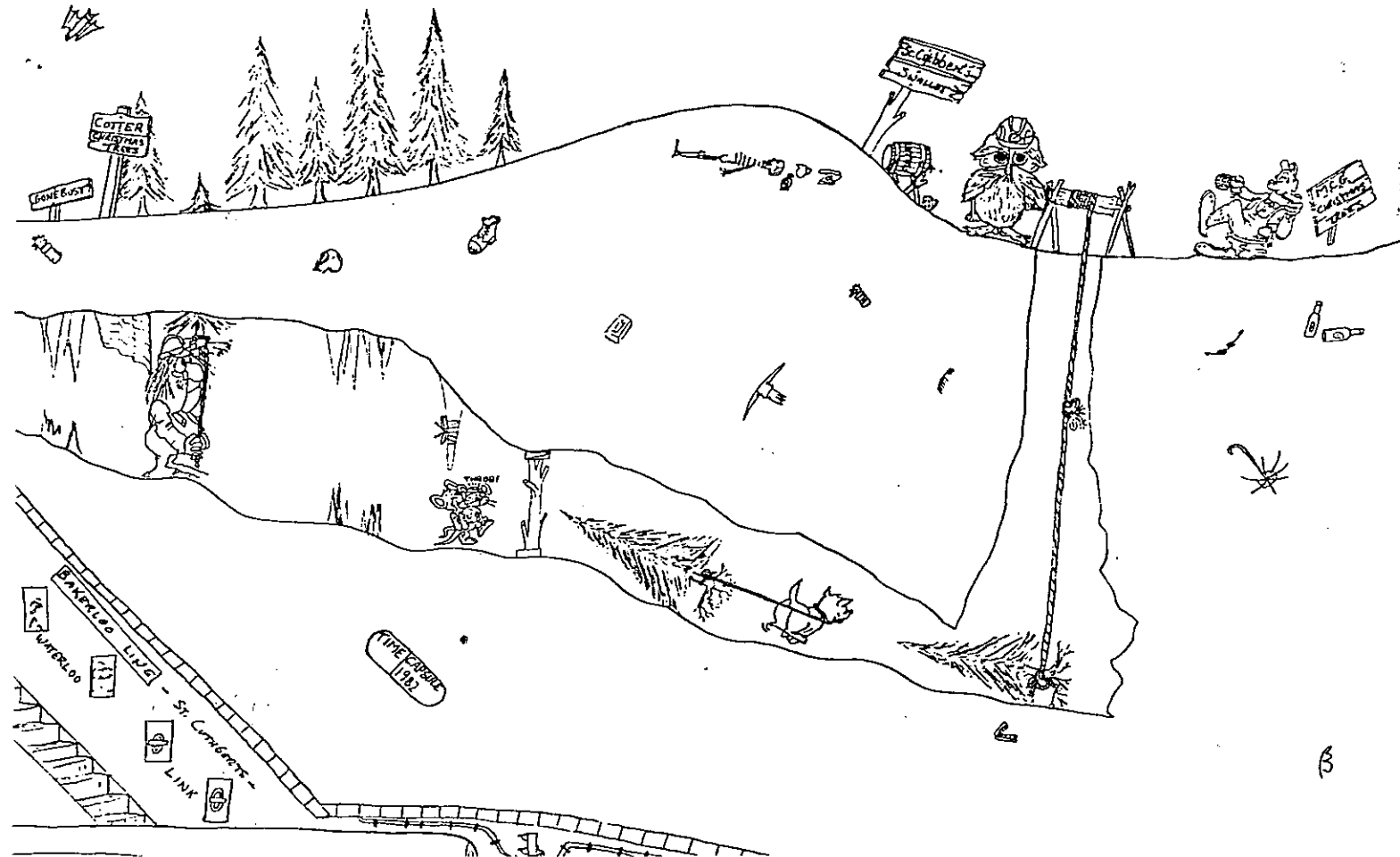




Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

December 1982

No 159



BOB SPELEO AND THE MCG COMMITTEE WISH YOU ALL A HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND A PROSPEROUS 1983.

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Caving accommodation is available at the MCC cottage on Mendip; Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6XW. The map reference is MGR 5147 5606 (OS 1:50,000 first series sheet 182). Guest bookings should be made with the cottage warden.

WEEKLY MEETINGS are held every Thursday at 8.30pm at:
The Fox and Hounds and Mawson Arms, Chiswick Lane South, London, W4

NEXT NEWSLETTER is due on 13th January. Copy should reach the Editor before 7th January to ensure inclusion. Late news can normally be accepted up to publication date.

MCC MEET PROGRAMME.

