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<u>Hon. Secretary:</u>	A.D. Newport, 60 Micklefield Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP13 7EY.
<u>Asst. Secretary:</u>	P.G. Hendy, 5 Tring Avenue, Ealing Common, London W5.
<u>Caving Secretary:</u>	C.W. Davies, “Hillcroft”, Woodborough Road, Winscombe, Avon.
<u>Hon. Treasurer:</u>	Mrs. A. West, 10 Silver Street, Wells, Somerset.
<u>Tackle Warden:</u>	W.J.R. Willcocks, 3 Westview Drive, Twyford, Berks.
<u>Hut Administration Officer:</u>	W.J. Ham, “The Laurels”, East Brent, Highbridge, Som.
<u>Hut Warden:</u>	P.A.K. Palfree, 10 Maynard Terrace, Clutton, Bristol.
<u>Deputy Hut Warden:</u>	Miss A.M. Golledge, 12 Coulston Road, Corsham, Wilts.
<u>Journal Distribution:</u>	M. Hewins, 31 Badshot Park, Badshot Lea, Farnham, Surrey.
<u>Survey Sales:</u>	R.A. Philpott, 3 Kings Drive, Bristol, BS7 8JW.
<u>Publication Sales:</u>	R.R. Kenney, “Yennek”, St. Mary’s Road, Meare, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9SS.
<u>General Sales:</u>	I. Jepson, 7 Shelley Road, Beechen Cliff, Bath, Somerset.
<u>Editor:</u>	R.G. Witcombe, 39 Whitstone Road, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, BA4 5PW.

## EDITORIAL

The regional structure of the National Caving Association acknowledges the fact that different caving areas face different problems and what might be a solution for one Regional Council might not necessarily suit another. In the interests of understanding the other person's point of view, I am reproducing an article by the Chairman of the Council of Northern Caving Clubs, Roger Sutcliffe, which first appeared in the Cambrian Caving Council's Journal "The Red Dragon". It deals with the problems of cave access in the North and provides a valuable insight into the philosophy and the practical workings of the C.N.C.C.

## CLUB NEWS

### A.G.M. and Dinner

Fifty nine people attended the A.G.M. at Priddy Village Hall on the 19th October and some lively debating was ensured by the provision of a modest quantity of free ale. The good ladies of the kitchen laid on the more traditional beverages after the show. The Dinner held again at the Bishop's Barn in Wells, was as well attended and fought as ever, and our grateful thanks must go to all who helped organise it. By the way of a very early warning, the 1975 A.G.M. is to be held on Saturday October 18th.

### New Members

Roy Arthur Barton	51 Crantock Road, Catford, London SE26.
Richard A. Chappell	69 Teddington Park Road, Teddington, Middx.
David N. Farr,	48 Ferndale, Waterlooville, Hampshire.
Jonathan C. Crocker	59 Kennington Avenue, Bishopston, Bristol 7.
Alicia S. Thomas	"Morawelon", St. Hilary, Cowbridge, South Glamorgan.

## MEETS

Organiser Richard Kenney:- "Yennek"  
St. Mary's Road  
Meare  
GLASTONBURY  
Somerset  
Telephone: Meare Heath 296

Friday night meets at 7.30 p.m.

Friday December 13th	Thrupe Lane
Friday January 10th	Eastwater
Friday January 24th	Longwood
Friday February 7th	Lamb Leer
Saturday February 22nd	Wales
Friday March 7th	G.B.
Friday March 21st	Swildons

## OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 1974-1975

<u>President</u>	F.W. Frost		
<u>Vice Presidents</u>	M. Norbert Casteret, Rev. C.H.D. Cullingford, C.W. Harris, Cdr. P.B. Lawder, H. Murrell, Dr. E.K. Tratman, Dr. F.S. Wallis		
<u>Committee</u>			
<u>Chairman:</u>	P. Davies	<u>Secretary:</u>	A.D. Newport
<u>Asst. Secretary:</u>	P.G. Hendy	<u>Caving Secretary:</u>	C.W. Davies
<u>Treasurer:</u>	Mrs. A. West	<u>Tackle Warden:</u>	W.J.R. Willcocks
<u>Editor:</u>	R.G. Witcombe	<u>Hut Amin. Officer:</u>	W.J. Ham
<u>Hut Warden:</u>	P.A.K. Palfree	<u>Deputy Hut Warden:</u>	Miss A.M. Golledge
<u>General Sales Officer:</u>	I. Jepson	<u>Committee Member:</u>	T.E. Reynolds
<u>Other Officers:</u>			
<u>Publication Sales Officer:</u>	R.R. Kenney	<u>Survey Sales Officer:</u>	R.A. Philpott
<u>Journal Distribution Officer:</u>	M. Hewins	<u>M.R.O. Team Co-ordinator:</u>	H.A. Pearson

### DUTIES OF OFFICERS

<u>Chairman:</u>	Chairman of Committee Meetings.
<u>Secretary:</u>	Internal Club policy, liaison with other clubs and outside organisations.
<u>Assistant Secretary:</u>	New membership applications, C.C.C. permits for members and affiliated clubs.
<u>Caving Secretary:</u>	Issue of cave keys, C.C.C. permits to non-members.
<u>Treasurer:</u>	Overall Club finances.
<u>Tackle Warden:</u>	Maintenance and construction of tackle.
<u>Editor:</u>	Articles for publication in the Journal.
<u>Hut Administration Officer:</u>	Hut bookings, co-ordination of repairs and supplies for Upper Pitts.
<u>Hut Warden:</u>	Day-to-day running of Upper Pitts.
<u>Deputy Hut Warden:</u>	Assists and deputises for Hut Warden.
<u>General Sales Officer:</u>	General caving items.
<u>Publication Sales Officer:</u>	Journals and other publications to non-members.
<u>Survey Sales Officer:</u>	Cave Surveys.
<u>Journal Distribution Officer:</u>	Postal distribution of Journals.
<u>M.R.O. Team Co-ordinator:</u>	Raising a rescue team from Bristol are members.

## INTERNATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL CONGRESS, BRITAIN, 1977

As many of you know, through the efforts of a small ad. hoc, Feasibility Committee the Royal Society has supported the proposal to hold the 7th I.S.C. here and the International Speleological Union's delegates have voted that we should be hosts. This will be the first Congress in an English speaking country and will surely represent the "coming-of-age" of speleology here.

The present Executive Committee, which has been ratified as officially representing every side of cave science and sport here, has been having meetings to discuss a programme of activities for the Congress. The main session will take place at the conference centre of the University of Sheffield between September 10th and September 17th 1977. Before and after this "core" week of lectures, entertainment and an excursion to the Peak District there will be tours, colloquia (in Bristol, Lancaster and possibly Galway, Ireland) and cave camps. In connection with the latter activity, it has been noticed that British club cavers now have a lot of contacts abroad (especially North America) which can be renewed at the Congress by way of hospitality at Club H.Q's and by trips underground. The sporting element in our Congress will be much larger than in others.

We do not think it too early to make this approach to club cavers through the Regional Councils of N.C.A. We should like offers of help with cave camps, correspondence between British and foreign clubs, offers to run specialist meetings (such as that already made by the Cave Diving Group) and so on. Please write to us at the address below.

Another matter of great importance regarding the Congress is that of finance. Whilst Royal Society recognition gives us official scientific recognition the society cannot loan us more than £500 and we shall need at least £3,000 in grants. N.C.A. is approaching the Sports Council on our behalf but all likely sources of funds need to be tried. John Wilmot is handling finance and if any clubs have suggestions for approaches will they please let us know (equipment, food manufacturers, trusts, publishers etc.).

It is also worth remembering that the Congress provides a focus for club publications and especially for photography including movie films.

Malcolm Newson,  
Hon. Sec., Executive Committee for the 7th Int.Spel.Cong.,  
Institute of Hydrology, Dolydd,  
Staylittle, Llanbrynmair, Montgom. SY19 7DB.

Dear Editor,

A friend of mine was quite surprised to find that I go caving and do a lot of gardening but have not had a tetanus injection. I duly reported to our local clinic, and the nurse on hearing my reasons for coming said - "I should think so too! "

Why not give it a thought?

Yours faithfully,

Richard Kenney

## THE DRAGON REMEMBERS

One of my earliest memories is that of Grandad, who lived in Wookey Hole Cave. At the time that I first knew him his flues were failing and he could only emit clouds of pure carbon. He would disappear into his lair and bring out a few candles for me -- a dependable nourishment for children for they gave no treacherous ulcers.

I spent my childhood flashing here and there between Golgotha Hole and Windsor Hill Cave, but the years that I remember with affection were those that I spent bat hunting, like a cat chasing butterflies. This was good fun until some idiot laced my meths with JP4 which brought the fizz down my nose -- and the Belfry was no more.

I had some humorous experiences with my diet as a kid. The Kenney brothers fed me a genuine Home Guard magnesium flare in Swildons Old Grotto which I couldn't digest properly, and I had to move very slow as the Upper Levels became full of smoke. You had your jelly-babies and I had my magnesium ribbon. I could eat that stuff for a pastime. All kids suffer from heat bumps and when I started on carbide I had no bumps but the smell -- ugh.

I remember one fellow who made me sit up and beg for anything up to three hours for his home-made flash powder -- and in the end I rebelled and blew the lot in Eastwater.



Do you remember the time in Wickendens when I tried eating Brocks? They didn't half make me burp -- explosively. Ah well -- dragons like talking about their ignition systems, and if you want to know where I live these days just listen carefully, and every now and then you will hear a flatubang.

