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EDITORIAL

Once again, politics is raising its head. On Mendip, there is a move to revitalise the dormant Charterhouse Caving Committee, while at national level, the proposed takeover of NCA by the BCRA could have far-reaching consequences, and is being closely monitored by the CSCC. Whatever happens, the committee will ensure that controls on access and our activities are kept to a minimum and as flexible as possible.

As I write, a small Wessex party has descended on Belgium, and hopefully they will record their exploits in a later issue of the Journal. For the present, you will find reports from Swildon's Hole, Canada and Essex. The MRO report emphasises the folly of allowing familiarity to breed contempt underground, and there are some lessons here well worth remembering, we like to keep our members!

CLUB NEWS

It is a sad duty to record the death in April of Jack Duck. Jack was a founder member of the Wessex in 1934 and was in recent years a Vice President. Although he had been in ill health for some time, his interest in caving was still keen, and the Club will surely feel a deep sense of loss.

Tackle Making is proceeding slowly. It is believed we have nine ladders, so Dave Morrison is giving this aspect top priority.

Insurance Members who use Mr Nobel's magic hammer are reminded that the Club's insurance policy does not cover accidents caused by explosives, and they should make their own arrangements in this respect.

Cars No-one should leave cars in the Upper Pitts car park for long periods since this area is intended for use by members and guests staying at the HQ, not for long-term storage or repair of vehicles. The two cars currently at Upper Pitts are to be removed before the next Committee meeting.

Upper Pitts There is a considerable amount of work to be done on the HQ in the next few months. Tasks include: 1) modifications to the drainage system 2) filling of holes in the drive 3) tiling the shower ante-room floor 4) the construction of a new incinerator. The hut warden intends to display a full list of jobs requiring attention, and all volunteers will be received with rapture.

Hut Keys will in future be subject to a non-returnable deposit of £1.50.

Caving Politics At the recent AGM of the NCA it was suggested that this body should merge with the BCRA. This was opposed by the CSCC, DCA and Cambrian CC, though the CNCC remained uncommitted. From the ordinary caver's point of view, it seems difficult to justify the BCRA as our representative at national level, and there is a suspicion that if this were to happen, BCRA would have

direct access to Sports Council grants, to its own benefit. The situation is being actively monitored by the CSCC.

The present executive of the Charterhouse Caving Committee has been totally inactive over the last two years, and the BEC, WCC and SMCC are convening a meeting of all Committee member clubs on May 11th in order to ensure that it continues to fulfil its responsibilities to the waterworks company and to cavers in general. Access to controlled caves has remained in operation throughout, so fortunately it should be quite easy to pick up the threads.

Unpaid members there are approximately 60 of these, who will not receive copies of this journal.

Sales There are some black polybags on sale at 5p each from Upper Pitts. They are suitable for kit carrying.

Mew Members There were no applications for membership.

(The above was abstracted from the minutes of the Committee meeting held at Upper Pitts on March 30th 1980)

S. Deal, Hon. Sec.

Tummy Trouble We were surprised to learn recently that Phil Davies, who with Pat is travelling overland to the Far East, has been shot in the stomach by Thai bandits. After a short spell in a mission hospital, however, Phil has been able to continue his travels.

DIARY DATES

13th/15th June	Gower weekend
21st/22nd June	Lancaster Hole/County Pot
12th July	Otter Hole Practice Rescue
22nd/24th August	Diving weekend, Beer, Devon
5th/7th September	South Wales
20th/21st September	British Cave Research Association. Annual Conference
26th/28th September	South Wales
18th October	Wessex Gave Club AGM and Dinner
26th October	Peak Cavern (fully booked)
15th November	Rumbling Hole
16th November	White Scar Cave (fully booked)
13th December	White Scar Cave

For further details, contact the Caving Secretary, Jeff Price.

OBITUARY

Dr F. S. WALLIS

Wessex members will sadly miss the geological and archaeological knowledge of Dr. Frederick Stretton Wallis, the honorary curator emeritus of Wells museum, who died at the age of 84 in March 1979.

Dr. Wallis has been associated with the Wessex Cave Club since its early days. In the late 1930's he more than once invited members on a conducted tour of Bristol museum where he was deputy director, and he led several Wessex geological field trips to the Priddy and Chewton Mendip areas.

In 1956 he was the Guest of Honour at the Annual Dinner and in 1959, to fill the vacancy left by the death of H.E. Balch, he was elected and invited to become President of the Club. This was a time of difficulties within the Club and he declined the offer partly because of his move from the area to become Curator at Torquay museum. He remained however a much valued Vice President of the Wessex until the end of his life.

Dr. Wallis was born in Bristol and educated at Fairfield Grammar School and Bristol University. His studies were interrupted by the First World War when he joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment and later the Royal Flying Corps. Here, being of light build and intelligent, he was chosen to be sent up in observation balloons near the front line to report on enemy movements. Eventually from this vulnerable position his balloon was shot down by German aircraft leaving him with wounds which led to many months in hospital and a permanent slight limp.

After the war he returned to Bristol University where in 1920 he obtained a First Class Honours Degree in geology. In the same year he married, and joined the staff of Bristol museum, where he remained for 40 years, entering as an assistant curator in geology and leaving as director. During this time he worked for and obtained an M.Sc., a Ph.D. and a D.Sc., and for 30 years held the post of special lecturer in sedimentary petrology at Bristol University.

He used to tell the story of how, shortly after he had been appointed to the museum staff, a young student frequently came in with geological and archaeological problems with which the museum helped as best they could. The student was E.K. Tratman who also became a Wessex Vice President.

Dr. Wallis was a kind and gentle man and a prodigious worker, producing numerous papers which were published in the transactions of various societies. Among those of local interest were 'The Fossil Insects of the Bristol Coalfield', 'Carboniferous Mollusca from Shipham', ' Draycott stone and marble' and 'Petrology of 19th century millstones in the Wells area'.

He also produced papers with several well-known archaeologists and they include 'Stone Axe Factories', 'The Stones of Wells Cathedral', 'Stone used in Somerset pulpits' and a report on Barrow mump for H. St. George Gray showing it to be of natural formation; only the irregular terraces are man-made.

He was always interested in adult education and worked and lectured for numerous societies, and started the monthly summer walks and winter lectures at Bristol museum. Societies of which he became President at some time were the South Western Group of Museums, the Museum Association, the Bristol Naturalists Society, the Bristol and Gloucester Archaeological Society, and the Geological Section of the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society. He was

also a Fellow of the Geological Society and was awarded the Lyell Fund for his fieldwork in 1941. During the Second World War he was editor of the Museums Journal and in his spare time belonged to the Royal Observer Corps.

Wessex members who know the museum of Torquay and Wells may have noticed the exceptionally high standard of exhibits in the geological sections and this can be largely attributed to our Vice President Mr Wallis.

A small book has just been published (March 1980) about the village of Easton. It is dedicated to Dr. Wallis who lived there for his last 14 years and whose work on the history of the village provided the foundation for the booklet.

Dr. Wallis leaves a wife, daughter, grandson and two great grandchildren.

C. and E. Hawkes

with thanks to Mrs Wallis, and Mr Cook of Wells Museum.

FRACTURE RIFT AND PASSCHENDAELE

Recent Extensions in Shatter Series, Swildon's Hole

P. D. Moody

In the Spring of last year Alison and I were at a loss for a digging site, Lionel's Hole had been played out the previous year, our hope for re-entry into Renaissance Series had not been forthcoming, and the terrible pollution of the Longwood stream kept us from our Renold's Passage project. It was Phil Dunk of the Shepton Mallet Caving Club, with whom we had teamed up earlier in the year, who proposed Shatter Series in Swildon's. Shatter Chamber was rejected as a place to dig both from a theoretical and a practical standpoint. It seemed probable to us that the way on would simply be a connection into Swildon's 7 and although in wet weather the roar of a large stream can be plainly heard from amongst the boulders in the lowest part of the chamber (suggesting to many, that the distance involved may not be as great as the survey indicates) those who have been encouraged to dig there have found their task difficult and dangerous. Our sights were set on the far more exciting challenge of Pirate Chamber. The Second Cave stream way (Ford 1965), which once flowed through Shatter Series, originally went to Pirate (Shatter Chamber being a later development); we wished to determine whether the route from Pirate would lead down to Shatter Chamber or, hopefully, continue towards Wookey at a high level independently to the modern streamway.

Pirate Chamber is a steeply ascending passage which has been extensively modified by collapse; many of the boulders have been cemented into position by stalagmite flows but twenty metres from and fifteen metres above the squeeze into the chamber the passage is totally blocked by a horribly unstable mass of breakdown. Phil, Alison and I started work in March. Digging consisted of either Phil or myself at the top of the chamber dislodging all the loose rock we could and then laying explosive charges on key boulders further into the choke. The sport was noisy and spectacular but there was little that Alison, or any of the others who came with us, could do to help and they usually went off on tourist trips to Shatter Chamber. It was after one of these excursions that Alison reported that the stream audible in Shatter had sounded very loud and suggested that we really ought to go there for a thorough look round.