Meet	Leader	Base
Dec 18 Eastwater (Primrose Pot)	Ian McKechnie	MCC
Jan 1 Singing River Mine	Kate Taylor	MCC
Jan 15 GB Cavern	Tony Knibbs	MCC
Feb 12 Lost John's	Tony Knibbs	? Yorkshire
Mar 19 AGM		
Apr 9 Portland (Dorset)	Ian McKechnie	MCC

The REMAINDER of the meet programme will be with us soon - watch this space for details.

A BONUS meet on 15th January - Tony Knibbs will be leading a GB trip for those who can't make it on the 1st Jan. (and for those who can, of course). You've all been into GB - but have you been into all of GB? Go along on 15th Jan and find out.

INDOOR MEETS have been arranged for Thursday, January 13th and Thursday, February 10th in the back room at the Mawson Arms, (just follow the signs for the Gents.) On Jan 13, Geoff Barton will give a presentation on "Mendip from Above", with a collection of slides taken from an aircraft during an archaeological survey of the area. On Feb 10, there will be a 16mm sound film of Castleguard Cavern, Canada, filmed by Sid Perou. Both will start at about 8.30 pm - don't be too late or you'll miss the beginning.

The 1983 PYRENEES MEET is now off the ground. The club's knowledge and experience of caving in the area has been tapped, with the result that we have the following proposals:

time: 18th August (Thurs) to 6th September (Tues).
place: Near St. Girons (about 60km South of Toulouse).
objectives: Exploration of Réseau Trombe (a large and varied cave system).
Visits to other caves in the area. Expedition to the Pyrenees Ridge (Cirque de Gavarnie). To relax and get to know the area, and its food and wine.

The time has been chosen to give the best compromise between hitting the normally-dry season, missing the crowds of Paris holidaymakers, and remaining within the school holidays. The period is almost three weeks and it is anticipated that some people may have to leave early. However, it's quite important that everyone should be there at the beginning of the period if possible, to minimise the disruption of the various activities.

The place was arrived at after a study of cave and mountain-walk guides, as the best compromise between severity and interest. The cave system chosen for particular exploration has a number of entrances, and provides caving of a variety of standards. There is a good selection of other caves in the area to add variety. It is not too far to Gavarnie, which is a good centre for walking in the mountains, and for visiting Grotte Casteret, a high-level ice cave.

The objectives were chosen to allow as much variety and flexibility as possible without disposing of organisation completely. A plan will be prepared nearer the date based on these objectives, so that everyone going can have a say in what we do. Some of the caving techniques required will be fairly advanced, and there will be several "training trips" during 1983. It's hoped that as many as possible of the party will come along.

Finally - who's interested? I have been assured that as editor, I am ideally placed to co-ordinate the expedition planning. I don't know about that, but it looks as though I've got the job anyway! So I will be keeping the list - if you're thinking of coming along, let me know. (Ian McKechnie)

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

FULL MEMBERSHIP has been granted to John Felton.

MARTIN ROME has sent us a card from sunny Belize - this is what he says:
Belize, 22nd November.

Dear Folks,
Hope you are enjoying the Blackmoor dig - personally I prefer this Carribean Island. Didn't get much caving done in USA or Canada, but met a guy in Mexico called Mike Sharcross who is an expert on caves in Guatemala, so expect a caving report soon. I've also learned that half the BEC are coming to Mexico - tell them although they get everywhere, the MCG get there first!

Martin.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS are due on 1st January. It's still only £10 for full members, £5 for associate members. PLEASE send your cheque off to the treasurer as soon as possible. Members subscriptions are one of our major sources of income, and delays in payment make budgeting difficult, as well as costing the club money.

A COVENANT FORM is included in this issue. If you fill it in and return it to the treasurer, it will commit you to nothing - it is purely a statement that as long as you remain a member you will pay your subscriptions. However, if you pay tax at the standard rate, the club can reclaim almost £5 extra from the taxman. The more covenants we have, the longer we can maintain the present subscription rate.

The BREWERY ACCOUNT will be in the hands of Derek Walsh from 1st Jan. as Bruce is moving to Cumbria. Order your BARRELS, SWEATSHIRTS, etc from Derek.

GRANADA TELEVISION are looking for events for next years "Krypton Factor" series - a series of competitive initiative tests, so I am told. Anyone with a good idea they'd like to put forward should contact Granada Television, Manchester, M60 9EA. Tel. 061-832-7211.

