

CLUB NEWS

COTTAGE WARDEN - the address of the warden is 80 Raleigh Road, Southall, and not 30 as in last newsletter.

WELCOME - accepted as probationary members are BRUCE DEAN of 6 Roman Close, Haltham; ANDY MOLL of 19a Church Road, Caversham; and BRIAN TERRY of 54 Brunswick Crescent, New Southgate, London.

ITS A GAS - a new gas cylinder has been purchased for the cottage following the mysterious disappearance of one a few months ago - keep your eye on it!

PUTTING THE LID ON - it was decided at the last committee meeting that we will attempt to complete the previously abandoned idea of capping Blackmoor Shaft to the plans originally drawn up, so help will be needed very soon.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS Richard Norris now lives at 3 Mornington Road, Chingford, London, E4 7DR; and John MacMillan now hangs out at 53 Clarendon Gardens, Ilford, Essex.

AROUND AND ABOUT

"BEER" - following recent price increases an intensive research has revealed a source of cheap booze. An excellent brew (Huntsman's Special) may be had at the "New Inn", Priddy for 10p per pint!

TONY JARRATT has recently discovered about 500ft. of thrutchy high level passage leading off Victoria Aven in Swildons 12.

CWM DWR - disturbing boulder movements in main passage and boulder choke twix Cwm Dwr Jama and O.F.D.II Situation regarded as dangerous and S.W.C.C. advise against using this connection.

EASEGILL - PIPPIKIN - Happy Wanderers are currently digging in Easegill after successfully making a smoke connection between the two systems.

EARLY CLOSING - Gingling Pot is completely booked for the rest of the year and Hammer Pot is closed.

QUOTE OF THE DECADE

"I'm not going caving, you must be mad, never catch me underground.....I prefer walking instead". Words reputedly spoken in 1964/65 by one John MacMillan, who promptly stalked off on a hike across Dartmoor.

UNDERGROUND POLE SQUATTING This and other fascinating titles such as "Caving and the unconscious"(someone been watching M.C.G. trips?) and "Speciation and raiation in cavernicoles" are listed in the Index to C.R.G. newsletters from No.1 to No,127 by subject and author. This is now in the library and provides an easy first reference for many varied subjects - our library holds from newsletter No.49(1954) to the present day.

The latest newsletter No 129 contains a letter by T.D.Ford(C.R.G. Chairman) concerning the discussed merger of C.R.G. with the B.S.A. 'Merger should help administration costs, increase membership, and assist increased coverage and publication of material. No action to be taken till consent of members obtained. Suggested date for merger - 1st January 1974.'
Articles on caves in Gibraltar, and Puerto Rico. Also notes for cave divers on the dangers of not taking decompression stops on combined time dives.

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GETTING KNOTTED

JOHN MIRIAM

Of the various types of rope available for underground use it is generally regarded that multifilament polypropylene provides the best compromise between several factors, namely cost, tensile strength, weight, abrasion resistance, and melting point. Although the group has successfully used this type for many years, recent experience has disclosed one or two possible shortcomings.

In 1969 300ft of 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. green filament polypropylene(Ulstron) was obtained from Marlow Ropes Ltd. After a few months use strands of the rope about 1/16in. dia. began to stick out from the centre of the rope in peculiar loops(termed cockles). This occurred at distances of as little as a few inches in some cases, and as the condition became more apparent the rope was withdrawn. Subsequent belated enquiry to the manufacturers revealed that this batch of rope was made on a machine fitted with an incorrect size gearwheel.

More recently 1000ft. of Ulstron was purchased from British Ropes Ltd. At that particular time I.C.I. had stopped making green fibres and only white ones were available; a number of phone calls to British Ropes extracted assurances of similarity to the previous green rope.

This new rope proved in practice to be very much more flexible, and when the rope had been twisted and tangled, the strands appeared unable to retain their inbuilt 'twist'.

This fault was entirely due to the loose lay but protracted correspondence to British Ropes, including return of samples, produced nothing except for more assurances of the ropes soundness. They did however offer to supply a stiffer rope with futrue orders, though why this wasn't mentioned earlier will remain a mystery. To cap it all, the green rope is now back in production.

Concerning the rope we now have in use, it would appear that with use it does become less supple and thus less susceptible to untwisting, and that by using chaining methods instead of traditionally coiling the rope, it is rendered less likely to tangle. The problem therefore seems to be largely overcome.

