



Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

COMMITTEE ...

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WEEKLY CLUB MEETINGS: are held at the "Royal Oak" New Road, Brentford, Middx (behind Brentford Football Club Ground) every Thursday night until closing time.

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COTTAGE Stirrup Cup, Nordrach-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Somerset. ACCOMMODATION for over 30 people - all essential services.

Guests charged at 20p per night (or 20p day fee). Guest party bookings through the cottage warden.

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Well, at long last its here! As even the most unobservant of you must have now realised the newsletter is now sporting its long awaited cover. I will therefore take this opportunity to thank everybody concerned in its conception, design and production. However, a smart cover is no substitute for a newsletter with uninteresting contents. So far, I have been given plenty of articles, all of which I have been pleased to print. If this reponse continues, the success of the newsletter will be assured.

If you have any articles to submit, I am up at the club most Thursdays, or if you cant get over to Brentford just pop them in the post to me. I am trying to produce the newsletter on a monthly basis, but again this depends on contributions. With this in mind I will try to produce each edition at the begining of every month and will bring the copies up to the club for two successive weeks. This gives me a chance to see people personally and also to distribute as many N/Ls as possible by hand. With the recent increase in postal charges this will mean quite a saving. If you have any articles you want included in the next months N/L, I would

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appreciate receiving them by the third week of the month.
I would be most interested to hear from anyone who can obtain supplies of decent duplicating paper cheaply. Spicers Plus Fabric or Croxley Script would be ideal. The size is A4 and the weight is 71 gms/sm. I mention this because the N/L is becoming increasingly expensive to produce and any such help would be appreciated.

B. Terry.

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MEMBER SECRETARY Bill Jones; 94 St. Davids Road, Gillingham, Dorset. Phone 01 889 1829

CLUB NEWS

MEMBER WILLIAM WAYNE; 47, Danbury Drive, Hayes, Middx. M.C.G. Journal No. 5. (our de contact et work phone is 01 888 8888 ext 877)

At last its out! Only six years were needed to produce this tremendous publication. This fantastic feat of publishing is a reflection of the long hours of dedicated work put in by a relay of journal editors. It also gives a true indication of the interests and enthusiasm of the Group.

The contents are all quite dated but are still of some interest to members. Articles are included on:- Faulting, Devon, Belgium, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia.

If you have not yet received your copy it is probably because you have not yet paid your annual subscription.

M.C.G. Journal No. 6.

This journal, which will cover current aspects of the Group's work, should be available when you pay your 1975 subscription. It is already nearing production and last minute articles should be handed in as soon as possible.

P. Mathews.

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For any members interested, the weekend 10th/11th of August has been set aside for a cottage-work weekend. Despite the fact that we may soon be thinking of building our new cottage, some work has to be done on our existing one. Certainly the elements need keeping at bay with a couple of coats of creosote; as for other work, no doubt Wayne will be glad to advise you how you can help out.

Changes of Address

- Malcolm Cotter: 249, Feltham Hill Road, Ashford, Middx.
- Penny & Ian Bramble: 35, Low Brows, Kirkfield, Ambleside, Cumbria.

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MEMBER WILLIAM WAYNE; 47, Danbury Drive, Hayes, Middx. M.C.G. Journal No. 5. (our de contact et work phone is 01 888 8888 ext 877)

Whitsuntide in Yorkshire,

Many lucky people managed to get the complete week off for Whitsun. Full advantage was taken by everyone concerned and quite a few members made the Dales their rendezvous.

Those in Yorkshire for the week included Greg Smith and John Miriam based in Clapham, Steve Conquest, Pete Lingwood and Fred Burton in Settle and Pete Mathews, Don Vosper, Bill Jones and Dave Stanford camping up in Dent.

Caves visited included, Hurnel Moss Pot, Rowten Pot, Black Shiver Pot, Kingsdale Master, Upper Long Churn, Ibbeth Peril and Dovecote Cave. Many pints were supped and a number of long walks accomplished. John, Greg, Bill, and Pete all finishing the Three Peaks in about nine hours.

