

CONTENTS

Editorial		185
Club News		186
Regional Notes (inc. Fairy Cave Quarry / SSSI / CSCC AGM)		187
FAULT CHAMBER: SEVERN AVENS (Swildons Hole)	M. Madden	194 & 210
NHASA LOGBOOK: MANOR FARM SWALLET	ed. B. Prewer	195
LA FROMAGERE (France)	M. Madden	197
CAVING IN THE 1940s (Part 2)	R. Kenney	199
Mendip Rescue Organisation: Reports, Accounts (1985)	J. Hanwell	203
	BCRC Conference, Incidents	
From The Log		211
Letter to The Editor	P. Hann	217
Visit to the Dordogne (Abstract: full article next issue)	(P. Weston)	217
Back Page (HQ Warden Roster / Meets &c Dates / Riddle)		

(Yes folks: the Editor is now on "Page Three"...)

CLUB OFFICERS

CHAIRMAN	Phil Hendy	Dragon Cottage, Westholme Lane, Steanbow, Pilton, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, BA5 4EH.
TREASURER	Dianne Walker	Field Cottage, 90 Chelynch, Doultling, Shepton Mallet, Somerset.
SECRETARY	Bob Drake	Axeover House, Yarley, Nr. Wells, Somerset.
ASST. SECRETARY	Mike Dewdney-York	59 Kennington Ave., Bishopston, Bristol
CAVING SECRETARY	Jeff Price	18 Hurston Road, Inns Court, Bristol, BS4 1SU.
NORTHERN CAVING SEC. (Northern caves only)	Keith Sanderson	Heather View, Newby, nr Clapham, via Lancaster.
Gear Curator	Dave Morrison	2 Westholm, Hampstead Garden Suburb, London NW11.
HUT BOOKINGS	Mike Dewdney-York	59 Kennington Ave., Bishopston, Bristol
SALES OFFICER	Pete Hann	3 Queens Terrace, Sherborne, Dorset.
EDITOR	Nigel Graham	60 Williams Avenue, Wyke Regis, Weymouth, Dorset, DT4 9BP Tel. (0305) 789770
COMMITTEE	Pete Watts, Nick Marachov, Jim Rands, Jim Moon.	
LIBRARIANS / JOURNAL DISTRIBUTION	Pete & Alison Moody	
SURVEY SALES	Maurice Hewins	31 Badshot Lea, Badshot Park, Farnham, Surrey

Opinions expressed in this Journal are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the Wessex Cave club as a whole, unless otherwise stated.

Wessex Cave Club Headquarters:

Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane, Priddy, Nr. WELLS, Somerset BA5 3AX Telephone Wells (0749) 72310

(c) Wessex Cave Club

EDITORIAL

Caving Politics

LOST FOR WORDS!

Having unwittingly unleashed a Pandora's Box of clumsy Nature Conservancy Council bureaucracy on Mendip by arranging for the main caves to be scheduled as Sites of Special Scientific Interest before the N.C.C. had grown its teeth via the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act so that it is now desperately fighting to get the N.C.C. off the farmers' and caving communities' backs, the Council of Southern Caving Clubs (or that fraction still at the AGM after over SEVEN Hours of debate), STILL has done virtually nothing to stave off the future threats to caving from within caving's own organisation.

A possible motion for the next C.S.C.C. A.G.M. will call for the dropping of the word "Novice" from the title "Novice Training Officer" (promotion to "Experienced .O."...?). The Council has an N.T.O. who clearly learnt nothing from the last few weeks' troubles: fresh from blithely playing the cavers straight into the N.C.C.'s hands at the S.S.S.I. meeting (attended by Mr. Bob Cornes, of the N.C.C. geology section), this worthy is STILL talking of grandiose Sports Council inspired schemes to ensure we shall eventually be Certificated (or at this rate Certified), Approved and Fully-Trained at public expense to ensure we are safe-within-the-meaning-of-the-Act to venture down Goatchurch Cavern (don't forget the permit & key).

For the benefit of non-Mendip-based N.C.A. / B.C.R.A. / C.C. officers who may read this Editorial and the meetings reports to follow: come to Mendip for a weekend's caving or two.

You might learn a thing or two... though I suspect not, in some cases ...

As the song says, "When will they ever learn? / When will they ever learn?"

Shall I turn to happier things? Like CAVING???

A Somerset-section C.D.G. member not a Round-Trip's distance from Upper Pitts sidled up to me one evening last November, in the Hunters', "Keep your ear to the ground: the divers have found something", he whispered conspiratorially. I did, but gags were firmly clenched. Until Easter, the start of the tourist seasons and it was official. The entrance sump to the Gough's Cave river had been passed. Remember the initial breakthrough was in 1985, the C.D.G.'s anniversary year: add to that the Wookey 25 diving, and work in the other regions – an excellent way to celebrate a 50th, Anniversary.

Congratulations too to the B.E.C. for their joint dig with Cardiff University in Daren Cilau. The dig entered 300-odd feet of passage, in an interesting area West of the Bonsai Streamway.

I have an ambition: to produce a Journal free of politics beyond the odd Committee notice or two. I nearly succeeded with the last one: I would be failing in my duty if I cheated by omitting the more important items of caving politics - I wonder if I'll ever manage to publish an edition containing nowt but CAVES, CAVING and CAVING SOCIALS?

Wouldn't that be nice?

CLUB NEWS

M.R.O. TEAM CO-ORDINATOR.

As Bob Drake is now an M.R.O. Warden, together with Jeff Price, he has stood down as the W.C.C. Team Co-ordinator, with the Club's thanks for his work. The Club M.R.O. Team Co-ordinator is now Pete Lacey.

JOURNAL DISTRIBUTION, MEMBERSHIP RECORDS.

In view of worries caused by our records being computer-stored, Bob Drake would like to point out that these Club records contain only names and addresses of members.

LOCKERS & FOOD BOXES.

These are now all numbered and listed. If you wish to install one, or stop using one, please contact Jeff Price or Pete Hann.

UPPER PITTS PROGRESS.

The new changing-room is taking shape. The floor and the showers plinth have been tiled throughout, including in the unisex toilet and in the tackle-store, so cleaning will consist of hosing and sweeping towards the mud-pit just inside the door. The sliding doors have been removed and replaced with a single standard door and a window, (This led to one little problem: the Wessex Chariot was inadvertently walled in and had to be partially dismantled to get it out!).

While tiling was in progress, the ladies' dorm. was temporarily dismantled and the room used as a store. Ladies, you've now had your room restored until the new dormitory is ready! The fire-escape from there was walled up: escape now via the extension.

The alterations and a new boiler will call for an overhaul of the entire heating / hot-water system: professional advice and planning will be used.

Slight modifications to the original alterations plans have been made, some resulting from builders' advice. The new boiler will be sited in its own compartment behind, outside, the building. The Gents' was to have contained a shower, but is now thought unnecessary since the three new changing-room showers will always be available. The new ladies' room will have a shower (the existing ladies' priority unit), however. Final details of the new ladies' dormitory are still to be considered: constructive suggestions welcomed.

One major modification to the plans has been dropped. Rather than simply entering the new changing-room straight from the "old" ladies' room, a combined porch / fire-escape in the corner between the extension and the main building was proposed (hence the footings installed there). Although this idea had a number of practical advantages, it was found that maintenance problems could arise in the future, so the original plan was followed instead. This decision led to the slight modifications, to regain the space the porch would have created.

This may be an opportune moment to reassure those members who have expressed reservations about the work. As one of those involved in arranging the work at Committee Meetings, the Editor would like to say that all the points raised by members, and the advice obtained from professionals, are discussed thoroughly. Possibly the most important point, of course, is the cost. The Hon. Treasurer's advice is always sought before major (expensive!) decisions are taken.

UPPER PITTS DOOR KEYS.

A reminder: these are available against a £5 returnable deposit.

CAVE DIVING GROUP / WESSEX CAVE CLUB RESCUE PRACTICE.

The major rescue practice from Swildons Four, held on April 27th, will be fully reported in the next Journal. Valuable lessons were learnt in this well-attended major exercise, which was observed by the M.R.O.

Part-way through the afternoon, people waiting at Upper Pitts for their turn in Swildons, were called out to an incident in Goatchurch reaching the cave more or less as the casualty was assisted out by her team and others present.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS.

Jackie Westcott is now at: Residence Chantilly, Rue Martin Pfeiffer 22, 1080 Bruxelles, Belgium.

NEW MEMBERS.

The Wessex Cave Club welcomes the following new members:-

MAGGIE McPHERSON	28 Union Street, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 4RR.
LYNNE CROCKART	29 Park Lee Road, Blackburn, Lancashire BB2 3NZ.
JANICE D. KAYE	9 Main Street, Wilsden, Bradford, West Yorkshire.
ROBIN MARK TAVINER	64 Farm Road, Weston-Super-Mare, Avon BS22 8BD.
DEAN MARTIN NUTE	97-99 Locking Road, Weston-Super-Mare, Avon.
Mrs. C.M. HOGGART	Hall Green, 22 Curson Rise, Kendal, Cumbria LA9 7PN.

THIS COLUMN.

At the Committee Meeting of 18th. May, Jim moon put forward a query from other members regarding the publishing of Minutes extracts. In fact parts of the "Club News", Mendip Regional Notes, various notices, dates and announcements etc. are derived from Committee proceedings: the New members section is one example.

MARRIAGE.

Best Wishes from the Club to DAVE MORRISON & AMANDA HUNT.

REGIONAL NOTES

MENDIP : Ss.S.S.I., Fairy Cave Quarry, C.S.C.C. A.G.M.

The last month or so have seen Mendip caving bogged down in an extraordinary mass of caving politics centred on two issues. The first was the Hobbs quarry scheme to convert Shatter Cave into a show-cave. The other, far larger, issue was the effect on farming and on caving of the hill's major caves having been designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Trying to pick one's way through the arguments and counter arguments, the politicising and the acrimony has proved incredibly difficult. Letters and reports have been circulated in all directions, somewhat haphazardly, all manner of rumours, speculation and electioneering have surfaced: the entire caving community has been delivered a swingeing upper-cut by the very quango it turned to in good faith to protect its interests.

To summarise: In the late 1970's each caving region submitted proposals to the Nature Conservancy Council intended to protect the caves by S.S.S.I. scheduling. No-one then foresaw the problems this could lead to, partly because the designations then had little real meaning.

In 1981 the Government passed the Wildlife & Countryside Act, giving the Nature Conservancy Council real powers to implement it. For some reason, again, no-one realised the inherent dangers; or if they did, they kept rather quiet about it (or were ignored? No-one seems very sure.).

In April 1986, the landowners on Mendip affected by the scheduling were abruptly told by the N.C.C. that their cave-bearing lands were Ss.S.S.I., protected by a very wide set of restrictions. All manner of perfectly normal agricultural operations were suddenly declared "Potentially Damaging Operations" - quite apart from such P.D.O.s as filling or polluting entrances, or quarrying. The farmers were, rightly, very annoyed and very worried: all their rights as farmers sold out so that cavers may continue to cave. Caving itself is a "Potentially Damaging Operation" - the N.C.C. however take the view that caving is more important than the owner's livelihood.

Not only have the N.C.C. suddenly wielded draconian powers over the landowners, apparently (to the latter) as a result of cavers' work with the N.C.C., but it has done so with all the finesse of a bison in a pottery. The farmers now require written consent, via forms they have to sign, simply to allow us to cave and themselves to farm. All that was required was a simple agreement to keep the caves and other, important, karst features intact and open, and to keep water-borne pollution to a minimum. The absurdity of the situation may be judged by considering Swildon's Hole: all the fields over it, including the village green and the paddock by the Queen Victoria Inn, are scheduled. The church, the school, the roads and the private houses are unaffected. In other words, the scheduling only affects bits of the cave itself but restricts activities on a large area of grazing land. By the time the cave leaves the swallet field, at The Well, it is nearly 100 feet down. The nearest known point in Twelve lies some 350 feet below the Queen Vic's paddock, yet even the landlord, Mr. Baines, has had to deal with N.C.C. forms. True, percolation water can carry pollutants into the cave, but this problem does not require a heavy-weight, Peterborough-based civil service department to deal with it.

