

CLUB NEWS

With a modicum of good fortune work will have begun on the construction of the Upper Pitts Headquarters on 16th September. The co-ordinating of the grant from the Department of Education and Science, arranging for tenders, and ensuring that the contract terms were satisfactory has been a worrying and protracted affair, but we should have the main shell of the building erected at least before the coming winter. Some members have put a lot of work into the site already, but a great deal remains to be done when the shell has been completed. When the time comes all offers of help from those with practical knowledge will be most gratefully received.

When we have our new H.Q. we are going to have to dispose of our premises at Hillgrove and Eastwater as mentioned in the last Journal. The Committee would prefer to give the option of purchasing the Eastwater Hut to one of our members, and so those interested should submit their tenders to the Hon. Secretary without delay. Since the site is not freehold, and a rent is payable to Mr. Gibbons of Eastwater Farm, prospective buyers must make their own arrangements with the landlord. With minor exceptions the hut and its contents will be on sale as a going concern. Hillgrove too, will have to be sold by the new year. The alternative is spreading the resources of the Club over two Mendip headquarters, with the inevitable division of the Club and reduction of income available for maintaining Upper Pitts. Clearly, this would be most unwise. Prospective purchasers of Hillgrove should ask for further details from the Hon. Secretary, and must be prepared to dismantle the building and find another site for it.

Recently the Club purchased a supply of Nife cells. The first batch were oversold before they arrived, and the next batch of 120 have all but gone. Another batch of Edison cells is arriving about the 25th September and then will be on sale at very competitive prices. The actual price depends on the condition of the cells on arrival and the type of headset. Samples will be on display at the forthcoming A.G.M., so do come along with some money if you wish to purchase any. Edison cells have the main advantage of being lighter than their Nife counterparts, and their only drawback to date has been the difficulty of getting spare parts. Members may wish to know that the sole concessionaires for all available M.S.A. and Edison spares are:-

Casey Brothers,
Mining & Industrial Safety Lighting & Appliance Dept.,
72 Ecclestone Street,
Prescot, MANCHESTER.

Illustrations of the various spares, with current prices and catalogue numbers, have been supplied to us and are published for member's convenience elsewhere in this Journal. The fact that Edison cells are much cheaper than Nife cells should more than compensate for the odd spare parts which may be required to get them in perfect working order for caving trips.

An intriguing possibility has arisen at Westbury-sub-Mendip. The old mill race used to be led away under two houses, but over the years the channel has become silted up. During the great floods of last July the water, unable to escape, burst up through the scullery of one of the houses and broke through the wall in a

torrent five feet deep. Possibly the removal of the silt from the race might prevent a repetition, and a donation to H.Q. funds could reasonably be expected. Any keen diggers interested?

We welcome the following new members to the Club.

Elected on 28th July 1968:-

N. George. Roselea, 8 Bristol Road, Highbridge, Somerset.

Elected on 8th September 1968:-

R. Borrett. 15 Chandler Close, Bampton, Oxford.

B. Quilliam. 93A Alexandra Road, London, W. 8.

Apart from the above additions to the Club Address List as published in the last Journal, the following additions and changes have been notified us recently:-

Additions to the Membership List 1967-68.

Candy, D.J.	10811 - 135 St Edmonton, Alberta, CANADA.
Cleave, N.H.	2 Aspen Close, North Colerne, Chippenham, Wilts.
Kinsman, D.J.	Old Thatched Cottage, Limpley Stoke, BATH, Som.

Changes of Address

Causer, D.J.	3 High Street, East Harptree, Nr. Bristol, Som.
Drew, Dr. D.P.	Geography Committee, Division of Social Sciences, University of Saskatchewan, Regina Campus, Regina, Saskatchewan, CANADA.
Giles, P.M.	Manor Farm Cottage, East Lydford, Somerton, Som.
Gosling, J.G.	72 Marston Gardens, Luton, Beds.
Gumbleton, D.P.W.	Longhazel Caravan Site, Sparkford, Yeovil, Som.
Phillips, T.	59A High Street, St. Johns Wood, London N.W.8.
Saunders, R.E.	52 Kenmore Drive, Yeovil, Som.

The Annual General Meeting is to be held at Priddy Village Hall on 19th October, and the Annual Dinner at the Wookey Hole Cave Restaurant the same evening. Full details have been announced previously, and the circulars appropriate to the A.G.M. have been posted with this Journal.

Mr. A. de Jong, of Horlicks is to be our Guest of Honour. Appropriately, he is an expert on food, though we trust his great knowledge of emergency survival rations need not be put to the test on the occasion in question! Tickets are now on sale from Jenny Murrell. Please make your order as soon as possible.

Now that the new rates and classes of postal deliveries are operative it is doubly important to ensure that correspondence to Officers and Committee members have the appropriate stamps. You can save the Club much time, effort and money if you direct letters to the person concerned with your query, and enclose stamped and addressed envelopes, particularly if you require a prompt reply.

THE ANNUAL AUSTRIAN CAVING CONGRESS 1968

by Derek Tringham.

The Caving Congress for 1968 was held in Gams near Hieflau in Northern Styria, and the organisers were the Styrian section of the National Caving Association. The Congress lasted from the 11th of August until the 18th, and I was lucky enough to be present for the last three days, which were the best attended. I arrived on the Thursday night and was helped to find very cheap accommodation in the village by the caving information office set up. At 8.p.m. in the Gorthaus Thaller the official welcome and opening of the Congress took place with the local band in attendance. After the speeches Mag. Volker Weibensteiner held a slide show to illustrate the many beauties of Styrian caves. The slides were extremely good, and it was interesting to note that almost 50 per cent of the people present were non-cavers who must have benefitted a great deal from such a dazzling display of stalagmite and ice formations. The evening was concluded in international caving fashion with groups of cavers dispersing to the various hostelrys in the neighbourhood.

On the Friday the A.G.M. took place, and I took the opportunity to have a walk around the district. Gams is not in a tremendously mountainous area, though the famous climbing region of the Gesanese begins 15 miles away. For caving, however, it is an ideal centre and, as the success of the Congress showed, a near perfect setting for such a gathering.

My first caving expedition was on the Friday afternoon to the famous crystal cave, the Kraushöhle. The entrance is situated in the "Not" gorge near Gams and has been a show cave almost since its discovery in the last century. A bust in bronze of Herr. Kraus peers out of a rocky niche to one side of the entrance to make sure that no visitor is left in any doubt as to the identity of the discoverer. The purpose of our visit was to photograph the cave, and this we did to good effect. The main chamber is 12 feet high on average and 30 feet wide, and the gypsum encrustations are really fine. The whole cave is very dry and ends very abruptly with no indication of further extensions. The phreatic origin of the system is superbly indicated in some of the side passages, with magnificent scalloping and passage profiles. After 3 hours leisurely photography we emerged again and returned to the village in time for a short talk by Dr. Vornatscher (The National Association's President) about cave fauna in the Kraushöhle. This very lively and interesting speaker was followed by Mag. Weibensteiner who showed more slides, this time of the caves to be visited during the Congress. A guest speaker, Dr. Thiel from Munich, then showed some superb slides of his group's explorations in Sardinia. Especially interesting were his observations on the black colouring on several stalagmite formations. This he attributed to the influence of volcanic lavas which had penetrated the systems. From his slides one got the impression of what a caver's paradise must be like!

The cave to be visited on the Saturday was the Bergmandlloch about 7 miles from Gams. (A Bergmandle is a dwarf with a pointed hat who guards the gemstones within from curious treasure seekers!). The surveyed length of the cave, which contains an active streamway, is 650 metres and exploration is not complete. One of the surveyors, Heinrich Kusch, told me where he believed the system might be pushed. I investigated these possibilities with Dieter Zimek from Graz. The first was a high level passage entered by traversing round a rope pitch, but we could not manage it owing to the

lack of pitons and the muddy rock. Another upstream possibility was found more practical, and by squeezing through an inclined rift we emerged, coated in tufa, into a new continuation of the streamway. This was followed upstream for 35 metres to a constriction which could not be passed. Beyond, however, a chamber could be seen with stalagmites glistening in the gloom. One side passage which consisted of a parallel rift coated with 6 inches of tufa was also explored. By chimneying 5 metres up through this "butter", a high level passage was seen leading back towards the known cave. Despite attempts to traverse into this, the slime defeated us and we returned to photograph in the streamway. The formations were very fine and included several groups of erratics up to 10 centimetres long. We then returned soaked to the skin and covered in tufa after being underground for 4½ hours.

An early start on Sunday was necessary in order to visit the Beilstein Ice Cave, but despite the hour 18 members took part. The maximum length is only 56 metres, but the ice formations were remarkable, and the 14 metres ice pitch was quite interesting for me, never having climbed electron ladders with crampons before ! This visit was unfortunately the last of the Congress, and after returning to Gams it was time for the drive back home. I would like to record my thanks to Dr. Trimmel for his invitation to attend this 1968 Congress, the Styrian cavers for their efficient organisation, and the Austrian cavers as a whole for their friendliness and company.

Letter to The Editor

The following extract is taken from a letter sent by John Benham:-

90 Elsdon Road,
Wellingborough,
Northants.
9th June 1968.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who were involved in my 'extraction' from Nine Barrows Swallet on 12th May 1968.

"My leg is progressing satisfactorily, but I am afraid it will be sometime in September before I shall be back on Mendip.

Yours etc.,
John Benham.

"P.S. For anyone thinking of having an accident, I can thoroughly recommend the Bristol Royal Infirmary."

SWILDONS HOLE: The 1968 Flood

by C.H. Kenney.

The most spectacular result of the recent floods in the Mendip caves was undoubtedly in Swildons Hole, where the 40' drop, known to cavers for more than half a century, "disappeared" overnight. There have of course been floods in Swildons before, and we know something of their result from cave rescues caused by the flooding. At the entrance, water has ponded up to a depth of three feet over the grating, entry to the cave has become impossible and the streamway in the cave hazardous to negotiate owing to the rapid flow of water and the small stones being swept along. The "Water Rift" just before the 40' has always been a point where the water has backed up and we know that it has filled up nearly to the roof. The 40' has become completely impassable but the caver has always concluded that apart from a few obvious danger spots it was quite possible to "sit it out", for the peak flow soon passes and the Mendip Rescue Organisation has means to reduce the size of the stream. The flood of 1968, however, has caused cavers to revise this view and there is no doubt that had the flood come at a weekend it is probable that some cavers would have drowned in Swildons Hole.

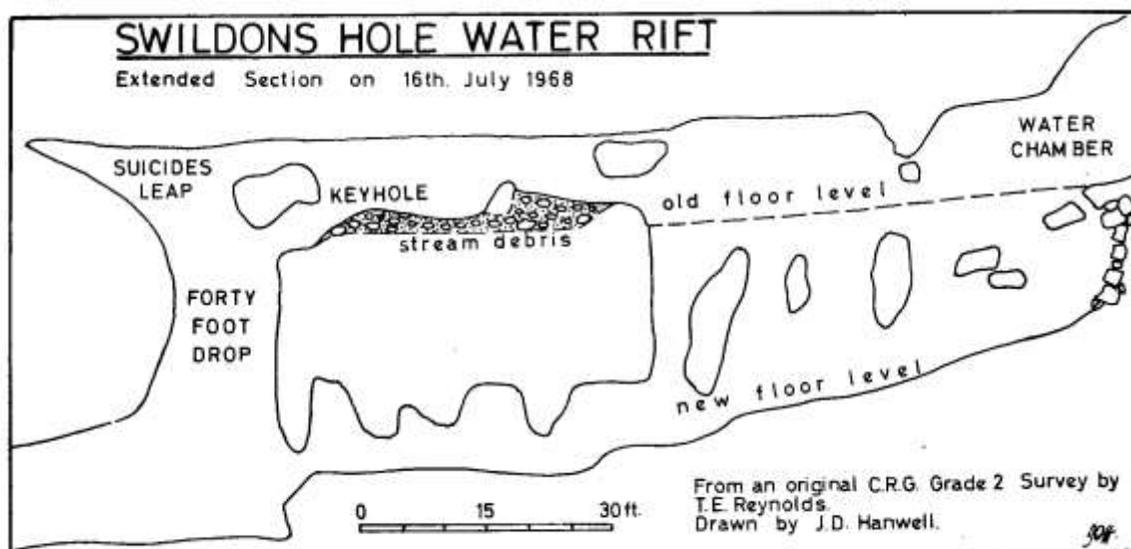
There were no witnesses of the flood at its peak but farmer Main ensured that there would be plenty of evidence of the levels the water reached, for he had recently cut the grass in the field above and this the stream carried into the cave in vast quantities where it festooned the roof with new formations of "haylactites".

On the surface the entrance was unable to take the vast quantity of water pouring down the valley and it ponded up to a depth of about 10' above the grating and nearly to the bottom of the wall running along the east side of the stream. At this level there would be a considerable lake in the valley and the pressure of water entering the cave must have been tremendous. To the left of the grating under the tree there has always been a crack a few inches wide which took water at times of flood, and from below one could look up it to daylight. This has now developed into a new entrance to the cave some three feet wide and several feet long, and makes the plans to more permanently gate the cave look rather foolish! Just inside the cave, at the beginning of the dry route, and at the head of the wet way, large boulders have been displaced which rather suggests that the new entrance developed quickly allowing an enormous rush of water to enter the cave from the lake above. Further evidence of this can be seen at the head of the 12' drop in the "Wet Way" where the deposit of stalactite and stalagmite pillars have been pushed a few feet downstream and left perched across the rift. The restricted nature of the cave at this spot and the "Lavatory Basin" a little further downstream probably caused a rush of water up "Kenneys" dig and this probably explains why medieval pottery was found at the top by the diggers. This is of interest for it indicates that there must have been at least one other flood of this magnitude since medieval times. Apart from the water rift no other great changes were caused in the upper levels except that it is a pleasure to see the "Middle Way" cleansed of 60 years and more of cavers rubbish.

The Water Rift was quite incapable of taking the flood, particularly one imagines when the second entrance developed. The trail of hay shows that the whole of the upper levels filled up and the only places where one could have survived were the two boulder chambers in the "Long Dry Route".

Previous floods have shown that the Water rift was stone-filled to some depth, for the floor level has always been a little deeper after a flood only to return to its original level as lesser floods deposited stones on the floor. But it was not appreciated that the depth of the rift was only 10' less than the 40' drop itself. One can imagine the enormous pressure on the water rift when the upper levels were filled up and perhaps there was still a lake on the surface as well. This must have caused the water to penetrate the 25' depth or so of stones on the floor causing the stones to start shooting out at the bottom end from a recess about 10' above the bottom of the 40' drop. It seems probable that the rift was quite suddenly emptied of stones and the enormous accumulation of water rushed down the new passage as well as pouring over the 40' and "Suicides Leap". At the right-angled bend between the 40' and the 20' drops the stalactite coated boulders over which one formally scrambled were carried 10' round the corner and the water then must have backed up from the "Shrine" area for the very fine stalactite high over the 20' drop was covered with hay. Further down the cave no spectacular damage was done, but the depth of potholes has changed - some were deepened, other made more shallow. Barnes Loop took part of the stream but did not flood to the roof. As one would expect, water backed up from Sump 1, and the comparatively horizontal area just before the sump, where the stream flows below boulders, was flooded, and when the water fell layers of river sand were left behind. Sump 1 is somewhat deeper and Ducks 1 and 2 have now reverted to the level which existed before they were lowered in 1948/49. No doubt other changes of water levels and banks of cave debris will be reported from other parts of the cave not visited by the writer! This leads one to speculate how little reliance one can put on cave debris stratification as indicating the history of the cave when one can see how much change can occur in one night.

And so a new era begins in Swildons Hole. Some will say that the dangers of the 40' have been removed for the inexperienced and this favourite rescue spot will no longer be so often visited by the rescue organisation. I doubt this, for the remaining climb of ten feet could still be impossible to an inexperienced tired caver, or in flood conditions, and the greater danger is that cavers whose abilities are only suited to the upper levels will now venture much further down the cave and then run into trouble from exhaustion.



FOOTPENNY EXTENSION, HORSESHOE CAVE, WINDSOR HILL

by John Letheren

Having read a description of the caves of Windsor Hill Quarry in a recent Bulletin of the Westminster Speleo. Group wherein reference was made to, "a visible passage, too tight to enter, about 5 ft long with a possible turning off to the right" it was decided to visit the quarry. Horseshoe Cave (not Horseshoe Hole) is located at N.G.R. 6122. 4538, and the passage going in appeared quite roomy but for one large boulder jammed in the entrance.

On Sunday June 23rd, my wife and I visited the site again and rapidly converted the offending boulder into handy 4" cubes. I wriggled head first down the passage but could not be sure of passing a rock flake in the event of having to back out. Curiously, this rock flake soon disappeared too, and I was able to wriggle down to the end of the 5 ft long passage. At this point I was surprised to see, on the right, a longish, 4 ft high rift. I entered this and found a cross joint continuing right and then left which led into a curving "stand-up" passage. Having run out of time, I quickly estimated the total length as 13 yards and, as the cost of effecting structural alterations was 3/3d, any genius will be able to explain the name given to the new series, Footpenny Extension.

The following week, the entrance was enlarged and a rough survey carried out, indicating 70 ft of new passage. Further extensions are not likely although two points are currently being probed.

The system is in Black Rock Limestone with exposed Crinoids and Spirifers. It is practically horizontal, and of zig-zag form caused by enlargements of joints in the limestone. The passage walls are thinly coated with nodular calcite which suggests a very gradual lowering of the water level here. This was not caused by quarrying as there is one stalactite at floor level about 8" long and 1½" in diameter which indicates the system has been dry for some time. The floor is hard packed almost dry sediment and, although no bats were seen, there is plenty of evidence that they normally inhabit the further parts of the system. A large number of small bones and one large bone were removed for identification.

(If anyone could assist in this, perhaps they would ring me on Temple Cloud 320).

MENDIP NOTES

by Schizomycetes

Eastwater Swallet

At last, nearly a year after the Entrance Ruckle collapsed, work has started on reopening Eastwater Swallet. Whilst on holiday on Mendip, Alan Fincham started digging at a site to the east of the original entrance. Since Alan returned to London, his dig has been carried on by several Wessex members under the auspices of the Hut Warden. To date, a 10 ft deep shaft has been dug through well packed earth with a few boulders, and all so far appears to be very stable. According to the survey, the shaft is above an aven which ascends from the Boulder Chamber. If the shaft connects with this aven, or with the Boulder Chamber, it should give an entrance to Eastwater avoiding the Boulder Ruckle which has always been such a source of danger in the past.

However, the Wessex diggers have not had it all their own way. Sometime during July, a group of cavers with more bang than sense placed a large charge in the old entrance. This had the effect of scattering rocks over the floor of the depression, and collapsing the remains of the old entrance even more, whether this was the intention of the operation is open to doubt. In addition, the Eastwater study group have also been active, This organisation was formed at an open meeting soon after the cave had collapsed; its aim being to reopen Eastwater. Since then a truly magnificent scheme of shaft sinking has been recommended by this group in the Shepton Journal but no work carried out until the beginning of August. Then, the Study Group galvanised itself into action by fencing off an area of land 20 yards up the valley from the old entrance (the survey shows that no part of the known cave went anywhere near this point), and by digging a 2 ft hole. It is believed that it was hoped the hole would effect a junction with a rabbit burrow leading to the 380 ft Way - or somewhere!

When what goes down needn't come up ...

With the discovery of the Valley Entrance to the Kingsdale Master Cave over a year ago, trips on which parties descended down either Swinsto or Simpsons and came out through the Master Cave became a definite possibility but the only trouble was how to get your ladders back. So, in order to find an answer to this problem, Paul Allen, Fred Davies, Ian Jepson, Tim Reynolds and Mike Thompson set out for Yorkshire, weighted down with several hundred feet of rope, artificial climbing aids, and some ladder. The plan being to abseil down Swinsto and out through the Master Cave.

Unfortunately while our intrepid heroes had planned the underground part of the trip down to the last abseil sling, they had overlooked the simple precaution of finding out the location of Swinsto Pot. The trip got off to what was nearly a disastrous start when the first two members of the party gaily abseiled into what they thought was Swinsto Pot, but which soon turned out to be Turbarry Road Pot. The latter does not connect with the Master Cave and only has one entrance - at the top! Luckily, the ropes had not been pulled down, so what could have proved an embarrassing situation was avoided. Eventually, Swinsto was found, and the trip went like clockwork: the ropes being pulled down after each pitch had been descended, and the party left the Master Cave a little under four hours after descending Swinsto.

Only one sling was abandoned en route. Rumour has it that plans are now being drawn up to abseil down Bar Pot, and come out via Gaping Ghyll Main Shaft (this having been laddered prior to descending).

St. Cuthbert's Swallet

The B.E.C., spurred on by Dave Drew's conclusions from the Central Mendip Water Tracing, are continuing their attack on the St. Cuthbert's Sump. During the early part of this year, Phil Kinston and Colin Priddle were digging the Sump itself. All the work at this stage was underwater which made digging rather slow. Needless to say, one of the more unfortunate effects of "The Flood" was to wash a large quantity of silt into the Sump which has now choked-up and so needs digging out again. Since the general trend of the Sump is to the left, a new start has been made in this direction. A passage is being dug parallel to the start of the sump some 20ft to the left, and it is hoped that it will link up in due course.

While this dig is progressing Dave Irwin, not to be outdone, has restarted the Dinning Room Dig, which it is hoped, will entirely bypass the sump. First, a horizontal passage was dug, but this started to close down, and so attention has been concentrated at a point where the passage changes dimensions abruptly. A shaft is being sunk at this point. To date only compact mud fill has been encountered, nicely surrounded by solid rock walls, and so Dave is optimistic of discovering some new passage at least, if not the hoped-for by-pass.

Swildons Hole

Various parties have been probing the further reaches of Swildons to see the effects of the floods. One of the more surprising discoveries was that Shatter Pot took quite a lot of water. The result of this was to block up the U-Tube which leads to Shatter Passage, but the Shepton are at present digging this out.

The new look 40', or 10' (Oh dear! What does one call it now?), seems to have solved all problems about the pipe, fixed ladders etc., which have so bedevilled discussions in The Hunters over the years. Your scribe has heard that someone has been banging the hole where the water comes out of the Water Rift. Surely, Nature has had her say as to how she wants the cave, so isn't it about time that the upper reaches were left as they are? It is one thing banging away rock, or digging out a sump otherwise impossible to get through, but there seems little point doing this just to make a cave easier. If this process were to be carried to its logical extremes, in twenty years or so Mendip caves will be looking like part of the London Underground.

CAVING IN BULGARIA

by Tony Oldham

Situated between the Black Sea, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Greece and Turkey, Bulgaria is in the heart of the Balkans. Many cavers may have had only a passing glimpse of Bulgaria as they rushed through on their way to Turkey, but Bulgaria warrants more than a hasty look. True there is a network of caving clubs within the Bulgarian Hikers Union, but with some 2,000 cave entrances recorded and only 400 caves properly explored, there is still ample scope for virgin exploration (3). The author and his wife, occasionally assisted by another Wessex member John Dolman, spent 14 weeks in Bulgaria in 1967 looking at caves and karst scenery. The impression was one of much to see and far too little time to really observe everything.

The tour began at Russe, not for any specific reason, other than that we had just come from Rumania (1). From Russe it is best to take the main road to Bjala and after 25 km. taken the turning to the east (left) to the village of Dve Mogili. This road is not marked on the map, along with many more which we drove along. It is easy to find and much more preferable, being only a dirt track for 2 km. as against 25 km. marathon, which is involved in taking the road direct to Dve Mogili.

For the traveller coming from Varna on the Black Sea coast, like we did, be warned, unless you have a strong constitution, for the direct route lies through a large restricted area, about 30 km. across. The boundary around this area is well marked with signs in 6 languages, warning that entry is forbidden. What goes on in there is best left unsaid, but as we drove through we noticed more police cars than usual, and spotter planes flying around. There appeared to be more gaping cave entrances in this area, just waiting to be explored, than in any other part of Bulgaria that we visited; however, discretion being the better part of valour, we just drove through without stopping.

Dve Mogili is a large village, cum small town, with one main street, and a railway station. The cave of Orlova Ghouka lies 4 km. to the north of Dve Mogili, and is quite difficult to find, without local help.

The only Bulgarian word we knew was "Peshtera" - cave, so we accosted a group of peasants on a street corner. Our phonetic pronunciation of Peshtera Orlova Chouka quickly brought a positive response, followed by a negative one. We were rather puzzled by this, but a chap appeared proclaiming that he could speak German. In the rather one-sided conversation that followed, it appeared that he knew 6 words of German. However, these were 6 key nouns, as far as we were concerned, because he was quickly able to explain that the cave was closed today, but open tomorrow. He continued that he would be pleased to show us the cave today, and that he had to work tomorrow.

With thanks all round we departed with our newly acquired guide. We left Dve Mogili on the road going north to Russe - a rough dirt track. A short distance after crossing the railway our guide indicated that we should turn left just before the white painted signal man's house. The way on lead across the fields. We followed a fairly smooth hard dry, mud road. It needed very

little imagination to think what state the track would be in after heavy rain. About 2 km. from the road we stopped on the rim of a shallow valley. In the distance, 200 m. away, partially hidden by trees was an electricity substation, as we walked down to it the cave buildings came into view. Here the shallow valley turns abruptly into a glaciated gorge with the cave buildings presenting an imposing sight - perched on the edge of the cliff. The cave was still 50 ft. down, so although everything was shut we still carried on just to look at the entrance of our first Bulgarian cave. It was like home from home, a cave with a gate and a padlock. Our guide pointed to his watch and explained with one of his 6 words of German that the cave would be open at 8.00 a.m. next morning. We stood for a minute and admired the view. A meandering stream worming its way down the valley, the quiet tinkling of sheep bells, as a shepherd was leading his sheep home. On the opposite side of the gorge there were black gaping holes in the limestone. We retreated to the van and after a fight with a patch of mud we returned our guide to Dve Mogili, with many "Merci's" or thanks, the second Bulgarian word which we had learnt.

We also learnt a few more words from him, in fact the Bulgarian equivalents for his 6 words in German, in case the next Bulgarian we met was not so talented as he was.

Though our guide had said it was strictly forbidden to camp, we had already chosen an excellent grassy clearing in a field of maize. We bumped back along the track to the clearing and settled down for the night, wondering what the morning would bring.

We awoke next morning to the sound of lorries - not troops on the move, but instead another common sight in the agricultural districts of Eastern Europe - peasants going to work. Shortly after breakfast the lorries returned empty. To our surprise one stopped and the driver and his mate came over to us. Expecting the worst, we stood by our van, our faces wreathed in sickly grins. But instead of chastisement, they had brought us a present and gave Anne a water melon. They refused all offers of money, but gratefully accepted a packet of English cigarettes between them.

We set off for the cave, this time on foot, we did not want to run the risk of getting the van bogged down again. As we had suspected we found the cave and the administration buildings still locked. As it was now 9.30 a.m. on a Monday morning, we did not anticipate the cave being opened before the following Sunday, if then.

After wistfully gazing into the cave through a very secure door of steel bars, I casually tried out my set of cave skeleton keys in the lock. To my amazement I found that the key to my father's back door not only fitted, but opened the lock. A perusal of the switchboard just inside the door and hey-presto - the cave was illuminated.

The first impression was one of brilliant white walls, beautifully sculptured in large smooth curves. A smooth hard, mud floor suggested a long period of infilling in the cave's development. We wandered from chamber to chamber photographing formations and exploring every nook and cranny. Parts of the system were quite complicated with passages interconnecting, mainly at right angles but fortunately all on one level. The wiring was invaluable for route finding. We finally came to a large chamber with a colony of bats high in the roof which we could hear but not see. This was the end of the show cave and as the lights did not go any further, neither did

we. As the cave curves round towards the cliff face we had expected to find another entrance but this was not the case. We returned to the entrance relying heavily on the wiring to show us which was the correct passage. All the time we were expecting to meet an irate cave custodian blaspheming in Bulgarian and threatening us with Siberian labour camps, but no-one appeared, so we switched off the lights, locked the gate and left Peshtera Orlova Chouka just as we found it.

Slowly we made our way back to the van. A quick look at the map and we started for Drynovo, to visit the cave of Bacho Kiro.

Our journey was not entirely without event. When we were about 2km. from the cave we noticed a sign pointing to a rather narrow side turning saying "Bacho Kiro". This caused some lively discussion between the driver and the navigator. The latter had assured the former that the cave was on the left hand side of the road, but clearly here the sign pointed to the right. After casting aspersions on Bulgarian cartography we cautiously drove up what turned out to be a very narrow and very rough track. After a 'Z' bend involving full lock in both directions and endangering the paint on the rear bumper, the road widened slightly, but with a deep tree wooded ravine on one side. After a short distance we accosted a peasant and enquired the whereabouts of the cave. After a little thought he proclaimed that the cave was over there (3 km. away, pointing in the direction from which we had just come). Next came an exciting 9 point turn, most of which was carried out with the front of the van overhanging the ravine. Somewhat to our surprise we found the peasant's directions were quite correct and we soon arrived at the Drynovo Monastery, and the Bacho Kiro Cave.

We were most impressed by the general scenery, large tracts of forest, with limestone escarpments on the skyline in which there were gaping cave entrances.

The monastery was situated on the valley floor, with the cave a little higher up, overlooking it. The pathway to the entrance of the show cave takes one past another impressive cave entrance that has been bricked up but contains a door and windows. This entrance is framed by a house on one side and a waterfall on the other, from a tributary valley.

The show cave entrance, like the entrance to most commercialised caves is a frieze of iron bars, a board of opening times and a showcase of faded photographs. The guide, although not much of a linguist managed a couple of words in German, and every other formation was greeted by "Sehön" and "Gut". We quickly picked up some Bulgarian words like Stalactite, Gallery and Hall, the first two were similar to English pronunciation, whilst the latter resembled the French Salle with an 'r' on the end.

The show cave consisted of 2 quite extensive series on different levels. The upper part contained some fine formations, including some tall columns in a high chamber. The connecting passages between the chambers consisted on large phreatic tubes roughly 5 ft. - 6 ft. in diameter, which looked as if they had originally been half filled with mud.

Our guide was exceedingly helpful, stopping frequently so that we could take photographs, and even allowing us to climb over the railings to get a better vantage point. At one stage in the tour

he made a great show of removing a fence and leading us into a side passage, presumably not on the general tour - we were highly honoured. When at last we arrived back at the entrance, we offered our guide a little "Trinkgeld", but he politely refused this and made signs that he wanted the hand lamp that we were carrying, and furthermore that he was prepared to pay for it! To my surprise he gave me a 5 Leva note (nearly £1) and refused any change. Although I was reluctant to part with such a trusty companion, which has accompanied me through many European caves, his donation was a very welcome addition to our decreasing reserves.

The next town on our itinerary was Pleven. A fellow camper had mentioned that a restaurant had been built into a cave. Although we normally avoid such tourist traps like the plague, we felt we could not drive through the town without making a cursory visit to this spectacle.

The journey to Pleven involved going through numerous nondescript towns none of which appeared to contain a Balkan Tourist Hotel, or a Bank that was open. Our searches were purely to find a place to change money.

We arrived at Pleven after the Banks had closed, but as the camping site was at a Balkan Tourist Hotel, we did not foresee any difficulty. However, it is one thing seeing the signs and another thing finding the camp site. The signs pointed in one direction, but everyone we asked pointed in the opposite direction. Eventually we found 2 key clues, to the riddle. One sign pointed in the opposite direction because of a No Right Turn, and the other sign pointing back again was covered with foliage. Soundly cursing Bulgarian signs we made our way to the camp site which seemed considerably more than 3 km. from the town.

At the Balkan Hotel, Pleven, another surprise awaited us, when we tried to change some money, we found they had run out of cash and would not be getting any more until the following mid-day. Nothing went right that evening; we camped too near the hotel and were kept awake half the night by the band which played until the early hours of the morning, and even the toilets were filthy. Our good humour was restored the following morning when we went to collect our passports, and found that there was no charge for camping.

Between the hotel and Pleven was a pleasant wooded gorge which accommodated the road as well as a river. There are many cave openings in the gorge but none which we inspected went anywhere. After travelling half way to Pleven we found the restaurant "Peshterata" (The Cave). A large chamber 100 ft. long and 30 ft. wide has been hewn out of the cliffs and very tastefully fitted out with a bar and restaurant. The tables were made from old barrels as were the chairs, and in one corner a concrete statue of a cave bear supported the roof. In the grounds of the restaurant was a miniature zoo, which being free we stopped to inspect. The animals included Deer, Brown Bear, "Black" goats, Squirrels etc. All these animals were under the fond gaze of Georgi Dimitrov, whose portrait had been carved out of the rock above. (G.D. was a famous Bulgarian Leader, at present much revered. There is hardly a town without an Avenue Dimitrov in it).

Our next stop was the Karlukovo district. This is regarded by the Bulgarians as their classical karst area. We drove along the bank of the River Iskar and inspected the many entrances in the river Gorge. We were most impressed and had great difficulty in resisting the temptation to

forget all about meeting J.D. in Sofia and to indulge in an orgy of exploration. Eventually we drove on to Vratsa, but not before we had vowed to return, time permitting with J.D. and continue our studies.

We arrived at Vratsa just after dinner, and quickly located the Balkan Tourist Hotel. "Yes, we change money", they said, "but the man who does it is upstairs, or somewhere else". After a considerable time, explaining that we did not want a room, a drink, or anything but to change money and go, another person appeared and insisted that I put a shirt on! At length, the money changing man appeared, but even now our troubles were not over. He had not seen a Barclay's Traveller's Cheque before so he had to look through a large book of facsimile copies to ascertain its worth. Finally we changed our money, this time enough to last us for the rest of our stay in Bulgaria. Very weary we drove off towards Ledenika Cave.

Although only a few miles from Vratsa it takes quite a considerable time to reach this cave, due to the mountainous nature of the road. A rough, unmade road winds with innumerable hairpin bends through a heavily wooded mountain side, to an altitude of 3000 ft! On the occasion of our visit the road was under repair, and we passed armies of peasant women digging and cracking up stone with hammers, to about the size of gravel. At the summit the road levelled out and went across a high altitude pasture. Soon the road descended quite steeply with many hairpin bends for about 500 ft. until we found ourselves at the bottom of an enormous ponor or closed valley, graced by an indescribably filthy, yet quite modern cafe and a large car park. The cave entrance is situated in a grassy doline at the lowest point of the ponor. We found to our good fortune that the guide was so fully involved with a large and rowdy party of peasants who appeared to be on a day's outing that we had an opportunity to wander around at our leisure and take photographs.

The Ledenika Cave consists of a steeply sloping entrance passage, down which one descends for about 100 ft. This leads to a large chamber about 80 ft. high and 120 ft. across. By a system of cast iron cat walks it is possible to circumnavigate about half way round this chamber at a height of some 40 ft. above the floor. The sides and roof of this chamber are all covered with discoloured stal. draperies. A side passage complete with more cast iron steps and a bridge, ends at the base of a lofty aven, with a fine stal flow.

As it was getting towards evening we turned our thoughts to camping. Where better than in the car park where one other tent was already pitched. But this was not to be as upon enquiring, we were informed that camping was "Streng Verboden"! We therefore returned to the mountain plateau and not wishing to descend the 3,000 + ft. of hairpin bends we made camp for the night. We are still not clear why camping is so strongly forbidden, except in "fenced and guarded" campsites. Are there still wolves or bandits in Bulgaria, or is it to reduce contact with the natives, or to bring in more foreign currency? Certainly we always found people working on the land very friendly, and it was only the officials and their ilk who were objectionable.

We descended the mountain and returned to Vratsa. There we experienced a little difficulty in buying some bread. Baker's shops appear to be non-existent so, after an iced coffee, which appears to be a very popular local beverage, we were finally directed to a cafe that would sell us some bread.

From Vratsa we took the road to Chiren, famed for its natural gas deposits. At Chiren we enquired from a Militar (Policeman) the whereabouts of the Ponora Cave. Much to our surprise he commandeered a passing motorcyclist and proceeded to lead us to the entrance. A most pleasant contrast to the behaviour of all the other militars that we had come across. Normally they appeared from behind hedges as one was in the midst of overtaking another car - blowing whistles and waving red lollipop sticks. As we never stopped we had no idea of what "crime" we had committed.

Soon we reached the cave, about 3 km. from Chiren. We had passed it by on the Eastern side of the road on the way from Vratsa without noticing it. The cave is at the base of a small cliff at the end of a dry stream valley. The white farmhouse nearby being a good landmark. We thanked the Militar profusely and to our surprise he refused our gift of cigarettes with a smile, saying something like, "In the call of duty".

