

RHINO RIFT: AND EXTRAORDINARY DISCOVERY FOR MENDIP

by Peter Mathews

RECENT developments at Rhino Rift have shown it to be one of the most extraordinary discoveries on Mendip. On the style of one of the Yorkshire 'classics', the pot consists of a single drop developed in the previously known rift. Although vertical, it can be rigged in three pitches of 100ft, 45 ft and 75ft. Each section is connected by steeply overhanging ledges. With the entrance shaft, the total depth is of the order of 300ft.

A small stream enters at the bottom of the pot and disappears down a narrow, partly-blocked crack. This is now being dug by East Mendip C.C. Because of the considerable danger, the Charterhouse Caving Committee, in whose control area the cave lies, has banned other clubs from visiting the new Rhino Rift for at least six months.

NEW MCG COMMITTEE MEMBER

PHIL Ingham was elected to join the committee as Cottage Warden. He succeeds Ray Buchan. The AGM spent some time discovering that most of the resolutions of the previous general meeting were still in the process of 'materialising'. The secretary attributed these delays to a postal strike.

The land purchase fund topped £500 for the first time and there was reported to be £147 in the general fund. The increase in subscriptions effective this year is all to be added to the land purchase fund.

CLUB MOTORCYCLIST DIES

MOST of the friends of Bruce Bennett will know by now that he died in a motor cycle accident on the way to work on April 7. Bruce had done a fair amount of caving and was a member of last year's Group expedition to Poland. He celebrated his 21st birthday only a few weeks previously.

DANYR OGOF REPOENS

ACCESS is now available again to Danyr Ogof, but Tunnel Cave, South Wales, is still closed. The club's three authorised leaders are: Greg Smith, Tony Knibbs, and Brian Hillman.

Cavers in Wales are asked to use carbide lamps only as a secondary MEANS OF LIGHTING and then to remove all spent carbide.

World news round-up

LETTER FROM POLAND by Janine Machon

THE Zakopane club is very active at this time of the year and visits the mountains every weekend. During the autumn evenings we held courses for newcomers to caving, teaching them the elements of tackle and geology etc.

Unfortunately we have had a very mild winter and our visits to Jimnej and Miętuśsoj were not completed because the caves were flooded. We are arranging a descent of our deepest cave, Sniegnaj, but this will take a long time. To start with, two weekends will be occupied digging the snow away from the entrance and preparing the upper pitches.

During August and September, some of our members are holding a camp in the mountains and I hope that some of your members will be able to join them - I would not like to think that your recent visit to the Tatras was to be your only one. Regards to all who came and have they any photos I could have, please ?

Pozdrawiam Ciebie Wtoich Kolegow barado-serdoxanug

1,000 SHAFTS FOUND IN POLAND

AN ANCIENT flint mining centre in south east Poland at Krzemionki Opatowskie (near Ostrowiec) is being developed as a museum of neolithic industry.

Investigations over the past 25 years have brought to light more than 1,000 shafts and a network of underground workings in which stone and horn utensils have been found.

Work probably took place over some 300 years up to four or five thousand years ago. Flint tools were probably exported to France and other parts of Europe.

CORNISH MINES: NEW LIFE COMES TO SOME, OTHERS ARE MUSEUMS

A SECOND new tin mine is soon to be reopened in Cornwall. Pendarves, south of Camborne, is expected to have a starting output of 87,500 tons of ore a year. South of Truro, Wheal Jane will soon be producing 600 tons of ore a day. Two other mines - South Crofty, near Pendarves, and Geevor near Landsend - are already producing between them over 200,000 tons a year.

Another mine, Wheal Prosper near Helston, is to become a museum piece if the National Trust can raise £3,000 to repair the engine house and chimney. Wheal Prosper was the first place in Britain where high pressure steam (40lbs, etc) was applied to a steam engine. Steam by Trevithick, engine by Watt.