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Yorkshire 15th/16th June.

Bill Jones, Pete Mathews, Pete Spain and Don Vosper stopped at Bull Pot Farm. From here a sporting trip, (getting hopelessly lost), was made into Bull Pot of the Witches. This was followed by an evening stroll around Ingleton Falls and a Sunday Trip down Aygill Cavern. A really festering weekend.

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HURNEL MOSS POT

After a leisurely bank holiday Saturday drive up to Yorkshire (prior to a weeks stay), Greg and I found only a token complement of Pennine members in residence at Greenclose. The day was far too advanced to entertain the thought of going underground and so the usual discussion concerning what we would do the following day took place. Between the three of us (Bill Pybus being the third) we managed to eliminate, for one reason or another, each of the caves suggested as they came to mind. That was the case until Hurnel Moss Pot was mentioned and we found that we couldn't eliminate that one because we simply didn't know enough about it. Reference to a copy of The Limestone and Caves of North West England suggested an entrance pitch of 10 metres followed by a broken pitch of 55 metres. As I was keen to try out a batch of freshly made ladder I attempted to convince the others that this was worth looking at. To my amazement they needed no persuasion and so we adjourned to partake of the usual saturday evening pastime.

A late start on Sunday was unavoidable with Bill holding regular Sunday morning Karate/Judo training sessions (at the Ingleborough Hotel) and so it was only after a couple of jers at this establishment that we and two young prospective Pennine members began making our way up the track from Clapham end on to the Allotment.

A westerly compass bearing from Bar Pot put us in roughly the right direction for Hurnel Moss and after about six or seven hundred yards and a tendency northwards we came across a large, deep shakehole with a low entrance leading off at the bottom. The stream-bed was dry and wet suits obviously superfluous (as we had indeed anticipated).

HURNEL MOSS POT, Cont/..

The first pitch (in fact free climbable) was encountered immediately and proved to be about 20 feet deep. This led onto a sloping boulder strewn floor which after about thirty feet dissappeared into space. In my reckoning 55 metres was about 170 feet and so this amount of ladder plus 15 feet for luck was fed over the pitch whilst trying not to dislodge too many boulders in the process. With two lifelines tied together I proceeded to descend.

My descent was halted after 10 feet by the first ledge and I began to wonder if we should have laddered from there but confident that the extra 15 feet of ladder would take care of this I carried on. As I climbed down, the shaft began to reveal its true dimensions. I was impressed by the size at least but, as I climbed awkwardly past another ledge, not by the quality. I could now see a great heap of ladder below me and at about a 100 feet I landed on what proved to be the largest ledge (some 15 feet square).

After lowering the remaining ladder down the next part of the pitch I free climbed about 15 feet down a water worn gully, before regaining the ladder. Another small ledge was passed after a further 40 feet and then I came to the end of the lifeline, nearly to the end of the ladder but not to the end of the pitch. I noted that my light would not penetrate to the far wall of the shaft, took part in an undecipherable shouting contest with those above and duly retreated to the large ledge.

I untied and after a while was joined by one of the two prospective Pennine carrying the 30 foot ladder that we had put down the first pitch. This then allowed a complete descent, of what proved to be 195 feet.

At the foot of the pitch a high rift passage led down and almost back under the pitch. This continued for several hundred feet and the fact that the cave had developed on a fault was strongly in evidence, due to the flat sharply defined walls of the rift and the wide vertical band of fault breccia that at one point reduced the rift to a flat out crawl just before regaining height and then plunging once again into a low wet canal-like crawl. This marked the end of our exploration.

All members of the party visited the bottom and the only noteworthy point concerning our exit was the re-belaying of the lower half of the ladder from the rawbolts conveniently secured at the large ledge. This made for easier climbing on the upper half.

On the Saturday a very rewarding second visit was paid to Black Shiver Pot. This pot like Penyghent Pot seems to repay second and successive visits. The feeling of depth and remoteness in the final canal is quite uncanny and the airy freedom of the 170 foot free hanging pitch makes the effort well worthwhile and the trip a suitable finale to a week in Yorkshire.