The isle of Majorca lies some 200 miles east of the coast of Spain, on the same latitude as Valencia. It compares roughly in size with Wiltshire. The inhabitants are Spanish-speaking (the Catalan variety); at the height of the tourist season natives are outnumbered by visitors concentrated along a 15 mile stretch of Palma Bay, either side of the old city. This coastal stretch presents an almost continuous vista of economic architecture; cheaply built and closely packed.

Fortunately the tourist disease has not become rampant much beyond Palma Bay, except for sporadic outbreaks, and the remaining island is genuinely attractive. In contrast to the relatively low altitude of the greater part of the island, the west coast is markedly defined by a 40 mile mountain chain running SW-NE. The highest point is Puig Mayor (1445m), spoiled by a summit radar station, and the rock in this area is predominantly a limestone conglomerate forming large areas of barren lapiaz in which cave entrances are frequently visible.

The only prior knowledge of caves was that there were some! Island maps were obtained which clearly marked the location of the show-caves, and it was to these that we paid prime attention, quickly putting as much distance as we could between ourselves and our hotel at El Arenal. Three SAET (Fiat) 850 hire cars achieved this function in spite of some monstrous navigational errors; the first of which ended in us joining the local militia in a coastal fort. Most roads on Majorca are the wrong ones, and all other drivers are madmen (so it was alleged).

Porto Cristo, on the east coast, is central for the well-known Cuevas del Drach and the smaller Cuevas del Hams. Drach was a good appetiser with profusely decorated grottoes and passages (mostly dry formations), culminating at a large lake where several parties assembled on benches for a preamble in four tongues from the No.1 guide, followed by instant darkness to enhance an electric sunrise effect over the lake to a music accompaniment. Boats provided an alternative to walking around the lake on the way out.

Cuevas del Hams was a much quieter affair. We were the only visitors and the guide was very friendly, allowing photography. Again, formations were profuse but markedly less dry, the cave consisting of interlinked grottoes with a lake of saline water linked to the sea, 2km away. One striking feature, admired to the sound of camera shutters and weegee amazement, was a helictite and straws grotto. Exit was made via a large shakehole.

Driving north along the coast for a few miles brought us to Cuevas de Arta, where a huge arch, into which ascends a flight of steps, forms an impressive entrance in a cliff-face against the sea. Stal columns are perhaps the most notable feature of this cave; some around 60 feet high. Considerable areas of formation in the entrance were covered with a black bacterial film which was attributed to generation during a period of ideal climatic conditions a few hundred years ago, but the growth is now

..... apparently dormant. One particularly fine chamber boasted a kind of son et lumière with coloured lights and achoral work of a Wagnerian(?) origin.

Not far from Arta a small cave entrance was noticed in a hillside near the coast road. The wagon train ground to a halt, finally spilling its human cargo, who took off up the hill. Staggering match-blind around a chamber was little fun and a swift return to the cars was made to find rope for a pitch which had been located. The large chamber, which had some once attractive formations, was explored on a more rational footing but the pitch remained the only likely lead. It was, for about 35ft., into a second chamber with good formations and holes to crawl about in; not much of a cave, but tackle was used.

A journey to the mountainous west coast gave us the opportunity to visit what I thought was the best show-cave, Cuevas de Campanet, situated at the northern end of the mountains, near Pollensa. Again the whole cave was in the form of linked grottoes and crammed with stal, but was cleaner and had more sparkle about it than others and appears to have been discovered more recently. A continuo of soft piped music became quite acceptable and the guide chose to say very little.

Taking the coast road going south-west we followed a somewhat tortuous path, varying in width, and with stretches of removable surface, through some very striking (at times very nearly) limestone and coastal scenery. A brief stop was made at Escorca to look at a large cave entrance in an area of deeply incised gorges. Here, we succeeded in moving a local caballero to shouting the Spanish equivalent of "get off my land"; some did, and some didn't. Those that didn't, managed to reach the cave and explore for a couple of hundred yards.

During the remainder of the drive many entrances were seen, but it was obvious that a lot of local knowledge and something better than a road map would be a prerequisite to any serious caving. Further south the roads degenerated; wide yellow to narrow, narrow yellow to white. A navigational error forced at least one car to press on to the bitter end, through Bamaibufar and around the south extremity, before returning via Palma.

In all, the four day excursion was a worthwhile venture. For a flight and hotel cost of £24 it can't be bad! Normally, not very high on the list of desirable caving areas, the sheer novelty, cheap alcohol and low cost is an attraction. Flight time, Bristol to Palma - 2 hours, is less than it takes me to get to Mendip. Current trends in cheap package holidays will continue to offer attractive prices for more distant destinations, Start saving now!

