

MCG NEWS

NO 103

COMMITTEE

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WEEKLY CLUB "The Royal Oak", New Road, Brentford, Middlesex. (Behind  
MEETINGS Brentford Football Club Ground,) every Thursday night  
till ejected.

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COTTAGE Stirrup Cup, Nordrach-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Somerset.  
Accommodation for over 30 - all essential services - guests  
charged at 20p per night (or 20p day fee).  
Guest party booking through the Cottage Warden.

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## Secret Developments at Timber Hole

A great deal of nocturnal activity has been reported to have been centred on Velvet Bottom during recent months. Rumours are beginning to leak around Mendip about sinister goings-on in the Group Dig at Timber Hole. Intelligence reports have revealed a grave situation in respect of security arrangements at group digs. Clearly, gating methods on M.C.G. Digs must be strengthened, and the Committee are believed to be considering electrified fences and time sequence locks.

Our agents have also been hard at work investigating these clandestine operations. With the aid of hidden microphones and a tape recorder concealed in a rain gauge, the Committee have collected a mass of incriminating evidence - the so called 'Black Rock Tapes'. It is well known that the break-in was investigated by a certain Peter Rose. What was not clear though, was the organization behind Rose, and their interest in Timber Hole. Suggestions that he was pirating the dig on behalf of the Cerberus appear weak as they have known to be not worth their salt! The bungling nature of the break-in was felt by others to be characteristic of previous bugging attempts by Wessex factions.

On the strength of an undisclosed tip-off, Tony Knibbs wrote to the White House. As yet we have received no reply. This is the strongest evidence we have got so far that President Nixon is in it up to his neck yet again.

We can now reveal that the illegal break-in and ensuing cover-up were the work of North Horrington Association of Subversive Activities (N.H.A.S.A.) Thanks to timely action by M.C.G. Counter Intelligence, the attempts at a take over seem to have been thwarted; and yet another joint dig looks on the cards. But we all know what a rotten lot the M.C.G. are to dig with, for we have it on the highest authority. One can only speculate on how long N.H.A.S.A. can last out before they too are finally impeached.

## What a Load of Rubbish

Members are reminded that the quarry isn't. Rubbish must no longer be deposited there, but be packed in plastic bags (or a dustbin if we get one) and left by the main road for collection, not hidden away behind one of Jim's Lorries.

Burnable rubbish should be burnt!

Beer bottles, full or empty, may be left around the cottage for our noble Cottage Warden to take back. Recently this has been keeping him in free ale!

The Milk Marketing Board are making a special appeal to members to take their empty milk bottles home with them. Apparently, there has been a steady drift of bottles from London to the West Country.

## Liquid Laughs

The long awaited arrival of the Barry McKenzie film has been felt on Mendip, and especially by those sleeping on the lower bunks. So if yer don't want to find yerselves up the proverbial stream of effluent in a barbed wire canoe - then watch out for them bastards that have been chugging away on Kings Brew - That's the nearest thing to Foster's on this side of the globe.

## Congratulations

To Richard Norris and Carole, who were married recently. They are now residing at 25 Bridle Close, Enfield, Middlesex. EN3 6EA

Also to Len Eley and Ann Smith, they are to be married as soon as possible!!  
Which in their case is 1st December.

And congratulatis to Eric Dowley on performing a triple somersault whilst  
driving across Mendip. Well, that's one way of pushing for Full Membership!

#### Address Changes

John Evans now lives at 8 St. Helens Road, Heath, Cardiff (Tel 0222 612371)

#### Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am pleased to announce that I spotted your 'Deliberate  
Mistake' in Newsletter No. 102, and claim my prize.

John MacMillan

The Prize :- The first punnet of fresh raspberries available?

Ere Ed,

I recon you maid a phew missteaks in yer last issew

Unsigned.

The editor was very pleased to receive the last letter and would like  
to consider the writer for the position of Proof Reader if he will identify  
himself to the editor.

#### Cottage Building

The Committee would be very pleased to hear from any Club Members having  
specialist skills such as brick laying, carpentry, plumbing, electrical installation,  
etc, who wish to offer their services to the club. Help of this sort from Club  
Members will help greatly in reducing construction costs.