I came along to the dinner in the Bishops Barn, and I expect that most of you heard the full-throated roar of my fore-burner. When the dinner was over I powered down and wandered around listening to the chit chat. I heard many people being very complimentary about the dinner arrangements, and one person said -- "Look, there's even some veg under my meat". The Dors system was as efficient as ever but I kept a wary eye on the beer bumps. Do you remember when some idiot (were his initials EH?) poured water over the bannister in 1938. It put my flues out and it was seven years before I could achieve ignition again.

A very good dinner but it had some disappointments. Why not save all missiles for the guest speaker after the dinner? Some of the ladies don't enjoy the bombardment during the meal. Some members said that they were finished with the Wessex dinner -- it just could not be enjoyed any more. Perhaps this is why there were many noticeable absentees among the older members. Why are there no activities after the dinner? Surely, that is the best time to let off steam. Where's the squeeze machine these days? During the fifties there were many changes to the routine and there was always something going on. Dinners will continue as at present until some group put on their thinking caps and work something out. The younger members obviously had a good time -- but the dinner should cater for all age groups.

A final point -- there is a shuttlecock up on the roof beams but why is my badge not up there as well?

## **I WILL LIFT UP MINE EYES UNTO THE HILLS . . . . . AGAIN!**

by Phil Hendy

The chill and clammy early-morning mist swirled around the clearing in the beech wood as a forlorn figure sat on an ammo box and pumped furiously at an unco-operative Primus. Sepulchral groans and stirring came from the nearby tents. There was a rustling of dry leaves from the wood, and the mist parted to reveal an ashen-faced and shaky-kneed camper who, casting aside both shovel and Andrex, started hunting urgently for his bottle of 'doggies'. The 1974 Wessex Expedition to the Picos de Europa had begun!

The party effectively numbered eight. Aubrey Newport and Ian Jepson were both returning to the area, having driven down from Cherbourg with Phil Hendy and Adrian Vanderplank. At Fuente De, they met Paul Hadfield, who had already spent a week carrying tackle up to the Vega de Liordes. Later that night, they were joined in the bar by Tim and Judy Gilbert, together with their young daughter, Rosalind. Ten days later, Wally Willcocks surprised everyone by strolling into the bar, wearing helmet and light. Supplies of the local fire-water took a severe denting that night!

As readers of the Journal will know, the club has for some years now been engaged in cave exploration in the Central Massif of the Picos de Europa, in Santander Province, Northern Spain. Interest has been largely centred on the high level enclosed basin of the Vega de Liordes, and a detailed description of the area, and its major swallet outlet, the Cueva de Liordes, will be found in previous Wessex Journals. Although much work has been done, the region is still to all intents and purposes untouched, and the objective of the 1974 Expedition was to make a start on finding and exploring other caves in the area of the Vega which might conceivably lead to the master cave which undoubtedly exists under the Remoña peaks which bound the Vega to the south. Most hope was placed in the shafts, noted by Ian three years ago, which lie high beyond the Vega to the north-west. The party was particularly keen to investigate a so-called ice cave which dropped steeply into one of the major buttresses of the Torre de Salinas.

The Cueva de Liordes swallet had previously been explored to a total depth of 230 metres, whereupon it ended in a sump. A final part of the exploration which was to be attempted was to pass the duck in the cave's main side passage, the Corredor de Frialdad (Cold Store Passage). Lower down the mountain, in the side of the magnificently boulder-strewn Canal del Embudo, lay the spectacular Cueva de la Canal del Embudo (Gully Cave). Here, the party intended to complete the survey from entrance to the first (30 metre) pitch, and also to survey the steeply ascending Rescue Passage. Time permitting, the high level rift passages above Green's Dilemma were also to be explored and possibly surveyed.

The Expedition had set itself an ambitious task, with only three weeks to accomplish projects which, in the main, could have no clear-cut ending point. It is pleasing to be able to record that the job was almost entirely achieved, although for every problem solved, two more sprang up. It is frustrating to view the wide expanses of karst, so pock-marked with unexplored caves and shafts that one scarcely knows where to start. As an indication of Mendip indoctrination, on several occasions members of the party leapt into insignificant-looking shake holes and started lifting boulders from the floor, in spite of all the open holes which lay around just asking to be explored.

The description and survey of Gully Cave will certainly appear in a later edition of the Journal. In the course of the 1974 Expedition, forty-five "new" caves were located and entered, together with five mines. For reasons of space, descriptions of these will also appear later. The purpose of this report is merely to give a background to the exploration, and to describe a few of the more interesting discoveries.

The 850 metre climb up the disused and crumbling miner's track to the Vega de Liordes can fairly be described as the major factor which limited exploration. The trip takes at least 1½ hours and this time can be doubled if the team is ascending with loads in the full heat of the sun. An early start meant making most of the climb before the sun reached onto the track, indeed on one occasion, two of the party were

caught in a fierce and chilling ice storm, for which shorts and shirt-sleeves were deemed inadequate. Happily, there is a small stone Refugio near the Vega swallet, and inspection of this showed it to be inhabitable, if two people didn't mind doubling up in one bunk, and they could tolerate the all-pervading smell of goat. Tim and Judy, with Rosalind, spent the first night there, and thereafter parties of two often spent nights in the Refugio, which gave them several hours more daylight in which to work. The hut also provided a useful headquarters and canteen when the weather was inclement.

Descent of the Corredor de Frialdad in the Cueva de Liordes was made, early in the trip, although Aubrey, clad in a borrowed oversized wetsuit, was too cold to attempt the duck. His subsequent return from a detackling trip caused some alarm to two nearby shepherds, although they were fascinated by his black rubber suit festooned with ironmongery. The eventual passing of the Cold Store duck must await a more enthusiastic and warmly clad party.

The location and exploration of the shafts up on the lapiaz started slowly. They all tend to look alike, and finally a pot of red paint was purchased, and each cave explored was duly identified with a code number painted near the entrance. Many of the frustrations of prehistoric man were experienced, as dripping pigment applied with the forefinger is difficult to place on the spot where it is wanted. On one occasion, a party who had found an interesting cave but had no paper or pencil to record details, came off the mountain bearing suitably decorated tablets of stone. Adrian's overall was likewise pressed into similar service.

The scale of the scenery defies description. Some shafts were man-sized openings in the lapiaz. Others presented themselves as yawning chasms; one, 'Hull Pot de las Picos', is particularly well-named. In spite of the at-times almost overpowering sun, many shafts and depressions were floored with a deep snow plug. Others ended in chokes of frost-shattered debris. As a general rule, none of the caves had any side passages, and it is considered that drainage is so free, no discrete water channel has been formed - at least not within about 70 metres of the surface. Once such a channel has been discovered, the possibilities are staggering.

The ice cave mentioned above was duly located and visited. The entrance was a large sloping rift entering the Torre de Salinas at the foot of one of its major buttresses, and the depression was almost entirely filled with an enormous snow plug. Beyond this, a vertical slot between the ice and the far wall led down into the mountain. Phil elected to make the first descent, and entered a wide and roomy bedding plane with an ice floor. It dropped steeply to a three metre pitch. While he was wondering what lay at the bottom, his boots slipped, and Phil found out. It continued down at the same angle, until Phil came to the end of his rope at a depth of about 40 metres. The cave was later bottomed by Adrian, who reported that after another similar ice pitch, the floor levelled and the ice ran right up to the far wall at a depth of 60 metres. In Tolkien tradition, the hole was named "The Cave under the Mountain", a code number was painted on the wall, and the explorers moved on.

Slightly higher, and to the east, another shaft was located under a large ascending rift. No suitable belay could be found for this shaft, and in attempting to provide one, both of the party's drill anchor applicators became rendered u/s when the anchors snapped off short. Eventually, the inevitable dodgy boulder was pressed into service, and Tim descended the shaft coded WX.17. At 43 metres depth, he came to the end of the rope, but could see the bottom, and reported little prospect of further progress.

A certain feature interested everyone as they walked across the Vega to the Refugio. High to the south, and almost under the very peak of Alcacero, lay a large open hole. It fell to the lot of Paul and Ian to make the ascent, up a steep gully littered with scree and boulders. They took a large number of climbing aids, as well as rope. The angle of ascent can be judged by the fact that they had to use pegs, and lifeline each other, while crossing a grass slope. At last, they reached the 20 x 13 metre entrance of 'The Mouth of Alcacero', and followed a passage of the same dimensions until it 'windowed' into a 33 metre diameter shaft. This was estimated to ascend for some 33 metres, but descent was only possible for 10 metres, to what was described at the time as a 'bloody ginormous snow plug'. There was a profusion of ice

formations, but no continuation. 'The Gob' was obviously an important swallet at one time, and makes the top of the mountain at this point quite hollow. The return of our intrepid explorers was hindered by low cloud, and although they waxed lyrical about the scale of the hole, no-one else could be persuaded to climb up and inspect it. Another spectacular failure!

The largest question mark unearthed by the team still hangs over WX.100, or Bird's Nest Pot, discovered by Adrian at the end of serious work in the Vega. His chance throwing of a stone down a small hole which certainly looked less inviting than many other cavities in the area showed that there was something significant under the surface at this point. Rocks thrown down the hole could be seen to bounce off a ledge at a depth of about 17 metres; they then fell silently for 5-6 seconds, to land in the depths with a resounding crash. All of the ropes had been carried back to Fuente De, but the following day, Tim, Wal and Aubrey carried a quantity back up the track, and located the cave. They passed the first ledge, and landed on another at 26 metres. From here, they were able to confirm that stones fell for over 4 seconds before landing on stones below. Poor lights and general apprehension prevented the bottoming of the pitch, conservatively estimated as being in excess of 100 metres. The crash of stones as they land indicates a large chamber below, and the absence of snow plug. Prospects for this hole appear to be excellent.