J. Miriam.

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MENDIP NEWS

St Cuthbert's

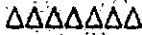
For anyone contemplating a St. Cuthbert's trip, please note that all requests for access should now be addressed to the caving secretary, B.E.C. c/o The Belfry, Wells Road, Priddy.

SWILDONS

The Shepton have re-opened the U-tube in Shatter Series. This work was carried out over the East holiday.

MANOR FARM

The surveyed depth of Manor Farm Swallet (see Descent 26) is 498ft. No final length has been given, but it is believed to be about 2,500ft (Source-Descent).



ROWTEN POT

Members of M.C.G. - John Miriam Plus - Fred Burton - Greg Smith - Pete Lingwood - Steve Conquest

Over the Bank Holiday week, the above 5 decided to visit Rowten Pot. As we drove into Kingsdale, the day was clear and fine with no sign of any other activity in the valley. We parked the cars near the gate in the wall and proceeded to load rucksacks with gear. With backs bent under the load we started the steep climb up to the top of the scar. Our climb up was accompanied by various mutterings from Fred about how he should have brought his walking boots and that he should have a rucksack. His all-purpose Aquaplast bag definitely was not designed to carry ladders, ropes, helmets, lamps and wetsuits. The top of the scar was soon reached and the yawning opening of Rowten Pot caught me by surprise. I did not expect such a large and impressive chasm. Whilst waiting for Fred to catch us up, we wandered around the main opening looking down into the darkness. Rowten is the largest and most impressive rift in the Kingsdale district, not unlike Alum Pot, but a little smaller and water can be heard rushing into the depths. A few yards to the south of the main surface opening is a smaller eyehole which provides a direct descent of 235ft to the bottom of Rowten Pot. We decided we would enter the system via the main rift and enter the big pitch about 80ft down.

We got changed and began the descent by climbing over boulders into the main opening. This route took us over the exit of Rowten Cave, where the water comes from, to the top of the 90ft Gulley. The Gulley is a very steep climb down, by the side of the water, requiring a handline. At the bottom, a bedding plane crawl to the left and away from the water follows the fissure, down which the water flows, to the main shaft and onto a sizeable landing. Once onto this landing, we all stood upright and looked up to the small opening admitting daylight above us. (This is the surface eyehole).

We then brought out the ladders and ropes and 2 of us crossed the Bridge, a narrow rock span, over the deep water fissure, to a small ledge which directly overhangs the remainder of the main pitch. In the rockface, at the back of the ledge were two sturdy eyebolts to which we attached the ladder and lifeline pulley. John then fed 150ft of ladder down the pitch whilst Greg belayed himself and made the lifeline ready across the bridge on the landing.

As this was a deep pitch with some water noise we decided to use whistles to give instructions when on the ladder.

John descended first, then Greg and I lifelined Pete down. At this point I decided that I would go down later as I did not want Fred to lifeline me down (he being unexperienced and all that) and the rope not quite long enough for double-lining.

Fred and I sat at the top whilst the others explored below. Eventually, we heard the two whistle signals to start lifelining up. After pulling up about 100ft of rope it became apparent that one was on the end. With much cursing and pushing I persuaded Fred to cross the Bridge and feed the line down again, with serious misgivings as to whether the line had actually reached the bottom. After crawling back on hands and knees across the Bridge, Fred colourfully explained that he wouldn't bother to descend.

Two more whistle blasts were heard, so Fred and I started hauling up again. After a few minutes, I felt that no-one was on the rope and asked Fred to look over the edge. He gingerly crawled to the edge and confirmed my suspicions, so we threw the rope down again, with misgivings, wondering what was going on beneath us.

Meanwhile, at the bottom of the 150ft pitch, John, Greg and Pete proceeded downstream about 40ft to where the stream flows over a 50ft pitch. This was successfully laddered to the left of the stream giving a dry descent. After the 50ft they climbed down 20ft which lead immediately to a very wet 30ft pitch. Continuing down downstream they rounded a bend to a low arch which gave onto the 1st of a series of 3 sumps, 27ft long, 12ft and 6ft which enter the Kingsdale Master Cave Series. There was a handline through the 27ft sump which was crystal clear. The sump appeared to be quite tight with a floor of fist-sized smooth boulders. The three then began the return upstream passing several dry, interesting passages.