COTTAGE BOOKINGS

December	March
18 Eastwater + Val's Barn Dance	5
25	12 Ealing College (12)
	19 AGM (members only)
January	26
1 Members w/e	
3 Barnet C.G. (8)	April
15 Members w/e	2
22 Kingston Poly (12)	9 members w/e (Portland meet)
29	16
	23
February	30
5	
12 Ealing College (12)	
19	
26 Kingston Poly	

COTTAGE NEWS

THE SOAKAWAY has developed into something of a disaster area - it seems that last weekend a good 4' by 7' trench had been dug, the "blumbing" was under way, when the trench caved in. The only way to dig it out again is by hand, and until it is done the cottage gate is blocked - you have to park on the road and clamber over the wall! It will be a hard day's work for a good team of diggers. If everyone has a go on the 18th December weekend, we stand a chance of getting things back to normal. Otherwise the cottage will be chaos for at least another month, with probable longterm repercussions. So if you're down that weekend, be prepared to spend a day digging mud.

THE AGM WEEKEND now has a full cottage booking. Please don't forget to cancel your booking if you have booked and subsequently can't go. If you don't have a booking - remember that Charterhouse Manor is just over the road. Bed and breakfast there costs £7.50, or for members £6.50. (Annual membership costs £10 to MCG members.)

CAVE KEYS will in future be kept in the library, on the back of the door, instead of on the key-board in the kitchen. This restricts access to full members only - visiting cavers must ask an MCG member for a key. We have had some problems recently with keys loaned to non-members not being returned. In future therefore, any non-MCG caver wishing to borrow a key must leave a deposit of £5 which will be returned when the key is returned. There will also be a signing-out book, and all key loans and returns should be recorded - whether to members or non-members.

THE TACKLE STORE will now also have a signing-out book. It is hoped that this will help us trace tackle accidentally left in the car by forgetful members - at present it seems to take several months before missing tackle reappears.

CAVING NOTES

GB CAVE, as you will see elsewhere in this issue, was the site of a rescue recently, caused by water rising rapidly in the main chamber and blocking the Ladder Dig passage. It seems that it is not unusual for the water level to rise this far - it has been reported several times over the past year, and there was a recent "tide-mark" on the wall at ladder-dig level on the date of the rescue practice this year. So beware - if it's raining hard or heavy rain is forecast, think carefully before you go into Ladder Dig.

RAWLBOLT REMOVED IN LADDER DIG. Presumably as a reaction following the previous weekend's incident, it seems that UBSS have removed the rawlbolt which helped the "first man up" into Ladder Dig. This means that in future you will need to take your own Rawlbolt with you (or a 20' Maypole). Unless anyone has a complete set of different sizes, a reconnaissance trip is perhaps required to find out the size of the Rawlbolt and to assess any other associated problems.

MANOR FARM was exceedingly smelly on a recent visit. The stream section in the entrance passage was badly polluted, and slimy underfoot. The air was filled with flies revelling in the stench. Following a complaint, Mr. Jeffries apparently closed the cave.

THE LAMB LEER KEY has been changed - we have asked for a new one, so check before you go down that you have the new key.

A BANG IN BLACKMOOR executed at the beginning of November has shattered the calcite at the face, which can now be prised apart. The pool remains as it was before. The method of removing spoil in the skips without using bags was tried out successfully. The best way was found to be with one person pulling and a second easing the skip past obstacles. The skip used between the face and the arch should be kept in that section of passage, however, as it is the only one to fit between the walls. Taking loads up the steps was no problem. A mixture of mud and rock was found to be the best way of keeping contents in the container, which can then be tipped to near vertical. The time taken to move a load from face to outside is about 15 minutes. Further ramping and obstruction removal would be helpful. In future please adopt the principle of taking out all spoil from the face - don't leave the job for another digging party. (Malcolm Cotter)

RECORDER'S REVIEWS

Wessex Cave Club journals 191, 192, 193 (vol 17)

The excellent Wessex journals have become a little sparser of late, with only three emerging so far this year. No 191, Jan 1982, has little of wider interest than club and Charterhouse/CSCC news. There is however an article on making your own ladder, plus notes on progress in Ogof Hesp Alyn and Poacher's Cave. No 192, undated but received in August, is a livelier issue containing reports on Charterhouse Cave discovery, Hole-in-the-Road, including a full plan and elevation, extension work at the Wessex's Upper Pitts HQ hedged about with the inevitably caveats, pleas and moans (so which club hasn't generated such comment?), the full MRO report for the year 1981, plus commentary on the Wessex's own practice rescue. Off-beat items include a note on frequency of visits to access-controlled Mendip caves (based on the issue of keys at Upper Pitts), and an ad for the Wessex Wonder Boot - a snip at £7.50 per pair. Not forgetting the everyday story of countryfolk underground, From the Log, and your very own Mendip News.