From the entrance a passage 10 ft. high and 6 ft. wide leads off. This passage has an arched roof and contains at least 6 ft. of water. We were rather disappointed that we had punctured our dinghy in Sura Mare (Ref (1)) for without a boat of some sort it would have been pointless to attempt any exploration. The description given suggests a 2.5 km. boat ride with plenty of formations thrown in. We were disappointed that the tourist leaflet was not a little more precise as to the nature of this cave, in that there is no guide or boat available as it implies.

We investigated some other small caves nearby, none of which went, and then, after photographing some of the numerous frogs and lizards, we departed for Sofia. We spent the night in a camp site near Sofia, quite a pleasant place, with plenty of trees and facilities for washing and servicing cars.

Next day, after a morning in Sofia we met J.D. outside the Georgi Dimitrov Mausoleum. The Mausoleum is an austere white building containing the preserved mortal remains of G.D. He is all laid out in state with his medals on, and with his eyes shut in perpetual sleep. His face is tastefully made up with rouge and a refrigeration unit hums in the background. The crowds of devoted Bulgarians shuffle round the bier, the chilled blast of air adding to the macabre effect. Not too soon one is out in the arid heat of Sofia in the leafy park at the rear of the Mausoleum.

We made a detour to the station to collect J.D.'s gear and then made our way back to Karlukovo. However, time was against us and just as darkness was closing in the welcoming signs of a camp site appeared. Needless to say this was the only sign of welcome. The site was gravel floored, no trees and right alongside the main road, with the constant roar of heavy traffic. The toilet as usual, was appalling, a tiny triangle cut in the concrete floor, with plenty of evidence of the poor aim of previous campers.

Next morning's start was a trifle delayed. A complete reorganisation of the van was necessary to conveniently absorb J.D.'s mountain of gear. We also took the opportunity to repack the food boxes. This was one way of making a little space which was all too quickly taken up again with specimens and other acquisitions.

At Karlukovo I consulted the Karlukovskiyat Prolom (2), a kind of Caves of Karlukovo. There

were so many caves it was difficult to decide which one to descend first. Our choice was further complicated by our lack of Bulgarian. This meant that there was a tendency to explore a cave and then compare it with the guide, attributing any errors to our mistranslations. The first cave which we selected was No. 26, a shaft barely 100 ft. from the road. Perhaps at this point a brief description of the area would not be out of place. We were parked at the side of the road on a grassy limestone plateau. There wasn't a tree in sight let alone a cave, whilst the sun scorched down relentlessly - 100°F in the shade, its brilliant glare reflecting on the many exposed limestone rocks.

In the conditions a cave barely 100 ft. from the car was a little like an oasis in the desert. We were fascinated to hear a dog barking at the bottom of the shaft, and I think J.D. had visions of rescuing it and appearing on Bulgarian T.V. as well as getting lots of gifts from doggie lovers. At that moment a chap pulled up on a motorcycle and as luck would have it he could speak excellent German. We quickly plied him with questions, one after another as fast as he could answer them. Yes, he knew Tranteev, the author of many Bulgarian caving books, he visited this region often. He also knew of this shaft we were about to descend, it was 50m. deep. A blank expression covered our faces, and then we realised it was 150 ft. deep! We then enquired about the dog. "Oh, Yes", replied the local, "Dogs are always falling down, there must be 20 or more down there". Finally we asked him the best cave for us to visit. He recommended No. 591 about 100 yards from the road and only a 10m. rope was needed for the entrance. With Auf Wiedersehens all round, we departed.

No. 591 was not all that easy to find although it was only 100 yards away. The entrance consisted of a steep sided doline with one side overhanging. We secured the rope to a flake of rock and I descended on the steep side. It was not very deep only about 20 ft. and there were plenty of holds - in fact a rope was not really required it was just that the glaring sun appeared to exaggerate the depth and difficulty of the entrance.

The cave consisted basically of a passage 180 ft. long, with an average height and width of 15 ft. and 20 ft. respectively. This passage ended unexpectedly in a mud choke but overhead another passage could be seen to go on, possibly by passing the choke. A climb existed up to the upper passage but as it involved a tricky traverse it was not pushed. We made a grade 1 survey, and then went over to cave No. 63, Temnata Dupka - The Dark Hole.

This cave is in the side of a massive archway, about 80 ft. high, called Prokhodna, which went right under the road and came out the other side. The fantastic thing about the archway and its valley was that it was very difficult to see from the road.

Temnata Dupka has a low, wide entrance, 5 ft. high and 30 ft. wide, which leads into a chamber 10 ft. high and 40 ft. wide. The passage then closed down and leads to a pitch of at least 60 ft. deep. A passage on the left, 400 m. long ends in two mud chokes.

At this point your scribe was stricken with a combination of heat, lethargy and diarrhoea, possibly due to temperature, idleness and peaches. Handing over the camera and notebook to his wife and J.D. he returned to the van. The VW had one salient feature, the 12" ground clearance. This is invaluable in hot climates as there is a cool comfortable sleeping place underneath it.

However, after a couple of hours my sleep was rudely shattered by a cow licking my face - presumably a preliminary before eating me. When I finally awoke I found myself surrounded by a herd of 100 cows or more. I jumped up (remembering to get out from under the van first) and uttered some colloquial expressions, which although in a tongue foreign to the cows still had the desired effect, and caused a mini stampede.

The explorers returned with tales of hanging valleys leading down to the River Iskar, and hundreds of gaping cave entrances, a story which was later confirmed when the films were processed.

We set off again, this time in the direction of Belogradchik but as it was getting dark we camped near the town of Mihajlovgrad. This site was different again from the others in which we had stayed. It was at the rear of a pub, the manager of which was extremely interested in the van, our cooking arrangements and even our lighting after dark. He seemed even more surprised at what we were eating: sweet corn (maize) followed by fried pumpkin with red wine.

The following morning we made an early start for Belogradchik. Just north of Mitrovtsi in a limestone gorge we noticed a large cave entrance, about 60 ft. above the road. After a certain amount of disagreement as to the best route up J.D. and I tied ourselves onto each end of one 120 ft. length of rope and proceeded to climb up by two different routes. The idea was that the winner would lifeline up the loser, so J.D. was lifelined up.

The cave turned out to be about 80 ft. long. The entrance passage was about 12 ft. high by 10 ft. wide. This tapered down to a 2 ft. wide rift which for the last 20 ft. of the cave was 20 ft. high. The cave contained a large cluster of noisy bats. Excavations had been made in the entrance passage but an examination of spoil heaps did not disclose anything. A quick abseil down to the road and we were on our way again.

The next cave we stopped to look at was just a few feet from the road on a hairpin bend, before the village of Dolni Lom. This was clearly a very active resurgence in winter but with no water flowing at the time of our visit. The entrance was about 6 ft. high and 2 ft. wide, and contained the remains of a weir. Once inside the passage sloped downwards, becoming a little lower and narrower, until finally, at a depth of about 20 ft. (50 ft. from the entrance), water was reached. Judging by the size of the passage and the quite large pebbles at the entrance the stream must be quite an imposing sight in flood.

Eventually we arrived at Belogradchik, and the Belogradchik Rocks. The latter is an outcrop of red sandstone which had been weathered into towers and minarets. Although vastly over-rated as a tourist attraction it is, nevertheless, worth a stop if one is passing through.

We drove on to Dimovo and then to Rabisa to see the cave of Magura. We arrived just as the cave closed for dinner, and as we had a 2 hour wait we had dinner as well. Eventually, we paid our Levas and got our tickets. The iron grill at the entrance had been very cleverly designed, with an outline of a prehistoric man on it and the lines of vertical bars were broken up by oblong brick shapes. The cave is reputed to extend for several miles, although the tourist route is probably no longer than ½ mile. However, it is the largest show cave in Bulgaria and certainly

the most spectacular commercial cave of that country. The guided tour takes about 1½ hours, through large chambers with enormous formations 30 ft. in circumference and 60 ft. high. In fact, one enters at one side of the hill and exits via another. The highlight of the cave is a series of unique cave drawings dating from Bronze Age times. They are sketched with bat guano and range from 1 to 5 ft. in height. There are drawings of birds resembling ostriches, animals of the deer family, circular objects, presumably to represent the sun, and gay scenes of women dancing around nude male figures - in all probability extolling the cult of conception and fecundity. With the guided tour near its end we were lead into a stalactite chamber where the guide induced the tourists to have their photographs taken in front of a large stalactite column. Well, after having spent a lot of time on the tour taking many photographs we decided to have one of ourselves, so loaded with cameras, tripods and flash guns etc., the 3 of us stood in front of the column and leered like Cheshire cats at the camera.

Magura was the last cave which we were to see in Bulgaria and we decided to spend that night in the comparative freedom of Yugoslavia. What probably impressed us most was that despite the heat and the dry landscape of the surface, the formations in the caves were still wet and growing.

At the Bulgarian border our difficulties were still not quite over. Contrary to what is written in the Bulgarian Tourist Office brochure, they would not change our surplus currency, but instead gave us a receipt which was to be presented to a bank in England for repayment. Next followed the customs inspection. Being the only visitors we were obviously going to be subjected to a very close scrutiny; they started with the engine compartment, tapping for secret panels! Fortunately, at this moment some luckless Germans appeared and the customs officers waved us on and swooped like vultures on the new victims.

Once over the border we were through Yugoslavian customs with the minimum of fuss and we felt we could breathe freely at last, no longer stifled by bureaucratic communism at its worst.

EPILOGUE

Like all good stories ours has a happy ending. We eventually cashed the receipt in England, only losing 12/-d. in bank fees in the process. We were most impressed by the caves we had seen and only wished we had had more time to spend in the Karlukovo district.

REFERENCES

1. Oldham T. Caving in Rumania. W.C.C. Jnl. 115 Vol. 10. February 1968.
2. Travteev, Peter. Karlukovskiyat Prolom. 60 pp. illus. & map, Sofia 1966.
3. Tranteev, Peter. Peshtera Turisticheski Obekti. 124 pp. plans, maps, photos, bibliog. Sofia, 1965.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE BULGARIAN CAVES

Abbreviations: C.R.G.: In the Cave Research Group Library.
Ref. Lib.: In the Central Reference Library, Bristol.
S.P.S.: In the St. Pauls Speleological Society Library.
W.C.C.: In the Wessex Cave Club Library.
U.B.S.S.: In the University or Bristol Speleological Society Library.

Am. School of Prehistoric Research No. 15. 46 ff. 1939. Garod D.A.E. (et al) Excavations in the Cave of Bacho Kiro, North East Bulgaria.

The British Caver Ed. G. Platten. Vol. 49 pp. 23-25, 1968. Bulgarian Caves by the Bulgarian Tourist Union (mentions Magoura, Ponora, Bacho Kiro etc.). (Ref. Lib.).

Cavernes Vol. 8. no. 3. pp. 53-54. Sept. 1964. La Spéléologie en Bulgarie by V.B. Gueorguiev. (Very concise account, historical, organisations, explorations and show caves). (Ref. Lib.).

Československý Kras Vol. 3. No. 6/7- p. 192 Brno 1950. Nejvýše položena jeskyně Bulharsku (High altitude Bulgarian Caves), by K. Kowalski.

Vol. 3. No. 8. pp. 257-268. Brno 1950. v Pirinu nejvýše položana jenskýně v Bulharsku a na Bálkáně:, (Bulgarian caves and the Balkans) by El-Tepe.

Vol. 4 No. 1. pp. 8-12. Brno 1951. Temnata Dupka. (Results of the Bulgarian Biospeleological Expedition to Temnata Dupka at Karlukovo). by Jo Kratochvil. (U.B.S.S.)

Chelsea Speleological Society Newsletter (W.C.C.).

Vol. 6. No. 2 pp. 18-21. No. 1963. Caves of Bulgaria. (Reprinted from an article in Bulgaria Today by Hristo Georgiev. (Kaunitsa Cave, Rhodopes; Cheleveshtmitsa Cave, Ziburdo; Garvanitsa Cave; Ivanova Vada Cave, Drobroeton.)

Vol. 7 No. 8. pp. 77-78 May 1965. Magoura by M. Djerikarova - Description.

Vol. 7 No. 9. June 1965. Details of Society's proposed caving expedition to Bulgaria. Lists caves.

