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Wessex Cave Club, Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane  
Priddy, Nr. WELLS, Somerset

## EDITORIAL

As most of you are probably aware, next year is the Club's fiftieth anniversary, as it was officially formed on November 4th 1934. Celebration plans include a really good dinner (so start saving), an informal party, and a history of the club is hoped to be published. What could be better, though, than to be able to celebrate some good digging results and expedition finds, and to report them all in a special issue of the Journal? Ah well, back to reality.

## CLUB NEWS

UPPER PITTS It has been suggested that the extension be put to better use by making it a changing/shower/locker storage area. This would also alleviate some of the problems of overcrowding the present changing area and having the back door constantly left open. It will be no small task, however, so it is hoped that profit from sales will help pay for the work. Because of this, and because some reorganisation of the main hut will be necessary, the matter is to be discussed at this year's AGM.

SALES In addition to the normal stock, wetsuit socks are available at attractive prices, and it is hoped to be able to supply made-to-measure suits.

NEW MEMBERS The Club welcomes the following new members:  
Keith Fielder, 65 Farm Road, MAIDENHEAD, Berks.  
Paul Norman, "Mellon", The Green, Hincaster, MILNETHORPE, Cumbria LA7 7ND

## MENDIP NEWS

EASTWATER CAVERN After a commendable effort, the BEC have been rewarded in a dig below Morton's Pot. Over eight hundred feet of passage have so far been found, and it is looking good for more, although the going is difficult.

TYNING'S BARROW CAVE The new landowner, Mr Reakes of Green Ore, has agreed to continue access as before, with the BEC looking after locks and gates. Keys are available from CSCC clubs. A goodwill fee is payable at Tynning's Farm.

CUCKOO CLEAVES The Cave is still closed at present.

SINGING RIVER MINE There have been complaints about people changing within view of houses, and parking inconsiderately. The land is under new ownership and it is hoped to maintain access as before, so please change before you go there, and try to park out of the way.

WEST TWIN BROOK ADIT In 1982, Bristol Water Works approached the CSCC to ask if they would be interested in administering access to this adit, a dead straight, 980ft, walking-size passage, of little interest to cavers. CCC was not very keen, and, following legal advice, BWW have withdrawn the offer, and the adit is permanently closed.

CHARTERHOUSE PERMITS At it's AGM, CCC approved an increase of 5p in the price of permits. They now cost 30p. Five-year permits are still available free to Wessex members.

## IN THE REGIONS

AFTON RED RIFT CAVE AND BAKER'S PIT Access to these caves is controlled on behalf of the landlord by the Devon CRO. Applications should be sent to:  
The Treasurer, Devon Cave Rescue Organisation, 6 Ledsgrove, Ipplepen, Devon TQ12 5QY. Charge is £1 (50p to Devon clubs) and £2 deposit on the key. Please note that there are no visits allowed to Afton Cave on Saturdays in the months November to January.

# NORTHERN NEWS

GAPING GILL-INGLEBOROUGH CAVE This is all now one system, although the connection which the Bradford Pothole Club Have pioneered is not really a Sunday Afternoon trip yet, being submerged and unpleasant. Other parties, even if competent, have been asked to keep clear until things have improved.

The Bradford are also radio-locating hallucination aven in relation to the Clapham Bottoms dig. One hopes that all this activity will not affect the performance of their 'A' Team drinkers, to whom, for all their roaming around, the BEC first team could not hold a Cinzano and lemonade (even if they had the necessary cloakroom tickets).

SCALES MOOR POT The Bentham Mole tells me that the NCC are optimistic of a breakthrough in this cave, having gained the necessary depth by blasting. The problem is that although the potential of the area is great, the lack of caprock means a lack of development near the surface.

CHAPEL-LE-DALE Rumours of a big find on this fell by Sheffield Poly CC are, it seems, a hoax. This has caused some relief in those quarters where SPCC membership is claimed if one does not want to say who one really is. I believe people make the same use of the UBSS.

NOTTS POT In a project which has seen a great deal of Wessex involvement, members of the Craven Pothole Club succeeded fleetingly in passing the Far Chamber extension boulder choke, which is famous for the large volumes of water heard above it. They discovered a fine chamber (Hangingwater Hall) and an active stream way. However, only one visit was possible before a massive collapse obliterated the access crawl. Work continues, and a full account will be made available to the Wessex Journal when the job is done.

Correspondent: Steve Gough

## CNCC ACCESS INFORMATION

Leck Fell; Fully booked at weekends until November.

Casterton Fell; Top sink entrance still collapsed.

Lancaster Hole/County Pot; Fully booked at weekends. Remember to put your details on the board at Bull Pot Farm, and to remove them afterwards.

Ribblesdale Area; There is no longer a closed season Except for Gingling and Hammer.

## DIARY DATES

Sep	9-10	BCRA Annual Conference, Liverpool University
Oct	15	Wessex AGM & Dinner
Nov	19	Yorkshire - Magnetometer Pot

### FRIDAY NIGHT CLUB TRIPS

Jly	30	South Wales (Saturday)	(Numbers limited)
Aug	12	Lamb Leer	
	26	Charterhouse Cave	(Numbers limited)
Sep	9	To be arranged	
	23	St. Cuthberts	(Numbers limited)
Oct	7	Reservoir Hole	(Numbers limited)
	23	South Wales (Saturday)	(Numbers limited)
Nov		Fairy Gave	
	18	Eastwater Cavern	
Dec	2	GB	(Numbers limited)
	16	Swildon's Hole	

If interested, phone Brian Prewer on WELLS 73757  
or Greg Villis on W-S-M 412770

## UPPER PITTS WORKING WEEKEND

Phil Hendy

The Working Weekend in mid-April coincided with two days of fine, sunny weather, and a small but enthusiastic number of members achieved a great deal towards repairs and improvements at Upper Pitts.

Most of the activity centred around the concrete mixer, and ten bags of cement were used to extend the concrete around the hut. The base around the kit-wash soakaway was completed, and once the steel cover plate has been made, kit can be washed in an old bath, and the mud trapped before it gets into the soakaway. The path from the car park was widened to enable vehicles to drive to the front door without damaging the lawn. A base was cast for the incinerator, which will reduce the amount of rodent-enticing waste left for collection. Also outside, the lawn was mown, the hedges trimmed, and the car park area generally tidied up. When the piles of sand and gravel have been used up, more scalpings will be laid in the car park.

Indoors, the kitchen was cleared, and the excess utensils stored upstairs. The long attic space has been floored, giving us storage for bulky items such as boots, and items not required for immediate use. In the hall, the telephone was moved to a more convenient position, and the notice-board replaced. Minor repairs were made to the plumbing and electrical systems, and the oil tank was painted. Some of the broken roof tiles were replaced, and racking was put up in the tackle store.

Gradually, then, Upper Pitts is being improved so that, hopefully, it is a better place from which to cave, and to change and relax in afterwards.

