





# THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

## VOLUME 21 (NUMBER 226) NOVEMBER 1990

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### **Next Issue:**

### **The King Pot Dives**

**Copy deadline: 31 January 1991**

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The Wessex Cave Club Headquarters, Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane, Priddy, Nr. Wells,  
Somerset, BA5 3AX. Telephone: Wells (0749) 72310

**Opinions expressed in the Journal are not necessarily those of the Editor  
or of the Wessex Cave Club as a whole unless expressly stated as being so.**

## Officers and Committee of the Wessex Cave Club, 1990

Officers whose address does not appear here may be contacted via Upper Pitts

<b>President</b>	Luke Devenish	<b>Editor</b>	Nick Williams c/o Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane, Priddy, Somerset BA11 2SE
<b>Vice-Presidents</b>	Paul Dolphin Graham Balcombe		
<b>Hon. Chairman</b>	Aubrey Newport Bramblebank, Upper Stanton Drew, Bristol, BS18 4EG 0272 333236 (9am - 9pm)	<b>Sales Officer</b>	Aiden Williams 26 Rock Road, Midsomer Norton, BA3 2AQ 0761 412896 (9am – 9pm)
<b>Hon Secretary</b>	Nick Marachov 5 Daleson Close, Northowram, Halifax, W. Yorks., HX3 7JF	<b>Hut Booking Officer</b>	Roz Fielder, 94 Cavendish Meads, Sunninghill, nr Ascot, Berks. 0344 27166 (9am – 9pm)
<b>Hon. Treasurer</b>	Brian Hansford 34 Fleming Road, Weeke Estate, Winchester, Hants, SO22 6EE 0962 882814	<b>Hut Admin Officer</b>	Pete Hann
		<b>Ordinary Member</b>	Jim Rands
		Journal Distribution	Jim Moon
<b>Asst. Secretary (Membership)</b>	Mairi Rands 17 Tillet Close, Stonebridge Park, London, NW10 0QA	Northern Caving Secretary	Keith Sanderson Heather View, Newby, Nr. Clapham, Lancs. 0468 5662
<b>Caving Secretary</b>	Andy Summerskill 12 Witten House, Sheephouse Way, New Malden, Surrey, KT3 5PP 081 330 2085	M.R.O. Coordinator	Nick Pollard, 17A Guilda Close, Whitchurch, Bristol 0272 83746
		Survey Sales	Maurice Hewins 31 Badshot Park, Badshot Lea, Farnham, Surrey, GU9 9JU 0252 29302
<b>Gear Curator</b>	Duncan Frew 90 Cheylesmore Drive, Cheylesmore Park, Camberley, Surrey, GU16 5BP 0483 22732	Librarian	Rob Taviner
<b>Hut Warden</b>	Howard Price 0705 822351 ext. 2113 (work)		

# Club Notes

## In Committee

Recent meetings of the Committee of the Club included discussions of the following;

New British Standards/European Regulations: Nick Williams made some enquires of Lyon Ladders and has discovered that new safety regulations which affect the construction of some caving ladders will not apply to the Club's own home made stocks.

The Committee are currently considering the idea of providing a small quantity of club tackle in a cupboard or locker which can be accessed by anyone with a Club hut key. This would make it easier for members to have access to tackle without committee members being present.

Following the appeal in the last Journal, the Frank Frost photo's have been found, and steps to put some on permanent display at Upper Pitts are being considered.

Responsibility for the purchase of hut supplies was recently passed from the Hut Admin. Officer to the Hut Bookings Officer, so if you have any complaints about shortages of loo roll, mops or detergent, please contact Roz.

## Committee Meeting Dates

9 Dec 1990, 20 Jan 1991, 24 Feb, 21 April, 2 June, 14 July, 1 Sept, 29 Sept.

If you have any comments or suggestions to make to the Committee about any aspect of the club, you are welcome to contact any committee member by 'phone, letter or by coming to the meeting.

## Upper Pitts

Unfortunately it has become necessary to raise hut fees to keep pace with the rising cost of maintaining Upper Pitts. The new fees are (per night) £1.50 members, £2.50 non-members.

We are also running short of teaspoons, knives and mugs, so any donations of cutlery and crockery would be warmly welcomed at the Hut.

## Food Boxes and Lockers

Requests by newer club members for food boxes and lockers are still on the increase. Persons not paying their locker and box fees by Christmas of this year will have their boxes opened and reallocated. Please contact the Committee if you no longer require your box or locker so we can arrange for the contents to be returned to you.

## Permits and Keys

Charterhouse permits valid for 1 year are available to members on application to Mhairi Rands. Permits valid for 14 days are available to non-members from Upper Pitts, at a cost of 50 pence each. Parties borrowing keys from Upper Pitts are also charged a £1 key handling fee, although this is waived for members and for parties staying at Upper Pitts. A £10.00 deposit for keys is required from everyone. The Club is also trying to maintain a set of keys to all the popular caves for the exclusive use of members.

# Wessex People

## New Members

**The Wessex Cave Club extends a warm welcome to the following new members:**

**Terry Potter**, Therose House, Dursdon Drove, Rooilham, Wells, Somerset, 0749 74562  
**Straun MacDonald**, 89A EDC Royal Naval Engineering College, Manadon, Plymouth, Devon,  
PL5 3AQ, 0752 553740 x 81383  
**Clive Richardson**, 25 Fleming Road, Weeke, Winchester, Hants, 0962 884070  
**Colin Spring**, 24c Iverson Road, London, NW6 2HE, 071 624 3215  
**Russell Carter**, 5 Farnham Close, Micklover, Derby, DE3 5RE, 0332 517748  
**Clare Jarvis**, 9 Crouch Street, Banbury, Oxon, OX16 9PN,  
**Colin Shapter**, San Giovanni, Burtle Road, Burtle, Bridgewater, Somerset, TA7 8ND  
**Martin Wykes**, 54 Hardwike Road, Narborough, Leicester, LE9 5LW  
**Peter Camilleri**, Princess Marina College, Arborfield, Reading, Berks,  
**Stephen Deacon**, 7 West Tynning, Marksbury, Bath, Avon, BA2 9HW, 0761 72210  
**Colin Waite**, 54 Beech Lane, Earley, Reading, Berks, RG6 2QA  
**Robert Long**, 23A Sandringham Crescent, South Harrow, Middlesex, 081 423 5423