Vol. 10. No. 1. pp. 1-5. October 1967.

Vol. 10. No. 2. pp. 18-20. Nov. 1967.

Vol. 10. No. 3. pp. 31-33. Dec. 1967. Snow Browne and the Seven/Eight Dwarfs in Bulgaria by No. Hans Anderson, pseudonym i.e. Roy Musgrove. (Serialised account of a caving expedition in Bulgaria, and how to buy sparking plugs in Bulgaria).

Grotolaz No. 19/20. Krakow 1956. pp. 29-32. A caving trip to Bulgaria by P. Burchard.

No. 18. pp. 3-10. Krakow 1956. An exploration trip to Bulgaria. Working area and organisation by K. Kowalski, P. Burchard and R. Unrug.

No. 19/20. pp. 16-17. Krakow 1956. Temnata Dupka by A. Radomski.

International Journal of Speleology Vol. 2. (1966) Pt. 1 & 2. Achievement of Bulgarian Potholers by V. Georgiev (mentions Ledenika Precipice, depth 242 metres (800 ft.) and Yamé precipice at Turgovishte near Belogradchik depth 307 metres (1000 ft.)). (SPS.).

Lucrarile Institutului de Speologie "Emil Raçovita" Vol. 3. p. 411-430. Bucurest 1964. (U.B.S.S.) Cea de-a treia expeditie speologică internatională din R. P. Bulgaria (15-27, 8, 1963) de L.Botoşăneanu, V. Decuşi T. Rusu.

Rassegna Spel. Italiana Vol. 8 No. 1. p. 50. Como 1956. La Speleologica Bulgara. by P. Tranteev. (U.B.S.S.)

Speleo Club de Paris No. 22. Paris 1958. L'aven Pitcha Douпка dans les Balkans centraux. by W. & A. Chodorowska. (A brief account with sketch) (The original article was published in Speleologia Vol. 1. No. 1/2 Warszawa 1959. pp- 38-86. Kilka danych o warunkach śradowiskowych z biorników wodnych w jaskiniach tatrzańskich/ Biospeologica Polonica 1.) (U.B.S.S.)

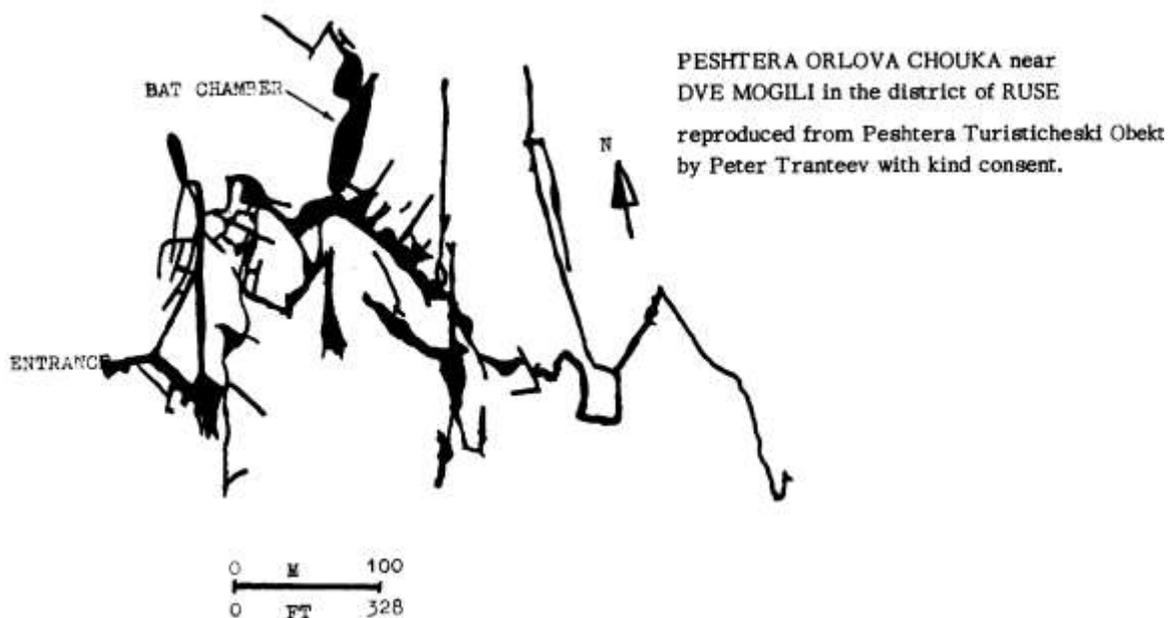
Proc. Prehistoric Soc. Vol. 5 pp- 266-267. 1939. Cave Exploration in North East Bulgaria by C. lark J.G.D. (An expedition under the leadership of Miss D.A.E. Garrod spent two weeks investigating archaeological caves in this area. They discovered several sites in the neighbourhood of Karlukovo and did intensive work in the cave of Bacho Kiro near Dryanovo, revealing for the first time Palaeolithic sequence in Bulgaria). (Ref. Lib.)

Speleopractise This is a duplicated newsletter published by the National Commission for Cave Study and Cave Tourism (Sofia) of the Bulgarian Tourist Union. (S.P.S.)

A guide book to Bulgaria by D. Mihailov and D. Marinov 202 pp. Foreign Languages Press, Sofia 1965. (Describes -many popular caves). (SPS).

"Weegies" in Magoura Cave from left to right -
Tony Oldham
Anne Oldham
John Dolman





English Equivalents of Bulgarian Place and Cave Names mentioned in the text.

Bacho Kiro	БАЧО КИРО
Belogradchik	БЕЛОГ РААЧИК
Chiren	ЧИРЕН
Dimitrov	АИМИТРОВ
Dimovo	ДИКДОВО
Dryanovo	АРЯНОВО
Dve Mogili	А ВЕ МОГИЛИ
Karlukovo	КАРЛУКОВО
Ledinika	ЛБАЕИКА
Lukovit	ЛУКОВИТ
Magoura	МАГУРА
Mihajlovgrad	МИХАЙ ЛОВГР^А
Mitrovtsi	МИТРО&ЦИ
Orlova Chouka	ОРЛОВА ЧУКА
Peshtera	ПЕЩЕРА
Pleven	ПЛЕВЕН
Plovdiv	ПЛОВДВИВ
Ponoara	ПОНОРА
Ruse	РУСЕ
Sofia	СОФИ Я
Temnata Dupka	ТЕМНАТА АУПКА
Varna	ВАРНА
Vratsa	ВРАЦА

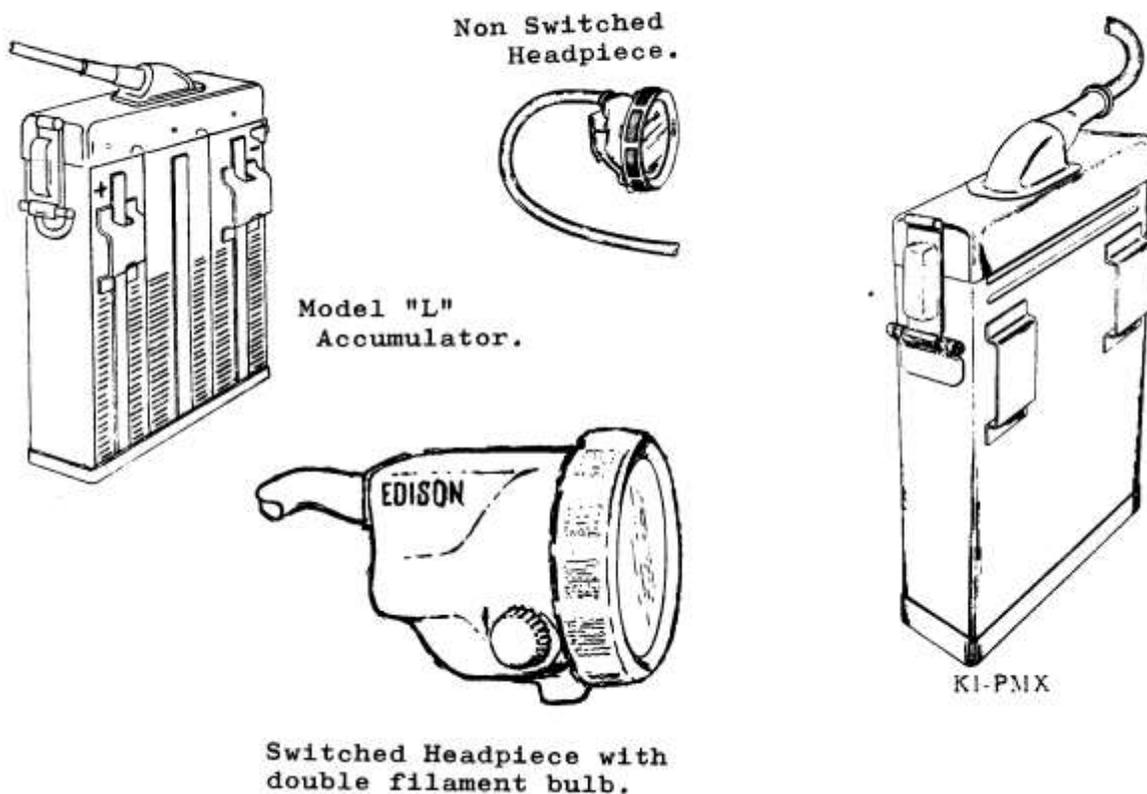
Edison Cells and Cap Lamp Spares

Abstracted from information and price lists supplied by Casey Bros.

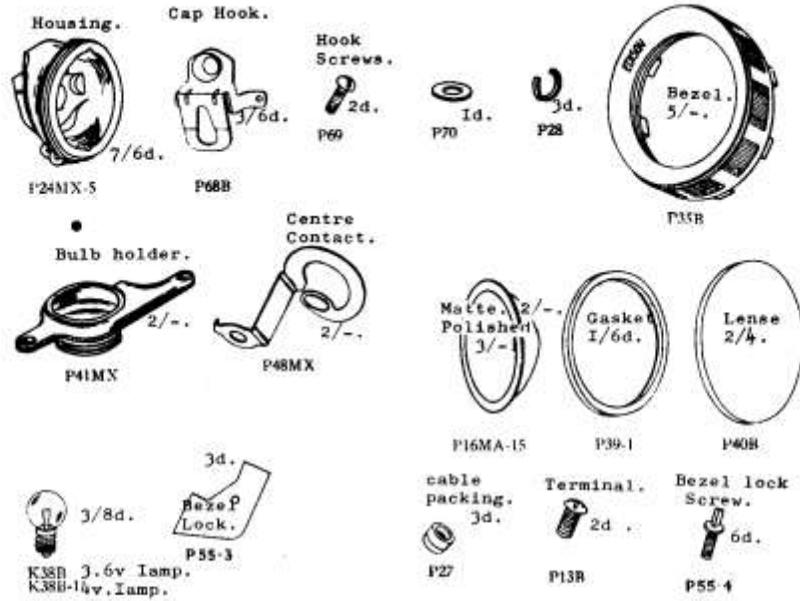
Casey Brothers are the sole concessionaires for all available Edison spares in the United Kingdom. They also have stocks of various lamps, helmets, etc., for which full information is available from their Mining and Industrial Safety Lighting and Appliance Department, at 72 Eccleston Street, Prescott, Lancs.

Basically, there are two types of accumulator which are identified as Models "L" and KI-PMX respectively. Also, there are two types of cap lamp or headpiece commonly referred to as the switched and non switched types. Sometimes of course, since the main supply of Edison's in this country are from surplus mining sources, other makes of switched head lamps have been fitted, but these are easy to identify. Clearly, most cavers would prefer to have a switched lamp with a double filament bulb. However, for the sake of completeness, the following illustrations show the whole range of Edison products, and includes the current catalogue numbers and prices of spares held by Casey Brothers. The Model and part numbers should be quoted when making an order of course.