So, the N.C.C. has achieved nothing constructive, but has simply tried to wreck years of co-operation between the Mendip landowners and the cavers. And after Mendip? The other regions of course. Clearly something had to be done. The first action was to regain the farmers' trust: we had brought the N.C.C. onto Mendip, now we had to try to keep it at bay. Local members of the major clubs on the hill met the farmers to discuss the situation and to promise to try to help them. The landowners around Priddy held a meeting, resulting in the closure of: EASTWATER CAVERN, HUNTERS' HOLE, NINE BARROWS & SLUDGE PIT (the latter still closed by slumping anyway), and SWILDON'S HOLE, for an indefinite time. The meeting issued this Press Release:-

"In the evening of the 15th May 1986 a meeting was held at the Hunters' Lodge Inn, Priddy, to discuss the implication of the Nature Conservancy Council proposed restrictions on the use of land in and around the village of Priddy.

"These restrictions, in the form of Ss.S.S.I. have been imposed in their view to protect the caves which are numerous in this area.

"We the landowners would like to point out that for the last 80 years landowners and cavers via the local caving clubs have worked hand-in-hand in the preservation and exploration (in both the scientific and sporting aspects) of the CAVES under their land.

"We can see no reason why a Government body utilising Public Funds are forcing upon us restrictions which we find Orwellian in nature.

"Because of this the landowners who are affected have with great reluctance decided to close caves and stop further exploration on their land.

"Further meetings will be held very shortly to consider what further actions might be taken to protect our freedom.

"Issued on behalf of PRIDDY AREA landowners by

Mr. S. BAYNES."

The above Press Release has been quoted in full. The Charterhouse controlled caves (G.B., Longwood August, etc.) are not affected. The owners, Bristol Waterworks Co., received and signed N.C.C. consent forms (on legal advice). At time of writing (27th May), the caves are still closed, and the B.E.C. have decided to close St. Cuthbert's Swallet in support of the Priddy landowners (for a reason to be explained).

FAIRY CAVE QUARRY

Before detailing the C.S.C.C. actions so far over the Scheduling, it is appropriate here to consider the Shatter Cave show-cave plan. This issue generated considerable controversy, not only as a caving problem, but also because its debate revealed some rather odd politicking.

Historically, the issue was a Cerberus Speleological Society matter, since they were the club exploring the caves as the quarry found them, and were the club entrusted with access control by Hobbs Quarries. This meant that the C.S.C.C. had no involvement until fairly recently, and then could only really act at Cerberus' request (the principle of club autonomy). When the quarry was closed, for planning reasons, C.S.S. attempted to purchase it for show-cave development. This may well have worked very well, but the scheme foundered. C.S.S. could not raise enough money, nor could they raise C.S.C.C. support. The present Editor was at the C.S.C.C. meeting which discussed the Cerberus proposal: the debate became somewhat acrimonious over the main sticking-point. This was caver access to any or all of the quarry caves. C.S.S. could give no real assurances on that, their representative thought C.S.C.C. were trying to scuttle the whole scheme, took umbrage and left.

Over the next few years, the caves were left in peace. No-one could obtain access since Hobbs were now protecting their "new" commercial assets. Opposition to their show-cave scheme was being organised, though it was recognised that a straight "No" from cavers' organisations would probably achieve nothing. Hobbs consulted "a caver" over technical aspects of the scheme, particularly a plan to drive an inspection tunnel into the side of Shatter Cave as part of their feasibility study. The C.S.S. meanwhile sought N.C.A. backing for their opposition to the development. Graham Price, then Cerberus Hon. Secretary as well as Conservation & Access Officer to both C.S.C.C. and the N.C.A. Executive, wrote to N.C.A. on behalf of his club.

This action came to light on May 12 1986, at a meeting called specifically to discuss the C.S.C.C. policy towards the proposed development. The meeting, convened by C.S.C.C. Chairman Dave Irwin in an attempt also to dispel the rumours, half-truths, "crucify-Price-campaigning", etc., was attended by observers Frank Baguley (Cambrian Caving Council), Jenny Potts (Derbyshire Caving Association) and Mick Day (Chairman, N.C.A.). The meeting learned that the N.C.A.'s reply, a letter supporting C.S.S. in opposing the show-cave scheme, was a response to a letter genuinely thought to have C.S.C.C. backing. The C.S.C.C. had not been involved in fact. This was too much for the W.C.C. reps present (Pete Hann & Nigel Graham): N.G. asked Graham Price directly, "You are an officer of Cerberus, of the C.S.C.C., and of the N.C.A.: how did the N.C.A. Executive come to believe your letter had C.S.C.C. backing?" No satisfactory answer was given, to this or to a question, "How did Cerberus come to lose its once very good relationship with the quarry owners?"

By the end of the meeting, the C.S.S.'s (or at any rate its Hon. Sec's) reputation was pretty low. The meeting adjourned for a week: it became clear that we could not produce an effective policy towards the development of an S.S.S.I. cave unless we had an effective policy towards Ss.S.S.I. generally.

COMING TOGETHER

At this point, the Council of Southern Caving Clubs was faced with two issues, plus its own Annual General Meeting, on May 17th '86.

- 1 The Nature Conservancy Council's actions on Mendip, and the C.S.C.C.'s corresponding policy.
- 2 The Fairy Cave Quarry show-cave proposal.

If Mendip landowners generally were angry, so were cavers. The mood in the huts and in the Hunters' was grim, and it was almost impossible to hold a straight conversation about caves and caving: it was all politics. Graham Price became a scapegoat. Not only were the members of most Mendip clubs snapping at his heels, his credibility with the landowners was practically destroyed. Clearly a new C & A Officer was wanted. This led to some rather unedifying electioneering between him and Alan Butcher (S.M.C.C.), not the sort of thing usually found on Mendip!

The C.S.C.C. sat down to three consecutive meetings at the Hunters' Lodge Inn on May 17th. The local farmers had just closed the Priddy caves, so no-one was in any mood to be flannelled by the Nature Conservancy Council's spokesman in the first meeting.

This first meeting was chiefly a question-and-answer session between the cavers and the N.C.C., represented by Mr. Bob Cornes, of the N.C.C. geological department at the Taunton regional office. The meeting started with a constitutional hiccup, but eventually Dave Irwin was proposed, seconded and accepted as Chairman.

The history of the Scheduling was given, the Mendip list of sites, prepared under N.C.C. guidelines under control of a 1949 Act, being submitted to the N.C.C. by Tony Waltham in 1981, i.e. before the Wildlife & Countryside Act came into force. The requirements of the new rules were summarised: to operate their farms the farmers must sign consent forms. If they do not, ALL the N.C.C.'s restrictions on "Potentially Damaging Operations" apply. The meeting then heard of the meetings to date between cavers' representatives (particularly Tim Large & Phil Romford - B.E.C.) and the landowners, and of the C & A Officer's contacting both the National Farmers' Union and the Sports Council. Neither of these bodies could offer much help at that time, though the N.F.U. were already aware of the problem. The S.C. has no influence over the N.C.C., partly because the N.C.C. has not actually stopped anyone caving! (N.C.C. policy is to keep the caves open, as well as to protect them from agricultural, building, etc. operations.)

Mr. Cornes explained several important points:

N.C.C. had had virtually no part in draughting the W & C Act 1981, whose procedures for enforcement were advised by the Treasury Solicitor.

If cavers refused to co-operate with N.C.C., the latter would go ahead with its scheduling etc anyway.

N.C.C. policy is to keep caves open: they do have Compulsory Purchase powers, but these are tightly controlled by Public Inquiry etc. rules. It has only used these powers once, on site in Wales, whose owner could not be traced.

Landowners would not be directly controlled by planning authorities, as A.O.N.B. listing has little real influence and the N.C.C. itself is powerless in planning control except over Ss.S.S.I. Buildings (houses, churches, roads, etc.) are covered by planning regulations.

Will future major cave extensions automatically extend the relevant S.S.S.I.? N.C.C.: "Yes". The scheduling covers ALL the known cave, even passages of no particular scientific interest. (Relatively minor caves, e.g. Hunters' Hole, North Hill Swallet etc., merely have the misfortune to have been included in the scheduled catchment area.)

N.C.C. will not withdraw scheduling unless it can be proved that the site is not in fact of any scientific importance.

Toby C.C. posed an intriguing question which Mr. Cornes answered with skillful, if unwitting, irony: "If by these consents we can cave, and if landowners who can prove financial loss can be compensated by the N.C.C., where's the problem?" Mr. Cornes pointed out that it was largely a matter of attitude and willingness. Speaker after speaker had been condemning the N.C.C.'s attitude, heavy-handed (and unnecessary) bureaucracy and total lack of understanding of caves and caving, landowners' wishes, etc all through the meeting: the N.C.C. representative may have appeared fairly sympathetic, but the N.C.C. itself clearly says "tough".

At the close of this meeting, Rich Witcombe observed that the caving organisations had been rather hypocritical in that we had worked towards S.S.S.I. protection for caves in the first place without really considering the consequences. He spoke thanking Mr. Cornes for attending the meeting and explaining N.C.C. policies to us.

After a short break, in which Club reps could discuss their own policies etc., the meetings re-convened to discuss Fairy Cave Quarry.

SUMMARY to this point:

Hobbs Quarries' planning application for the show-cave and "leisure-centre" scheme turned down on planning grounds, but they may appeal.

C.S.C. has no real policy as yet towards Ss.S.S.I.

FAIRY CAVE QUARRY (SHATTER & WITHYHILL CAVES DEVELOPMENT)

Hobbs Holdings Ltd. closed these two caves to cavers in 1981. C.S.S. were informed by the Company, and in turn informed C.S.C.C. C.S.C.C. could take no action itself as doing so would infringe the club's autonomy but it did request Cerberus to re-negotiate access when possible. C.S.S. then published their show-cave proposal, with N.C.A. backing, and informed C.S.C.C. of its actions. As C.C.C. said they could handle the situation itself, the council formed no official policy, the Cerberus simply keeping the council informed of any developments over the ensuing 5 years.

At the C.S.C.C. meeting of 15th February 1985, the C.S.S. report was tabled but not discussed: it was simply noted in the Minutes. Later the report was circulated to the Planning Committee, with a covering letter from N.C.A. Chairman Mick Day. The C.S.C.C. were not consulted as the N.C.A. believed they were acting the council's full knowledge: the C.S.C.C. suddenly found itself with a policy!

A Planning Committee Site Meeting was held. Dave Irwin, in a letter of apology for absence to Graham Price, stressed that the C.S.C.C. is not averse to the principle of the Shatter Cave development, provided the intrinsic beauty of the cave is not harmed. Dave Irwin understood the work would be "monitored by the N.C.C. and Dr. William Stanton ... known for his views on cave conservation".

At the time of the Site Meeting, outline planning permission was nearing expiry (end April '86). Hobbs, it appeared, would intend to meet the cave conservation conditions submitted to the planners. Since then, the outline planning permission expired and was not renewed. Whether or not Hobbs will appeal, it was clear the C.S.C.C. needed a definite policy on the show-cave proposal, hence the Emergency Meeting of the council, convened on the 10th May 1986.

As noted above, this was adjourned. On the 17th May it resumed, though with no clear S.S.S.I. policy to guide it. A general proposal set out by Dave Irwin was discussed, and accepted with a few amendments, after a long-winded debate on detail.

Essentially, the Council of Southern Caving Clubs is agreed that it cannot stop Shatter Cave being converted into a show cave, but it asks that Hobbs Holding Ltd. and the Nature Conservancy Council employ consultants to advise on the development and to ensure that the cave is damaged as little as possible. The C.S.C.C. also agrees that Withyhill Cave is not suitable for converting to a show-cave.

The C.S.C.C. had sat down at 2.45 pm that afternoon. It was now about 7pm. There was a break of about twenty minutes for beer and food, then a very reduced meeting re-convened for the A.G.M. Many of the delegates from the more distant clubs had left, so the Council's A.G.M. was not far off inquorate: in fact it was not much more than a caucus of Mendip-based clubs.

COUNCIL OF SOUTHERN CAVING CLUBS A.G.M.

The Meeting discussed two major issues; the Ss.S.S.I. work and the N.C.A.'s Grant-Aid committee.

The Grant-Aid committee, set up by N.C.A. to submit a case for major Sports Council grants to British caving generally, functions as a co-opted body. Graham Price and Martin Grass (Hon. Sec., C.S.C.C.) explained that this could mean it may be able to create full-time, salaried officer posts in caving's national organisation WITHOUT needing N.C.A. approval (co-option is not a constitutional change so the N.C.A. or its Working Party needs no General Meeting for such posts to be ratified - or rejected.)

The C.S.C.C. officers will study the work of the Grant Aid committee more fully: at the time of the A.G.M. it did not have all the information needed. Their findings will be reported back to the C.S.C.C.

The Meeting agreed to establish a Working Party to deal specifically with the Ss.S.S.I. problem. Its members were elected after the elections of C.S.C.C. Officers for 1986 - 1987:

Chairman	Dave Irwin
Hon. Secretary	Martin Grass
Hon. Treasurer	Chris Smart
Conservation & Access Officer	Tim Large
Equipment Officer	Jerry Breakspeare
Novice Training Officer	Alan Dougherty.

The Ss.S.S.I. Working Party, to consult and liaise with the landowners and to try to reduce the N.C.C.'s restrictions to a minimum, is:-

Dave Irwin, Martin Grass, Tim Large, with Jim Hanwell (Geological Adviser), Mike Thompson (Legal Adviser) and co-opted members Graham Price (N.C.A. representative) and Phil Romford.

Graham Price (controversial choice) chosen mainly because he is in a position to report directly to the N.C.A. Executive. (The whole issue is seen as a potential national problem, affecting the other caving areas, also it is important to stress that the C.S.C.C. is supporting the meet Mendip landowners fully.)

The Meeting closed at about 10.45 p.m. with a vote of Thanks to Dave Irwin for his Chairmanship and the mass of preparatory work he had done.

MENDIP NOTES (CAVING)

WATERWHEEL CAVE, a long-term digging project by Willie Stanton & co., is now "open". On Somerset County Council land, the Charterhouse Outdoor Activity Centre administer access control. The key is held by Mendip Caving Group, who have to apply the same restrictions on access as apply to Upper Flood Swallet.

The cave is 500 to 600ft long and about 120ft deep. Opening the cave required a lot of stabilising just below the entrance. Beyond, the cave descends steeply to a small streamway through crawls to larger passage to a 25ft pitch, below which the passage narrows and sumps. Pumping fail revealed no continuation.

Nature has had a go at closing EASTWATER CAVERN, with boulders near the bottom of the entrance ruckle moving. The marked route down appears unchanged but entering other areas of the ruckle is not adviseable.

GOUGH'S CAVE, of course, has provided the main find on Mendip in the last few months. An awkward flooded pot in the oxbows, dived inconclusively by Martyn Farr in May 1980, proved to be an entrance into the main river when Rich Stevenson succeeded in penetrating it in November 1985.

Subsequent diving by Rob Harper and Rich passed 500ft of river passage to a large chamber, now named Lloyd Hall. On May 2nd further diving reached a very large chamber, of G.B.'s Gorge proportions, boulder-strewn, leading to another sump.

News of the initial diving breakthrough was kept under wraps at the request of the cave management, so that it could be released at the start of the tourist season. The diving itself was delayed for a time by floods.

SWILDONS HOLE ACCESS: Though the cave is presently locked, when it is re-opened, please use the proper routes to and from the entrance (i.e., after paying at Manor Farm, via the path from Solomon Coombe, or that from the village hall).

There have been reports of cavers crossing the fields from Eastwater Lane, members or guests at Upper Pitts being obvious suspects. **THERE ARE NO ROUTES TO SWILDONS HOLE OTHER THAN FROM THE VILLAGE:** even if you do pay anyway. The land East of the entrance meadow is not part of Manor Farm, and there is no access between the fields.

SOUTH WALES

Love it or hate it, DAREN CILAU is here to stay and it's "growing". The B.E.C. / Cardiff University diggers' Hard Rock Cafe Dig is now some 1600ft long, aiming for the Icing On The Cake area upstream of St. David's Sump. Even the "old" Daren Cilau still yields new passage, a passage from the old Main Chamber has been pushed a short distance and seems promising.

Of all the caves in South Wales, Daren appears to be the place NOT to have an accident. A rescue from the far reaches of DYO, say, would be a major affair, but even the Long Crawl in there is by no means as awkward as the DC entrance series with its abrupt bends, occasional squeezes and small stream. A meeting was held in early March to consider the problems of rescue from Daren Cilau. Called by W. Gascoigne (Secretary, Gwent C.R.T.) and attended by Dr. Jess Corson, himself a caver, the meeting considered various options including drilling shot-holes in the squeezes, ready should blasting be necessary, to the possibility of the resurgence proving a viable route for evacuation by diving. Dr. Corson explained the problems of diagnosis, first-aid, hypothermia and shock, and the meeting also considered the psychological state of the casualty suffering both the injuries and the realisation of the serious dangers

(Continued p 216)

FAULT CHAMBER: SEVERN AVENS

Mark Madden

Intrigued by the rather vague description in "Mendip Underground", Sean Walsh and myself visited Severn Aven in November 1985. A 25ft climb up from the floor of Fault Chamber, aided by a fixed rope, leads to a small stance. From here a 5ft traverse over a stal slope leads to a small alcove, the bottom of Trench Aven. A bold step around the corner leads to a rift which is the start of Severn Valley Series.

At the far end of this 20ft long rift a squeeze leads to a much bigger cross-rift. The first aven, 25ft high, follows shortly and leads to the second aven, 30ft high. The first two avens in this series are covered in flowstone and are reminiscent of vertical escalators. They lead to the third and final aven, impressively circular and 40ft high. On our first visit we could not climb this without a rope or any tackle, but it looked inviting. Also about 15ft up the back wall an alcove could be seen which was very promising, but again needed tackle to be sure of getting back from.

On our exit, the Trench was investigated. This consists of a rubble strewn vertical rift which after a 100ft or so, gives rise to a 10ft climb and small chamber containing the only solid walls in the whole aven. Unfortunately the only leads, a narrow ascending rift, pinched out after 15ft or so.

A return was planned and postponed, and planned again and postponed again, until finally, following a "Bath Uni. Old-Boys" meeting one January night in our spiritual hometown, the trip was on! Unfortunately, the long, philosophical discussions the night before meant that no-one was in a fit state to go underground until well into the afternoon...

Numerous ropes, runners, bolt kits, etc. were transported to Fault Chamber, and a "bombproof" traverse line was fixed between the stance and Severn Aven by Kev Clarke and Rob Jacob. Climbing the final Severn Aven gave Sean and myself several hours of good fun while Kev and Rob shivered and held the rope. The aven was finally topped using a mixture of free- and aid-climbing. This involved threading grotty bits of tape behind even grottier bits of flowstone to use as footholds as well as using both ends of the same ladder as a mobile etrier. Naturally enough, the aven pinched out at the top in all directions, but we enjoyed it and it had needed checking. (The previous explorations, in 1964, had used a scaling pole to get 30ft up, high enough to see that it did not continue upwards, but not to check the cross-rifts.)

We detackled the aven and climbed quickly into the aven. A short (10ft long) passage leads to a small chamber with a 10ft high rift leading up. This unfortunately pinched out, but a crawl beneath it leads to an interesting passage about 25ft long, with a shale floor. This ended with the roof dipping to the floor, but it looks like a good place to dig: there is a strong draught somewhere in the system.

We detackled the avens but left the traverse line in place. All in all, these are an impressive set of avens well worth visiting and relatively easy to get to. Although there are no open leads, it could be worth a bit of a dig.

Sketch section, Severn Avens: p 210.

EXTRACTS FROM THE N.H.A.S.A. LOGBOOK

MANOR FARM SWALLET

EDITED BY BRIAN PREWER

Part II

4th June - 30th August 1972.

Fourteen sessions of steady digging, including some banging, wall-building and railway installing ("extended to new station", 30/8). Personnel represented were: M.M.T., Aubrey Newport, Geoff -?, J-Rat, Al ('Satanic') Mills, R.M.W., F.J.D., R.E., B.E.P., Alb., John Jones (of the Nantymeol Chapter), R.W. ('Barabobath'), D.C., Jeppers, J.D.H., Tim Reynolds, Pete Palfrey, J.M. & Son, 'Foul-Mouth' Miller, Nigel Taylor, Pete Moody, Jerry Lavis, M.P. Barton.

By now the retaining wall was built up to the roof, while the dig seemed to be descending. 30/8: Railway extended to new station, serious injury to Baraknee by Prew!

6th September 1972.

Dug out more from final choke. RN started pushing the UBSS dig in the other passage and considers that in view of labour surplus, we might as well have a go at both simultaneously. Bang will be needed here. Alan Fincham, BEP, JLH, JL, Alb, PP, NT, MPB, RW. -JDH.

13th September.

Small hole opened below large boulder at lower end of tramway. Fair bit of rock, some with stal, shifted. There appears to be some draught. Suggest leave UBSS hole for a bit. Alb, PP, BEP, NT, Satanic, AF. -Alb.

14th September (Thursday).

As a result of last night's pre-Hunters' shock, AF, NT, Satanic, PP, McManus & 1, continued probe. Pete and Alan unearthed a gravel pit, the next shift (Satanic & NT) moved some boulders and uncovered a 20ft deep slot. A large boulder still blocked the way on. This was eventually removed to expose a rift 20ft deep and 7ins wide. It would appear to enlarge back in under the tramway. -NT.

15th September.

The dig looks extremely interesting, for we now have a strong draught. The rift can now be seen to extend 20ft down and 10ft horizontally. The way on requires bang. I would suggest 3 to 4 lbs and we could be in. There is no further point in digging until it has been banged. PP, NT, AF, Satanic. -AM.

17th September. (Sunday)

Morning: 20oz bang in crack and tamped well. Lit blue touch-paper, retired immediately, and "God's House" was open. AF, RMW. -RMW.

Afternoon: Checked up on bang. Removed many boulders. It needs another pound or so to make it passable. Draught extremely good. Satanic, FJD. -AM.

Evening: AF, FJD placed another bang. -AF.

18th September (Monday).

Annie & Rich West went in to investigate. Results of yesterday's two bangs very good but at least one more needed. (There is an obliging crack). Large amount of bang-shattered rock either extracted or pushed into depths to the accompaniment of merry rumblings and crashings. Helmets very welcome and Newton very wise to stand under apple tree instead of banged rock!

AW, RMW. -RMW.

20th September.

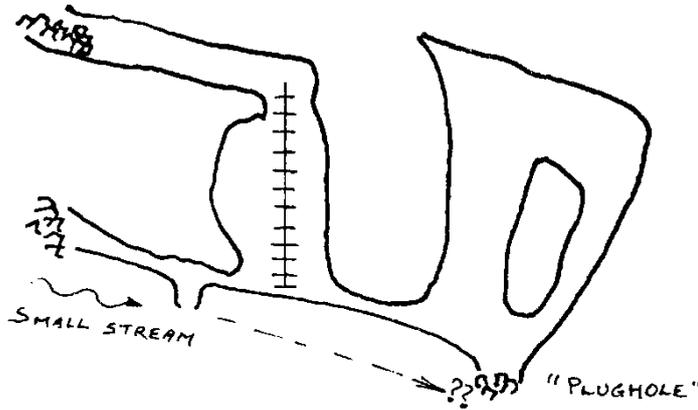
Rift still too tight! But the gallant UBSS had some bang so 1½ lbs placed in crack and fired.

JDH, MMT, DJC, Barabobath, 'Sir Algol' (JL), Alb, BEP, Satanic, NT, PP, FJD, and UBSS contingent.

-FJD.

21st September (Thursday).

RMW, BEP, PP, Alb, FJD looked at extension below rift (see sketch). Best plan of attack probably the "Plughole" at lowest point, a sludgy, muddy dig.



23rd September,

Six tons of clay were removed from the terminal dig and deposited into the Plughole. It was noted that there was a large quantity of red worms in the mud.

N.B. -We are following the stream passage down-dip.

-AM.

Note

It would appear that there are now three digs going on in Manor Farm; the Plug, UBSS and the Terminal Dig. As UBSS dig does not affect the other two, a decision will therefore have to be made as to which dig to concentrate on, as there is not enough room to dig both at the same time.

-AM

27th September.

Dug at so-called "Plughole", gained about 3ft depth. Put mud in poly bags upslope, however this will all have to come out eventually - a long job. Clearly 1968 Flood mud.

NT, BEP, JHD, Rex Emery, Alb, RW.

-JDH.

4th October - 22 November 1972.

Nine sessions of steady, if obnoxious, cowsh digging from the Plughole, following draught (of non-alcoholic variety!). Down to 1962 mud on 8th Oct. Problems with slumping encountered. Spurred on by the roaring of the stream which can be clearly heard at the digging face (22 / 11).

'The Master', Alb, FJD, PP, DJC, Greg Villis, Tim, NT, AM, BEP, MMT, Satanic, K. James, Pete -?, I. Grey, MPB, Barabobath, Algol, 4 UBSS.

