

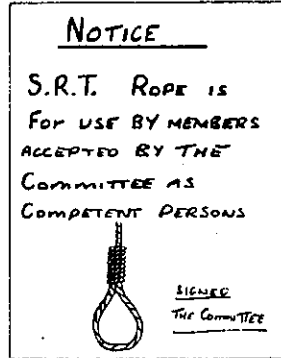
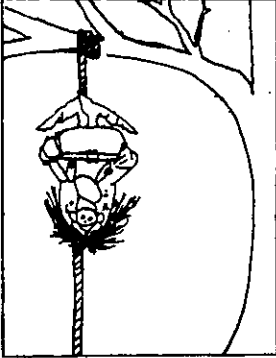


Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

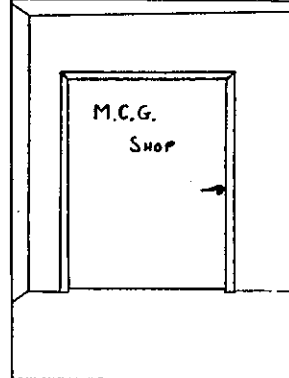
November 1983

No. 167

Bob Speleo β

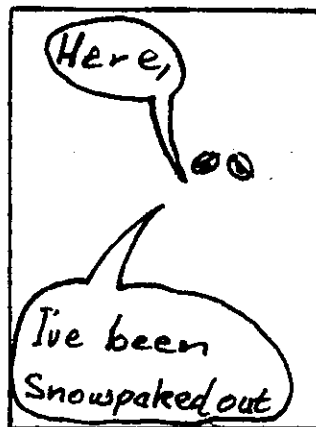
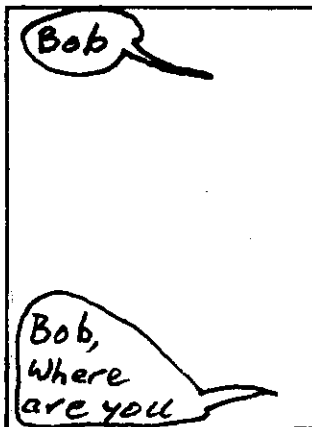


Bob Speleo β



from a verbal illustration by Tony

Bob Speleo β



Bob Speleo β



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BOB SPELEO RULES
OK

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

Secretary:

Tony Knibbs, 23 Winern Glebe, Byfleet, Surrey.
tel (home) Byfleet 43875 (work) 01-546-7741 ext 2199

Treasurer:

Arthur Spain, 57 Guildford Road, Broadbridge Heath, Horsham, Sussex.
tel (home) Horsham 64068 (work) Crawley 542251 ext 63

Meet Secretary:

Geoff Barton, 5b Cricket View, Princes Road, Weybridge, Surrey.
tel (home) Weybridge 49241

Cottage Warden:

John Miriam, 44 Chesterfield Road, West Ewell, Surrey. KT19 9QP
tel (home) 01-393-3955 (work) 01-736-1212 ext 3027

Tacklemaster:

Roy Kempston, 13 Florence Road, College Town, Camberley, Surrey.
tel (home) Camberley 34338

Resorder:

Jonathan Roberts, 17 Kent Avenue, West Faling, London, W13 8BE
tel (home) 01-997-2916 (work) 01-278-3825

Editor:

Ian McKechnie, 30 Brittain Road, Hersham, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.
tel (home) Walton 228292

CAVING ACCOMMODATION is available at the MCG cottage on Mendip. The address is:
Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6XW.
Map reference NGR 5147 5606 (OS 1:50000 first series sheet 182).
Bookings should be made with the Cottage Warden.

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

MCG MEET PROGRAMME

Dec 3	St Cuthbert's Swallet	Tony Knibbs	MCG
Jan 21	Peak Cavern	Roy Kempston	Orpheus
Feb 18	Yorkshire	Martin Rowe	NPC?
Mar 17	DYO/OFD	Roger Wallington	SWCC
Apr 20-29	N. Scotland	Geoff Barton	Grampian

ST CUTHBERTS is one of Mendip's major cave systems. Entry is with an approved leader/leader only, and the MCG now has a leader in the form of Tony Knibbs. On the weekend of 3rd December will be one of the infrequent opportunities to visit the cave. If you'd like to go along - let Tony know as soon as possible. (nb there's a barrel on that weekend. Now will you go?)

ARMCHAIR MEET on 8th December will be a presentation of the slides from the Pyrenees trip. If you have any slides we don't know about, please contact Ian McKechnie as soon as possible.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

NEW PROBATIONARY MEMBERS:

Peter Collings-Wells, 63 Jordan Road, Perivale, Middlesex. tel 01-998-3228
introduced by Tony Knibbs, Denise Samuel.

James Davies, 'Doirlinn', Owlsmoor Road, Owlsmoor, Camberley, GU15 4TS
 introduced by Roy Kempston, Malcolm Cötter. tel (0344) 771736
 Mike Heselden, 3 The Close, Thornhill Park, Southampton, SO2 5RB
 introduced by Tony Knibbs, John Miriam. tel (0703) 464490

GORDON LISTER is now a full member.

ADDRESS CHANGES: Lesley Robbins is now found at 53 Hilary Close, Aylesbury, Bucks (0296) 33337. Paul and Joy Merton have moved to 21 Howbeury Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey, CR4 8HZ, 01-771-0666. Bob Varley is at Flat 2, Nokewood House, Church Lane, Beckley, Oxford, OX3 9UT, tel Stanton St. John 760. Dave and Kathy Baxter have come South to 52 Bradshaw Road, Watford, Herts, WD2 4DE, tel 0923-32504. Steve Coquest can be found at 10 McAdam Drive, Enfield, Middlesex, EN2 8FS, tel 01-366-3276. Peter Hervey has moved to 'Brynawel', Castle Road, Rhayader, Powys, tel (0597) 810831.

CONGRATULATIONS to Phil Eliot and Maria, who are to be married on 25th November. Also to Bob Varley and Jenny, who were married earlier in the year.

THE COMMITTEE is in need of extra assistance, to help in the general running of the club. Our constitution does not allow us to increase the number of committee members, but it has been suggested that in future there should be two Ordinary Members outside the committee who will help individual committee members when they have a peak work-load or are not available themselves, and to take responsibility for some of the tasks which committee members do not always have time for. Any member who would like to take on one of these posts, please contact Tony Knibbs or another committee member. And of course, if you're thinking you may wish to stand for election to the committee in the future, it's an excellent way to get your name well known by the club membership....

RECEIPTS should be provided to cover the expense of anything you have to buy for the club, such as replacement 'household' items for the cottage. You should not normally spend more than £10 without the prior approval of the treasurer - this is obviously necessary to allow the treasurer to keep control of club funds. However the rule should be treated with a little common sense; for example, if the cottage gas cylinder is empty and you have to replace it (cost £23) then you have done a good job, providing you have a receipt. But if you spend £8.50 on a decorative brass helmet-hook for the hall, you will certainly be asked to justify the expense, receipt or no receipt.

COTTAGE BOOKINGS

November	February
25 Kingston Poly	4 Members Weekend
	11
December	18
3 Members (St Cuthberts), Barrel.	25 Dave Higginson (12)
10 West Midlands (10)	
17	March
24	3 Members Weekend
31 Members Weekend	10 Dave Higginson (12)
	17
January	24
7	31
14	
21	April
28	7 Members Weekend

COTTAGE NOTES

OUR LADDER (cottage-climbing, not caving), is now attached to the back wall of the cottage, and the key is kept on the back of the library wall. So if you find a blocked gutter, there's now no excuse for not going up to unblock it. But don't forget to put the ladder back afterwards and put the key away - it's rather too attractive an item to leave unguarded during the week.

OUR LIBRARIAN informs us that a number of members have had books out for some time; if you are one - would you please return or renew as soon as possible.

GROWLS OF DISCONTENT have been noted on several weekends recently, when members who have booked into hotels or bought tents, arrive to discover that the fully-booked cottage is actually half empty. The sin of booking then not turning up is unavoidable on occasions; most of us have had to drop out through illness or some other reason at least once. But please bear in mind, now that the membership has grown and the cottage is more often full, that others may be glad of your bed; don't book up if you think you MIGHT go that weekend. Similarly, if you find the cottage is fully booked the weekend you want to go, don't be put off; put your name on the booking sheet anyway, as first reserve; on past experience you're pretty sure of a bed, and if you're unlucky, the chairs are almost as comfortable.

TACKLE REPORTS

SRT TACKLE is still spread among a number of members. If you have some of the club/Pyrenees SRT gear, please tell Roy Kempston what you have (including lengths) so that he can complete his list of holdings. If you want to borrow SRT gear, Roy is also the person to ask. But don't bother to ask unless you are an experienced practitioner of the art of SRT, who has demonstrated this skill to the satisfaction of the committee. If you are a newcomer to SRT you are welcome to use the gear, but only under the supervision of an experienced member of the club, who must be the one to take responsibility for the equipment.

A TACKLE BOOK is in the tackle store, where you should note any lost, damaged, or defective equipment you come across. It is also important that any tackle taken away from Mendip is recorded in the book, or any tackle taken for longer than the duration of a caving trip recorded on the trip board. Please remember also to return tackle as soon as possible, especially when it has been taken away from Mendip, eg to an away meet, and don't take all but three of the club's ladders away so that no-one else can do any caving - check with Roy Kempston in advance if you will need a lot of tackle.

Participants: Tony Knibbs, Denise Samuel, Arthur Spain, Geoff Barton, Roy Kempston, Bob Varley, Paddy Newman, Alan Dougherty.

As usual, we enjoyed the hospitality of the OSS at "Whitewalls" for the weekend. The good news is that they have decided to instal a shower; the bad news is that it isn't finished.

Not all caving trips have a definite aim, but this one had a declared itinerary of Northwest Junction, Turkey Pool, Summertime Series, and return via Coalcellar Passage. Last year we had failed to locate the connection between coal cellar passage and Summertime, so this time advice was sought and the magic connection approached from the other direction. Bearing in mind the problems which we encountered, this report records the connection in sufficient detail to act as a reference.

We entered the cave at 11.00am which, considering the scheduled duration of 10 hours, clearly jeopardised drinking time. Apart from TK leading everyone up a cul-de-sac somewhere between the entrance and first boulder choke, no route-finding problems were encountered as we spent as we reached the first three hours reaching Turkey Pool where we halted for a meal. As befits a trip of this nature, the food consumed included pork pies and buttered buns, BV deserving special mention for Chelsea buns made by himself.

For reasons best known to themselves, GB, RK, and PN dined by themselves downstream of Turkey Pool. This deprived RK of the knowledge which might have stopped him from drinking from the water when he was on the far side, ie that someone had gone for a leak upstream.

We continued upstream via Turkey Chamber to eventually reach Hawkins' Horror - a pas passage off to the right into Sand Caverns Passage at the start of Summertime Series. After about 100m up Sand Caverns, a right turn enters Selenite Needle Passage which provides a mixture of crawling and stooping to reach Eastern Avenue, itself an element of the Inner Circle route.

We found Midsummer Passage easily enough; it is the first right-hand passage off Eastern Avenue and carries away the small stream between banks of sandy mud. Midsummer Passage continues South, and the stream becomes lost beneath sand-covered breakdown blocks which eventually choke the passage. A hole between boulders at the left-hand wall was followed along the wall for about 50m to pass the choke and regain open passage.

Almost immediately on leaving the choke, an examination of the right-hand wall revealed two holes sloping down for a few metres to unite above a narrow, parallel-sided vertical rift. The two holes are obscured from casual view by a large, flat-topped block upon which we found a 'marker' - a brick-sized rock with white plastic-covered detonator wire wound around it.

The narrow rift drops about three metres directly into the upstream section of Easter Passage. To me, it looked rather intimidating as a route for all to use; at this point I was unsure of how much passage, and of what difficulty, lay between us and the upstream extension of Coal Cellar Passage. But AS decided the issue and easily passed the slot, with DS in support, shuffling over a chockstone and dropping down about a body length to open passage below.

Of course, as soon as somebody provides a lead, others follow, and it was not long before we were all thrutching along a small, boulder-encumbered passage - mostly on hands and knees (ouch!). We had met the stream again and, slowly, I recognised enough landmarks to be sure that the slot had dropped directly into Easter Passage. God knows how we had missed this connection, having worked upstream from Coal Cellar

Passage on a previous trip, I shall never know. Equally puzzling is the question of where Coal Cellar Passage becomes Faster Passage, but navigation is simply by following the stream.

Reminiscent of the previous trip, tiredness began slowing down the party; BV slowed me down by being kind enough to let me carry his ammo box (again!). We reached Turkey streamway at about 6.00pm and continued down to Northwest Junction, stopping for a nosh and a rest shortly beyond.

Before we set off, I managed to get rid of the blasted Ammo box - I was offered PN's rocket tube (Exocet, perhaps?) and reluctantly passed the box to DS. Now that everyone was slowed down, we headed off out. Minor route-finding problems held us up in the vicinity of Second Boulder Choke, otherwise the return trip went smoothly and we left thencave at 8.30pm.

Everyone was back at 'Whitewalls' soon after 9.00pm and a frenzy of disrobing and washing took place before people either went down to Crickhowell for a few jars or practised 'cordon noir' cooking just to be different. It must have been a bad night because everyone claimed to have caught a fleeting glimpse of the spectre of JR scrounging supper at the hut around midnight.

GENERAL NOTICE - THE CARRIAGE OF OTHER PEOPLE'S IMPEDIMENTA.

It is hereby proclaimed that, in future, no assistance will be rendered in the carriage of other people's impedimenta - including plastic rocket tubes, ammo boxes, wicker hampers, portmanteaux, sea chests, handbags (with purses), imitation leather suitcases or tin trunks - unless the following conditions are agreed to or complied with before, or at the time of, commencement of the aforementioned carriage.

- (i) The caver requiring such assistance (hereinafter referred to as THE NUISANCE) shall demonstrate his/her total exhaustion. Panting and walking into walls will not be considered sufficient evidence, unless offered as part of a bigger fiasco.
- (ii) The person providing the service of carriage (hereinafter referred to as THE MUG) shall take all reasonable steps to avoid the chore. Demonstration of equal incompetence, dying, breaking a leg, hiding successfully for more than five minutes, are all acceptable as disqualification.
- (iii) In the event of the Nuisance dying prematurely, the item(s) carried shall become the property of the Mug.
- (iv) The Nuisance shall ensure that the item to be carried shall be properly fitted with handle, shoulder strap, skid, wheel(s), in such a way as to facilitate carriage by the Mug.
- (v) The Mug shall not be held responsible in any way for the safety or survival of the item(s). It will be assumed that the Nuisance has rendered such items impervious to :
 - (a) accidental throwing down pitches not exceeding 100m depth,
 - (b) loss of buoyancy through some inability to support additional ballast (rocks) stowed internally or attached by string or wire,
 - (c) damage by fire, notably a few hours contact with multiple carbide lamp flames or placing upon a paraffin, petrol, or spirit stove,
 - (d) destruction by explosion due to negligently placing the item(s) within inches of a prepared charge, thereby occasioning a terrible misfortune.
- (vi) The Nuisance shall, at all times, be responsible for ensuring that the Mug does not absentmindedly forget such item(s), ie by inadvertently leaving such item(s) under or behind boulders or buried in sand, gravel, or soft mud.

(vii) In the unlikely event of the item(s) actually being returned, howsoever altered by circumstances, to the Nuisance, the Mug shall be entitled to levy a fee, payable in good quality bitter, as shown hereunder.

- (a) Ammo box, handbag, (with or without purse), satchel, small knapsack, canary (in cage).....ONE PINT
- (b) Large ammo box, small suitcase, briefcase, hamper, attache case, hatbox, rolled umbrella, or any item exceeding 5lb weight or 1cu.ft volume.....HALF GALLON
- (c) Full-size suitcase (with strap - on wheels), sea chest, tin trunk, port-manteau, Gladstone bag, rucksack, carpet bag, (including Axminster), tea chest, or any item exceeding 30lb weight or 2cu.ft volume.....ONE GALLON
- (d) Wheelbarrow, handcart, palanquin, luggage trolley, sack truck (with sack), or an item which is so big and heavy that two or more Mugs are needed to move it.....ONE BARREL

(viii) Potential Nuisances are advised to carry underground some readily negotiable form of prepayment (or bribe); some Mugs would do anything for a can of Fuller's in Summertime Series.....

THE TROLL BOLLARD HANGER

by Martin Rowe

MCG members who attended the SRT course at Whernside and anyone who was on the Pyrenees trip, will be familiar with this new piece of equipment. The hanger, which bolts into standard 8mm anchors, is self contained and requires no carabiner or maillon rapide - the rope is attached directly into the hanger. It is light-weight (only 25 gm.) and compact (4 x 3cm).

To use, first a loop is tied in the rope, (bowline on the bight, butterfly, fig 8, depending on location). This loop is pushed through the opening in the Bollard and over the bolt, which is then screwed into the anchor. It is important to either have a slightly overhanging location, or to arrange the belay so that the rope hangs clear of the rock. This is to avoid friction, especially at the knot. The best loading is just less than 90 degrees to the anchor, but it is ascertained to be safe to use up to 45 degrees.

When de-tackling, remember that once unscrewed from the anchor, the Bollard is not attached to anything and it is likely to disappear down the pitch if you are not careful. An 'ordinary' hanger remains fixed into the knot in the rope.

Have a krab at hand, and carry the Bollard (and any other hangers) inside the tackle bag when not in use, to prevent damage to the threads.

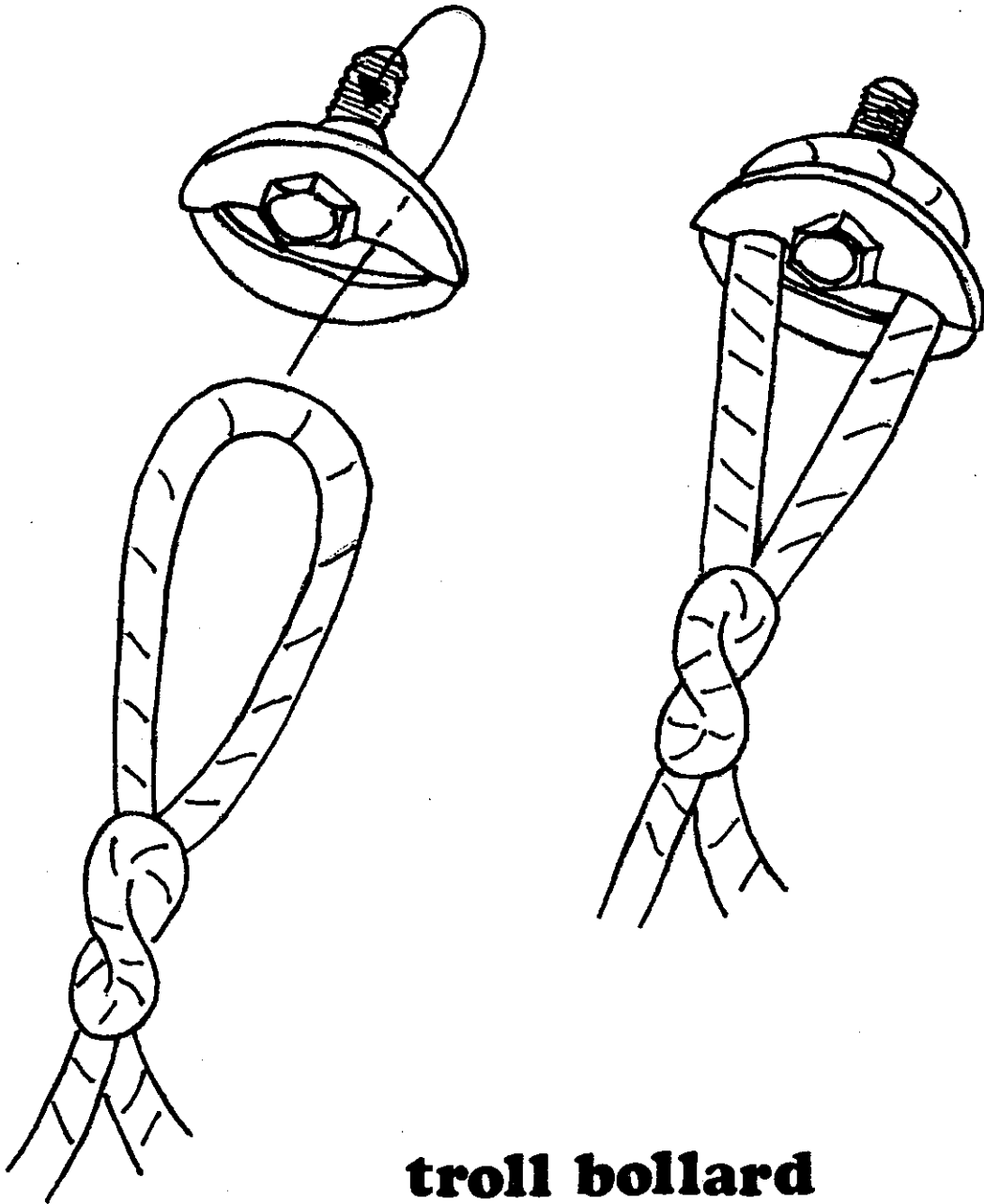
A KNOT FOR DOUBLE BELAYS

by Martin Rowe

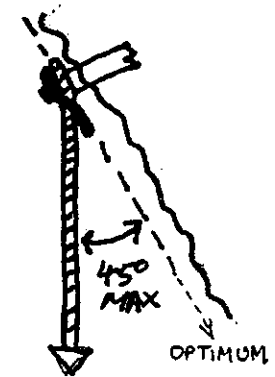
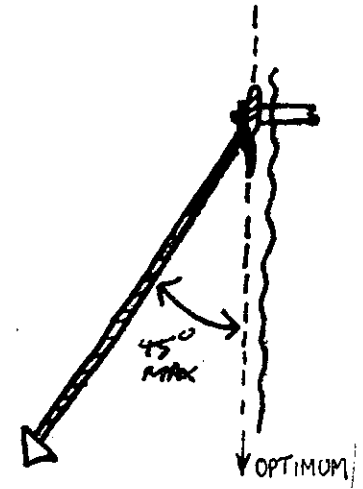
When arranging a double belay for an SRT rope, it is useful to have a knot with a double loop, one for each hander. The simple figure-8 knot only has a single loop; however, the figure-8-on-the-bight produces two loops. A further advantage of this knot is that the loops can be adjusted independently so that loops of different lengths are produced.

To tie, first of all make a figure-8 knot with one long loop (fig 1 overleaf). Then take the end of this loop and begin to return it through the knot (fig 2). This produces two new loops, and by slipping the end of the original loop over them (fig 3) then over the entire knot, the knot is secured (fig 4). The method is similar to that used in a bowline-on-the-bight

Figure 5 illustrates how the knot is used in a double belay. The loops can be adjusted to any lengths; if the angle between the loops is 90 degrees then this avoids over-tensioning the belay.

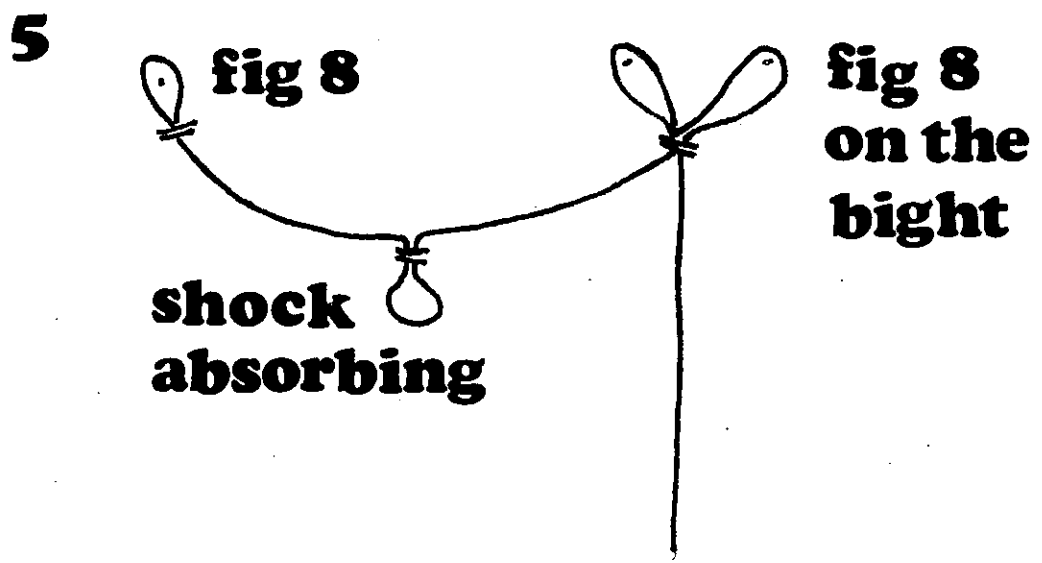
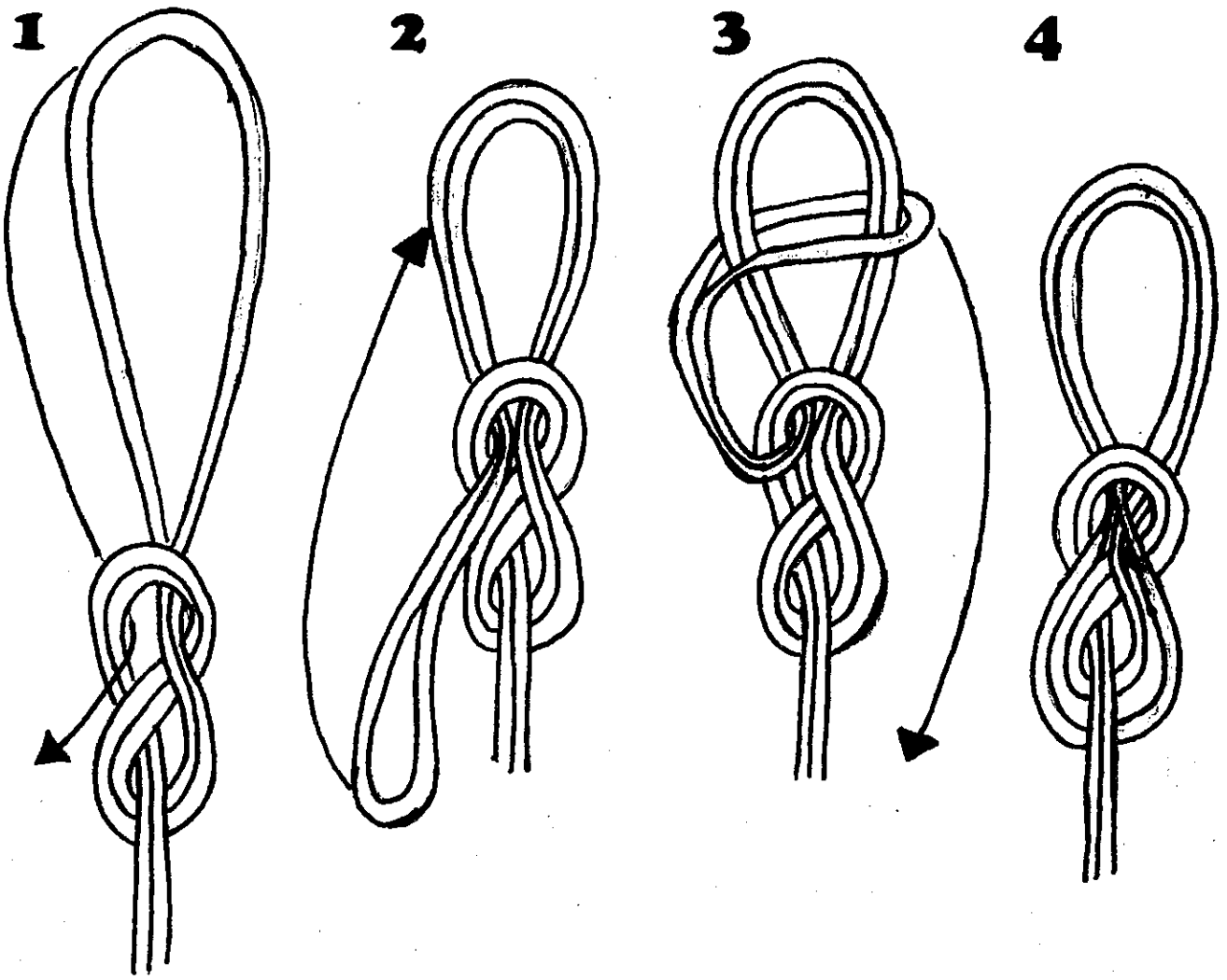


troll bollard



max. loading angles

Figure 8 on the bight



For me, the highlight of the conference was the series of stereo colour slides taken Gregoriana expedition. The most impressive of these slides was taken looking directly down a 55m shaft and when projected onto a 20' square screen it had 200 people in the audience desperately groping around looking for belay points and cows tails. In fact, if we had been wearing caving gear and if a few sound effects had been thrown in, it would have been impossible to believe I wasn't actually caving in Spain. This was one up on Armchair Caving - more like a sit harness. Incidentally, Gregoriana has potentially the world's deepest cave - Poga Jorcada Blanca (I think), better known as F.U.56.

Clive Westlake's informative talk was a guide to the parts of Speedwell Cavern that tourists and most cavers never see, with some geology, history, and hydrology mixed in. Some high quality photography and his professional presentation all helped to make the conference excellent value for money (16 talks per day for £1, or about 6p each).

In the afternoon, an inspired talk by Howard Jones was pure entertainment. Basically a slide show of him and his mates doing a bit of caving in Treviso, Spain (Cueva 56 to be precise) his wit and humour led us through slides of thier trip down what is potentially the world's deepest cave.

Blue holes 83 was, surprisingly, not an expedition to potentially the world's deepest cave, but rather a cave diver's holiday in the Bahamas. They did find a shrimp though. Or as Julian Walker said. "This is a shrimp. It has red spots on. Other than that, it is white". He also said, "We were supposed to do some biological work, but it didn't come off, as we didn't know what we were doing".

Mexico 82 was another expedition to potentially the world's deepest cave, enlivened by the presence of a few well-known Mendip cavers. They didn't find the deepest cave (which gives them the excuse to go back, I suppose), but they did discover the local fire water. As there were Mendip cavers present, there had to be silly games of course, some of which involved live fireworks (Bryan Terry please note). Their progress down one cave was halted at a skull slope (honest!), which the Mexican papers reported as "British cavers find world's deepest cave in Mexico - way on blocked by skulls". Bet 'Descent' has never had a story like that.

This was followed by Sid Perou's latest film - about Mexico. As usual, it is up to his very high standard, but does let one unfortunate phrase creep in - yes, you've guessed it - "...to find the world's deepest cave". He didn't find it, but Dave and Gill did dive several sumps to find new passages beyond. Dave led the way, with Gill following and continually asking "Is it getting big, Dave?" or "Isn't it, Dave". No need to say how this went down with 400 cavers in the audience. What I can't figure is how Sid Perou is always there to film Dave "Discovering" new passages beyond the sumps.

Alison Moody was due to give a talk at this point on Charterhouse Cave, but didn't show up. My guess is that she had discovered the world's deepest cave in Mendip and was keeping it quiet.

Sunday morning got off to a slow start after Saturday night's disco (bar till 2a.m.) Talks on Pecos and Matienzo began to blurr together in the mind. You can only take so much. It was as if we were really watching a slide show of the world's deepest Cave - it went on and on. 15km long-1196mpotential 1500m 29 pitches8days to rig2000m rope600 rolls film.

One thing is for sure: when the World's Deepest Cave is eventually found, Dave Elliot and Paul Ramsden will bottom it on SRT and others on ladder. The SRT/Ladder debate didn't produce anything conclusive. At one point Dave Elliot said ".....

..climbing is like wanking: its boring and makes your arms ache". Someone behind me whispered "so does SRT".

Dave Elliot also gave an interesting talk on knot strengths, the result of some backyard research at Whernside. He concluded by saying more research requires more money and that the national bodies cough up, he wouldn't do anymore. Embarrassed smiles from BCRA officials. (Dave also had some pretty slides of the latest in caving clothing for female cavers in Yorks).

Finally the illustrated lecture on the Gaping Gill/Inglborough connection by Geoff Yeadon and Geoff Croosley. This trip had been 'on' for some time but Yorks TV who wanted to film it delayed then backed out. Fortunately Sid Perou had recently returned from filming in potentially the World's Deepest Cave, in Mexico, and saved the day. The lecture consisted of a brief history of the exploration and how the connection was made, with Sid filming. Geoff and Geoff didn't have slides of the sumps, but got around this..."In fact it looks very like Keld Head. Very much". Well if you've seen one, you've seen them all - but wasn't it huge Dave!

NOT PENYGHENT POT WEEKEND.

by Tony Knibbs

Participants: Roger Wallingto, Mike Lovell, Tony Knibbs, Danise Samuel, Phil Eliot, Pete Collings-Wells, Martin Rowe, Steve Lane.

This is really a tale about making the best of things when faced by adversity. RW's insurers may not think the word 'adversity' is the best choice under the circumstances. Starting the weekend by demolishing his Audi all over the back of a Jensen Interceptor on the M1, Roger had more reasons than most to find weather conditions uninspiring on Saturday morning, 8th October. Rain poured down liberally out of a mournful grey sky. Friday night's report of water conditions had not been optimistic, so the overnight downpour, and its sequel, were not helpful. Penyghent was obviously off limits.

SL and MR (plus two mates) sought to defeat the rain by visiting Car Pot using SRT. This turned out to be a fiasco because the second pitch was too wet to descend. And Car Pot is usually a dry trip, indicative of just how web the fells were.

The rest of us decided to take shelter in (a) the Whoop Hall, at Cowan Bridge, for a couple of pints, then (b) Lancaster Hole and Easegill. RW and ML set off to put the ladders into County Pot to facilitate a through trip. TK, DS, PE, and PC-11 headed towards Lancaster Hole, laddered the 110ft shaft, and proceeded to enjoy an unusually wet descent starting soon after 1.00pm.

While waiting for RW and ML to arrive from County Pot over the moors, we set about passing the time by descending into the Graveyard via an extremely wet fixed ladder pitch of about 25ft. None of us could think where the Collonades were, but the arrival of the other two allowed us to begin the trek towards Easegill.

When it could be heard far below us, the main stream sounded lively. The waterfall from Cow Pot provided a noisy spectacle at Fall Pot, and numerous other inlets were seen entering the system from all sorts of nooks and crannies. The main stream was only encountered in the Master Cave at Oxbow Corner; it filled the whole passage with peaty, brown, rapids.

The Minarets was a welcome landmark. Route-finding had been straightforward so far and continued this way to Stop Pot where the fixed 30ft ladder eluded us for a few minutes. Beyond Stop Pot, boulders were soon descended to the Main Drain from which the route off towards County Pot was impassible due to the high state of the stream.

A party had been encountered back at about Cornes' Cavern. They had come in via Manchester Bypass and had obviously laddered the short Waypole Pitch. Hoping that

we were ahead of them, we retraced our steps towards Snail Cavern. The bypass was easily located in the left-hand wall, across a bedding plane, and we were soon reduced to thrutching along this vile, knobbly, intestine of a passage.

At the maypole it was obvious that we had finished second; the other party had gone, and with them their ladder. Never mind, the maypole was left in position and it only took a few minutes of knotting slings and bits of nylon string together to provide a passable means of descent. Let's be honest, anything was preferable to trudging back to Lancaster Hole entrance, and it was only a 15ft climb (or fall).

Safely down, it took us only a few minutes to reach the streamway above Spout Hall. Continuing upstream to Oxford Circus gained the short climb up the left-hand wall into the County Pot streamway and out to a truly wet and miserable evening on the moors at about 6.45pm.

We all felt rather weary and the prospect of having to go over to de-tackle Lancaster entrance shaft was most unwelcome. But thoughts of a hot shower back at Greenclouse spurred us on and it only took an extra 45minutes to finish the job.

Sunday seemed to dawn even wetter than Saturday and the prospect of putting on wet gear drained away whatever enthusiasm there may have been remaining. Still, it hadn't all been bad.