It was pleasant to go down to the Vega basin itself, and investigate the more Mendip-like swallets on the north-west slopes. These sinks are either abandoned, or only activated by spring melt-water. Removal of a few stones from the Green Vee Swallet depression allowed entry to a 10 metre free-climbable shaft, but the others are all heavily boulder-choked. Most of these swallets look promising, however, and were they on Mendip, would have given up their secrets long ago. Two swallets, found just inside the Vega and under the very foot of Remoña, still await exploration; the removal of a few boulders is all that is needed to permit access.

Paul spent one afternoon looking into the mines which lie scattered around the col. They are all short, and nowhere do they break into natural cavities. Three short adits were also located in the Vega itself; they have a 2 x 2 metre cross-section, and are 20 metres long. Their size is larger than would be expected in a trial adit, but no actual mining seems to have occurred. There are extensive areas of neatly stacked deads, and traces of galena and iron ores can be found among the spoil.

Various parties went into the Gully Cave mainly on tourist trips. Phil exposed large quantities of film in the cave, particularly in Mithril Passage, and Paul descended the first (60 metres) pitch in the L.H. Series below the first pitch, where he spun on the rope, setting off flash bulbs in all directions, while enthusing about the formations. Some small side passages in the R.H. Series were investigated, and found to lead into the 60 metre pitch. The survey of the entrance series was duly completed, the major difficulty being that the delicate gypsum flowers on the walls had a penchant for dropping down the surveyor's necks, where they caused intense irritation. Rescue Passage was also surveyed, but there was no time left to explore the high level passages.

The abandoned mines under the Teleférico had long been an item of speculation, mainly because locals had pointed them out to a previous party with the words; "Muchas, muchas estalactitas!" One cool and extremely misty day, Ian, Adrian and Phil set out to see what these mines had in store. Two or three entrances all led into the same workings; the upper series were very short, and ended in what appeared to be 'bad country'. A lower entrance led over a scree of stones and rubbish to a roomy hall, with three ways off. The centre and right hand routes were very short, and with mud and water on the floor. The left-hand series was longer, with several short side passages. Everywhere, the floor was about a half metre deep in water and mud. Stone drill cores and shot holes were abundant, and one of the latter poured forth a small stream of water. Debris high on the walls showed that at times the water is nearly two metres deep. The total length of the mines was estimated at 170 metres; there is no natural cave, and no trace of stalactites.

An attempt to locate caves further down the valley from Fuente De was made by Tim one day. He looked around the villages of Pambes and Mogrovejo and walked for some way up the Rio del Agua. He found

no sign of cave development, and although conversations with various villagers revealed that there were many caves in the area, he was unable to discover their exact locations.

Of course, it must not be thought that the entire three weeks were spent caving. A few 'rest days' were spent shopping in Potes, and relaxing in the chill waters of the Desfiladero de la Hermida. The high spot of any day was a meal in the Cafeteria attached to the Teleférico, and many a party rushed down the track from the Vega to ensure obtaining tortillas, mixed salads and veal steaks, washed down with respectable quantities of chilled vino tinto. El Rebeco, the local bar, also did exceptional trade. After experimenting with a few exotic drinks (Orujo, a clear brandy distilled from the fourth pressing of the grape, deserves a special mention) most of the party left it to Tim to experiment, while confining their own tastes to chilled beer, and Anis. Such was the demand, that once, the local bus had to be despatched to the next village for further supplies. Apologies must be made to three members of the Craven Pothole Club who stumbled on Fuente De in the course of a tour of Northern Spain. Their lack of drinking prowess must be due to the greater acclimatisation of the Wessex party. Many late nights were spent in the Rebeco. but it is interesting to note that this never prevented any subsequent caving. However, the "crack of dawn start" became an in-joke, and the party that started up the track by ten a.m. was indeed a rara avis.

It was with great sadness that the party left Fuente Dé, and the return is looked forward to with anticipation. Where will the upper series of Gully Cave lead to? What is at the bottom of Bird's Nest Pot? How deep are the swallets near the col? Perhaps the 1975 Expedition will answer these questions, but the end of exploration in the Picos is nowhere in sight. At times, it is doubtful that the Wessex has even reached the beginning.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We gratefully record our thanks to the Comité Nacional de Espeleologia, Madrid, and to Señor Don Fermin Sanchez for their help and interest. Grateful acknowledgement is also given to the staffs of the Cafeteria and 'El Rebeco', who not only kept the inner man more than adequately wine and dined, but who showed a keen interest in our work and suggested areas for future exploration. In fact, everywhere we met friendliness even if no-one could understand why we English came all the way to Spain to spend our days underground, unpaid, and for pleasure.

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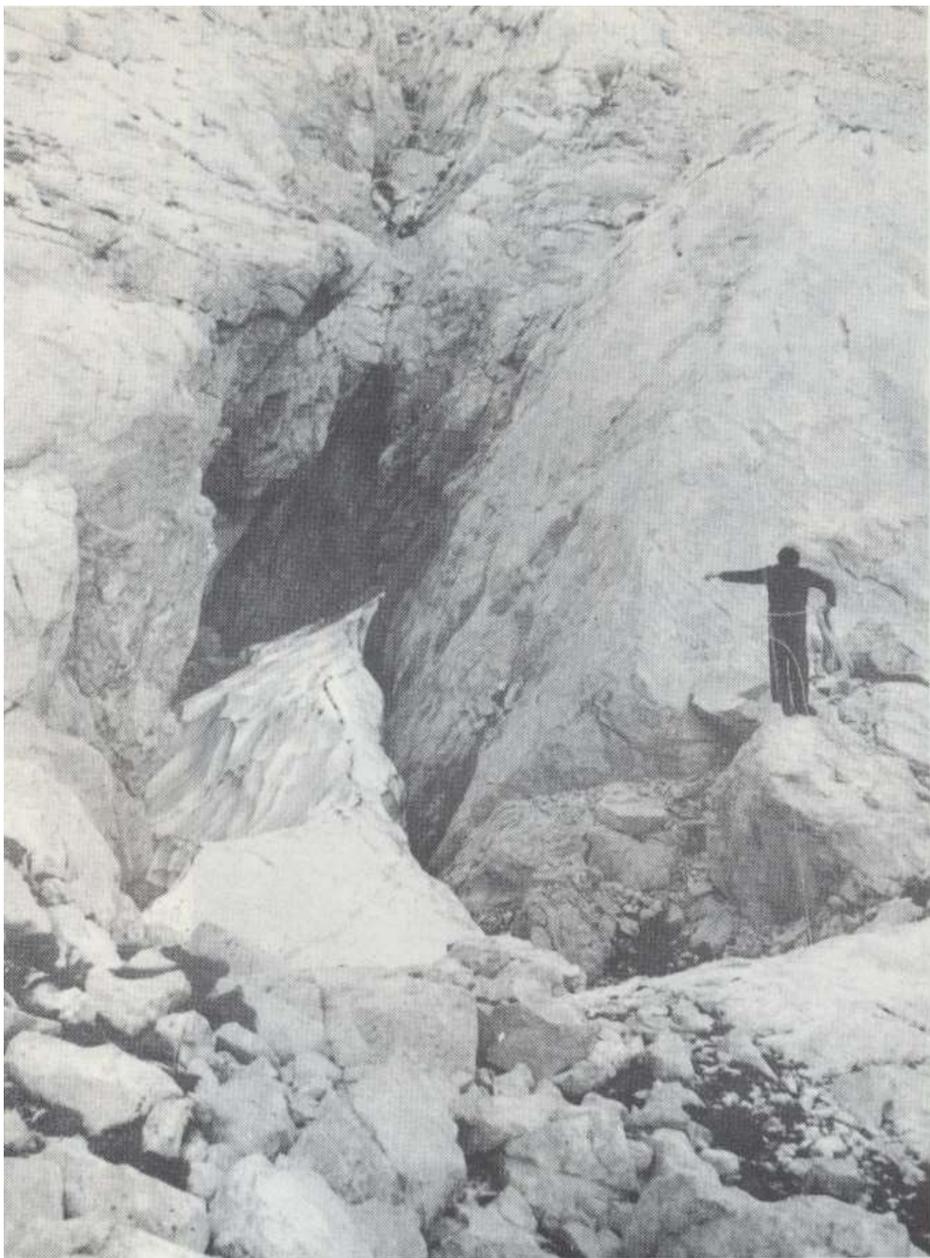
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The Team in camp, checking their life-support systems.  
(Paul, Ian, Aubrey, Rosalind, Tim, Adrian, Wal, Judy and Phil.)

*Photograph P. Hendy*



WX. 16 The Cave under the Mountain.

*Photograph P. Hendy*



WX. 100. Bird's Nest Pot.  
100 metres plus, and still awaiting exploration.

*Photograph A. Newport*



Paul making the first descent of the 60 metre WX.19.

Photograph P. Hendy



WX.100 Bird's Nest Pot

Photograph A. Newport

## **THE COUNCIL OF NORTHERN CAVING CLUBS** **AND NORTHERN CAVE ACCESS PROBLEMS**

by Roger Sutcliffe

### **The Background**

Cave access procedures in the North of England have developed along different lines to those in the other main caving regions for a variety of reasons, both physical and political.

Firstly a high proportion of the caves, and all the deeper potholes, have their entrances on 'open' fell land used primarily for rough grazing of sheep, but also, in certain areas, as grouse moors. The hill farmers are mainly tenants and it is significant that cave access formalities have mainly become necessary where the landowner has a more direct interest in the land - for sporting purposes, or as owner-occupier. Although most of these fells are in private ownership, they are extensive and often remote from the farms. Before the late 1950's, there was almost complete freedom of access because the visiting cavers and walkers were few in number and rarely did anything which clashed with a farmer's or landowner's interests. The dozen or so established potholing clubs were on friendly terms with the farming community.