No 193, also undated, (are the Wessex embarrassed by the infrequency of issue?) and received in October, has a description of a Pyrenean visit. The key article though, is by Pete Moody on the Renold's Passage extension in Longwood/August (including plan and elevation). An alternative title could well have been "to the limit and beyond". Your recorder, having suffered survey equipment damage in the field while plotting Charterhouse Rakes, (due to high wind blowing over the compass tripod and also causing the tape to part) was relieved to read he is not alone, with the BEC's Abney level and the Wessex's old clinometer and new tape expiring on their first trip down Renold's.

The Renold's project was stimulated, according to Pete Moody, partly by rumours of "discoveries" in the early 1970's by the Plymouth Caving Group. His matter-of-fact description of pushing Renold's - an example being "...In May the trips were particularly trying, the passage being dug was only 10cm wide, 50cm high, and was half filled with water..." - puts a trip to the bitter end possibly in the Greg Smith league, but all who manage the Primrose Pot trip on 18th December should certainly qualify as entrants. Meanwhile the Moodys are becoming a legend in their own time, deservedly. And in case you thought the only moles the Wessex has are Alison and

Pete, "From the Log" shows how wrong you were. Now wouldn't it be nice to titivate our log with exploits of pushing unexplored chasms beyond the limit...

THE 1982 LIBRARY LIST

reviewed by the Editor

A weighty tome is the library list. A full 60 pages of solid facts about the MCG library. Our hon. librarian has spent many long nights generating this document, which lists every publication held by the club.

Part 1 lists all UK and Irish pamphlets, bibliographies; non-regional items; also foreign publications on international topics. The list is classified into subject groups. Part 2 lists regional items, classified into regional groups, with the Mendips group further classified into subject groups.

Part 3 lists UK and Irish caving club magazines, and other publications, in order of the club names. The newsletter and journal lists are conveniently shown in chart form for each club, so that you can see at a glance not only which months of which years we have editions for in the library, but which editions were published in the first place. Part 4 lists foreign publications in the same format.

This is a very useful document if you want to find a particular item in the library - particularly when used in conjunction with other reference documents and subject indexes. Several copies will be held in the library, and to make it easier to use when you've just returned from the Hunters, each part is printed on a different coloured paper with an index at the beginning.

TEN HOURS UNDER THE EARTH (or THE MISSING LINK)

One of Parkinson's lesser known laws is "The size of the party tends to increase to fill the cave space available". That's not true, but it was a party of no less than 10 that entered Agen Allwedd at 10.30 am on Saturday, 20th November: Tony Knibbs, Phil Ingold, Steve Conquest, Jon Roberts, Ian McKechnie, Geoff Barton, Dik Houseago, Steve Taylor, JP Burch, Adrian Duckett, Mick Dean, Roy Kempston, and Pete Bulling.

The plan was simple - a trip around the Outer Circle route through Summertime Series from Coal Cellar Passage, taking an estimated eight hours. Well, we had to have some sort of objective in a cave system 24 km long.

It took almost the first hour to get everyone to Baron's Chamber, emerging from the first boulder choke into the start of Main Passage. Soon turning off this huge dry corridor, we set off along Main Stream Passage where the size of the stream must have offered some hope of salvation to those clad in wetsuits.

An hour or so of slipping all over the place on greasy boulders, surmounting various obstacles and avoiding loose areas in the Second Boulder Choke, brought us to North-west Junction. At this point the main stream is augmented by another flowing from Turkey Streamway. It was as good a place as any to attack the various foodstuffs contained in the half dozen or so ammo boxes which never seem to get any lighter, however much is taken out of them.

Full of expectation and Mars bars, the party filed along the Turkey Streamway to find Coal Cellar Passage; it had to be the first obvious inlet on the right - and it was. From the survey back at Whitewalls, it had looked an easy matter to follow this passage up to a continuation - Easter Passage - and thence into Midsummer Passage. The description in Stratford's "Caves of South Wales" failed to suggest any route-finding problems. But fail we did.

The bitter end of Coal Cellar Passage was reached after numerous minor acrobatics and a lot of thrutching about as the passage dimensions shrank to miserable proportions. The stream finally issued from a choke with no way on. Several holes overhead were looked into on the slow return downstream, but somehow the necessary connection with Summertime Series eluded us. An obvious hands-and-knees crawl, on the right about

halfway back to Turkey Streamway, was followed for a couple of hundred feet until it was realised that it simply represented a higher level of Coal Cellar Passage and was running in the wrong direction.

It had taken about three hours to make the return trip up Coal Cellar Passage. The distance had seemed like miles, but I estimated its length as about 500 metres. I would very much like to hear where the connection with Easter Passage is or, failing the dawn of knowledge, the next attempt at the Outer Circle will be made from the opposite direction.

Before heading out of the cave, we pushed on up the roomy streamway and crossed Turkey Pool to reach Turkey Chamber where a halt was called.