On the return up 30ft and 50ft pitches, because of the water, they decided to use whistle signals.

Eventually, Fred and I heard two more whistle blasts, so I started hauling accompanied by muffled shouting coming up the shaft. Later, a puffing and sweating Greg appeared over the edge of the shaft, angrily demanding why half of the lifeline was hanging below him.

After a hasty explanation, I decided to go down and meet the others at the bottom. Once over the ledge, the ladder hung freely down for 150ft with an accessible ledge about 50ft down. The descent was in a superb shaft with water falling sheer somewhere to the left. When I reached the bottom, the others had already detackled the remaining pitches and were ready to ascend. I had a quick look further downstream and then set myself for the return climb after sending up the tackle.

We followed up without incident, all taking short rests, to meet the others on the top landing. Two of us quickly climbed out via the crawl and gulley to drop a line down the eyehole to draw up the tackle, and save the remainder of the party hard work through the crawl.

Once everyone was on the surface, I apologetically explained to them all why the initial lifeline was a bit (!!!) loose and they apologised to me for not thinking about the use of whistles so close to the main shaft.

A very good trip was enjoyed by all, except Fred, who kept slipping out of his sandals on the climb down to the cars.

GENERAL NEWS

Discovery in Littondale

A number of solo dives by Geoff Yeadon of Kendal Caving Club, involving a 1000ft long sump at the end of Boreham Cave near Arncliffe has led to a spectacular discovery. At the end of the submerged section of the cave over a mile of roomy passage was entered. This is particularly well decorated and contains one of the finest straw ceilings in the country. The largest straws are reputed to be ten feet in length.

Lancaster - Pippikin?

Some vague news has just reached me of a possible link between Pippikin Pot and the Lancaster-Easegill complex. A definite drainage link has been established, but whether it has been dived or only dye or spore tested is not clear. This link could tie up with the discovery made in 1971 of some passages running south from the Lancaster-Easegill through route. It was hoped then that these would connect with Pippikin Far Streamway. If this envisaged connection is made the result would be a cave system with a total length of over 20 miles. More news when things develop.

ACCESS TO OFD II

As you will probably know, 1974 is Welsh Cave Conservation Year and, prompted by this, the A.G.M. of S.W.C.C. focussed its attention to the "wear" which is now very apparent in the passages normally reached via the top entrance of OFD II. This wear takes the form of damage to sand and mud floors, caused by parties crossing the marker tapes. Formations too, are damaged - the tip of "The Trident" has been broken off and many formations muddled.

Access will now be more rigorously maintained. The major effect of this will be that visiting parties wishing to obtain a key must write to the secretary of S.W.C.C. for a permit. This must be produced to the duty officer at the S.W.C.C. HQ on the weekend in question who will then provide a key.

This is not a booking system, so that you will still be able to obtain access on any date, provided advance permission is sought.

Access via Cwm Dwr is not affected. Carbide lamps will be discouraged except as emergency lighting and parties should be no larger than seven of whom no more than half should be novices.

Agem Allwedd - Grand Circle Route.

This trip is best done in the order, Southern Stream, 4th Choke, 3rd Choke. The connection itself is through very loose boulders and since it is vertical it is best climbed down rather than up. Also route finding is easier in this direction.

Several parties have reported that in the upper end of the high water level range, a sump forms in the Narrows section of Deep Water, making the route impassable. At the same time, it is reported, the strong flow washes boulders and debris into the passage through the 4th Choke, so that a party could get caught between the

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the two chokes. There is an emergency depot about 300ft upstream of the confluence with Southern Stream.

THRUPE LANE SWALLET

After six years of determined assaults by joint Wessex/Westminster digging forces, Thrupe Lane has yielded its secrets. Its discovery is a just reward for the diggers concerned.