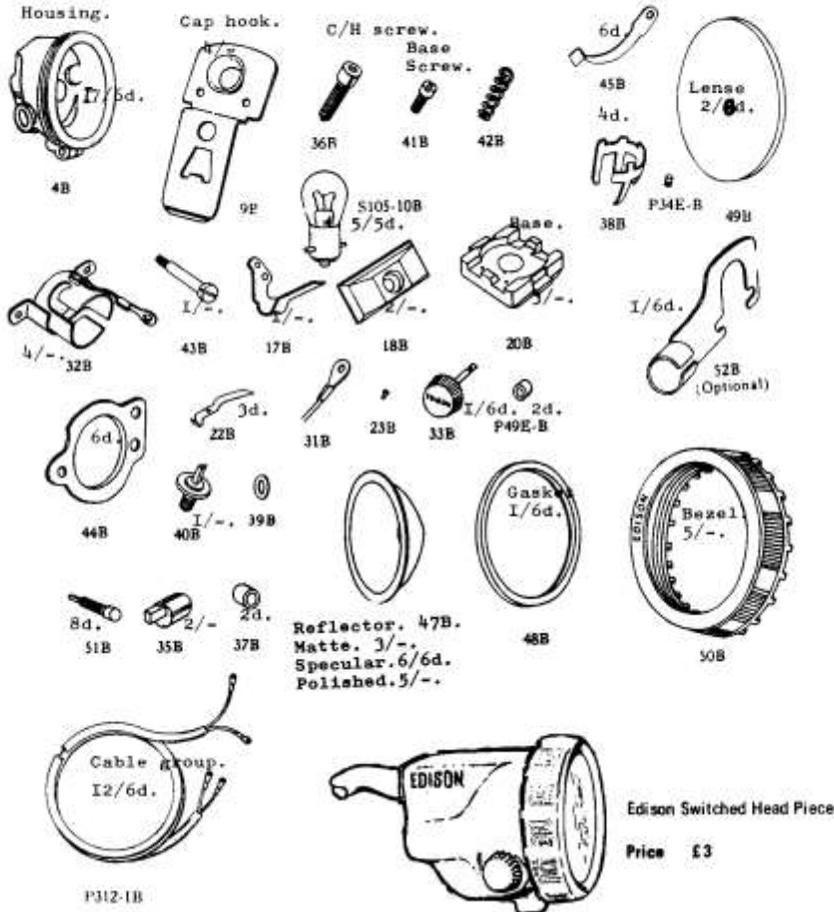
The Edison Range of Mining Cap Lamps.



EDISON NON SWITCHED HEAD PIECE.

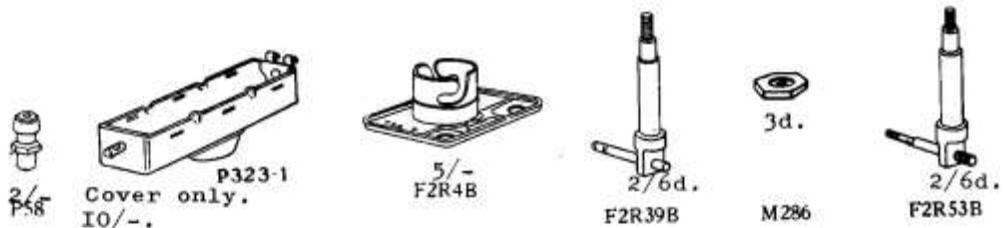
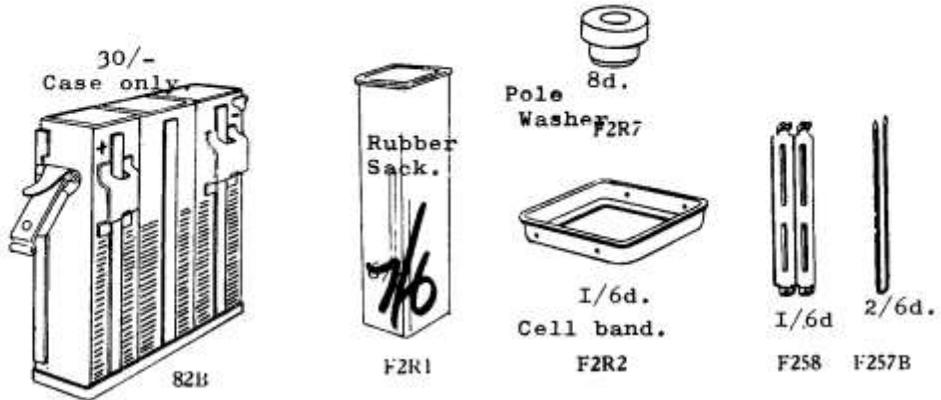
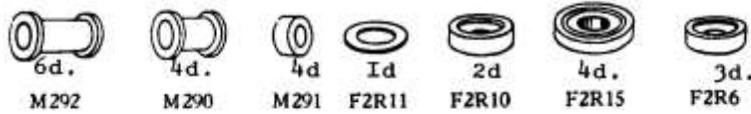


Edison Switched Headpiece Parts.



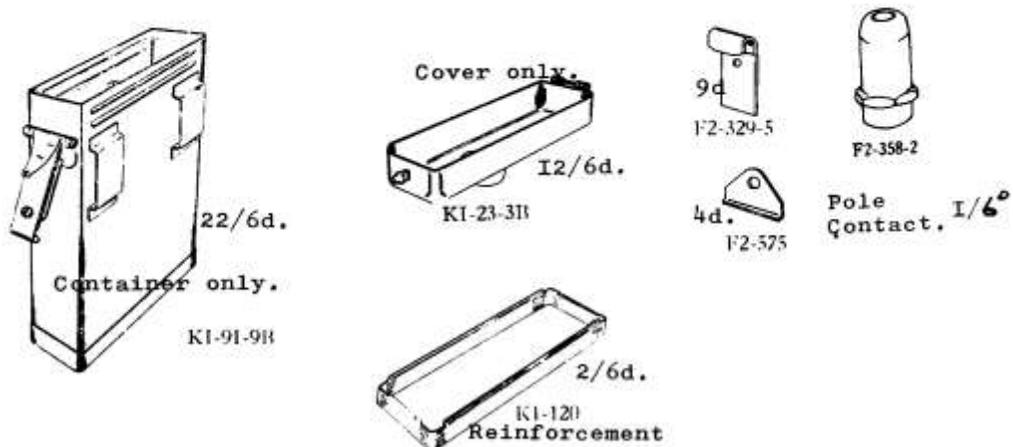
MODEL L ACCUMULATOR SPARES.

Please quote Model L and part number when ordering.



KI/PMX Accumulator parts.

Please quote KI/PMX and part number when ordering.



(An optional strengthener)

EDISON ACCUMULATOR PARTS
Common to KI/PMX & Model L Types.



15/-
P342-4B



2/6d.
P346-2



F345-1

Hinge nut.



2d.
P6

Pole Nut.



2d.
F2R9



F2-348-3



5/-
Neg. Contact.
KI-77-10



5/-
Pos. Contact
KI-72-10



3d.
P28-1B



F2-330



1/6d.
P9-1



3d.
P60



5/-
F2-360-2



3d.
P61



F2-348-2



6d.
F2-361B

6d.
Plastic
F2-502



M530-1



4d.
M1426



F2R16
2/6d.



1/-
F2R18



1/-
F2R14



1/-
F2R25



3d.
F2R-17-1



Gasket
M309-2

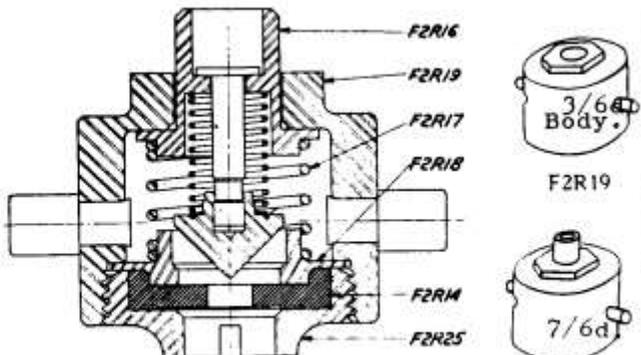
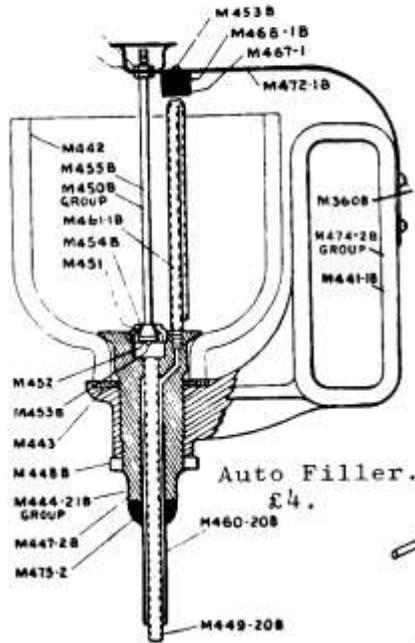


Fig. 2 Plunger Valve Group
F2R12

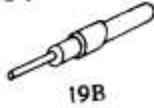
Edison Servicing Tools.



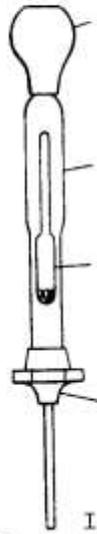
Auto Filler.
£4.



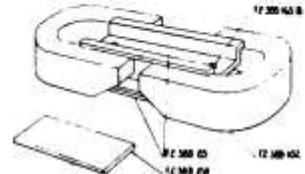
Valve Wrench.
I2/-
K88



19B



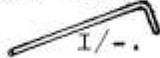
I2/6d.
Hydrometer.
AC3159B



F2-388-55 £3/10/-
Portable Magnet Assembly.

Model "L" Filler
M440-26B

Cam screw wrench



I/-.
P105



53B



F2-388-5



F2-388-10

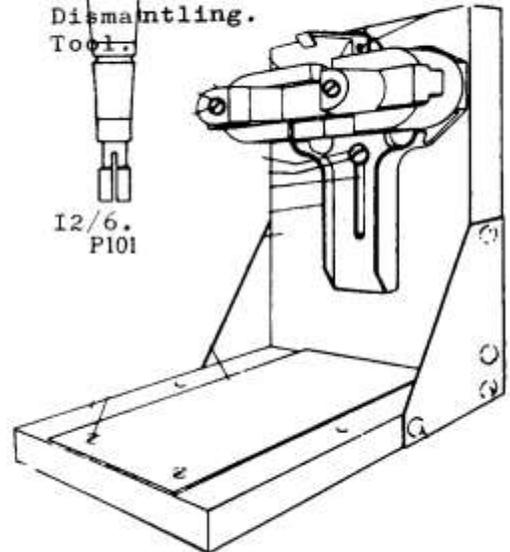


F2-388-15

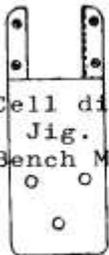
L cell
Dismantling
Tool.
I2/6.
P101



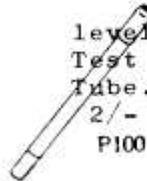
Bench Magnet
Assembly.
£8.



Cell dismantling
Jig. For
Bench Mounting.
P102



3/-
54B
Bulb
Remover.



level
Test
Tube.
2/-
P100

NORTHERN NOTES

by Carl Pickstone

Notts Pot

The collapse which sealed the passage before the first pitch remains, but there is an alternative route which leads under the blockage. About ten feet down the entrance shaft there is a crawl which connects with the final upstream chamber; from there all the routes to the bottom are open but great care must be exercised in passing under the blockage as there are many loose boulders.

Peg-Leg Pot Rescue

On the 18th of August the C.R.O. was called out to Casterton Fell where Ian Carruthers of the Red Rose was trapped by the legs whilst attempting to clear flood debris washed into the entrance. In the struggle to extricate him more boulders fell trapping him still further.

He was released after 4½ hours and taken to Lancaster Infirmary suffering from leg injuries and shock.

A few years ago this pot in Easegill Beck was the scene of another rescue, the aftermath of which was the closure of both Leck and Casterton Fells to cavers. Eventually, however, after the Northern Council had negotiated with the landowner they were re-opened with restricted access. One of the conditions being that a booking system must be used for access to the caves on both the fells.

Birks Fell Cave

The Craven pushed aside some boulders at the end of the stream passage in the existing cave near Buckden and discovered another 4000 ft. of streamway. The extension has four pitches, the biggest of which is 25 ft. The large rift type passage continues in the direction of the valley, and the resurgence is Birks Wood Cave which is 60 ft. long to an impenetrable sump which has been probed by Northern Cave Diving Club divers. This extension brings the length of cave passage up to one mile.

