



A HISTORY OF MENDIP CAVE RESCUES & INCIDENTS

by

Alan Gray

(1669 to 2019)

Published by - Mendip Cave Registry & Archive

You've been home for two hours after a long day caving. The wet kit is hanging and just started to dry, a meal is cooking, and you have had a shower to wash the dirt and some of the aches away. After the meal you plan just to sit down and relax until it is time for bed.

The telephone rings!

A party of six trapped by flood water below the 20 in Swildon's Hole. Meal is forgotten, although your stomach thinks otherwise, wet caving kit is thrown into the car. Its dark and still raining.

This will be a long hard rescue.

This edition of *A History of Mendip Cave Rescue & Incidents* is dedicated to all the people involved in cave rescues, past, present and future.

First Edition 2019

Cover picture: Percy Baker – the “victim” in a Rescue Practice in Banwell Quarry – Photograph by John Chapman (c. 1967).

Whilst every care has been taken in the compilation of this book, the author cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.

INTRODUCTION

In the mid 1980's I was Journal editor for the Axbridge Caving Group and, much like Journal editors today, I was always scratching around for articles. However, once a year the M.R.O. produced an annual report detailing the rescues over the past year. These were retyped and so these reports attained a greater significance, in my mind, than they would have had if they had just been read.

Now moving on to 2017 and I thought that a compendium of rescue reports, over the years, would interest the caving community. I started by using the wonderful on-line resources of the W.C.C. and B.E.C. Then Tony Boycott loaned me a box of M.R.O. archives, Wells & Mendip Museum had another archive and Rich West yet another. The book was expanding. To provide further interest, but probably not accuracy, newspaper articles were included. The most interesting additions were those from the log books of cavers who attended the rescues. Ephemera, artwork, photographs and equipment were also added.

A table of rescues, by decade, by cave was compiled, and a similar table listing types of injury. Speculations were made as to why the number of rescues has fallen over the years.

At an early stage it was decided that it would not make commercial sense to publish a printed version of the book, it was far too specialised a subject. The book would be a free download from the M.C.R.A. web site. This has advantages that it can be kept up to date and also additional material can be added.

Hope you enjoy dipping in and out of this book.

If you would like to add anything please get in touch. toursandresearch@yahoo.com

Alan Gray

All Sources of information not annotated have been obtained from the
M.R.O./M.C.R. Archives

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MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION – ITS FORMATION AND ACTIVITIES – 1935 TO 2000

By **Brian E. Prewer**

*Based upon a lecture given at the BCRA One Day Meet held at
Priddy Village Hall, 10 June 2000.*

The paper outlines how the history of the Mendip Rescue Organization has been affected by various rescues and how rescue equipment requirements have changed as cave exploration became more demanding and intense.

The Beginnings

Sixty-six years ago, in 1934, after a protracted rescue in Gingling Hole in Yorkshire, the Central Rescue Organisation was formed (later to become the Cave Rescue Organisation (C.R.O.)). A year later, in 1935 the Mendip Rescue Organization (M.R.O.) was formed by Bertie Crook, a local doctor, who was a member of the Mines Rescue Team at Pensford. In 1936 Mabel Binks was the first caver fatality in the UK; some person unknown, dropped a rock on her at the bottom of Alum Pot in Yorkshire.

Up to the outbreak of World War II caving was becoming ever more popular and demanding as caves on Mendip and Yorkshire became deeper and longer. It was apparent that a well-organised cave rescue service would be necessary in both areas.

In 1939 an incident took place that eventually resulted in the putting together of a system that has more or less been followed up to the present day.

In that year, 1939, another fatality occurred. John Lambert died in Rowton Pot after falling off a ladder and then being washed off a ledge by floodwater. The B.B.C. broadcast an appeal for help from all potholers as not enough local cavers could be found. The rescue was difficult and protracted, taking 16 hours to effect the callout and assemble sufficient cavers to find and haul Lambert out of the cave.

Ironically, it was in this same cave, in 1986, that Dave Anderson of the C.R.O. became the first cave rescuer in Britain to die during a rescue.

The C.R.O.s Reform

After the war the various C.R.O.s were reformed and in December 1946 there was another fatality, this time in the recently discovered AG Pot (Grange Rigg). Harold Sargent died of hypothermia after a fall in this wet narrow cave. Many hours lapsed before the alarm was raised and before rescuers reached the casualty. In fact, the whole event took nearly 20 hours before the body was brought to the surface.

The coroner was very scathing of various individuals and in fact of the whole system of cave rescue call-out and management. This led to a complete rethink of call-outs and operation of C.R.O. The press went to town –

“Questions on Rescue Party Pothole Arrangements”,

”Rescue arrangements criticised by Coroner”,

"Pothole Jury suggests better Rescue Service".

On Mendip the effect of this must have been pretty dramatic.

Early Records

Early records of M.R.O. prior to the war are sketchy, most have been lost. Bertie Crook was not however the first M.R.O. Sec, Norman Baldwin's name appears in early correspondence. Bertie became Secretary around 1938. Bertie sought initially many caving doctors and a list of ten was drawn up. They were regarded as the Senior Wardens along with Hywell Murrell, one of the Wessex Cave Club (W.C.C.) founder members. M.R.O. was reformed in 1951 when local cavers had meetings with the local Police. Present day callout and organisation procedures emerged from these meetings. The first annual meeting of M.R.O. was held in 1953 in the Speleo Rooms at Bristol University and those present included Frank Frost, Prof. Tratman, Harry Stanbury, George Lucy, Don Thomson, Pete Harvey and Howard Kenney. Howard Kenney was appointed the Hon. Sec. though a year later Oliver Lloyd took over from Howard.

The M.R.O. finances of the day may seem rather amusing by today's standards. In 1952 the expenditure for the year was £7.8s.4d with a balance of 3s.2d (16p)!

Early Rescues and accidents

Prior to the formation of M.R.O. there had been a few noteworthy rescues. In 1775 Rev Thomas Newman died by falling down Pen Park Hole – it was 39 days before anyone got his body out.¹ In 1875 Plumley died, it is thought, after the hauling team broke his neck pulling him up the newly discovered pitch in Plumley's Hole.²

Balch himself fell down Lamb Lear pitch when his rotten manila rope broke – he was lucky – his own party managed to get him out after fetching a new rope from Wells. Later a flood in Eastwater (1910) trapped Troup and his party; again, they managed to get out safely. Exploding flash powder, again in Eastwater, caused a serious burns accident.

Any incidents in those early days were dealt with by club cavers or by the caving party itself. By the late 1930s there were four main clubs in the Mendip area, namely the Mendip Nature Research Committee (M.N.R.C.), the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society (U.B.S.S.), the Bristol Exploration Club (B.E.C.) and the Wessex Cave Club (W.C.C.).

Bertie Crook was the first long term M.R.O. Secretary. He brought with him his skills as a Mines Rescue doctor. Alan Woolley, a G.P. from Wells also joined the medical team. Harry Stanbury of the Bristol Exploration Club and Frank Frost of the Wessex Cave Club made up the remaining post-war Wardens. Luke Devenish, a local demolition contractor, soon joined the organisation and became a Warden.

¹Catcott, George Symes, 1792, A descriptive account of a descent made into Penpark-Hole in the year 1775. Bristol : J. Rudhall, 51pp. survey ; Two printing were made of the book, the second, October 1792 contains extra letters at end of text.

²Dougherty, Alan F., Irwin, David J. , and Richards, Christopher, 1994, The discovery of Plumley's Hole, Burrington Combe and the death of Joe Plumley. Proc UBSS 20(1)43-58(Dec), illus, table

There were a number of so called Rescue Squads including divers like George Lucy and Dan Hasell. Club teams with a team leader came into being some time before 1967, when it was felt necessary to involve local caving clubs. It was then that I became the Telephone Team Leader.