## Also, welcome back to:

**Kev Clarke**, Baggridge Bungalow, Wellow, Bath, BA2 8QW, 037387 652  
**Ande Reid**, 24 Horshole Close, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 4DJ, 0276 683469

## Change of Address

**Tony King and Sarah Willis** may now be found at: 26 Roughdown Avenue, Boxmoor, Hemel Hempstead, HP3 9BH.

**Fiona Lewis** can now be contacted: c/o Ring O Bells, St Mary's Road, Meare, Glastonbury, Somerset, BA6 9SP,

**Keith Savory** is now at: 14 Milton Lane, Wookey Hole, Somerset, BA5 1DG, 0749 670186

**Ross Stewart** has moved to: 4 Manor Farm Cottages, Southridge, Streatley, Reading, Berks, RG8 9SS, 0491 875130

**Nick Williams** is on the move again too, since I have a new job in Skelmersdale.

Correspondence should be sent to me via Upper Pitts until I can publish a more permanent address up North.

Get Well Soon to Richard Kenny who has recently been in hospital, and Doug Boomer who got knocked off his bicycle.

We are sorry to report the recent deaths of Alan Rogers and Denis Kemp.

## Annual General Meeting News

The 1990 A.G.M. was held at the Hunter's Lodge on 20 October. The only motion for discussion was to acknowledge and accept the Craven Pothole Club's offer for the Wessex to become a Kindred Club. This was passed, and an additional motion required that a note be appended to the Club's Rules bringing this relationship the notice of the relevant people should rule 20 come into effect. (Rule 20 concerns the disposal of the Wessex's assets in the event the Club is wound up).

Other matters of concern included the lack of any audited accounts, and the Committee were instructed to investigate ways of ensuring that any necessary assistance, including professional help, was offered to the Treasurer and Auditor in order that this state of affairs should not persist. A motion was passed calling on the Committee to call an EGM should it become apparent that an increase in subscriptions is necessary in order to balance the accounts for the coming year.

The recent filling and clearing of shakeholes on Mendip was the subject of some discussion, as covered elsewhere in this issue.

The need to try and get the Journal out more frequently was also discussed, and the Editor was instructed that he should be more active in chasing members of the Club for articles and contributions.

## **Annual Dinner**

A successful Annual Dinner was held at the Fenny Castle House in Wookey on 20 October. 99 members attended, along with guests from the MCG, the BEC, the Shepton and the CPC. The guest of Honour was Gerry Brice. A display of the Frank Frost photo collection caused much interest, and copies of some of these were given away as raffle prizes. The collection will also be displayed in parts at Upper Pitts over the coming months. Suggestions for alternative venues for next year's annual dinner will be welcome - please contact a committee member with your ideas.

## **Club Handbook**

All members of the Club should have received a copy of the new club handbook with their AGM handbook. Several errors in this have already come to light. If you have noticed any problems with it, please mark the errors as clearly as possible on your own copy and send it to the Editor. It will be replaced, and an updated copy will be issued next year. (Club members may be interested to note that the printing and issue of the Handbook was achieved completely free of charge this year, so no money will be wasted by having a new edition so soon after the last).

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## **Caving Notes**

Llangattock. Bill Gascoine and Clive Gardener are compiling a history of the early exploration of the caves under Llangattock. Photographs of early work there are being sought, and anyone with any useful shots should contact them c/o 23 Landin House, Thomas Road, London, E14 7AN, tel. 071 987 8820.

The next meeting of the Council of Southern Caving Clubs will be held at the Hunter's Lodge on 24 November. All are welcome to attend.

For two years now, John Cordingley and Russell Carter have been searching the downstream Kingsdale Master cave for the King Pot water, an important link to the hydrology of the Eastern side of the valley. In that time over 600m of new passage, some of it of considerable size has been discovered. In September of this year, after an hour's underwater digging, John and Russell eventually entered the King Pot stream at a point some 340m from the KMC base. In two dives, 150m of line was laid until the way on was lost in a large chamber in bad visibility at -21m. At this point the divers are under the valley floor, heading east and have already crossed the line of the Beck on the surface. In a dive on 10 November, both John and Russell dived, and between them laid 110m of new line. The present end is 600m from base at 25m depth, still heading east.

Gavel Pot is now open again, although CNCC permits are still required (contact the Caving Secretary.)

# From the Log

## **4/5 August:**

Nick Pollard and Tav: Surface dig, Llangynidr. "After two days of heavy clearing we revealed a fluted water worn shaft 10ft deep to a ledge."

## **8 - 12 August:**

Daren Cilau, Andy Cave, Graham, Rich Blake. "Found 230m, stood up twice."

## **12 August:**

Nick P, Tav, Nick W. Llangynidr. "Managed to enlarge top part of shaft, NP entered to squeeze.... at bottom to enter 15'x4' boulder chamber. Quickly joined by Tav and NW....Started digging then stopped due to fact that the boulders we were digging were holding up some large boulders which threatened to fall into the entrance shaft and block our exit. Will return soon with convenient means of stabilising boulders."

## **18 August:**

Swildon's 9. Mark and Carmen. "Via Blue Pencil and sump 4...came out via Damp Link and Shatter. Note: the hole in the floor duck in Shatter can be baled from the far side."

OFDII – James Eaton, Tony Nagle. "Got lost several times, finally found very low stream way. Good 5 hour trip."