#### Library

Thanks go to Don Vosper who has very graciously donated some classic  
French Caving books to the Club Library.

#### M.N.R.C. Winter Lectures - Museum, Wells.

You are invited to the following Lectures to be held at the Museum, Wells  
during the winter months.

Lectures will commence at 7.30.p.m. and finish at approximately 8.30p.m.

DECEMBER 1st - Cave Archaeology

- Mr. Cook, Wells Museum Curator

JANUARY 5th - Cancelled

FEBRUARY 2nd - Cave Diving Film - Cave Diving Group

MARCH 2nd - Geology & Caving on Mendip - Mr. Peter Stewart

APRIL 6th - Archaeology of Wookey Hole - Mr. F. Mason  
& Stoke Lane Slocker

MAY 4th - Finding Caves - Mr John Letheran

## Manor Farm

With the help and encouragement of fellow members I've taken my camera into every cave I've been in during the last few years, with the exception of Dan-yr-Ogof.

When we decided to investigate Manor Farm Swallet on the 4th November, there seemed little point in taking a camera down below, owing to the uninspiring reports of what had been revealed by the breakthrough. The camera therefore remained in the car with the ammo box, the 25' ladder, the 30' rope and the waist band.

The farmer's wife requested us not to park on the greensward at the farm entrance, nor walk through the farmyard, but to cross the stream by the little stone bridge, so well camouflaged. Go over the stone stile in the wall running at right angles to the farmhouse, and then down the field to the cave entrance. (Fee 5p).

The rumours of sewage in the cave seemed likely to be true, as the ends of a broken sewer pipe were seen projecting out of opposite sides of a garbage strewn depression next to the entrance shaft.

The 45' entrance pitch was in a roomy blockhouse. Descent was via a rigid ladder freely suspended from a horizontal steel bar. This required a long stride from the edge of the shaft to the first usable rung.

At the bottom of the shaft was an all fours crawl, past a junction on the right, to a steeply declining passage, negotiated on one's rear. This terminated in a hole with a muddy slippery lip under which, strange to relate, was an electron ladder suspended from a wooden beam. This gave access to a narrow rift about 15' - 20' deep. Having seen my four companions negotiate the top of the hole, to get on the ladder, I decided I could follow.

At the bottom of the rift was another crawl, and then we were able to stand up, in yet another steeply shelving passage, which had a very loose surface. This opened into a small gorge with good formations. At the end of the gorge was an iron bar belay point above a waterfall - and no ladder!

If what we had come upon was a sample of what was to follow, then it was worthwhile getting a ladder, and so I confessed to having the necessary tackle in the car. Away went those two enthusiasts Bryan and Malcolm to get it. 40 minutes later they returned with the tackle, just as Rob, Don, and myself had decided to return to the surface because we were getting cold.

The pitch was rigged and we saw later how to free climb it. Down we went into a good streamway which was in places 50' or more in height. There were a few pools, one very short horizontal squeeze through a nicely rounded hole and more streamway which descended sharply via a couple of dolly tubs. The remains of a false floor were very much in evidence. Eventually we came to a small chamber at the bottom, access to which was gained by a very short low crawl in the stream.

The return to the surface took 1 hour 10 minutes, and could have been less if we'd not stopped to chat to two U.B.S.S. members who demonstrated the technique of free-climbing down the left hand wall of the waterfall.

Bearing in mind that the water level in the surface stream was very low, I thought this could become a really sporting trip when the winter rains fill the streams.

What would I have photographed? Well nearly everything which had been taped off, and a lot which hadn't. It's a mixture of Swildons and G.B. with a Cuthbert's curtain.

It is well worth a visit. I suggest you go in a wet-suit and take a 25' ladder, a crab for the iron stake belay and a 40' lifeline. Oh yes - and your camera - it still looks like a virgin cave - don't rape it.

Our party consisted of Malcolm Cotter, Rob Penn, Bryan Pittman, Don Searle, and myself.

P.S. The cave only smelt in two places.