Poulawillin Co. Clare

Gerald Benn, Dave Brook and myself returned to the scene of the recent Bradford discovery in Ireland (reported in the last "Northern Notes") and found another 1000 ft. of low wet streamway during the extremely dry weather of the summer. The cave is thought to resurge at St. Brendan's Well, but at the time there was insufficient water to complete a dye test.

Pollnagollum-Pollelva Cave Co. Clare

The Irish Tourist Board, largely through the efforts of John Coleman (author of The Caves of Ireland), has purchased the piece of land which surrounds Pollnagollum entrance shaft, so that cavers will have easier access to the system in the future.

Aille River Cave, Co. Mayo

The Craven have continued their exploration of the system and have discovered a further mile of passage and another entrance.

Provatina Greece

In "Northern Notes" in the last W.C.C. Journal it was stated that the Paratroopers descended 1300 ft. down the shaft. In actual fact they also reached the bottom of the pot as they found a snow and boulder slope which lead down into a large chamber with a pool and a small choked passage. The total depth of the pot being 1400 ft.

The whole expedition was planned as a military exercise with an expertise that would put most caving expeditions to shame. The motorised winch was borrowed from the Forestry Commission and was fitted with wheels and skids to facilitate manhandling up to the plateau. To get the winch up the mountain they simply ran out a length of winch wire, which was then anchored, and let the winch drag itself up the mountain by means of its motor. All the eighteen men on the expedition reached the bottom. This just shows what can be done when you have the resources of the Army at your disposal!

A couple of weeks later Ken Kelly arrived on the scene and succeeded in getting Peter Livesey of the Bradford down to the bottom.

Norway and Lapland

A report appeared in the 31st August edition of the Manchester Evening News, of an expedition in which Dave Heap and Michael Smale led a party of Northern Grammar Schoolboys to the caving regions of Scandinavia. They connected two caves Okshola and Kristihola near Fauske in the arctic province of Salta. The system is now 11,000 ft. long with a depth of 300 ft. This is greater than Norway's previous longest, the Jordbrugrotta.

In Lapland, near Musken in Hellemofjord, they entered a few caves with a depth potential of over 2000 ft. In one of the caves they descended a 250 ft. pitch, but were then stopped by a very deep shaft which they estimate to be over 300 ft. deep. They had descended 700 ft. from the surface up to that point and the resurgence is 1500 ft. below that!

Gaping Gill System

Alan and Dave Brook of U.L.C.A. are resurveying all of the system again. So far they have completed the half mile Bradford extension (Whitsun Series) and their own discovery of the mile long complex known as the Far Country, together with Stream Passage and Car Pot. As Gaping Gill system now has approximately six miles of passage they have set themselves quite a task! The Bradford have been given the problem of re-surveying Ingleborough Cave with all the additions in the Upper Series of Inauguration Caverns.

BOOK REVIEWS

1. Report of the 1967 Gouffre Berger Expedition, by P. Watkinson, B. Baker, A. Wicks, H. Lord, and Dr. H. Kidd. Published by the Pegasus Club, Nottingham (October 1967).
 2. British Speleological Association Report of the 1967 Expedition to the Gouffre Berger, by K. Pearce. Published by the B.S.A. (June 1968).
-

Apart from nearly common timing and tackle sharing, the two British expeditions to the Gouffre Berger in 1967 set out with distinct objectives. The Pegasus party were to attempt supposed high level extensions, while the B.S.A. party planned to dive the terminal sump. However, unforeseen events brought the two expeditions together even more closely than planned. Although well over half a year separates the two reports, there is a considerable overlap of information, e.g. The Communications and Medical reports are common to both publications. Comparisons are inevitable.

Both booklets are produced by good quality offset litho with few mistakes. While the inaptly named "Geographical Block", cave section and location map of the earlier report are a disappointing anti-climax; nevertheless, the format, choice of type face, paper weight, and superb photographs, makes the Pegasus publication the more worthy of the two. This is reinforced by the standard of the text, which presents readers with much more relevant and instructive material. The B.S.A. report is overwhelmed by pointed comments about the personalities deemed by the author to have occasioned the breakdown of the diving party on 12th August.

Eventually, a depleted B.S.A. party reformed and a combined force successfully completed the original objectives. At least, the Pegasus report gives the impression of a joint undertaking, whereas the B.S.A. one brusquely disputes this in its Foreword and elsewhere. It is most difficult for the uninformed reader to follow the reasoning as to who did what, and why. Clearly, one must draw one's own conclusions on the respective merits of the publications as reports of expeditions which, after all, did carry out notable explorations in this incredible system.

J.D.H.

* * * * *

HÖHLENKUNDE by Prof. H. Trimmel. 300 pp. 88 illustrations, No. 126 in the series Die Wissenschaft, published by Friedr. Vieweg & Sohn, GmbH Braunschweig, West Germany 1968. at 36.90 DM (£4.2s.0d. approx).

Cave Science or Speleology has been a long established discipline on the continent. Over 40 years ago a book on this topic, "Theoretischen Speläologie" by Prof. George Kyrle was published. This book, acclaimed as a masterpiece in its time, was, nevertheless badly in need of revision, due to the many advances which had been made in the science over the years. Höhlenkunde by Prof. H. Trimmel undertakes to revise and improve upon "Theoretischen Speläologie" in an inimitable fashion, which must make it one of the most important speleological works to have been published in the German language.

This book is a veritable speleological encyclopaedia, culminating in an extensive bibliography listing 697 works from many different countries, as far apart as the United States and Rumania, New Zealand and Africa.

The author, Prof. Hubert Trimmel born in Vienna in 1924, always had a keen interest in speleology, and after graduating from Vienna University he concerned himself with many aspects of the science. Since 1950 he has taken part in organising the Austrian Cave Explorers Club, and has made great contributions to Austrian speleological literature with such publications as "Langste und Tiefste Höhlen."

He is now a State conservancy official concerned with cave protection and also a member of the examination body for Austrian Cave Leaders.

The book has been divided into 7 sections, each with annotated sub paragraphs.

These sections are as follows: 1. Arrangement and Classification of cave sciences, including Speleology as a science and cave and karst sciences. 2. Geospeleology, the conception of caves, cave systems, cave formation and climate etc. 3. Biospeleology, including caves as living space, fossils in caves and a review of cave plants. 4. Anthropological Speleology, including anthropological finds in caves, historical finds in caves, and caves in myths, songs, stories and customs. 5. Economical aspects of Caves and Cave Science (Practical Speleology), including the field of subjects covered by the exploitation of cave chambers, the exploitation of cave contents, protection and legal rights with regard to caves. 6. Historical Speleology, including cave exploration at different periods and documentation. 7. Technical Speleology, including personal caving equipment, cave surveying etc. 8. The important Caving Regions of the World (Regional Speleology), caving in Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Asia, etc.

Bearing in mind the rise in popularity of Speleology, this book fills a gap which has been open for some time. Scholars of German will find it of excellent value, and it is to be hoped that some time in the near future somebody will see fit to translate it into English.

J.E.A. and A.D. OLDHAM.

<u>Hon. Secretary:</u>	D.M.M. Thomson, Pinkacre, Leigh-on-Mendip, Bath, Som.
<u>Caving and Asst. Secretary:</u>	R.J. Staynings, 8 Fanshawe Road, Hengrove, Bristol 4.
<u>Hon. Treasurer:</u>	T.E. Reynolds, 23 Camden Road, Southville, Bristol 3.
<u>Subs. Treasurer:</u>	A.E. Dingle, 32 Lillian Road, London S.E.26.
<u>Hut Warden:</u>	M.W. Dewdney-York, c/o Hillgrove Hut, Hillgrove Farm, Priddy, Wells, Somerset.
<u>Journal Distribution:</u>	P.R. Cousins, 3 Kinver Road, Sydenham, London S.E.26.
<u>Editor:</u>	J.D.Hanwell, 50 Wells Road, Wookey Hole, Wells, Som.

WESSEX CAVE CLUB

Hon. Secretary's Report for the Year 1967-68.

This year, although it probably does not seem so this far, has been a year of decision for the Club. We have committed ourselves to building a new Headquarters on Mendip, with its considerable capital outlay, and in doing so have confirmed that we intend to remain a Mendip club. Much discussion preceded this step, as we have been conscious of the impressive discoveries in South Wales, but we hope that better facilities on Mendip may encourage further finds here. At the time of writing the builder is about to start, and very soon we should see the completion of the shell. A great deal of work will devolve on members after this, for although the cost of the materials is inside the resources of the Club, we have relied on the labour of members to be given free. We have, during the year, lost one of our Vice-Presidents: Mrs. Dinah Dobson-Hinton. Although known to very few of the members she was one of the earlier cavers in the West Country and the first woman to descend what was the forty pot in Swildon's. An obituary appeared in the Wessex Journal, August 1968. She was closely associated with the UBSS for many years and was a well-known writer on archaeology. Much of the Club's activity was curtailed in the early part of this year by the epidemic of foot and mouth disease. Dependent as we are on the goodwill of the farming community it was essential that we took no chances of spreading this disease to Mendip. However, even this passed, and the Club's activities began again.

The structure of the Committee has been altered to increase our efficiency. This has been, in effect, taking the load off the Secretary, to reduce not only the work load but the immediate responsibility. This has worked well, and there has been full co-operation between members of the Committee. Tony Dingle has been acting as Subscriptions Treasurer, leaving Tim Reynolds free to concentrate on the overall finances of the Club. This has been a job of more than usual responsibility this year, as the decision to go ahead with Upper Pitts depended to a great extent on the advice of Tim Reynolds. A close control has been kept on the documenting of subscriptions by Tony Dingle. It has been good for the Club to have had new people on the Committee. Jenny Murrall, a second generation Committee Member, to represent the interests of the lady members. John Thomas, who came to us from the original Farnham Group, and John Church, who has been in charge of the Club technical projects, with special interest in the georesistivity equipment. The Committee has met ten times, the Upper Pitts Sub-Committee on two occasions. This was appointed to supervise the negotiations and assist the Trustees concerning the new headquarters. It consisted of Howard Kenney who acted as Chairman, Phil Davies, Malcolm Padfield, Steven Causer, Jim Hanwell, Jenny Murrall, Roy Staynings, Mike Dewdney-York, Donald Thomson and Peter Cousins. Leslie Teasdale also attended the second meeting. Much of the technicality of building detail has been the work of Steve Causer and Malcolm Padfield. Phil Davies will have the responsibility of site organiser.

At the last Annual General Meeting the Committee was instructed to consider a number of items. The first was the question of inserts in the Journal. Several attempts have been made to follow up these suggestions. Insurance firms have been contacted, but the impression has been that cavers are not the sort of life business insurance firms wish to attract. However, one or two possibilities are still in the offing. The Meeting authorised the transfer of £130 to the Hut Fund

and this has been done; and at the same time required the Committee to apply for the 50% grant towards the cost of Upper Pitts. We did in fact obtain assurance of this grant, but the cost of the building was increased by requirements of the Planning Authorities, and we are negotiating this at the time of writing. Howard Kenney has been in charge of this correspondence, and it is now nearing completion with the beginning of building. The new headquarters has compelled us to defer the publication of the Club Prospectus. We had hoped to produce this as a handbook for members and an introduction to the Club for new members. However it seemed pointless to print this and almost immediately have to reprint it when we moved from Hillgrove. So we have decided to defer it until Upper Pitts is ready.

Although one does not wish to trespass on the Report of the Treasurer some explanation for the increase in subscription and hut fees would seem appropriate. Unfortunately the Wessex, like everyone else has been caught up in the consequences of inflation, and the mere administration, purchase of tackle and equipment, repair of premises and above all, Journal production, is only just covered by the subscription. Most prospective members seem to have understood the inevitability of this increase, as the Club membership has declined by one only. During the year it was found necessary to raise hut fees. We did have one or two complaints about this but again this must be considered reasonable. Fees were last raised many years ago and still compare favourably with the charges made by other clubs. We did lose four members by resignation, but only two of these resigned because of the subscription increase. 30 Members and 2 Joint Members failed to renew subscriptions, but we do not know how many failed to do so because of the increase. Membership stands at 310, including 46 joint members. This compares with 311, including 42 joint members last year, and 318, with 46 joint members the year before. We have six affiliated clubs, and as before these have proved a continuing source of good and active members.