Llangynidr, (Pwll Pen-Y-Myndd). Tav, Nick W., Nick P. "Scaffolded bottom of entrance shaft, then brought lots of the roof down 'til we all decided to leave it for a week to settle."

## **25 August:**

Pwll Pen-Y-Myndd. Tav, Nick P. "Passed through loose boulders at bottom of entrance shaft into new chamber 20' long 5' wide with lots of hanging death. Boulders need securing before we can dig this safely."

## **29 August:**

Aubrey and Pete: "Drunkards as usual."

Eastwater: Nick P., Graham, Keith Savory, Vince (BEC). "Digging in Propper Job Rift above first rift chamber."

## **1 September:**

Pwll Pen-Y-Myndd: Nick P., Keith Savory,

Tav. "Cave now 80ft long. Keith was unable to pass tight squeeze due to the horrendous proximity of megadeath boulders...."

## **15 September:**

Eastwater South Bank, Pete and Alison. "Digging trip to the two high level chokes above the terminal sump. The downstream choke is reasonably open but downhill and difficult to reverse. The upstream choke very promising however look a really major dig. Little ladder before Blackwall is broken."

Nick W & Clive Gardener, Rolling Thunder "Stuffed a 15 x 600mm hole in"

## **21 September:**

Toothache, Longwood Valley Sink & Longwood August, Pete and Alison. "General snoop around, don't fancy the first two digs, Longwood was more pleasant."

## **22 September:**

Dallimore's. Pete and Alison. Fruitless search for the fabled Oxford University extension. Unless it's off one of the avens the only possibility appears to be our old dig behind a steel grille at the left hand end of the terminal rift.... Entrance pipe don't require a ladder if you follow Pete's example and just throw yourself off the top. Fortunately no injuries except for his pride. Cracked rib from Eastwater last week and free-fall this - I think horses are safer!"

## **29 September:**

Dallimore's again. Pete and Alison. We contacted the Oxford in the week and learnt that the way into the extensions is through our old dig. We had a look at our other old dig straight on down before the bedding. Someone had back-filled our passage and it took an hour to open it back up. A squeeze leads to a descending passage then a free-climbable 15' rift before dropping down to a mud choke. An eye-hole appeared to promise a way into a parallel rift but after opening it up with a hammer and chisel we could see there was really nothing there .....The whole area is draughty and really horrid."

## **6 October:**

Rhino Rift. Kev Clarke, Mark Madden. "Climbed the ascending rift in the final chamber. Very bold

step into choked alcove, then very hairy etrier assisted traverse across flowstone into second rift. This closed down after 15' and is probably just a high level section of the main cave section. Doubt if anyone has been there before."

**12 October:**

Wookey Hole. K. Savory, H. Price. "Dive 9ii to 20 ...there may be a few possible sites. However, they need chemical persuasion as the mechanical variety doesn't work..."

**14 October:**

Cow Hole, Mark and Carmen. "First trip since the access pipes were installed last week by Tuska etc. (now a 45' shaft), to check if there had been any modifications to the cave following the infilling of the depression. There had! The way on from the Dexion shored area at the bottom of the entrance pipe has been reduced to squeezes between a recent boulder collapse....Exit to clean underwear. (Drunkard's seems safer than this)"

**19 October:**

Mark Madden Kev Clarke. Ogof Afon Hepste "(Failed). Carried enormous cylinders around

**HUT WARDEN DUTY**

**UPPER PITTS NEEDS YOU!**

Howard Price has again said that he will stand as Hut Warden, but he will inevitably be unable to cover every weekend (particularly if Her Majesty's Government chooses to give him an all expenses paid Middle Eastern holiday!)

We need volunteers to keep an eye on Upper Pitts at weekends and to make sure that the place is left clean and tidy by visiting groups and members.

Handing out bogroll, black sacks, keys and permits is another part of the job.

The work is neither particularly unpleasant or arduous, since it mostly consist of chasing student and other groups to make sure they do not treat the place like their college halls.

If you are going be visiting Mendip at any time in the next year, and wouldn't mind adding a few minutes to your stay at Upper Pitts, please let Howard or another Committee member know. We can then make sure you have got the necessary keys and know what needs doing and where the supplies are kept.

Committee Members addresses appear at the front of the Journal.

part of Wales for a while. Realise neither of us had the slightest idea where the cave was. P.S. Got totally knackered."

**26/27 October:**

Mark and Friends (TSG) "Saturday morning spent down P8. After heavy rain on Saturday night our trip down Peak on Sunday morning was quite sporting."

**27 October:**

Nick W, Dave Checkley, Large Pot. "Bolting an aven in Necropolis. V. cold, but a good trip. Footloos broke on way out."

Swildon's. Jim Moon, Paul Moon & Friend Jez. "Intended touring down to 2 for curious friend - but got held up by 14 grockles being lined down the 20, ten minutes each body. Close examination of dry ways preceded an early beer. I should have known better.

**October (no date)**

Twll Dychrynlyd, Upper Hepste Valley. Andy Ward, Andrew Whitehouse (SWCC), Gareth Hardman (SSS). "New cave found after 5 mins dig. 350+ metres long. Sump and streamway flood prone. Good digging sites."

**3 November:**

Pwll Pen-Y-Myndd Tav, Nick and Nick. Went to persuade a boulder or two.

**4 November:**

"The BEC arrived and dropped some fireworks down the chimney"

**10 November:**

Nick and Malcolm, Pen-y-ghent Pot. "Accompanied by Ted (Gerry Atric) Dillon and Malcolm (all CPC) Superb 6hr trip on ULSA's rigging."

**14 November:**

Rods Pot. Aubrey. "Subcontract to MCG, followed by Drunkard's again."

**17 November:**

Ian Timney, John Wildman, Mark Wildman, Elaine Wildman, James Kenny. "Queen Vic where I got ripped off £3.80 for a local call and the Butcombe was sour. John's arm was broken walking back from the Hunters by a passing car mirror. Spent the night in Bristol Infirmary."