Ron Saunders

Yorkshire 13/14 October 1973

This was the last Yorkshire meet of the year and was attended by the Hon Tackle Master, the Hon Meet Secretary and Dave Stanford.

On Saturday Car Pot was visited again. ( See Greg Smith's report in last Newsletter.) How did he get lost on the moor when a wall just by the entrance leads down into Trow Gill?

Early on Sunday morning we arrived in the rain on Leck Fell. The conditions reminded me of Mike Thornton's following comment:-

Out on Leck Fell where the cold winds howl,  
And the shit lies thick from many a bowel.

Fortunately the lady at Leck Fell House let us change in the barn. Pippikin Pot is situated below the house towards Easgill Beck. An entrance pitch of 30' led us into a large chamber. We then had to cross a well to a small tube which is best tackled feet first, unless you are 8' tall and good at handstands. After a bit more grovelling, we found the second pitch (20'). We had heard rumours that someone was digging in Pippikin so we were not surprised to find it already laddered. So we left our tackle all bar a few ropes and belays. More grovelling was required to reach the next pitch (50'). Dave decided he was the wrong shape for this pot and remained behind. Below this pitch after thrutching down a tight inclined rift, we dropped on to a stemple, and by dangling from this the head of the next pitch (30') could be reached. The then Tackle Master added extra belays on some of the pitches. Below the pitch and through another squeeze, a stream entered from the left and immediately dropped down a 20' pitch. We followed the stream in a tight rift for about 600yds, traversing at different levels until we descended a short pitch. Soon the stream sank in boulders, so we followed some muddy, high level crawls for about an hour. Then boredom set in, so we retreated to the surface to be welcomed by the rain.

John MacMillan.

#### Resuscitation: Dangers in First Aid.

When an apparently dead body is recovered from cold water the standard first-aid treatment for drowning may be positively dangerous, according to a Royal Navy doctor, who has made a study of accidents associated with water sports. In an article in the Proceedings Of The Royal Society Of Medicine, Surgeon Lieutenant-Commander F St C Golden maintains that often in such cases the victim is suffering from *Asphyxia* due to immersion in cold water, and that vigorous artificial respiration or heart massage can be fatal in such circumstances.

Many of the thousand deaths from drowning reported in Britain each year are probably caused by hypothermia. Anyone who falls into cold water will lose consciousness as soon as his body temperature drops from the normal 37°C to 33°C. If the water temperature is below 5°C even a fit man will lose consciousness within 20 minutes and will do so more quickly if he attempts to swim to keep warm.

However, if he is wearing a life-jacket he may remain alive but unconscious as his temperature falls further; indeed most deaths after shipwreck in European waters are due to hypothermia rather than drowning. As the body temperature drops below 27°C the borderline between life and death becomes ill defined, and even a trained observer may find little evidence of life in someone who could recover, because both respiration and heart rate become virtually undetectable.

A body recovered in that state is extremely cold to the touch with widely dilated pupils; but even if the heart beat is undetectable by electrocardiographic tests, death should not be diagnosed, Cdr Golden says. The correct first-aid treatment for severe hypothermia is to take the victim, lying flat and wrapped in a polythene bag or blankets to where he can be rapidly rewarmed in a bath of hot water (44°C to 46°C).

Handling should be kept to a minimum while the temperature is low, and no attempt should be made to give heart massage or artificial respiration until the body is warm. The danger of such procedures is that they may irritate the slowly heating heart muscle and put it into a condition of fibrillation, which will cause death unless specialist electric shock treatment is given within a few minutes.

The article emphasizes that artificial respiration and heart massage are essential if the cause of unconsciousness is drowning. It admits that there may sometimes be difficulty in distinguishing drowning and hypothermia. The circumstances of the accident are important; if rescue is made within a few minutes of the victim entering the water, there is a strong presumption of drowning. Recognition of the possibility of hypothermia is most important in cases where the apparently dead body recovered is wearing a life-jacket; all such cases should be treated by rapid rewarming as the first step.