The return trip seemed incredibly long and, in fact, it took about three hours from Northwest Junction. Minor debates took place at several points where boulders complicated the otherwise-large Main Stream Passage. Cavers holding opposite views on the best route usually went their separate ways to prove that almost any hole could be followed with equal success. It didn't always work out quite like that, of course!

Surprisingly, the only route-finding problem of any note was the elapse of some 10 frustrating minutes spent looking for the way into the first Boulder Choke from Baron's Chamber. And that was the one route feature which I had carefully (?) committed to memory on the way in.

The last 500 metres out to the entrance seemed never-ending. They must have been most trying for MD who was valiantly battling the twin evil of tiredness and cramp in both legs. Once out into the night air at about 8.30 pm we set off back along the tramroad in small groups, leaving JR the half-hour job of locking the gate. Noblesse oblige.

Far below the tramroad, the lights of Crickhowill stood out as clear as a hundred hub signs. Tiredness was almost forgotten in the universal rush to change, wash, and grab a quick meal before heading for the Bridge End Inn - an excellent free house - to relax over a couple of pints.

LOVE YOUR LIBRARY by McBibliophile

Have you ever browsed the MCG library while down on Mendip? Some of those musty, dull-sounding titles could give you a pleasant surprise if you just took them from their shelves and looked between their dusty covers. For example, how about this as an inspiration to the armchair caver?...

"The hour had come. I leapt to my feet. I set to work uncoiling the ropes, and tying them end to end. I had got together all the cordage I could lay my hands on, a mighty lot. Altogether there were a hundred and thirteen feet of rope, not very suitable because it was too thin, though strong enough for the weight of an adolescent.

"The handling of the rope and the tremendous knot with which I tied it to the nearest tree gave me confidence. I kept telling myself to be calm and determined, and immodestly reminding myself of my prowess in games of strength and agility. All this helped to restore my wits. Having got rid of all useless encumbrances, taken a lighted candle in my teeth, and hooked the acetylene lamp to my belt, I was not too much frightened as I backed down hand over hand into the abyss.

"At sixty-five feet the forty-five degree tunnel suddenly ended in a vertical drop, which in fact overhung a little, so that everything was plunged in darkness. It was the delicate point of the descent, but, trusting to my strong arms and Martell's description, I did not hesitate. I knelt backwards on the edge of the void, and then dropped on my stomach on the overhang, below which the rope dangled free. As my head passed the ledge, the candle bumped and went out. My vertical descent now was blind and out of reach of the walls. A hundred feet does not look like much in figures, but in reality it is the height of a seven-storey building; on a dangling rope in the dark it looks like more.

"It was a happy moment when I touched ground, and relit the candle and then the lamp. I was flushed with pride. I had vanquished my fears, and conquered my first chasm!"

That was Norbert Casteret, a teenage boy, in the first decade of this century. In "Ten Years Under the Earth" he tells of some of his early caving experiences, including "My First Chasm" from which the passage is taken. I don't think we'll recommend him for a safety award, though.

For those of a poetic bent, how about this?...

One day outside the Hunter's Inn
Arose a terrifying din,
As down the Priddy Road appeared
A vehicle exceeding wierd.
The centre part contained our Ken -
Reclining on his abdomen.
The front of this contraption queer
Had built-in sets of digging gear.
While prancing-irons made of steel
Were driven by the usual wheel.
And Kenneth said that, at the rear,
Was strapped a kilderkin of beer.
While down the chassis, on a board,
A cunning mass of pipes ensured
That petrol, oil, beer and water
Went each to its allotted quarter.
'Ah, well!' said Ken, 'I'll be away.
I've got a lot to do today.
But try to save some stew for me.
I'm off to do a quick GB.'

...a sample from "The ingenious Invention of Kenneth Lyle" - one of the 'Sneleodes' from 'Reflections' by 'Alfie'. (Cheddar Valley Press.)

A collection of first-rate historical photographs in Swildon's Hole, and a complete history of the cave from its discovery to (almost) the present day, are found in "A Pictorial History of Swildon's Hole" (Hessex Cave Club, 1975). A sample of the early material is this caption beside a photograph of "The Central Groun, November 12th Grotto, 3.8.1922:

"A topping instance of good STRONG lighting and shadow not by side lighting from concealed corner - contrasts are fine. Pity pillar on extreme right didn't come in to balance composition, but that would have brought your corner in as well, where light was coming from. Water evidently got into camera by its fall in the pool - it pulled a square half inch off the off this subject, can you spot it? I can only attribute this to the film sticking here to the sheath in front."

The quality of the photographs, taken in the 1920's with large, heavy cameras and lit with magnesium ribbon held in the end of a stick, makes one wonder what progress we have made with our modern equipment. And the beautiful formations recorded high above the streamway, many of which have since been destroyed, will at least encourage me to slow down and look around next time I go down Swildon's, rather than treat it as an expressway to Sump One.