Permit arrangements of any kind are therefore a relatively new phenomenon in Northern Caving. Although many holes can still be visited with no more formality than a call at the nearest farm on the way, it is to be expected that some of the most heavily visited pots have become subject to additional control. Where restrictions have been imposed, these have been, in all cases, initiated by the landowner or, less frequently, by the tenant farmer. There is no history of individual clubs exercising any control over particular caves in the Dales apart from the one ill-conceived example of the B.S.A's lease on Lancaster Hole in 1947, and their attempt to exclude others by means of a locked lid. The reaction which this unilateral action caused has remained in the minds of Northern Clubs - and probably some landowners too - ever since, and the only locked caves are Show Caves.

During the 1960's, potholers began to meet refusals of permission from farmers and gamekeepers disturbed about the rapidly increasing numbers crossing their land. Paradoxically, the designation of the Yorkshire Dales National Park greatly aggravated the situation for cavers by encouraging visitors to the area generally, and by unintentionally promoting the idea that there was free access to the open countryside. Potholers frequently got the blame for damaged walls or unclosed gates where walkers or picnickers might just as easily have been to blame. It was in this deteriorating climate that the Council of Northern Caving Clubs was formed in 1963, by the senior clubs in an attempt to protect the cavers' interests.

### **The Leek and Casterton Fell Agreement**

The closure to cavers of Leek and Casterton Fells in 1963 was the specific cause of the clubs taking concerted action. The two landowners seized upon a rescue incident at Pegleg Pot in Easegill as a reason for banning potholing anywhere on their land. They refused to discuss the matter with individual clubs and said that the responsible caving bodies would have to get together and exercise some sort of control if access was to be resumed.

The Agreement which was signed the following year initially restricted access to just one club per day on either Fell, and the three months closure for grouse breeding applied throughout. Since then the Council has gradually managed to negotiate improved terms, and up to three clubs can now be allowed on each Fell. The close season was also ended on Casterton Fell, to make the Lancaster-Easegill system accessible all the year round. A request has been submitted for a similar concession at Lost John's Cave, which lies close to the Leek Fell road. Despite these increased facilities, such popular holes tend to get booked up months in advance and 'pirating' is unfortunately still prevalent.

## Other Access Agreements

From the outset, C.N.C.C. policy has been only to agree to control access for a landlord as a last resort. Prior bookings and permits are a nuisance to clubs, and make tiresome work for voluntary Meets Secretaries.

Later, in 1964, an Agreement was concluded with the Langcliffe Estate to restore access to Magnetometer Pot and other holes on Fountains Fell. In this case, the landowners insisted that the terms of the Agreement should also apply to caves and pots on Penyghent, some of which were on grouse moor, and had to be avoided during the breeding season. Effective control over Penyghent is not really possible, however, in view of the large number of walkers who roam freely over the area throughout the year.

The remainder of Fountains Fell., around Gingling Hole, has always presented more of a problem because the owner, who in this case, farms the land himself, enforced a complete ban on caving with considerable success for several years. He refused to make any formal Agreement with C.N.C.C., but eventually accepted that a limited number of clubs could visit Gingling Hole each year. He has always reserved the right to cancel particular bookings which may have been included in the annual list which has to be submitted for approval. Although in recent years most applicants have received permits, the excessive notice required and the delay in getting confirmation, are regarded as very unsatisfactory.

It is significant that access restrictions have frequently been imposed after new discoveries have led to a sudden surge of interest and increased pressure on an area. A single undesirable incident, such as a rescue or an unauthorised dig, has then been sufficient to promote a restrictive reaction from the landowner or farmer. This was the pattern of events with Magnetometer Pot, and also Mongo Gill Hole and Birks Fell Cave, to each of which access was restored only by agreeing to a permit system.

In all areas where prior booking is necessary, the arrangements have worked quite well, but C.N.C.C. has never obtained full confidence of the landowners because they know that small groups of cavers disregard the Agreements, and go without permission. These selfish and impatient individuals obviously annoy both the landowners and the clubs which have official permits, but there is really no effective disciplinary action which the Council can take, even if the 'pirates' can be identified. Clubs may be reported and publicly denounced, but they frequently disclaim knowledge of the individual's activities. If Council members were involved, expulsion would only make them more likely to 'pirate' the controlled areas in future. The only effective deterrent would be legal action by a landowner, but they have shown themselves to be quite unwilling to proceed, even in a clear-cut case.

As the demand for access increased, the Council has been forced to review its procedures for the issue of permits in order to safeguard the Agreements. Initially, when applications were received from non-members, Northern-based clubs were told they must first join C.N.C.C., because, in most cases, they were an unknown quantity in terms of experience and behaviour. On the other hand, permits were granted to clubs from other regions, because only reputable established ones were applying at that time, and few enough of them, not to prove an embarrassment to the Agreements. With the development of the motorway network, the situation has changed radically as more and more applications were received from unknown clubs. The Council could no longer be expected to take responsibility for them on controlled fells, as required under the terms of the Agreements. By 1972, bookings from non-member clubs reached over 40% of the totals for holes on Leck and Casterton Fells. Complaints were made by Member Clubs (most of whom only subscribe £2 per year in order to qualify for access permits), that they could not get bookings "because so many Southern Clubs were being allowed in for nothing". Consequently, the rule calling for C.N.C.C. Membership as a prerequisite for any club requiring permits was adopted in 1973 after discussion at two General Meetings. Whilst it can be seen as a retrograde step in the context of inter-regional co-operation, no alternative has been suggested which would satisfy both the landowners concerned and treat clubs on an equal basis. It is, in fact still easier and cheaper for a small Mendip group to get permission to visit, say, Lancaster Hole, than it is for a newly-formed Northern club.

## Constitution

The original C.N.C.C. Constitution was drawn up rather hurriedly to cover the requirements of the early Access Agreements. At that time, it was not clear to what extent the Council would develop in terms of membership and commitments, nor was it felt desirable for a federation of autonomous Clubs to be too precise about procedural rules for meetings. This led to some uncertainty in decision-making as the work increased and the Constitution was given a much-needed face lift in 1972.

The requirements for prospective member-clubs have generally shown them to be reasonable and adequate to meet the need of the Council to accept a measure of responsibility for their members in negotiating access. Further consideration will have to be given, however, to the position of the growing number of outdoor pursuit centres and school groups which are asking for membership.

## Outstanding Problems

A number of access restrictions have never been officially cleared up, though in certain cases, cavers have regained entry to blocked caves by finding alternative entrances. At Dale Barn Cave, the owner has steadfastly refused to discuss the matter since having the entrance concreted up in 1966. After failing to get any response from numerous approaches in the subsequent two years, the case was reported to the Countryside Commission and the National Park Committee in the hopes of getting some advice. Both bodies expressed great sympathy but offered nothing at all in the way of help.

Similar action was ordered by another absentee landlord at Red Moss Pot, soon after its discovery, when he read a newspaper report which hinted that the entrance was dangerous. In this case, the Agent did at least have the courtesy to inform C.N.C.C. of their intention! Cherry Tree Hole and its neighbour Darnbrook Pot are two other fine caves which had their entrances well and truly sealed. The farmer who took this action, blamed the inconvenience caused by a rescue incident several months previously. The restoration of access here will be very difficult indeed.

C.N.C.C. can be thankful that, so far, no major threat has been presented by quarrying or other extraneous development. It is largely fortuitous that the quarry sites have been established clear of known cave systems. There is no cause for complacency regarding the access situation in general, the maintenance of which depends so much upon the clubs for co-operation - which unfortunately is not always forthcoming. None of the existing Access Agreements can be regarded as secure, and the provision of adequate third party insurance cover is a matter of high priority.

Whilst N.C.A. has made it possible to muster stronger forces in defence of caves threatened by the plans of giant quarrying concerns, it has done nothing as yet to help a Regional Council fight the landowner who decides to physically close a cave to save himself possible inconvenience.

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## JUST PUBLISHED

Quarrying in Somerset - a draft policy for the next thirty years prepared by Somerset County Council. The document is illustrated with maps, diagrams and photographs, and is obtainable from the County Planning Department, Taunton, price £1.50 (postage 10p extra).

**"THE VISION OF HELL"**  
**Dante Canto III Line 9**

by Ian Jepson

Lying to the north of Old Approach Passage, in Swildon's Hole, is a section of cave with a most despondent name, little visited since the early sixties. One Sunday in February of 1973, I was showing Greg Pickford around this area, to increase his store of 'happy' memories to take to the Land of Kiwi. Greg, unfortunately decided to turn a simple tourist trip into a ferreting session. Much time was thus spent clawing at the undersides of boulder chokes perched above avens, and forcing minute worm-holes.

As a result, and much against my better judgement, the following Sunday saw us, plus borrowed entrenching tool, attacking a low, mud-choked passage at (1) (see survey). Some two hours' digging here had produced little result, when Greg pushed on through the crawl on the right, to see if a bedding plane off our dig connected with it. I continued stolidly digging until I was interrupted.

"Ian, You're not going to believe this!" "Why not?" "I've moved a couple of rocks and broken through!" "Oh yes - if you think I'm coming through that squeeze just to give you a laugh you can think again." "I have! Seriously, I can stand up!" "Oh aye".