With the increasing popularity of life jackets for sailing the number of immersion victims who remain unconscious for long periods in the water is likely to increase, Cdr Golden says. He adds; 'It is hoped that many such victims will not die after rescue as a consequence of over zealous first aid'.

N.B. It should be noted that hypothermia occurs in cases of exposure. While the patient suffering from exposure may not have lost consciousness, the body warming treatment described may be advisable but the water temperature must be kept strictly between the limits described otherwise shock and death will quickly follow.

### Blackmoor

#### Upper Flood

The end has been dug with great gusto and mounting excitement over the last few months, since the forward drainage of water occurred. Several small cavities were found and then Bill Jones managed to manipulate a long probe to a depth of 10' forward of the working face. The hole was then opened up until a clear view was obtained of a calcite curtain blocking the way at the point that the probe had reached.

On 3rd November entry was made into the tight passage after a lot of mud had been cleared and the calcite and rocks had been removed as well. However, although no restriction to the water has occurred and therefore the prospects

still remain highly promising, quite a lot of work will now be required before more forward progress can be made. Incidentally, an analysis of boilersuit dirt collected after a digging session revealed a ~~0.75%~~ <sup>0.75%</sup> lead content.

### Recent Observations

The rift at the end is hour-glass shape in section, and the narrow waist contains hard calcite with curtains hanging underneath, giving a few inches air-space. The rift was found with a complete blockage above, consisting mainly of red clay and cemented clay. In the matrix was a variable random assortment of calcite slabs and some stalagmites. In one place a layer of peat was sandwiched between the upper fill and the bedrock below.

The fill is very interesting, and appears to offer part of the explanation of where formations from higher up the cave have gone. The indication is that some at least were transported to this position. After deposition, a void must have occurred in the part of the passage, either by removal of the broken deposits, or by removal of a bed which they were resting on. This void then saw the steady growth of stalactites above and calcite floor below. Later black mud was carried in from the lead washing beds.

I hope that all people digging will try to take note of what is being removed as information of this type is extremely useful in unravelling the recent history of the cave.

Upper Flood appears to have missed the almost total re-excavation of deposits which has occurred in the other major swallet caves on Mendip. To a great extent this is to our bane, since a long section of open cave is less likely to be found until the main stream is reached. This, the writer believes runs parallel to Upper Flood, and there is a chance that a lot more digging will have to be done before it is reached.

M.O. Cotter.

### Another Fine Digging Achievement

Entry to the cave at Manor Farm must rank as the greatest new swallet cave discovery since St Cuthberts Swallet was entered in 1953. The swallet site itself has been the scene of many years work which up to 1972 was carried out mainly by U.B.S.S.

Prior to the Great Flood of 1968 U.B.S.S. had reached a highly unstable boulder choke below the swallet depression. They used concrete pipe sections for shoring, but owing to instability finally decided to sink a shaft some 20m down the valley from the swallet, which they hoped would bypass the choke. Before the shaft was completed however, the flood opened a pothole some 17m deep by 6m across. At the bottom of this, a passage lead directly down dip for some 15m following a clearly defined fault.

The U.B.S.S. continued with their shaft and joined the bottom of it to the new cave. They did not however dig the passage leading directly downwards from the pothole, but enlarged a narrow rift formed in a fault a few metres to the west instead.

In 1972 the dig passed over to Wessex Caving Club. Wessex dug the passage instead of the rift, knowing the passage to contain material from the collapsed shaft. However the passage looked so unpromising in mid 1972 that three of Mendip's digging enthusiasts concluded that they were digging in the wrong place, and that the U.B.S.S. dig should be continued instead. Although nominally a Wessex Caving Club dig the excavation was done mainly by N.H.A.S.A. (North Hill Association for Spelaeological Advancement). This body, not a caving club as such, started as a consortium of people from various clubs who dug at North



Hill Swallet for many years.



In September 1972, after digging vertically for 5m down a narrow rift, the diggers broke into a high rift. They were again confronted by a blocked passage, however a year later when near the point of giving up, they were rewarded by making a major breakthrough. Apparently one of the last items removed was a section of broken sewer pipe. The rift which they had found earlier was filled with a great amount of spoil.

