





# THE WESSEX CAVE CLUB JOURNAL

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## CONTENTS

Club Notes	2
Caving Notes	3
Club Diary	4
Notes For Contributors	4
Letters to the Editor	5
The Cambrian Cave Registry	7
Portland Rescue Exercise	8
Expedition to Norway 1993	11
WCC Sales	11
Why do men do it?	12
Caving Politics	14
25 Years Ago	16

### NEXT ISSUE:

Dig your own cave

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*Opinions expressed in the Journal are not necessarily those of the Club or the Editor*

# CLUB NOTES

## *Wessex People*

The club would like to welcome the following new members:

**Jayne Stevenson**, 24 Horseshoe Close, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 4DJ, 0276 683469

**Angela Ball**, 24 Horseshoe Close, Camberley, Surrey, GU15 4DJ, 0276 683469

**Terry Rands**, 17 Tillett Close, Stonebridge Park, London, NW10 0QA

**Angela Astbury**, 22 Gloucester Road, Wednesbury, West Midlands. WS10 0TY, 021 556 5792

**Roy Vernon & Rosemary Freeman**, 33 Alton Road, Fleet, Hants, GU13 9HW, 0252 629621

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**Subscriptions** for the year 1992/93 are now due. The AGM decided that the subscription should come down for those people who pay before the end of the year. Thus the subscription for an individual member who pays by 31 December is £16.00 for the year, while after that date it will revert to last year's level of £20.00. Hut fees remain at £1.50 per night for members, £2.50 for guests, and locker and food box fees also remain the same as last year at £5.00 and £2.00 respectively. Please send your subscription to Duncan Frew at the address given at the front of the Journal.

The following weekends in 1992 have been designated **Hut Working weekends**: 20/21 February, 26/27 June. Please turn up if you would like to help keep up Upper Pitts.

Please would whoever has **club survey kit** return it to Upper Pitts as soon as possible.

Following an incident in late November when a certain amount of damage was done to the interior and fittings of Upper Pitts, the committee have taken steps to try to cut down on the incidence of riotous behaviour at the hut. Measures taken include the banning of a certain BEC member from the hut and also the **banning of barrels at Upper Pitts**. Members may rest assured that the damage done to the hut was, on this occasion, minor but the committee takes a serious view of the fact that the perpetrators did not take steps to repair the damage the following day. The ban will be reviewed in six months, but members should note that even when it is lifted those people who use the hut for what are, in effect, private parties, will be held personally responsible for clearing up and making good any damage done to the hut or its fittings.

The **locks on Upper Pitts** are to be replaced in the new year. This is because the existing locks are worn out - we have been informed that this is to be expected of locks of this type, and will be difficult to avoid unless much more expensive locks are fitted. New keys will be issued to paid up members on request and upon receipt of a deposit of £10.00. Members already in possession of a key will receive a refund of their £5.00 deposit, but must return their old key to get it. The old and new locks will both be used for a transitional period (the changing room door will be changed first, then the front door a few months later) so members should find it possible to get in with old keys for some months into the new year. A lock conforming to the new pattern will also be fitted to the library door.

### **AGM Notes**

Aidan Williams is repaying the sum lost from the Sales account in monthly instalments. He is up to date with these.

It was requested that caving politics, and in particular the NCA re-structure, be covered in the Journal.

The committee was requested to appoint a club conservation and access officer.

The motion to limit the period any person may sit on the committee was defeated.

The motion to require two signatories on any club accounts was passed.

A motion to raise subscriptions was defeated, and instead the subscription was lowered to £16.00 (individual) if paid before 31 December, to revert to £20.00 thereafter.

# CAVING NOTES

The period since the last Journal has seen significant discoveries on Mendip, in Scotland and in the Forest of Dean. In mid October BEC members Graham Johnson and Vince Simmons were accompanied by Murray Knapp in exploring about 100 ft of passage beyond the previously known end of **Welsh's Green Swallet**. The new cave was accessed by a long programme of blasting. It's apparently significantly bigger in dimensions than the preceding passage, but that's not saying much!

Elsewhere on Mendip, Tim Large and Andy Sparrow have been having success in **Whitepit**, and entered 200ft of extremely well decorated and generously proportioned cave. This is currently under lock and key while the diggers stabilise the dig and work out an access arrangement which will preserve the beauty of the cave in the long term. Full access will be restored as soon as possible.

Scotland, meanwhile, saw great activity on the weekend of the Grampian Speleological Group dinner in late October. In beautiful sunshine a cast of about twenty GSG members, armed to the teeth with various items of mechanical and chemical persuasion, strolled up **Traligill** in search of potential dig sites. One particular site was subject to some concentrated effort, and soon yielded a sloping chamber some thirty feet square and four to five feet high. This was soon occupied by every GSG member on the mountain! J-Rat soon took the lead, closely followed by another GSG member (Phil?) with Goon and Nick Williams following on behind. The way on led down a body sized tube in loose gravel, up a flat out crawl on a 45° slope (also in loose gravel) to a point where the cave opened out into another chamber and the sound of a large streamway could be heard. Traversing the chamber, a 2m climb down into the stream confirmed that this is another access to the main 'Knockers' water downstream of the end of the known cave. At a total length of about 300ft this is not an insignificant discovery, and it will be well worth a close inspection when water levels are lower.

In the Forest of Dean, meanwhile, **Redhouse Swallet**, the subject of a Gloucester Speleological Society dig of some years, has finally yielded. News is a bit scarce, but apparently the cave consists of 500m of low streamway to a sump, which has been dived and found to be 20' long. A further 1km of stream

passage lies beyond. More news soon, we hope.