FIND A HOLE AND START DIGGING

An opinion by Ogofwr Ddu

The discovery last year of Shatter Cave and recent opening up of Rhino Rift may remind members of the MCG that they are not doing much towards the enlarging of Mendip's repertoire.

Where are the diggers looking at every hole, which is even a whisper of a breeze, where are the results of all the surveys that end up in the Hunter's, the Notchers, Anras or the Fire Engine?

Our reputation seems to be founded on Ubley Pot, Christmas Crawl, some sporadic digging in Blackmoor and the efforts of the resident Mendippers.

If caving is to continue there must be new finds and its only once every Great Flood that they find themselves.

*If you haven't heard of the Fire Engine there isn't much hope left.

DON'T TAKE OFF YOUR HELMET IN THE CAVE

The annual report of the Mendip Rescue Organisation makes usual depressing reading: The schoolmaster who called at the Berrington Cafe to say he was taking a party underground but who wanted to call back to say he was out, a party of three in Glastonbury with one torch, no boots and no helmets, and long reports on the two memorable incidents in Swiltens and Longwood.

Tom Gage from Keynsham took off his helmet in the Cornhill terminal rift and was hit by a boulder twice the size of a door being kicked down by someone above. He needed 8 stitches but do we need this reminder NOT TO TAKE OUR HELMETS OFF, NOT TO CLIMB ABOVE OTHERS, AND NOT TO STAND BENEATH OTHERS in the library?

Dave Judson, who some members of the club may remember, was recently trapped behind a rock fall in Dan yr Ogof. He was able to help rescue himself and was only shocked and cold.

WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN UNDERGROUND?

Pat Matthews is concerned that cavers who cave should let him have reports of trips for the 1971 caving log. Contributors to the newsletter need not write twice, original reports will be passed on.

REVEREND CAVER....

TWO speleological classics have recently been reprinted. In 'A tour to the caves', the reverend John Hutton describes some of the Yorkshire caves he visited in the eighteenth century. (first published 1781, 8½" x 5½", 100 pp, price £1.50 .

E. A. Baker's book of his visits to many caves in the 1920's makes hair-raising reading even today. He visited both Swildons and the Mendips as well as some of the Yorkshire classic systems. ('Caving, episodes of underground exploration', 1932, 252pp + 56pp of pictures, price £3.15)

Firm orders placed through Pete Mathews may secure a substantial discount. -PRM

Trans-Craven and Lt Cuthberts.

Bradford PC Bulletin vol5 no 8 spring 71 contains a theory postulated by DC Brook that in years to come it may be possible to travel underground from Bar, ndale to Littondale. He doesn't say how much the fare will be! Also articles on limestone mines at Dudley Worcs and Earl Pot. Journal of London University CC no11 spring 71 discusses St Cuthberts 2, Lost Johns, Gaping Gill Aven series and the Chelsea and King's College Irish expedition to Sligo, Fermanagh, Cavan and Leitrim.

Group news

ELEVATED. Tony Ingold, Malcolm Cotter and Tony Fitzgibbon have been granted associate membership

ROLL UP. Sales of surveys will in future be handled by Helen Saunders. Customers from outside the group should be referred to her.

RUDE POEM. A very rude poem acquired from Yorkshire is available from Pete Mathews. Applications in person should be made at the back door of his flat. Wear an old belted raincoat to qualify. Ask him to take you downstairs and he may have more porn on offer.

SPRING CLEAN HUNT. The half yearly meeting will be held on October 16 at the cottage at 5pm. It will start at this time to follow the annual spring clean of Longwood/August. Treasure is to be distributed around the cave as an incentive to hunt for rubbish. A communal barrel and/of irish stew will be available to save the struggle to the pub afterwards.

MEETS PLANNED. The next two meets are on June 12 to south Wales (SWCC) and in July to Gingling hole. Details from John MacMillan.

Yorkshire trip reports

HILL INN JUST LOST TO HARDRAWKIN POT

By Helen Saunders

IT was a rather cold, dull morning and fifteen of us were disputing between caving and visiting the Hill Inn. Inevitably the Hill Inn won, but at about 2.30 (yes, closing time) the keener cavers headed across the fields to Hardrawkin Pot, Chapel-le-dale - the others caught up later.