## A CAVING TRIP PAR EXCELLENCE FOR THOSE WHO CAN'T ROUTE FIND

Bob Lewis

To return to Chauveroche (for those who aren't bored with it): Visitors to the Jura in May '83 saw the worst floods for thirty years, closure of bridges over the Loue, and suffered the further indignity of failing to reach the bars in Omans because of the quality of the trip they thus missed - no tackle to carry, lots of water, and 3¾ miles to Sump One. (That's 7½ miles inclusive).

France seems best in late August or September, avoiding the European Summer Monsoon. If the weather is good and you are near the Jura, go to Omans and find the single-track road going off south from near the swimming pool to a sign after two miles indicating the entrance. The rest is plain sailing.

Up the 10ft fixed ladder and on 50ft to a duck (if there's no draught, give up). A mile of dry passage follows via one muddy wriggle and, towards the end, an open choke of boulders. After this mile is the sound of running water (small stream goes off R) - go up slope on right or through a long low duck to same point in a big, wet gour passage. Follow - via eighteen gours, some 200ft+ long - to obvious stal. beehive, then shallow wade c.300ft to main stream which also sinks on the right. Go upstream 2¼ miles, ignoring all turnings off. Features of the stream way are a fine 12ft waterfall after ½ mile, a big tunnel off right after 1 mile, a series of violent zig-zags after 1½ miles followed by an easy duck, then, finally, the sump (which had a line in it last year). Don't break a leg - hypothermia could finish the job. The trip may take from 7 to 12 hours. Good luck!

## PICOS DE EUROPA 1982

Al Keen

The involvement of the Wessex in The Picos de Europa, Northern Spain, is well documented in previous journals, and a complete set of articles and reports is kept in the library at Upper Pitts. The geology of the area has been studied by Jim Hanwell and others, and their excellent notes obviate any need for expansion here. The aim of this expedition was to spend seven to eight days in the Vega de Liordes in the Macizo Central and, from there, look at some sites previously observed but not investigated, and to look at some new areas.

The expectations of those who had not been to the Picos before were varied. It was made quite clear that there would in all likelihood be a lot of hard work walking and pot-dropping, and not much caving. No doubt everyone accepted this, but were secretly dreaming of spectacular finds. Of course, the wine, food, sun and scenery were also an attraction.

The two vehicles rendezvoused in Potes, arriving just in time for lunch in 'Greasy Joe's', a restaurant-bar popular with the locals and the Wessex. After a good fill, some of us had our first try of Orujo. This spirit is cheaper to buy in Spain than meths is in England, and tastes, to some, about the same. Those driving were lucky in that they did not have more than a sip. Throughout our trip, this stuff was thrust upon us by proud proprietors (they make it), seemingly as a gesture of appreciation of our custom.

On arrival at Fuente De, a good camping spot was found, with cow-mown grass and wild crocuses growing, and out of sight except from wanderers and people in the Teleferico with binoculars. After a quick kit sort-out, we went down to 'El Rebeco' for another feast. One of us made an early start the next morning, and made his way up the Tornos de Liordes, He was to establish a route from the Caseta Forestal refugio to the Collado de Valdeon. The rest drove or walked the track through Campodaves to meet him there. The climb to the Vega from here, over the Puerto de Remona, is much quicker and easier than the Tornos, taking about an hour depending on the load carried. The four-track vehicle (an ordinary car would not get around Campodaves) was left as a convenient 'Camp One' in the Collado de Valdeon. A load was taken up to the refugio, and most of us had our first sight of the area we were to be working in. 'There has to be cave in that lot!', one could hear people thinking. Gaping, black holes could be seen everywhere. Several likely projects were noted on the walk up the Canal de Pedabejo. That night, back in Fuente De, we all had a lot to drink and sat watching the lights of a distant storm reflected on the mountains.

Thursday was spent shopping in Potes. On Friday, most of the remaining kit for immediate use, and supplies, were carried up to the Vega. This included wine, spirits and beer, and three large pieces of chipboard for refurbishing the bunk in the refugio.

Having been allocated our cave numbers for the day, we set off the next morning in three groups. Two of us were to look at entrances around the Canal de Pedabejo and Puerto de Remona. A hole in the side of the gully (WX30) went in a short way to a choke. Several shafts were noted to the west of the path at the top of the col. Two of these were marked 'G.E.M.', with a number and depth. Those remaining were noted for return. Some large, open shafts were also seen to the east of the path, but all were filled at a depth of about 20m. About half way down to the Vega, where the path divides, a small cave in a shake hole (WX31) was looked into. It appeared quite tight and loose inside, so it was left for a return with more support, just in case! Another two began a difficult climb up to a hole in the east wall of the gully (WX61). About ten metres of progress were made, and from the higher viewpoint, the hole looked good. The remainder of the group looked at WX23, a cave in the Torre de Liordes area not fully explored on previous visits. A look around proved that the best bet was a dig at the bottom of a chamber, but it was difficult to rig a ladder to descend here. A traverse was negotiated above the chamber to a better take-off, though a bolt was needed, and further passage was seen on the other side. The next day, a hand-line was rigged over the traverse, and a bolt placed for the ladder. On investigation, the continuation passages led

to chokes, some of them not too far from the surface. The climb to WX6l was proving difficult on steep, loose rock, necessitating some carefully placed pegs. The hole could still not be looked down into.

On Monday, more supplies were obtained (mainly of liquor), and the shafts on the east side of the Puerto de Remona were descended. WX33 (or WXEE - it was written whilst hanging upside-down over-the edge) went 25m to snow. The snow was passed for about another 15m. From there, about another 8m further could be seen to where the snow filled the shaft, which was about 10 x 15m at that point, and widening. WX34 also ended in snow and rubble after going down about 30m in two pitches. While we were standing around on the surface, a griffon vulture soared above us. WX31 was pushed to a chamber with several small passages going off, all with loose fill chokes.

The clouds came down on us the next morning, and a miserable day was spent at WX6l only to find it did not go. Some seven hours were spent in WX23, doing a rough survey and digging head-first down a 45° passage. The dig was drafting, and an echo could be heard from beyond. As a break, on Wednesday some surface recce work was carried out in the Jou de los Llagus area. Some shafts noted on a previous expedition were looked at. All were filled with the standard helping of snow and rubble. Returning to WX23, a full survey was done and digging begun again. After futile attempts to widen the gap between two fairly solid walls, using a furling iron and peg hammer, and by removing earth fill. Tufty was eventually volunteered to go through. The passage beyond proved constricted and took a little cautious effort to negotiate feet first. He could be heard shuffling and grunting for a while, then, with typical non-committance, 'Hmm, I say, chaps.' his voice echoed.

'Yes?'

'Well, there is a tight passage going on from this one, and a tube off to the right, which, well, er, ..'

'What is it? Does it go?' we asked impatiently.

'Er, yes but I'll need a lifeline to look any further - it looks as though I'm at the top of a chamber about thirty feet high'.