This discovery is the finest made by Mendip Cavers in recent years, and all concerned are to be congratulated. It proves yet again that on Mendip digging is the only way to make new discoveries.

### Some Features of the Cave

The cave has one of the finest stream passages on Mendip. After going down the dug out rift there is only one real squeeze in the entire length of the cave. The way thus offers the greatest length of upright caving in the area.

Mention has been made of the two faults which can be seen below the pothole. These are probably dominant throughout the cave and have given guidance to it's southerly direction. The first part of the cave appears to follow the easterly faults. Lower down the route takes a turn to the right goes a few metres, then meets another passage at right angles. This passage also contains a stream which is probably that seen in the U.B.S.S. dig. The fault occurring at this dig probably directs water to the junction and the combined waters beyond.

The bedding dip is about 30° <sup>in</sup> on a southerly direction. It may be argued that the dip has also had a profound effect on the direction followed by the cave. The dip and the faults have probably acted in combination. I think however that faulting has been the main factor in the location of the swallet, and it's subsequent development. Although it cannot be proved without considerable work the spring which feeds the Manor Farm stream probably lies on a fault, which may or may not be that found in the cave. The Manor Farm valley itself lies in a fault zone, which is probably why the valley is there in the first place. The cave itself is remarkably straight and uncomplicated. The passage is very high so that one may infer that the stream has followed the same course throughout it's history. The form of this channelling thus seems more suggestive to me of fault control than bedding control.

The fault should be seen in the floor of the cave where bedrock is exposed. As close observation of the floor was not made at the time of my visit it will be interesting to find out if in fact the fault can be seen.

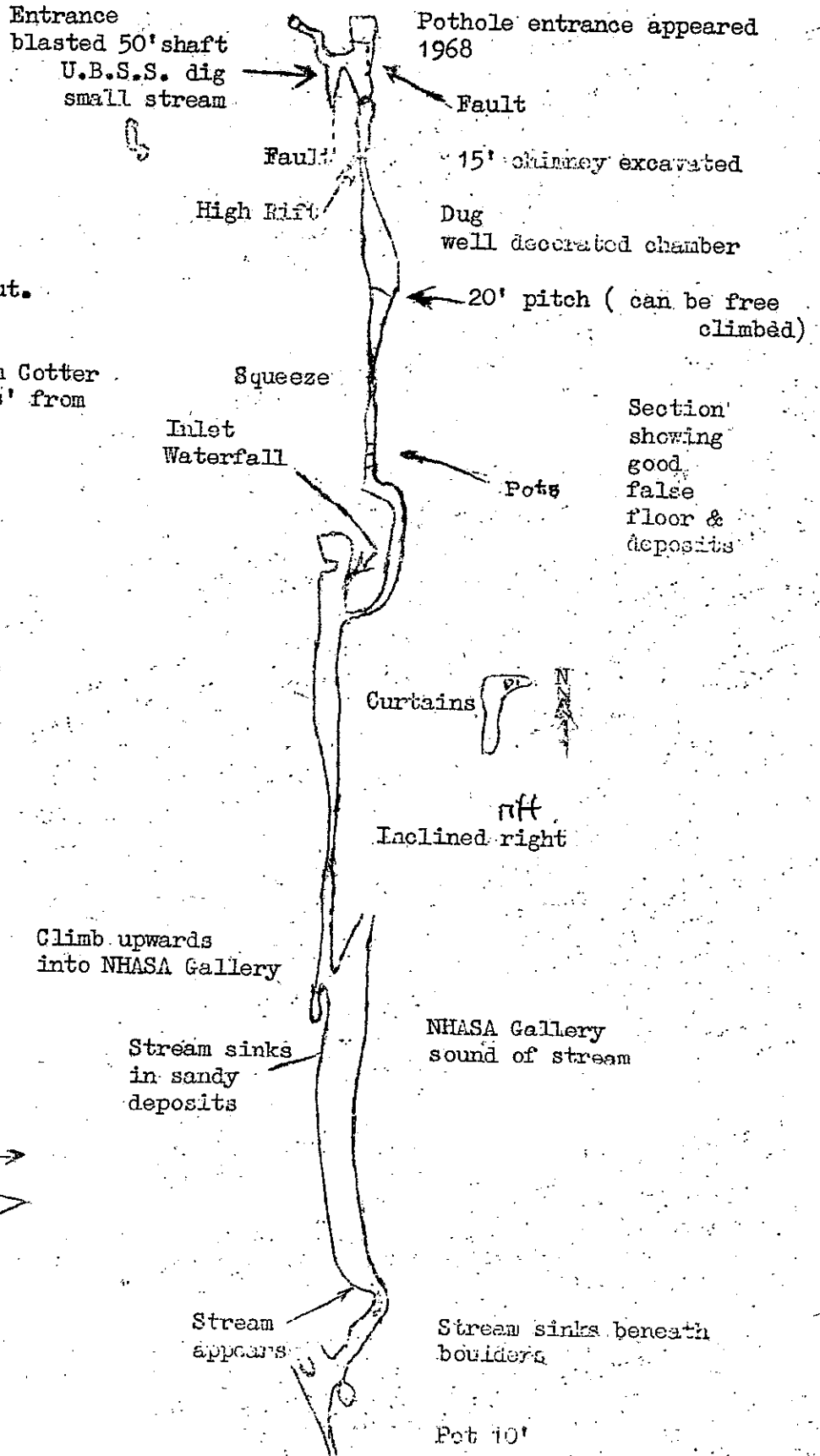
Another feature of extreme interest in the cave is it's deposits. This cave shows more clearly than most others that there has been a major re excavation of deposits which were laid down in the dry period. In places cemented breccia covered by stalagmite floor lies high above one's head. At numerous sites one can pass underneath natural bridges formed of the stalagmite which covers more loosely packed fill underneath.