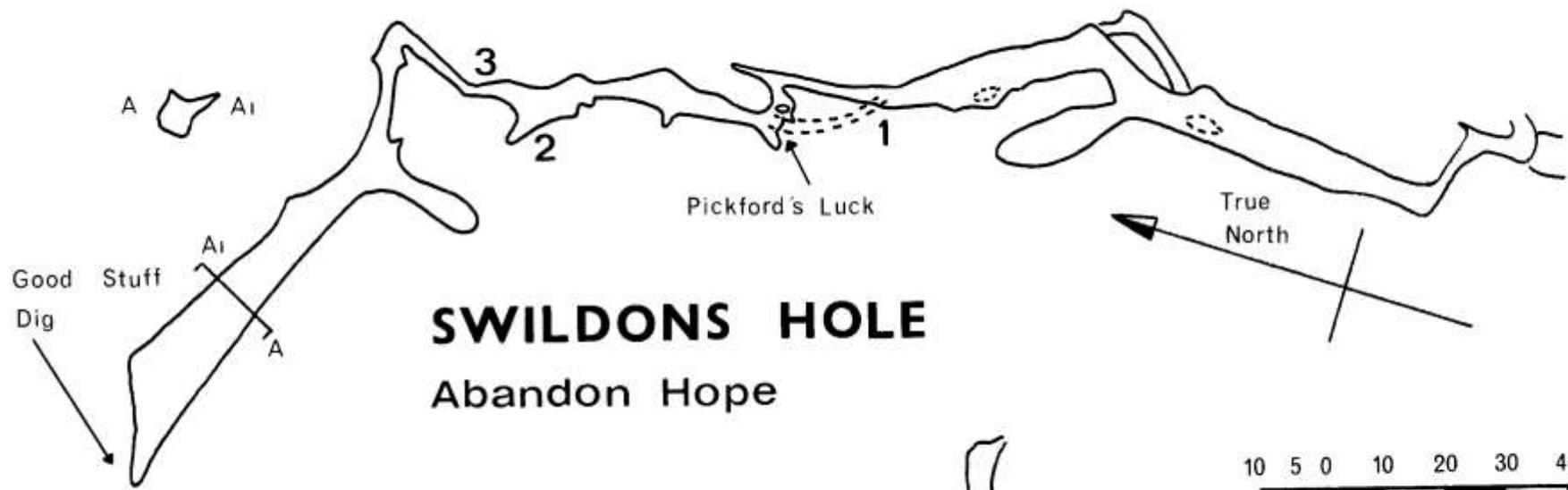
Persuaded however, by Greg's receding voice, I followed. Some gardening was necessary before I could force my rather larger self through "Pickford's Luck", and join Greg in "Abandon Hope Extension". We were in a section of fairly high, narrow passage, with a tight, choked, descending tube at the southern end, and a low, wide, and (so it seemed) too tight crawl over mud at the northern end. Just above the exit from "Pickford's Luck" we climbed up perhaps 30' in an aven before it became too tight, and Greg was able to push a tight passage to emerge via an even tighter second aven into "Old Abandon Hope". A somewhat academic round trip! A week later, with Rich Gordon, Greg had a dig in the hole in the floor, with a marked lack of success, and subsequently left for New Zealand.

During the next few months the northern end of the passage was pushed further into places where the hand of man had never set foot by the efforts of several people. Prominent among these were the Gordon brothers, Pete Moody and Dave Yeandle. Initially, the flat-out squeeze was dug for about 15' to reach a small chamber at (2) (see survey). This had some quite fine mud formations on the floor, now regrettably no more. Their awkward position in an awkward passage condemned them to a short life as soon as regular digging parties were in transit.

A possible way on directly ahead was not dug because of its awkwardness. Instead, a passage to the right (3) (see survey) was dug out. This gave access, via a right-angled bend, to an ascending and then descending thrutch tube. After 30', the tube gave out into the side of a much larger passage about 10' wide, and of walking height in places, very reminiscent of the end of Vicarage Passage. At the further end, now lower and wider, was yet another choke, the soon-to-be-notorious "Good Stuff Dig". So named for the tenacious quality of its mud, the dig is a 3" wide trench, driven through a thin top layer of sand, into a solid mud choke with a rock floor. A series of working trips were made in the latter half of 1973, and occasionally since. So far, these have produced some 10' of progress, an increasing tendency for the dig to flood between trips, and a marked dearth of volunteers for repeat visits! Several people have claimed this to be the muddiest trip in Swildon's! Nevertheless, the site remains far more promising than another, and even more notorious dig in Swine-Puke Passage!

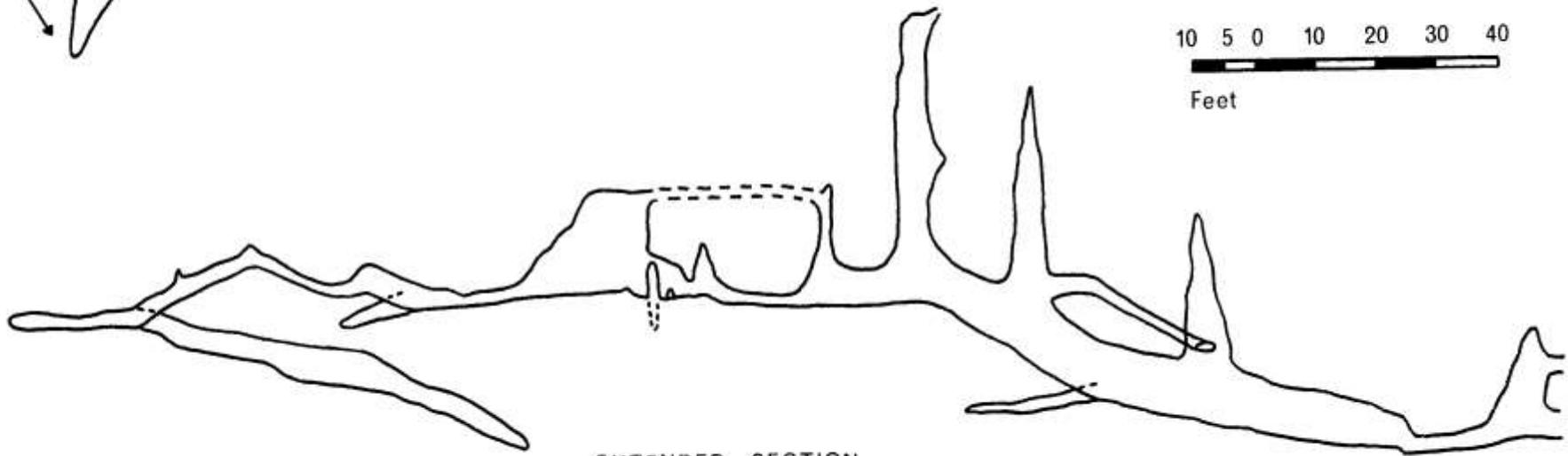
The survey by the S.M.C.C. indicates that only some 30' or so separate "Good Stuff Dig" from the final dig in Vicarage Passage. Also, just before Christmas 1972, Paul Hadfield and myself, at "G.S.D.", clearly heard a small charge of bang fired in the Vicarage Dig. Any volunteers to make the long-fabled Black Hole - Troubles connection a reality?

PLAN



**SWILDONS HOLE**  
Abandon Hope

EXTENDED SECTION



Based upon an SMCC survey

## CAVE RESCUE CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 1974

by Phil Davies

Mendip was the venue for this biennial conference at which delegates from many British cave rescue groups meet to discuss and demonstrate recent developments and techniques that have become available to the caver who undertakes rescue operations. Problems encountered on various rescues are talked over and ideas and possible solutions are put forward.

The proceedings at the Blue School, Wells, started with a Council meeting on Saturday morning at which Bill Wilkes of Abergavenny was elected Hon. Sec. Amongst other business conducted, the principle that the Council represented rescue per se and did not seek to become involved in caving "standards" etc. was re-affirmed; it was stressed that the question of recommending caving codes of practice and safety etc. was the responsibility of the N.C.A., Regional Councils, and the Clubs themselves to advise upon, not the duty of cave rescue organisations.

128 delegates attended the afternoon conference, Yorkshire C.R.O., Derbyshire C.R.O., North Wales and South Wales C.R.O.'s Gwent Rescue Team, Gloucester C.R.O., and Devon C.R.O., were officially represented. The hosts, Mendip cavers representing M.R.O., were of course, out in force. Other official bodies were invited to participate and observe. The local branch of the Red Cross, Avon and Somerset Constabulary (Chief Insp. Dennis Parkinson representing Chief Constable Kenneth Steel), Somerset Accident Volunteer Emergency Services, (S.A.V.E.S.), Royal Life Saving Society (Local branch) and Dr. Roger Snook of the Accident and Ambulance Research Establishment at Bath were present.

Don Thompson opened the afternoon programme with a talk entitled "The Caving Doctor" outlining some of the first aid (and occasionally more advanced) treatment of casualties that Medical Wardens and others might be called upon to administer underground. Splinting fractures, he said, was not unusual, recently suction, intubation and administration of oxygen had been necessary, it was not out of the question to consider setting up a drip underground. Following his address, resuscitation techniques were explained and demonstrated by Medical Wardens and by the local branch of the Red Cross who loaned the models for practice. Meanwhile equipment used and developed by various rescue organisations was on display in the gymnasium.

Members of C.D.G. (Somerset Section) demonstrated the use of the M.R.O. Mark 2 Sump Rescue Apparatus in the school swimming pool. We gathered from the commentary by Oliver Lloyd that the casualty, or victim, Derek Stead had been press-ganged into participating - he said that for this exercise they could do without a volunteer who more than likely would turn out to be a neurotic masochist. Derek, immobilised in the exposure bag, tied into a carrying sheet and wearing the Normalair mask and reducer was transported (almost without getting wet) several lengths of the pool, a convincing demonstration of the skill of the operators, the simplicity of the apparatus and the safety of the technique.