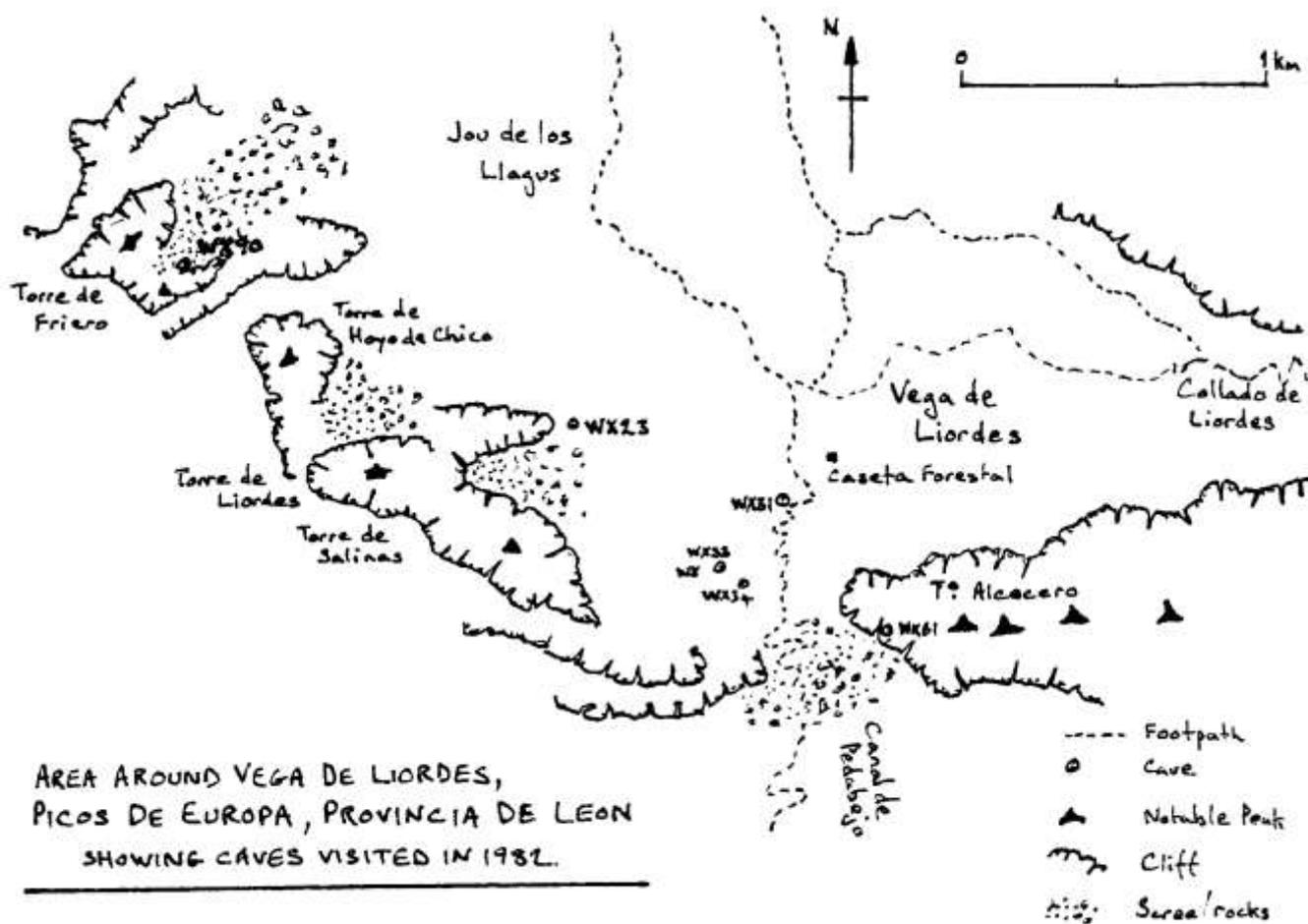
With new found ability to contort and compress, Al went through with a line to join Tufty at the top of a series of flowstone banks above a chamber. Tufty was lined down. Meanwhile, Pete was taking off his furry suit so that he might get through the squeeze. By the time he was half way in, the bottom of the chamber was found to be blocked. From the depths: 'Don't bother Pete!', and cursing and moaning could be heard from above. After a cursory survey of the extension, the cave was detackled and left.

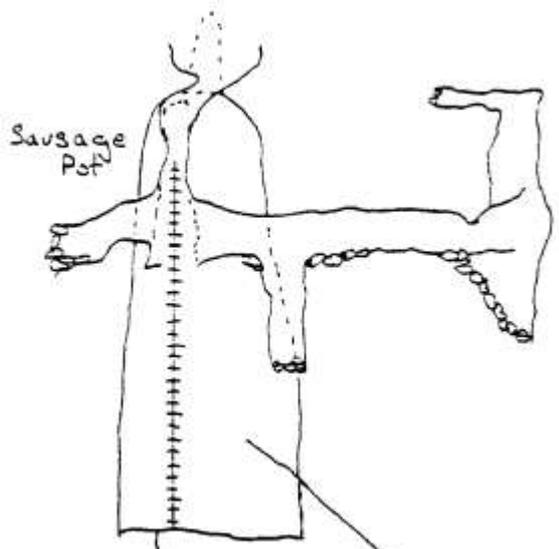
So, all was disappointment up to now, and the whole area had become a write-off in some people's minds. The Vega de Liordes is a great place to be though in the fine weather we were having, and this more than compensated. Not beaten yet, two optimists went the next day to look in the Hoyo de Chico area, and the others carried loads back to Camp One, looking at some holes in the south flank of Torre de Salinas on the way. Only one of these was actually a hole and not just an alcove, and this had been looked into by GEM. It was bottomed anyway, and it seems as though it must have had snow in it when the French went down, as we got further than their recorded depth. This over with, we scree-ran back to the vehicle and festered in the sun.

Back at the refugio that evening, the day's events were recounted. With some restraint, the Hoyo de Chico group listened to everybody else's story. Then it was their turn. They had been high up towards Torre de Friero, passing many of the usual blocked shafts as one does after a time in the Picos. Near the top of a scree and boulder-filled gully, an entrance was found that went in under the mountain (similar to WX16 only smaller and more horizontal), It was getting late, so only a quick look was planned. Inside, a sloping passage with a rubble floor led to the top of a huge chamber. Stones dropped down indicated a few hundred feet of nothing below. Now, we were in two minds as to what to do, as most of the gear had gone back, we only had one day left, yet we could not go without a further look. After some debate, it was decided that three or four would go the next day and at least try to determine whether a visit another year would be worthwhile.

WX90 lies high in the gully immediately east of Torre de Friero, in the mountain flank on the west side. Truly remote, it took about an hour and a half to reach from the refugio. The gully is boulder-strewn and there are many remnants of chambers and shafts, some snow-plugged. Indeed, a line of these follow a fault for some one kilometre towards the Jou Llagus de Bajero. Even up near the cave entrance though, some rebecos were drinking the snow-melt, and colourful wall-creepers flew in and out of the cave. A handline was rigged over snow in the entrance, and the cave descended. A traverse was lined round deep holes to a suitable belay point. This point was roughly surveyed as 30m below the entrance. The pitch was 33m deep. Alas, however, there was no way on. Other passages could be seen going off at the top of the chamber, but these were not possible to reach with the time and equipment available, so it remains a mystery. In view of the altitude of the entrance - 2320 m - it will be some cave if it goes!