3rd December.

Reconnaissance trip after weekend's heavy rain. Small hole had appeared near digging face on left, against rock wall, through which stream is clearly visible. (Probably flowing through boulders 2ft below dig). Hole enlarged to drain dig. Some photos taken.

Pete Smart, Ian Statham.

-IS.

6th December.

Pete and Ian: Large quantities water down entrance shaft, from small joint. Larger quantities disappearing into UBSS dig, with collapse shaft water. Large stream in main rift, to sump at dig: appeared to flow out of drain into dig, flowing forward in direction of digging. First Manor Farm streamway trip!

-IS.

(To be continued)

LA FROMAGERE

-MARK MADDEN

Last Summer, while some people were having a holiday at the Gouffre Berger, a group of ULSA cavers and I were also enjoying ourselves on the Vercors. After doing some minor (by French, not English, standards) classics, we decided to attempt something major. The Gouffre Engels - LA FROMAGERE- looked good, but a bit much for an in-and-out trip, so we planned a minor three-day siege. So much for the plan...

The reality was somewhat different. La Fromagere is somewhat different! Almost as deep as the Berger, with twenty-one pitches, the impressive entrance is halfway along the main track to its more famous rival. An advance party of four, armed with five tackle bags, went to rig to the bottom of the big pitch (205 metres deep alone). The attitude was, "Well if it gets tight we'll just have to take off our tackle bags!" The first pitch was found to be rigged, so we thought we would carry on, using our tackle just in case. Fifteen minutes and about 100ft further on we'd changed our minds. For some stupid reason we didn't dump the tackle until it was all down the second pitch and halfway to the third. We decided to carry on following the French tackle as far as we could.

The entrance series consists of seven medium-sized pitches leading to the big one. Unfortunately most of the first 1000-odd feet is narrow, meandering passage, covered in moonmilk, making the pitches tricky, and with several awkward traverses where the floor is too narrow.

The big pitch is rather like a large cheese, split into six or seven shafts. They were immaculately rigged, complete with etrier traverses hanging in space between ropes, and numerous rebelay. Unfortunately, Andy N, had a bad fall on one of the rebelay and dislocated his knee. He limped out while the rest of us carried on.

At the bottom, the cave changes character completely - black, jagged rock and a narrow, stooping streamway leading to a sump. The way on is a low crawl, Le Boyau, leading off from a cross-rift in the roof, just upstream of the sump. This long (200ft) crawl eventually opens into a high rift, where we found a "Pennine Bitter" beer mat! The way through the rift is not clear: we found a high- and a low- level route. The higher is definitely recommended but is not easy to find. A small pitch regains the main stream in a high, wide rift.

Over a kilometre of easy going follows, punctuated by occasional pitches, numerous pools, some fine formations, and some calcite barriers to negotiate, before reaching a pitch dropping into a small chamber. This had been de-tackled, but the rope was still there, so we rigged the 14m, pitch and continued. Just a little further on another pitch was met but with only a broken end of rope left at its head. This pitch opens out into a large chamber; traversing out over the pitch head, the floor could not be seen. We estimate that we had reached the -520metre mark. It certainly felt deep!

The return was tiring, all uphill, with numerous small pitches and climbs. Finding the way back through the rift to Le Boyau crawl gave us some anxious moments, but we eventually regained the bottom of the big pitch. This seemed a noisier and wetter place than previously, but luckily the ropes were rigged well out of the water. Ascending the pitch took a good half-hour, but due to all the rebelay we could climb relatively close together. Arriving at the top we found the cave was flooding. The noise was deafening and disorientating, whilst the tricky entrance passages caused us all to spread out, all making it difficult not to panic after such a tiring trip. Pitch heads were hard to get off with the extra water, moreover, finding the correct places to start traversing was crucial. Lagging behind at one point, I have never been as glad to see Tharrat's ugly face as when he waited at one of the traverses for me! It was inordinately reassuring to find the tackle bags, for it meant we were nearly out. Getting the tackle up the penultimate pitch was soul-destroying, but even worse was shifting it to the first pitch, through the low crawl which was now dangerously full of water. The entrance shaft, previously bone-dry, was a raging maelstrom of

flying spray and noise, where carbide lights had no chance. After one of the longest 13 hours of our lives we finally surfaced to an awesome thunderstorm and staggered back to the minibus, which we only found because Andy had left a light shining from the roof-rack.

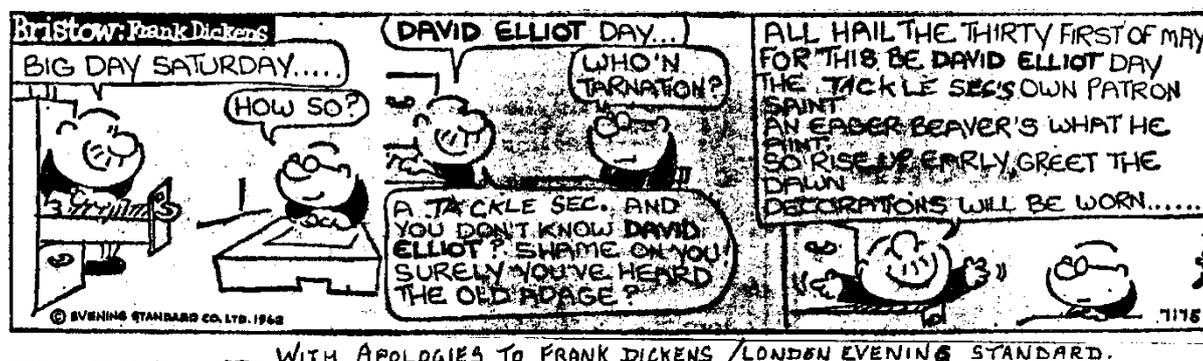
Overall, La Fromagere was an experience: English hard classics (Langcliffe, Quaking, Daren Cilau, Easegill traverses, etc.) are just not in the same league. It is technically difficult, physically hard and psychologically wearing. I have nothing but respect for the French cavers who originally explored the cave, and for those who rigged the cave for us. The only pity was, it wasn't rigged to the bottom; it means we've got to go back some time.

The terrible weather and lack of holidays prevented anyone else from having a crack at it, but really we were not equipped. 9mm rope is a necessity in a cave like this, and we just did not have any (but I have heard rumours that we are buying some soon!).

Team members: J. Belshaw
A. Menzies
A. Tharrat
M. Madden.

Tackle List:
P: Pitch
C: Climb or Cascade (rope definately needed).

P24. P18. P6. P17. P14. P22. C5. P205. C8. P7. C3. C4. P14. P17. P5. P5. P7. P31. P5. C10. C30. metres.



AGM
&
ANNUAL
DINNER

18
OCTOBER
1986

CAVING IN THE 1940'S

Richard Kenney

Part 2

CARBIDE

"Large or small, Sir?"

"Loose or tinned, Sir?"

"Grey, black or blue, Sir?"

A large proportion of the carbide manufactured in this country found its way to the Third World. An easy method of establishing brand loyalty lay in the introduction of a black or blue dye during manufacture. Grey, or natural, was a down-market product!

CLOTHES

Wartime;	Old clothes because new were subject to clothing coupon rationing.
Late 40's;	Military surplus.
50's to 70's;	Synthetic materials, rag-trade "surplus".
80's:	Co-ordinated designer wear with personalised colours.

Quite a progression. To understand the choice of clothing one must remember the different social environment of the times. Pressure from society since the war has not only brought more-or-less equal pay to women but has made employers treat juniors under 21 as monetary adults. In the '40s, with a promise of a secure employment ahead, youngsters were willing to wait their turn for available goodies.

It was a matter of pride that torn jacket pockets or sleeves should be allowed to disintegrate naturally. German Army epaulettes could be sewn onto the shoulders to keep bag straps in place: for a while I became an "Obergruppenfehrerholer".

Pleasure could be obtained from cycling through the wealthier parts of Wells wearing all our clobber and watching for the looks of disgust. In any case this was the preferred method for dry trips where pubbing was not involved. In 1946 I cycled 25 miles to acquire a naval sweater, which then reached to my knees. It still wears well at Twin T's and I hope that it will outlast my caving. It was probably knitted by some old biddy doing her bit for the wartime lads.

Perhaps then, the old Gladstone bag that I found at home, dated back before the Great War. This was an ideal shape, flat-bottomed, to strap on the back of a bike, for carrying clothes up onto Mendip was always difficult.

Re-adjustment of clothes, including removing boots to wring out socks, and similar tribulations with lights, hats and boots meant that caving was a slow business: today's high-speed trips were just not possible. Reversal in tight passages was difficult and one was always stopping to re-adjust clothing. I had quite a reputation for doing this, but certain photographic trips were much more tedious. Thin people were at a disadvantage in wet caves. To swim out of Porth-yr-Ogof I wore vest, pants, 2 shirts, pullover, corduroy trousers, denim trousers, jacket, football socks - and the British Working-Class Boot.

Ex-Somerset-based Yanks returning from Germany to see the size of their families brought back liberated packs. We were inordinately proud of these backpacks, which were covered with natural fur and a multiplicity of drawstrings, buckles and harness. They could have been made for the old Imperial army before 1914. It was quite safe to leave them in the barn at Priddy whilst caving.

And then came our turn. Howard's kitbag was 14144843 and mine 19031811. WD Packs, Webbing, Side, Small became the standard and were used until the bottoms dropped off. Some had straps, buckle (female), but others had straps, plain (male), and one always seemed to have the wrong gender shoulder strap. For quite some time it was the done thing to carry all tackle in those packs, with food and other dry items in cocoa tins.

Kitbags eventually wore out and the lucky few found polythene bags. These were a rarity at first and were jealously guarded. Their present-day ubiquitous use has added the diminutive "polybag" to our special caving language.

"Goonsuits" - inflatable rubber and canvas submarine escape suits were the first common protective 'uniform', and after the years of extreme cold the comfort that they gave was almost beyond belief. Wet suits followed, but now we realise that for many a trip something lighter and less heat-productive is better. In old age, good rubber gardening gloves are also beneficial. As a point of interest, who can claim to have introduced "goonsuits" to the caving world?

GLASSES

There must be new young cavers wondering how to cope with this problem. I have never yet met any wearer of contact lenses who has not had a problem with loss or irritation in a normal environment: how, then, could one trust them underground?

Thin metal-framed glasses are rather fragile, and I wouldn't use them at all. Neither trustworthy are those that rely on a pressure contact on the head. They can easily slip off when looking downwards.

I have always worn glasses caving, and the best, in my opinion, have glass, not plastic, lenses. I know that there is a risk of breakage, but the plastic are too soft and would soon be scratched to blazes in a cave environment. The frames, well, the current NHS are sufficiently robust and I have only broken one pair in more than 40 years, coming up the Forty and getting my hand caught behind a rung, and freeing it with overstrong backward force. The frame should be fitted with flexible curved pieces that fit behind the ears; uncomfortable if improperly fitted or unaccustomed, but utterly safe.

In middle-age, if bifocals are required one can press on for a few years with the long-distance lens only, but eventually they are essential. My normal glasses have "Varimatic" lenses which are graduated from one focus to another. They are quite expensive, and I avoid wearing them in caves - standard NHS ones are perfectly OK. In any event it makes sense to have a spare pair - although the mud would need to be removed first before use.

Keeping glasses clean is not really a problem. In wet caves one presses on to a drier location. A handkerchief is best kept in the helmet for cleaning purposes, even if soaking wet it still helps to wipe off the surplus water and muck. Never use anti-misting agents; they are usually greasy and attract all the mud and grit.

TACKLE

The only tackle to which we had access, until joining the Wessex in 1947, was that belonging to the M.N.R.C., of which we were members. It was stored in the Museum, and consequently was never subject to damp.

The ladders were usually 20ft long and most of them had rungs wide enough to allow both feet to stand on the same one. An Eastwater trip used all available tackle - and at least one ladder had rungs wide enough for three feet. Between the drops, or on the Traverse, the ladders had to be "chained", or unrolled and passed rung-by-rung between persons. In fact it was normal practice to pass all bags and tackle to the front and then move on the relevant distance before repeating the manoeuvre. The carrying of individual loads would begin only below the drops.

Typically each ladder had long rope tails thus allowing ladders to be joined by means of "grannies" or other knots. There were no karabiners to provide easy joins (the word "krabs" was not yet in use). Tethers were often 20ft long and about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch diameter. They were soft, furry and easy to handle, but probably had little strength.