Brian Prewer has asked for all Club members to take careful note of the access arrangements for **Swildon's Hole**. This has been the subject of some considerable confusion recently, including incorrect information in the last *Journal*. The true situation is as follows: the goodwill fee is 50p per person, payable to either Holmfield Cottage (opposite the field gate) or Manor Farm (on the Green). Please do **not** park on the Top Green and be discrete when changing - use the bam provided.

**Access arrangements in Yorkshire** are changing again: permits are no longer required for Magnetometer Pot, Antler Hole, Echo Pot or Fornah Gill Caverns, but please ask for permission from Mr Coats at Neals Ing. Note the closed season on Fountains Fell which is 1 November - 2nd weekend in May so please do not bother Mr Coates in this period. Please also note the following 'closed' seasons: Leck Fell: 1 April - 30 June; Pippikin/Nipperkin Pot: April, May, June; Mongo Gill/Shockle Shaft: May, June July; Birks Fell: 1 November - 15 April the following year; Allotment: all pots 31 March - 1 October. CNCC permits are still required for Gingling Hole and Hammer Pot.

News from Derbyshire includes details of the entrance arrangements for **Tearsall Pipe Cavern**. A box spanner and keys for the gate are available from Brightside Farm. Also from the area, the **PO entrance** is now capped, and there has been a collapse in **Gautries** just before the water sinks in the eyehole.

From Wales, the news is that the management at **Dan-Yr-Ogof** have installed security cameras and gates after vandals damaged and removed stal. Meanwhile, the diggers of a large dig on **Llangynidr**, near Chartist Cave, are asked to contact Bill Gascoine, and there have been access problems recently at **Coed-y-Mystwr Cave**: please use discretion. Finally, visitors to **Porth-Yr-Ogof** are warned that there was another fatality in the cave in October. An outdoor pursuits instructor drowned while rescuing a child in his care - it would appear that the exit pool of the cave is at its most dangerous when the water levels in the cave appear safe. This is the second fatality in the cave this year, and indicates that exiting from the cave via the resurgence has an unacceptable level of risk.

# Club Diary

31 December	MRO Coffee morning	Belfry Store
30 December	Yorkshire booking	Notts Pot
31 December 1992		Lost Johns Cavern
10 January 1993	Committee meeting	10.00 am Upper Pitts
30 January	NCA Executive meeting	Stafford
20 February	Hut working weekend	
21 February	Committee meeting	10.00 am Upper Pitts
20 March	NCA Annual General Meeting	Stafford
4 April 1992	Committee meeting	10.00 am Upper Pitts
9 April	Easter meet in Ireland	Contact Andy Summerskill for details
16 April		
1 May	May bank holiday meet, Wales	WSG Hut, Penderyn
3 May		
15 May	Committee meeting	10.00 am Upper Pitts
29 May	Spring bank holiday meet, Yorkshire	Camp at the Hill Inn
31 May		
5 June	Club training weekend	More details in the next Journal
6 June		
26 June	Hut working weekend	
26 June	Committee meeting	10.00 am Upper Pitts
25 July	Committee meeting	10.00 am Upper Pitts
5 September	Committee meeting	10.00 am Upper Pitts
16 October	Annual General Meeting and dinner	

Please contact Keith Sanderson (number at the front of the Journal) if you wish to attend any of the Yorkshire bookings.

Novice instruction is available on all Club trips: please contact Andy Summerskill (number at the front of the Journal) for details.

## NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Submissions of any caving related material from members are welcome for the Journal. If possible, please type your manuscript on one side of the paper using widely spaced lines. However, hand written submissions are perfectly acceptable so long as they are clear. It sometimes helps to print names and other difficult words!

If you use a word processor, please send your submission on disc - I can convert from most formats of computer including MS-DOS, BBC and Amstrad. Please make sure that you include a hard copy of your submission as well as the disc since this helps to spot errors and odd characters.

Line drawings, sketch maps and diagrams are all welcome. They should be supplied in the size at which they are to be printed. Make sure that lettering is large and bold.

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.

I would like to thank Richard Kenney for his assistance in the preparation of this issue

NJW

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

I refer to the Caving Notes section (WCCJ Sept. 1992) on the National Trust and Cheddar Gorge. I am a sort of conservationist and mycologist (in my spare time), mainly because caring for an elderly relative leaves me with only short-duration caving trips in the local area (most of which I have done previously).

I accept that in some cases conservation work is carried out with the very best of intentions. Anyone who wanders in what's left of the Caledonian pinewoods will see the difference between the areas fenced-off from deer and the rest; the fencing is, there, justified. In the limestone areas with which we are familiar, however, it is extraordinary the damage which is being done, sanctioned and paid-for by our National bodies: The National Trust, English Nature and the numerous local teams like Avon Wildlife Trust. Some of what they do is good; but some is not and some appears to be profit-motivated. I have had disputes with persons authorised to damage woodland at the following places; Brown's Folly Wood (A.W.T.); Cheddar Gorge (N.T.); Leigh Woods (English Nature & The Warden); I have left (this week) a ten-minute speech on the Cheddar Gorge Warden's "answerphone" which is closely reasoned and states objection to use of fossil hydrocarbons to drive saws and vehicles used in clearance of plants which have somehow "managed" without people for millennia. At Leigh Woods the clearance, stated to be "improvement", is in fact leading to a spread of bramble, people and vehicles - the National Nature Reserve (NNR) has Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status but is being modified for people: the timber is cut and burned (at Cheddar it is apparently used for furniture); either way, native trees are being removed, scrub is being cut, burned (and stumps painted with poison to prevent regenerative growth) and undergrowth near the road destroyed, in the name of "grassland regeneration". On Wednesday last I remonstrated with workers at Cheddar, one of whom was destroying hazel-scrub on a scree (it takes a long time for

grassland to form over a high-angle scree!), pointing out to them that by such removal they were in fact increasing the risk to road-users at Cheddar by felling the things which halt or slow any tumbling rocks.