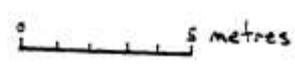
Those taking part were; Ian Jepson, Glyn Bolt, Gordon Wright, Julie Wootton, Pete Hann, Dave 'Tufty' Tuffery (MNRC) Al Keen.





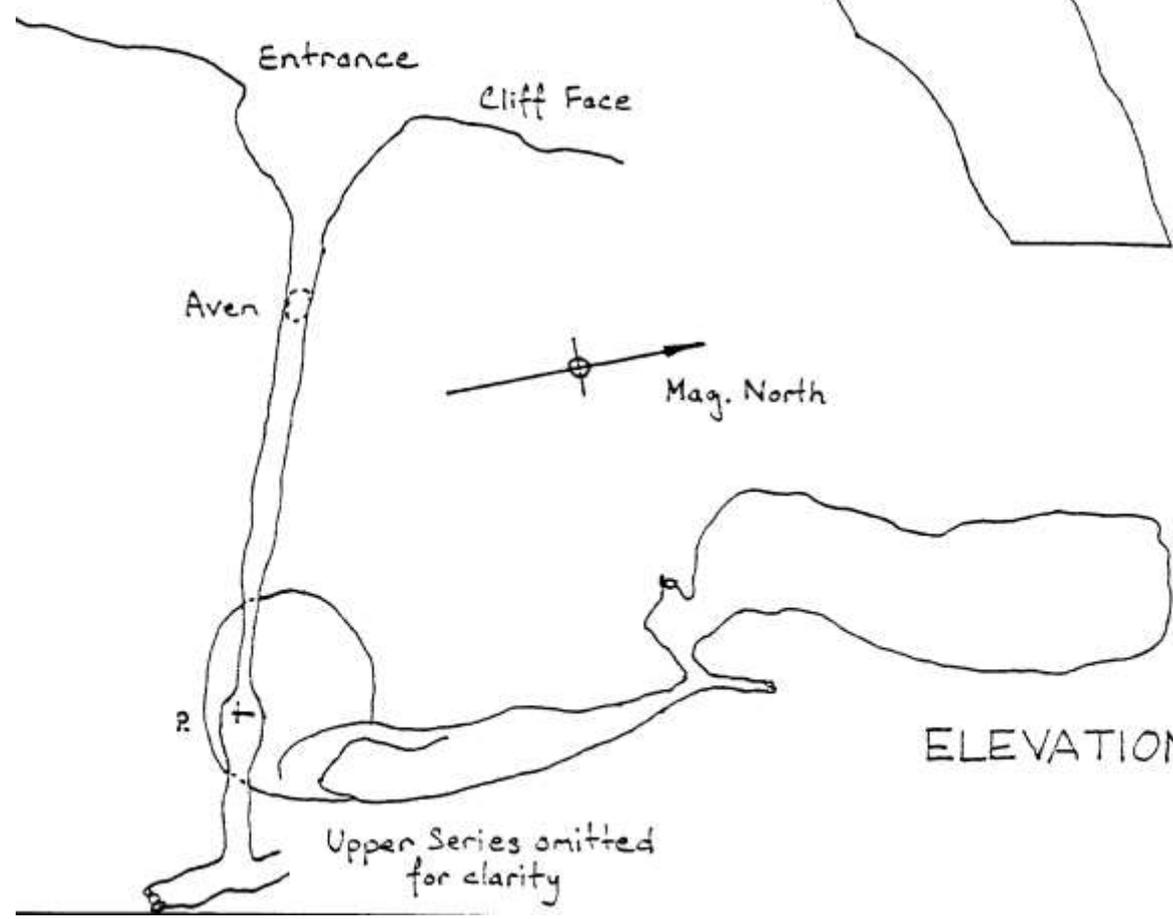
WX 23  
PICOS DE EUROPA

Length 120m  
Depth 37.5m  
Altitude 2150m app.



The Nut Wrecker

PLAN



ELEVATION

Upper Series omitted  
for clarity

# MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

## Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer for the Year ending 31st December 1982

As late as mid-November, it was possible that this would be my briefest report for a long time, I should know better by now! Many issues arose after the long rescue at G.B. Cavern and, although the actual operation went smoothly at the time, there are several lessons to learn from what has happened since. No sooner had the accompanying log of call-outs been prepared at the end of the year when both television channels and local newspapers carried news that some members of Somerset County Council's Public Protection Committee had argued that cavers should pay for rescue services. We have heard such rash views before, of course, but every publicised outburst has to be answered in kind. This report features some of the articles and one of my replies along with another by Tim large. They cover most of the points at issue. Maybe, those who do not live near Mendip will be unaware that, whilst this was predictably an over-strong reaction to a much publicised incident, most rescues do not end once those involved have left safely for home, Not only has equipment to be cleared-up, tested and replaced if needs be, but there are usually pointed questions from the press to answer, letters to write and many people to thank.

M.R.O. only provides a rescue service for cavers with their help. It must not stray into areas concerning why, where and when people go caving. However, if those responsible for call-outs go away without an explanation or even a word of thanks, then their rescuers are left to justify what has happened. This forces us to take on jobs that we should not really have to do. The point being made is underlined by the low level of donations from rescued parties seen on the accompanying accounts for the year. Moreover, it should be noted that seven of the parties needing help belonged to either scout, school or student organisations. Many of such groups have access to equipment and funds to subsidise their caving. Whilst there are notable exceptions to this situation because M.R.O. has been consistently supported over the years by established university and polytechnic clubs, it is evident that we still rely mainly upon Mendip based clubs for most of its money and all of its experienced manpower. New groups who cave on Mendip should not take the provision of a rescue service for granted and must take their share in ensuring that M.R.O. can respond effectively when things go wrong underground.

The purpose of stressing these points is not only to get cavers as a whole to support rescue work but also to answer the critics who propose the untenable extreme of making charges for any involvement by, say, the Police and Fire Services. We must be in a position to resist such trends in all respects. I am conscious that next year will be 1984!

J.D. Hanwell,  
Hon. Secretary & Treasurer,  
Mendip Rescue Organization  
January 1983

## MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

### Cave Rescues and Incidents for the Year ending 31st December, 1982

Thirteen call-outs are recorded below although only six turned into actual rescues. They are strangely grouped at bi-monthly intervals with the exception of the big one at G.B. in November, Even stranger, however, is that Swildon's Hole only rates a close shave; the first time that this has happened since 1961 on April 1st!