("Rumour has it Tony is now planning a cheap ALL-IN trip to the clubs-sorry caves- of Paris, including the Grotte Bergère, and will be seeking out a few addresses of interest to future expeditions.")

GRANTS FOR CAVING

Members under the age of 21 can benefit from reduced rates on the various climbing and caving courses held from time to time in different areas. This would certainly include the popular Y.H.A. climbing school and caving courses organized by Ben Lyons of Whernside Manor. Presumably one could also argue the inclusion of the C.R.G. symposium and the B.S.A. conference.

The grants are available from the Education Dept. of your local authority. They pay full travelling expenses + 50% of the course fee. Applicants will also require a reference for suitability, normally from the Hon. Sec. (is he suitable?)

Incidentally, we hear Whernside Manor might shortly come on the market; seems the National Scout Caving Association has been having a lean time and may wind up their centre. Certainly it seems to have been used more by others than scouts.

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BELT UP

The disadvantages of leather belts for accumulator cells are; (a) they are expensive, upwards of 50p (ma boy); (b) they harden up and crack; (c) when hydroxide is spilt on them they rot fairly quickly.

Nylon webbing, sold by the yard at Pindisports, Y.H.A., etc., appears to be the answer. You will need 3 to 4 feet of 1" (2 cell nife), or 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "/2" (most cells 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ "), costing 20 - 30p; also a buckle, could re-use one off an old belt. Cut edges of the belt should be melted in a gas flame and holes melted with a hot wire. The buckle can be sewn on with nylon or terylene thread, or fixed with araldite and rivets (the Brian Terry method). The result is a cheap and extremely hard-wearing belt in a photogenic day-glow orange.

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CAVING FASHIONS

Going through the cottage logbook, it seems that caves like anything else have their popularity trends. It shows by analysis, between six major Mendip caves (Eastwater, Cuthberts, G.B., Longwood-August, Lamb Lair, Swildons), that over the past 3 years club trips down Swildons have decreased from 47% of the total trips down all six to 33%, whereas trips in Longwood-August have increased over the same period from 24% to 43%. The small percentage of people visiting the remainder, especially St. Cuthberts and G.B., reflects the difficulty of access. There would seem little benefit gained from the system of access to G.B. as much damage has been caused, and a case might be made for the issue of permanent keys to the major clubs as for Longwood. The condition of this latter cave hasn't noticeably deteriorated, indeed conservation has taken place voluntarily, viz M.C.G. occasional spring cleaning trips.

BRUCE'S CAVE

PETE MATHEWS

An evening stroll on the return from Skye.

Cheif Sheila - the author
Boot carrier - Don Vosper
Sheep - Wayne Hiscox
- Anne Duffell

Following his early defeats at the hands of the English under Edward I, Robert the Bruce hid in many strange places; perhaps too many, for most are purely fiction and are based upon his exploits according to Sir Walter Scott.

One of Bruce's more famous hiding places was a cave in the grounds of what is now a campsite at Kirkpatrick Fleming (NGR.NY 270 708), just south of Beattock. He is reputed to have used the cave for six weeks during 1306. The cave is about 15ft vertically above a river in the face of a 60ft high cliff. The cave consists of a single chamber about 12ft dia. and 8ft high, the roof of which is quite flat, and the walls show clear signs of pick marks, etc. There are also two small alcoves cut into the wall.

Above the entrance to the cave we noted the following inscription:-

'within this cave kynge robert bruce
from foes pursuante soughte a truce
lyke ny forebearers who for hym fell
i ermengarde doe guard it well'

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AND WE' FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT

THE OTHERS

Over the spring holiday, in the interests of one-upmanship, it was decided to hold a 'silly' committee meeting at Port na Long, Isle of Skye, at which 6 out of 7 committee members attended. While there we thought to look around for the remainder of the week following the early disintegration of the meeting with canned Piper Export and Goon Shows.

The main attraction of Skye is the Black Cuilins (3300ft), which roughly form a 'C' shape on plan, the outside of the 'C' being made up of about 8 corries. The Cuilin Ridge is along the top linking the peaks, and in places is a knife-edge perhaps 2ft across with drops either side to the corrie floors 1000ft or so below. The view from the ridge is breathtaking (if you've any left). At the foot of the Cuilins is Glenbrittle where we stayed, some in cottages, and others on the campsite,.....all having to travel 28 miles return for a pint.

Numerous trips were made to the ridge, when weather allowed, and many a Mars bar consumed in the shadow of Innaccessible Pinnacle, a high column of rock rising directly off the ridge of Sgurr Dearg providing spectacular climbing from the point of view of exposure to the sheer drop below. One experience not to be missed was the descent from the ridge down the scree slopes to the corrie floor in double quick time.