I have to say that some of these people are not as clever as first appears. People who said they studied at Bristol University, when accosted by me in an NNR, misidentified a tree, claimed that felling improved the wood despite my demonstrating otherwise (they actually cut a Small-leaved Lime while I watched - a nationally rare tree) and tried to tell me that the timber would be left to lie (which it is not; it is mostly removed) and it was only when I wrote to the local Press that it seems any thought at all was given by these "conservationists" to mycorrhizal associations and the incidence of fungi; their concern was with butterflies (and presumably not moths because Joe Public isn't too keen on those).

What we may be witnessing - I have my suspicions about it - is the effect of a Government policy to require Nature Reserves to pay for themselves. No-one minds a bit of scrub encroaching on a site where a rarity flowers being controlled in order to protect the threatened species - but the operations I have witnessed are much more than that and should in most cases be directly opposed. It is important, in this context, to establish what is happening to the timber, who is selling it! Then we shall see just who is doing what for whom. Don't forget that expertise does not lie in Government Departments or National Bodies even if they seem to be authorities on the subjects with which they deal - most of their staff are simply employees. The real experts are the people who spend time in the countryside specifically in order to study nature. You will recall an analogy in the caving world - the real cavers are probably not committee people, but those who have better things to do underground and who spend the time they can doing them. The power rests (unfortunately in some examples) in the hands of writers and committees who claim to

speaking for the cavers. It's a problem not confined to our set-up and the implications for natural habitats on the surface are enormous compared with those underneath. Therefore, if you see someone interfering with any part of an NNR or SSSI, you should question what they think they're at.

Yours etc..

Bob Lewis,  
Horfield,  
Bristol.

25-10-92

*A reply from English Nature copied to the Journal, reads as follows:*

Dear Mr Lewis

Thank you for the copy of your letter to the Wessex Cave Club Journal expressing a number of views on the management of local SSSIs and NNRs. It is clear from your letter that you hold the opinion that SSSIs should not be managed except perhaps to protect them from malign external influences such as the pressure of sheep and deer grazing on the Caledonian pine forest.

We would argue that the converse is often the case and that without intervention by man most of the rich and varied semi-natural habitats in the British Isles would be lost.

Many of our SSSIs are the result of centuries of stable grassland or woodland management and we consider that it is sound practice to continue those grazing or coppicing regimes to maintain their wildlife interest. We are keen to maintain diverse habitats and the range of species, plant and animal, which inhabit them. Cheddar Gorge is a case in point where, prior to the National Trust's major exercise in scrub control, scrub and woodland had invaded the grassy slopes, cliff edges and ledges. If succession were allowed to continue populations of a number of rare plants would have been seriously diminished or possibly driven to extinction. In addition a major landscape feature, the Gorge itself would have been clothed in woodland and much of the finer points of detail lost to the observer.

Coppicing, another practice to which you appear to take exception, is known to dramatically increase the diversity of woodland ecosystems and allows many invertebrate species to colonise open areas which would be in short supply in the 'natural' forest. Essentially it allows the woodland to retain the maximum number of species in the minimum area - a factor of extreme importance in the least wooded country in Europe.

Your assertion that much of the woodland management undertaken on SSSIs and NNRs is profit motivated is quite simply wrong. Selection of trees to be felled is always made on conservation criteria, not profitability. While material may be extracted and sold to help defray the cost of management, to my knowledge no net profit has ever accrued to the conservation body undertaking such work.

The high cost of managing such woodland has, of course, been recently recognised by the Forestry Commission in making available a Special Management Grant for such operations as coppicing in Ancient Woodlands.

Your assertion that the readers of the Journal should enquire of persons managing SSSIs or NNRs why such management is necessary is a sound one. They should however keep an open mind and accept a logical explanation where one is given. We are of course always willing to discuss the management of our land with interested persons as are the voluntary bodies.

Yours sincerely

RG Corns  
Conservation Officer Somerset  
ENGLISH NATURE  
Taunton  
Somerset

3 November 1992

*Further correspondence on this and any related subject will be welcome -NJW*

# THE CAMBRIAN CAVE REGISTRY

by Bill Gascoine

Periodically, I remind cavers of this quite unique organisation which exists in Wales and from time to time falls on hard ground for lack of support. We are, at present, enjoying a spell of new discoveries in caving terms, and need to keep the Registry up to date if it is to be of any use to cavers now and in the future. This needs folk to register the new finds, so read the account below, and, if you think it is your scene, join in, and make The Cambrian Cave Registry flourish again. . . .

The organisation was founded in 1964 by caving clubs and cavers with interests in the caves of Wales, and is still being run on a voluntary basis by cavers for the benefit of any interested parties who need the information held in the Registry.

The object of the Registry is to record, index and make available information on caves and other sites of speleological interest in Wales: The information being available in two forms:

1. As type-written Registers held in various buildings where they are open to scrutiny by cavers and other people.
2. As punched cards in a card-index held by the Information Officer at his home; The information is also on computer available on print-out, or verbally by telephone from the Information Officer.