An insight into those early rescues can be found in Richard Kenney's recent article of the 1951 rescue in G.B. Cave, when 4 people from Bristol went down the cave at 2 p.m. and became trapped below the Devil's Elbow, when their candles went out and their matches became damp.³ At midnight a friend drove from Bristol to Mendip to look for them – he didn't know where G.B. Cave was so at 3.30 a.m. he rang the police. He waited at the phone until 4:30 a.m. when the police told him that the Wells Police Rescue Team was on its way having called one person back from Plymouth! The police reached Lower Farm at 7:30 a.m., without the rescue team. It was here that they found a small group of cavers, including Richard, staying at a hut in the lower farmyard. Richard's group were transported by the police to G.B. Cave and entered the cave at 8:00 a.m. They found the missing party and were out by 9:30 a.m. before any M.R.O. Warden had turned up. The missing cavers were all suffering from hypothermia. Nineteen and a half hours for a callout! Today M.R.O. is able to assemble a team in about 20 minutes, mainly because quite a few cavers have moved into the Mendip area over the last couple of decades and of course nearly everyone has some form of telephone or transport.

Early Equipment

Early rescue equipment was scattered all over Mendip, Luke Devenish kept some of the first rescue equipment in a barn at his house near Wells. The full inventory would have taken just a few lines on a sheet of paper! A drag-sheet, a pulley, a kettle and stove, 2 hot water bottles, 2 crowbars, an entrenching tool and a first aid kit. In 1969 M.R.O.'s rescue equipment was scattered all over Mendip and was in various states of serviceability. The U.B.S.S., A.C.G., M.C.G., Main's Farm, Belfry, W.C.C., Luke's house and the S.M.C.C. all had kit stores.

The medical warden at that time, Don Thomson, had some comments about equipment when he examined the kit held by the various clubs. One piece of kit was described by him as being more likely to kill than save life. Most other kit was inappropriate, incomplete, or in poor repair. His conclusions were that M.R.O. equipment was scattered over the top of Mendip in a completely uncoordinated fashion and it would seem only a matter of time before a life was lost through this!

The drag-sheet, long favoured by M.R.O. wardens, is based on a St. John Ambulance carrying sheet which was laced up with rope. It was vital that wardens knew the secret of lacing the sheet together, if you didn't the casualty gradually slid out of the bottom of the sheet or did injury to various vital parts. The present Mager drag-sheet is a vast improvement but still uses the same principle to hold the casualty securely which, hopefully, does not cause a male casualty's voice to rise by more than one octave. This stretcher is, as far as the author is aware, the first purpose designed cave rescue stretcher, other C.R.O.s used a modified Neil Robertson stretcher. The Mager stretcher is ideally suited to Mendip caves having a rigid frame that can be removed in order to negotiate torturous passages.

In 1972, M.R.O. felt it had to provide a central rescue depot for its equipment. A stone built hut was offered by the B.E.C. at their headquarters, The Belfry at Priddy. They would also share the cost of a public telephone that would be used to improve callout efficiency. M.R.O. accepted

³Kenney, Richard, 2000, Why M.R.O. W.C.C. Jnl 25(269)143-144(May), illus

the depot and fitted it out in order to house the rapidly increasing quantity of equipment. Today the depot has been extended as still more kit arrives.

Early Callout System

Just compare the early M.R.O. callout sheet with today's – Bertie Crook's phone number was Timsbury 13, Wells Police: Wells 97! Callouts were often done by car or more usually by motorbike. Years later Wells Police telephone number, well known to Mendip cavers of the day, appeared on the M.R.O. signs that were placed at many cave entrances. Some of those early signs are still to be seen on the walls of some club huts –one line reads "*Ring Wells Police on Wells 3481*".

Relationships with the local police were extremely good with the local police inspector knowing most wardens by name and where they worked. This came into its own during the 3 day search of Mendip caves for 2 army cadets when the local police arranged for a control centre to be set up at Wells Police Station with all phone calls being routed there.

In 1974 this was all to change; Wells Police station would no longer be manned for 24 hours a day. The new callout system required cavers to ring 999, their calls going to Yeovil or Taunton. The local contact with the police had gone. The present arrangements do not always work smoothly. For example, one cave rescue call was sent to Mid Wales Rescue and then to the Chairman of the B.C.R.C. in Derbyshire and another went to the coastguards at Southampton.

Swildon's Hole - Forty Foot Pot

Most of the rescues on Mendip during the 1950s and 1960s were in Swildon's Hole; usually at the old Forty Foot Pot. A 6" diameter pulley was used to assist in the haul of the casualty up this usually wet pitch.

Many cavers of that era will remember Luke Devenish's rather over enthusiastic way of getting a rescue started. He would arrive on Priddy Green in a battered open Landrover, skidding to a halt with mud and water flying, only to look in the back of the Landrover and say – "Oh, shit I've forgotten all the kit!!" We used to wait in the Hunter's on a Saturday night for the phone to ring, Swildon's 40' again!

Early Problems

Mendip's first non-diving fatality occurred on the Swildon's Forty Foot Pot in January 1959. An ill-clad John Wallington had great difficulty climbing the ladder after the cave flooded from melting snow. He died from hypothermia, a condition not fully understood at that time. Another person was to succumb to hypothermia in Longwood in 1963 before suitable advances were made in order to prevent and treat the problem.

These early rescues all influenced the future of M.R.O., in particular with regard to equipment and callout procedures. Today M.R.O. has hot air apparatus, reusable heat packs and of course a range of clever modern materials to combat the effects of hypothermia.

In 1971 hydraulic lifting kit was donated to M.R.O. after Dudley Soffe was trapped for 12 hours in the Swildon's Hole Upper Series Oxbows (not by Soffe incidentally). Only a Fire Service hydraulic jack used as a stemple released him. A wire rope-pulling device was also in conjunction with the stemple. This combination enabled this difficult rescue to be drawn to a satisfactory conclusion. We were told afterwards that the casualty was two inches longer than before he entered the cave!

A year after Wallington died, in 1960, Alan Hartnoll died in Eastwater boulder ruckle when boulders fell on him. Unfortunately, no amount of rescue equipment would have saved him. The boulder ruckle (choke) had, prior to this been so-called stabilised. Though not involved with the work in the ruckle M.R.O. made a conscious decision with regard to making caves (boulder chokes etc) safer and decided that the organisation would not become involved in preconditioning caves or make comment on safety or weather conditions.

Communications

Many of the early rescues were difficult to manage by the lack of communications between the surface and underground. The condition of a casualty or the state of progress of a rescue could only be obtained by the surface controller using a system of runners. It was also difficult for the controller to know when fresh hauling and carrying parties were needed to replace exhausted teams; again, runners were needed.

During the early 1960's ex-W.D. field telephones could be purchased and M.R.O. obtained a set. These phones required the operator to crank a generator handle to make contact with the other end. This was OK unless the unfortunate operator was baring the phone wire with his teeth at the same time and got a high voltage shock straight into his mouth (I am speaking from experience here). These phones were connected by means of heavy cable contained on large cable drums – a nightmare to carry and unreel down a cave. Tele-Fs, as they were called, were soon to be replaced with lightweight battery operated hand phones used with a single strand of steel wire; a much easier option with cable laying being done almost at the speed the caver could move through the cave. The snag was always that during the recovery of a casualty the wire invariably got broken resulting in much swearing and a painstaking search for the break. These phones are still kept by M.R.O. for they are very useful for communication through sumps.

To improve surface communications a radiotelephone network was set up and a base station was approved by the Home Office. The base station was installed in the Belfry depot this allowed communications from the depot to a controller at the scene of the rescue. This was another great improvement to the operating efficiency of M.R.O.; standby rescue teams could now be kept away from the control point until needed. Soon another base station was approved for the W.C.C. H.Q. at Upper Pitts. Within a couple of years, the police took on the payment of the licence fees.

Underground Radios

By the early 1970s various groups throughout the country were working on a "through-the-rock" radio. Two groups up north and one here on Mendip were convinced that a low frequency, SSB system would work and not be severely attenuated by the rock like conventional radio systems.

To my knowledge Bob Price, a B.E.C. radio engineer, was one of the first put some bits and pieces together. Speleo Rhal also carried out some experiments; Harold Lord developed what he called the "Inductorphone" and published details of the device. Here on Mendip an Inductorphone was built and used successfully for a number of years, including the radiolocation of many caves including Wookey Hole.

It was Lancaster University that finally produced the well-known Molefone about 1977. M.R.O. purchased two of these units before the company producing them went bust. Currently a new advanced underground radio system is about to be made available to C.R.O.s throughout the country at a fraction of the cost of the original Molefone.

