and can be taken only as a guide. The publication of a review in this Journal is no guarantee that the subject of the review is still obtainable.

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