The Registers hold information on the type of site, its Grid Reference, its altitude, its length and / or depth, a brief description, any hazards, access restrictions and sometimes references to publications on the site. A variable amount of detail is given in the Registers dependant on the information known by the person who registered it.

The Card Index holds most of the above but with less detail, as does the computer printout.

Four Registers exist at present, in the Geology section

of the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff, in the headquarters of the South Wales Caving Club at Penwyllt in the Swansea Valley, in the Public Records Office at Hawarden in Clywd and at the home of the Hon. Secretary of The Cave Registry in Church Stretton in Shropshire. The Registers are only available for reference and cannot be taken away on loan. They are also likely to be somewhat out of date as new information is only added when the Hon. Secretary or Information Officer can visit the various buildings to up-date the Registers.

The Card Index, however, is usually up-to-date, as all information on new sites is given to the Information Officer as the first step in registering a site; and he immediately transfers it to the Index and the computer.

For the purpose of registering, sites are listed in regions: North Wales, West Wales, Gower, South East Wales and The North Outcrop (the limestone areas north of the South Wales Valleys). Within these regional lists they appear alphabetically, their Welsh names being used wherever possible.

So that is the Cambrian Cave Registry, it survives on volunteers who will act as registrars and search out speleological sites, ideally in their home area and send in the information to The Information Officer; he and The Hon. Secretary will then do the rest. For many years we have been short of registrars for some areas, and so the Registers lag behind and become less useful. If you think that you can help therefore, contact The Information Officer and make a start.

*NOTE:* Up-to-date Computer print-outs of Gower and The North Outcrop sites are available from The Information Officer at 10p a sheet (approximately 4 sheets for Gower and 11 sheets for The North Outcrop). The other regions will be brought up to date within the next few months.

## *Addresses:*

Bill Gascoine,  
Information Officer.  
18, Groveside Villas,  
Pontnewynydd,  
Pontypool.  
Gwent. NP4 6SZ.  
Tel. 0495 764489

Alan Ashwell,  
Hon. Secretary.  
Cuilcagh,  
Stanyeld Rd.,  
Church Stretton.  
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Tel. 0694 722338

# PORTLAND CAVE RESCUE EXERCISE

A valuable cave rescue practice from Blacknor Hole. Portland, took place on Saturday 13th June 1992. It involved the MRO, HM Coastguard and local cavers belonging to various clubs. This article is prepared from the formal report produced for all the participants.

Nearer the time, I liaised with everyone as far as possible, whilst Colin Pearce organised his full-time and auxiliary cliff-rescue team, and sorted out car parking near the coastguard Portland Bill depot.

## THE CAVE

Blacknor Hole is entered by abseiling 35 feet down a 105ft, slightly overhanging face on Portland's Westcliff, and swinging in. It consists of a fossil streamways intersected by mass-movement rifts. From the entrance, 100 feet of mostly flat-out crawling reaches a small cross-rift chamber (Piccadilly Circus). The crawl leads head, but we used C&A Rift, entered to the right. Two levels are passable, by climbing 12 feet down from Piccadilly Circus and going along the floor to a scramble up a boulder choke or by traversing past a huge block and climbing up to a series of short climbs up and down boulder floors, to drop to the boulder choke. The rescue started from this point, thus involving several obstacles and techniques in about 200 feet of passages. This is only a fraction of the whole system.

## INITIATION

The exercise was mooted by Wayne Brown in April 1992, and provisional arrangements made by Wayne, Colin Pearce (Wyke Sector Officer, H.M. Coastguard), Mike Read and Nigel Graham. The date was chosen to avoid holidays as far as possible. Unfortunately, only just as the date was confirmed by all, the WCC Tuska Tours' trip to North Wales was advertised, leaving some people in a bit of a quandary and worse, possibly stretching MRO cover for Mendip. Obviously a real incident would have taken precedence, for either Coastguard or MRO.

Compiled by Nigel Graham,  
helped by Pete Hann, Nick  
Poole, Eddy Waters  
& Wayne Brown.

## INTRODUCTIONS

Many local, and all visiting, cavers met the coastguard at the Portland Bill equipment store. This fulfilled two functions. It

introduced us all to each other, and we demonstrated equipment to each other.

Significant differences were the greater bulk and weight of coastguard tackle, and limitations and requirements imposed by Health and Safety Executive regulations on the Civil Service organisation. For instance, coastguard cannot use live volunteer casualties for exercises. Instead they use a heavy dummy. The 'Little Dragon' was new to coastguard, although they knew of the mountain-rescue 'Reviva' on which it is based. We suggested its use in marine rescue, but Mr. Pearce explained that once a rescuee has been picked up, he is rapidly transported to a hospital, whereas a caving casualty may have many hours of carrying to the



The stretcher arrives at the cliff top



Emerging into Piccadilly Circus

surface.

#### THE RESCUE

The advance team had already entrapped themselves, on the choke in C&A Rift, whilst the Coastguard and the other cavers were struggling over from the lunch-break (we actually forgot about that in planning, as we knew the Coastguard had a tight schedule!). The advance team were Brian Coward ("casualty") and Eddy Waters.

Coastguards set up their cliff-top hauling tripod, while MRO arranged their gear including the Molefone. Pete Hann was Surface Controller, as the first rescuers - MRO Wardens and local cavers - entered the cave at about 2p.m. Mike Read received underground Molefone instructions from Dany Bradshaw, who with Bob Cork and Vince Simmons, organised the haulers. Although the latter were all S. Dorset based, they normally cave in their separate groups: This was the first time all had caved together a point not lost on the exercise planners.