Underground radio has probably been one of the most significant advances in cave rescue techniques in the last 30 years. Before the Molefone runners and telephones were used to pass details to the surface. With no surface radiotelephones (or mobiles) to link controllers to club huts (or Pubs) rescue personnel were usually all gathered around the cave site causing congestion and traffic mayhem. It was nothing to see 50 cavers all gathered on Priddy Green in the rain waiting their turn to go underground. Today thanks to the Molefone and a modern network of radiotelephones rescue parties can be kept back in club H.Q.'s where they can remain at the ready, warm, dry and fed.

Effect of SRT

Another area of change that influenced the M.R.O. was the change over to S.R.T. Of course, the early cavers used wood and rope ladders which frequently broke because they had nasty habit of going rotten. The electron ladder was a vast improvement but still relied on good lifelining techniques. How often did one see a lifeliner paying out the line from between his hands? M.R.O. records show a large proportion of injuries was caused by falls from ladders. In recent times S.R.T. has reduced this; jammers and other hardware made ladder climbing safer by removing the lifeliner from the "loop". M.R.O. has obviously invested in SRT hardware in particular for use to carry out the safe hauling of casualties up pitches.

Rescue Statistics

Looking at some of the statistics over the last 65 years [1935 to 2000] M.R.O. has rescued in region of 850 people and responded to about 400 incidents. Most rescues can be divided into three categories, namely, falls, failures (i.e. - equipment, lights, lost, stuck etc), floods. There have been 97 injuries and 5 fatalities. Of the 400 rescues 133 were in Swildon's followed by 29 in Eastwater.

The longest rescue was the 3-day search of most Mendip caves for the missing Sandhurst cadets; they turned up in France using caving as a decoy.

The most technically complex was probably the G.B. Cave rescue where cavers were trapped in the Ladder Dig by floodwater. Several Fire Service pumps were required to reduce the flood water flowing into the cave and cave divers were sent in to try and establish the condition of the trapped cavers This rescue also produced the most "flack" from the public as to who should pay. Lots of letters to the press followed.

The shortest rescues are always the overdue party; callout being initiated by a panicking relative just as the party walks through the door. The most annoying are those where someone raises

the alarm because a caver has not returned home when he should. A search follows, perhaps even underground, but the party is eventually found propping up the bar of some local pub.

Several rescues had a humorous side; at least 3 parties were trapped over-night in caves when keys snapped, or locks jammed. In Longwood the trapped cavers were released after several hours of hammering, chiselling and sawing on the coldest, frostiest night of the year. We were outside freezing; they were inside relatively warm. The local farmer arrived at 3 a.m. with hot Irish coffee.

One party, without a key, entered Swildon's (it was once locked), and got locked in, missing the pub; no one went to look for them until next morning. One caver who had sustained "severe leg injuries" (broken legs) walked across the field before M.R.O. had even got changed!

Of course, the final touch of humour involved something referred to as "Fred's Boot". Fred Davies, a warden for many years, usually led the underground rescue party to get some wet, mentally and physically exhausted person up the 20' or 40' Pot. His technique, reported by our senior Medical Warden in an article in the British Medical Journal, was to work his metaphorical boot into the poor unfortunate. He was usually too scared to decline the offer of being booted up the pitch. This technique worked again in Swildon's when a caver refused to dive back through Sump I. Here a considerable amount of "advice" was given at high volume by the M.R.O.'s "Rent-a-Thug" on how to free-dive back through the sump. This advice was made even plainer as closing-time was fast approaching.

The Future

Finally, what of today and the future, we seem to have gone into a quiet period with regard to rescues on Mendip although nationally things seem to be about the same. We see fewer cavers now, less students and scouts, perhaps as a result of the Lyme Regis tragedy. Young people have a greater choice of outdoor activities these days – some of them a little more public and glamorous than caving.

Cavers are undoubtedly better equipped with improved clothing and hardware. SRT must have had its effect, certainly there are less injuries from falls from pitches.

Today M.R.O. encourages the training of club teams into the use of specialised rescue equipment and regular first aid courses are arranged during the winter months. M.R.O. also has membership of the South West of England Rescue Association (S.W.E.R.A.) and British Cave Rescue Council (B.C.R.C.) allowing the interchange of information between other rescue organisations and C.R.O.s.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the use of material by, Richard Kenney, John Frankland and Jim Eyre also thanks to Rich West who helped me search the M.R.O. archives.

B.E. Prewer, Priddy. June 2000.

Source – Descent No. 73 – November/December 1986

So That's Why They Started It

Writing about the recent jubilee celebrations of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, one well known Mendip caver remarked to another recently. "it's interesting to note that it was the Wessex Cave Club who suggested forming M.R.O. – no doubt this became necessary after the formation of the Bristol Exploration Club."

Name Change For M.R.O.

Source – Descent No. 202 – June/July 2008

THE Mendip Rescue Organisation (or Organization as the late Oliver Lloyd insisted it should be spelled) was formed in 1936, making it the second oldest cave rescue organisation in the world, just one year younger than Yorkshire's C.R.O. In a historic move, the annual meeting in March 2008 voted to change its title to Mendip Cave Rescue or M.C.R. for short.

Bob Cork, Secretary of Mendip Cave Rescue, writes:

The Mendip Rescue Organization (M.R.O.) was formed in 1936 and the name has served us well ever since, or has it? Historically, cavers visiting Mendip knew what the M.R.O. was and directly associated it with cave rescue, but times change. The M.R.O. in the early days was called out by contacting the local bobby at Wells police station. This knowledgeable chap knew the wardens personally and called them out accordingly. Traditionalist or not, we all have to acknowledge that many factors have changed: cave rescue is now alerted using 999, there is no local bobby, we have unmanned police stations and communication centres operated by civilians, and cavers do not know where they are unless their Sat Nav/G.P.S. is working (not to mention the proliferation of mobile phones). Increased mobility has for many cavers reduced their exposure to caving huts and local hostleries, traditionally places where caving news is communicated. The M.R.O. itself has always been modest, not shouting about the mishaps of its customers or its activities, and it has therefore not promoted its name outside the indigenous caving community.

To cut a long story short, the name needs to reflect what we do. We cannot afford any ambiguity or obstacle to ensuring that communication room staff, other emergency services or anybody using search engines can quickly access information about our services and callout procedures. For these reasons the M.R.O. has decided to change its name to simply Mendip Cave Rescue (M.C.R.) – we do exactly what it says on the tin. Everything else remains unchanged – the principle that cavers rescue cavers and that the M.C.R. will continue to remain autonomous and be funded from within the caving community.

M.C.R.'s 75th Anniversary

Source – Descent No. 224 – February/March 2012

Mendip Cave Rescue celebrated its 75th anniversary on 19 November 2011, having been founded in 1936, which makes it the second oldest cave rescue organisation in the world (after the C.R.O.). Over 200 cavers, members of the public, police, guests and even local M.P. Tessa Munt attended to enjoy the events at Priddy, from videos shown in the Hunters' Lodge on the Friday night to a stomp on Saturday evening. In between lay a range of cave rescue equipment

demonstrations – stretchers and comms, diving and rigging techniques with hauling on a climbing tower – and a special Speleo Olympics obstacle course for those fitter and leaner cavers, plus a rescue practice in Swildon's Hole. This was definitely more a celebration than a fundraising event, although the latter was not to be ignored. With the name change from M.R.O. to M.C.R. in 2008 came a need to change the rescue plaques fitted to Mendip cave entrances, at the same time updating any necessary information. The old plaques were offered first to clubs with any special link with the site and the remainder were sold off or auctioned in the evening, raising a total of £850 (which went a good way towards paying for the new ones). Original artwork donated to the auction raised over £500, with one picture by Robin Gray depicting digging in Hillgrove Swallet raising over £200.

New M.C.R. Store

Source – Descent 233 – August/September 2013

In other building news, Mendip Cave Rescue has completed renovating and expanding its store. As well as a new roof, a drying room has been added, plus heating in the main room so that winter rescues can be run in a little more comfort. New shelving has been added and Tom Chapman, Equipment Officer, has done a great job in relabelling all the kit to make it easier to find. Now with twice the space, M.C.R. has more room to lay out equipment and a large worktop helps with maintenance carried out in situ. Overall, the building is less of a store shed and more of an H.Q., complete with C.C.T.V. for external security. A big thank you goes to John Thomas of Wessex C.C. for painting the new store and to Dany Bradshaw for all his earlier work on getting the project off the ground.