On our visit to Shatter Chamber the stream did indeed sound close but it quickly became obvious that we were not going to get any nearer to it than any previous party had. All the routes down between the boulders in the chamber either became exceedingly loose or choked. Before leaving however we decided to check a tight ascending rift in the SE corner of the chamber. The rift was entered by a short crawl,

appeared impossibly tight and of little consequence but Phil (with some help from below) was able to climb sufficiently high to see that beyond a constriction the rift opened out into what looked like a large passage. Alison was summoned and it was possible for her, by standing on my shoulders and with me stood on Phil's head, to reach the constriction. Bien, like some nineteenth century chimney sweep with his apprentice, I was able to push and in other ways assist Alison up through an extremely tight angled squeeze into a horizontal passage above. The discovery only went a few metres to a further constriction but the rift could be seen continuing beyond, at least five metres high and a metre wide and heading southward towards Wookey.

The Pirate Chamber project was shelved and in the next seven days we managed three more trips to Shatter, successfully opening up the vertical rift and the squeeze which had stopped Alison. Fifteen metres further on another local constriction held us up and it was several weeks before Alison could squeeze by. The rift beyond all but petered out at high level but a route could be seen down between boulders in the floor. Another trip was planned for the following weekend. On the day of the Big Push Brian Woodward and Brian (Boris) Peak, two Shepton members, accompanied Phil, Alison and myself to Shatter but neither was able to negotiate the vertical rift into the extension. Wookey-bound, the original team pressed on. The squeeze had been sufficiently enlarged to allow me past but Phil found it still too tight and proceeded to attack it with a lump hammer while Alison and I tried to clear the boulders blocking the rift. Phil had more success than we did, managing to join us after five minutes work, but even our combined efforts were inadequate to open the way on, the rift being narrow and the choke more solid than had at first appeared. Thoroughly dispirited we were just preparing to re-join the others when we heard shouting from Shatter Chamber. The acoustics were very bad but it quickly became obvious that Brian and Boris had made a breakthrough. Our return was very speedy.

Rather sheepishly the two Shepton B's told their tale. When Phil had started hammering at the constriction in Fracture Rift Brian noticed that the noise of the blows resonated up from the boulders where they sat. It took only ten minutes to pull the rocks clear and reveal a tantalising black space below. Dropping through, they found a large and very muddy sloping rift leading off down and a couple of tight squeezes between unstable boulders brought them to a low stream way. Progress in both directions was stopped by loose boulder chokes and fearful that we would be blasting in Fracture Rift they had hurried back to tell us their news.

Brian and Boris generously left us to push the leads, a task eagerly accepted. The upstream choke was passed with little difficulty into a large boulder chamber where the stream was found to issue from an impenetrable bedding plane. A climb led us into a second chamber, directly above the first, and here we found a rift, guarded by a mass of breakdown, heading off over the bedding. From the upper chamber Phil also discovered an easy route back to the rift entered by Brian and Boris which avoided the two squeezes. Downstream we had less luck, a way on could be seen through the choke but while trying to garden it a little the whole pile on which I was standing dropped several feet, blocking the way and scaring the wits out of me. We decided to put a charge on the breakdown in the upstream rift and call it a day.

On the Sunday Boris, Phil and I returned to the new extension only to find the upstream rift choked hopelessly after five metres. No further progress could be made downstream either, our only achievement was a very crude dye-test; a quarter of an hour was spent muddying the stream, and Chris Milne with Bob Hill detected it emerging from under the first boulder collapse in Swildon's 7.

Having exhausted all the easy leads (and with a belly full of Shatter trips) no more work was done until September when we returned refreshed and revitalised from exploring vast foreign chasms and caverns. It was decided that the upstream bedding warranted a few weeks attention but should it not open out within that period the project would be left for leaner digging times. To our amazement on the second trip an hour's work with crowbar and hammer by Phil, Brian and I saw the passage enlarged enough for Alison to worm through. She found a large clean-washed rift in jet black limestone ending at a climb. The following week we were all into the extension. A series of passages led off from the climb but all quickly either choked or became too tight. In one, the constriction could be seen to be only short and the

scalloping on the walls roof and floor, and the enticing draught blowing through left us in no doubt as to where to direct our attention. The next week we were through again; two boulder chokes held us up temporarily but by the end of the day we had a further twenty five metres of passage terminating at a sump and a huge boulder-choked cross rift.

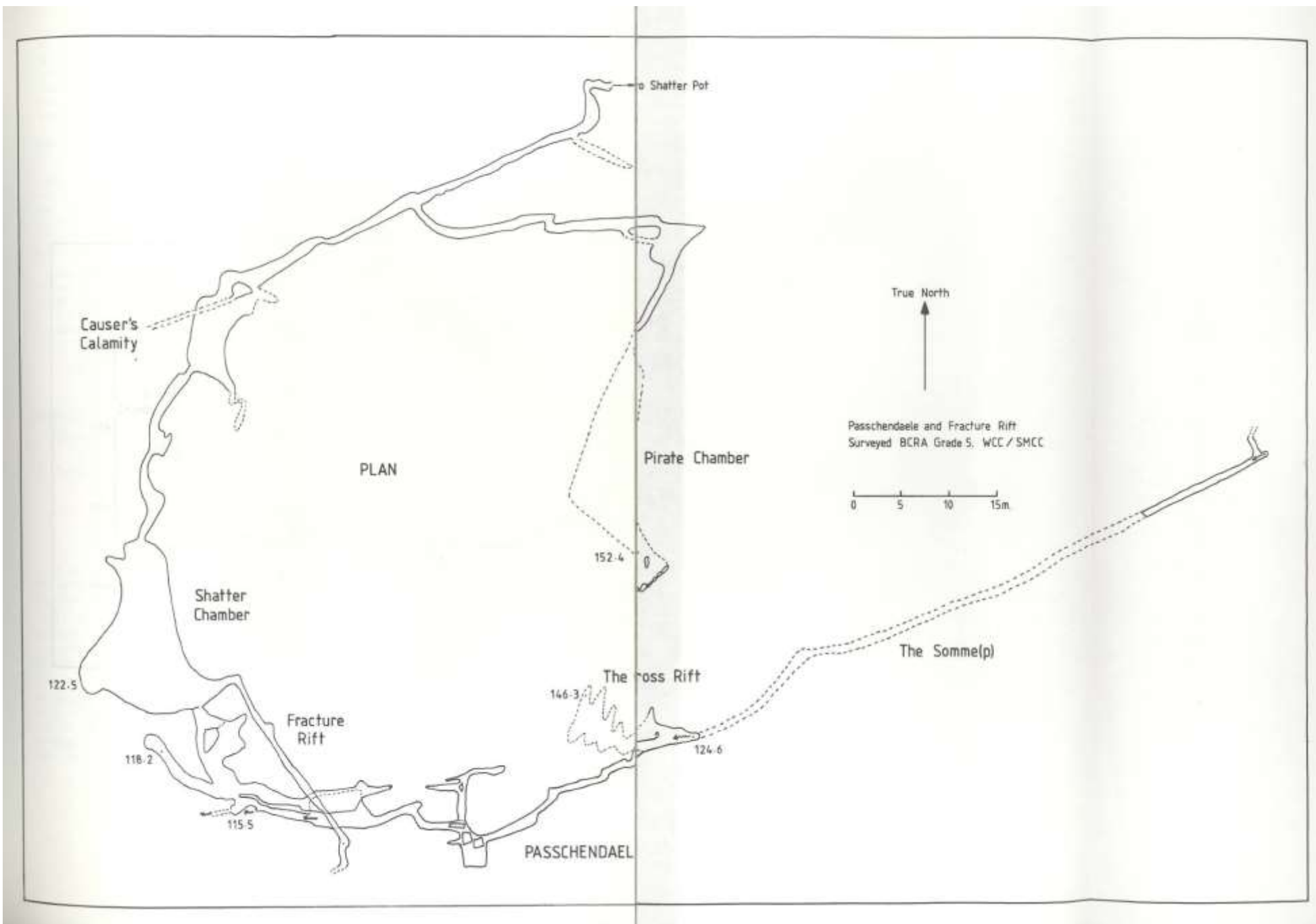
Over the next month the series was surveyed, the sump dived and an intricate route up between the boulders in the cross rift trail-blazed to a totally impenetrable area twenty five metres above the stream way. The survey was carried out by two teams of three: Andy Dawe, Mark Faulkner and Alison, and Brian Woodward, Phil and myself, using hand-held Suunto compasses and clinos and Fibron tapes. (The second team managed to avoid most of the work by losing its compass down a narrow crack, from where it still has to be recovered.) From the survey we found that the cross rift was very close to Pirate Chamber and an attempt to establish an aural connection between the two was to some extent successful. In Passchendaele not a sound was heard from the group in Pirate, but they, standing at the top of the chamber, faintly heard the noise of our hammering coming from above them.