20th February	Sludge Pit	1	Trapped, stuck, claustrophobia
17th February	Manor Farm Swallet	?	Snowstorm, overdue party alert
17th February	Eastwater Cavern	7	Overdue party search
14th April	Hunters' Hole	2	Trapped, unable to climb
28th April	G.B. Cavern	1	Fall, broken arm and dislocation
5th May	Longwood Swallet	6	Overdue party alert
25th June	Alert	?	Overdue party
15th August	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue party alert
15th August	Sludge Pit & Underwood Quarry	1	Overdue alert
26th October	Eastwater Cavern	2	Lost, lights f.
29th October	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck
21st November	G.B. Cavern	11	Floods, trapped
31st December	Rhino Rift	2	Overdue alert

The majority of these calls occurred during weekdays rather than at weekends and Wednesday is now a popular time to go caving on Mendip. This trend towards more mid-week trips has already been taken into account by M.R.O, when the call-out arrangements were revised to involve more locally accessible caverns. Such availability has even led to three straightforward incidents being solved before the Police were notified. It must be remembered, however, that M.R.O. is only officially in action when call-outs are channelled through the Police and it is usual to involve them at the start of each incident.

When specific instructions have been given, as in the case at Rhino Rift, alerts for overdue parties are easy to handle. Without such details, however, it is very difficult to respond positively to a general call-out. A third of the hundred or so incidents during the past decade have been for overdue parties but half of those above tell the same old story of vague messages being left and even ignored in one case. Because M.R.O. must answer to all reports of overdue parties, cavers and clubs are urged to make more of the common sense precautions of letting reliable people, preferably fellow cavers on Mendip, know about their trips beforehand and afterwards! The G.B. rescue brought home how many fail to do either in practice.

Apart from noting the trap of under-estimating the length of a trip, it makes good sense to add reasonable leeway for delays appropriate to both the cave concerned and how those left with the message are likely to react when the E.T.A. becomes due. The normal procedure when an E.T.A. has passed is to alert M.R.O. through the Police Control at Yeovil rather than phoning around known contacts for help. This saves time and minimises the risks of messages becoming garbled. If contacted direct, Wardens will soon inform the Police of the incident and their proposed action,

Saturday 20th February

Sludge Pit

Matthew Stalker of 7 Heath Close, Holmer Green, High Wycombe, aged 14 went down the cave with members of the Holmer Green 1st Boy Scouts about mid-day. He then became stuck and panicked in the upper series Maze and the Scout leader left the cave to summon help from Upper Pitts.

Glyn Bolt was approached at about 3.30 p.m. and went to the cave whilst advising the Leader to contact Wardens at the Belfry. Stewart McManus and Alan Thomas organised things there and Tony Jarrett, Mike Duck and John Watson took kit to Sludge Pit. The Police arrived at Eastwater Lane about 3.55pm. During this time, the scouts underground had managed to free Matthew Stalker. He was brought out at 4.00 p.m. unharmed.

Wednesday 17th February

Manor Farm Swallet

A heavy snowstorm passed over Mendip around dusk. Later in the evening a report was received that a party of Adventure Scouts from Reading had not reported back from a trip down the cave. It was established that no one was still underground there and no further action was taken on the assumption that they had surfaced but were probably having some difficulty in getting back home because of the weather.

Wednesday 17th February

Eastwater Cavern

Phil Hendy called in at Upper Pitts about 8.0 p.m. and noticed that a party of 7 including Jim Fussell had gone down the cave at 2.30 p.m. and had expected to be out by 7.0 p.m. Their cars were still in the park and there was no evidence that they had surfaced. It was snowing hard.

Glyn Bolt and Val arrived before Phil had taken any action to alert M.R.O. They changed and went into the cave at 8.30 p.m. whilst Phil stood by at Upper Pitts. The overdue party was soon found making its way out of the cave. There were five teenage girls in the party moving very slowly because of tiredness and at least three carbide lamps had failed, apparently from overfilling. All were back at Upper Pitts by 9.30 p.m. In the circumstances and in view of a possible call-out to Manor Farm Swallet still outstanding, it was decided not to inform the Police.

Wednesday 14th April

Hunters' Hole

Roger Dors rang Alan Thomas at 4.45p.m. to say that a party of 3 had gone down the cave about noon and that one had surfaced to report the others having difficulty in climbing the pitch. They had abseiled down but Fiona Overlake, aged 22, from Bristol was unable to prussick out only using knots. Moreover, she had never climbed a ladder before

Alan Thomas decided to handle the situation himself and rigged ladders borrowed from the Belfry to show how the pitch could be simplified into two climbs. They experienced little difficulty after being shown what to do. The trio said that they were experienced climbers who had only taken up caving a few weeks earlier. Meanwhile, Roger Dors had let Brian Prewer know what was happening,

Wednesday 28th April

G.B. Cavern

Kevin Staddon, aged over thirty and from Portishead, Bristol, was coming out of the cave during the evening when he fell whilst free-climbing the Ten-Foot Pot in the Devil's Elbow route. This pitch formerly had a fixed chain which had been removed recently. He sustained a fracture to his upper left arm and was unable to use his right one too owing to a dislocated shoulder. He was reluctant to move.

The alarm was raised from a call box in Shipham and Yeovil Police then alerted Brenda Prewer at 9.30 p.m. They informed M.R.O. that the party contained experienced members of the Hades Caving Club, two of whom had remained with the patient. Staddon was not a member of the club, however. Brenda relayed the message through Mike Duck and Barrie Wilton to Wardens who had just finished digging with N.H.A.S.A. down Sludge Pit. All alerted went straight to G.B. with rescue and medical equipment.

Fred and Graham Davies entered the cave at 10.05 p.m. followed by Dr. Don Thomson, Barrie Wilton, Mike Duck and Brian Prewer. A member of the original party accompanied Jim Hanwell to clean out the damp squeeze into Mud Passage. They were then joined by Glyn Bolt, Pete Hann, Pete and Alison Moody who had been already caving in the vicinity, somewhere. This group stood-by as a possible stretcher hauling party, Albert Francis and Eric Dunford organised the surface with the Police patrols.

The patient's fractured arm was plastered and both arms then immobilised. He was given a Fortral injection and kept warm in a Polar Suit. As he could then walk, it was decided to assist him out through the easier Mud Passage route. This worked well and, although the patient became very tired, all were out of the cave about half past midnight. An ambulance from Highbridge took the patient to Weston-s-Mare for hospital treatment. He was released later in the morning,

Wednesday 5th May

Longwood Swallet

A party of students from the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester went down the cave during the afternoon. They left clear instructions with the telephone switchboard operator at the college to notify the Police if they had not confirmed their safe return from the cave to him by 10.00 p.m. When they had not done so after this time, Mr. R. Waterhouse did the correct thing and contacted Yeovil Police. M.R.O. was alerted at 11.00 p.m.

Roger Dors was able to confirm that a group of R.A.C. students had been seen around 6.00 p.m, having completed their trip and there was further evidence that they left the cave about 5.30 p.m. No further action was taken and M.R.O. informed the Police and College that no search of the cave was necessary.