Brian was carried out along the upper levels of C&A Rift, in which people over(under?) took the stretcher by ingenious chimneying routes below the false floor, accompanied by dislodged rocks

crashing  
impressively  
below them.  
Dany asked  
people to  
move away  
ahead in the  
entrance crawl,  
to save time and  
prevent people  
chokes. Once at  
the entrance,  
surplus  
personnel  
abseiled out.  
The coastguard  
replaced Brian  
by the dummy,  
and hauled it to  
the cliff-top,  
using tripod and  
impressive array  
of ropes, blocks  
and auxiliary  
officers. Only  
when the  
coastguard were

clear of the pitch-head was the abseil rope cleared safe (as usual for this pitch) and the last cavers could come out. The cave was clear about 4.30p.m.

#### AFTERMATH

Back in the pub, we decided that the exercise had been largely successful, especially in diplomacy terms. MRO advice to us local cavers was that we follow this exercise's lead with future events, including for instance attending MRO lectures. Most importantly, we were advised to maintain and if necessary reinforce mutual links, call-out lists and the like.

Portland is relatively remote, so like some other British caving areas, the local cavers are first line rescuers, even if they are not formal cave rescue organisation.

Other cavers attending were Jim Hanwell, Martin Grass, Tim Large, Richard & Annie West, Phil and Lil Romford (all M.R.O.), Keith & Roz Fielder and Colin Masters. Apologies to anyone accidentally omitted!

Clubs represented by participants include (in no special order) Bridport Caving Group, Weymouth

## APPENDIX PORTLAND CAVE RESCUES

WINDY DIG 2 overdue December(?) 1974

Dorset Caving Group found after brief search, that their "overdue" colleagues had simply forgotten to report back. (They were duly "fined" rounds of beer!)

BLACKNOR HOLE 1 injured (broken leg) July 1975

Seven Dorset Caving Group members entered the cave to further its exploration, part of a joint project with its Hardy's School Combined Cadet Force discoverers. David Hunter dislodged a large block, which fell and broke his leg. The three beyond him had to dig back to him through a short intervening crawl obstructed by dislodged debris.

The rescue involving DCG and HSCCF cavers, the coastguards and a Royal Navy helicopter, took several hours. Dave, in Neil Robertson stretcher, was lowered from "Queen's Entrance", in the cliff south of Main Entrance, thence down the undercliff slopes to the helicopter. The irony was not lost on Dave, who kept calm and in good spirits throughout despite considerable pain: He was a Royal Navy S.A.R. helicopter mechanic.

Mendip Rescue Organisation were stood by, but in the event not needed. This was just as well as it transpired a progress report was mis-communicated to "Stand down, thank-you"!

The local G.P. who gave first-aid and pain-killers deserves special mention, and gained considerable respect. Dr. Barnard-Jones had never caved before, yet, escorted by experienced cavers, entered the cave by ladder from the cliff-top - and left by the same technically-awkward, daunting route.

A scale model several feet high of the cliff-face scene was made by a C.G. officer. and shown at

various exhibitions.

PI55 3 misjudged cave about Autumn 1978?

Date not recorded. 2 DCG + 1 guest, cavers misjudged tackle needed for this narrow, greasy, 40feet deep fissure, took only a handline... and "lobster-potted" themselves. One panicked (his word) up the worst of the climb out, and obtained a ladder for the others. Grateful thanks for help to mine hosts of the Eight Kings public house, where the 'phone call for the ladder was made!

SANDY HOLE 2 Lost December 1991

C.G. called M.R.O. who called local cavers to search for 2 overdue, local(!) cavers. They had descended Sharbutts Rift (vertical top entrance), could not ascend it, and failed to find the main exit. (? Strong west winds that evening must have made Prize-Day Passage very draughty, suggesting the way out.) They were soon found & guided out - after the searchers had established the right cave from relatives' sketchy information.

OTHERS (Mainly self-rescues) Exact details unrecorded.

Weymouth Youth Activities Centre (now W. Outdoor Education Centre) - and perhaps other teams? - have sorted out the occasional minor mishap. Coastguards have hauled one or two fallen-in non-cavers from the un-roofed rifts at Portland Bill.

## EXPEDITION TO NORWAY 1993

Would you like to prospect for previously unentered and unrecorded caves amid some of Europe's most beautiful scenery? Norway has it all .... mountains, fjords, lakes, tarns, waterfalls, glaciers, open moors, and forests of birch or pines.

Would you like to explore exhilarating marble stream caves? South Nordland expeditions are guaranteed to find at least 3km of new passage each year they visit Norway.

Would you like to camp in an unspoilt wilderness miles from the nearest habitation? Much of northern Norway is uninhabited, home only to elk, reindeer, lemmings and other wildlife.

The provisional itinerary for South Nordland '93 includes both prospecting in entirely new areas, ranging from coastal valleys to mountain plateaux, and completing the exploration of two exciting new caving areas found late in the 1992 expedition. One of the latter areas, Toerfjell, yielded a fine marble stream cave over 100m deep and nearly 1km long. Higher up the mountain are caves which were not pushed due to lack of time and flooding. These have the potential to be over twice as long and deep. Toerfjell will be explored from a mountain camp.

The expedition is planned for three weeks in late July / early August. For further details contact Geoff Newton. He can be found in person at Whitewalls on two weekends a month or by phoning one of the following numbers: 0372 726405 (home) 0737 765070 (work)

## WCC SALES

Colin Masters has taken on the post of Sales officer, following Max Midlen's temporary transfer to the WCC antipodean section. Colin writes:

"On behalf of myself and the Committee I would like to thank Max for his efforts and wish him every success in his quest for employment in the Antipodes.