Mendip Cave Rescue – Activities – 2000 to 2019

Still to be written

RESCUES AND INCIDENTS

Unknown date – Ubley Hill Pot

Source – MCG Log Book No. 1, page 89 – 1 August 1960

Part of Log Book entry – On return to the large chamber we started to look at the bones. Pete went over to what looked like a stal. Boss. Then he exclaimed “Human skull here.” We went to have a look and sure enough there was one complete skull staring upwards and another half skull by the side.

We followed Skeleton Chamber round and found more bones at various points. On a mud bank at the top were antlers and another skull cap.

Source – MCG Log Book No. 1, page 91 – 16 August 1960

Part of Log Book entry – Richard and Jack took Professor E. K. Tratman down Ubley Hill pot to examine the human bones in Skeleton Chamber. Dr. Tratman’s theory is that the bones were at least 200 years old. Members of the Police Force were also present.

Source – MCG Log Book No. 1, page 97 – 3 September 1960

Part of Log Book entry – The following remarks were written by Jack Solwell (an amateur archaeologist from Bath). Spent two and a half hours in Skeleton Cave. There appears to be four skulls. Two with craniums complete and two with craniums incomplete. In both cases the lower mandible is missing. The teeth in one were in good in upper jaw, which contained 8. Have taken two to have analysed regarding age. The other contained 1. There are numerous bones in this cave, a large amount being common animals, sheep, cow, etc. Lower down in the cave I found a part of an animal skull with two horns projecting from the front. Have taken this also, this being very interesting. There appears to be much material embedded in the mud.

Source – Limestone & Caves of the Mendip Hills by D I. Smith and D. P. Drew (1975) page 387

The human skeletons found in the first chamber of Ubley Hill Pot may have been those of miners exploring for ores. They lay scattered beneath the shaft, which is entirely natural in its lower part and unclimbable without a rope. [This is not the shaft opened up by the Mendip Caving Group.] On the other hand, the total absence of any traces of clothing or other equipment, makes it rather more likely that they were unclothed bodies flung down after some murderous quarrel long ago. There is plenty of evidence that the Mendip miners were a pretty rough crowd even by the standards of their own times.

Source – Mendip Underground by Alan Gray, Rob Taviner, Richard Witcombe (2013)

Many human and animal bones were found in Bone Chamber when the cave was dug open by MCG in 1960. The remains of wood and rope below the second pitch, together with signs of mining, suggested earlier visitors, some of whom were unlucky judging by a number of relatively modern skulls.

2 July 1669 – Pen Park Hole, Bristol

Source – *Royal Society – Philosophical Transactions, Volume 13, Number 143, Pages 2 to 6, January 1683*

A DESCRIPTION OF PEN-PARK HOLE IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Communicated by Sir Robert Southwell

There is a place in Gloucestershire called Pen Park, about three miles from Bristol, and about three from Severn, where some miners for lead discovering a large hole in the earth: One Captain Sturmy, a warm inquisitive Sea-man (he has writ a large folio of Navigation) would needs descended into it and his narrative was as followeth:



Engraving of Captain Samuel Sturmy

UBSS Proc. 1993 Vol 19 No. 3 Page 293

Upon the second of July 1669 I descended by ropes affixt at the top of an old lead-ore pit, four fathoms almost perpendicular, and from thence three fathoms more obliquely, between two great rocks where I found the mouth of this spacious place: from which, a mine-man and myself lowered our selves by ropes twenty five fathoms perpendicular, into a very large place, which resembled to us the form of a Horseshoe; for we stuck lighted candles all the way we went, to discover what we could find remarkable.

At length we came to a River of Great Water, which I found to be twenty fathoms broad, and eight fathoms deep. The mine-man would have persuaded me, that this river ebbed and flowed, for that some ten fathoms above the place, we now were in, we found the water had sometimes been: but I proved the contrary, by staying there from three hours Flood to two hours Ebb, in which time we found no alteration of this River. Besides its waters were fresh, sweet and cool, and the surface of this water, as it is now at eight fathoms deep lies lower than the bottom of any part of the Severn-Sea near us, so it can have no community with it, and consequently neither flux nor reflux, but in Winter and Summer, as all Stagna's, Lakes and Loughs (which I take this to be) have.

As we were walking by this River thirty two fathoms underground, we discovered a great hollowness in a rock, some thirty foot above us; so that I got a ladder down to us, and the mine-man went up the ladder to that place, and walked into it about threescore and ten paces, till he just lost sight of me, and from thence cheerfully call'd to me, and told me he had found what he looked for, a rich mine. But his joy was presently changed into amazement, and he returned affrightened by the sight of an Evil Spirit, which we cannot persuade him but he saw, and for

that reason will go thither no more. Here are abundance of strange places, the flooring being a kind of a white stone, enamelled with lead oar, and the pendent rocks were glazed with Salt-Peter, which distilled them from above, and time has putrefied.

After some hours stay there, we ascended without much hurt, other than scratching ourselves in diverse places by climbing the sharp rocks. But four days together, after my return from thence, I was troubles with an unusual and violent Head-ach, which I impute to my being in that vault. This is a true account of that place so much talkt of.

This Captain Sturmy falling from his Head-ach into a Fever and dying; what from his death, and the opinion of an Evil Spirit, nobody was willing to have any more to do with the said Hole from that time to this.

1775

17 March 1775 – Pen Park Hole, Bristol

Source – Felix Farley's Bristol Journal – 25 March 1775

Yesterday fortnight the Rev. Mr. Thomas Newnham, one of the minor canons of our Cathedral, and son of Mr. Newnham, Banker, met with his fate in a very singular and melancholy manner. Accompanied by his father, another lady and a young gentleman, he went to see the remarkable cavern called Pen Park Hole, about four miles from this city, and curiosity led him to fathom it. Before you come to this perpendicular fall, there is a defect between the rock, down which he went a little way, the better to dispose of his line, and for his greater safety caught hold of a twig of an ash tree, that grew near; but the ground being rather slippery, his feet gave way, and the twig breaking in his hand, he slipt down into this dreary cavern.

His companions were spectators of his distresses without being able to lend him the least assistance. Various trials have been made every day since the unhappy event to find the body of the deceased, but hitherto without success; tho' a gentleman (a stranger here) conversant in mines, sensibly affected with the distress of his afflicted and disconsolate parents hath gone frequently down himself and given every probable direction for recovering the body.

Source – Sarah Farley's Bristol Journal – 1 April 1775

We hear that Capt. Hamilton, an officer in the Prussian Service, now on his travels here, has again visited the cavern at Pen Park, and notwithstanding the nicest inspection has not been able to discover the least vestige of the unfortunate Gentleman who lately lost his life there.

Source – Felix Farley's Bristol Journal – 29 April 1775

Tuesday the body of the Rev. Mr. Newnam, who unfortunately fell into Pen-Park Hole six weeks since, was by a mere accident discovered. A wager was depending between two gentlemen of this city, to decide which one of them was to venture that morning into the Hole, previously to which a man was let down, who immediately perceived the body floating on the water. He was soon taken up, and it appears that by the fall, he met with a violent contusion on the back part of his head, and also broke one of his arms. He was interred at Westbury Church Thursday afternoon. Many are the conjectures respecting his remains so long undiscovered, but the most probable is, that the surge of the water, occasioned by the agitation of his falling into it, carried him into a chasm of the rock below, in which he was confined, 'till by some unknown

cause (probably the running off of the water, which it has in great abundance since that time) he was set loose and rose up to the surface.

Source – Sarah Farley’s Bristol Journal – 29 April 1775

The following is an authentic account of the discovery of the Rev. Mr. Newnham: - The persons who were from the beginning employed in searching Pen Park Hole for the body of the Rev. Mr. Thomas Newnham had the good fortune Tuesday morning last to discover him floating on the surface of the water at the bottom of the cavern. The discovery of the body has given great satisfaction to his friends, at the same time it proves the falsity and cruelty of the various reports so industriously circulated, tending to injure the character of the deceased. He was lying on his face with his arm over his forehead, in an attitude to shield it, in which position he is supposed to have descended the dreadful abyss. He had a wound in the back part of his head, but his arm was not broken as asserted. As the body descended into the water in an inclined position, it is imagined he was thrown under a projecting part of the rock, and there eluded every former search; but as the water (owing to the late dry weather) is decreased in depth near 20 feet, the body became exposed to view. The jury sat on the body and brought in their verdict accidental death; and it was afterwards interred in Westbury Church, attended by a great concourse of people.