The village of Thrupe is situated about 1½ miles NE of Croscombe on the Wells-Shepton Mallet road. The dig site lies on the right of the road-up from Croscombe, some fifteen yards away in the corner of a field.

The first shaft sunk was abandoned as being too unpromising, and the second shaft was started 12 yds away. This second shaft was a gargantuan effort, providing ample room for work for the whole of its 42ft descent from ground level. After nine months of digging in the shaft the narrow entrance rift revealed itself. Now called the Ferret Run, this rift was artificially enlarged and the route was pushed through to Slit Pot via Corkscrew Canyon.

Slit Pot with its 50ft climb led to a wide rift, and a boulder choke nearly as high. Another small pot where water was heard, led back to Slit Pot.

Unbeknown to the diggers on their way to Slit Pot they had passed the top of another pitch which was obscured by a gravel choke. When this choke was cleared and enlarged, Perseverance Pot, as it has since been dubbed, was revealed.

The initial section of this pitch is quite tight and the ladder is best used for hand holds and only the occasional foothold. It widens out for the last 45ft or so, but is still narrow enough for the climber to lean back against the wall and admire the view.

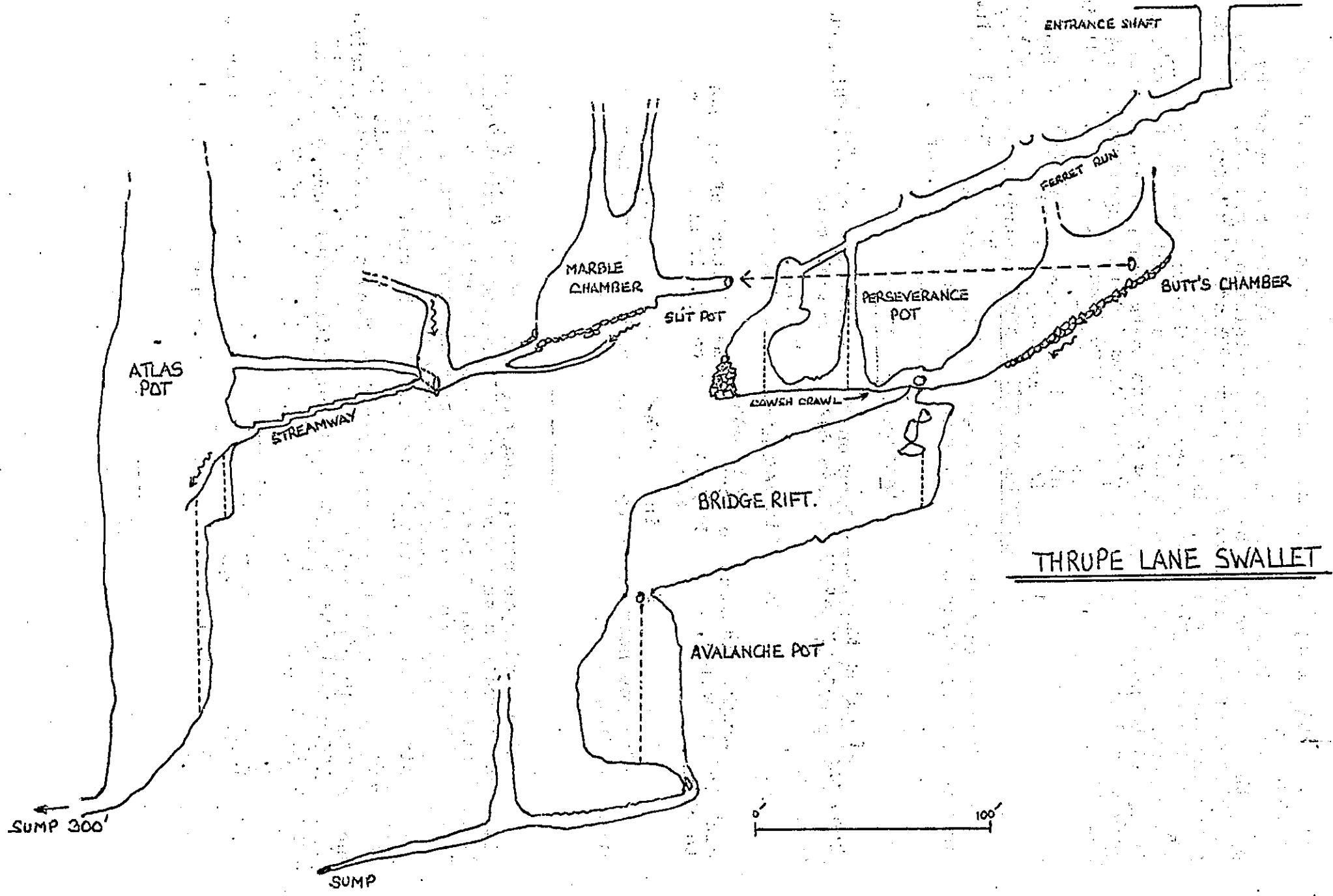
At the bottom a small opening was investigated and was found to be a connection with the bottom of Slit Pot. A cold draught was detected coming from another small hole, and after digging through a thin layer of sand, Cowsh Crawl was revealed in all its malodorous glory. This 8ft long, knee-deep crawl in fetid glutinous mud led out into a large chamber. This is now called Butt's Chamber.