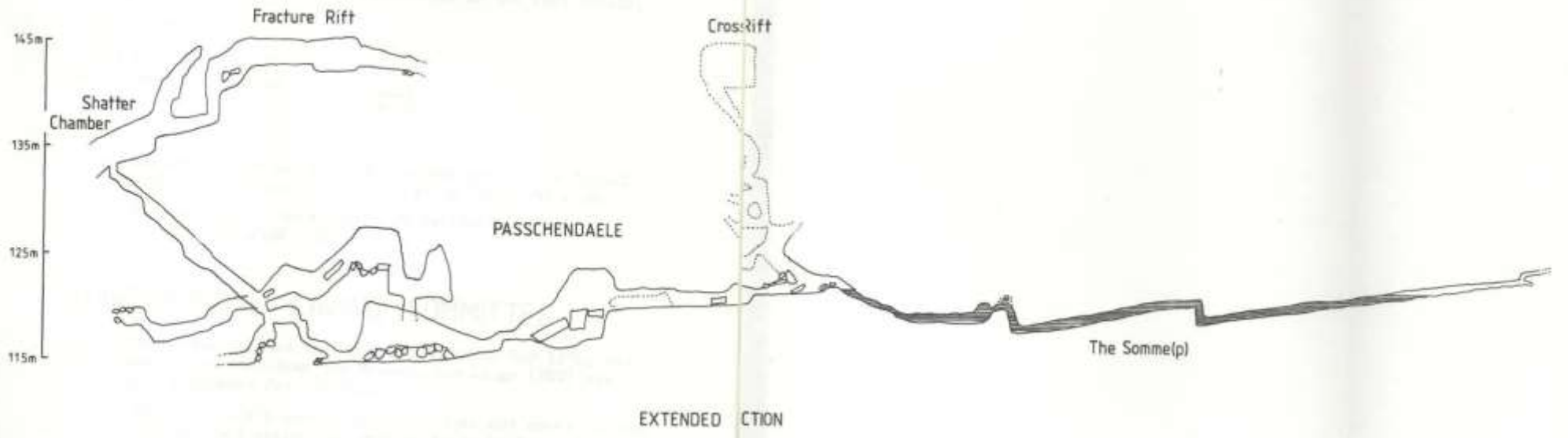
We expected the Somme (p) either to quickly choke or be a short U-tube. The first dive proved us wrong. Three more diving trips by Brian and I were required before we finally cracked it, and we now have the hardest carry leading to the longest sump in Swildon's. All the effort was rewarded on 2nd February when Passchendaele 2 was discovered. From fifty metres into the sump I was rewarded by a ramp up into an airspace, the passage continued up at the same angle as the underwater passage with the stream cascading towards me. There was no increase in the dimension of the passage, a metre high and fifty centimetres wide, and a full dekit was necessary just to progress along it. After only fifteen metres the stream resurged from a minute sump, a bypass to the left went a couple of metres but then also became too tight. The cave god's sense of humour does not amuse!

The discovery and exploration of Passchendaele has hammered one more nail in the coffin for the idea of a high level continuation from Pirate Chamber towards Wookey. A slight possibility remains that the passage does exist, our extension being only a capture from it, but in all probability the development from Pirate has now been found. A successful dig in either the upper part of the cross rift or the roof of Pirate Chamber should resolve the question but neither site appears an easy proposition.

The cavers who thought they could hear the mainstream in Shatter Chamber have been proved wrong and the chance that a 'dry' route down into Swildon's 7 can be found looks as remote as ever. We did manage to push the downstream ruckle a short way in September but it is a real horror story. Hydrophobes may do better trying for their link from the original dig in Shatter Chamber which is still downstream of any point in Passchendaele.

Two problems remain outstanding although we do hope to resolve one, finding the source of the Passchendaele stream, within the next month. The stream is very responsive to rainfall and ceases to flow in dry weather; this is indicative of a swallet origin and the most obvious candidates are Ninebarrows and Sludge Pit some 750 metres away on North Hill. We are soon to do a water trace which should confirm the link and provide the much-needed incentive to force the squeeze on the far side of the Somme (p). The connection, if it could be done, would re-establish Swildon's Hole as one of the deepest caves in the country at around 200 metres deep and with still 80 metres in height to gain to the choke in Sludge Pit there should be plenty of large (??) open passage to find. The second problem will take longer to solve and require plenty of hard digging. From the survey it appears that the original dig in Shatter Chamber, Fracture Rift, is un-associated with Passchendaele; the passage crosses the boulder chambers at high level and just heads on southward. Were we side tracked from Wookey Way?





SURVEY NOTES

As stated in the article the Passchendaele / Fracture Rift survey was carried out using hand-held Suunto equipment. Station co-ordinates were calculated by computer and the plotted survey is to BCRA Grade 5 standard. The Somme(p) and Passchendaele 2 are to Grade 2 (the length of the sump was estimated from the length of diving line left on the reel after the dive and a Suunto diver's compass was used to obtain a bearing on the far side of the sump.)

For completeness, included on the small scale plan are the Sump 6 bypass, surveyed to BCRA Grade 3 by Chris Milne and myself last year, and various Grade 1 sketches of the other odds and sods discovered in the last decade.

Length of passage found:

Fracture Rift	25 m
Passchendaele 1	160 m
The Somme(p) and Passchendaele 2	<u>75 m</u>
	260 m

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- Atkinson, T.C. Now at last it can be told - extensions in the fossil series of Swildon's Hole.
J. WCC 9 (106), 59 - 68.
- Ford, D. The sequence of development in Swildon's Hole.
J. WCC 8 (99), 198 - 205.

CHARTERHOUSE CAVING COMMITTEE

A consolidation meeting was held at the Hunter's Lodge on May 11th, and was attended by 8 member clubs including the Wessex. Tim Large (BEC) was elected Hon. Secretary / Treasurer for 1980/81.

It was noted that the Committee's insurance policy does not cover the use of explosives. A new, streamlined system for permits is to be brought into operation on September 1st, if BWW agree with this and an amended form of indemnity.

All digs are in good order. Dave Morrison wants to conduct a water trace in Longwood Valley Sink, and the MNRC, digging Toothache Pot, are 32 ft down in a vertical mined shaft with a loose boulder floor. The UBSS' Bat Passage dig in GB is intermittent. Though still loose and dangerous, Great Chamber is accessible via two routes. That nearest Ladder Dig is probably the safer of the two.

NORTH AMERICAN DIARY - VI

P. L. Hadfield

Early November: this month again through the countryside of Alberta and Montana to make the now-familiar rendezvous at Bozeman with the Shiny Mountain cavers. Accompanied this time by two Canadians, Denise Tummon and Brian Pratt, I was headed once again for Mill Creek Cave.

Our team of eight cavers and two huskeys was slowed on the approach march by the knee-deep snow but three hours from the trailhead found us setting up our bivouacs in the cave entrance, from which the 500 ft crawl way was soon passed to lead us to the heart of the system. On this occasion the two Canadians and I formed one team whilst the remaining Americans split into two further teams, each with its own objective. That of our team, needless to say was the promising area I had observed on my last visit and we wasted little time in travelling to 'Lost Torch Passage' where we placed a rigging point at the head of the 15 ft drop. We were soon at the head of the pitch I had visited on the short solo excursion of my last trip.

Wedging myself in the rift I belayed Brian, who half climbed, half fell down the pitch into the roomy hall beyond. Meanwhile Denise, eager to seize some of the glory for herself, nipped off up the inlet passage I had peered into on my earlier visit. Once Brian had untied I was therefore alone at the head of the pitch and amused myself for the next twenty minutes by placing a bolt for rigging the pitch. As I was finishing this job off I was interrupted by the reappearance of my two Canadian friends in a highly agitated condition. Apparently, their various leads had met up at the first pitch in the stream way after the 500 ft crawl way. Due to the complex pattern of the stream in this cave I found this hard to visualise and it was only after we had surveyed the new section, linking them up with already-known parts of the cave, that I realised that we had succeeded in resolving a little of the mystery of the Mill Creek water system. Much however remains to be done, as we learned from the reports of the other two teams.

One had attempted to push the draughting slot that I had found on my very first visit to the system in 1978, but had been repulsed by the cold, wet, tight crawl ways on the approach to it. The other team had experienced a tantalising couple of hours when exploring some abandoned passage 'downstream' of the long gallery. They had been able to smell wood smoke from the fire that we had lit in the cave entrance by our bivouac. Knowing that a new entrance in this area would bypass the rigours of the entrance crawl way, they had scabbled around frantically while the smell of wood smoke endured, to try to find it. Success eluded them, however, and it remains the objective of another trip.

It had been our original intention to get in a second day's caving in Mill Creek, but overnight temperatures of -35°C transformed our damp caving overalls and wetsuits into rigid and grotesque caricatures of the human form. The thought of attempting to put them on for a second trip changed everybody's mind. The only way we were able to get our boots on was to re-enter the cave to where there was running water, and soak them in the stream until flexible. We then put them on over the perennial plastic garbage bags worn over socks. This worked quite well as long as we kept going so that there was sufficient heat output from our feet to prevent the boots from re-freezing!