Source – Register of Gloucestershire Inquests – 1 May 1775

On Thursday last an inquest was taken before James Rudge, Gent. one of his Majesty’s Coroners for this county, on the body of the Rev. Mr. THOMAS NEWNHAM, who, on the 17th of March last, fell into Pen Park Hole. The jury brought in their verdict Accidental Death. It must be great consolation to the deceased gentleman’s friends and relations that he is found, as it entirely contradicts the many false, ridiculous, and scandalous reports raised and propagated by the foolish, ignorant, and designing. On Tuesday some gentlemen of Bristol went to Pen Park Hole to decide a wager, and a person going down discovered the body floating on the water. It appears that Mr. NEWNHAM had received a violent contusion of the back part of his head, and also broke one of his arms.

Source – The Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century by John Latimer Page 416

A melancholy accident occurred on the 17th March to the Rev. Thomas Newnham, one of the minor canons of the Cathedral. The reverend gentleman, who was about 25 years of age, had gone with his sister and two friends to visit a singular cavern near Brentry, known as Pen Park Hole. Endeavouring to ascertain the depth of the cave, Mr. Newnham hung over the opening for the purpose of throwing down a line, when the small branch of an ash tree to which he was clinging suddenly broke, and he was precipitated to the bottom – nearly 200 feet – into a deep pool of water. Although repeated efforts were made to recover the body, it was not rescued until the 25th April.

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 5 May 1883

On 17th March 1775, the Rev. Mr. Newnham, one of the canons of the Cathedral of Bristol, with another gentleman and two ladies, one of them his sister, and the other the object of his affection, went to explore the depth of this horrible cavity. Mr. Newnham lowered a line, and being near the dark aperture, that he might be safer, laid hold of a twig pertaining to the root of an ashen tree which grew over the mouth of it. But his foot slipping, the twig broke, and he was precipitated into the yawning, black and dreadful gulf in the sight of his astonished and almost petrified friends. That morning he had officiated at Clifton church, and read the 88th Psalm in

which are these words, so descriptive of his catastrophe – “Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in a place of darkness, and in the deep.” After this shocking accident so many people went from Bristol to see this hole that the place about it was like a fair. Vehicles for descending were contrived, and some went down daily to search for the body which was found 39 days after floating on the water.

1793

October 1793 – Loxton Mine

Source – Mines & Minerals of the Mendip Hills by Peter Burr

In a letter to Richard Symes, an Attorney at Law at Bridgewater who also acted as steward to the Marquis of Buckingham, dated October 17, 1793, William Jenkin wrote (RCM: HJ 1.1-13; SRO: DD/X/HAM 2):

I have received a letter concerning the accident which happened to the Pig Drover. The Captains say they have frequently covered over the shafts but the people of that neighbourhood [sic] (Loxton Hill) have always stole away the covering. Many accidents of the like happen every year in this County.

In a letter to Scrope Bernard, steward to the Marquis of Buckingham, dated March 4, 1794, William Jenkin provided some additional information on this accident which threatened to prove costly to the adventurers (speculators) (RCM: HJ 1.1-13; SRO: DD/X/HAM 2):

I am sorry to hear of an accident which happened at our Mine about 20 weeks ago of a poor man falling into one of the pits about 15 feet [4.57 m] deep and breaking his leg.

1795

10 June 1795 – Unnamed Mine in Shipham

Source – Hereford Journal – 10 June 1795

A few days since, a boy about four years old, son of John Day, of Shipham, Somersetshire, playing near one of the calamine pits, nine fathoms deep, in the presence of his mother, fell in; but owing to her shrieks a man at work in the pit was alarmed, looked up, and caught him in his arms! The child, however, received so violent a cut in his head by striking it against the side of the pit, that a recovery is doubtful.

1800's

November c.1800 – Giant's Cave, Bristol

Source – Bristol Daily Post – 31 August 1863

A NIGHT IN GIANT'S CAVE

A correspondent of the Bristol Times writes: "The following adventure was told to me by an old inhabitant of Bristol, who died a short time ago. I will give you the story in his own words as near as I can, only promising that it occurred in the month of November, somewhere about the commencement of the present century, and that a path that then existed on the face of the rock communicating with Giant's Hole. Happening to take an evening walk on Clifton.

Down, near the Windmill, now the Observatory, it struck me that though I had been down in a diving bell and up in a balloon, I had never been in Giant's Hole. I determined at once to go there, and after some difficulty in finding the right path I succeeded in my object, and being something of a geologist I spent some time in observing the stratification of the rock, and in getting as far as I could to the end. On my return to the mouth of the cavern, judge of my astonishment and dismay at discovering a heavy snow storm had set in, covering completely the path by which I had descended, and that the shades of the night were approaching with every appearance of a smart frost. Here was a dilemma – I grew more nervous and agitated; should the frost continue here was I cut off from mankind. I could not approach the mouth of the cavern so as to be seen or heard from without; for the frozen snow would have made it as slippery as glass, and it was impossible I could scale the rock unaided – I should die of hunger and thirst – what would my wife say or think? and my poor children – should anything happen to me what would become of them, deprived of a father's guiding care and but slenderly provided for? These thoughts, and such as these, flashed through my mind from time to time with increasing intensity. I became bewildered, and could not fix my thoughts on one subject for a moment: I paced the cavity backwards and forwards for hours in agony 'thinking o'er all the bitterness of death.' But better thoughts at length came over me. I remembered in how many instances the goodness of Providence had been exercised to avert death and destruction from me. My mind at last became calm, and I looked forward with hope for the morrow in the full confidence that I should not perish miserably. You will be surprised to hear that I slept. The Indian, you know, has been said to sleep at the stake; yes exhausted by fatigue both bodily and mental, I absolutely slept soundly too. When I awoke it was broad daylight, the sun was shining brightly, the snow and frost were gone, and it required but a short time to dry the face of the rock. I passed a few anxious moments – to me they appeared hours, and then, though with no little nervousness and



Clifton Observatory early 1900's

trepidation, succeeded in reaching the surface of the Downs. My first thought was to return thanks to Providence for my deliverance from a lingering death, my next was to make a mental vow that I would never again go near Giant's Hole."

24 September 1808 – Sophia's Shaft

Source – Felix Farley's Bristol Journal – Saturday 1 October 1808 (Page 3, Column 5)

A MOST PROVIDENTIAL ESCAPE

Saturday last a girl of the name Sophia Weaver, about 6 or 7 years of age, who had gone into the fields at Downside, in the parish of Backwell, Somersetshire, to pick blackberries, was missed by her parents; a diligent search was made after her by several of the neighbours, till 12 o'clock at night without effect. In the course of their search, they found a deep pit covered over with brambles and long grass, from which many years since lead ore had been extracted, to the mouth of which they were led by the barking of a dog belonging to the father of the child; the grass, it appeared, had recently been trampled upon, but the lateness of the evening deterred those who were in search of her from descending. In the morning however, they returned, and two men were let down with ropes, when to their great astonishment, the child was found in one of the lanes leading from the pit, standing upright and free from injury, except the little hurt she had received in being scratched with the brambles. The preservation of the child was still more remarkable also, in her having retired into the lane, as the men in their descent rolled down several large fragments of rock, which must otherwise have inevitably dashed her to pieces. She remained 14 hours in the pit. Its depth is upwards of 100 feet.

25 August 1812 – Mine at Rowberrow

Source – The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette – 3 September 1812

Thomas Venn employed in a mine at Rowberrow, was killed by a large stone falling on him.

12 September 1814 – Lynchcombe Mine

Source – 24 September 1814 – Bristol Mirror

On Monday last, Jacob Hare, of Shipham, whilst digging calamine, in Lynchcombe Wood, was crushed to death by a rock falling upon him. He has left a wife and eight children.

Source – 29 September 1814 – The Taunton Courier

On Monday fe'onight [fortnight], Jacob Hare, of Shipham, whilst digging calamine, in Lynchcombe Wood, was crushed by a rock falling on him. He has left a wife and eight children. On August 10, 1818, Thomas Stevens, aged 4 years, was buried at Shipham. He had been killed by falling down a mine shaft (parish records).

September 1819 – Mine in Shipham

Source – The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette – 18 September 1819

INQUESTS LATELY TAKEN IN THIS COUNTY

Accidental Death – Thomas Stephens, of Shipham, by falling into a mine.