The students eventually returned to Cirencester having forgotten the arrangement that they had made! All concerned were none too pleased and a letter of apology was eventually received via the Police,

Friday 25th June

Alert

At 1.35 a.m. Yeovil Police phoned Brian Prewer with information that a wife had called them because her husband had not returned from a caving trip the previous evening. She had no further details of the party or the cave being visited. Brian contacted the Belfry and Martin Grass was alerted. Before a search was started, however, the Police rang back to say that the woman had reported her husband's return. Apparently, the party comprised of teachers from Millfield School, Street.

Sunday 15th August

Swildon's Hole

A Mr. Booth from Bristol rang the Police to say that his son had not returned from a trip to the Black Hole when expected. The Police alerted Brian Prewer at 6.20 p.m. Five minutes later Brian learnt from Mr. Booth that his son had surfaced having under-estimated the time for a trip to the Black Hole. Ian Jepson had spotted the party in the cave and noted that they were not using a ladder on the Twenty Foot Pot. Mr. Booth did exactly what he had been instructed to do by his son - "Call the Police at 6.00 p.m. if I am not home".

Sunday 15th August

Sludge Pit and Underwood Quarry

Yeovil Police contacted Brian Prewer at 4.09 p.m. to say that a Mrs. G. Barlow had told them that her husband should have been home at 2.30 p.m. following a caving trip to Sludge Pit and then to the old quarry at Underwood known as "Split Rock" by cavers. He was with three others from Glastonbury and driving a white Ford Escort whilst the rest had a Vauxhall Avenger.

The Belfry was alerted and Dany Bradshaw set out to search for the cars described. The group was located at Underwood Quarry, Those involved were under the impression that they had until about 5.00 p.m. before thinking of returning to Glastonbury. They were given some useful words of advice by Dany about estimating the time of trips.

Tuesday 26th October

Eastwater Cavern

Wayne Dawes and Roger Batten from Bristol descended the cave at about 11.00 a.m. expecting to be out by 6.00 p.m. They had limited knowledge of the system although had the right amount of tackle. At 9.30 p.m. a relative in Bristol rang Stewart McManus to say that the pair had not returned and were three hours overdue. At this stage there was some doubt about which cave was involved and Manor Farm Swallet was also mentioned, Stewart decided to check out Manor Farm whilst Tony Jarrett went to Eastwater, The car belonging to the overdue party was located in the park at Upper Pitts. Having established that they were still down the cave, Mike Duck then informed Brian Prewer who alerted the Police that a search was being mounted at 10.00 p.m.

Martin Bishop, Bob Cork, Tony Jarrett, Mike Duck and J. Green entered the cave soon afterwards and a second party was stood by. At 10.25 p.m. a local electricity failure knocked out communications at the Belfry for a while to delay the organisation of kit there. At 11.00 p.m. Tony Jarrett surfaced to report that the two cavers had been found safe and well at the top of the Canyon. It appears that they had tried to descend the Twin Verticals route but had found the ladder too short. On their return up the Canyon they became lost and wandered into the Boulder Chamber by mistake. Before their lights finally failed they returned to the place where found by the rescuers. All were clear of the cave by 11.30 p.m. and those standing by were informed that the incident was over.

Friday 29th October

Sidcot Swallet

Weston-s-Mare Police called Brian Prewer at 1.25 p.m. to say that a Mr. Tinkler from Salisbury had reported a member of his party stuck beyond the final squeeze into the Lobster Pot. A strong contingent of thin rescuers went to Burrington Combe straightaway whilst Jim Hanwell and Richard West brought along hauling gear from the Belfry. All arrived at the West Twin Brook park around 2.00 p.m. to find that the stuck caver, Ian James, had been helped through the squeeze unharmed, by his own party. All were sixth formers from Bishop Wordsworth School, Salisbury. This incident coincided with a Cliff Rescue for an injured climber in Cheddar Gorge dealt with through Richard West.

Yeovil Police rang Brian Prewer at 4.31 p.m. A Mr. McDonald had been down the cave that afternoon and seen water flowing into the Ladder Dig because flood waters had backed-up in the Main Chamber. His party had got out just before the crawls to Helictite Grotto sumped. This must have occurred shortly after 3 p.m. since he telephoned the alert from Burrington Cafe. Other parties were said to be left in the Ladder Dig Series. As such flooding has occurred frequently in recent years, and the sumps can remain for several days after the weather clears, the outlook for trapped cavers was regarded as potentially very serious. The Bristol Weather Centre forecast further storms after a brief lull in the persistent rain raking Mendip. Fortunately, this did not happen.

On contacting the Belfry straight away, Brian Prewer learnt that a party of 7 Venture Scouts from Essex had left there about mid-day for a G.B. trip. Subsequently, it was discovered that another party of 4 students from Queen Mary College, London, had also gone down the cave from Upper Pitts. They must have been about 70 minutes or so behind the scouts. With the prospect of 11 being trapped, a full alert went out from M.R.O.

Jim Hanwell and Chris Batstone established a Control on the roadside near the cave with the Cheddar Police at 5.15 p.m. Pete Macnab was there to give valuable early assistance. In future it might be best to have the main Control for M.R.O. at the blockhouse with a secondary one on the roadside for lengthy incidents involving a lot of people. Phil Romford manned the Belfry Base Radio and Fiona Lewis recorded all messages there throughout the operation. Brenda Prewer dealt with many other outside calls from West Horrington and the Taunton Control room was a very busy place that night.

At 5.32 p.m., an hour after receiving the first call, Tim Large, Miles Barrington, Stewart McManus, Nick James and Adrian Burstow entered the cave with comforts and to assess the extent of flooding. Edric Hobbs maintained a vital radio link at the entrance blockhouse during the incident. A team of five divers assembled at the Belfry with Brian Prewer, Fred Davies and others. It was decided to try and establish contact with the trapped cavers by diving. Consequently, Trevor Hughes, Rob Harper and Chris Milne with Bob Cork and Dany Bradshaw set off to undertake this. Oliver Lloyd was requested to stand-by more air cylinders and kit in Bristol since it was possible that the Sump Rescue Apparatus might be needed for several people if conditions were bad.

In view of the weather conditions and outlook, the Bristol Police offered to mobilise a W.V.R.S. canteen if needed. They also informed M.R.O. that the press, radio and T.V. knew of the incident and would undoubtedly arrive to get reports from the scene. Jim Hanwell and P.C. Clegg took advantage of the lull in activities to check out the vehicles belonging to the trapped parties. The scout's minibus was parked on the track to Piney Sleight.

At 6.24 p.m. Tim Large surfaced to confirm that the Main Chamber was still flooded with water flowing into the Ladder Dig. He swam in to observe that the sump levels appeared to be static rather than rising. A rope was laid as far as possible from a dry landing. It was agreed that contact by diving might work and so the five divers entered the cave at 6.48 p.m. Tim Large returned underground with a Little Dragon resuscitator.