The entrance was a fifteen-foot drop-down which the stream flowed. It was easy climbing and we followed the stream along some 60ft of passage to the first 83ft pitch. We had to crawl in water for 150ft, compensated for by the rather super coral-like domations on the walls. Trying to avoid the stream on the way out Roger and I found a beautifully clear pool containing crystals.

The 83ft pitch was very wet. Cold numbing water flowed straight on to the ladder. At the bottom was a very large chamber which led to the 36ft pitch - we didn't need the handline recommended in PU.

The foot of the 36ft is the bottom of the cave with a sump on one side and a dead-end the other. Our arrival at the surface was recorded on film by Bryan Pittman - what trip would be complete without such a welcome?

SHOULD THERE BE A CANAL SUTRA AND HOW MANY POSITIONS ARE POSSIBLE ?

By Roger Wallington

Rudely awoken by some Northern twit, eight unlikely-looking bods rose to challenge Penyghent Pot. The success of the trip was briefly placed in danger by our Swiss chef producing two gallons of porridge and communal bears (Ed's note: I thought this read bears as in Three Bears, but I afterwards reflected it could have been beans).

Anyway, next thing we knew we were standing outside t' pot'ole and we set off at 11am resembling mobile ironmongers, each carrying 3 ladders, ropes and multitudes of belays. We laddered 12 pitches in all - but to confine boredom to one publication at a time I will list these in Pete's Caving Log.

The famous canal although deceptively easy to negotiate is very long and one has to try countless positions to save the body for later - someone should publish a Canal Sutra! Conveniently joined to the Canal

there is 650 ft of flat-out crawl leading directly to the 15ft pitch which ends in a pool and you remember what it is like to be upright.

Between the first two pitches we stumbled along second stretch passage which is too high to crawl and too low to walk and leads by way of a very deep pool to another 15ft pitch. Quickly following this are the two main pitches, both in the same rift. The third pitch of 60ft is like a staircase - the ladders hang against a smooth wall and on to a smooth platform from where the fourth/CONTD ON NEXT PAGE

A CANAL SUTRA ? from previous page

pitch of 70ft descends to a more jagged portion of the rift which opens into a very large section about 30ft down.

Penyghent is divided into three main parts: the low, tight passages down to the main pitches, then a long rift section which contains a succession of small pitches, then a long rift section which the old master cave leading to the sump. Apart from the two main pitches the time taken for the trip is really determined by the middle section as it contains most of the pitches. Lifelines are needed on some, but others can be safely achieved without and some can be free-climbed without difficulty.

At the eleventh pitch a stream tumbles down a chute completely filling the chamber below with spray. The innocent speleo - is there such a thing ? - descends the last pitch, Niagara, filled with thoughts of glory, but he is severely dampened by two water spouts ten feet down which appear from either side in a charming fan-shape, completely obliterating the view of the ladder beneath.

The lively stream passage from the bottom of the Niagara has a rather treacherous fluting floor with some pools described as 'deep' (and confirmed?)

The terminal sump is disappointing as the passage finishes abruptly in a rift at right angles filled with very deep water. So far we had taken 5½ hours to get six people to the sump, two of the party having turned back earlier.

We attempted to make a hasty ascent with one person already using carbide and another with a dodgy Nife cell. The main barrier on the way out was the 70ft pitch - not difficult but a psychological barrier, which, when past had nothing but quickly traversable sections between it and the entrance.

At the canal three of us were on carbide and this underground acoustic tube rang to the words of the Penyghent Song (been down this pothole much too long !)

We were out at 11pm, but in time to stock up at the Crown in Horton having left a huge mountain of tackle at pitch 3 for collection by a party we hoped (and prayed) would be following us the day after.

It occurs to me that if we had to pay the new rates for tackle left or lost, the bill would have been £110 or thereabouts, proving the well-and oft-expounded theory that it's cheaper to stay on the surface.