Only too soon we were back at the trailhead and into the hot springs at Chico. Lounging in the steaming open-water pool with the air temperature at a balmy -20°C we discussed the objective for Christmas/New Year. There were, it appeared, three major options. The first was the by now traditional trip into Scapegoat system, for yet another crack at Green Fork Falls; secondly a winter push in Q5 on 'the Island' to extend the exploration, and thirdly a new contender, Great X in Wyoming.

As it transpired, the Scapegoat trip was left to the enthusiasts of the Shining Mountain boys, whilst the Canadians opted for Great X. Our trip, however, was a disappointment as our schedule did not allow for any time underground. It does, nevertheless, lead me on to talk about an aspect of caving in N. America not found in Europe. This is the 'ski-in' (or out).

Firstly, as you may appreciate, there are very few caves in the West in the USA or Canada that are

situated comfortably near driveable roads. As a result, hikes of up to 20 miles are considered a standard part of caving trips. Now put the hike in high country in the dead of winter and you are faced with the additional problems of temperatures down to -40°C and deep, deep powder snow.

It's hard to describe just how heavy a full cave pack feels when you are carrying not only a wetsuit, lamps, vertical rig, tackle, boots, gloves etc but in addition all the food and paraphernalia for making camp and surviving in such a harsh environment. But this is just the beginning of the problem. To move over the deep powder snow the proven technique is by cross-country ski. Hoisting the pack onto your back while maintaining balance on the two long narrow appendages is an art that requires some practice. Next comes actual movement across the snow.

Reading the instructional literature you learn, that there should be a combination of kick and glide, and with the correct application of technique you should sail gracefully and effortlessly across the surface of the snow. It soon became apparent that the author of these texts had never had to carry full cave packs long distances at high altitudes.

To begin with, the excessive weight you are carrying has completely negated the flotation of the skis and they are buried, calf-deep, in the snow; any attempted bodily action, if you happen to have the strength to do it, simply buries them further. Then there is waxing. The correct wax for the snow 'sticks when you kick, slides when you glide'. To which my reply is Ha bloody Ha! In reality a wax that sticks builds up a layer of snow on the ski converting the 'slide' into a kind of tottering plod on 4 inch high stilts. On the other hand a wax that glides simply accelerates the process of falling over. This in itself is an experience it is best to avoid. Under normal conditions, ie no pack, a fall of even moderately deep powder snow can be difficult enough to recover from. First of all you have to locate your feet, usually on the ends of your legs which if you are lucky are not broken, and probably remove one or both skis. It is then necessary to stand up, if you can, in waist or chest deep powder, and spread your weight out over a sufficiently large and stable area in order to replace the skis. This can be an exhausting process, often involving the loss of a glove and incipient frostbite, powder snow down the neck, up the nose, caked in glasses and in every other imaginable crevice.

Now picture the situation on a steep hillside carrying an 80 lb pack! The fall itself is inevitably much more severe as you are precipitated off the edge of the trail down the slope, usually ending up on your back and head with the feet upslope, trapped in this position by the ungainly carapace on your back. Recovering from this position can be excessively arduous, involving, in addition to regaining one's feet and pack, the climb, usually up an unstable powder slope, to the original trail.

Every schoolboy is familiar with Newton's Law of Motion, relating to bodies moving in a straight line until compelled to change direction by an applied external force. This is well-illustrated by the cornering situations encountered when going downhill at an usually uncontrollable speed. Before engaging in one of these outings I discussed the matter with several experienced 'Cave Skiers' and the general conclusion that I reached, and subsequently confirmed by personal experience, is that though you may manage to turn both your skis and your body round the curve, this has no effect whatsoever on the pack, which, governed by Newtonian Laws, is obliged to carry straight on over the precipice or into the woods or wherever. This in itself would be of little consequence were it not for the fact that the correct method of carrying the pack involves attaching it to oneself by various straps and buckles which are generally not of the quick-release type. Hence the inevitable end result of such a situation is that the unfortunate skier is snatched off his feet and dragged head first and screaming into the outside slope of the corner by an uncontrollable cave pack.

An occasional incident of this type, as long as it doesn't happen to you, serves merely to enliven the trip. However after 18 miles (on the Great Cross trail) and any number of such falls, the comedy wears a little thin, and the whole process becomes more than a little tiring. Such are the hazards of winter caving in the North West.

A change of job and address (I am now a resident of British Columbia, and as I write, I can look up over a 6,500 ft elevation and see two glaciers pouring down towards me from the heights), have precluded any active caving for a couple of months, although I have just managed, together with Pratt and Tummon, to open up a new entrance to Bat's Nest in Alberta, which will give much easier, though very dangerous, access to the pretties in the far reaches of the cave. This entertaining outing almost resulted in my being buried alive under a landslide of humus and animal bones, and for a while I was isolated from my companions when I managed (shades of Flower Pot and Mr. Bishop!) to dig myself in when I was first through an unstable constriction.

My job will now be taking me south, away from the spring snows of B.C's mountains, and it will be a few months before I am able to get underground again. My objective will be, once again, West Virginia where I intend to revisit the underworld of the Greendriver and Pocohontas Counties, and who knows, perhaps find even a little more cave.

P.O. Box 3023
Smithers B.C.
27th March 1980

COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS – A.G.M. REPORT

The AGM of the CSCC was held at the Hunter's Lodge on May 17th, 1980. The following points of interest were discussed:

Singing River Mine is being built on. Access will be maintained, but it is now more important than ever that it is kept locked.

Brown's Folly and Swan Mines are to be gated at the request of Sir Charles Hobhouse, who owns the land and mineral rights. Some of the Brown's Folly entrances are on Avon Wildlife Trust land, but CSCC is negotiating with all parties to maintain access to bona fide visitors, and allow free entry to the mines by greater horseshoe bats (which will, apparently, hop in and out through 9 in. diameter concrete pipes).

Lamb Leer Oliver Lloyd has recently repaired the entrance ladder, and the Council has requested Southern Caving Clubs Co. Ltd to commission a structural survey, by a qualified person, of all fixed aids in the cave.

Severn Barrage The Council is keeping a watching brief, particularly with regard to any new proposals for extending quarrying concessions on Mendip.

Banwell Bone and Stalactite Caves are now controlled by Dundry Caving Group.

Amendment to Constitution The Wessex had put forward a proposal to add a rule to the constitution in order to ensure full debate of any major topics with possible far-reaching consequences. Following an assurance by the AGM that such topics would not be bulldozed through (the veto could be used to prolong discussion and allow time for the gathering and dissemination of information) this motion was withdrawn.

Access Booklet This could be ready by July. Each member club of CSCC will receive a free copy, and copies will be available at 50p each.

NCA The Council will resist any move by BCRA or any other constituent body of the National Association to merge with the NCA

(continued on page 33.)

DENEHOLES

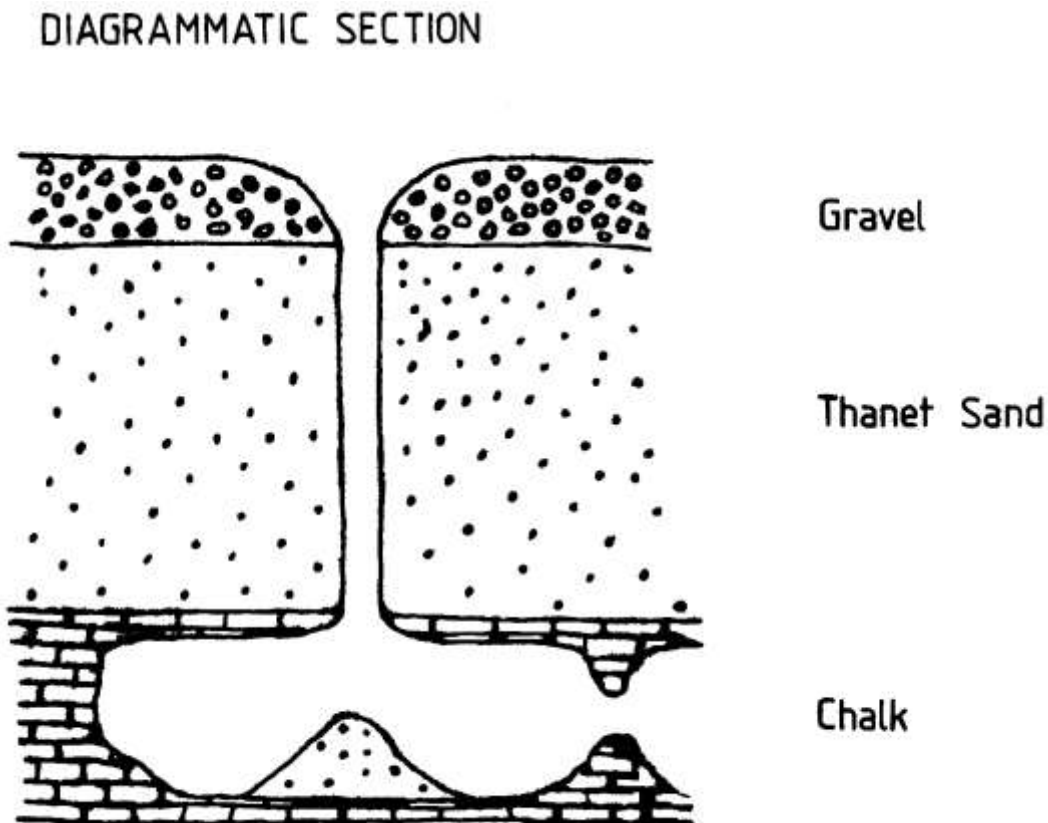
D. Sanderson

In 1974 I wrote an article in collaboration with Roger Wing about the Deneholes in Hangman's Wood, Grays, Essex. It was subsequently printed in the Belfry Bulletin (No. 131.) Following the two recent references to Deneholes in the last volume of the Wessex Journal, I thought it might be appropriate to rewrite the article with a few changes and additions to the information it contains.