Jim Hanwell decided that, even if dives made contact with the trapped parties, it would still "be necessary to pump water away from the surface sink to abate the flood underground. Since the stream in nearby Charterhouse Cave had been shown to be independent of G.B. flows, it could be used to decant water away from the Tynning's stream. Paul Hodge from Bristol Waterworks was alerted and agreed with this scheme. He kindly came to the scene and remained throughout which was very much appreciated. Following a site survey with Chris Batstone, Paul estimated that some 600 gallons per minute would need pumping at least 60 feet to Charterhouse Cave with a 12 ft lift between both valleys. This discharge estimate proved remarkably accurate in the circumstances. It continued to rain steadily with little respite. At 7.50 p.m. the Fire Service was requested by Jim Hanwell through Inspector D. Parr and they were given the pumping details. Meanwhile, cavers would prepare the dam site and establish a telephone line down the cave so that the effects of surface pumping on water levels underground could be closely monitored along with other messages.

Glyn Bolt and Paul Hodge drove across to organise and build the dam for the Fire Service with Brian Pitman, Kevin Clark, Brian Hansford, Jeff Price, Paul Weston, Nigel Graham, John Ham, Pete and Alison Moody. Brian Prewer, Fred Davies, Brian Workman and Ted Humphries laid the telephone line down the cave. The Fire Service arrived with their appliances and 23 fireman at 8.20 p.m. They were pumping only 15 minutes later and soon shifting 600 gallons per minute. Sergeant Thome and P.C. Heil joined their colleagues to give us valuable help. Eric Dunford came to maintain radio equipment and took advantage of the tender ladders to improvise a superb aerial affording much clearer communications across Mendip.

Four cavers who knew the younger scout party went underground at 8.57 p.m. with a request to take hot soups and tools to the Main Chamber. At 9 pm, the divers returned: Trevor Hughes and Rob Harper reported being able to pass two sumps but that fresh silting prevented further progress about 15 ft from Helictite Grotto. They had extended the rope laid by Tim Large to this point underwater. As the rescue now hinged upon the success of the surface pumping, the five divers returned to the Belfry and stood by. The Police in Bristol were asked to ferry out air bottles from Oliver Lloyd in case they might be needed later on. Diving would have to be the last resort if water levels in Main Chamber could not be lowered sufficiently and long enough to bail out the sumps.

The well-being of the 11 trapped cavers, now underground for over 9 hours, remained unknown and worrying. Exposure or worse had to be allowed for and so a general alert for more cavers was raised from the Belfry and Upper Pitts. Bailing parties were requested at 9.15 p.m. and Fred Davies surfaced soon afterwards with Brian Workman to confirm what was required. Miles Barrington, Nick James and Adrian Burstow also returned from the cave. Extra plastic bags were ferried in by Dave Turner to waterproof the dam and John Hildick remained on call at Priddy should sandbags available through the County Council prove necessary to hold the pressure.

The Chief Fire Officer for Somerset, Mr. Nigel Musselwhite, arrived and gave invaluable offers for any further help whenever required. This was welcome in addition to the good work being done by the local brigades. Indeed, Brian Prewer telephoned news that water levels had begun to fall significantly at 9.25pm. Fred Davies and Brian Workman returned underground with Dave Turner, Pete and Alison Moody all festooned with buckets for bailing. Shortly afterwards, Pete Meddy, Nigel Graham, Rich. Warmer, Pete Hann, Gordon Wright, Ian Jepson, Barry Badman and Barry Davies entered the cave to help bail out the sumps. A request was relayed for more manpower to extend the bailing chain into the Ladder Dig.

Many more assembled at 9.45 p.m. along with the main wave of press, radio and T.V. reporters. An Ambulance Team arrived on their own initiative after hearing of the incident. The Police did wonders with all the traffic and I can record that the media reporters on the night asked our permission to undertake their work and were fair and discrete in gathering details. Apparently, the incident had been mentioned on the national news earlier in the evening. This led to Brenda Prewer having to deal with over 40 phone calls from worried relatives and friends of uninvolved cavers yet to report home after trips down other Mendip caves during the day. At the Taunton Control Room, too, P.C. Beaman and Mrs Serieux were required full-time handling similar calls. Their own three-page record of messages is a measure of the good work done by the Police during such incidents.

The added burden of answering such queries during rescues is not often recorded or, perhaps, even appreciated. It also suggests that a surprising number do not leave clear details with people back home who worry about their activities. Maybe these worries never completely go away; but, on this occasion, it required those already hard pressed at G.B. to check out the entrances to other caves such as nearby Tynings Barrow, Longwood and Manor Farm swallets. Confirmation that parties who went down these caves had surfaced was gradually gathered. Graham Price arrived to report that Longwood was clear, for example. During floods, too, there is a greater chance that more than one cave will be affected. The simultaneous rescues when fire pumps were used last at Swildons and St Cuthberts on 27th August 1960 are vividly remembered by those of us involved. So, until an all-clear can be reasonably guaranteed, it is unwise to commit everyone and everything to one cave.

Among those who checked in at G.B. with kit to help were; Paul Allen and 7 members of the Severn Valley C.G., Robin Gray, Chris Bradshaw, Adrian Vanderplank, Pete Franklin, Jeremy Henley, Colin Houlden and Martin Winsbey. More soup was heated at the Belfry whilst Lil Romford gathered all remaining Nife cells holding charges. Medical supplies were prepared.

Dr. Tony Boycott arrived at 10.30 p.m. prepared to join the diving party if needed. Doctors Don Thomson and Peter Glanvill were asked to stand by since the condition of the trapped cavers was still unknown after being 10 hours underground. Then messages from the bailing party suddenly became optimistic and the first contact with the trapped cavers was reported at 10.40 p.m. Dr. Boycott entered the cave immediately. Underground, Brian Workman at the front of the bailing chain felt tugs on the rope laid by the divers. The trapped parties had noticed the drop in water levels and had sensibly begun digging from their end, Dave Turner followed through and the message that all were well and in good spirits was passed out.

At 10.50 p.m. the final unwinding of the operation began. Whilst pumping continued, Tony Jarrett, Martin Winsbey, Jane Clark, Graham Wilton-Jones, John Ham, Jeff Price, Tony Littler, Tony Mintram, Phil and Lynn Hendy went down to help clear the cave, The divers returned from the Belfry to retrieve their kit left in the Main Chamber. Fred Davies made a final search of the ladder Dig Series.

The first of the trapped cavers surfaced at 11.10 p.m. and the last at 11.30 p.m. Pumping ceased and it is of interest to note that the last rescuer to clear the cave witnessed the floods return moments later as a wall of water travelling down the Gorge. The final stand-down of the Belfry radio was at 12.10 a.m. Monday morning and the last of the M.R.O. party left G.B. at 12.40 a.m. after thanking the Fire Service, Police and local farmers who had turned up to give a helping hand.