Advertiser's announcement

SURVEYS OF ALL MENDIP CAVES

and some others are

now available from Helen Saunders

THE EDITOR REGRETS THAT DUE TO TECHNICAL PROBLEMS SOME PAGES OF THIS
MAGG NEWS ARE ILLEGIBLE. IT IS A DAILY MAIL PLOT TO GAIN READERS WE BELIEVE

MENDIP: A BISHOPRIC OF OUTSTANDING BEAUTY

"MENDIP 71" is to be an exhibition illustrating all aspects of the region. It will be held at the Bishop's Palace in Wells during September with Peter Scott and the Mendip Society as patron and sponsors.

The exhibition will mark the adoption of Mendip as an area of outstanding natural beauty. Designation by the country Commission makes the area more difficult to develop - both preserving it for us and increasing the difficulties of cottage searching.

SING A SONG OF MENDIP

ON June 26 the Wells Folk Song and Dance Festival is to be held in the city.

BERKSHIRE AND YORKSHIRE CAVES

THE GRC northern meeting on June 19/20 at Wharfedale Manor, Dent Yorks, will include lectures on caves of ETHIOPIA (Anthony Sutcliffe), the 1970 Nepal expedition (AG Walton) and recent hydrological work in the Graveleros (A.P. Pitt).

The annual meeting will be held in the Leewood Hotel, Manchester Rd, Burton on November 13. This year MCG is a committee member of the GRC.

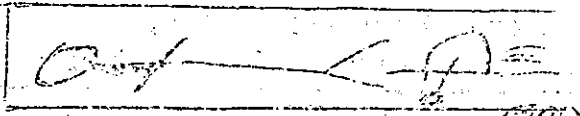
Review by Joan Goddard

FIFTY SIX CAVES TO AVOID

A LIST of 56 northern caves from which the rescue of a seriously injured person would be very difficult has been compiled by the GRC and Upper Wharfedale Fell R.C. Unconventional rescue techniques are being studied including the possibility of sinking special shafts. GRC recognises that in some caves it may be necessary to establish an underground 'hospital' rather than remove the patient. Details in Document no 16 Jan/Feb 1971.

60FT PITCH BLOCKED BY FLOODS

Westminster SG has produced the first of their new look bulletins with flash photographs. The major feature of the latest issue is a comprehensive description by Dave Everett of Ggcf Fawr - the dig WSC started in January 1969. A 60ft pitch was discovered by severe floods blocked the squeeze at the head of the pitch in 1970



New Flashy MCG news incorporating exact reproduction of Editor at work

FINDING CAVES BY RADIO

A system of surveying underground from the surface has been developed that actually prints out a map of the features found. It uses VLF radio techniques and can define cavities as well as metal pipes, sewers and anything else out of the ordinary.

Developed by Electrolocation Ltd with help from NRDC, the system requires that the area to be mapped is roped off and traversed with a ground reflection meter which injects the radio signal into the ground and catches it on the rebound. The response is recorded on a tape recorder and can later be played back on a geophysical digital plotter which produces a map in chart form. The outlines of the map are shown by dot density.

THE SNAIL MERCHANT

"It was in a Somerset lane that I saw him, of a morning in early winter... Curiosity triumphed and so I asked: 'what are you looking for?'. 'Snails', was the rather short reply. 'What you do want 'em for?', 'Zell 'em'. But almost at the same moment he softened a little and added, I thought with a touch of pride, 'That's my trade'..... Then what do you call yourself then?' I ventured to ask. 'On the census I put snail merchant', he answered with dignity."

This is a very short extract from one of the magnificent books of Walter Raymond written in the early years of this century and published by Dent. They seem to be out of print now, but libraries can borrow them from other libraries. The above comes from the book of crafts and character, but the book of simple delights has a fine tale of how to catch a thatcher and Two Men o' Mendip is a murder story that takes in much of the area around Cheddar Charterhouse and Shipham that we know well.

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