After the tea interval, Clive North showed his films loaned by the B.B.C., which had been televised following two recent and difficult rescue operations on Mendip; this led naturally on to the demonstrations which followed. Fred Davies showed the method he had improvised on a recent Swildons rescue for lowering an injured person down a pitch, where it was not practicable to hang a ladder so that a caver could climb alongside and guide the descent of the casualty in a carrying sheet. The method employed involved the casualty being harnessed to the back of the rescuer and being lowered on a single rope run through a figure of eight descendeur. Meanwhile Tim Reynolds had the unenviable job of demonstrating the best way of tying a body into a standard M.R.O. carrying sheet. On this topic no two people seem to be able to agree, so much depending upon the shape of the body, the type of injuries and to what extent a vertical haul is necessary in the particular cave in which the accident has occurred.

The open forum after the demonstrations was unfortunately (from necessity) all too short, the main topic being the design and use of stretchers. It appears that in other caving areas depending upon the type of

cave passage and pitches encountered during a rescue, more than one type of stretcher might be used on the same rescue, the casualty being transferred from one to another when the circumstances required. On Mendip, however, only the standard carrying sheet is available and this is expected to cope equally well for all passages both horizontal and vertical, both tight and roomy; it was obvious from the reaction of M.R.O. wardens particularly now that more vertical cave passages have been discovered, that the seeds of doubt as to the universal application of our carrying sheet were sown. It would not be surprising to see practices using other stretchers being tried out in the future. It must be admitted, however, that to date the carrying sheet has proved to be adequate and even if people are not able to agree on the correct way of tying it up, it is a piece of equipment that all are familiar with.

Howard Kenney unfortunately had to curtail these discussions to tell about the experiments carried out by M.J.O. using 2½" rubber lined fire hoses and an air compressor to clear pockets of foul air and power air tools underground, and to invite people to attend the demonstration planned for the next morning at Sludge Pit. This technique he told us, had been first suggested by Luke Devenish as a possible alternative to the various methods of dispersing pockets of foul air, absorbing the CO<sub>2</sub> and enriching with oxygen, which had been tried without much success by M.R.O. under the direction of Dr. Alan Rogers in previous years. On the occasion that the new technique had had its first trial in Fairy Cave Quarry in May 1971, the volume of air at the end of 1000' of fire hose was sufficient to cause considerable displacement of air in a roomy passage. Although no air analysis was carried out it was thought that pockets of accumulated CO<sub>2</sub> could be safely dispersed by this method for long enough to effect a rescue, moreover, the air pressure was found to be sufficient to enable the use of rock drills and hammers. The pressure drop from the compressor at 100 psi over 1000' of 2½" fire hose was only 4 psi, being very much less than with an equal length of standard high pressure contractors air hose, where the pressure dropped by 80 psi.

The Dinner held in the Kennion Hall at the Blue School was attended by some 58 people, including cavers from most areas, the guests were Chief Inspector Dennis Parkinson (Frome Division) and the headmaster, Mr. Kenneth Bailey, and of course, Roger Dors.

During the Dinner, as might have been expected, there was a callout, the Police alerted M.R.O. to assist four Bristol youths reported overdue from a caving trip on Sandford Hill. In fact the party were out of the cave and on their way home probably before M.R.O. was alerted. Whilst we awaited the outcome of the callout Oliver Lloyd showed the rather nostalgic film made by M.R.O. instructing cavers on the use of the Mk 1 Sump Rescue Kit, both in a swimming pool and Swildons Hole Sump One.

The practice and demonstration in Sludge Pit next morning enabled more local people to have some experience in handling the hoses, and to re-test the rock drilling capacity of this method. Hugh Pearson and others of the Wessex Rescue Team laid 970' of hose to the bottom of the cave in less than an hour without trying too hard. Two shot holes two feet deep were drilled in ten minutes, demonstrating the potential value of the method in the event of a rescue where a passage, perhaps in excess of 5,000' from the surface, needed to be enlarged. An interesting possibility for future dig!!! When the hoses (loaned by Mr. Turner, the Somerset Fire Service Chief) were returned to the Fire Station at Bridgwater, Jim Hanwell and Fred Davies were shown a special hose trailer containing over 6,000' of a new light weight plasticised hose in 75' lengths with aluminium couplings etc. These would be available in the event of a real accident, much lighter and easier to handle than the canvas hose with brass couplings used on the practice. Although it has been calculated that the hose contains about 140 cu ft of free air per 1000' at a working pressure of 100 psi and that in practice it is fairly easy for one man to hold and direct the open end of an inflated 2½" hose, there seems to be some doubt as to what would actually happen if a hose ruptured under full pressure in a confined space near a caver.

The conference highlighted M.R.O.'s several positive contributions to the general rescue scene, but raised two important pointers for the wardens to consider in the future. First is the use of the carrying sheet as our only stretcher still entirely suitable for the changing and more varied and vertical character of Mendip caves? Secondly what tests can be devised to ascertain the potential hazards of using fire hoses underground, particularly if the technique ever becomes available to diggers?

## NOT NOW AND AGAIN, BUT AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN

### Part V

by Fred Davies

Our attacks on the small hole running roughly south that we had reached in March 1973 began slowly. Charges placed on the left-hand wall seemed to have very little effect and we only crept forward, still with that enticing black space in front of us. With about 4' of progress made, the tunnel was still so small that it was awkward to place charges at the very face, and even more difficult to crowbar out cracked rock. So I placed a good charge on the right-hand wall at the beginning of the passage.

My next visit to the site was solo. I forget who had accompanied me that day to the series but they had decided at Krapitan that enough was enough. Our little tunnel was a frightening sight. The one charge had just about doubled the width of the passage for its full 4' length. A vast quantity of broken rock lay poised ready to fall down the small aven where I felt certain it would block the squeeze out towards the Dave's Knee region. I quietly crept away and made certain that on the next visit I would have a companion to help re-excavate the squeeze and so ensure my path back to the surface.

Late in 1973 we did have one exciting trip to the Cowsh Series. Dave Causer decided he ought to see the place before his next long sojourn in the American Colonies. Satanic Mills, and I think Paul Hadfield, were going to follow us up the series, and we set off down the cave in normal conditions, reaching Little Pot without mishap. There was quite a heavy drip coming over Little Pot, more than usual, but nothing alarming. Dave took hold of the fixed rope and started to haul himself up. As his head came level with the lip there was a rumble from above and a torrent of dark brown, foaming, stinking liquid rushed over the lip and onto Dave. He rapidly returned to floor level and spent a few moments spitting out the amount he had swallowed and regaining his breath. The cascade continued but with care we were able to make the climb up into Boss Pot. The ascent of Boss was easy, the climb up can be made well away from falling water, and we went to the bottom of Bladder. This was a most impressive sight. Filled almost completely with roaring, splashing spray, we decided that there was no point in attempting to climb.

A retreat was made to the top of Cowsh Aven itself where we found Satanic Mills bemused by the eighteen inch deep stream roaring down from Great Aven. We all returned to the lower passages of IV but the heavy flow stopped almost as quickly as it had started, just as the last man abseiled down to IV. Visitors to Cowsh should beware - the run off of surface rain is extremely rapid but the only unpleasant place to be caught by a sudden rush of water is probably the tube between Krapitan and Shit Sump.

On a later visit with Brian Woodward we were able to clear away the vast stack of rubble waiting in the passage. Brian stayed by Dave's Knee while I climbed to the top of the aven and threw down the rubble which immediately blocked my access squeeze. It took Brian and I over half an hour to re-excavate the squeeze, a job that would have been extremely difficult from the inside only.

Now 1974 had come. On some trips early in the year we were helped by Mike Roger. On one of these Brian Woodward, struggling to lever off some cracked rock, remarked that he must be careful not to drop the crowbar as there was a deep but narrow (3 - 4") rift in the floor. A few minutes later a metallic clatter and a bout of cursing announced that he had done just that!

Paul Hadfield joined Brian and I on a trip and he very nearly squeezed out into what was now clearly a very big space. He did not quite make it but he was able to report open space, down for at least 10', up for at least 20', and in front for about 15'. Another bang was required and was placed on a projecting boss before we left.

On Saturday 16th February, Brian and I had one of our most exciting days in the cave. For the last couple of trips we had been alarmed by the greasy, slimy nature of the Bladder Pot climb,, What caused this

sliminess I do not know but I was very glad to put a fixed rope down Bladder and use a Jumar for protection on the climb. The existence of this extra fixed rope more than halved the tackle we had to carry into the cave. On this trip we put a drill anchor belay into the rock at the head of Bladder Pot, the thread belay had served us well but had never looked over strong. While we had the bolting gear with us we also took the opportunity to put a new ½" bolt at the top of Krapitan.

With our bolting done, we continued to the top. The way was open and held on a line by Brian I crawled out into a 3-4' wide rift. It is just an easy width to bridge. The climb to the floor proved very easy and Brian soon followed without the benefit of any protection from above. The floor, a good 15' below our entry point, was a bed of coarse gravel sloping gently to the south. After about 20' the walls closed leaving only a 4' high passage,, The gravel floor sloped steeply now and after 10' I found a clear pool of water with no clear sign of an easy continuation.