The next phase of requests for news statements - started straightaway and continued more or less throughout the night and following day. Whatever was published from these reports, the facts as given to us then are as follows. The seven Essex Venture Scouts trapped were; Steven Turpin (28), Nicholas Gymer (21), Kevin Gumer (20), Richard Russell (18), Andrew Piggott (18), Edward Clay (18) and Tina Turpin. The Queen Mary College students, reported as Geography undergraduates, were; David Allen (from Long Ashton), Tony Owen (Torquay), Frances Dorkin (Waltham Cross), and Jenny Oakley (London). Both parties were wet-suited, had good lights and did all the right things once their trips went wrong.

The scouts must have entered the Ladder Dig sometime before 1 p.m. and the students after 2.00 p.m. During that time their observations suggest that water levels in the Main Chamber rose at least 3 ft up the ladder. Then, a rise of a foot every 4 minutes must have been noticed on making the climb. So, it could be envisaged that water might go over the top of the pitch within the hour. This was the case soon after 3 p.m. as discovered by Mr. McDonald. By all accounts, then, the already high streamflow sustained by persistent moderate rain must have almost doubled following a short-lived but very heavy shower in the area around lunch-time.

We do not know how long both parties planned to spend beyond the climb into the Ladder Dig or whether they reviewed their trips on seeing the rising water in the Main Chamber. Stanton and Barrington state in their guide book (1977, p. 84) that the "Ladder Dig Series can flood in very wet weather". Given such warnings, it is clearly a mistake to spend long in this part of G.B. with water visibly rising. The conditions of the surface stream must be the best initial indication of likely flooding in the Ladder Dig. Since the valley lies east of the blockhouse and is not normally seen by parties visiting the cave, it would seem a wise precaution to make the effort to do so during wet weather and when showers are forecast before going underground. There is plenty to see in the dry parts of the system at such times.

The tally of M.R.O. rescuers on record is as follows: 37 cavers went underground, 8 of whom did two trips; 19 cavers worked on the surface either diverting the stream with the firemen or being concerned with equipment and co-ordinating the different organisations present. As 5 of the surface party at G.B. later joined those underground, 51 volunteers were actively involved throughout the 7 hours from the call-out to when all had surfaced safely. Far more stood by should the trapped parties have been worse off or their recovery delayed. With at least 70 cavers plus over 30 from the Police, Fire and Ambulance services, over a hundred people took some part in the rescue. To these must be added the press, radio and T.V. reporters present,

An account of the dives attempted by Rob Harper and Trevor Hughes has since been published in the Cave Diving Group Newsletter, New Series No. 66, January 1983, page 26. Also, I have met Tony Owen who led the Q.M.C. party and made a special journey to thank us. Nothing has been heard from the Essex scouts to date. On Mendip, at least, the willingness and effectiveness of all who volunteered are typified by our local farming friends who came along to lend a hand. Among them were Mr. Mercan Jefferies from Manor Farm, Charterhouse, and Mr. Ivor Gibbons from Eastwater Farm, Friday. Roger Dors provided refreshments as ever. Thanks to a lot of people, then, the rescue went smoothly and ended successfully.

Friday 31st December

Rhino Rift

Alan Mills and Colin Houlden went down the cave the previous evening and hoped to be out at 10.30 p.m. By 1.30 a.m. when they were three hours overdue, Tim Large and Chris Batstone decided that something was wrong. Fiona Lewis alerted Brian Prewer that they were going over to the cave to investigate with Jim Smart and friend. Brian informed the Police of the action being taken.

Jim Smart found the overdue pair just about to complete their ascent of the Main Pitch. Apparently, Colin Houlden encountered great difficulty with his Lewis ropewalkers and so both had to share Alan's S.R.T. gear to get out: a good case where experience and determination prevented a larger scale call-out.

This report concludes with some thoughts on the established Call-out system that was well tested by the unusual coincidence of both Cave and Cliff rescue incidents on Friday 29th October, The need for a single Call-out system as set up between the Police and M.R.O. with the Cheddar Gorge Cliff Rescue Team was highlighted.

Whilst the Taunton Division handled the fractionally earlier Cheddar Gorge climbing incident through Richard West, Weston-s-Mare followed with the Burrington Combe caving alert. In neither case was it absolutely clear what exactly had happened from the first calls received. Such uncertainty during the initial phases is almost inevitable and long experience of rescue call-outs shows this to be always understandable in the circumstances. At this critical stage, then, the chances for confusion must be regarded as very high. We are in a better position to judge what is needed than those in police control rooms who will be unfamiliar with caving and climbing. If the police had to decide whom to call for particular incidents, one can imagine that coincident calls especially run the extra risk of being confused. There is also the question of back-up once one team has been sent into action. Only a single Call-out system will do in the area which is why M.R.O. must make sure that it works every time.

J.D. Hanwell  
Honorary Secretary & Treasurer  
January 1983

Editor's Note: I have published this report in its entirety mainly to save my having to re-type it, I apologise to anyone involved who feels that the names should not be mentioned.

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION  
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 1982

<u>11 months to</u> <u>31.12.81</u> <u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>	<u>£</u>
<u>Income</u>			
Donations:			
422 General appeal		311	
332 In memory of Keith Potter		56	
87 From rescued parties		20	
11 Interest on bank deposit account		18	
35 Hire of M.R.O. Nife Cells		69	
20 Contribution towards radio licence (Cheddar Cliff Rescue Team)		20	
<u>907</u>		<u>494</u>	
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Equipment:			
168 Little Dragon resuscitator	-		
275 K.M.B. 10 supplies	36		
55 Hannam suit	-		
13 Display stand	-		
18 Lighting and Nife Cells	-		
42 Other supplies	75		
165 Medical supplies	-		
60 Insurance of equipment	60		
99 Postage, stationery, duplicating, etc.	124		
58 Share of Belfry telephone rental	55		
65 Annual radio licence to Home Office	65		
5 S.W.E.R.A. levy	5		
- Donation - B.C.R.C.	10		
- B.C.R.C. meeting expenses	20		
<u>1,023</u>		<u>450</u>	
<u>£ (116)</u>		<u>£ 44</u>	
		<u>---</u>	
			Surplus/(deficit) for period

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION  
BALANCE SHEET AS AT DECEMBER 31, 1982

	<u>1981</u> <u>£</u>		<u>£</u>
<u>Current assets</u>			
Balance at bank:			
Deposit account	100		300
Current account	354		227
Cash with Hon. Treasurer and Equipment Warden	57		28
	<u>511</u>		<u>---</u>
	<u>---</u>		<u>£555</u>
			<u>---</u>
<u>Representing:</u>			
<u>Accumulated funds</u>			
Balance at January 1, 1982	627		511
Surplus/(deficit) for period	(116)		44
	<u>511</u>		<u>---</u>
	<u>---</u>		<u>£555</u>
			<u>---</u>

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 December 31, 1982 and of the surplus for the year ended on that date.

*R. Chant*

R. Chant, A.C.A., F.T.I.I., 44 Wells Road, Wookey Hole.

21<sup>st</sup> January 1983