With the enormous success of the new embroidered club sweatshirts made possible by computer technology, I shall be re-ordering at the end of January. I would like to offer the entire range of colours available. We still have a few of batch one in royal blue, available at £15.00 (£15.50 for XL, £16.50 for XXL) each. Unfortunately, due to factors beyond our control, a 'nominal' price increase is imminent at the suppliers as I write so the price for the second batch of shirts may have to rise slightly.

If you would like to reserve one of the new shirts please let me know by calling the number below, or by adding your name to the list at Upper Pitts.

We also have some ideas for other lines of club clothing: for example 'V' neck wool sweaters (Jeager), polo shirts and T-shirts are all available. If you are interested in any of these items please let me know so I can gauge numbers and prices. Colours available include white, black, sky, bottle/green, red, yellow, royal blue, grey, burgundy and pink.

Finally, I am trying to find a source of acceptable quality cheap ankle boots and wellingtons. If any club member knows of a suitable source, please could they let me know."

Colin Masters  
0252 712585

Watch this space!

# WHY DO MEN DO IT?

By Balders

I was recently sent a copy of an article from a women's magazine (that men of course never read, especially the problems page) that was thought relevant to me and my adventurous male brethren.

The article was entitled "The Ultimate Male Flirtation" and it proceeded to suggest some of the real reasons why men pursue dangerous sports. I thought that as pursuers of a 'dangerous' sport readers would like to now know the reasons why we do it.

The roots of the male urge to do insanely stupid things seem to date from prehistoric times. It would seem that some of the biological 'mysteries' of women left poor old prehistoric man feeling inferior, and only good for "throwing lumps of flint at passing mammals". The only apparent advantage he had over his prehistoric wench was his strength, he thus used this strength in two ways. One, to control his women, leads to another whole can of worms. The other place he could use his strength was to attempt to dominate his environment. Thus by taking risks with their own lives while hunting dangerous wild animals, prehistoric men justified their existence on the planet in relation to their world. Unfortunately "Sainsbury's now provide the needs of modern man which is very convenient, but leaves modern men with huge reserves of hormones designed to help scare themselves stupid". Modern man has thus turned to cliff faces and racing tracks in an attempt to use these stocks of hormones up.

The article suggests that most men are "content to be on nodding terms with the Grim Reaper". It is thought that the really serious brinksman prefer to "go for the celestial equivalent of a drink down the pub with him and then, perhaps, follow it with a curry." A major league brinksman is somebody who drives like a maniac (remind you of anyone with a white van?), who hangs from cliffs by his finger tips or "men

who go down potholes, burrow deep into the deepest, dankest, most dangerous crevices that they can find in the belly of the earth". Stirring stuff!! I think it was just as well that the author of the article has never come across cave divers, I think she would suggest that they are closely related to the Grim Reaper, if not, at least, someone who puts the Reaper to bed when he has had too much to drink.

Pursuers of dangerous sports are almost certain to have accidents, the author concludes. Because of our conditioning the author reckons that if a woman has an accident the first thing she will ask for is a mirror to check her face, whereas a man will check the wedding tackle first. Any scarring could just be considered as trophies to show off down the pub.

The article does acknowledge that there are some women who follow such dangerous pursuits, but describes them as a "definite minority, an oddity, not only to the men that do but also to the women who don't", but apparently some women argue that it is chauvinism. "Men have carved out these dangerous pursuits for themselves; have monopolised the right to risk their necks on the spurious grounds that you have to be really strong to earn the right to kill yourself".

So there you go, all of you cavers, which one of the pots above the bar in the Hunters is the Grim Reaper's and who is he posing as? Dany? Quackers? Or the meek mild mannered Max? The article surmises that "If he hangs from cliffs by his finger tips, it's a safe bet he is fit and healthy". The copy of the article I was sent by a female friend was annotated "so where did you go wrong?". Good question.

# SPELEOScene

SEPT

## ING POT TO KELD HEAD

### The World's Longest Cave Dive Traverse

work by a 6.5km), this link also created the possibility of the longest underwater traverse between two caves in the world. The dive from the downstream sump in and myself. I was away on ar for the whole of July and f the dive to have been dor returned to England. Ir

## SPELEOScene

The newspaper of the National Caving Association, Speleoscene is a lively broadsheet format newspaper containing up to date news, views and information on breakthroughs, access, insurance, foreign expeditions and much more.

Speleoscene is available from all caving equipment retailers, good caving cafes and by subscription from the address below. The cost for a year's subscription (six issues) is £4.00

Speleoscene, Townend Cottage, Priddy, Wells, Somerset, BA5 3BP

**DMM**  
— a new fixed a  
British caves  
Paul Ramsden and I

...rying well defined? W

**INTERIM DEVELOPMENT**  
**OR**  
Graham Price, Conserva

The claim is being strenuously resisted by both local residents and national organisations and is currently the subject of an application to the High Court

at the question of ... and this has been the ... much ...

## BOOK NEWS & REVIEW

A new edition of the Handbook of the Derbyshire Caving Association, giving details of access to the local caves and mines, is now being prepared but will not be ready for some time. If you already have a copy of the "Derbyshire ... in a ...

The text is well supported by both colour and black and white photographs from the worlds best cave diving photographers, together with well produced diagrams. No account such as this can ever be perfect, as any historian would testify, and there will be no doubt further fuel for discussion as attitudes and ideas needless to say, ... and finally sending out the finished journal. I marvel that each year he has found something new to publish. This issue is no exception with eighteen original articles and fourteen reprinted, or published simultaneously with other publications. A new category of articles are published in pamphlet form.