Jin Eyres is a name that many of you will know - he achieved some notoriety last year by writing his book "The Cave Explorers"; and even more by getting it banned from sale during a court case over statements he made in the book. One of the less libellous but no less funny chapters is about a caving trip with two rather inexperienced Spanish cavers:

"A very wet Annisimo still clung stoically to the rock below the pitch. He was looking up dejectedly at an even more dejected Ignacio who was clinging fiercely to the ladder about fifteen feet above his head and doing an imitation of a statue in a fountain. John Carney, under some stress, was holding the wretched Spaniard on the lifeline; clamped rigidly to the ladder, the Spaniard refused to go up or down.

The water cascaded off his body and into his waders, which were now completely full and expanded with water. The water spilled over, making a picturesque liquid ballet skirt to veil the grotesque swollen rubber legs below. Every now and again, Ignacio's mouth would open and I could faintly hear the now familiar cry of 'Santa Maria'."

You'll be pleased to hear they got him down safely in the end. The book continues in similar vein throughout, though it has its sad moments as well, as in the account of the Mossdale tragedy.

Then there are back copies of the MCG Newsletter, where we learn that there's nothing new under the sun. Pick up any edition between nos.1 and 159, and you'll find the same issues recurring; complaints about caving gear left at the cottage; pleas for prompt payment of subs; discussions on cottage improvement; reports that the standard of caving is dropping among newer members; it's all there, time and time again.

And you'll find such gems as the suggestion (in the 1950's) that out-of-work members be paid from club funds for food and beer (not too much beer) in return for work on the club digs. And the account of the visit of the Marquis of Bath to an MCG dig, the diggers (complete with muddy boots) being taken afterwards in the Rells to Longleat for tea.

If these extracts have given you a taste for more, then have a look through the shelves some rainy day on Mendip. Most books may be borrowed, though please record all loans in the loan book, don't borrow too many at once, and try to return them as soon as possible to give other members a chance.

PROPOSED WARMINSTER BYPASS

from our transport correspondent.

The good people who brought you the Brown Shutters Crossroads Order 1981 have now brought forth the West of Southampton to Bath Trunk Road A36 (Warminster Bypass) Order 198- and (Warminster Bypass Side Roads) Order 198-. The 198- implies that it isn't yet an Order, and is going through the public enquiry mill (or will be within a year or so) before construction is given the go-ahead or further schemes are thought of. A Heytesbury bypass is also proposed for a later date. Comments and any objections to the scheme are required by 3th February 1983, to be received by the Department of Transport's South West Region offices at 26b Fore Street, Taunton, Somerset.

The Warminster Bypass has been proposed as a fairly firm commitment since 1976 when a route was safeguarded. Costing £7½ million at Oct 82 prices, it would be an all-purpose 7.3 metre wide single carriageway road approximately 9.7 km long - but would widen out to accommodate climbing lanes along the steeper sections of the route. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the statutory procedures and the availability of funds, construction of the bypass could start in about three years' time and take about two years to complete.

If things continue at this rate, Central Mendip will be only 2hrs drive from S11 London by the late 1980's (at legal speeds, that is). The effect of this on the popularity of Mendip caves can only be judged when the time comes, but it must reinforce the attraction of the area as the closest major caving area to SE England. Don't forget to purchase your queuing ticket now for the Hunters back room bar, unless of course Roger extends his establishment (as is Geoff Baynes down the road), or he starts selling coloured water at 60p a pint (that's 106p at 1988 prices, assuming 10% inflation or the equivalent in tax changes). And it's a good thing the Moodys are finding all that new cave passage - we'll need it.....