It will be interesting to investigate the level of water during the 1968 Flood and determine the extent of any alteration. All told Manor Farm Swallet is a cave of outstanding speleological interest which will sustain various investigations for sometime to come.

M.O. Cotter.



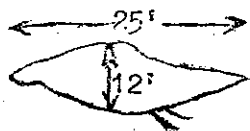
Manor Farm Swallet



Trend of cave  
close to 180° throughout.

Plan from Memory  
By Greg Smith & Malcolm Gotter  
with occasional 'trends' from  
Greg's compass.

Length estimated  
2000'-3000'



Amateur's Cave in the Moravsky Kras, Czechoslovakia

by R. Burkhardt (shortened translation from  
'Die Höhle' by P. Mathews)

In memory of J. Slechta, M. Slechta and M. Zahradniček

Introduction

The exploration of the Punka Cave in the years between 1909 and 1914, and the opening of the river cave between the Macocha Abyss and the Punkva Resurgence from 1920 and 1933 were the culmination of the research led by Prof. Karel Absolon in the Moravsky Kras (Moravian Karst).

In the years after 1945 there followed a period of intensive exploration by amateur clubs. At that time nothing was known of the underground water course connecting the sinks at Sloup and Holstejn and their resurgence in the Macocha Abyss. In 1958 a party led by M. Kala discovered Spiralova Cave, near Holstejn, and the flood passage of the Bila Voda (White Water River). Further discoveries in this cave were made by the Planivska Group under the leadership of Milan Slechta. Ten years later this same group discovered Pikova dama Cave which was eventually connected with Spiralova.

On the 31st December 1964, the Planivska Group opened a 70m. shaft in the dig known as 133, approximately 1 km. south of Holstejn, and for the first time they reached the active, underground stream of the Bila Voda. In close collaborative work with the Moravian Museum, Brno they succeeded in extending the streamway 700m. in the direction of Macocha. The river passage was broken in places by

syphons, separating richly decorated chambers. On the 5th September 1965 the young explorer Jiri Slechta, Milan's brother, was tragically drowned whilst diving in 13C.