## THE ASHFORD MINE



cave and mine exploration group and not by members of the public. Large, then in accordance with the guidelines, there was no need for costly and extensive measures to make the mine "safe".

# CAVING POLITICS: A PERSONAL VIEW

Part 1 - the case for a national body.

by Nick Williams

At the annual dinner of the Club after the AGM at which I was volunteered for the post of Editor, a senior and long standing member of the club (who shall remain nameless because I didn't know who he was at that time) came up to me and congratulated me on my new post. "Improve the presentation" he said, "and leave the politics out". Well, over the years since then, I have tried to do just that. However, I am now told that the 1992 AGM, at which I was unable to be present, has instructed me to include some details of politics. This can only be a good thing, to my mind, since it indicates that the Club has stopped looking inward at its own problems and started looking outward to regain its rightful place at the head of British caving. Well, you asked for it!

Like it or not, Britain currently has two national caving organisations who attempt to service the needs of the caving community. These are, of course, the NCA and the BCRA. In addition there are several specialist bodies who serve smaller, but important sub-sections of the community, for example the British Cave Rescue Council, the Ghar Parau Foundation and the Cave Diving Group. The functions of the two national bodies are fairly clearly delineated, and inevitably complement one another to a large degree. The BCRA takes on many activities which bring it directly into contact with the caving community, including the publication of Journals, the organisation of events such as this conference, the brokerage of a tailor made caver's insurance policy and the provision of library services. By contrast, the NCA has traditionally taken on a much more political role and the majority of its work over the years has consisted of liaison with government and the Sports Council, and the distribution of funds from central government coffers.

Politics is, of course, a dirty word in every caver's vocabulary since people associate politicians with rules, hierarchies and control, and an important attraction of the activity is the relative freedom from such horrors. The result of this antipathy from the caving community as a whole is that, despite much essential and worthwhile work, the Association has failed to

communicate its purpose effectively to the caving community, with the result that few active cavers today either know or care very much about the work which is done by the NCA on behalf of cavers up and down the land. In truth, the NCA has over the years done a good deal to keep real politicians off the backs of the majority of cavers.

So what, you may ask, is wrong with this situation? A reasonable question indeed, but easy to answer. It is that the structure that we have at the moment has manifestly failed to address many issues vital to the continuing health of both the sport and science of caving, and equally importantly, fails to serve a very significant part of the totality of people who use caves, for whatever purpose, in this country.

Everyone has their own idea of who to consider as cavers, but it is important not to lose sight of the fact that any body which purports to represent the caving community must stretch its sights far wider than the BCRA membership, the recognised club members, the universities, the diggers and the expedition cavers, and must include the more casual users of caves as well. Obvious examples of these are scout and forces groups, management training candidates (for want of a better description) and academics whose interest is in the study of caves, as well as landowners, farmers, water companies, quarries and other people who, although they never actually enter caves, and will never be members of a national caving body, must be dealt with and understood if continued access to caves is to be assured. It may be that we have to exert some form of control over some of these groups, and even reduce their use of caves, but we will be incapable of meeting challenges of this magnitude if we cannot first agree amongst ourselves how we are going to approach them. Caves are a scarce resource in this country, and the interests of all these and still more groups must be balanced carefully if we are all to continue to be able to cave, and the caves themselves are to survive for future generations.

Examples of issues we have failed to address are numerous. Probably the single most important is

that of the conservation of caves in the face of ever increasing use by a wider and wider cross section of people. It is certainly arguable that we spend a great deal of money on training people to, in effect, go off and wear out caves, and training is another issue which has not been properly considered. More and more people seek to earn some sort of a living from caves, and their un-coordinated activities are already causing problems. Access problems such as that which currently dog the Red Rose and Casterton Fell must surely also be issues worthy of national support. We have failed too to react to establishment threats to our activities: the recent changes in explosives legislation have, for example, cost some cavers a great deal of money and forced them to significantly alter their activities all because there has been no effective check on the zeal of certain government departments. Some people have similar fears in respect of recent research into Radon. Equally, questions which should be regularly debated within the caving community have stagnated for want of a proper forum in which to discuss them: the provision of grant aid to expeditions is a prime example of this. We have also failed to support the specialist bodies I mentioned earlier as fully as we should: CDG has already expressed its own view of this by withdrawing from the NCA, and the Cave Rescue Council made a similar decision some years ago, albeit only tacitly, when it decided to take no active part in national politics.

There is no doubt that some of these issues could have been properly dealt with had the political wrangling which has preoccupied the BCRA and the NCA in the last ten years not wasted valuable time. Indeed, there is a school of thought which says that they can all be addressed with the existing structure. Unfortunately, we are unlikely to get the opportunity to prove this point since change is being pushed upon us by both external and internal forces. For better or for worse, the Sports Council as we currently know it is likely to cease to exist within the life of this government. This will dry up nearly all the funds which the current NCA has at its disposal. Without either an evolution or a revolution the NCA as we currently know it will cease to exist. Of the forces from within we know that CDG has already withdrawn and DCUC can no longer afford to be members, so the NCA may have already lost its legitimacy as a true national body.