# What Price Depressions?

Recent activities on Mendip have concentrated attention on the changes which have taken place to the scenery and landscape of the Mendip Plateau in the last 50 years or more. In the first of a short series of articles, Richard Witcombe discusses what has been happening.

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**By Richard Witcombe**

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Shortly after the Second World War, the Air Ministry conducted an aerial photographic survey over much of Britain. The photographs of Mendip show the level plain of the central plateau pockmarked by thousands of depressions, some the work of lead and other metal miners, but most of them the natural solution and swallet features of a classic karst landscape, the only one in the south of England. Forty years later, the pilot sees a much changed scene below. Most of the gruffy ground has been reclaimed for agriculture, and over large areas the natural depressions have vanished, infilled for farming convenience and used as dumps for every kind of rubbish imaginable.

The reasons for this change are not hard to find. Mendip is surrounded by rapidly expanding cities and towns, and with disposal sites for bulk waste at a premium, fly tipping in the country side is an obvious temptation to householder and industrialist alike. At the same time, agriculture is under pressure to operate at peak efficiency. To the farmers, holes and hollows are waste ground, ripe for reclamation and levelling. When the demolition and disposal firms and the farmers get together, the common interest means that one man's cheaply emptied lorry is another man's cheaply levelled field. As a result, a very rare karst landscape is fast becoming a very ordinary Southern counties landscape. The loss of these depressions is more than just a loss of scenery. Some of the dumped material has been noxious or even poisonous. Car bodies and battery acid are mild compared to the 20,000 gallons of waste oil from Bristol garages dumped in the Devil's Punch Bowl or the 50,000 gallons of cyanide impregnated oil discharged into Nedge Hill Hole. The natural history of Mendip is also at stake. The traditional limestone flora, for which there is no place in the modern field, hangs on in many of the steeper depressions, providing shelter for reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. For the geologist, rock outcrops in swallets and depressions are a valuable insight into the formations below. Wurt Pit, often threatened with infilling, has a fine exposure of Harptree Beds, the Jurassic rocks overlying the Carboniferous Limestones in that area.

And of course there is the caver interest. Mendip caves have to be dug for, and whilst not all depressions have man sized passage at the bottom, past experience shows that the shakehole and swallet depressions offer the best prospects of new discoveries in the decades to come. Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet, Cuckoo Cleeves, Dallimore's Cave, Hunter's Hole, Pine Tree Pot, Sludge Pit and many others have their entrances in dry depressions in agricultural land. In the featureless level fields of tomorrow potential entrances will be lost forever.

Recently, infilling practice has taken a further turn for the worse. Existing caves have been lost as their entrance depressions have been filled. Tankard Hole, Hollowfield Swallet, Flower Pot, Lily Combe Cave, Horseshoe Hole have all been buried, as well as many other promising dig sites. In the last few months, Ubley Hill Pot, Cow Hole, Larkshall Slocker and Ubley Warren Swallet have had to be reexcavated.

By and large, the farmers and landowners have been sympathetic towards the interests of cavers, but much less so towards the survival of the depressions themselves, especially where no cave is currently known. Thus in the Cow Hole and Ubley Hill Pot incident, the farmer was prepared to see the caves re-opened but not prepared to see the deep entrance depressions, which he regarded as a dangerous nuisance, restored to their former condition. The compromise on offer is the concrete pipe entrance shaft down through the infill. Dallimore's Cave has remained open by a similar agreement to install a piped entrance and the same arrangements were offered to cavers at Hollowfield but not taken up. This spirit of co-operation may ensure the survival of existing caves, but it does not safeguard future digging sites, and pays no regard to the landscape, natural history and geological value of the depressions.

So what, if anything, can be done to prevent or reduce the infilling of depressions? In theory, a small degree of legal protection already exists. The very finest examples of Mendip depressions - Bishop's Lot, Devil's Punch Bowl, Sandpit, Wurt Pit and the Cross Swallet/BrimblePit closed basin - have been scheduled by the Nature Conservancy Council as Sites of Special Scientific Interest in their own right. The dumping of any material on these sites is illegal. If the landowner himself dumps material or condones dumping by others, he would be liable to prosecution and an order to remove the material could be enforced. If a third party carries out the dumping without the owner's knowledge or consent i.e. fly tipping, the owner is not held liable but the NCC will grant aid or, in some cases, pay in full the cost of removal of the material. This is an important safeguard, and if a watertight case can be presented to the NCC, they will act.

As proof that the money and will are there, one well-known Mendip caver recently purchased the field containing Brimble Pit and he has already received cash help in emptying one of the depressions.

Nearby Cross Swallet is full of tyres, dumped there before the "beefing up" of SSSI protection. Should the landowner wish it, these too could be removed at NCC expense.

Many other Mendip depressions are within the boundaries of SSSIs scheduled for other reasons, most notably cave SSSIs. Here, the degree of protection varies. Around Priddy where an SSSI "controversy" raged for over a year, the farmers achieved a considerable watering down of the Potentially Damaging Operations which require planning consent in an SSSI. As a result, dumping is only forbidden within a 10 metre radius of the cave entrance. Outside Priddy, for example in the Cheddar or Lamb Leer SSSIs, dumping is a PDO throughout the SSSI area, and the full range of NCC sanctions and help apply.

Elsewhere on the plateau, landowners are subject to more general planning regulations. As a rule, a farmer is entitled to dump his own farm refuse and debris into one of his own depressions. Most farmers invoke this freedom when challenged over infilling. What is not permissible **without** specifically granted consent from the Local Authority is the importation and dumping of waste or rubbish from outside the farm. If a farmer wishes to fill a depression with, for example, builders' rubble from a Bristol demolition site, he would have to apply for planning permission to operate a landfill site, and the chances are that permission would not be forthcoming in the central Mendip area.