Deneholes are found in a number of counties in the SE of England, and also in parts of France. Basically, the ones in Hangman's Wood consist of a single shaft dropping through the topsoil and the underlying Thanet Sand into a chalk chamber below. The shaft may be as much as 80 ft deep and up to 12 ft in diameter. The chambers at the bottom are of a 'double trefoil' shape, though elsewhere they can be a simpler bell-like shape. There were many shafts in Hangman's Wood, but there are now only two shafts of about 70 ft open. They lead to a network of chambers connected by short crawls.

It is not an easy task to date the Deneholes. Those at Grays were investigated by "the Essex Field Club in the 1880's and, in the reports, suggest that they were dug after the arrival of the Romans (some Niedermendig lava was found, and this was not imported into Britain until after the Roman occupation) However, a study of the bones found at the bottom of one shaft revealed the presence of badger, ox, dog and horse. There was a total absence of wolf and red deer, which were commonplace in the area during the time of the Normans. This would imply that they are post-Norman. However, in one Denehole some Roman urns were found, suggesting a pre-Norman age. One firm conclusion we can arrive at is that they were not all dug during the same period, and that they were dug when and where it was necessary to do so, which implies that they were of agricultural or industrial significance rather than the result of an event such as an invasion which could be accurately dated.

In the original article, we discussed nine suggestions as to why the Deneholes were dug. The five most interesting are repeated overleaf:



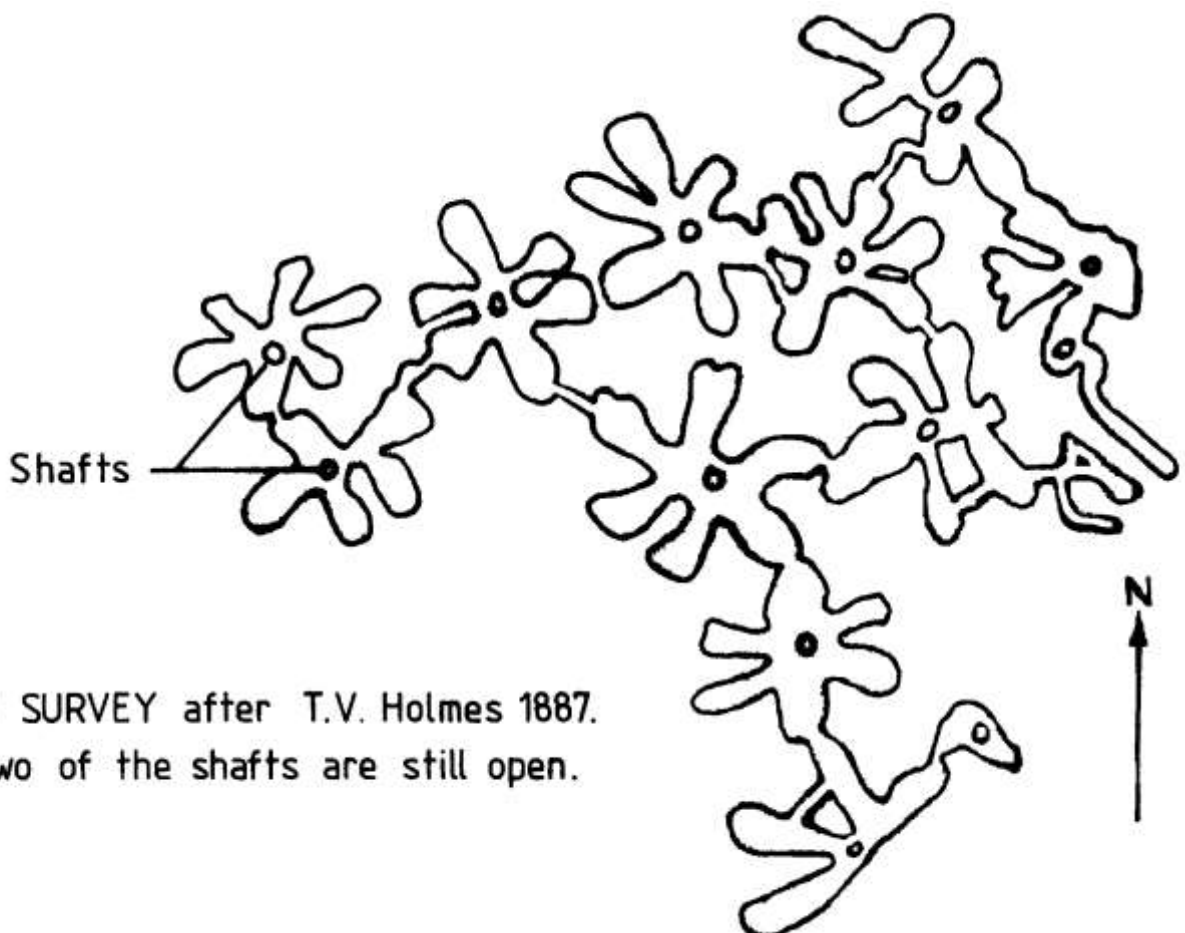
1. That the shafts are, in fact, natural. This is a recent theory. What has been supposed is that a cavity has been formed in the chalk bed by percolating water in a similar manner to that which occurs in limestone. This cavity is formed close to the top of the chalk layer. The theory goes that eventually the roof of the cavity meets the underside of the layer of Thanet sand above, and this drains through like an egg-timer to leave a cylindrical shaft dropping into a semi-filled chamber in the chalk below.

No matter how feasible this is, it cannot explain the double trefoil shape of the chambers. Add to this the problem of balancing the infill with the volume of the shaft, and the theory loses credibility - regardless of whether such, a formation process is at all possible.

2. That they were flint mines. There are several points against this view. Firstly, a band of flint can be seen in both the open shafts in Hangman's Wood, but this flint has not been touched. Secondly, there are no signs of debris either inside or outside the Deneholes, and this would be the first time a flint mine had been cleared up.

3. That they were places of refuge. According to Baker in 'Caving', this theory seems to have gained weight from the fact that locally the word 'Denehole' is pronounced 'Danehole' - implying that they were hiding places from the Danes. However, several commentators, including Baker, have observed that the word is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word 'Denn' which simply means 'cave' or 'den'. Also, the nature of the Deneholes themselves suggests that they are the last place one would wish to use as a refuge. Once in, it would be an easy matter to become trapped.

4. That they were granaries. This theory was much favoured by the Sussex Field Club report of 1887, and they arrived at this conclusion by drawing, an analogy between the Deneholes and other underground constructions which are definitely silos. However, where these silos are concerned, there has always been an abundance of evidence as to their use - evidence which the Deneholes have never displayed.



SKETCH SURVEY after T.V. Holmes 1887.
Only two of the shafts are still open.

5. That they were chalk mines, either for local marling or for commercial uses. This theory seems to be the most likely, and was accepted by Baker, though a few questions may still spring to mind. Firstly, why mine chalk at Hangman's Wood when there is a large outcrop of the rock barely two miles away? There may be several possible answers to this such as the cost or inconvenience of transport, or the different ownership of the land where the outcrop occurs. Secondly, why are the chambers shaped the way they are? Baker attempts to explain the trefoil shape in terms of how far a bucket on the end of a rope will swing from the main shaft, but this is not completely satisfactory. Rather, they are shaped in this way for purposes of structure. Some of the walls between chambers of one shaft and another are only a matter of a few feet thick, so they have been dug with a sense of precision. There is very little evidence of collapse, which implies that the diggers knew when to stop digging one chamber and start another. The trefoil shape may be the natural outcome of the maximum removal of chalk with the minimum of risk.

Since writing the above, I have found some correspondence concerning the Deneholes in 'The Essex Countryside' for January 1964 (Vol. 12, No. 84.)

Here are three extracts:

"After excavating some 5'6" deep in the sand at the bottom of one hole, my son and I uncovered a paved flint floor and some small flint arrowheads; under the floor was laid about 1'6" of imported gravel.. ,"

"...one cannot help feeling that their shape and size were governed by the limited area of an unsupported chalk roof."