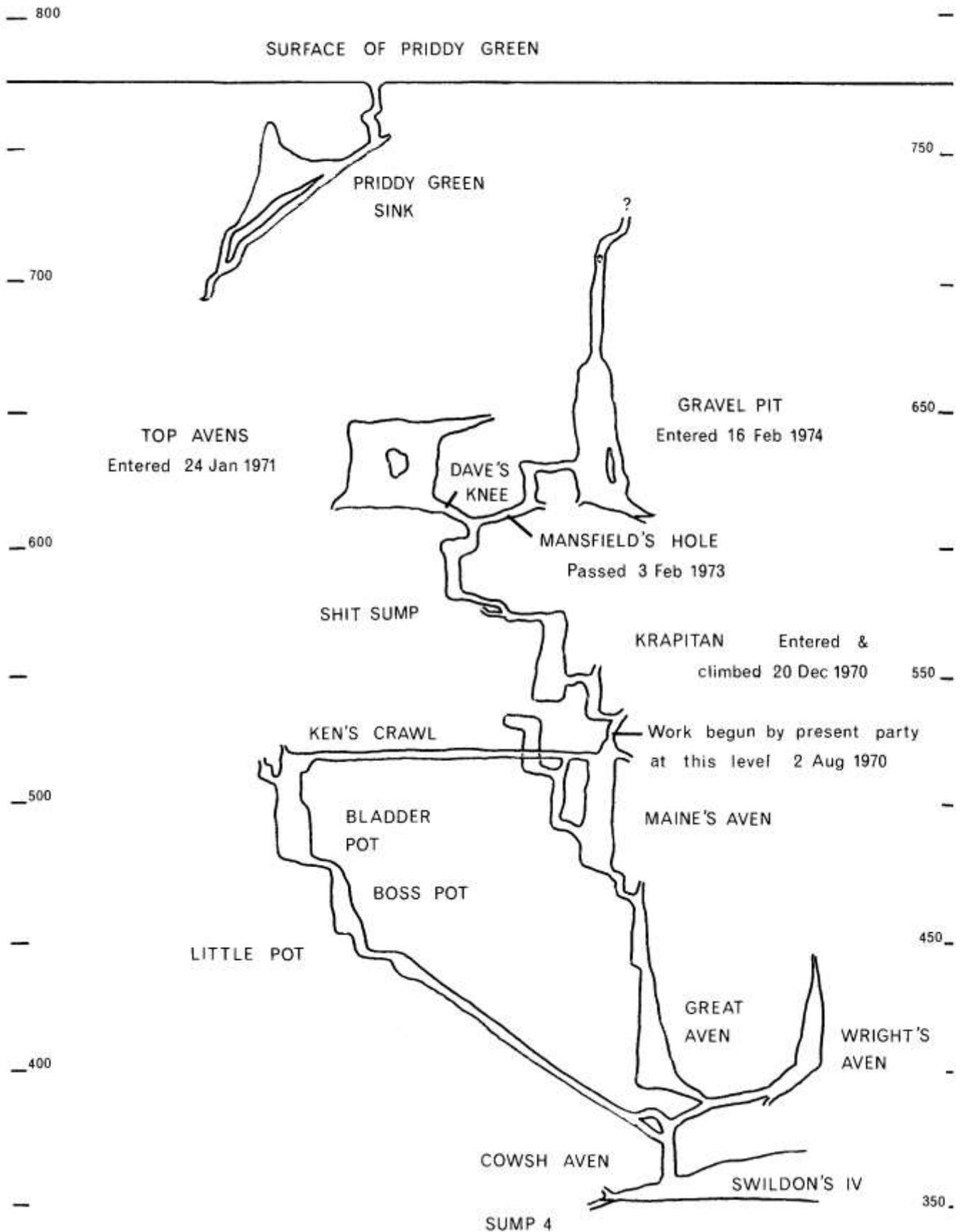
Brian turned his attention upwards and had soon bridged and straddled his way high above me. As I followed him up I was struck by the large quantities of gravel that lay on all the ledges. We named this the Gravel Pit from all these deposits, our first thoughts being that it was road washings. After each new gain of height I was expecting the aven to close, but Brian continued to move steadily up. At one definite point the aven narrowed till progress up was awkward because knees could not be raised high enough for a good purchase, but it kept on going. The rift extended in both directions as far as we could see yet it was rarely more than 6" wide. At last Brian came to a stop and reported a chock stone jammed across the rift. He made one attempt to pass, then offered me a try.

Gingerly, not wishing to dislodge the boulder, which was over 18" across, onto Brian, I managed to sidle slowly past it and was able to see the wider portion of the rift bending over to the right (north) before continuing up again. I failed to push my way around the corner but could see the route continuing, perhaps a little tighter, for at least 15'.

It had proved to be a wearying trip. As we slowly made our way out of the cave, my mind was frantically counting up vertical distances. I estimated the Gravel Pit as at least 100' of vertical gain. We must now be well above the level of the bottom of Priddy Green Sink and yet far away laterally. What the devil had we found?

# COWSH AVEN SERIES, SWILDONS HOLE

Extended Section (not better than CRG Grade 2)  
 Sketch of Priddy Green Sink added to show relative altitudes only.  
 Altitudes shown are feet above OD.



## REVIEWS

Northern Caves Volume 5 The Northern Dales by D. Brook, G.M. Davies, M.H. Long and P.F. Ryder. Published by Dalesman Books. Price £1.10.

Despite its volume number this is the second of five volumes to appear which are to replace the famous Pennine Underground, which has for so many years served potholers as a handy guide. It is a very real fact that it would be impractical to cover such a vast and classic area so comprehensively, in such detail, under a single cover. Divisions just had to come, The system that has been chosen can be summarised and criticised as follows:-

- a) The entire caving area is split into five distinct volumes
  - i) Wharfedale
  - ii) E. Ribblesdale, Malham, Attermire and Giggleswick
  - iii) Ingleborough
  - iv) Ribblesdale, Kingsdale, Leck and Casterton Fells
  - v) The Northern Dales

What happens to those sites that fall on the watersheds, so to speak?  
Have the regions been selected logically?

- b) A secondary grouping occurs within each volume. Eleven chapters in this volume and twelve in Volume 1 have thus been produced. Individual sites are arranged alphabetically within each chapter. This tends to confuse the presentation and makes the book more difficult to read and use.
- c) Grading of caves has been reduced to five numbered grades of severity, which may be soon outdated by subsequent discoveries. A book like this will always be out of date at the time of publication. A healthy sign, I think!
- d) An overall volume index has been provided. This is indispensable as a way of finding a cave description rapidly.

Now for some harsher criticism. The cartography of the whole series leaves a lot to be desired. An area map at 25 miles to one inch gives an idea of the areas covered by each chapter. I was relieved to see that this had been printed the correct way around in Volume 5, avoiding the error made in Volume 1.

The maps covering each chapter are shown at the beginning of the respective chapters. These maps are adequate except for the heavy emphasis on hachures or slope symbols. The map of Alston and Cross Fell contains a glaring example of this fault. Another problem has arisen in the "clearing" of important detail to make the cave names stand out. The sum result is a visual muddle. The location of caves is thus difficult to sort out. Personally, I would have chosen less obtrusive tone screens of dots, layer-tinted to show varying altitudes, or even omitted relief representation altogether. Priority should have been given to greater generalisation to show the location of cave sites with less emphasis on relief. It is no doubt a product of too many sites on too small a scale map that has resulted in the disappearance of Thornber's famous dry stone walls that all too often proved to be markers for locating many a cave in the Dales. Curiously, they appeared in Volume 1.

My other chief criticism concerns the binding. Aggravated by relatively thick pages, soft-covered and with only a glued spine, the book refuses to open flat. Very rapidly, especially with field use, the book decays into a handful of loose pages. A sewn binding would undoubtedly extend its life span.

The grouping of the area chapters into alphabetical order could be considered a departure from logic. If a regional policy is to be followed, why at the last moment turn to the alphabet to give an order. The whole

series could equally well have been based on an alphabetical list of cave names. This is not to say of course that the guide does not have great merit. The wide distribution and sheer bulk of the sites described represent months, if not years, of search and research. Caves just are not distributed evenly, and this calls for much skill in the methods of presentation. Any solution will be open to criticism - "Why didn't you do this - or that?" This guide is one answer to a difficult problem.

Of considerable use are the reduced surveys in outline which appear in the guide. All the major caves are shown, but I shall not venture to ask what is to happen in the case of the Lancaster-Easegill System! In terms of cave detail, I have found the book to be exceedingly accurate and comprehensive. All in all, this is a must for casual visitor and regular potholer alike.

D.G.E.

#### Underground drainage of limestone catchments in the Mendip Hills

by T.C. Atkinson and D.P. Drew. Special Publication No. 6, Fluvial Processes in Instrumental Watersheds (February 1974). Institute of British Geographers.

So the Karst Police have recanted. The WATER TABLE is back under Mendip. Eight years after Dave Drew transformed it from a familiar concept into two dirty words it now reappears saturating every joint and fissure of this paper by himself and that other calcstone cop, Tim Atkinson.

The paper is a good clear summary of the Mendip work carried out by Dave and Tim over the period 1965-70. Most of their findings have already appeared in various forms, some unpublished, but this review is valuable for its concise coverage of the whole field.

Water tracing results up to 1971 are figured, tabulated and discussed, and the calculation of water budgets is described in detail. The figures quoted indicate (but this is not boldly stated) that in the Cheddar and Wookey Hole catchments the volume of water flowing over ground from the Old Red Sandstone into the swallets is only about one quarter of the volume that reaches the limestone by underground leakage through the Lower Limestone Shales.

The relatively small part played by the swallet streams in feeding the resurgences is emphasised. Thus in Central Mendip only about 3% of the flow from Wookey Hole and Cheddar is supplied by their respective swallets. The remainder is percolation water. In East Mendip where limestone forms a smaller proportion of the total catchments the swallet contribution is greater, 26% in the case of St. Dunstan's Well. One supposes that springs with no known swallets, such as Chewton Mendip Spring and Banwell Spring, may be entirely fed by percolation.

The authors go on to calculate the volume of storage in the limestone aquifer, using recession curves for the Cheddar and Wookey Hole resurgences and the results of a pulse-wave experiment at Cheddar. They reach the remarkable conclusion that although the submerged channels feeding the Cheddar Spring contain a handsome volume of water (100,000 cubic metres), this is only one quarter of one per cent of the volume stored in flooded fissures in that part of the limestone below the water table but above spring level. Moreover, although the indicated Wookey Hole catchment (15 sq. km.) is much smaller than that of Cheddar, it is said to contain roughly three times as much water in storage. On the face of it, this would suggest that Wookey Hole is a much better developed system than Cheddar.