In the past, the Local Authorities have been reluctant to get involved with illegal landfill retrospectively, citing a shortage of resources and the general difficulty of proving that the landowner and not an unknown fly tipper was responsible. More recently, widespread concern over the increasing degradation of the Mendip landscape has prompted them to take a greater interest. In response to representations from geologists, conservationists and a few cavers, Somerset County Council has ordered the owner of Cow Hole and Ubley **Hill** Pot to remove the imported landfill material from those sites and restore the original depressions. The landowner has appealed against this enforcement notice, claiming that most of the infill was his own farm rubbish, and has offered the compromise of levelled depressions with piped access to the caves. This solution has proved attractive to many cavers who are fearful of antagonising farmers and risking loss of access as a result. At the same time, the compromise is certain to muddy the waters of the Council's first test case and could signal to other farmers that dumping will be no problem so long as access to known caves is maintained.

Legal action of the above kind will never be the whole answer to protecting the depressions. Mendip is a compact area and local cavers have always prided themselves in having a better caver/landowner relationship than in most other caving areas. The time has clearly come to put this to the test and to embark on a programme of educating landowners about the importance of safeguarding the landscape they have inherited. Cavers should take every opportunity to talk to farmers and explain to them how rare and valuable are the karst features on their land. Farmers too, it should be remembered, can benefit from Nature Conservancy grants. Contacts should be extended to such bodies as the National Farmers Union and the Country Landowners Association, and a leaflet and poster campaign could back up the personal touch.

There remains one further safeguard to be discussed. Why don't cavers become Mendip landowners themselves? It is already happening on a small scale. The caver who has bought the field at Brimble Pit is now protecting nine depressions, and he also owns two acres including a cave entrance elsewhere. At Thrupe Lane Swallet, a consortium of cavers including the author, leases one third of an acre including the depression and entrance. St Cuthbert's too is leased by a caving club. The owner of the impressive Cross Swallet is thought to be prepared to sell it, and since this is part of an SSSI, the NCC would be prepared to grant aid up to 50% of the purchase price. How ironic it is that the Council of Southern Caving Clubs Ltd, set up some years ago for the express purpose of buying cave sites, should have been wound up recently **through** maladministration without a single purchase to its name.

The next few years will be crucial to the long term interests of Mendip cavers. If succeeding generations are to have new sites to dig and new caves to explore, the tide of infilling and levelling must be halted and, ideally, reversed. Cavers must reexamine their attitude towards bodies such as the Nature Conservancy, and be ready to take advantage of any help that bureaucracy might provide. At the same time, we must collectively or individually be prepared to spend money on this campaign, and do everything in the way of diplomacy to carry the enlightened farmers

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In the next issue of the Journal, Dave Morrison will describe the efforts to empty some of the filled depressions. Over the page, the Wessex response to the County Council is published.

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# Letter to Somerset County Council

*Following the filling of shakeholes on his land, Farmer Mr. R. Lovell was subject to a Somerset County Council enforcement order, requiring him to remove the spoil from the depressions and restore them to their former state. He has appealed against this, and the Wessex have been asked by Somerset CC to give their opinion. After a sounding of views at the AGM, the following response has been sent.*

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1<sup>st</sup> November 1990

The County Secretary and Solicitor,  
Somerset County Council,  
County Hall,  
Taunton.  
Somerset.

TA1 4DY

Your Reference: CON 25/U01/GCF

Dear Sir,

Thankyou for your letter regarding the two appeals lodged by Mr R.L. Lovell of Ubley Drove Farm, Ubley Drove, Blagdon, Bristol, regarding the land at Cow Hole Pot (OS 0078) and Ubley Hill Pot (OS 6100) in the Parish of Priddy. The Wessex Cave Club would like to make the following statements as a representation to the appeal.

The Wessex Cave Club does not condone the filling of any swallet holes or depressions on Mendip (or anywhere else), so protecting the character and quality of the landscape. To this end the club would support any changes in the law regarding the improved conservation of depressions or swallets, whether they contain known cave passages beneath them or not, and whether material is brought from outside the agricultural unit in question or not. The club is particularly concerned with the conservation of depressions and shakeholes where access to the underlying caves, which caused their original formation, has not yet been achieved or the caves have not been explored or surveyed.

In the case of Cow Hole Pot and Ubley Hill Pot, access to the caverns has already been regained by excavation and the installation of access shafts, with the assistance of Mr R.L. Lovell. Members of the Wessex Cave Club were major participants in these operations, which were carried out under the auspices of the Council of Southern Caving Clubs, and it was deemed that total excavation of the depressions would be impractical in both of these cases, for two basic reasons. Firstly, excavation to regain entry to the caves has indicated that it would not be possible to determine the exact shape or size of the original depressions, and furthermore, any flora or fauna that may have existed here in the past has been lost. Secondly, it is thought that excavation of the original depressions could result in irreversible damage to the caves below, by causing collapse of the roofs. This would result in either the complete loss or damage of the sites from both an archaeological and geological point of view.

Thus the Wessex Cave Club would not object to the appeals of Mr R.L. Lovell in the case of Cow Hole Pot (OS 0078) and Ubley Hill Pot (OS 6100), although this decision should not be allowed to be used as a precedent in other cases. The Wessex Cave Club would definitely like to be notified of the outcome of the Department of the Environment's decision in this matter and would like to participate in any other such cases,

Yours Faithfully,  
Dr. Nick Marochov (W.C.C. Honorary Secretary)

# Book Review

Underground Adventure by A. Gemmel and J. O. Myers  
Softbound £9.00 ISBN 0 905953 19 6

This classic caving book was first published in 1952 by the Dalesman Publishing Company, and has now been reprinted in facsimilie by Castle Cary Press.

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By Richard Stevenson

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I had never read this book and I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to do so now. Castle Cary Press have made a superb job of the presentation, and the photographs are stunning even by modern standards.