"The Roman historian Pliny in AD 23 mentions chalk in Britain being dug from deep shafts, an early description of a Denehole."

Having moved away from the area, I have not visited the Deneholes for several years. I understand that the access arrangements, through Thurrock UDC Recreation Dept. Blackshots Lane, Grays, Essex, are somewhat more complicated than they were.

REFERENCES

Essex Naturalist. Vol I, 1887.

Forgotten Thameside. Glyn H. Morgan. 1951.

Caving. E.A.Baker.

Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute. 39. 1909.

Chelsea Spelaeological Society Records. Vol IV. 1965.

The last reference I have not seen, but it is reputed to be very good. I have seen an excellent survey of the Deneholes at Grays which, I suspect, comes from the CSS Records.

COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS

(Continued from page 30)

Somerset Trust for Nature Conservation This body is buying and leasing land on Mendip for conservation and recreation. Their attitude towards caving is uncertain - until recently, they did not know that there was a body, viz. CSCC, representing local caving interests. A watching brief is to be kept, as they are currently showing interest in the Minneries. Although certain groups using the land here do much damage, many, such as anglers, walkers, swimmers and so on do not. The Trust will be meeting on the Minneries shortly, and the Wessex will be represented. The Club (or rather, Glyn Bolt) has now made good the damaged gate on Waldegrave Swallet, and resecured the entrance. The same, unfortunately, cannot be said for the sides of the dig!

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer for the Year ending 31st Jan. 1980

Last summer, Mr. Kenneth Steele, the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset, retired after many years in the region. We remember him in particular when he was in charge of the old Somerset Police force as the caving community owes him much for his personal interest and support of MRO over the past twenty-five years. He was one of the three Chief Constables who met to further the links among Police, mountain and cave rescue groups throughout the country. MRO was one of the first to receive insurance cover whilst underground on rescues as a result of his foresight. This model is now used by all search and rescue teams associated with the Mountain Rescue Committee. We thank Mr. Steele for all this and wish him well.

The new Chief Constable, Mr. Brian Weigh, has already been extremely helpful to us and so the welcome tradition of close support between Police and MRO continues. On Mendip, this is reflected by the interest taken in cave rescue work by those at divisional control to the patrols on the scene. Superintendent John Lee at Frome has given us much advice and practical help over the years for which I am very grateful. When the call-out system transfers to Yeovil shortly, we hope that his particular help over communications will continue. One of the last activities of the year was to show Inspector Rod Deane and five of his colleagues from Wells around top Swildon's. And they want to go again!

Another stalwart to leave the area was Tim Reynolds. Apart from influencing the many sides of caving here and throughout the country, whilst a MRO warden Tim did much where it matters at some very serious incidents. He was always a great help to me as a neighbour here in Wookey Hole. Dr. Tim Lyons also left the area to take a new hospital post and we thank him, too, for making himself available for calls whilst on Mendip.

New automatic pumps installed by Bristol Waterworks Company upstream of Longwood Swallet and Swildon's Hole led to most wardens being taken on a guided tour of the former by Paul Hodge, Sources Engineer. He has taken a keen interest in the work of local cavers and we thank him for the contingency plans to reduce stream flows at both sites when necessary. Another get together of wardens and other MRO cavers was in Manor Farm Swallet when a useful practice with David Mager's improved stretcher was held hauling out Albert Francis from the bottom of the Curtain Chamber pitch to the surface. Albert has now been our standard patient on several practices. He tells us what to do.

The Mager stretcher, as we now call it, also impressed delegates at the Annual Conference of the South West England Rescue Association in November. This regional Mountain Rescue Committee body includes the RAF, Coastguards and Police as well as moor, mine, cliff and cave rescuers. So, it is a good one to exchange ideas, especially on equipment. It is fortunate to be informally organised with good sense and humour by Fred Barlow from Okehampton. Apart from seeming to be a chunk of Dartmoor, Fred is a Devon Speleo' and claims to have been won to caving from climbing by Oliver Lloyd here on Mendip!

We continue to be fortunate in supplies of equipment from interested cavers. These range from specially designed carrying bags made up by David Mager, a windfall of NiFe Cells from the Avon County Fire Service with help from Adrian Vanderplank, bronze descendeurs donated by Bob Drake and a couple of semi-waterproof polythene suits from Tim Large. Also, we are very fortunate in the generous and prompt help always given by Rocksport in supplying MRO with a variety of equipment and ropes in particular.

Brian Prewer as Equipment Warden keeps all this up to scratch and has also worked hard to secure both the instruments and information for MRO to operate a private radio service during rescues. A basic system has been installed and sanctioned by the Home Office. It will be available for use as soon as we receive the official licence from London. In developing and installing this equipment, we are most fortunate for practical encouragement by John Eley, local representative of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and, especially, for the expert work and support given by Eric Dunford. He has acquired much of the equipment for us, installed it and advised us on the procedures to be followed. Alan

Mills provided and helped to fix the base station mast from which MRO will be able to go on the air.

All this has led to the greatest volume of correspondence ever. None would be possible without practical and financial support for MRO is entirely a voluntary body which relies upon donations. On the practical side, we must thank Charles Bryant for his hard work and unique information about old mines in the Brendon Hills which was published in the last Wessex Journal. The record income from donations is shown in the accounts which accompany this report. It should be added that two-thirds of this handsome income has come through appropriate fund raising by Wardens including the raffling of a rucksack donated following a rescue. Also, the caving community through MRO received a bequest which has both its poignant and propitious sides to us on Mendip.

This report should highlight the principle of voluntary self-help that is the tradition of cave rescue work on Mendip. Our preparations are best judged by the practice, of course, which was no better evident than at the difficult Thrupe Lane Swallet rescue in November. Perhaps Nigel Kermode who was so badly hurt there will allow me to end this report to fellow cavers on Mendip with his appreciation of their efforts.

"Since my life was dependent on the rescue operation, my thanks cannot express fully the gratitude I feel for those who saved me."

J. D. Hanwell,
Hon. Secretary and Treasurer
Mendip Rescue Organisation
"Chaumbey"
50 Wells Road
Wookey Hole
Wells, Somerset, BA5 1DN
1st March 1980

CAVE RESCUES AND INCIDENTS FOR THE YEAB ENDING 31st JANUARY 1980

There were eight calls during the year. Six were potentially serious which is more than in any other year throughout the seventies. A general observation must be that several involved parties made up of relatively experienced and well-equipped cavers with comparative beginners who were less suitably clad for the trips undertaken. This works on many occasions; but, should conditions take an unanticipated turn for the worse underground, the beginners need extra help which has not been expected.

The danger has been spelt out by an experienced Caver whose club relies on grant support for its activities. He says that such clubs "have a problem that they do not have much time to introduce people to caving but giving total novices a chance to cave is one of the main ways we justify our existence to granting bodies!" Please note that the exclamation is his.

The following accounts which are based upon the reports written at the time by the wardens concerned will tell their own stories.

Thursday 8th March

Swildon's Hole

An outdoor activities group from a large Government establishment in Taunton went down the cave in the evening led by Graham Burgess and Robert Morgan, Several members of the party were inexperienced and lightly clad but no lifeline was used on the 20ft Pot. As a result, Mrs. Penny Bailey, aged 30 from Chard, fell from the top of the pitch and injured her back.

The alarm was given to Mrs. H. Main at Solomon Coombe Farm. She alerted the Police and then

informed Alan Thomas nearby at about 2100 hrs. Whilst Alan made his way to Priddy Green to organise the first party of rescuers, the Police contacted Brian Prewer who informed Dr. Don Thomson. Dany Bradshaw and Bob Cork went to assess the situation and encouraging news soon returned that Mrs Bailey would be able to help herself. Trevor Hughes and a fellow Royal Navy instructor carried a goon suit with dry clothes and Martin Bishop organised a support party of five. With their help, Mrs. Bailey climbed the pitch and was assisted out of the cave by 2230 hrs.

As some back injury was suspected, she was advised to seek attention as soon as possible once home. Later, it was diagnosed that she had sustained a crushed vertebra and needed hospital treatment. In the circumstances, therefore, Mrs. Bailey did particularly well to help herself once the rescuers had arrived.

Sunday 22nd April 1979

Longwood Swallet

Miss Julie Smith, aged 18 from Keynsham, went down the cave with seven others and Alan Mills. On reaching the Great Chamber, she became faint and fitfully passed out. Alan Mills left the cave to summon help through the Police.

William Stanton was alerted at 1605 hrs and advised Alan to return underground to keep the girl as warm as possible until others arrived. He then raised a party from the Belfry with comforts and hauling gear organised by Tim Large. Dr. Don Thomson was informed and he stood by the Reviva in case of hypothermia. Bristol Water Works Company was advised of the incident although there was no immediate danger from the stream. The Police sent a patrol car to relay messages and Mr and Mrs R.S. Trim at Lower Farm kindly provided hospitality to everyone.

Tim Large's party was able to give Alan Mills assistance in helping the girl after she had been refreshed with hot soup. It appears that she may have exhausted herself owing to lack of food before going underground. The rescue ended at about 1700 hrs.