Source – Mines & Minerals of the Mendip Hills by Peter Burr

On August 10, 1818, Thomas Stevens, aged 4 years, was buried at Shipham. He had been killed by falling down a mine shaft (parish records).

c. 1820 – East Harptree Mine

Source – Mines & Minerals of the Mendip Hills by Peter Burr

About 1820, William Cole is recorded as having been killed in a calamine mine in a field called Blackers (perhaps T165) at East Harptree (SRO: DD/WG 14).

10 December 1820 – Shipham Mine

Source – Mines & Minerals of the Mendip Hills by Peter Burr

On December 10, 1820, Joseph White, aged 14 years, was buried at Shipham. He had been killed by a rock falling on him in a mine (parish records).

June 1823 – Mine in Shipham

Source – The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette – 12 June 1823

INQUESTS IN SOMERSET

On Thomas Athay, (one of the oldest miners on the forest of Mendip) [he was 60 years old!], who incautiously entered on some old [mine] work in the parish of Shipham, when the side fell in, and buried him.

31 October 1834 – Well in Shipham

Source – Bristol Mirror – 8 November 1834

FATAL ACCIDENT

Jos. Glover, a miner, of Shipham, Somerset, had been employed to sink a well, and it being necessary to blast the rock, he put a charge of powder for that purpose; when the explosion took place before he left the well, and he was taken out dreadfully mangled; and notwithstanding prompt medical assistance was procured, he died in about two hours. He left a widow and five children. Verdict – Accidental Death.

4 November 1834 – Combe Down Mine, Bath

Source – Bristol Mirror – 8 November 1834

ACCIDENT

On Tuesday, while a young man, named James Style, was at work in one of the stone quarries on Combe Down, near Bath, he was dreadfully crushed by the falling in of the surface. His thigh was broken, and his frame otherwise severely injured.

21 June 1835 – Giant’s Cave, Bristol

Source – Durham Chronicle – 26 June 1835

On Sunday last, a boy named Job Lancaster, ventured on the rash experiment of descending from the summit of St. Vincent’s Rock, Clifton Down, to what is called Giant’s Hole, in search of birds’ nests; he had almost reached the cavern, when his head became dizzy, he lost his footing, and fell from a height of about seventy feet! The terrified spectators naturally expected that he must have been killed; but on his being taken to the Infirmary it was found that he had sustained a concussion of the brain and was insensible, not a limb was fractured; and in the course of a few hours he was able to describe the cause of his fall. He is now fast recovering – Bristol Journal.

28 September 1837 – Giant’s Cave, Bristol [Fake News]

Source – Globe (London Newspaper) – 2 October 1837

DREADFUL MURDER & SUICIDE

Bristol – Clifton, September 29 – A circumstance occurred yesterday which has thrown our beautiful village into a state of the utmost agitation and excitement. It may not generally be known, that at the near summit of a cliff rising 300 feet above the surface of the river Avon, and which is commonly styled St. Vincent’s Rock, there is a hole or nearby circular aperture extending 20 or 30 yards inward, and to which an underground passageway has lately been excavated by the proprietor of the Clifton Observatory.

About noon yesterday, an elderly gentleman, accompanied by a young and lovely female, appeared at the door of the Observatory, and requested to be admitted to the “Giant’s Hole,” as this cave is generally called. Whilst one of the attendants went for a torch, which was to light them through the passage, the door keeper, observing that the gentleman seemed in a state of great excitement, muttering to himself in a low tone of voice, asked if he were not well, hinting that it might be better he should rest himself ere he ventured into the close air of the cavern. This intimation was either not heard or not heeded; but the lady said, “I am much obliged to you for your attention, but my husband is subject to these fits of absence.” The torch bearer, having performed his office, left them leaning over the balustrade at the outer entrance of the cave, enjoying the view of the picturesque landscape on each side of them, and the river rolling at their feet. What remains of this catastrophe can only be told by the people who were walking under the rocks at the time; they state that they saw a lady and gentleman leaning over the balustrade; the gentleman soon turned round, and could distinctly be perceived using violent gestures to the lady, who, terrified, sank to the ground, clinging onto the railing; they then saw him attempt to lift her up by the waist, which she resisted, still holding fast to the iron rails and uttering the most piercing screams. He at last succeeded in lifting her up to the top of the railing; the people at the Observatory, hearing the cries, hastened to the scene, but not in time to save the victim; he no sooner heard their approaching footsteps than with a jerk, he hurled her into the depths below; for a moment he steadfastly regarded the body of the unfortunate lady as it whirled round in the air and fell upon the ground a disfigured mass, and then with a spring, and a demonical laugh at those who were on the point of seizing him, he cleared the barrier betwixt him and eternity; but a just Providence ordained that he should suffer acutely for his double crime; he fell upon a pointed pinnacle of rock, and there, impaled and writhing, the wretched man hung for nearly a minute; gradually his hold relaxed, his joints stiffened, and he fell heavily about 10 yards from the body of his wife. Those that ran to the lady when she fell only heard her repeat these words “My God, I am innocent.”

On inquiry it has been ascertained that they arrived at the Gloucester Hotel the night before, from London; but all attempts to discover the names or address of the parties proved abortive.

Source – Bristol Mirror – 7 October 1837

DREADFUL MURDER & SUICIDE

The following paragraph [see above] under the head first appeared in the Globe London paper, and is now going the rounds of the provincial journals. It is hardly necessary to assure our readers, that the whole is a fabrication from the first line to the last, and seems to be the production of some penny-a-liner, who finding that the supply of news for the London market hardly keeps pace with the demand, sought to earn a dinner by drawing upon his inventive faculties. The attractive handling, and the melodramatic style in which the incidents are worked up, show some experience in such matters, and will probably lead the respectable paper which has been so grossly imposed upon to detect the writer.

[**Note** - The Giant's Cave tunnel was dug from the Observatory in 1837, broke through on 10th June & opened to the public on Mon 3rd July 1837.]

1 June 1865 – Ham Woods Mine – Crosscombe

Source – The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette – June 8, 1865

Additional Information – Earth Colours – Marie Clarke, Neville Gregory & Alan Gray – page 102

SHEPTON MALLET – ACCIDENT

On Thursday an accident occurred in the iron mine at Crosscombe, near this town. Some of the workmen were engaged in blasting the rocks in several places, and from some unaccountable cause one of the charges did not explode, whereupon two of the men named John Hill and Ephraim Brown, poked at the boring. Whilst thus employed, the explosion took place, and the two men sustained severe injuries in the face.

1869 – Elm Cave

Source – Proc. Somerset Archaeology & Natural History Society Vol. 140 (1997) page 13

Charles Moore (1814 to 1881) is the classic Victorian amateur geologist. Of independent means, he amassed a large fossil collection, perhaps the finest ever collected from Somerset by systematically exploring the then abundant local quarries. He wrote scientific papers on these finds and local geology.

In 1873 Moore lectured on his experiences in Mentone, France, where he spent the previous winter on an enforced recuperation from a bad accident during fieldwork on the Mendips. He was trapped by a rock fall in a cave in Murder Combe, and it was some time before he was rescued. This, said Winwood (1892) *, was the cause of the long illness to which Moore eventually succumbed. The illness weakened him and restricted his fieldwork, but his enquiring mind was active till the end.


Moore writes to Owen in 1878 “I am still a sad invalid without the prospect (having lost one lung) of ever being sound or fit for much hard work again.”

Source – *Winwood H. H. 1892 Proceedings Bath Natural History & Antiquarian Field Club, Vol 7 p 232–292. page 263

In 1869, he visited his old haunts in the Vallis, and took the Club to a cave which he had partly excavated in Murder–Combe valley, but where a large sheet of water at the bottom had stopped farther researches. He had not found anything of importance here; but, as he subsequently told me, the exploration of this cave and his being immured there for some time, owing to the falling in of a portion of the material, laid the seeds of that disease to which he finally succumbed.