The book is compulsive reading and the first thing that struck me was the dedication and sheer energy of these early explorers. I really cannot imagine how cold and miserable they must have been without modern clothing. A good sense of humour can only have been essential, and this certainly comes out in the writing. All of us can relate to people who admit to "...wanted nothing better than to go out and have a nice cup of tea. But the others would have none of it. No doubt it was genuine sportsmanship, though at the

time I put it down to a sadistic desire to see me suffer in the slit as they themselves had done." I know the feeling!

There cannot be many modern day cavers who would even consider some of Leakey's Exploits. "Undressing completely and carrying a headlamp connected to a battery which he gripped between his teeth, he went feet first into the icy cold water, feeling for air-spaces with his toes. I was left almost gasping with admiration for such single minded determination - a true explorer.

The descriptions of the caves are second to none, and clearly show the passion of the early explorers for their environment. This book certainly rekindled in me a desire to visit or revisit many of the places mentioned. However, comments such as "...the floor was worse than a Flanders dug out in November." can only evoke memories of abject misery in all but the most insensitive.

A great adventure story, a fascinating historical document and a must for any collection. This book is excellent value at £9.00 and will certainly make a welcome Christmas present for anyone with an interest in caves or exploration.

**Wessex Cave Club**

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## Preliminary Announcement

# Crete 1991

Crete, the largest and most southerly of the Greek islands, has three limestone mountain regions over 2000m high. There are a number of major sea level resurgences so the potential for major cave systems is obviously great. Although many caves are known on Crete few of those found to date have significant length or depth.

Previous expeditions have concentrated on the Western and Central Massifs. An expedition to reconnoitre the Eastern mountains (Mount Dhikti) is therefore proposed for 1991.

Participants should expect to spend a large part of the time mountain/hill walking whilst carrying lightweight caving gear and a minimal amount of lightweight SRT rope and equipment. Any caves found will be explored and surveyed although in the event of anything really major being found a follow up expedition will be necessary given the lightweight nature of this expedition. Careful documentation of entrance locations will also be necessary.

Crete is a well known holiday destination and it is assumed that most expedition members will sample the beaches, bars and tourist sights from time to time. There is also some opportunity for visiting show caves or for sporting cave trips. However, groups of people wishing to spend their entire stay in such activities are requested to make their own arrangements.

The reconnaissance is proposed for a two week period in September or October. The dates are chosen for the following reasons:

- It's cheaper away from the peak season;
- The weather is cooler for walking;
- It's easier to accommodate group bookings;
- Snow cover will have gone;

Travel and accommodation will be by tourist package operator, probably using self-catering apartment in the Stalis/Malin area. Internal travel around the island will probably be using shared self drive car hire although some use of buses is possible. The cost will be in the range of £270 to £330, exclusive of food, drink, and car hire etc.

There may be a need to make a charge to cover the purchase of some lightweight SRT rope should expedition members not have access to sufficient quantities of this.

When a firm decision has been reached on the dates and accommodation a deposit of £60.00 will be required to secure a place.

For further details, interested people should contact Geoff Newton on 0372 7264505 (home) or 0737 765070 (work) (assuming he hasn't been made redundant by the time this is published. Regular visitors to Whitewalls (Chelsea SS HQ, South Wales) will be able to contact him in person, as he is normally there one or two weekends a month.

# Wessex Go to Norway!

In the last *Journal*, Clive Gardener remembered the events of the 1989 trip to Elgfjell. This year saw Wessex members Geoff Newton, Jim Rands, Trevor Faulkner, Nigel Graham, Eddie Waters, and Keith Bryant depart the U.K. to explore caves in the Elgfjell area of Norway, just south of the Arctic circle

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By Jim Rands

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Day 1: Left home with Geoff at 20.10, camped that night at Sutton Bank.

Day 2: Met up with Nigel, Eddie and Trevor in Newcastle, all but Eddie (who sailed on the Fred Olsen line) boarded the good ship "Venus". Very disappointed to find that there was no figurehead.

Day 3: Slept on deck, too stuffy inside. Arrived Bergen 12.00, cleared customs by 12.40. Stopped night by Lake Valasso.

Day 4: On road by 09.00, arrived Svenningdal by 17.40. Locals warn us of a bear who is kill crazy, it's only a two year old but it's bigger and faster than me! Started on the duty free!

Day 5: Day mostly taken up with sherpa-ing gear to high camp at Varskartte. Went for a walk, found two caves fifty metres from camp. Keith arrived from Sweden at 23.30.

Day 6: First day's caving; Geoff and I surveyed the two caves found last night, Camp cave ends in a sump after 100m. Baptist Cave we never finished, we were too cold, also worried about water levels. Cave name reflects the nature of this cave.

Day 7: Back to Compass Cave to check out open leads from last year. Cave still hungry: lost belay belt and Crab. Found five new caves: approx. 300m surveyed, found three more on way back to camp: too cold and tired to look in them.

Day 8: Broke through eye-hole in Baptist Cave, regained stream: 9m gain, two small caves near camp made approx 100m gain. Went prospecting in the rain. Eight more caves to look at tomorrow. Eddie's wetsuit and oversuit are in tatters, He and Nigel both lost their carbide lights in cave two. (I don't think I want to go there.)

Day 9: Three Caves found last night yielded only thirty metres. Resurveyed three entrance cave to Grade 3. Eddie found a cave up on the snow line: went ten metres to boulder blockage in a stream with water nearly to the roof. I had a go at the boulders - in 10 mins had a way on, but by then I was too cold to stay in the cave: Geoff and Eddie went on and found 90m of fine streamway.

Day 10: Only one open lead found today, but dug into three more. Tourist trip down Rainbow Cave found an extra 15m. Dug into upstream Compass Cave: Only 12m. Rained most of the day so no mozzies. Edgar arrived this evening with six cans of beer. YOH!!