Monday 2nd July 1979

Combe Down Stone Mines

Brian Prewer was contacted by Bath Police via Frome at 1015hrs with news of a missing person down the mines. Mr Barnard, landlord of the Hadley Arms, had raised the alarm. Apparently, he and five others had gone down the mines with hand torches about midnight starting Monday 2nd July. They had lost contact with one of the party, Nicholas Champion, aged 23. A search later in the morning had been fruitless.

Brian Prewer alerted a party comprising Bob Scammel, Keith Newbury, Alison Hooper, Dave Turner, Rex Emery and John Richardson. They went down the mine about 1115 hrs with Dave Walker standing-by at the surface. Meanwhile, Brian with Tim Large and Jim Hanwell made their way to Bath with full MRO equipment. They alerted Don Thomson and Mike Palmer agreed to raise a party in Wells if needed later. Brian Woodward was contacted in Bath and all met at the site about 1230 hrs with the Police.

Champion was fortuitously found and brought to the surface by 1310 hrs after some thirteen hours alone. He was cold, tired and only had a feeble glow of light left from his torch; otherwise he was in good shape. It is tempting to regard this as possibly a fair case of being stoned-out in the mine!

Sunday 16th September

Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer was contacted by Frome Police at 1600 hrs. A girl was reported stuck in the entrance series at the bottom of Kenneys' Dig with a dislocated knee. Martin Rowe, the informant at Priddy, could not give any further details so Brian alerted Tim Large at the Belfry to form a small rescue party.

At 1638 hrs, the Frome Police reported that all were safely out of the cave and that the girl's injuries were minor. The rescuers had met the party concerned just inside the entrance. The cavers were given as members of Kingston Polytechnic Caving Club.

Three friends, Colin Gibson, Kevin Senior and Nigel Kermode, who had graduated from Southampton University the previous summer and had been members of its caving club, met for a private trip down the cave. Fortunately, all three were well-equipped and fit. They entered the cave about 1320 hrs and took about two hrs to reach Atlas Pot. Here, they tackled the longer wet pitch by mistake and, owing to the noise and some confusion over life-line signals Kermode, the first man down, fell the last 20ft of the climb from the bottom of the ladder. Senior descended to find Kermode in great distress and Gibson left the cave to call MRO. The accident happened about 1530 hrs and it was subsequently found that Nigel Kermode had sustained a fractured skull and pelvis with a broken wrist and bone in the palm of one hand.

William Stanton was the first warden contacted by the Police at 1610 hrs. He got in touch with Mr and Mrs Butt at Thrupe Pam and was told that Simon Meade-King who was digging nearby would go down to give assistance. By 1615 hrs, Brian Prewer had been alerted and a full scale call-out was initiated. Dave Irwin and Chris Batstone organised the surface arrangements and equipment from the store. Alan Mills and Graham Nye hurried after Simon Meade-King as runners and were followed by Dr. Don Thomson, Fred Davies and Ray Mansfield with medical equipment. Meanwhile, calls were made to assemble three separate carrying parties with Martin Bishop, Tim Large and Brian Woodward respectively. These parties eventually included Ken James, Ian Caldwell, Graham Wilton-Jones Martin Grass, John Dukes, D. Horsewell, T. Mintram. Chris Bradshaw, Bruce Bedford, Steve Gough, Richard West, Phil Romford and Steve Tuck. Brian Prewer and Robert Hill laid a telephone line from the farm as far as Marble Chamber.

Ray Mansfield soon came out to advise on the seriousness of the injuries and the need to enlarge the crawls if possible. He returned underground with Dave Turner and Brian Workman whilst Gary Cullen and Richard Whitcombe went to dig open the crawls and Colin and Claire Williams cleared stones to stabilise the slopes of the entrance rifts. The Reviva was taken down by Chris Foster and John Kettle. Martin Bishop followed with a party of five to undertake the hauling on Atlas Pot.

Jim Hanwell brought MRO emergency foods from the Belfry which Mr and Mrs Butt and family kindly agreed to prepare. Indeed, their home had a most welcome and friendly open door throughout the night for which all concerned were very grateful. Hanwell returned to Priddy later to stand-by other cavers there as it seemed likely that the operation would continue well into Monday. Offers of help were kindly given by a number of local people who had done a little caving on Mendip.

At 2018 hrs, Martin Grass surfaced with Kevin Senior of the original Southampton trio who seemed to be in reasonable shape. The former then returned underground with Steve Woolven carrying comforts requested by the hauling parties. Reports came out that Nigel Kermode was being hauled up Atlas Pot at about 2220 hrs and a lengthy carry into Monday was confirmed. At this point Tim Large's party entered the cave to take over from Martin Bishop's team where appropriate. Brian Woodward's group followed about an hour later to do the hauling on Perseverance Pot. In view of the injuries and length of carry anticipated, it was agreed to request medical back-up from Doctors Michael Glanvill and Nigel Mizrahi. Both responded and arrived at 2343 hrs and 0135 hrs respectively.

Michael Glanvill was accompanied underground by Pauline Gough just after midnight. About then, it was reported that the patient had arrived in Marble Chamber and had been given warm air from the Reviva. Further soda lime was requested and taken down by Dave Walker. Nigel Taylor, who just joined the rescuers from work, agreed to drive to Priddy for a CO₂ adaptor. At 0200 hrs, Nigel Mizrahi went underground to relieve Don Thomson and Michael Glanvill when it was reported that the casualty was nearing the bottom of Perseverance Pot. When Dr Thomson arrived at the surface at 0217 hrs he telephoned the hospital in Bath to advise them of the patient's injuries and condition. The local ambulance was then alerted. At 0415 hrs, Nigel Kermode was brought to the surface and left for hospital by about 0430 hrs, some thirteen hours after the accident happened.

This was the most serious and prolonged rescue dealt with by MRO for many years. It was made all the

more difficult because it was the first incident in the awkward Thrupe Lane system. It is, therefore, worth recording the carry times for the various stages once hauling started from the bottom of Atlas Pot. To Marble Chamber: about 3 h; then to the top of Perseverance Pot: about 2 h; and, lastly, to the entrance: another ½h. In addition to a carry lasting over six hours, another problem in such a constricted system is to plan the exchange of essential relief parties when it is difficult for one to pass the other. As hauling up Perseverance Pot is best done from the bottom of the pitch, for example, unless an exchange occurs below, the relieved party is effectively blocked from overtaking and unable to get out for another hour or so behind everyone else.

Apart from hearing that Nigel Kermode was making a good recovery from his injuries, perhaps the most rewarding feature for the many Mendip cavers wholeheartedly involved throughout the night was to be so warmly thanked by all concerned, particularly his parents and fellow cavers at Southampton University. Nigel himself has also written later to say that he is now well enough to be back at work. He is full of praise for the efforts made on his behalf and wishes to thank all concerned.

Saturday 24th November 1979 Manor Farm Swallet

A Cambridge University Caving Club party consisting of Jeremy Drummond, John Hibbert, David Flatt, Robert Kingston, Duncan Howsley and Heather Wall were on the way out from a trip to the bottom of the cave. Heather Wall was particularly tired and, on climbing the ladder up the entrance shaft, she fell off from about 25-30ft up. No life-line was available. Another member of the party standing at the bottom of the shaft was able to break her fall without further injuries occurring to either one. This was a rare case of two wrongs turning into a right ! Apart from a cut chin and feeling very shaken, Heather was otherwise not badly hurt.

Members of the party already up the pitch raised the alarm to Frome Police. Dave Irwin was alerted and contacted a rescue group from the Belfry about 1755 hrs led by Chris Batstone and Tim Large. This team included Trevor Hughes, Ross White, Tony Jarratt, Dave Glover, Simon Woodman and Garth Dell.

The injured student was strapped into a Whillan's Sit Harness and hauled quickly up the shaft by 1840 hrs. A Police patrol car then took her to the Cottage Hospital, Wells, for a check-up and stitches for the cut chin. After an overnight stay for observation, she was discharged on Sunday morning.

This incident could so easily have been prevented had a life-line been used. Those concerned admitted that they had not even bothered to take one along!

Sunday 9th December Swildon's Hole

Oxford University Cave Club party with several beginners went down the cave about 1430 hrs. One of the novices without good protective clothing for a very wet trip was 19-yrs old Martin John Vickers from Birkenhead. Although the stream was running quite high and the weather turned in rather wet later, the party went beyond the 20 ft Pot. When the water began to rise following heavy rain, they started to retreat but Vickers got into difficulty at the pitch as he was very wet and cold by then. Other members surfaced to call out MRO via Frome Police. Dave Irwin was informed and organised a rescue team with hauling gear, hot soups and medical equipment if needed. As Dr Don Thomson was unavailable, Dr Michael Glanvill was contacted and he made his way to Priddy. Bristol Water Works Company was advised of the incident and the flooding risk in view of the continuing rain. They quickly responded by turning on their pumps upstream and the effect on the water going into the cave was soon noticed.