Attention was now turned to the hole on the left immediately after Cowsh Crawl. This led to Bridge Rift, some 70ft high but bottomed by only 20ft of ladder after a bit of boulder climbing. At the bottom of Bridge Rift the Thrupe stream leads down for 430ft or so to a narrow rift. This was banged to reveal the head of Avalanche Pot. This is a free climb of 80ft with a wet take-off point and leads to a fairly large rift and a streamway heading down to a small sump.

Halfway up Butt's Chamber a small crawl leads into Marble Chamber and the dull boom of water is heard somewhere below. To follow the sound of the water, the route is through some loose boulders at the bottom of the chamber's sloping floor.

The short passage from Marble Chamber leads to a high small chamber with water pouring from a high inlet. This stream flows down a most attractive and clean-cut passage, with short steps taking the depth down some 20ft or so. This stream passage leads to the most spectacular find in the system so far - Atlas Pot.

The far wall is some 35-40ft away, but Atlas Pot is much wider, being yet another rift. 30ft down on the left is a large ledge; from this one can climb up to a perched false floor and also reach a superb free 80ft pitch which lies parallel to the Atlas main



ENTRANCE SHAFT

FERRET RUN

MARBLE CHAMBER

SLIT POT

PERSEVERANCE POT

BUTT'S CHAMBER

ATLAS POT

STREAMWAY

COWSH CRAWL

BRIDGE RIFT.

AVALANCHE POT

THRUPE LANE SWALLET

SUMP 300'

SUMP



pitch. This ledge gives a most impressive view of the pot and stream.

The 80ft wet descent leads to the sloping bottom of the pot- the height from pot base to stream inlet being 150ft. From the bottom of the pitch 300ft of passage leads to a sump. At this point the total depth is estimated at 400ft.

The cave is at present gated and access control is being determined. Should Thrupe Lane be made accessible to other cavers it should be noted that heavy rain floods the entrance area fairly quickly and an obvious cut-off point would be the streamway leading to Atlas Pot

B.Terry.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I think that the club badges etc. is a good idea. Did you know that Pen-y-ghent stores do such a service?

Ian Bramble.

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Congratulations to John on the manufacture of the new club ladder which, although heavier to carry, is much easier to climb.

Pete Lingwood and Steve Conquest.

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Jokes

Did you hear about the man who could make a lasso with one finger?

With a view to persuading his girl-friend to submit to his carnal advances an amorous caver presented her with a solitaire diamond ring and some muttered promises of marriage. Despite the expense, however, she continued to deny him her favours. He sought advice from a fellow caver in the pub. He was told that a solitaire diamond was not enough and that he should replace it with two.

Next weekend he met his friend on Mendip and reported great success with his girl-friend.

—"You see", his friend said smugly "a double diamond works wonders".