Day 11: Baptist, Virgin and Compass Caves: all the last leads pushed, 110m gain. Trevor's team doubled the length of Blafsellet Grotta with plenty more open leads.



Day 12: Went over the col to Blafsellet Grotta to photograph the waterfall. 3/4 hours in muddy tubes to a 4m waterfall, scratch two flashguns. On walk back Eddie found a cave with a beautiful waterfall in a white marble streamway, must come back tomorrow with ladder and ropes.

Day 13: Back to Eddie's cave with ladders and ropes, rigged the pitch out of the water, 4m waterfall in a circular pot, a beautiful white marble streamway. Soon narrowed down until it ended a sump 35m beyond the pitch. In the afternoon took a tourist trip into Roaring Cave to take photographs, water levels impassable between two and three. Nigel, Geoff and Keith went in entrance four but were stopped at a twin stream pot, too much water. (That's the price you pay for a sunny day.)

Day 14: Went prospecting, found naff all. 8k walk in scrub. Started sherpa-ing gear back to basecamp.

Day 15: Sherpa trip with last of gear from top camp. Called in to see Odd Johansen and opened a bottle of duty free. He then told us about a river that disappeared underground for 1½k. Stayed the night.

Day 16: Went to Kaapskaidet to look at river. We found several caves, big passages, crystal clear sumps all in white marble, took lots of photo's (I hope they come out), one hell of a walk. Wet furries are not the best trekking kit. I'm knackered!

Day 17: Back to Kaapskaidet, more water than yesterday. Built a dam to divert some of the river from the cave. Fixed a rope through the rapids, then by-passed ten metres of white water by a roof tube, dropped into white water, crossed river, then 10m downstream to an "interesting" climb into high level tubes, a maze of passages leading back to river, only to round a bend and see it disappearing down a gorge 1½m wide. Needed high level bolt route to pass. The best trip of my life.

Day 18: Walked the area of Stavvasdalen, crossed the river on a bridge made of two wires with wooden slats on, not so easy with a pack on. Found only two small caves, made our way back with a thunderstorm threatening, made it back to the cars before it started raining. O boy, did it rain!

Day 19: Went to Mossem to buy the booze for tonight's party, whilst there took a trip down Øyfsell Grotta. Nigel and I took lots of photo's. Dinner a great success, braised elk washed down with plenty of hooch.

Day 20: The survivors of the party started the long trek

home. We gifted Odd with our spare carbide, Duracells, a furry suit and socks. Weather perfect, blue sky and sun. Camped the night at Valasso.

Day 21: Weather back to normal mist and rain, so we set out without breakfast. Lunched at Grom, drove to within 50 miles of Bergen and booked in a hutter.

Day 22: Back aboard the Venus, force 7 gale. Water crashing over the bows. We almost had the bar to ourselves.

Day 23: Back in Newcastle by 13.30, home by 19.00. Oh well, it was good while it lasted. Back to work on Monday!

## Subscriptions

Subscriptions for the club year 1990 - 1991 are now due. They are unchanged from last year until the club accounts are produced, at which time the Committee may call an EGM to set a new rate if necessary. Persons paying their subscriptions before this will only be liable to pay the current rates which are:

Single Member:	£16.00
Full Joint Membership (2 votes, 1 Journal)	£28.00 Ordinary
Joint Member (1 vote, 1 Journal)	£20.00
OAP (Full member, no insurance)	£4.80
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Please include notification of any change of address, and if you are paying for a locker or box, state the number.

# Bat News

Members who can cast their minds as far back as Journal 219 may remember a brief article about caves under threat in Australia.

Tony Hutson of the Bat Conservation Trust recently wrote to say that, thanks largely to the efforts of local cavers, Mt Etna, the limestone cone whose disappearance by quarrying threatened a range of rare bat species and other wildlife, has been declared a National Park. In his letter, Tony says that "it was really the speleologists who were at the forefront of this battle and they should get a lot of credit." The lesson to be learned, surely, is that active protests can work, and this sort of fight should never be abandoned until the last vestige of hope has gone.

Tony also mentions that the Bat Conservation Trust has recently been set up in this country and "is looking for new members - we haven't yet approached

the caving fraternity." The aims of the Trust are to conserve bats, their roosts and their feeding habitats. The Trust "acts as a source of information on the biology and conservation of bats for the general public ..... produces educational materials to encourage a wider understanding of bats and their conservation needs, raises funds for conservation action and publishes a quarterly 8-page newsletter", amongst other services and activities. Membership costs £10.00 for individuals, and further details are available by contacting the Bat Conservation Trust, care of The Conservation Foundation, Lowther Lodge, 1 Kensington Gore, London, SW7 2AR. I have a number of application forms if any Wessex member is interested.

*Nick Williams.*

## Notes for Contributors

If you have any article, letter, comment, news, photograph, or anything else which you would like to see published in the Journal, please do not hesitate to send it to me at the address below. Preferably, text should be typed on one side of the paper only, with wide margins and double spaces between the lines, but I'd rather have it scrawled on the back of a cigarette packet than not get it at all.

The main requirement for photographs is that they should not have too much contrast as otherwise they are unrecognizable when printed. Prints in black and white or colour are acceptable, but bear in mind that they will come out as black and white prints when they appear, so if the colour is an important feature the effect may be lost in printing. Please make sure that your prints or transparencies are clearly labelled, and send the appropriate captions for each label on a separate sheet.

For those who have access to a wordprocessor, I may be able to accept contributions on floppy disc. Please give me a ring so that we can discuss whether or not your software is compatible with mine - at present I can handle contributions in ASCII on all formats of CP/M and MS-DOS (IBM) disc, as well as ASCII BBC Model B and Apple Macintosh.

Line drawings, sketch maps and diagrams are all welcome. They should be supplied in the size at which they are to be printed.