The rescue party led by Tim Large was able to assist Martin Vickers out of the cave by 2045 hrs. He was examined by Dr Glanvill and it was found that he was a known sufferer from asthma. However, this was not known to his fellow cavers beforehand and this may help to explain the distress he suffered when the conditions worsened underground.

Cavers with such disabilities that might flare up underground ought to let their colleagues, know, especially on the event of a rescue which may require the use of emergency medication.

Thursday 27th December 1979 Swildon's Hole

Four former pupils of St. Edward's School, Oxford, went down the cave about 1730 hrs intending to visit the Black Hole. They had travelled to Mendip earlier in the day, hoped to be out of the cave by about 2300 hrs and had arranged to stay with the Mendip Caving Group at Nordrach, afterwards. However, none of this was known to anyone on Mendip at the time for they had left word with someone in Oxford that they would telephone them on getting out of the cave. The party consisted of Edward Taylor aged 25 from Leicester, Adam and Ben Williams aged 19 and 18 from Oxford, and Phillip Cash aged 18 from Daventry. All were well-equipped and apparently experienced but they were not members of a caving club.

Heavy rain followed by quickly melting snow set in during the evening. At about 2030 hrs, Tim Large and a group from the Belfry went to the entrance and found water flowing into the blockhouse. The stream was still rising. Noting a blue Ford Cortina parked at Manor Farm, they alerted Brian Prewer about ten minutes later. It was agreed that Tim would make a quick search of the stream way before the water became too high if no-one surfaced earlier. Brian Prewer informed the Police then stood-by Jim Hanwell and Dave Irwin. Other local cavers were asked to be ready if called-out later. Bristol Water Works Company were contacted and Paul Hodge, Sources Engineer, came to Priddy. Unfortunately, however, their pump-house was flooded and the pumps were out of action. By this time, the worst of the storm had passed so Tim Large, Dany Bradshaw, Bob Cork and Mike Duck entered the cave about 2230 hrs with comforts and basic hauling gear.

The search party found the missing four making their way up the 8ft in good shape. All were safely out of the cave by 2230 hrs. Apparently, they had become aware of rising water beyond Sump I and so had turned back. On reaching the waterfall at the 8ft, they had found it impassable and so had waited about two hours below for the flood to pass. As it abated the search party arrived.

With the increase in the number of cavers making flying visits to Mendip from far afield, yet not making contact with locally based clubs, the problem of leaving information about trips with appropriate people becomes more acute. In this case, for instance, one wonders what the contact in Oxford would have done had the party not phoned by about midnight, one hour after the estimated time out. This is the worst time to raise a rescue party quickly, of course.

Another problem of the flying visit is to get a picture of what the weather is and has been doing on Mendip compared with other areas of the country. By 27th December 1979, the ground was fully saturated and it had already been the wettest December since 1965 owing to very wet days on 5th, 9th, 13th, 14th and 18th. On 27th, in fact, a 100mm. storm caused serious floods in SE Somerset and 51mm fell at Priddy. Just as the party went underground, the rainfall became particularly intense. The storm has been claimed to be the heaviest of the decade over the area as a whole. Thus, it is of interest that cavers in Swildon's Hole were able to note rising water beyond Sump I and were capable of sitting-out the event for the critical two hours that it took for the flood peak to pass.

All cavers are urged to note that, after 1st April 1980, re-organisation of the Police Divisions in Avon and Somerset will mean that Emergency 999 Calls for Cave Rescue and Cliff Rescue on Mendip will go to YEOVIL rather than as previously to Frome. Ordinary calls should be made to YEOVIL 5291 asking for the CONTROL ROOM. From some locations on western Mendip, such calls may also go to Bristol and Taunton. The same procedure must be used to alert MRO. In these circumstances it is even more important that anyone contacting MRO through the Police must:-

1. GIVE PRECISE INFORMATION ABOUT AN INCIDENT,
2. GIVE EXACT INSTRUCTIONS OF WHERE THEY CAN BE CONTACTED BY TELEPHONE AND
3. REMAIN AT THAT TELEPHONE UNTIL SPOKEN TO DIRECTLY BY AN MRO WARDEN

The last point is particularly important, of course, for a rescue operation to be successful.

J.D. Hanwell
Hon. Secretary and
Treasurer, MRO

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year ended 31st January 1980

<u>1979</u> £		<u>1980</u> £
	<u>INCOME</u>	
173	Donation – through general appeal	322
19	Donation – from rescued parties	71
6	Interest on Deposit Account	11
29	Hire of MRO Nife cells	58
-	Sale of surplus equipment	30
-	Raffle for donated rucksack	65
226		557
	Less EXPENDITURE	
60	Equipment – hauling and stretchers	70
18	Equipment - lighting and Nife cells	307
10	Equipment – other general supplies	42
9	Insurance of equipment	10
22	Postages, stationery etc.	29
10	Share of Belfry telephone	-
-	Levies to CRC and SWERA	10
-	Radio equipment	101
-	Annual Radio Licence to Home Office	19
5	Copyright fees to Ordnance Survey	-
26	Conversion to Belfry Store	-
160	Total expenditure	588
£66	<u>SURPLUS FOR YEAR OR (DEFICIT FOR YEAR)</u>	(£31)

Balance Sheet as at 31st January 1980

£		£
	<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>	
100	Balance at Bank – Deposit Account	100
248	Balance at Bank – Current Account	222
16	Cash with Hon. Treasurer and Equipment Warden	11
364	TOTAL ASSETS	333
	Representing:	
	<u>ACUMULATED FUNDS</u>	
298	Balance at 31st January 1979	364
66	Add surplus for the year or (subtract deficit to 31-1-80)	(31)
£364		£333

J.D. Hanwell. Hon. Treasurer. 50 Wells Road. Wookey Hole

I have reviewed the above accounts which have been prepared from the books and records of the Mendip Rescue Organisation. In my opinion, and to the best of my knowledge, these accounts give a true and fair view of the state of the Organisation's funds as at 31st January 1980, and of the surplus for the year ending on that date.

Richard Chant, A.C.A, F.T.I.I., 26th February 1980, at 44 Wells Road, Wookey Hole

FROM THE LOG

29th Sept. 1979 Swildon's Hole - Shatter Chamber. Pete and Alison, B. Woodward, P. Dunk (SMCC). Bedding plane banged last week had been cracked open. After an hour's digging, Alison squeezed into a large clean rift 3ft wide and 10ft high which went to a cross-rift and climbs going on. Alison returned, and the squeeze was banged again to make it passable to others. Also laid a small charge on the downstream boulder ruckle.

5th Oct. Swildon's Hole - Damascus. Pete and Alison. Alison managed to descend the pot feet first. At the bottom a duck led through to a larger passage which after 20ft opened out to a 7ft high rift. Only way on via an eyehole to a parallel passage but will probably need banging. Another charge laid at the top of the pot to enlarge it.

6th Oct. Swildon's Hole - Shatter Chamber. Pete and Alison, B. Woodward, P. Dunk (SMCC) Last week's charge obliterated the squeeze. At the limit of Alison's previous exploration, the route split. A series of rifts were entered - too tight at high level and boulder-choked at low level. Brian and Pete found a T-shaped passage, heavily scalloped, and continuing after a restriction, which was banged. The downstream boulder ruckle was passed into a loose chamber. About 100ft of passage found.

7th Oct. Eastwater Cavern The entrance is now re-opened; work will now start on making the steel shaft.

13th Oct. Manor Farm Swallet. J. Price, A. Kinglerlee. Looked at the BEC's new find, a gravelly sump going nowhere.

20th Oct. Swildon's Hole - Shatter Chamber. Pete and Alison, Brian Woodward. Found the roof of the squeeze banged 6th Oct. was badly cracked, although the charge had been laid on the floor. Ended in a boulder choke but a way on was cleared. Small choke beyond led to another choke. This too was cleared to a squeeze under a hanging death. Beyond was a large clear sump pool. A climb over the hanging death led to a very large rift running N-S (?) filled with large boulders. Looking good.

21st Oct. Eastwater Gavem This is now open again for good. The shaft is nearly finished. Yoh!! S. Beal.

3rd Nov. Manor Farm Swallet J. Price, J. Deal, A. Newport and 3 Cave Photography Group. To look at hole in NHASA Gallery seen by Aubrey a few weeks ago. Dug for some time and made 15 - 20ft. Passage is heading for another, visible above the stal bank. Needs bang. ADN.

9th Nov. Swildon's Hole - Damascus. Pete and Alison. Blasted the 1st eyehole - still haven't attempted the pot headfirst.

1st and 8th Dec. Longwood Swallet Pete and Alison, P. Dunk, Dave Higginson. Blasting end of Renolds - slow but steady progress.

15th Dec. Manor Farm Swallet Pete Moody, Phil Dunk and Shepton small boy. Attacked terminal squeeze in Sarum inlet with plaster hammer.

15th Dec. Swildon's Hole Pete Moody and Rich Websell. Evening trip to Damascus to blast the eyehole.