One ladder was a heavy load when wet and this explains why minimum party size was an important consideration. Lifelines weighed a ton and made the return trip an exhausting business. This is the main explanation of long trip lengths, say 6 hours for Swildons to Sump One, which included at least 2 hours on the Forty-Foot. Rigging the Forty often took half an hour, with ropes and knots everywhere.

We had an old-fashioned kitchen with lots of floor space around the anthracite-fed boiler-stove where we could put all the tackle to dry. Some of it must have been more than ten years old when it was finally abandoned: how lucky we were. On reflection, Balch must have worried quite a lot about our using this tackle, bearing his accident in Lamb Leer many years beforehand, when a rotten rope broke.

I have just remembered the tatty bits of string that we used to tie the ladders when rolled. Carbide lamps perilously close to ropes, and alternate cussing and burning...

FOOD

Sandwiches were the standard, for the pre-packed convenience foods were unknown until the mid-50s, and most things were rationed anyway. We solved the problem for longer, wet and tiring trips in the following way.

Take one week's chocolate ration (2oz), break it into a saucepan, cover with milk and melt over low heat. Add broken cornflakes, currants if available, and dried milk powder. Keep adding the latter until like strong concrete. Cut into lumps (what with - a cold chisel? -Ed). It was an indestructible food which survived crushing and aqueous forces, important prior to the plastic-bag age.

Every item listed, from bread to cornflakes, was rationed and most of us were hungry after a trip. Eggs were limited to one per week. It was very difficult to take food out of the house, for in effect it left a gap in the weekly menu. Wartime parents were continually making sacrifices, of which we were largely unaware, for their children.

Hot milk after Swildons was a luxury. We valued it for its food content, and I have happy memories of Albert Main even going to the extent of lighting a fire for us in the loft and having the milk ready for us, in a saucepan. He, too, was a parent.

Many of our first trips ended about 5pm, so we were too early for the pubs. On later trips we found that the pubs sold no food. Visits to the Hunters' were fraught; if the clientele were hostile to under-age drinkers we left quickly. The alternative was an empty New Inn with a miniscule turnover and flat beer. In those days, the Castle of Comfort wasn't: I have only been there once.

When heading towards Burrington or Stoke Lane exceptional care was taken to ensure the safety of "Thermos" flasks. To get one, we had to persuade Father to go to the Town Hall and report that his own had broken and please could he have a permit, as an Essential worker, to buy a new one. We didn't cycle backwards and forwards through sheer dedication, it was done simply because we couldn't afford to lose anything.

THE LAND

By 1943, the Somerset War Agricultural Executive Committee had pressured all farmers into maximising the use of marginal land. A prewar ride across Mendip would have shown much "waste", but newly-ploughed fields were now much in evidence. I doubt if any systematic search has ever been organised, and I'm not sure if it would be desirable, but certain fields contain a wealth of flint tools, knapping

material and Samian or Roman style glazed pottery. Howard was sure that he had found a knapping site, where flint was worked into tools, near Ores Close Farm.

The Pen Hill to Rookham area was used in early '44 for tank training and the tanks could be seen easily from Wells as they manoeuvred near the Round Plantation. I think that they were transported to the site, and I don't know their origin. There was one small mine broken into near the top of Rookham road hill, and the tank tracks are still visible as one drives up the hill.

The Priddy Mineries flue chimney was still standing in the early '40s, but it was in a bad condition and was eventually blown up by the Army. Many of the fume settling tunnels were still present, and perhaps the longest stretch retaining its crown, was say 100 yards. The principal building still had its walls erect but the roof and all floors had collapsed so there was nothing left by which one could visualise the industrial process. There was an early war reclamation attempt from the spoil heaps, with its light quarry-type railway. What fun to roll the wagons down the dump rail to their destruction, or at least derailment!

A fun area, until one learnt the tragedy of lead poisoning, and let one's mind dwell on the equally-young boys who had to clean out the flue tunnels in the search for residual minerals.

Tumuli are disappearing under the plough, despite all efforts to save them: at last farmers can get rid of these unwanted intrusions by using a bit more throttle and a deeper blade. (Does this still apply? I thought such sites are safe now, but I may be wrong. -Ed.)

1941 & 1942

There are usually some events in our lives where a small difference in age is critical. Some people missed Wartime call-up because they were too old, others missed National Service during the '50s because they were just too young when it ended, and so on. Howard and I were lucky in that we reached caving age just after the immediate German threat to this country had passed. There is no doubt about it, our parents would have prohibited us from cycling all over Mendip in 1941 and 1942.

The nightly progression of bombers over Mendip, the fires of Bristol visible from the Somerset Levels and the random falls of shrapnel and other debris discouraged pleasure trips. One night a bomber jettisoned one bomb which landed right in the middle of the road near Pen Hill. The crater completely cut the road, and its repaired surface was visible for a few years afterwards. Italian POWs were given the job of rebuilding the wall, and it was they who erected the "Romulus and Remus" statue in gratitude for their treatment in this country.

In the year before caving we could at least have a holiday. Out were visits to places such as Leicester, large towns being especially vulnerable. Right then, how about Weston? Just our luck to pick the same week as that chosen by the Luftwaffe. We found ourselves in the middle of the dropping zone, and despite our agitated pleas, we were not allowed outdoors for a look. In the context of minor raids committed for their nuisance value, it was locally severe. An area near the Winter Gardens was flattened, so was a spot near the Boulevard where the present modern house sticks out from its Victorian neighbours. Banwell main street was blocked for a few days, incendiaries landed in Kewstoke Woods and there plenty of other incidents: we were shocked to find the "Bristol Channel" utterly destroyed. Goebells threatened to bomb all our historic and tourist sites: the "Baedeker" raids, named after the German tourist guide books. This had been a Baedeker raid and it had achieved its purpose, the concrete model of Bristol Channel, on which we had sailed many a model boat, had gone for ever. Why was Wells spared?

(To be continued.)

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

REPORTS & ACCOUNTS, 1985

REPORT by the HON. SECRETARY & TREASURER for the Year Ending 31 Dec. 1985.

It is always good to report few cave rescue incidents. Details of the ten call-outs follow this review of the year. In other respects the year was memorable for the British Cave Rescue Council Conference held on Mendip in May. A special report for the record is given separately. Sadly it was Oliver Lloyd's last time with cavers and the rescue organisation he had nurtured throughout the fifties and sixties. He left us in style, having launched the Conference weekend at the Hunters' Lodge Inn. My own tribute to Oliver has already been published in a B.C.R.C. Newsletter. He would want us to look ahead and not dwell on the past; but, this has been rather difficult at a time when the Bristol Exploration Club celebrated its Fiftieth jubilee and there was a reunion of pioneer cave divers at Wookey Hole Cave to commemorate the first dives in 1935.

The support given to cave rescue work by Mendip cavers is as strong as ever. We also enjoy close links with the people who live and work on Mendip, which is particularly important to M.R.O.. Without such a relationship there would be no access across fields to cave entrances and digs. Nor could we expect so much help during emergencies when land-owners are invariably put to a lot of trouble. What a shame it is when people don't bother to understand, or even disregard, the consequences of souring such relationships. M.R.O.'s voluntary work would be more difficult if caving became by contract rather than by courtesy.

One example of a commonsense tradition that could be at risk if caving was to become more formalised is M.R.O.'s principle of cavers standing on their own feet both practically and financially. We do not go round, cap in hand, for grants and other forms of sponsorship. So, I am pleased to report that the B.C.R.C. Conference almost paid for itself thanks to everyone's support. Also that we have been able to keep equipment up-to-date and still have a healthy reserve of funds for future projects. Audited accounts follow, and I would like to thank Richard Chant who does this professional task for us each year particularly since he is not a caver.

We thank the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset, Mr. Ronald Broome, for his active support on the Association of Chief Police officers regarding Search and Rescue radios. Our own system is now covered without having to pay an annual licence fee. Through Bob Whitaker, a good friend and caver in the Wessex Water Authority, we have been able to up-date our radios, and the Mendip Citizens Band Radio Club donated us other sets after a special fund-raising effort on behalf of cave rescue work in the area. We thank all concerned and let them know that their help has meant significant improvements in our response to call-outs, and communications while incidents last. Our own wardens' technical expertise with such equipment explains why M.R.O. is so well ahead of many other rescue teams in this field; a further example of the self-help approach. Yet another is Barrie Wilton's kindness in providing M.R.O. with headed notepaper, which was a boon when writing to all concerned about the B.C.R.C. Conference, and so on.

Over the weekend of September 27 / 28th 1986, M.R.O. intends to celebrate its own Fiftieth Jubilee. There will be fun and games of course, and we hope to stage some purposeful activities in support of cave exploration and rescue work on Mendip. We hope to see you all there.

Jim Hanwell
Hon. Secretary and Treasurer,
Wookey Hole.

BRITISH CAVE RESCUE COUNCIL CONFERENCE, 1985

The Conference was held over the weekend of 18th / 19th May on Mendip with the Mendip Rescue Organisation as hosts. On the Friday evening, Dr. Oliver Lloyd got everything off to a fine start by screening his old M.R.O. cave rescue film made twenty-five years ago. This featured the first sump rescue apparatus in use through Sump One in Swildons Hole, and historic shots of hauling up the old Forty-Foot Pot. The nostalgia of the occasion would have been even more had we all realised that this was to be Oliver's last visit to Mendip. He died only two days later.

The formal opening of the Conference took place on the Saturday morning at the Little Theatre, Wells, and was attended by over 120 cavers and guests. The Rt. Hon. David Heathcoat-Amory, MP, welcomed all to the area and related his own interest and experience in caving having descended both Swildon's Hole and G.B. Cavern. Jim Hanwell introduced other guests: the Chief Constable of Avon & Somerset, Mr. Ronald Broome; Somerset's Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Douglas Cummings; the Chairman of Mendip District Council, Mr. Ernest Wright, G.M.; the Managing Director of Wookey Hole Caves, Mr. Frank McBratney; and the Manager of Cheddar Caves, Sandra Lee, with Chris Bradshaw. All had been caving or had strong associations with cave exploration under Mendip. The party mingled with officers of the B.C.R.C. and delegates in the adjacent Youth Centre Hall, which had been set up for a Trade Display organised by Phil Romford. Exhibits were provided by Bat Products, Lyon Equipment, and Allcord Ltd. Richard West presented M.R.O. incident data in various ways by computer: are we the first to do this?

Andy Eavis, a current Royal Geographical Society medallist for his work in organising overseas caving expeditions, gave an illustrated talk on expedition medicine and self-rescue from remote places by small parties. After lunch, John Hill and colleagues from the local Casualty Union realistically demonstrated typical caving accident injuries. Their treatment underground was discussed by Doctors Donald Thomson, Peter Glanvill and Andrew Nash, all M.R.O. Medical Wardens. Phil Hendy, Chairman of the Wessex Cave Club, lightened the minutes before tea in the Exhibition area.

We were due to see the Somerset Fire Service Rescue Tender with its special take-off outlets to run M.R.O.'s compressed-air system after tea, but, unfortunately, it had been called away to attend a real incident at the time! This left longer for everyone to see the demonstration of the new Kirby Morgan Sump Rescue Equipment by Somerset C.D.G. divers and M.R.O. Wardens in the resurgence pool at Wookey Hole Caves. This attracted one of the largest gatherings of the day and several performances were given until Alan Mills, the patient, decided that he needed to warm up.

Some then took dinner at the Hunters' Lodge Inn, kindly provided by Jackie Dors, whilst most attended a magnificent buffet at Priddy Village Hall, prepared by Alison Moody and many helpers from the Wessex Cave Club. The highlight of a memorable evening was the Cave Rescue Game devilishly provided by Glyn Bolt and deservedly won by the Police Rescue Team from Belfast, Northern Ireland. After such a full day, it was good to see the Mendip caving community and friends from other caving areas sharing the more social side of cave rescue work.