The Club has been very active this year. Official Club trips have been only fairly well attended, as the more active members have been making their own arrangements. Three trips to South Wales were cancelled through lack of support, although members of the Club have been going there privately in increasing numbers. Twenty-four Club trips were arranged, seventeen being actually run, including two to Yorkshire and nine to South Wales. A Gentleman's and Families Trip to Devon was also successful, where Reed's Cave and Afton Rift Cave were visited. Several of our members, including Dennis Warburton and Mike Dewdney-York are surveying Agen Allwed, and John Church is planning to survey Tatham Wife Hole. Carl Pickstone is representing us very efficiently in the North, where he was among the discoverers of the Whitsun Series in Gaping Gill. Members have been active abroad, though not representing the Club. The Bristol University Geography Dept. hydrological expedition to Jamaica had several Wessex-UBSS members, and explored several large stream passages. Peter Cousins went to Czechoslovakia, where the Russian Army, with its disordered priorities interrupted his caving. Tony Phillpott went to Rumania, so did others, and we were relieved to see a postcard saying only "A.D.O. is back". Derek Tringham is caving in Austria, and several of our members went to County Clare in July. Garry Pilkington and David Drew have left for Canada; Garry of course has joined Derek Ford. It was intended to run a Club trip to the States, but lack of sufficient numbers, devaluation, and too short notice made postponement inevitable. We are still hoping to arrange this. Apart from caving trips Roy Staynings, with the help of Hugh Pearson, arranged a display as part of the Leisure and Pleasure exhibition in Lewis', Bristol in May, and used the

opportunity to improve the image of caving with the general public.

Coming nearer home members Mike York and others have started on the project of re-opening Eastwater Swallet, sinking a shaft down to the Boulder Chamber. Jim Hanwell, Mike Thompson, Fred Davies et al are still making a cave at North Hill. When prevented by labour shortages they work a new dig between Priddy and Cross Swallet. Once every so often Willie Stanton returns from Portugal to dig Reservoir Hole, at which he and Will Edwards have worked for years. Elusive draughts have been followed through unstable boulders, but one feels the great system of Cheddar must be there somewhere. On a less ambitious scale Mike York joined members of the Axbridge Caving Group concerned in the exploration of Ubley Warren Pot at Nordrach. When Dave Drew went to Canada Tim Atkinson took over the Water Tracing Project. It is hoped to have the Burrington results ready for sale at the A.G.M. Recently John Cornwell, Mike Thompson and Tim Reynolds chartered an aircraft and flew over Mendip looking for clues, but don't tell anyone - it's a secret! So that, with a passing mention that John Letheren is working in Horseshoe Cave, Windsor Hill, sums up the year's work. No major discoveries have been made, and no major extensions found to any known systems, but several of the digs now being actively worked could lead into major systems. Most records of work done is to be found in the Hillgrove Log, and one day this will be published.

The Club has provided several services for members for several years now. These have made a modest profit this year. We were fortunate in obtaining 150 NiFe cells from Scotland, which sold almost before they arrived, and have just received a consignment of 200 Edison cells from the Coal Board in Fife - the result of negotiations conducted on our behalf by W.G. Harrison and Steve Causer. These can now be repaired when they go wrong. Spares for carbide lamps and NiFe cells are sold at Hillgrove and we shall be selling Edison spares too. From time to time Peter Cousins acquires several hundred pairs of boots, usually with Vibram soles and metal toe caps, the sale of which makes a small profit for the Club. Boiler suits and other caving gear has also been provided for sale. Members are also reminded that as Club members they can ask for 10% discount on such items as Cagoules, tents, and camping gear from the Outdoor Centre behind the Colston Hall, in the Bristol Centre. Club badges, ties, and, to order, car badges are also sold by the Club (usually in the person of Roy Staynings). Tim Reynolds has been handling the sale of cave surveys, available, like the Journal, to non-members.

Tackle has been the concern of the gear curator, Peter Cousins. He had intended to manufacture 250 ft. of new ladder, thus bringing the quantity available for use up to 930 ft. Preparations were well in hand when the foot and mouth epidemic prevented access to Mendip, and with the arrival of Spring and the end of the epidemic it was considered unwise to take the small stock out of circulation for rebuilding. It was not until the Summer that Peter Cousins was able to take a holiday on Mendip and really begin the work, but with the help of Mike Calvert and others at Cheddar School the ladder is now ready for assembly, and it is hoped to complete a substantial part of this rebuilding during the coming Winter. Early in the year all lengths of ladder and rope were marked and indexed and this system is being extended to provide a permanent record, so that the exact age of any tackle is known. Stocks now held of tackle in use consist of 680 ft. of Electron ladder, 700 ft. of Ulstron rope, and 720 ft. of nylon. Most of the tackle has been stored in Jim Hanwell's garage.

For the last year the Journal has been edited by Jim Hanwell, and we have produced a Journal bimonthly since last December, that issue completing the 310 pages Volume 9. A full index for this Volume was circulated recently. With the November Journal Volume 10 is nearing 200 pages, and there are seven issues to come. Members are receiving more news and caving articles than ever before. With the increase in paper costs and postage rates the cost of the Journal consumes a relatively greater part of the Club's budget. However, many copies are now sold to non-members, especially to Yorkshire, so that some of the increased outlay is recovered. As directed by the last A.G.M. the possibility of loose advertisement inserts as a source of income has been investigated. While some firms have shown interest we have not yet been able to offset costs in this way, but the matter is being pursued. The first Occasional Publication which appeared last October has paid its way, and a recent advertising campaign to all Further Education establishments in the British Isles is already showing signs of being highly successful. We shall extend our campaign to kindred institutions at home and overseas. In this way initial criticisms that the important Karst Hydrology Research papers would not reach the wider readership they deserved are being answered. The prospects for the comprehensive distribution and viability of future Occasional Publications seems well assured. At the time of writing copy for the third phase of the Karst Hydrology Research Project, namely that carried out in the Burrington area last Easter, is in the press and we hope to have it available for sale at the forthcoming A.G.M. Meanwhile preparations are well under way for the long awaited Occasional Publication to be devoted to the life and works of H.E. Balch. This will appear in 1969 to acknowledge the centenary of his birth. Also in course of preparation and to be published in the Journal, is a comprehensive account of the Great Flood of July 1968, and its influence on Mendip caves. There may be some changes in the Journal, as shortly it will be necessary to purchase a new stock of Journal covers. It might be a good thing to change the design of the cover (though not the overall size) to something like that of the Occasional Publications. This would finish the controversy over our dragon, what colour it ought to be, and what it ought, or ought not, to do in public. A wrap around cover for example would facilitate collating and stapling, giving more scope for improved type face, and it would help reduce the cost a little.

We are building up quite a comprehensive library of caving publications, and we exchange with many clubs in this country and others in the States, France, and occasionally Australia. One day the Library will be housed in Upper Pitts, but at present Chris Hawkes is holding it. It tends to be used almost exclusively by one member, but everyone else is entitled to use it too. We can buy books for it if suggestions are made, and it is one of the reasons why we opened a dollar account. We can buy occasional American books.

The Club maintains relations with other bodies. Many of our members are also members of other clubs, a very praiseworthy thing as it helps to eradicate the suspicion between clubs which so poisoned the atmosphere of the caving world a few years ago. We are Club members of the Cave Research Group, and their literature may be borrowed from the Library. Members sit on the Council of Southern Caving Clubs, the Charthouse Caving Committee, the Mendip Cave Registry and the Mendip Rescue Organisation (this is a Bristol rescue team of Wessex) and the Mendip Survey Colloquium. In the effort to further good relations the Club has lent tackle to other clubs during the year, though due to some difficulty in recovering some of our tackle this was not as much as we would have wished.

Michael Dewdney-York, the Hut Warden, reports that about 40 members stay regularly at the Hillgrove H.Q. during the year, altogether staying about 1500 man/nights, and in general the running of the administration has been quite smooth. We have had one or two minor incidents, and one more recently rather serious, involving non-members, but these have been dealt with by the Hut Warden. Early in the year, foot and mouth disease compelled the Committee to close Hillgrove and Eastwater huts for several weeks while the epidemic appeared to be extending. Later Hillgrove was opened to people living less than 30 miles away and John Cornwell provided straw and antiseptics which were placed in the drive to Hillgrove. The hut warden stayed for a period at Hillgrove and was able to supervise members of visiting clubs who have stayed mid-week, to the Club's considerable financial advantage. London University, and clubs from Exeter and Brighton have stayed, and also a Naval party from H.M.S. Dedclas. Not a great deal of work has been done on either hut this year. With the advent of the new H.Q. there was little point in doing so.

With the completion of the Upper Pitts premises we shall have to take leave regretfully of Mr. Sealey, who has been a good friend to the Club for many years. Steve Causer, who has had a great deal to do with planning of Upper Pitts reports that arrangements for the builder to begin work have been going ahead smoothly. The contractor was ready to start on 1st August, but for various reasons, mostly administrative, he was unable to do so, but work began in the third week of September. It should be completed by early December. Little progress is likely to be seen in the first two weeks of the contract as the work is mainly concerned with foundations and drainage, but given favourable weather conditions the walls should be erected by early November and the roof completed by mid November. The building will be basically a weatherproof "shell" when the contractor has finished his work. This means that all the external decoration such as Snowcem application to walls, and outside painting will be complete, but the internal walls will remain unplastered. The upstairs floor joists will be positioned, but the floor-boarding and ceilings to upstairs and downstairs rooms will not be fixed. Also to be installed will be the plumbing to the Kitchen and showers, a heating system, and the electrical wiring. The work tops and cupboards in the Kitchen will have to be provided and the bunks installed in the dormitories. It is to be hoped that a large amount of the work will be carried out by the labour of Club Members leaving the more specialized work, such as plumbing and electrical wiring, to be done by contractors. Les Teasdale is planning the heating system.

The next problem will be the disposal of Hillgrove and Eastwater huts. The Committee felt that the enthusiasm of the Club ought to be concentrated in the new H.Q. and that a faction of the Club staying at Hillgrove would not be good. The Eastwater hut we would quite like to sell to one of our members. The Hillgrove Hut is a bigger difficulty. The suggestion that it be "knocked apart and towed over The Bridge" raised doubts as to whether once apart it could ever be got together again, but we would like to sell it to someone prepared to take the chance, and we are not sure that this is the best way of providing accommodation in South Wales. This is the most obvious problem facing next year's Committee. The disposal of these huts will help a little towards the cost of Upper Pitts. In the early part of this year we heard that our application for a grant had been approved by the Somerset Education Dept. and it was then sent to the Department of Education. Meanwhile tenders were invited from local builders. The range of estimates was very large, but that of Messrs. Packham of Timsbury for £2,190 was selected. We must add to this the cost of materials to complete the inside, and we hope to get a grant for 50%

of the total expenditure.

Last year's Annual Dinner was a success. We had representatives from most of the Mendip clubs, though no Guest of Honour. This year we are having a change of venue and we hope that the Wookey Hole Cave Restaurant will be as successful a site as the Caveman was. The Club has held events during the year, part social and part fund raising. The Umpteenth Night Party was, regrettably, fund losing; it made a substantial loss. The Barbecue, held in July at Pinkacre, made a profit. Both were pleasant, informal gatherings. In addition we sent representatives to most of the Club Dinners of other caving societies.

So now we start planning next year's club activities. All the help people can give will be needed at Upper Pitts. We hope the Club will continue to grow and become even more successful. Our Journal has a good reputation and articles in the pipeline suggest that this will continue. Club trips need more support. Roy Staynings produced very full programme, and the attendances has waxed and waned from time to time. If every member tried to attend one Club trip a year, and made the effort to organise and lead one, this service, given by the Club to its youngest and least experienced and to its affiliated members would be greatly improved.

It is difficult to give thanks to many Club members without being unfairly selective, but I would like to thank a few people for their outstanding work, and do so on behalf of the Club. Les Teasdale now feels he wishes to give up the Chairmanship and Jim Hanwell is standing for election. Les has been a great help to me, and I feel sure that Jim Hanwell will be so too. Thanks must also go to those members who have worked on the Upper Pitts project, Howard Kenney with the financial formalities and Steve Causer who is now taking an increasing part in the practical planning and in checking the contracts and estimates, as well as organising the sale of supplies to members. Roy Staynings has done a great deal to encourage the corporate spirit of the Club, by co-ordinating Club meets and performing very efficiently the duties of Assistant Secretary. Lastly I would like to thank the Committee as a whole for working hard and harmoniously.

Donald Thomson
Leigh-on-Mendip 1968.