If you copy drawings or photo's, or quote, from another publication, please make sure you inform me before publication so that I can make arrangements regarding copyright.

Authors may obtain a laser-written copy of their article for the production of further off-prints by contacting me, although I may have to make a small charge for this service.

The Journal is produced on an Apple Macintosh Plus computer using a Western Digital 20AP hard disc, Microsoft Word 4 software and a LaserWriter IISC to produce camera-ready artwork.

I would like to thank Nick Marochov for the use of his LaserWriter in the production of this issue.

Editor:  
**Nick Williams,  
Upper Pitts,  
Eastwater Lane,  
Priddy,  
Somerset,  
BA53AX**

# Club Diary 1991

21 January	Committee meeting	
9/10 February	Wales weekend	Details elsewhere in this issue
23 February	Club weekend	Visit some of Mendip's smaller Caves. Novice Ladder and SRT instruction Rescue Gear demonstration
24 February	Committee meeting	
16 March	Golden Oldies Film Show	Details elsewhere in this issue
20 April	Hut Working weekend	Spring Cleaning Weekend - Barbecue and Barrel
21 April	Committee meeting	
4/6 May	Yorkshire weekend	
25/27 May	Yorkshire weekend	
2 June	Committee meeting	
15/16 June	Devon weekend	Visit Devon's main caves. Digging and diving too!
6/7 July	Portland Trip	Seaside and caving
14 July	Committee meeting	
27 July to August 18	French Trip	Caving and walking in the Dordogne. More details to follow.
31 August/ 1 September	North Wales weekend	Walking, but caving can be arranged!
1 September	Committee meeting	
15/16 September	Derbyshire weekend	
29 September	Committee meeting	
19 October	AGM and Annual Dinner	

Details of the caving trips away from Mendip will be published in the Journal nearer the time.

Full Yorkshire bookings diary will be published in the New Year.

All trips will include novice instruction if requested - contact the Caving Secretary or another member of the Committee.

If you have any ideas for a Club activity, contact the Committee for help with organising and publicising it

# Obituary

## Robert E. Lawder, 1930 - 1990

Bob Lawder joined the Wessex in November 1948 and first published an article in the Wessex Circular of January 1949 on Lamb Leer. His home was then at Wrington in Somerset and his understanding father, Commander Lawder, had joined the club only a short time before. Bob visited most of the caves on Mendip in fairly rapid time. After school he went into the Army to become a professional soldier where he rose to the rank of Major having on route taken a science degree at Shrivensham College.

Bob wrote a good many articles on caving for the Circular (subsequently re-named the Journal) and on a variety of subjects. In 1952 he managed to get two articles in about sailing across the North Sea on the tenuous strength of calling the article "a Caver at Sea" (the editor was obviously glad of any copy as editors always are!) His other articles were factual and sometimes bordering on the scurrilous.

His caving exploits were never 'tigerish', he preferred to enjoy a caving trip, taking a rest now and then to have a smoke and a look around. He helped beginners and was not of that ilk that rushes in and out of caves, although he did consider it important to visit that spiritual home of cavers i.e. the Hunters Lodge, where he regaled us with many a recitation and song.

Cave digs he also found a good form of recreation and a way of using his practical engineering skills. When he got married to Anne in 1958 he had a good excuse to go on all the 'tourist' trips again to show her the Mendip Underworld.

Yachting was really his other main hobby which he did both in England and during his postings in the Far East.

Many of us have enjoyed his company and were saddened by his last illness. One of Bob's great gifts was the ability to write a good caving song, and by way of tribute I will quote one which has reverberated around the walls of the Hunters many times.

*Chris Hawkes*

### The Tankard Hole Song

*(To the tune of "Ain't going to need this house no longer").*

In last summer a dig was started  
by some bod from "the other club"  
In a shakehole by the roadside  
Not so far from the Hunters' pub.  
With occasional draughts of cider  
the diggers soon piled a heap  
to the envy of the Weejees  
and the puzzlement of the sheep.

### Chorus

Ain't going to need this cave no longer,  
Ain't going to need this cave no more,  
With its stalactites from the ceiling,  
and its stalagmites from the floor.  
Aint going to bang this choke no longer,  
Ain't going to force this squeeze no more,  
For our Tankard hole is going  
And it's going to beat them all.

Oh, the entrance it was narrow,  
So there wasn't much need to shore,  
But further down it's ample,  
Twenty feet by sixty four,  
It was tedious to climb the pitches  
And a risk the gulf to jump,  
So we've got an elevator  
from the first pitch to the sump.

### Chorus

Your can keep you Tratman's Temples,  
And your Devil's Elbows too,  
And your Morton's Pot with stemples  
And your Cuthbert's entrance queue,  
For our Tankard Hole is going,  
Going steadily down the dip.  
Taking Swildon's as a feeder,  
And St Cuthbert's as a drip.

### Chorus

*Robert E. Lawder, 1956.*

# WALES WEEKEND

9/10 February 1991

Accommodation at Westminster Speleological Group

Possible trips:

Daren Cilau  
Ogof Ffynnon Ddu  
Dan-Yr-Ogof  
Agen Allwydd

Contact the Caving Secretary or any committee member  
for further information, advice, contacts for lifts etc.

WESSEX GOLDEN OLDIES PRESENT A

## FILM NIGHT

Saturday March 16 1991  
At the Hunter's Lodge  
8pm Prompt

Do You Remember: - the Hillgrove Hut, Swildon's with the 40 but without  
a blockhouse, Cornwall banging at Hillgrove Swallett, The original Cow  
Hole Drainpipes, a lithe Mike York in G.B., Nick Hart caving and Atty  
sketching in Ireland in 1964, Water tracing and geo resistivity,  
Pre-Butcombe Beer at 1/10 a Pint.....

All will be revealed in the best that 8mm home movies can  
provide in glorious AGFA colour (and Black and White)  
Make a date for your diary now. We're getting fewer all the time...

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