The following morning saw two field demonstrations. At Gough's Cave parties were able to practice hauling techniques beyond the show-cave, and the "Ogofone" was used successfully through some 400 feet of rock to a party on top of the Gorge. Thanks to Bob Williams and Brian Joplin of the South Wales C.R.O. for this test in an area with a lot of radio interference.

continued on page 207

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31. 1985

1984

£		£	£	£
	<u>INCOME</u>			
	Donations:-			
201	General Appeal		397	
20	Rescued Parties		<u>55</u>	452
19	Interest on bank deposit account			26
299	Hire of M.R.O. Nife Cells			241
20	Contribution towards radio licences (Cheddar Cliff Rescue Team)			
53	Social events			70
<u>-</u>	BCRC Conference			<u>(9)</u>
<u>612</u>				<u>780</u>
	<u>EXPENDITURE</u>			
	Equipment:-			
-	Training	87		
14	K.M.B. 10 supplies	9		
2	Radios	149		
40	Lighting and Nife Cells	30		
143	Other supplies	<u>69</u>	344	
15	Medical supplies		11	
90	Insurance of equipment		60	
95	Postage, stationery and duplicating		104	
78	Display and Exhibition		-	
65	Annual radio licence		-	
10	S.W.E.R.A. Levy		10	
-	BCRC donation		5	
<u>27</u>	Meeting expenses		<u>25</u>	<u>559</u>
<u>579</u>				
<u>£33</u>	Surplus for year			<u>£221</u>

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

BALANCE SHEET AS AT DECEMBER 31, 1985

1984

£		£
	<u>Current assets</u>	
	Balance at bank:-	
300	Deposit account	300
281	Current account	504
<u>23</u>	Cash with Hon. Treasurer	<u>21</u>
<u>£604</u>		<u>£825</u>

Representing:-

<u>Accumulated Funds</u>		
571	Balance at January 1, 1985	604
<u>33</u>	Surplus for period	<u>221</u>
<u>£604</u>		<u>£825</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 Organization. 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, 1985 and of the surplus for the year ended on that date.

R. Chant, ACA., FTII
"Bali",
Milton Lane,
Wells.

February 1986

Meanwhile, at St. Cuthbert's Swallet, the month-long siege of the second sump reached its climax. Over a kilometre of standard fire hose had been connected from the Belfry car park to the sump. Compressors on the surface, including the Somerset Fire Service Rescue Tender, kept a submersible pump at work underground that dried out the sump for diggers to attempt a breakthrough. Against expectations from the Company itself, the pump kindly provided by Atlas Copco did the job well. Regrettably, however, the immense efforts made by the Bristol Exploration Club to dig a way through the compacted sediment had to be abandoned. Thanks to Stuart McManus and Alan Butcher for organising the teams, and to Dany Bradshaw and Fred Davies for ferrying hose. We also thank the Somerset Fire Service Chief, Mr. Nigel Musselwhite, for allowing us the use of so much hose for the experiment. As a means of working power-tools underground, the technique is clearly very successful. A full report on the operation in St. Cuthbert's Swallet was given to the B.C.R.A. Conference in September 1985 by Alan Butcher.

I would like to thank all who helped to make the whole weekend a success through their hard work and attendance of the many activities. Do come again. The next Cave Rescue Game Challenge will be on the weekend of 27th and 28th September '86 when M.R.O. celebrates its Fiftieth Jubilee!

Jim Hanwell.

CAVE RESCUES and INCIDENTS for the YEAR ENDING 31st December 1985.

There were ten official call-outs through the Police during the year. Only four involved rescuers going underground, however, the others being three overdue party alerts, two calls to assist climbers in Cheddar Gorge and a stand-by from South Wales for our sump rescue apparatus and divers. So, the low number of underground incidents on Mendip in recent years continues even if there has been no decline in numbers going caving. Long wet spells with several flood events have occurred too. Perhaps someone should publicise the fact that out of some 40 000 people descending caves on Mendip in 1965, only four needed help. And one of those was a drunken tourist in a show-cave!

1st May	Goughs' Cave	1	Trapped tourist, drunk.	(4)
5th May	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Fall, head injuries	(8)
9th June	Little Neath River Cave	?	Floods, standby divers.	(-)
4th August	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion, unable to climb.	(11)
17th August	Cheddar Gorge	1	Tourist hurt, stand-by only	(-)
19th October	Cheddar Gorge	1	1 Fall, broken ankle and cuts	(5)
20th October	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, stuck	(6)
29th October	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue party	(-)
8th November	Swildon's Hole	?	Alert, presumed missing party.	(-)
27th December	Rod's Pot	3	Overdue party.	(-)

In the above summary, the numbers of people requiring help is shown where known, and the number of rescuers actually going underground given in parentheses. Brief accounts of each incident follow:-

Wednesday 1st May.

GOUGH'S CAVE

A boisterous party went into the main show-cave early in the afternoon. Unnoticed, one young man left and crawled into the low dig off the tourist route at Heartbreak Hill. The rest did not appreciate he was missing until they came out of the cave. They were challenged by the cave guides as to what had happened but they did not appear to know. The Police were informed and a search of the system was undertaken. Eventually, the tourist was found lying apparently unconscious near the end of the dig.

He could not be moved or roused. It was thought that he might be suffering from a medical illness. Brian Prewer was contacted by the Police at Taunton at 3.15p.m.

A hauling party comprising Brian Prewer, Greg Villis, Tim Large, Dany Bradshaw, Brian Workman, and Jim Hanwell was raised. By the time they arrived however, the cave staff had solved the problem. The drunk had collected enough of his wits to realise that helping himself out was preferable to being hauled. The Police took him away for questioning. Afterwards, they contacted M.R.O. to enquire whether those alerted wished to recover any costs. We did not, of course, because cavers volunteer their services regardless of the nature of the call; even unconventional ones.

Sunday 5th May

St. CUTHBERT'S SWALLET

During the laying of fire hose down the cave for the B.C.R.C. Conference pumping-out of Sump Two, an experienced caver fell head-long from the Second Ledge Pitch. Although wearing a helmet with a chin-strap this was lost during the fall and the person concerned was lucky to escape with only facial injuries, a cut scalp and mild concussion. He was given First Aid by M.R.O. Wardens already underground and helped to the surface. Brian Prewer stood-by other hauling parties at Upper Pitts and informed the Police that the rescue was well in hand. The injured caver was out of the cave within about 80 minutes and taken to Bristol Royal infirmary for treatment.

Sunday 9th June

LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE

A school party taken down the cave was endangered by floods. The South Wales Cave Rescue Organisation requested us to stand-by divers and our sump rescue apparatus. Bob Cork, Rob Harper and Bob Drake were contacted; but in the event, the problem was dealt with successfully by those on the spot.

Sunday 4th August

SWILDON'S HOLE

The late Oliver Lloyd's birthday celebrations planned to take place in the Old Grotto were cancelled since it was quite clear that the persistent heavy rain raking Mendip would lead to the entrance being flooded early in the afternoon. It did.

This danger was not apparently noticed by other parties. Several members of the Gosport Caving Club went down the cave at about 11.15a.m. They split into two groups underground, with Dave and John Monk leading each party. The one going below the Twenty Foot Pot included Mrs. Toni New, aged 21, and her husband. Mrs. New was on her first caving trip and had borrowed a two-piece wet-suit. She became cold and exhausted. Attempts to haul her up the pitch some two hours later were abandoned because she kept being swept away off the landing by rising water. Some of the party left the cave to raise the alarm at about 3p.m.

Fred Davies received the call from Yeovil Police and alerted Jim Hanwell at Upper Pitts with the Wessex Cave Club and several members of the U.B.S.S. Whilst Jim Hanwell collected comforts boxes, hot-air and hauling gear, Pete Hann, Richard Warman and other Wessex and U.B.S.S. cavers went underground to help. Toni New was reported to be "in a state" by her husband, so additional parties including Tony Jarrett, Pat Cronin, Martin Grass and Ray Mansfield entered the cave at 3.30p.m. followed shortly afterwards by Fred Davies, Brian Workman, Ian Beal and Paul Baxter. Dave Turner maintained a watch on water levels at the cave entrance, and a radio contact was established to Priddy Green.

Toni New was hauled up the pitch at about 3.45 p.m. and encouraged to help herself out of the cave. Other parties were still underground and, with water levels still critical at 4 p.m., Richard West and Brian Prewer joined Jim Hanwell at Priddy, and Bristol Waterworks were requested to start their pumps upstream to stem the flow as much as possible. Other groups were advised not to go down the cave owing to the obvious flood risk. Fred Davies and Brian Workman scoured the cave to Sump One to tell those still underground. The cave was finally cleared by 6 p.m. and the entrance flooded once more later that evening.

Oliver seems to have had the last laugh on the day!

Saturday 17th August

CHEDDAR GORGE

A young lad scrambling up the cliffs slipped and hurt his leg. He was on a track easily accessible from the road and was helped down by the Police and an ambulance crew. We were asked to stand-by the Cheddar Gorge Cliff Rescue Team in case further help was needed.

Saturday 19th October

CHEDDAR GORGE

A climber fell from a route on the Pinnacles. His fall was broken by trees but he broke an ankle and sustained slight head injuries. Several cavers went to assist the Avon Gorge Rescue Team in lowering the climber to safety. Others stood by at Priddy, but were not needed.

Sunday 20th October

SWILDON'S HOLE

Christopher Downs, a student at Lanchester Polytechnic, Coventry, became firmly stuck by his clothing in the tight rift above the Showerbath in the Upper Series. He could not be budged by his friends and so M.R.O. was alerted through Brian Prewer at 4.34 p.m.

Tony Jarrett, Phil Romford, Richard West and Dany Bradshaw went to help, and the stuck caver was gradually freed by brute force and some juggling of the snagged clothes. All were out the cave within the hour.

Monday 29th October

SWILDON'S HOLE

A party of three cavers from Nailsea, near Bristol, went to explore the Upper Series at about 8 p.m. on Sunday 28th. They left details of their trip with a friend with instructions to contact the police if they had not returned later that evening. When they had failed to do so by 2 a.m. the following morning, the friend did as he was told.

The car used by the cavers was not at Priddy and so Brian Prewer suggested that the local Police went to the home of the leader in Nailsea to check. He was found safely in bed! The arrangement appears to have broken down owing to a misunderstanding and an incorrect telephone number.

Friday 8th November

SWILDON'S HOLE

A party of cavers from Bristol had done a late-night trip down the cave, coming out at about 1 a.m. They were rightly concerned on finding an old broken ladder and doubled lifeline still belayed to the Twenty Foot Pitch, and M.R.O. was alerted for a presumed missing party. As it was known that this tackle had been there for some while, through other reports, no action was taken immediately.

That evening Brian Prewer and Jim Hanwell went down the cave to remove the abandoned ladder. They also recovered its tape belay, a double lifeline and a handline that had been left on the eight-foot climb at the bottom of the old Forty-Foot. Why on earth should such tackle be left behind?

Friday 27th December

ROD'S POT

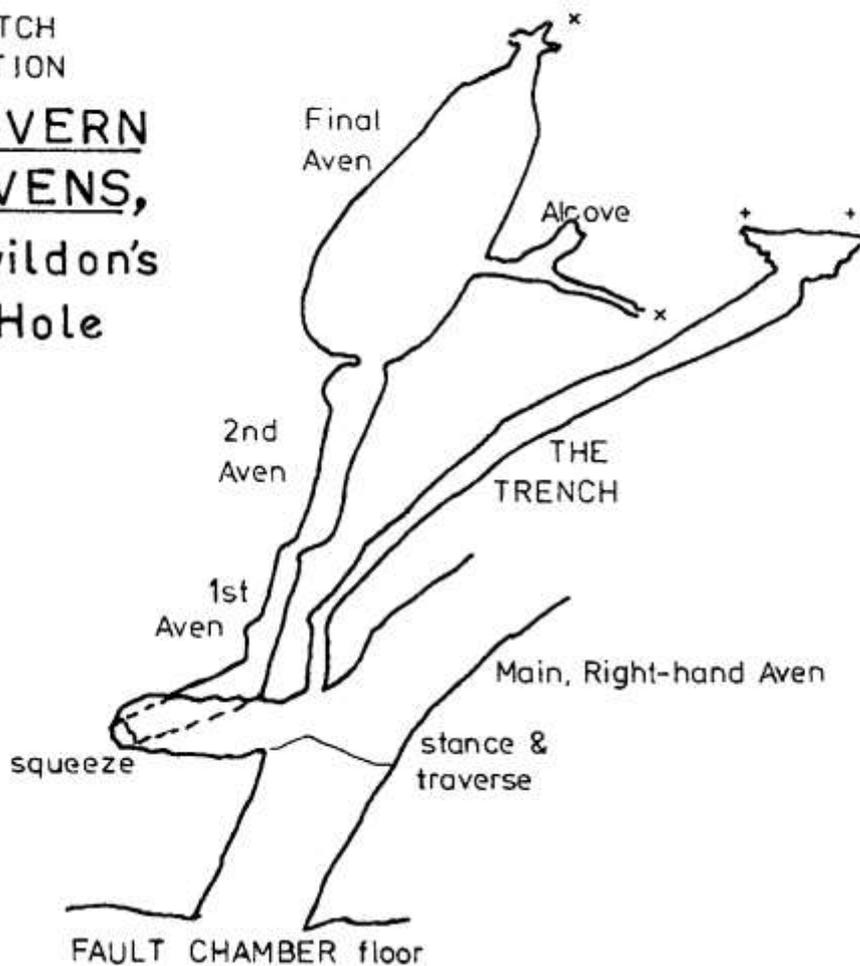
At 6.55 p.m. the Police contacted Brian Prewer because the mother of a young caver on a trip down the cave that afternoon had expected him to be home by 6 p.m. Before a search could be started for the car being used, the son returned about an hour late, having been delayed. Search parties were stood down straight away.