Names like Sgurr Alasdair, Mhic Choinnich, and Coire Lagan will re-fire the imagination of anyone whose ever visited the ridge and promised to return, and with any luck we'll be there again next year.

ARMCHAIR CAVERS SECTION

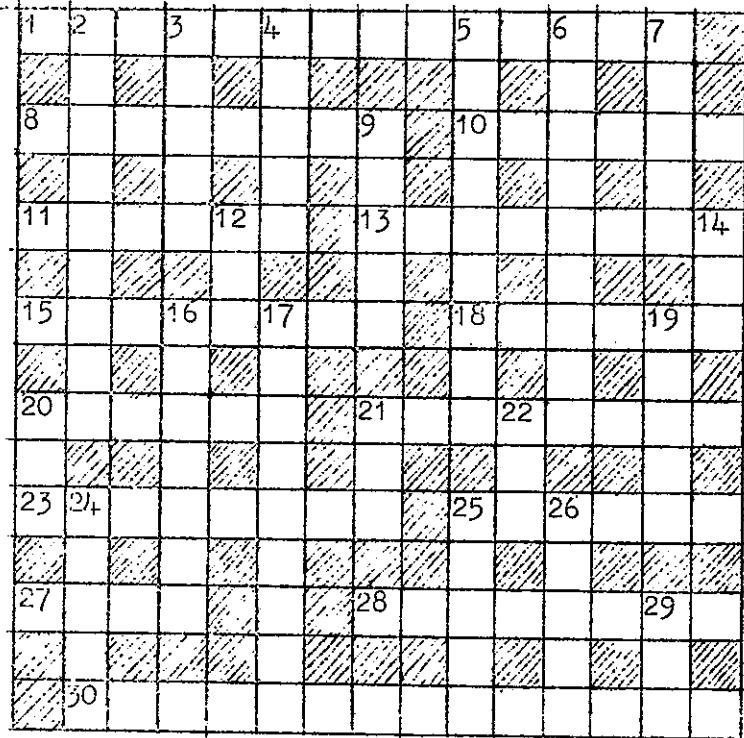
A chance for the many 'retired'(emphasis on last syllable) members who are constantly boring others with their early exploits, using only candles "which cast no treacherous shadows" etc., to prove they know a cave or two. There follows a crossword prepared by our own Swildon's Wizard - Brian Terry.

Clues across

- 1 -sounds like a december pub tour in Longwood(9-5)
- 8 -what pollution experts say some springs need(8)
- 10 -that belonging above the water table(6)
- 11 -a curtain formed by loose debris heading north(6)
- 13 -filled that suitcase again(8)
- 15 -give a car a name in Swildons(8)
- 18 -sagacious(6)
- 20 -Longwood-August grade(6)
- 21 -this man was once thought to be original cave-man in Sussex(8)
- 23 -martian prostitute on Mendip(5-3)
- 25 -an elevated Mendip caving establishment(6)
- 27 -fishy drink(4)
- 28 -a form of zinc ore(8)
- 30 -the least, every caver must do to pass a proficiency exam(7-7)

Clues down

- 2 -a beautiful formation lit the ice in G.B.(9)
- 3 -a picture in the interim agenda(5)
- 4 -a river in Devon(5)
- 5 -a real gem underground(4-5)
- 6 -formally renounced(9)
- 7 -stocking fabric from France(5)
- 9 -stuff oneself in G.B.(5)
- 12 -its always wise to have one to the ground(3)



- 14 -owing, or about to happen(3)
- 16 -eternal, like most women over thirty(7)
- 17 -a lime tone makes this formation(9)
- 19 -hill near Priddy and in London(5)
- 20 -what malformed gas may make you do(3)
- 21 -French foot without an old penny, leaves something to eat(3)
- 22 -golfers beverage perhaps(3)
- 24 -what a studious caver does while on Mendip(5)
- 25 -the granddaddy of Mendip cavers(5)
- 26 -the condition of neglect or oblivion(5)
- 29 -scold persistently(3)

Personnel office on a building site - a coloured gentleman is applying for a job.....Foreman "Sorry fella, ya gotta be oirish ta work on dis site".....
 ...Applicant "Sir, but indeed I am Irish, my name is Dare".....Foreman "Oi can't believe dat, yas'll have to prove it".....Applicant "Certainly sir"....
 ..walks outside and seeing a man high up on a building shouts "Hey Paddy"....
comes the reply "Hulooooo dere".