The final section sums up these findings, and contains the satisfying assertions that the water table is present ("Skeletal" and not exactly "a true water table" though it may be) and that caves, discrete conduits, run through it.

Dave and Tim will, I hope, forgive me if I try to pick a few holes. After all, I have been through a chastening 8-year period when squares who still believed in water tables were regarded with the same sort of tolerant scorn as flat-earthers, and my meek attempts at a come-back (e.g. WCC Jour. 22 (126) pp 438-442) met with silent disdain!

In the water budget section, too much is perhaps made of the difficulty of achieving a perfect balance between input and output. It is hard to draw catchment boundaries even moderately accurately on the limited evidence provided by water tracing to date. Some of the groundwater divides shown (Figure 2) are debatable, for example, why should the Cheddar catchment not extend to the northern escarpment, where there are no significant springs between Rickford and Sherborne?

The old chestnut about speedier flow along the geological strike in East Mendip appears again, and I still do not believe that strike control is decisive. In the natural swallets an increase in the strike component means an increased path length, which could also be important. Some of the major East Mendip slockers, such as Stoke Lane, East End, and probably Withybrook, are artificial and only a few hundred years old, inasmuch as their streams are led to them over dry limestone along lined channels, leaks in which have been plugged as soon as they appeared. Thus they are not strictly comparable to natural sinks, and in view of the self-sealing properties of channels carrying muddy streams (WCC Jour. 13 (155) p 103) the ability of some of these abnormal waterways to cross each other, without their water mixing is not as surprising as it at first seemed.

The really astonishing feature of the paper is the figure obtained for phreatic storage above resurgence level in the Wookey Hole limestone catchment. At 112 million cubic metres (25,000 million gallons) this is a colossal volume of water, equal to five and a half Chew Valley Lakes; an unsuspected groundwater resource of major importance to this area. By tapping it (and a quoted resource equal to two more Chew Valley Lakes in the Cheddar catchment) Bristol Waterworks' problem could be solved for decades, and flooding on the moors south of Mendip could be relegated to history. Can it really exist?

Viewed from one angle, this quantity of water would sustain the Wookey Hole Axe as its mean flow of 11 million gallons daily for six years without rain. . Yet flow in the Axe at Glencot falls to less than 2 million gallons daily in dry summers. From another angle, if we allow an average thickness of 50 metres for the saturated slice of limestone below water table but above spring level in the Wookey catchment (probably a generous figure in view of the proved depths of the major swallets) we find that the volume of aquifer involved is 750 million cubic metres. Yet one seventh of this is now said to be water, in other words the porosity is unprecedentedly high at 14%. What a paradise for the cave diver!

I conclude that the figure quoted is a gross error, and can think of three possible explanations. It could be a misprint, but this seems impossible as it appears in several places in the paper, and the figure for Cheddar is quoted in the article on Mendip hydrology that was published in 1973 by Somerset County Council (reviewed in WCC Jour. 13 (151) pp 17-18) as a supplement to the study "Quarrying in Somerset". It may seem alarming that such an error can occur in a document likely to influence the future of the Mendip Hills. The second possibility is that of a mathematical error, upon which I cannot comment, and the third is that the recession curves were not properly analysed, inasmuch as they represent drainage from other rocks beside the limestone.

I think the third possibility is correct. If as suggested above there is important underground leakage from the Old Red Sandstone into the limestone, the rate of leakage is likely to stay fairly constant for very long periods. Surface swallet water can be regarded as overflow from the O.R.S. aquifer, a very variable quantity. In dry spells, as the flow from Wookey Hole decreases, the relatively constant component leaking from the O.R.S. forms an increasing proportion of the whole discharge. The recession curves must reflect the release of storage from two very different aquifers, and the pitfall into which the authors have fallen is that of ignoring the O.R.S.

It's a shame really. We could have used all that water to good effect, as well as the vast caverns it would be filling.

W.I.S.

## FROM THE LOG

### 23rd-25th August 1974 WEST WALES

Pete Palfree, John Hunt, Bob Scammell. Sea cave at Cwm Tudu, West Wales. Following a local story that a cave at the above cove joins with one at Llangraddog about two miles (?) along the coast, we found one about 150'-200' long, but none two miles. Entry to these caves, of which there are 7 or 8 around the cove, is a case of swimming to the entrance and riding in on the most convenient wave. We also stopped at the Gold Mines near Caio. Very interesting - one with a 50' shaft and various levels. Finished weekend with a splash in Porth.

B.S.

### 1st September 1974 SWILDONS

Vicarage Passage. Chris Murray, Pete Moody and Bob ? on a trip to 2 to collect water samples. We took the first just upstream of the Inlet Sump, the second below the Inlet Sump and then went up to Vicarage Passage. On the bend going towards Vicarage Pot, where Greg Pickford found some new passage a couple of years ago, a small stream comes in. It was heavily polluted. The stink is absolutely diabolical, it makes Cowsh at its worst smell like essence of roses. A deposit of white slime is two inches deep near the inlet. Chris bravely collected a sample. May his soul R.I.P.

P.M.

### 15th September 1974 CUCKOO CLEEVES

P. Moody, Alison, C. Murray. Cuckoo Mark II again! (God knows why). Using the bars taken down last time, we managed to shift a lot of mud, shingle and boulders from the end of the rift above the lake. 'Twere absolutely hair raisin'! The way on is an upward wriggle through and beneath 'orrible great boulders, which proved to be even more unstable than we thought, as they collapsed again just as we were leaving - a narrow escape no less! The site is potentially extremely dangerous, as even a slight injury might make it impossible to get through the crawl from the lake. The general feeling is that the place is best forgotten. Cuckoo Cleeves - R.I.P. Amen.

Anon.

### 22nd September 1974 SLUDGE PIT

Foul air at Sludge. A number of Mendip notable worthies gathered at Sludge - Nigel came with drill, Brian did the telephones, Howard (plus many others) gave advice! Everyone else thrutched with the 1000' of fire hose. The test comprised firstly flushing the sump area with fresh air and secondly drilling shot holes. 2' shot holes were drilled in 6-7 minutes. All was successful. Even John Ham was there!

C.G.

### 28th September 1974 LONGWOOD SWALLET

P. Moody, C. Murray, I. Jepson. In pouring rain to a very wet Longwood. No problems in Longwood - through Christmas Crawl, down Swing Pitch and very spectacular Fault Chamber. Proceeded downstream to first pot, where we chickened out, as in the crawl we were in imminent danger of involuntary participation in unauthorised flooded lung respiration experiments. 2 hours. Very sporting.

I.J.

### 28th September 1974 SURFACE SITES

P. Hendy, B. Gay, C. Murray, A. Vanderplank, Alison etc. In view of the heavy rain in the last few days, especially today, went around some of the major swallets. EASTWATER - pool at entrance, cascading down through boulders. Cave very wet, possibly impassable, just inside entrance. SWILDONS - water halfway up relief pipe. MANOR FARM - Medium stream, but sinking well. LONGWOOD - large stream sinking at blockhouse, a large volume being taken by the lower flood entrance. G.B. - water collecting at entrance. Heavy drip could be heard inside. Collapse depression had pool at bottom, mud slumping rapidly down the sides. TYNING'S FARM SWALLET - backed up, water rose 2" in about 6-7 minutes.

Anon.

18th October 1974 SLUDGE PIT

Friday evening trip by F.N.C.C. Included Paul Blundel, B.Milton, Dave Gill, Greg., Prew, Adrian Vanderplank, J. Robinson, A. Watson, Andy? Trip to sump to lay charge in shot holes drilled during the CRO conference exercise.

P.B.

19th October 1974 SLUDGE PIT

Adrian Vanderplank and Adrian Gay. The above had a pleasant trip to Sump 1 where the bang placed on Friday had done b....r all damage except from loosening sump roof and bringing some small boulders down. It is possible that with crowbar and digging tools the roof can be raised to allow a better working face and area.

A.V.

26th October 1974 ST. CUTHBERTS

Practice rescue. Attempted to remove subject from a squeeze in Long Chamber Extension. Rescue deemed impossible from this point, it being easier to drop (!) a victim down Pillar Chamber. Next point was that after getting subject ready in the carrying sheet, it was found that the hauling ropes had been left on surface. B.E.C. practice rescue - say no more!

C.G.

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**MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION**

Rescue Call-out

All 999 Emergency Calls for Cave Rescue, as indicated in previous circulars and on our notices at cave entrances, are channelled to the new Police Divisional Control Room at Frome. In the rare event of the line being already in use, such calls are automatically routed via another control centre at Bath. M.R.O. Wardens and Police in the field have direct access by radio to either centre during an operation so that the speed and extent which essential information can be exchanged is now respectively much faster and more widespread. The effectiveness of this system must not be impaired by unnecessary or trivial calls; therefore: -

1. A 999 CALL IS FOR GENUINE EMERGENCIES ONLY,
2. ROUTINE QUERIES TO THE POLICE SHOULD BE VIA FROME 2211.

However, the Police must not be bothered on general matters; for example, CAVERS MUST MAKE THEIR OWN ARRANGEMENTS REGARDING THE DETAILS AND REPORTING OF PROPOSED TRIPS, PREFERABLY WITH OTHER CAVERS. In short, please do not confuse or abuse a very efficient communications system specifically designed for rescue services only.

J.D. Hanwell  
Hon. Sec. & Treasurer,  
Wookey Hole,  
7th November 1974.

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