

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

CAVING CODE

Normal Caving

1. It is usually best to ask the owner's permission before entering his cave. Never grudge the farmer his shilling; goodwill is worth more than that.
2. Always leave a note with someone on the surface to say which cave you are visiting and what time you expect to be back.
3. Make sure that your lights are in good order and that you carry with you the necessary spares. It is a good thing to have with you two forms of lighting and to be able to do repairs in the dark.
4. Clothing should be adequate for the type of trip contemplated. Wet caves need warmer clothing. Strong boots are recommended. Helmets are essential on verticals and desirable at most other times.
5. Keep in touch with the caver behind you at all times; this prevents the party from getting split up. The leader should be on the look-out for signs of fatigue or distress, particularly with beginners. He should give the necessary encouragement and be prepared to turn back. Take food with you for any long or energetic trip.
6. Always take your own tackle for a ladder pitch. Never use other people's tackle without making arrangements with them: it may be missing when you return. If you find a pitch already laddered you may either (a) leave your ladders at the head of the pitch, contact the party below and ask them to put your ladders in position, when they go out, or (b) take up the other ladders and put down your own, especially if they are better. It is courteous to roll up the other people's ladders. Never go away with other people's tackle, not even if you have lost your own. Never put ladders side by side on a pitch. Never have more than one person climbing at a time.
7. A life-line should be available for all verticals and must be used on verticals of over 20 ft. It is not sufficient to have it just in case; the leader must insist on its use. On long pitches (e.g. Lamb Leer) it is essential either to use a double life-line or to leave a life-liner at the head of the pitch.
8. Leave no rubbish in a cave or near its entrance. Spent carbide should be buried or tipped into an active streamway (not pools). Don't use it to defile the rocks and stalagmite. Spent batteries, flash bulbs and toffee papers are rubbish and should be removed.
9. In Swildon's Hole Sump I is a safe free dive of 6½ ft. Sump II (18 ft.) and Sump III (26 ft.) should on no account be attempted by anyone who is not quite certain of himself, his equipment and of the line through the sumps. Sump IV of 15 ft. is difficult and should not be attempted for the first time, unless in company with someone who has done it and knows it well. Lead weights belonging to M.R.O. should always be replaced after use.
 In Stoke Lane Sump I (2 ft.) is safe unless there is flooding. Sump II should not be attempted. All other sumps on Mendip are best avoided. In flood conditions the entrance to Stoke Lane becomes a trap—one way only.
10. It is not usually safe to have less than four cavers in a party. If someone gets hurt, the second stays with him, while the other two go for help.
11. Join a reputable caving club, if you want to learn and enjoy good caving.

In Times of Trouble

1. If your lights fail or you have lost the way, stay where you are and await rescue. This may take a long time, unless you have observed Rule 2 above.
2. If you are cold, wet and shivering, you are particularly prone to accidents. Everything you do has less efficiency and takes twice as much energy, so don't try any tricky climbing. Keep going steadily and eat some food. If you have to wait, get out of draughts and huddle together to keep warm. If possible, move about from time to time to restore the circulation. Avoid changing the water nearest your skin.
3. If someone gets badly hurt, observe Rule 10 above. Put extra clothing on the subject, if you can. If you can get him moving on his own, do so; but it may be best to await rescue.
4. The party giving the alarm should observe the M.R.O. notice at the cave entrance. Go to the nearest telephone, ring the Police at Wells 3481 and stay by the telephone, until the Rescue Warden rings you back for information.
5. To avoid getting trapped by floods, consult the weather before going down a wet cave.
 - (a) Swildon's Hole. If the stream is over the entrance grating, the 40 ft. pot will be impassable. Anyone below the 40 should await rescue in a dry place above flood level. If anyone is known to be below the 40 by someone on the surface, alert M.R.O.
 - (b) Stoke Lane. See Rule 9 above.
 - (c) Longwood and August Hole. The Tunnel may fill up completely, while if water is going down the entrance shaft, this may not only make this shaft dangerous but it may flood part of the by-pass to the Tunnel.
 - (d) St. Cuthbert's First Ladder Pitch may become impossible in times of flood. Get comfortable and await rescue.

Avoid doing battle with flood waters; they are likely to win.

NOTES:

