

MCCG NEWS

July 1986 No 186

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

BIG BROTHER ON THE FARM

Farmers and landowners at Priddy could be prosecuted for using their own land.

They will be breaking the law if they fail to seek permission to work the land - because of cave systems 500 feet below.

This is the shock effect of the Nature Conservancy Council's bid to designate the area as a site of special scientific interest.

Large areas have been forward as being sites of special interest and there are now less than four months for objectors to put their cases.

NCC regional officer, Mr Bob Corns, said the regulations came into effect immediately and any owners or occupiers who did not follow the official procedure would open themselves up to legal proceedings.

Owners will be acting illegally if they fail to obtain permission to carry out work such as ploughing, grazing, seeding or hedging operations described in official paperwork as "potentially damaging".

Those affected have been sent forms by the Nature Conservancy Council designed to streamline the process of gaining permission - but owners are incensed by the whole idea and say they will not sign.

If they fail to do this and carry out a restricted activity without seeking permission they will be breaking the law.

Owner Geoff Baynes, Of the Queen Victoria public house, said "The situation is like 'big brother'".

"I'm very upset by the whole principal of the thing. I don't like the idea of being told what I can do and what I can't do on my own land. If someone wants to plant a tree they will have to have permission."

"I am not going to sign the form. We are going to organise a campaign against the move. It seems to me it's a takeover of our fundamental rights," he said.

Farmer Alan Pattinson, of Higher Eastwater Farm, also said he was refusing to sign the form.

Designation of the area as being of special scientific interest will bring the sections of land under the control of the Nature Conservancy Council.

A four-month consultation has begun before a decision is made on whether designation should take place.

But as a result of a 1985 amendment in Parliament, strict rules over the use of proposed special sites came into operation the moment initial notifications were sent out.

Forms sent to owners list various activities which could be carried out without further permission - but this only applies if the forms are signed and returned.

"Owners of land above the system have been sent a list of consented operations, which will be their normal farming operations. If they sign this they will be able to carry on without further permission," said Mr Corns.

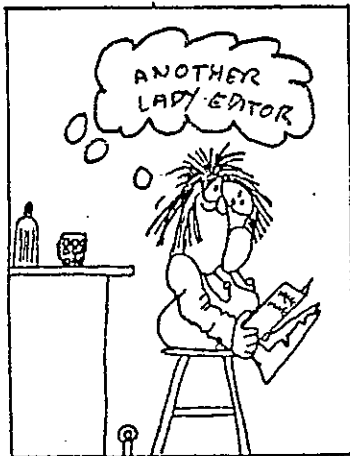
"It is up to them. Without consent, a person opens himself up to the possibility of legal proceedings".

"To avoid that we have tried to restrict the amount of applications required by offering people the chance of signing consent forms now," he said.

by Brian Cock
Wells Journal.

SPECIAL DATE

Jul 12	Member's weekend St Cuthberts (John Miriam)	..... .....
Jul 26	..... .....	Lancaster Hole, Yorkshire (Ian Parry)
Aug 9	Member's weekend Radstock Mine (Yvonne Ward)	..... .....
Aug 23	.....	Tunnel Cave, Wales (Any offers?)
Sep 13-27	.....	Malaga, Spain (Adrian Duckett)
Oct 11	Member's weekend Half Yearly	..........
Oct 25	..... .....	Lost John's, Yorkshire (Mike Lovell)
Nov 8	Member's weekend Cheddar Gorge (Jon Roberts)	..... .....
Nov 22	.....	Dan Yr Ogof, Wales (Tony Knibbs)
Dec 13	Member's weekend Mangle Hole (Dave Baxter)	..... .....



Secretary: Tony Knibbs, 85 Cavendish Ave., London, W13 0JY
01-997-2032 (home) 01- 546- 7741 x 2199 (work).

Treasurer: Mike Lovell, 4 Settrington Close, Loddon Park,
Earley, Reading, Berkshire. 0734-663747 (home).

Meet Secretary: Geoff Barton, The Lodge, The Heath,
Weybridge, Surrey. 0932-49241 (home).

Tacklemaster: Alan Dougherty, 3 The Cottages, Wrington,
Nr Bristol, Avon. 0934-863056 (home).

Cottage Warden: John Beauchamp, St Hugh's Cottage, Charterhouse,
Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6XR. 0761-62929 (home).

Recorder: Ian McKechnie, 21 Conyers Close, Hersham, Walton-on-
Thames, Surrey, KT12 4NG. 0302-228282 (home).

Editor: Yvonne Ward, 15 Jesse Close, Yateley, Camberley, Surrey,
GU17 7AH. 0252-876783 (home).

Committee Member: Gordon Lister, 127 Seaford Road, West Ealing,
London, W13. 01-579-3466 (home).

IT WOULD BE BETTER THE OTHER WAY ROUND! -
OTHERWISE AN ACCOUNT OF:

TOP SINK TO PIPPIKIN.

By Alan Dougherty.

Since last July, when we had caved together in France, Roo Walters (of York University Caving and Potholong Club) had promised a long trip in the Easgill system.

The awaited weekend arrived, and so did Mike Haselden on our doorstep. Hadn't even had time for an after-work cup of tea before he breezes in complete with a large bag containing SRT kit and rope.

Not very unusual one might think, until Mike announced that it had been paid for by his employers! Apparently Mike has persuaded the authorities in Southampton that he can inspect high-rise buildings using the technique.

A prompt departure was made for Yorkshire as we had arranged to pick up Dave Kay (of Croydon Club and who also caved with us in France last summer) at Bristol Parkway station.

Motoring up the M5 I suddenly realised that, despite living for 25 years near Bristol, I had no idea how to reach Parkway station! Mike consulted the atlas - plenty of stations in North Bristol, but none named. We took pot-luck and were successful in our rendezvous with Dave.

Despite road-works and fog in the Midlands, we managed to arrive in one piece at the Ingleton caravan site. The place was full of student union mini-buses except one from York! Eventually I located Roo and learnt of the 'morrow's trip.

We rose early. Dave and I in the comfort of a caravan and Mike in his beloved tent. By 11 o'clock on Saturday our party of five entered Top Sink, having changed at Bull Pot Farm and walked up the dry river-bed of Easgill.

That the gill was dry and the weather forecast good, was heartening, for the section of passage which crosses below the gill is a flood plane.

After a few minutes sideways shuffling and crawling in the streamway I rigged the first pitch in Top Sink - three good bolts for a traverse line and y-hang. The pitch was wet, and was soon followed by another shorter one, en-route to Limerick Junction.

Here route-finding is difficult, but Roo pointed out a straddle over a hole in the floor, which is the key to the high-level route onwards, and a moving chock-stone, which confirms that the right route has been taken.

We were soon assembled near the Rock of Ages in Nagasaki Chamber. Holbeck Junction, on the main streamway, was our next target, but first we made a detour into Easter Grotto. I had been here some ten years earlier, and could now see a huge increase in damage to the famous straw formations. Some of the roof helectites are, however, still of quality.

Progress downstream along the master-cave brought us to Stop Pot, and the fixed ladder up to the high-level route to Lancaster Hole - familiar ground from the previous weekends' MCG / NPC Lancaster / County traverse.

Fast progress through the vastness of Monster, Snail and Cownes Caverns brought us to the Minarets, where we admired the passage's cross-section and enjoyed Carol's home-made biscuits. The latter was of some relief to me as some dozen of the tasty biscuits had been weighing heavily in my helmet.

Just before reaching Stake Pot we located the route into the Stake Pot Inlet Series. Interesting passages, with one fixed ladder and some tricky navigation, lead to Maple-leaf Junction, and the 90 foot pitch down to the

lower streamway.

Having rigged the pitch, we made a detour to inspect the very fine formations of Cape Kennedy Chamber. We were ahead of schedule and did not fancy a lengthy wait at the foot of Echo Aven, while our exchange party rigged it for us.

The lower streamway and the Wormway crawl had a feeling of austerity, probably made more severe by the knowledge that they sump in wet weather. Soon we were waiting at the base of Echo Aven. We all began to feel the cold, and for once the party was silent. Luckily, we only had an hours' wait before the pitch was rigged, and we could ascend up to Link Pot. Echo Aven is a magnificent climb of some 90 feet.

Progress through a rather loose boulder-choke led to a tantalizing glimpse of daylight at the Link Pot entrance shaft, which to make matters worse, had a rope hanging down it!

Stoicism was the order of the day, and certainly a useful attribute in the muddy Wallows Crawl to Pippikin Pot. It was here that we realised why Roo had put up with a wet-suit in the dry series, in the Easgill section.

None of us three Southerners had done Pippikin before and were apprehensive about its legendary tightness. It was at this point that we wondered whether the other way round would have been the better direction for doing this traverse. We discovered, however, that Pippikin is more awkward than just tight. Even so, with having to de-rig six pitches, progress was fairly slow. In many places tackle bags had to be passed from caver to caver.

Perhaps of greatest gymnastic interest was the squeeze at the head of Stemple Pitch. Here one has to stand on the belay stemple and keep high in a narrowing rift squeeze some eight feet long.

Ten hours after entering Top Sink we emerged from Pippikin Pot into the night darkness, and wondered which route would take us off the moor.

All agreed this was a most worthwhile trip. Some two miles lie between the two entrances, and, unlike many British trips of similar length, this traverse contains quite a variety of caving, including ten pitches. It would certainly be easier in the opposite direction, but either way several pitches have to be ascended, and thus rigged in advance.

I would recommend anyone contemplating the trip to have reconnoitred in sections beforehand, for in places route finding is difficult. The cumulative errorss following navigation difficulties at the many junctions on the route could add up to many lost hours. Alternatively, do what we did and get yourself a reliable guide. ■

MCG GETS ME DOWN!

There are still plenty of sweatshirts for sale plus the new 'MCG gets me down' T-shirts, all in many sizes and colours.

If you want to fly the flag for the club then Gordon Lister is the man to see.

He will have a selection of T-shirts at the Mawson Arms on Thursdays but if you want a sweatshirt could you please let him know in advance.

The T-shirts are £3.50 each
The sweatshirts are £6 each.

OLDHAM MINING CAP-LAMPS

We have aquired a limited number of ex-NCB Oldham type T cap-lamps. These will give approx. 10hrs of light and are in good serviceable condition. They are priced at £15 each, which is considerably less than prices asked by caving retail outlets for the same thing. For an extra £2 you can purchase a contact set to allow charging through the head piece. TONY KNIBBS.



WELCOME

... to five new probationary members:
Ken Cooper of 'Woodside', Whitfield Hill, Kearsney, Dover, Kent, CT16 3BG. Tel: 061-437-3682.
Sponsors: M.Cotter and D.Searle.

Paul Dixon of 3 Martello Road, Folkstone, Kent.
Sponsors: M.Cotter and D.Searle.

Jeffrey Holloway of 18 Montrose Road, Bedfont, Middx., TW14 8LP. Tel: 01- 751-3330.
Sponsors: A.Duckett and A.Mallon.

Brian Snell of 1 Wallington Court, Fort Fareham Road, Fareham, Hants. Tel: Fareham 238841.
Sponsors: R.Kempston and Y.Ward.

Malcolm Rowe of 188 elmbridge Avenue, Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 9HF. Tel: 01-399-8795.

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CONGRATULATIONS

... on achieving full membership go to Grant Sheppard, Mick Dean and Richard Stansfield.

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LOOK OUT, look out, there's a thief about... unfortunately I have to report that the following items have gone missing from the cottage:
A camera from the library
A tackle-bag from the Foremans lounge
Some money from the lecturn

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CONSTITUTION and RULES

The revised issue of the consitution and rules is available from Tony Knibbs on request.

LAND PURCHASE

... is proceeding and a draft control plan is being presented to Max Brown for his approval. Also planning permission has been received to move the gate to comply with his conditions of our land purchase.

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CLUB SUBS

As the following people have not paid their subs this year we presume they no longer require membership:

- Anthony Alston
- Jarrold Bartlett
- Mike Bygrave

- Chris Richards
- Peter Whittle
- Richard Woollacott

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WE HAVE MOVED

We wish Alan Dougherty good luck in his new home - his new address is:- 'Wynhanger', Station Road, Wrington, Bristol, BS18 7LL. Also...
Peter Collings-Wells - 10 Newmarket Avenue, Northolt. Also...
Jon Roberts -

.....

DESTROYED!

Geoff Barton put the new rope tester through its paces the weekend of 7/8th June with the help of an anvil borrowed from the farm next door. He tested to destruction two 'old' ropes - lifeline and SRT - and the result was the SRT rope broke after 15 drops and the lifeline - well he lost count well into the twenties!

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HELP!

It is time to start thinking about preparations for the Barn Dance again. Gordon Lister is 'in charge' and will be arranging things, eg. hall, band, BAR. What he will need help with is the food so anyone who is willing to prepare the usual buffet - type spread please give your name to Gordon with suggestions, (culinary preferably).

Down among the cavemen

When it comes to rescuing potholers, cavers, climbers or other intrepid explorers who find themselves in mortal danger, the British lead the field. Rob Hughes meets the expert team who risk their lives to save others.....

China's thrust towards modernisation knows no bounds. One day outer space, the next day the bowels of the earth.

British experts are now leading exploration into caverns in South China. And the Chinese, hitherto circumspect about entering dark holes, quite naturally require some persuasion that people trapped or injured hundreds of feet below ground can be rescued.

They have asked the right people. Few are quicker than the British to get down a 400ft vertical shaft, as experienced at inching through tunnels, or more ingenious at adapting hardware to extricate the wounded. And much of our knowledge comes from the village of Clapham in the North Yorkshire Dales.

From there, over the past 50 years, the Cave Rescue Organisation has assisted 1,574 people and advanced so far that identical rescues 35 years apart now take six hours instead of 30. As hypothermia can kill within two hours, that time is invaluable.

The methods and equipment about to be shown in China are proven throughout Britain. They are also exported to Scandinavia and North America and Norway has contingency plans to fly in Clapham rescuers for emergencies. The rescue organisation has come a long way since being dismissed as "those idiots who pull out the idiots who get stuck down potholes". In the dales, where 100 of its 170 volunteers reside, it has matured into a task force on call to walkers (even those who mindlessly roll boulders down 'occupied' holes), climbers and fallers down slate mines - as well as folk marooned in flooded cottages, snow-bound vehicles or crashed planes.

Police, the army and the RAF willingly subordinate personnel and machinery to back up the organisation of men and women who, as cavers, climbers and walkers themselves, are

addicted sharp-end commandos. The practical leadership comes from Jack Pickup, a fire safety equipment executive; the organisation from David Renshaw, a French teacher; the coordinating from Brian Boardman, who ensures that everything is operational; and the medical expertise from a Lancaster GP, Dr John Frankland, who is also the body's current chairman.

Like any active unit, they have only one boss in the field. This is Pickup, whose decisions under pressure have to get rescuers down (and safely back) as quickly as possible.

The teams and their relief units must have enough guts to face danger, enough sense to minimise risks in moving the seriously injured victims and enough humour to laugh of the searches that prove fruitless - missing sheep, for instance, may have fallen only to rustlers, or even to someone's mistaking soapy water for a fleece.

In fact, when it comes to raising funds, there is nothing like rattling a collection box at animal lovers. They clearly reason that the 87 lambs, 83 sheep, 32 dogs, 9 ducks, 6 cows, 6 calves and one bullock lifted out by the organisation to date are less to blame than people who have come close to entombing themselves in the name of sport.

The organisation spends around £2,500 a year on basic overheads, including the maintenance of two yellow Land Rover ambulances. It receives £7,000 in donations and covenants from caving clubs and their 14,000 members. It gets grants from various National Parks and - usually - local authorities, plus NHS funding for essential medical equipment such as collapsible wire Neil Robertson stretchers, splints, analgesics and anti-hypothermia polyprene "exposure" bags. The police cover damaged equipment and loss of earnings during 25-hour rescue marathons.

No one is invoiced for being saved. No rescuer profits by so much as a wet-suit or a thermal oversuit for, on average, making himself available for at least two operations every weekend

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He might abseil 340ft down gaping Gill to reach an exhausted novice, or spend perilous hours beneath Crack Pot's loose rocks, wrestling with the dreadful decisions involved in rescuing someone with head, pelvic or spinal injuries.

Dr Frankland might be at his side or at the other end of a Molefone, a Lancaster University invention that can communicate through 1,000ft of rock, water or soil. The doctor may have only headlamp illumination as he judges whether a victim's exposure warrants morphia and the deliberate cracking of a few ribs to get him free. All rescuers may work in foul air or flooding, though only 6 of the 18 fatalities they have brought in from cave and dale since 1982 were underground. The latest, a drowning victim, was brought in by CRO divers last weekend.

Not all the people they rescue are the ignorant or foolish day-trippers. Colin Boothroyd, the CRO's representative on the China trip, has fresh scars across his buttocks and chest to prove that anybody can get into trouble. Last month, on the day of the organisations golden jubilee dinner, he was on the receiving end of a rescue for the first time in 10 years of caving.

While trying to push a difficult cave to new limits, Boothroyd became stuck underground. He took off his wet-suit in an unsuccessful bid to "force the squeeze", and then had to lie for 8½ hours stripped to underpants and wellies - while colleagues tunnelled down 200ft of tortuous constrictions.

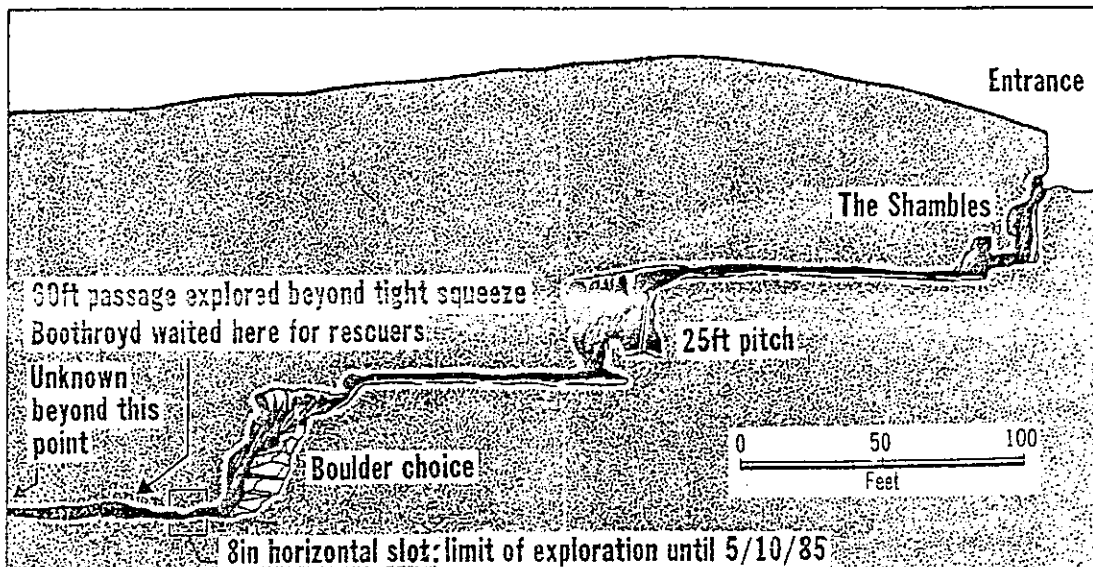
Then they had to enlarge the 8-inch slit through which he had earlier contorted his 5ft 8in frame and 37in chest. He was not bothered by claustrophobia, but he was bothered about intermittent violent shivering and the dread of hypothermia impairing his faculties. He sang, kicked and talked, his spirits falling whenever the generator powering the drills faulted.

"I knew it would take a lifetime to chisel me out", he says, "and they couldn't pull me out because the skin on my buttocks had ruffled up". To pain there was added humiliation: "I began counting all those £8.50s I owed the guys who couldn't get to the dinner!".

They numbered more than he could know. Up above, daylight turned to darkness as police army and farm four-wheeled vehicles stood by. A dynamite expert hovered. House calls went out for lanolin (to rub on him) and hair-dryers (to waft warm air down). Women served chip butties and hot drinks, but the queue of volunteers thinned out when a second call came through from five miles away. An exhausted man had to be lifted from a 280ft vertical shaft.

Around 10.30pm, both victims were extricated - Boothroyd's exit assisted by a liberal spraying of Fairy Liquid. He is, of course, impatient to return to the same cave. "Others will be down", he says. "I'm keen as hell to get back because there's a potential two to three kilometres and a depth of 400-500ft around the corner from where I got stuck. ■

The Times.



Cottage Activities

Since being elected to this position of power and grandeur several items of progress / modification / change are worthy enough to bring to your notice:

a) Cottage Booking System

The basic rules and guidelines are outlined on p4 of Newsletter 179. The only change has occurred with block bookings. In this respect block bookings for member groups / non-members / guest clubs etc must be made through the Cottage Warden.

Allocation of dates for non-members / guest clubs will be generally for the second and fourth weekends in the month.

For all block bookings a cottage booking form will be issued which should be returned with a 25% deposit. This will then be entered in my master file and duplicated in the cottage file.

Simple!

If you have any doubts or just want to check availability, give me a ring anyway.

b) Cottage Jobs

There is a list on the cottage notice board and some items have already been completed:

Our thanks to : Grant Sheppard for getting the lounge curtains cleaned.
Adrian Thomas for getting the chimney swept - and leaving the soot evenly deposited in the lounge.

Andy Scully for taking $\frac{1}{2}$ ton of rubbish to the skip.

Please try and assist in the upkeep of this great asset of ours - there's always plenty to do.

c) Keys

Probationary: On being welcomed to the club an S.A.E. will get you your cottage key.

Full Member: As soon as you are confirmed send me your old key with an S.A.E. and I'll send you your coveted master key.

Lapsed Member: If you are fed up with us please return your cottage key and we can say 'he/she wasn't so bad after all'.

d) Other

1. Cess pit - This was emptied on 29.5.86 so you won't get your own back any more.

2. Lounge / kitchen / Foremans lounge / Small bedroom.

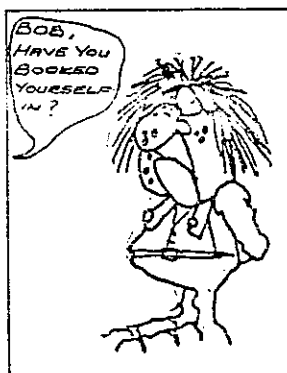
The ceilings, walls and paintwork have now been decorated - please try to keep them clean.

3. Old pants, shaving bags, miscellania.

Did you leave them behind two years ago?

See Andy, he'll show you where all this stuff was dumped.

John Beauchamp.

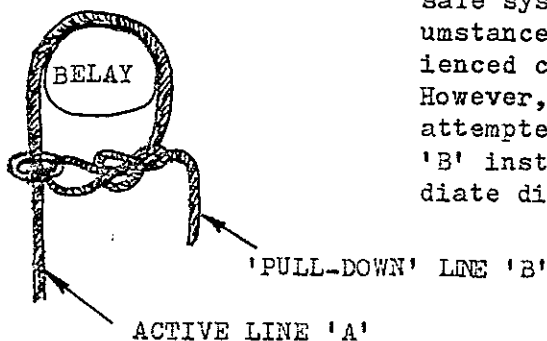


SAFETY NOTE

WHICH ROPE ?

(A warning)

In January this year, a caver was seriously injured after falling 50ft in Swinsto Hole, Yorkshire. He fell while abseiling down a pitch during a through trip, when the abseil rope was rigged with a 'slip knot' to allow it to be pulled down after the last member of the party. (See diagram). This can be a



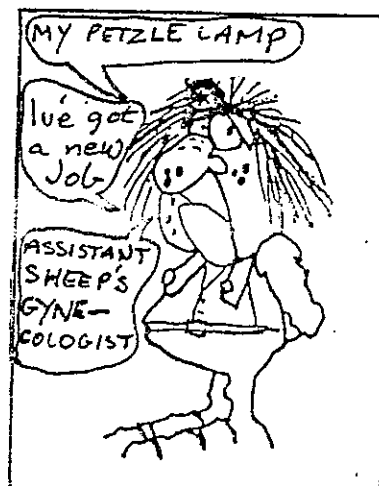
safe system of descent in the appropriate circumstances, and is a system often used by experienced cavers engaged in a 'through trip'. However, the unfortunate caver in this case had attempted to abseil down the 'pull-down' line 'B' instead of the active line 'A', with immediate disastrous results.

If you intend to try a 'through trip' using a pull-down technique, there are a few precautions which can reduce the risk of disasters:

1. Carry a spare rope long enough for the longest pitch.
2. Carry at least one set of ascending gear.
3. Only use a 'pull-down' system for the last man. All other descents should be made on a securely fixed rope. Alternatively, tie off rope 'B' so it cannot be used.
4. Keep a close eye on less experienced members of the party. You could save their lives.
5. And a rule which applies generally in caving: Think what you're doing at all times, don't just follow blindly.

Source : Caves and Caving, May'68

Bob Speleo β



COVENANTS

We would like to say a big thank you to all of those who replied to Alan Mellon's letters and filled in the covenant form and to say to those who didn't 'now's your chance'. To help you realize the great benefit to the club by doing so, below are values paid to us by the Inland Revenue to date:

Financial year	82/83	£ 47.63
	83/84	£208.00
	84/85	£511.14
	85/86	£500 approx.

Not bad eh!

770 CLAIMS BRANCH CHARITY		PAYMENT BY INLAND REVENUE							15589 0941	10-12-01
Reference:	£	Millions	Hundreds of Thousands	Tens of Thousands	Thousands	Hundreds	Tens	Units	+14P	Date 16/05/86
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the bob speleo column

Overheard:

Malcolm as he climbed over a barbed wire fence, "Oooh! I forgot I left it dangling down".

Malcolm again, as Louise finished adjusting her dress, "Good, now we can get our legs over".

Seen:

A--y B---e threaded his rack upsidedown at Split Rock TWICE.

Someone in the club sent an ode to the makers of Mars bars and this was their reply:-

"We thought your poem rather jolly
 And sympathise with lack of lolly
 But if we gave our goods away
 To hundreds writing every day
 By early spring we would be broke
 (for Mars fanatics that's no joke)
 Despite the fact we must say 'no'
 Think kindly of us 'down below' "

WHATSIISNAME?

CUE - HI! DO GO ASK. OIL THE LIP.
 SIT - A - DANGLE. PULLET BINGE.
 SERVE BEER - DARN! PORN MAULER.

Who are they?