COMMENT ON EDITORS

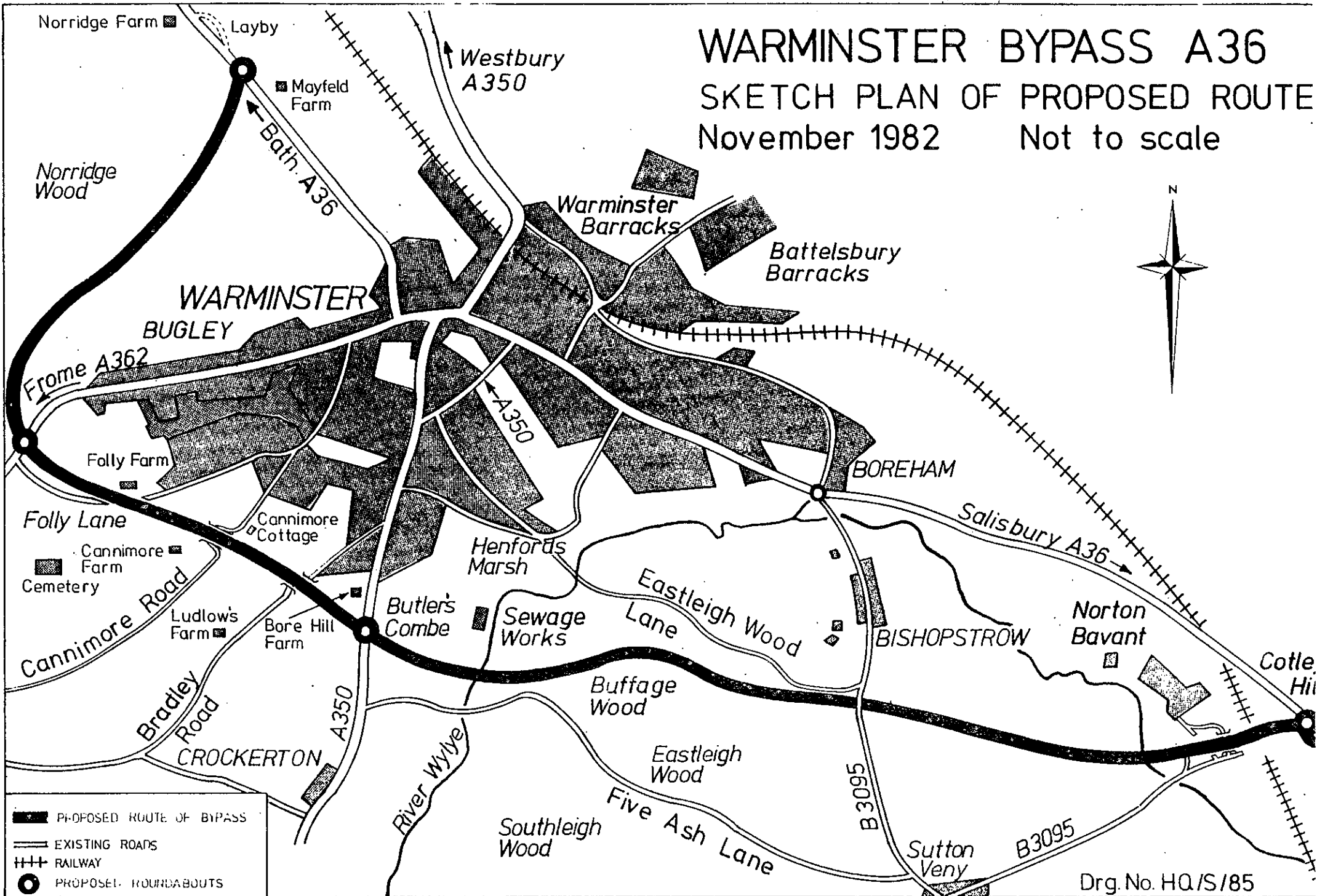
from 'Applied Optics', 15, 1915 (1 68)

Writers in Britain today are not so much bothered by censors - editors are our bug-bear. But in commenting on them, few would choose the word "glutton". Why should the poor devils not be gluttonous? During the post-prandial snooze some of our stuff might slip through unmangled.

WARMINSTER BYPASS A36

SKETCH PLAN OF PROPOSED ROUTE

November 1982 Not to scale



Drg. No. HQ/S/85

Trapped potholers song of survival

ELEVEN potholers, three of them girls, told today how they sang carols and joked while trapped by a flash flood 350 feet below the Mendip Hills, near Cheddar.

For more than 12 hours the group—four from London University and seven from Harlow, Essex, scout group—were trapped after heavy rains sent floodwater surging through the cave system.

The rescue followed the damming and diversion of a stream draining off the hills into the cave.

Firemen stemmed the water a quarter of a mile from where it went underground and then pumped it, 600 gallons a minute, into another part of the valley half a mile away.

As the underground water level dropped the potholers, four geography

undergraduates from Queen Mary's College, London, and the scout group, unhurt but cold, walked to safety and cups of hot soup at midnight.

David Allen, 21, of Bristol, and his girlfriend Frances Dorkin, 20, of Waltham Cross, Herts, smiled after reaching the surface. Said David: "We were never lost. We knew where we were and when the water rose we got to higher ground."

Frances said: "We joined the scout group and sat it out, huddled together for warmth, singing and making jokes."

Mr Phil Romford, a member of the Mendip Rescue Organisation said the flooding was unexpected and it was just bad luck.

But another member of the rescue organisation, Mr Brian Prewer, said the potholers were "perhaps slightly foolhardy" in not asking locals for advice before going down.