Source – *Death Certificate*

CERTIFIED COPY OF AN ENTRY OF DEATH



GIVEN AT THE GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE
Application Number 8155794-1

REGISTRATION DISTRICT				BATH				
1881 DEATH in the Sub-district of Lyncombe and Widcombe				in the County of Somerset				

Colours	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
No.	When and where died	Name and surname	Sex	Age	Occupation	Cause of death	Signature, description and residence of informant	When registered	Signature of Registrar
	7th December 1881 10th Colchester Place N.W.S.	Charles Moore	Male	67 years	Geologist	Phthisis Obstruction of the Bowels 3 days Syncope 3 days	Joseph Moore Informant of the Death 10th Colchester Place N.W.S.	7th December 1881	William Bours Registrar


Seal of Registrar

CERTIFIED to be a true copy of an entry in the certified copy of a Register of Deaths in the District above mentioned.

Given at the GENERAL REGISTER OFFICE, under the Seal of the said Office, the 24th day of March 2017

DYE 152665 See note on back

CAUTION: THERE ARE OFFENCES RELATING TO FALSIFYING OR ALTERING A CERTIFICATE AND USING OR POSSESSING A FALSE CERTIFICATE. ©CROWN COPYRIGHT
WARNING: A CERTIFICATE IS NOT EVIDENCE OF IDENTITY.


JAC
P

The Death Certificate for Charles Moore Aged 67 and dated 7 December 1881 stated that the cause of death was Phthisis [pulmonary tuberculosis or a similar progressive wasting disease]. Obstruction of the Bowels 3 days. Syncope [Partial or complete loss of consciousness].

Source - Mendip The Complete Caves Barrington & Stanton (1977) page 70

Charles Moore an early geologist is said to have become stuck in the cave, having to be rescued by miners and dying soon after.”

5 January 1875 – Plumley's Hole

Source – *Proc. Univ. of Bristol Spelaeol. Soc., 1994, 20 (1) page 54*
The Discovery of Plumley's Hole, Burrington Combe and the Death of Joe Plumley
by Dougherty, Irwin & Richards

Llewellyn's Account (1911) Accident to Joe Plumley in 1874

Many may have heard of the accident which resulted in the death of Joe Plumley in Burrington Combe in 1874. The following is my recollections of the sad event.



Plumley's Hole Photograph - Dave Irwin 2004

George White, Fred Wookey and James Addicott were with Joe Plumley on Tuesday 5th January, quarrying just above the limekiln nearly opposite what has recently been christened "Rock of Ages." It appears they discovered a hole or fissure in the rock leading pretty nearly straight down from the surface. Having borrowed ropes from Mr. Thatcher, the three men proceeded to let Joe Plumley down this hole in the rock.

Plumley was a tall, handsome and heavy old man. Having lowered him a distance (I measured it the next day) of 150 feet, either owing to a cry from below, or being otherwise alarmed, they began to pull him up, but unfortunately his head caught on a projecting ledge of rock. They pulled, but to no purpose. His neck was broken at the first pull.

That evening about 9 or 10 o'clock, Frederick Plumley, who was at that time my groom, came hurriedly into my dining room at the Court and told me what had happened to his uncle. On arriving at the place, I found a considerable number of neighbours still at times pulling at the rope. At twelve, midnight, all hope was given up of releasing him. Early next morning we lowered George Clarke, then of Rickford, but afterwards of Butcombe, down the chasm and he found Plumley as I have described. This action of Clarke will always remain as one of the most daring and plucky actions on record. The almost perpendicular descent in the dark being made particularly dangerous by the loose stones falling as he went down. The body of Plumley was thus recovered. An inquest was held in the schoolroom on the 8th, when a verdict of Accidental Death, was returned.

A curious fact connected with Plumley's descent was that when released it was found that his feet were in a stream of running water. This fact probably accounted for his cry to be pulled up.

Joe Plumley lived alone in a very small cottage, the remains of which can hardly now be traced amongst the thorns and briars close to the gate leading to the Combe. For days after this sad occurrence Plumley's dog, a huge and very savage animal, could not be induced to leave the cottage. I believe it died there, though many were anxious to take care of it for the old man's sake.

Source – The Weston-super-Mare Gazette, Cleveland Journal & Somerset Advertiser – 9 January 1875

BURRINGTON – DISCOVERY OF ANOTHER CAVE.

As many of our readers are doubtless aware, much has been said and written about the caverns in Burrington Combe, which have been visited by a number of geologists, and an opportunity

is now afforded of inspecting one that has never before been explored. A few days since a man in the employ of Mr. John Clark, builder, of this place, was blasting solid rock in the Combe for the use of a limekiln, when the explosion opened up a cavern, or large fissure in the rock, the extent of which has not yet been ascertained. The only way in which any estimate of the cavern can be formed is by throwing down a stone, the sound of which can be heard for the space of three to four seconds.

Fatal Misadventure – On Tuesday a singular mishap befell Joseph Plumley, an old inhabitant of this parish, in connection with the discovery of the cavern mentioned above, by which he lost his life. Plumley, with George White and other men, were employed at a quarry and lime kiln in Burrington Combe. About three weeks ago, while blasting rocks in the quarry, they discovered a large circular cavity apparently leading to a cavern which the men were curious to explore, and on Tuesday afternoon Plumley resolved to make the descent. His fellow workmen having made fast a rope to him and provided him with a light, he was let down the chasm to a distance of about forty yards, the rope being held at the mouth of the cavity by White and the other men. Plumley then called to be drawn up, and he was pulled up eight or ten yards, when he called to the men to slacken the rope; they did so, and immediately afterwards Plumley's light was observed to be extinguished. The men shouted to him, but could get no answer, and upon trying to pull him up further found he was immovable. This caused some alarm among the men, but eventually George Clark, a labourer of Butcombe, having a rope attached to him was let down about twenty yards, when he requested to be drawn up as he could see nothing of Plumley. Clark was drawn up, and no further attempt to get out Plumley was made that night. On Wednesday morning the villagers flocked to the spot, and Clark made another descent into the chasm, this time going about thirty yards; he then discovered Plumley with his head jammed against a projecting rock, but as may be supposed life was extinct. Clark got the body clear and it was drawn up and removed to the house of his sister, with whom he resided. He was an unmarried man and aged about 55 years. Supt. Gilbanks was in attendance when the body was recovered.

Source – The Weston-super-Mare Gazette, Cleveland Journal & Somerset Advertiser – 16 January 1875

BURRINGTON – THE FATAL ACCIDENT IN A CAVERN.

The inquest on the body of the man Plumley, whose death in exploring a cave in Burrington Combe we reported last week, has been held. It appeared from the evidence that on the day in question Plumley, in the presence of several men, descended a large hole which had been discovered in the quarry, and which he was anxious to explore. A rope was fastened around his body and held by some of his companions. After he had gone down about 70 feet the men found that the rope could not be lowered further nor could they pull Plumley to the surface. The body was not recovered until the following morning when George Clark was lowered into what proved to be a large cavern, by means of another rope. It was evident that the rope by which Plumley descended became entangled in a piece of projecting rock, and thus suspended by the rope he died before assistance could be rendered to him. It would seem that he had made a great effort to get back to the surface, for the body was found “doubled up,” and the rope slipped from the breast to the head. The jury returned a verdict of “Accidental death.”

Source – Bristol Evening Post (Bristol Times) – 22 May 2001 (Extract)

In the 1920s a caving club got to discussing the incident with locals, and some new details emerged. It was said that before Plumley went down, iron bars were fixed in the rocks to belay two ropes, one to climb and one to act as a lifeline. It was this rope that must have slipped when

the quarryman was being hauled out, caught around his neck and hung him. The club members also found a ledge with a 'v'-shaped notch 30 feet down and it was probably here that Plumley became jammed and broke his neck. A hole under this ledge may have carried the stream mentioned. Sometime after Joe's death the cave was named after him. It was then blocked by a tree stump and large boulders. Over time it became infilled with rubble and became much less deep. However, some reports talk of immense caves below the rubble. In 1924 the local authority placed a manhole over the cave for safety reasons and covered it with cement. Rock falls later obscured it and as far as the public is concerned its now a 'lost' Mendip cave

20 September 1876 – Vobster Lead Mines, Redhill

Source - The Western Mercury & Somerset Herald – 23 September 1876

FATAL ACCIDENT

On Wednesday, a little boy named William Charles Moulton – son of the manager of the Vobster Lead Mines, Redhill – met with an accident on the works which was speedily attended with fatal results. It appears that he was playing in the engine house, and is supposed to have caught hold of the driving strap of the crushing machine, by which he was drawn over the wheel between the cogs of the machinery. His perilous position was almost immediately seen by Arthur Cole, the engineer, who at once stopped the engine and summoned the attendance of the child's father, but so entangled had the body and clothes of the little fellow become in the machinery that his clothes had to be cut away to extricate him. It was then found that he had sustained severe injuries to the head, besides which his shoulders were nearly torn from the body. The surgical aid of Messrs. Chadwick and Collins was at once procured, but from the first they could give no hope of the unfortunate child's recovery, and in less than four hours after the accident he breathed his last. An inquest was held before Mr. S. Craddock, coroner – and a jury who chose their foreman, Mr. T. Hamlin – on Saturday, when a verdict of "Accidental Death" was returned.