Finally, a reminder to all cavers who understandably want to hurry to a rescue. Please remember the Police drivers' maxim:

"Drive to Arrive".

Thank you for all your support for cave rescue work on Mendip.

SKETCH
SECTION
SEVERN
AVENS,
Swildon's
Hole



0 feet 30

Grade One

x pinches out

+ closes down

FROM THE LOG

Charterhouse Cave

20 April. After leading Trevor Faulkner, Jackie Westcott and Nick Dallman on a tourist trip, Nigel Graham joined Pete Hann, Alan Marshall and Aidan -? (prospective member) for a useful digging session, i.e., more concrete in end boulders.

Eastwater Cavern

1 April. Geoff Newton, Duncan Frew, Maggie MacPherson. A quick thrutch down to the S-bend: it's still sumped and is silting at rate which suggests it will need a lot of digging as well as bailing to re-open. The West End pitches were left rigged to encourage the sherpa-ing of cement, pipes, etc. for the proposed dam. The thrutch out was very quick: we have found a rival for Alison!

The boulder ruckle has redistributed itself a certain amount during the 11 months it was frozen up, not all of it stabilising.

3 April. G.N., D.F. Inspired by Tuesday's foolishness, the Wessex Hydrological Engineers (Eastwater Battalion) set forth after much deliberation ("I could do with another brew"). Two 5 litre containers of cement, a length of old Hut drainpipe and polybags were transported reasonably intact to the bottom of Lolly Pot. A one-way trip for the plastic bottles: they only just got there. A good start was made on the dam, but it looks as if we've run out of resident gravel - and probably of people to carry stuff there. Any volunteers would be most welcome.

Hopefully the dam will be ready for the first drought, this year, or next, or whenever. The question is, could the drought be artificially induced by diverting the Morton's Pot water down Primrose, using the existing dams below the Boulder Ruckle? We will see. Pitches still rigged.

Palmer's Dig

23 February. Pete & Alison Moody, G.N. Had planned a major clearing session at the final cross-rift, but instead started excavating a rift halfway into the cave. It is deep, fairly narrow and loosely filled. Opened it up to a depth of four feet, removing the clutch back to the entrance passage. P.M.

Pierre's Pot

9 April. P: & A.M., Andy Sparrow (BEC). Inspected choke at the lowest point where the stream can be heard, to see if anything can be done to shore up all the loose nasty overhanging the dig site.

16 April. Same 3. Took a piece of corrugated iron down to protect the dig, however, the Sparrow did his stuff in there with a 4ft crowbar. When we left, Andy had opened the site right up, uncovering an open rift which, from the sound of the stream, drops directly down to the Master Cave. Several blocks prevent entry and will require clearing before we can be sure. The hanging debris threatening the dig is still just hanging there, although it doesn't look quite as dangerous as it did before. P.M.

Swildons Hole

ONE STREAMWAY

19 March. P.H., Graham Johnson. Looking for new digs, found two small sites at bottom of Showerbath chamber. Then to Newport's dig to give him a hand for half an hour. P.H.

HENSLER'S DIG

22 February. N.G. 1 hour.

18 April. N.G. Unusual Friday evening foray into this rather airless retreat, which on this particular, contemplative solo trip it was intended to be. About 2 hours steady work. Watch stopped: exited rapidly to see New Inn still all lit up: relief! My ETO 11.30pm, arrived U/Pitts 12.15am. OOPS!

OLD FORTY DIG

6 April. Aubrey Newport, Ian Jepson. Operation Rolling Thunder continues - and looks set to continue for some time yet. Applied 1lb of Dr. N.M.R.R. and once more filled the streamway with fumes.

16 April. P.H. with nothing better to do, pirated Mr. Newport's dig below the Forty. Hose and hammer still working well. One party thought the black hose was an electricity cable!

WATERFALL DIG (near head of the Twenty)

26 February. P.H., G.J., Merv Ingram. Removed mud and stal floor: looks good, with an outward draught.

5 March. P.H., G.J. More mud and stal removed. A six-inch slot needs enlarging to gain entry into new passage.

12 March. Same 2. The six-inch slot was attacked and passed. Four feet in, a tight squeeze called ? (unprintable: re-name it!): I just wanted the hammer and chisel to get back through after getting stuck. Beyond it the passage enlarges slightly for 15 feet then descends at 45° to a tight squeeze, not yet pushed as a handline will be needed to pull someone out of it if it is impassable. P.H.

16 March. Same 2. An attempt at the tight squeeze, but as there was only just room for two Size Seven boots my very-expensively well-developed beer-gut had no chance. The passage descends out of sight but looks larger beyond the narrow bit. It would now be a long term bang or hammer job. P.H.

29 March. P.M. Continued with the dig beneath Pete Hann's dig. Shifted a lot of muck. Explosives will be needed to push further.

BARNE'S LOOP DIG (just downstream of Loop)

19 February, 26 Feb., 5 March, 12 March (Wednesday nights) and 15 March.
John Scott and M.I. Two hours digging each trip. On 19 Feb, joined by P.H. and G.J, after they had placed bolt and re-hung handline on the dig above the Twenty. J.S. / P.H.

SHATTER POT DIG

23 March. G.N., A.M. To "pirate" (?) Alison's & Nigel's dig by Shatter Pot head (not Shatter Chamber, as the Log reads -Ed.). Aborted at Barne's Loop where we met a "rescue" in progress. The leader of a novice party had suffered a dislocated shoulder and was being helped out by Charlie Self of the U.B.S.S. We

joined in to help the victim and the hordes of leaderless novices out of the cave, and arranged for his despatch to Bristol Royal Infirmary. G.N.

19 April. N.G. Short solo session: ½ hour general digging.

UPFER FAULT CHAMBER

22 February. P. & A.M., G.N. Returned to dig at the top of the Right-Hand Aven series after an absence of several years. The digging site was dry and a good quantity of clutch was removed. The choke has levelled off and is 'Looking quite promising. P.M.

1 March. Same 3. Another reasonable session. Dig still dry, although a bit cramped. Slow progress.

WATERGATE

15 February. P. & A.M., D. F., Martin Buckley & 2 Poly of Wales. Planned trip to West End Series, Eastwater, to construct a dam below Lolly Pot was thankfully aborted at the entrance where the ice had completely sealed the route down through the boulders. So to Watergate where everyone had a wonderful time. P.M. "(Mud) glorious (mud)" A.N. Other.

HEAVEN & HELL

8 March. A.M., G.N. First visit for Geoff, first, for 9 years for Alison. The dig at the end has less water than expected but looks pretty long-term. A climb above the dig revealed a possible way on after some gardening. Perhaps worth a return visit with a bolting kit and bang. Excavations the near side of the climb look more promising than the terminal dig. The digging is loose here, and takes a fair amount of water.

15 March G.N., D.F. Went to put in a bolt on the climb Geoff made on the 8th. This proved quite difficult since the only solid rock is behind you, and the wall you are facing when comfortably ensconced is a sharp, thick layer of calcite. After various techniques had been tried, a bolt hole was put in lower than planned (epic stuff). The axle badly clogged and we were unable to actually place it. Before leaving, Dunc climbed up and attempted to pass the squeeze, which will definitely need re-modelling. The way on, will be upwards a bit if at all. D.F.

6 April. P.M., G.N., M.I. A trip to the end of the Heaven and Hell Passage to bang the eyehole above the terminal dig. Merv was misled by Mr. Frew into coming along for what he thought would be a nice pleasant trip.

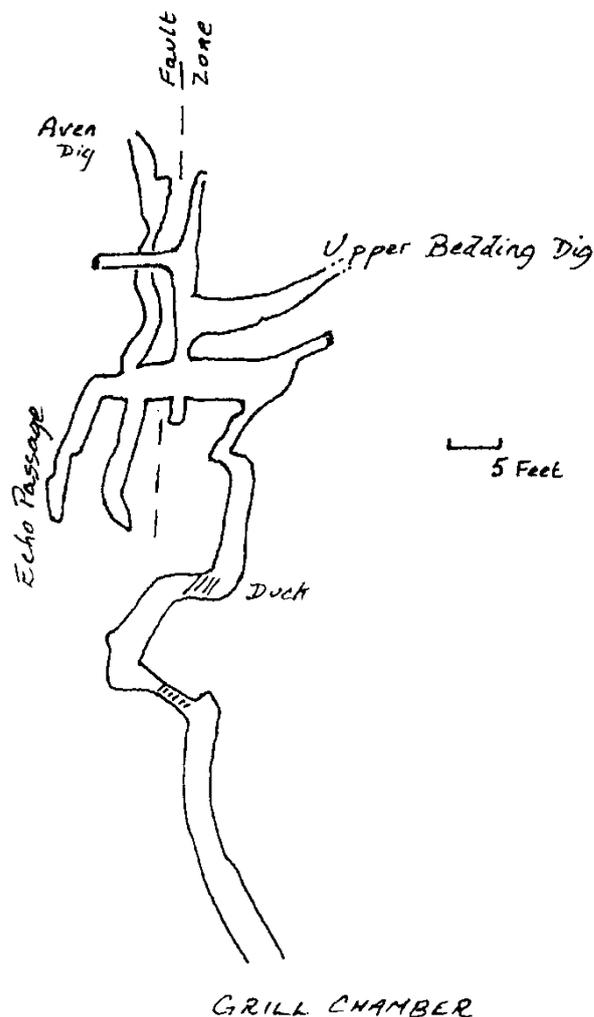
20 April. P.M., G.N. The bang of 6 April was found to have demolished the eyehole and easy access to the caverns beyond was obtained. The extension proved to be all of five feet long! So the bad news is - there is no hope, it's solid chert. The good news is - we don't have to go back. Swildons was pleasantly wet and sporty. G.N.

Warren Farm Swallet

16 February. P. & A.M., G.N., D.F. The final open lead in the extension found 9th February went all of 10 feet. After some grotting around we have decided the way on is a choke by the aven. Looks long-term again.

19 March. P. & A.M. Had a really good digging session at the aven choke. The fill was soft sand and gravel - honest! - but a great deal had to be shifted to make the site workable. Three hours work saw us in far enough to disclose the way on running under boulders: hopeless. Had a look around further back and found four possible leads.

22 March. P. & A.M. gave Al Taylor a quick guided tour then on to the end where last week's leads were ticked off one-by-one. The first was a passage with a really good echo turned out to be a pretty bedding to a rift with no way on. Second, another low bedding heading down dip, quickly becoming very tight. This might still be good bet if the calcite floor can be broken up and the dig opened out. Third, a bedding going up dip into boulders. Finally, a strike passage pinched out in a tight rift with many sharp angular boulders. Disheartened, we left for the surface.



22 February. GOATCHURCH CAVERN & SIDCOT SWALLET. Bristol Ducati Owners' Club to deepest Burrington. 2½ hours underground. Paul Weston.

22 February. G.B. CAVERN. Malc, Nick, Martin. To Bat Passage, stroll around, Nick taking pictures.

23 February. SWILDONS. Malc, Nick, Martin, Jeff. Flushing out hangovers in streamway. Some light-fingered bastard stole our ladder!

2 March. SWILDONS: SWYNE-PUKE. Geoff Newton, Martin Buckley, Tim Robbins. Pleasant thrutch, visiting the dig at the end of Terminus Chamber. It looks very promising: was able to insert half a body into it, the roof appears to be levelling off or even rising. The fill was water and loose gravel. Getting the water out could be difficult though.

The U-Tube to Renascence was still sumped, and to judge by the mud in it there may well have been a mud slump the other side.