Many people reading this will notice that I have left out a significant issue from this list - that of

the representation of grass roots cavers and the way in which they can affect the activities of a national body. This is not because I believe this to be unimportant: merely because I believe that to decide the constitutional arrangements for a body before you have decided exactly what it is going to have it do is putting the cart before the horse. Given sufficient flexibility in the initial arrangements for a new national body, the structure which best serves its objectives can be evolved over time - indeed, this is surely the only sane way to approach an uncertain future. To argue that individual cavers, clubs or any other sub-unit of the national body must have a voice at any particular level is specious if those sub-groups have nothing to gain or lose by not being involved in the body in the first place. Experience has shown that any body which actually has a day to day effect on grass roots caver's activities will very soon become answerable to them, since one thing you can rely on with cavers is that they will not allow others to push them around.

I do not think that I am giving any secrets away if I say that the biggest obstacle to the re-structure process is the personalities of some of those who have become entrenched on each side of the argument. This polarisation of views is damaging, and unnecessary: in the final analysis, the wishes of these individuals are not so very different and there are ways in which agreement can be found. There is a commonly held belief amongst cavers in general that the only people currently involved in caving politics, both in the NCA and in the BCRA, are a bunch of aged fossils who are far past their active caving days (if they ever had any) and are now only interested in sitting on committees and bickering amongst themselves. There may be elements of truth in this, but what is really relevant is that, to my certain knowledge, each and every one of those individuals actually genuinely, passionately cares about caving, and believes that what they do is for the best of the sport. Unfortunately, in putting forward their views they also succeed admirably in putting off huge numbers of potential volunteers willing and able to give a great deal to the sport. It is this lack of participation that is the biggest threat to our national bodies.

In the next article I will examine the way in which the NCA and its constituent bodies have chosen to tackle the issue of structure, and some of the proposals which have been put forward.

# 25 YEARS AGO

from Wessex Cave Club Journal Vol. 9 No. 114 (December 1967)

## Club Administration

Once again we start to refer their queries to the appropriate department. It saves a great deal of time as the addressed envelope is sent, it saves the Club a year.

Much is to be done during the coming year. The prospective new H.Q. at Upper Pitts is more necessary as the overcrowding at Hillgrove becomes ever more severe. At the A.G.M. the question of the necessity for a new H.Q. provoked much discussion, but people who stay at Hillgrove have no doubts. David Toombs felt that such a proportion of members lived in Bristol that a Bristol H.Q., or at least a meeting place, would be a better idea. Most people would rather see the Club centred on Mendip; it is really up to the Bristol people to arrange social meetings there if they want them. Peter Harvey used to meet his mates in Crockers once a week at one time, but the meetings eventually fizzled out. The U.B.S.S. hold regular lectures in the Geography Department to which Wessex members may go, and these always finish in time for other activities. Details will be listed.

The re-opening of Eastwater Swallet is to be organised by Phil Romford. Much of Eastwater is thought to be stable, and although much engineering needs to be done it is worthwhile.

## Conference

Several of the Club attended the B.S.A. Conference in Romford, though not in any official capacity. Several of those of greatest interest to the Club are being those of greatest interest to the B.S.A. as their details will bring the

## Rescue in Lamb Leer

There was an accident in Lamb Leer on Sunday, 29th October when a girl from Surrey University Caving Club fell part of the way down the Main Pitch. The Surrey University party had gone down as guests of the M.N.R.C., and on the main pitch a mix up occurred whilst the girl was descending. The person at the top who was lifelining thought that she had reached the bottom of the ladder and so let go of the lifeline. Unfortunately she had not reached the bottom, and when the lifeline went slack she fell off the ladder. The person who was lifelining was then unable to check her fall because the rope was running too fast, and so she hit the floor of the chamber rather hard; and the M.R.O. had to be called to get her out of the cave. An examination at Bristol Royal Infirmary later did not, luckily, disclose any broken bones.

Members welcome through.

The Club is obviously in need of subscriptions. Much necessary to ask for a copy of the final report of the final subscription Treasurer as in the Journal.

## And in Swildons

On the same weekend, Swildons was having its share of M.R.O. call outs. On Saturday, 28th October, the M.R.O. was called out by the R.M.A.S. Sandhurst in view of the amount of water going down the cave. There were parties down below the 40' at this point, and the M.R.O. played a waiting game. Eventually, a M.R.O. party went down and met up with one of the parties, who were from the Harrogate. They had had a bit of difficulty in coming back through Swildons due to the high water conditions. However, they came back in a motor steam with assistance from the M.R.O. party.

On the Sunday, Oliver Lloyd went to the new look 40' looked like under present it was quite dangerous. The pool behind the lifeline was hitting the ledge and was a wide sheet. It was a bit of a get wet.

## The Club Dinner

ascend was much jet.

## New Discoveries

The So extension to the summer Pa terminal water eventually a po

The Annual Wessex Dinner was again held at the Caveman Restaurant, Cheddar this year, and in spite of the increased cost of tickets, was attended by over 140 members and guests. Happily it appeared that the massive deer hunt at Longleat the previous week had been successful, and the venison promised by the management was available. It had originally been arranged that Sir John Wedgewood was to be the guest of honour this year, but unfortunately he was unable to come at the last minute so we had no guest of honour this year. As a result, most of the missiles this year were directed by the diners amongst themselves and the potentialities of aerodynamic tests carried out on the demonstrated as a result of flower power were conclusively demonstrated as a result of aerodynamic tests carried out on the members thoughtfully provided by the management.

the dinner, there was a movement across into the neighbouring bar continued until the bar closed at midnight. It was the wisdom of hiring a coach became apparent as individuals staggered towards the coach to decanted out at various places between with the celebrations.

Derek Ford and Willie for a few days. Crossing with Tim racing tests since