#### The discovery of Amateur's Cave

In the years between 1965 and 1968 M.Kala's group worked without success in the Doline ciganska, north of Ostrov. The Planivska Group then took over the dig at a depth of 6m. On the 30th November 1968 their shaft broke into open void, and a second shaft which was descended in the December. They reached the Dome of Discovery, at a depth of 110m., and once again the streamway of the Bila Voda.

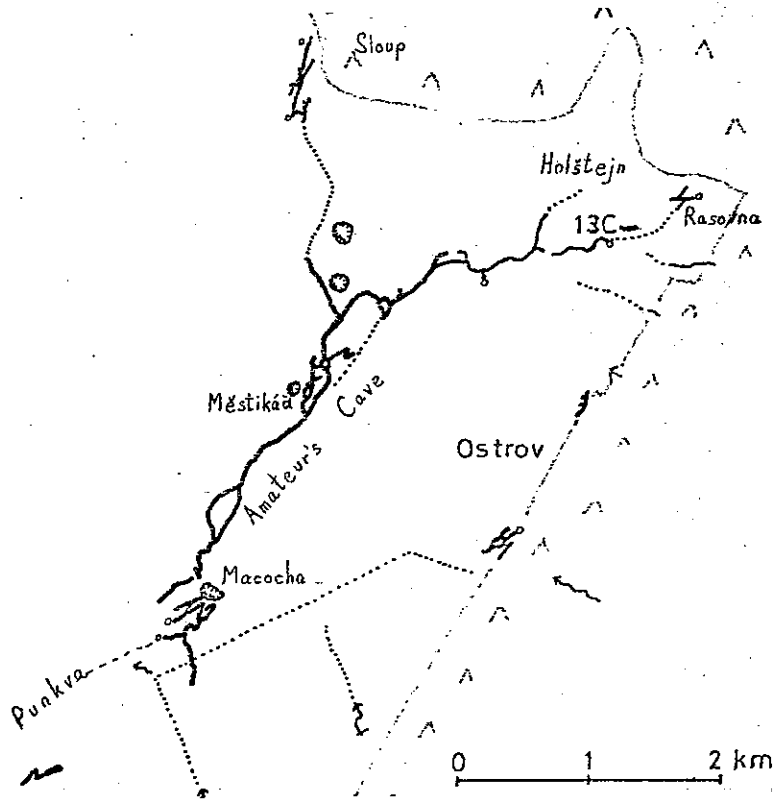
They discovered 1,500m. of passage including a large tributary from the north. Downstream the Bila Voda left the main passage to disappear in a narrow cleft. The main passage ended in a syphon. During the winter Milan Slechta carried out temperature measurements, and showed that the syphon barring the way was not connected with the stream. It was possible, therefore, that the water could be pumped out.

In the summer of 1969 divers from the Planivska Club ( M.Slechta, M.Vojanec and M.Benisek ) passed the syphon and refound the streamway. During a two hour exploration they reached a spot under the 'Mestikad' shake hole. Here they encountered a second large tributary passage.

#### The flood of 29th August 1970

On the 29th August 1970 Milan Slechta and Mako Zahra dniceks set out on a surveying trip to the near galleries beyond the syphon. The working team was fixed for several days and was carefully planned. The expedition was linked to the outside world by telephone. During the first

day a freak storm broke, flooding the cave and trapping the survey team. The rainfall was the highest recorded in the area since 1917. After damming the sinks a rescue team were able to enter the cave. Divers from the Trygon Club, Brno and later the mine rescue team from Ostrava passed the syphon to find the bodies of the two surveyors.



#### Further exploration in the Amateur's Cave

In 1971, a year after the tragedy, the Trygon Club continued exploration. Thereafter, the Karst Commission handed over further exploration to the Czechoslovak Academy of Science (ČSAV). The syphon was pumped out and the cave explored to within 300m. of the Macocha Abyss. Recently, a tunnel has been drilled into the cave from Pusty Zleb thus affording easy entry to the depths of the system.

Exploration continues, for there are still many problems to be solved, including the link to Macocha. Amateur's Cave is now the main feature of the Sloup/Holštejn - Punkva Drainage System. And the Moravský Kras ranks as one of the world's most interesting karst areas.