Following the failure of some pillocks to put our ladder down the Twenty, we were able to demonstrate three different ways of free-climbing the pitch.

1 March. DAN- YR-OGOF. Doug Adams, Jim Moon, Jeff Price, Malc Foyle, Pete Hann, Nigel Graham, "Stumpy" (Rich Websell - DYO leader). First trip for some to "Danny" - what a cave! Photos by Pete (Nigel assisting). The rest to the Risings, back via Abyss to Mazeways: passed first three sumps! A brill. trip all round except for an awkward free-climb for Nigel! Nice one, Stumpy. D.A.

8 March. SWILDONS: SHORT ROUND TRIP. Doug Adams, Keith & Roz Fielder, Duncan Frew. A quick run round, meeting Ken and Bob at Greasy Chimney, down to Sump Two, and out in two hours.

9 March. WARREN FARM. Keith & Roz, Duncan. To bottom of rocky horror to retrieve a bag of the infamous mud for Bruce. Keith got very warm demonstrating that anyone larger than himself just would not get through the squeezes.

9 March. MANOR FARM SWALLET. Doug Adams, Jim Moon, Mike Usher (guest) and various Kingston Poly bods. Nice trip - NHASA Gallery and a potter about. Got caught up in a scout ruckle at the entrance! J.M.

15 March. G.B. gateway. Pete Hann, Julie Bolt. We were going down Charterhouse Cave, but a car had a window smashed, with valuables still inside and the party still underground. The Police were called. As they arrived so did the owner of the car and confirmed that property had been stolen. This is the third weekend on the trot, and all by breaking windows so be warned. P.H.

9 March. PIERRE'S POT. P. & A.M., G.N. Took cement and gravel into Pseudo Nash's with the idea of securing all the loose clatch above the bottom dig. In the event couldn't decide where to start so went into Pierre's to investigate possible sites.

22 March. NINE BARROWS. G. N. Evening trip to end of Gordon's Extension. Was necessary to shift a lot of cobbles to get through. The end is still the same - a fair long-term prospect with a shortage of stacking space.

22 / 23 March. Upper Pitts "Building Maintenance Symposium". Lot of Productive work done: new letter-box installed; ladies' dorm. gutted and filled with junk from the extension; new showers base in extension started, boiler timer repaired; new weatherboards and gutters fitted; drive hedge laid; windows, kitchen and sofa restored by the industrious ladyfolk. The weather boarding on the North side of the lounge proved difficult to replace due to bad quality of the original work there.

The Chariot has been "resculpted", to allow it to be removed from the extension, where it was very solidly bricked in: it wouldn't fit through either of the two doors. -D.F.

Symposium delegates: Lynne & Phil, Hendy, Jim Rands, Pete Watts, Dave Morrison, Mary Rands, Liz Green, Alison Moody, P.H., D.F., N.G., G.N.

29 / 30 March. DAREN CILAU. Duncan Frew with BEC members Swabbet, Tim Large, Wormhole, J-Rat. Staggered to entrance 5.45pm Saturday laden with tackle sacks and many forms of illumination for 20hour trip. Objective was HARDROCK EXTENSION (BEC dig) to supply the dump there. Repetitive lamp failures halted us at Welly Boy Aven: all the hard work done with no benefits. I don't know where it went but we lost an hour mid-trip. We weren't even near the Time Machine. 3a.m. on a snowy night is not a pleasant time to emerge from this grot hole -arid it was supposed to be good old British Summertime -D.F.

30 March. NINE BARROWS. M. J., & E. Hewins. Easter Sunday photographic trip. Regrettably no pictures as ammo box leaked and flash gun packed up in the wet. Ate consolation Easter-eggs before returning. 1½ hrs.

28 March. NORTH. Trevor Faulkner, Geoff Newton. (This and other trips North will be collated in a separate article in a later edition -ED.).

28 March / 5 April. The Northern hordes return to Mendip: 19 C.P.C. members and guests (several CPC are also WCC members -Ed.), combined in efforts to visit Manor Farm, North Hill Swallet, Rhino Rift (x2), G.B., (x2), Longwood August (x2), Thrupe, Eastwater,(x2), Upper Flood Swallet, Swildons (x2),

Twin Ts, Tynings, Cuthberts and Wookey. Several sight-seeing trips were also made to various destinations. Many thanks for the hospitality.

28 March. SWILDONS TWELVE. P.M. Intended to pursue 12b again, however water levels were well up and the narrow rift noticed a couple of summers ago was well and truly submerged. Good to see the New Year floods have scoured out Sump 4 and the deep section at the start of 9.

31 March. SWILDONS FIVE. P. M. Returned to Jubilee Aven just the other side of Sump 4. At the top of the second aven a constriction prevents access to a 3rd echoing chamber. Put a charge on the squeeze.

5 April. SWILDONS SEVEN. P. & A.M., G.N., D. F. Simon Turner. The impressively-efficient Wessex in action in Swildons again. Suffering from light-pox, P.M. dropped his main bulb in the streamway below the Twenty, it was immediately swept away never to be seen again. We then found that both ladders had been left at the Twenty, Simon went back for the Shatter Pot ladder only to return with the wrong one - he got it right at the second attempt. At Tratman's, A.M. and D.F. headed off for Four via Blue Pencil while the others went down the streamway. At Sump 2, found some diving party had taken all but one of the lead weights.

The others met a couple of Derbyshire blokes coming up Blue Pencil in full wetsuits with sewn-in hoods, plus Petzl suits, and carrying two huge tackle sacks, trying to find the Troubles. On to Seven where we met the divers, one of whom had an arm in plaster!

All went up into the Backroom for a quick look around. This was cut short when a large slab detached itself from the wall and a hurried retreat had to be made. Maybe worth a look again sometime.

A.M., D.F., S.T. went out via Damp Link while G.N, and P.M. returned via the streamway, putting another charge on the aven on the way.

18 April. LONGWOOD-AUGUST. G.N., Trevor Faulkner, Alan Marshall. Tourist trip for Alan's benefit. In Longwood, out August, visiting Stream Gallery (and the first aven in it), Main Streamway and Tributary Passage.

(continued from p 193)

of his situation. The meeting could come to no firm conclusions at that stage, and the various possibilities are to be investigated further. A rescue practice from the cave will be arranged this Summer - a "victim" has already volunteered!

(Ref. Cambrian Caving Council N/L 2 1986-7, May 1986, p4)

Meanwhile, in the Clydach Gorge, work continues in the AGEN ALLWEDD RISING, being dug by airlift. "Indoors", nearly 1100ft dive in Daren Cilau's Terminal Sump (downstream) brought Martyn Farr to the main Aggy river about 330ft upstream from the furthest point reached from the rising via Elm Hole.

WARNING: cars have been broken into in the Llangattock area.

NORTH

WHITE SCAR CAVE is open again to cavers beyond the show section. Permission has to be obtained in writing from the show cave manager, and an admission fee of £3 per person is levied.

Diving in the Dales has linked JINGLE POT & HURTLE PUT (Chapel-le-Dale), extended STONELANDS POT (Littondale) and located the main route in MARBLE STEPS INLET, KELD HEAD.

On Ingleborough, a long campaign has opened up P5 (Clapham Bottoms area) to SLUGS / LUSS diggers

(Ref. "P5" - Paul Ibberson, 'Descent' 70).

VERY LONG WAY NORTH:

Scottish Islands in fact: FINGAL'S CAVE (and its associated caves). The island of Staffa, off the West coast of Scotland, has been bought by the National Trust, assisted by a £175 000 donation from U.S. businessman Mr. John Elliot. The small island, uninhabited for the last 150 years, is an important breeding ground for birds.

(Source: "Sunday Express" 27 March 1986).

Letter To The Editor

Upper Pitts, Use Of.

Sherborne.

Dear Sir,

In the "Contents" of Journal 208 you have
"Back Page (H.Q. Warden Roster, Riddle)".

How true this is as it is a puzzle I try and solve many weekends, often never getting an answer.

Although some members do the job very well, others leave much to be desired. Some say it is better to have someone rather than no-one at all. I'm not so sure as if there wasn't a Warden, members (who are the biggest culprits for leaving without doing anything) might get fed up with the mess and do something about it.

I hope it never gets to that state, but it's not far off, so I appeal to the members who use the Hut to put a more concerted effort into keeping the place clean and tidy, and not leave it to the couple of us who stay late on Sunday evenings. Remember, Upper Pitts is a big asset to the Club, so let's not let it go to pieces.

Yours in hope with bucket and mop,

Pete Hann

VISITS TO THE DORDOGNE 1985

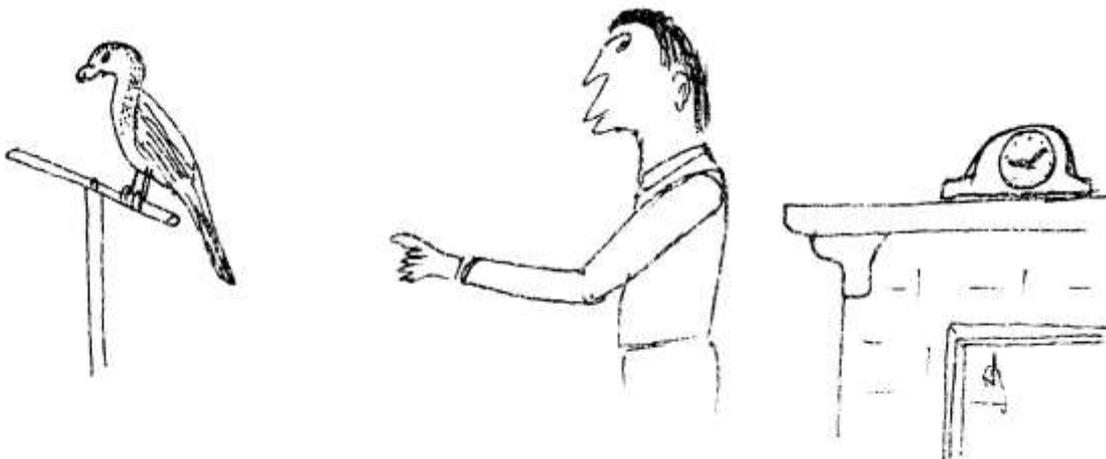
Paul Weston

Abstract: In 1985, Paul and Val Weston visited a number of the Show-caves of the Dordogne, including the Padirac and Lascaux II. Paul describes the trip and their impressions of the caves, and has submitted two copies of a tourist guide to French show caves. These will be offered to the Club Library in due course.

The article was scheduled for this edition of the Journal but has been held over to the next Edition, partly for room, partly to spread France about a bit.

-The Editor.

"Bloody marvellous - get home after a weekend of caving admin., and what do I find? The flamin' parrot's started to imitate the clock!"



BACK PAGE

UPPER PITTS WARDEN ROSTER 1986

CLUB MEETS &c.

Jun	6	B. Pitman		
	13	D. Adams		
	20	M. Thomas		
	21/22		DEVON w/e	
	27	R. Hyde		
	28			WCC Committee Mtg.
Jul	4	J. Scott		
	5		HAMMER POT	MNRC Sedan Chair Race
	11			
	12/13		PORTLAND w/e	
	18			
	19/20		TOP SINK - COW POT / LOST JOHN'S	
Aug	1	Mairi Rands		
	8			
	9			WCC Committee Mtg.
	15			
	22	N. Dunmur		
	23		BIRK'S FELL	
	23/24/25		GOWER / S. WALES	
	29	J. Price		
Sep	5	R. Drake		
	6		OTTER HOLE / PENYGHENT POT	
	12	B. Hansford		
	12/21		IRELAND (COUNTY CLARE)	
	19	J. Price		
	20			WCC Committee Mtg.
	26	J. Glowacki		
	27/28			MRO Anniversary w/e
Oct	3			
	4		TOP SINK / PIPPIKIN	
	10			
	11/12		DERBYSHIRE w/e	
	17	M. Dewdney-York		
	18			WCC AGM & DINNER
Nov	1/2		MONGO GILL	
	15/16		QUANTOCK HILLS w/e	
Dec	6/7		YORKSHIRE w/e	

Volunteers for unclaimed Warden weekends most welcome (no Hut Fees charged to Wardens on their duty weekends!):
contact Bob Drake

For further trip details, contact Jeff Price

RIDDLE

SOLUTION to riddle in Journal No. 208: SWILDON'S HOLE

For a complete change, a straightforward one-liner that is not even speleological in flavour:
Mark well and think wisely, of which famous British geographical feature?