GUARDIAN, 1-11-82

Potholer dives to new record

By Martin Wainwright

SURROUNDED by silt and watched only by freshwater shrimps, a Welsh potholer has established a new British cave-diving record. Mr Martyn Farr swam to a depth of 200 feet—50 feet beyond the record—in the Wookey Hole system below the Mendips.

His way was eventually blocked by two silted-up slots, narrow fissures in the rock, at the maximum depth where compressed air could be used safely. Mr Farr swam back along a lifeline in water so murky that he was unable to read his depth gauges.

The attempt began on Saturday when Mr Farr, aged 31, Mr Robert Palmer, also 31 from Bristol, and Mr Robert Parker, 20, from Southampton, entered the Wookey Hole show caves. All three were part of a team which established a world record in the Bahamas last month by swimming 3,880 feet into a sea cave.

Their target in the Mendips lay more than 2,000 feet ahead through four flooded caves along the course of a stream which sinks below ground at Swildon's Pot and rises two miles away at Wookey. Exploring the link between the caves, more than a mile of which remains unknown, is one of the main challenges facing Britain's cave-divers.

Mr Farr said yesterday that one of the slots was clearly negotiable but only by digging out silt which would have been foolhardy at that level.

"We are working at the limits of our knowledge here. I can't see further progress for a few years although I think it will come in time. It won't be me, though. You have to be at your absolute peak for this."

Mr Parker, who waited with Mr Palmer in Chamber 25 above the sump which Mr Farr descended, said that the water was extremely muddy. When Mr Farr was making his final decompression stop to avoid the "bends," only 10 feet below the surface, they could see no more than a dim glow.

There were no remarkable formations, which are rare in Britain's flooded caves, but an escort of small shrimps continued all the way to the bottom. Mr Farr's underwater journey took him something like 500 feet along alternately steep and gentle slopes before he reached the silted-up passages.

Mr Farr said that he had various other projects in mind in the many unexplored passages of Britain's cave system.

Telegraph, 15.11.82

Jungle tribe of cavemen discovered

By IAN WARD
in Singapore

A PRIMITIVE tribe has been found deep in the hinterland jungles of Sarawak. It is believed the 40 cave-dwellers have never had contact with the civilised world.

The tribe inhabits the upper reaches of the Sungei Ulu Tutoh. Their diet consists of wild sago and jungle fruits, and they make fire by striking stones together.

First contact was made with them early this month after another hinterland tribe told of sighting three jungle people wearing leaves and bark.

An expedition into the region will investigate reports that one of the tribal customs involves marriages between parents and children in the event of a death in the family.

It is believed the men marry their daughters, if their wives die, and the women marry their sons if their husbands die.

Officials who spoke to members of the tribe during the first encounter feel that they may be an offshoot of the Aboriginal group known as the Punans.

What is puzzling, however, is that the "lost" tribe has a distinct dialect of its own. Some of the women of the tribe were spotted breast-feeding infants.

Telegraph, 15.11.82

Roast bat for the Queen

ROAST bat, boiled banana and stewed blackbird complete with beak and feet were on the menu last night when the Queen was guest of honour at a South Seas feast in Funafuti.

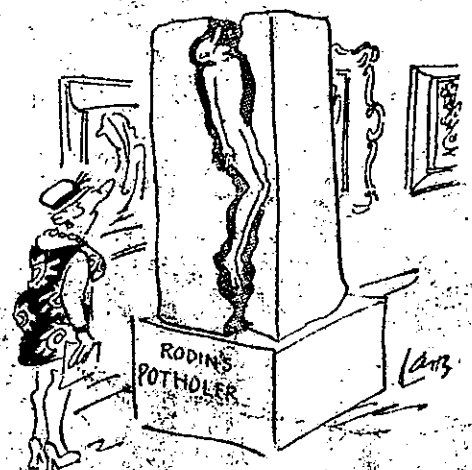
Wearing a crown of stephanotis in place of her tiara, she put on her spectacles and stared at the large green matting plate placed before her.

It was piled nearly a foot high with every possible Tuvaluan delicacy including bread fruit, crayfish, lobster and coconut crab. The Queen seemed unsure what to try first.

After careful inspection and considerable thought, she selected a small piece of chicken and a banana, and in between mouthfuls she sipped from the opened coconut at her side.

As a special concession, the Queen ate with a knife and fork while others around her tucked in with their fingers.

The feast took place in the low Maneapa meeting house, carpeted with beautifully decorated matting. The Queen, in a pink and orange evening dress, sat on a low stool as island girls advanced bearing garlands. One had difficulty placing the flower crown on her head, and left it perched somewhat precariously—and back to front.



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Bob Speleo β

(based on a recent reported incident in Upper Floor.)





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