18 December 1876 – Redhill Lead Mine

Sources – The Western Mercury & Somerset Herald – 23 December 1876 & Western-super-Mare Gazette – 23 December 1876

WRINGTON – ACCIDENT TO A MINER

On Monday, Henry Childs, aged 36, a miner, residing with his parents at Wrington, and employed in a lead mine at Redhill, was drilling a hole at the bottom of the shaft, when some other miners at the top of the shaft accidentally let a bucket of lead fall down a depth of 50 feet. The whole mass fell on Childs' right leg, inflicting a frightful gash, about a foot in length. He was removed to the Bristol General Hospital and admitted as an inpatient.

8 January 1883 – Winford Redding Pitts

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 9 January 1883

SUPPOSED BRUTAL MURDER NEAR WINFORD

Mark Cox aged 17, who was employed at the Redding Works, Winford left his house, at Ridgehill, about 11:30p.m. on Sunday night, so as to arrive at the works at 12. Nothing was seen of him at the works, and at about six o'clock yesterday morning, as a man named John Haberfield was passing through Ridgehill, on the way to his work at Dundry, he found the body of Cox in the middle of the road, near the King's farmhouse. It was dark at the time, and Haberfield could not tell whether the man was drunk or in a fit. He at once called up Mr. King and another farmer named Weaver, who took a light with them and found it was the dead body of Cox lying in a pool of blood. On examination they found several cuts about the head. Dr. Collins of Chew Magna was soon on the spot, but he could not say without a post mortem examination whether the wounds on the head were from blows or gunshots. Evidently there was no struggle. The right hand of deceased was in his trouser's pocket when found, and his dinner basket on his arm. He must have been struck or shot down and at once rendered insensible. No motive except malice can be assigned for the crime, as the deceased was an inoffensive young man. He partly supported his parents. The foul deed has cast quite a gloom over the neighbourhood. Supt. Drewett has arrested a young man named Job Wedlake on suspicion. It appears Wedlake had been heard to threaten to "do for" deceased. They lived very near each other, and were not on the best of terms.

Our Long Ashton correspondence writes – "About midnight on Sunday a young man about 18 years of age, named Mark Cox, left his father's house at Ridgehill, in the parish of Winford, for the purpose of proceeding to the Redding Iron Ore Company's Works in the same parish, where he was employed. About 6 o'clock yesterday morning he was found lying on the road in a pool of blood, near Mr. Alfred King's farm house, and in the direction of the works. His jaw was broken, there was a large, deep cut over the eye, and several bruises on the back of his head. His left hand was in his trousers pocket, and his right on his breast.

Information was given to Police constable Orman, at Winford, who was at once on the spot, and he immediately dispatched a messenger to Supt. Drewett, who proceeded to the place. The body was taken to the house of his father (George Cox), at Ridgehill."

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 10 January 1883

THE BRUTAL MURDER NEAR WINFORD

Inquiries made yesterday by Supt. Drewett have placed beyond doubt the fact that a most brutal murder was committed at Winford on Sunday night, and matters that have since transpired have deepened the suspicions against Job Wedlake, aged 17, who has been apprehended. For many months ill-feeling has existed between Wedlake and deceased, which had from time to time given rise to altercations. Cox and Wedlake resided in a lane leading from the main road, and were the nearest neighbours, although their houses were about a quarter of a mile distant from each other. Both were engaged in the same occupation – excavating iron-ore – although the works where they were employed were a little distance apart. What originally gave rise to the ill-feeling between the deceased and Wedlake has not transpired; and besides the prisoner, others were disaffected towards the unfortunate young man from no apparent cause. Cox was steady and inoffensive, of a kindly disposition, and disinclined to create a breach of the peace. The grudge entertained by Wedlake and others towards the deceased must have been tolerably deep-seated even in the summer, for at haymaking time Wedlake, his brother, and a third man concealed themselves one night in an out of the way place, and when Cox appeared they set upon him and beat him unmercifully. Things then would have been more serious – some say he would have been killed – if it were not for the timely arrival of deceased's parents, who were near and heard cries. They interfered, whereupon the old man was also set upon and maltreated.

Since that time matters has not improved, but had latterly become worse. It would appear that a little while since Wedlake shot some pigeons belonging to Cox, who threatened to summons him, although he did not carry out his threat. This seemed to increase the exasperation of Wedlake, who frequently after this used threats towards Cox. The treatment he received from Wedlake and it is believed from other men, terrified him, and several times deceased observed that he feared ill-treatment. As late as the Saturday before Christmas Wedlake met the deceased, and was heard to threaten him to "do for him". Cox seemed to have had a presentiment that he should meet with a violent end, and this was especially marked on Sunday evening, when he observed to his parents that he felt very uneasy, and was afraid to venture out to go to his employ. He worked at night, and had to commence at midnight on Sunday. He further said he was sure they would find him murdered at some time and expressed a desire to be accompanied to the works, as he was sure they would murder him. (referring to persons who had threatened him.) The deceased, however, left his home alone, at 11:30 p.m., in order that he might reach his work at the proper hour, the distance between his residence and the excavations being about two miles. He carried with him his food-basket, and there was also a knife in his pocket. From that hour he was not seen alive. The next morning John Haberfield, who resides at Witcombe, or Strode, was walking to his work at Dundry at an early hour when he came upon the deceased lying in the centre of the road a hundred yards from the farmhouse of Mr. King. As it was dark at the time, he could not see the terrible nature of affairs. He therefore went to the house of Mr. King, called him up and then awakened another farmer named Weare. Lights were brought, when a ghastly sight presented itself to their view. Deceased was lying dead in a large pool of blood, with his head smashed to pieces. There were no signs of a struggle, his cap was on, in his pocket were the things he left home with, and his food basket was still on his arm. A messenger was sent to Chew Magna for Dr. Collins who, on arrival, pronounced life to be extinct.

The body was removed to the residence of the deceased's father. Shortly after 9 o'clock on Monday morning Supt. Drewett was informed of the shocking occurrence and at once set off to Winford to make enquiries. To remove traces of the foul deed, dry furse was taken from the hedges and burnt over the large quantity of blood in the road. Supt. Drewett, Sergt. Knight, and Constable Orman used every effort to discover the perpetrator of the crime. They ascertained that malice had been shown by John Wedlake towards the deceased, as circumstances were strong against him it was decided to charge him on suspicion. When the murder became known the men employed at the various works went to see the body, but Wedlake remained behind. The officers went to the place where Wedlake was engaged and found him at 1p.m. with other men in a hut eating some food. Supt. Drewett apprehended him, and told him he should charge him on suspicion of having murdered Mark Cox, and cautioned him as to any statement he should make. Wedlake, it is said, trembled when he was charged, but replied that he knew nothing about the crime, and that he did not leave his house during Sunday night. He was remanded to the cells at Flax Bourton, where he was detained. Supt. Drewett and the other officers continued their enquiries yesterday. They found that the deed was perpetrated on the main road, midway between the deceased's house and the place where he worked. Believing from the appearance of the body that some weapon was used they searched the ponds and other waters for it, but without success. Dr. Collins of Chew Magna, and his assistant made a post mortem examination of the body and found the organs thoroughly healthy and the body well nourished. The head, however, presented a frightful appearance. On the left temple was a terrible fracture, extending entirely round the skull, the jaw was broken, there was a deep cut over one of the eyes, and upon the face and back of the head were bruises and abrasions. The theory is that the deceased was met whilst he was going to work, that he was struck down by a heavy blow on the left temple, and that he was afterwards kicked or beaten about the head, and then left where he fell. The police gained many other details which confirmed their opinion as to the way in which the crime was committed, and which pointed more clearly to the prisoner

as being the perpetrator. At 5p.m. yesterday evening the prisoner, Job Wedlake, described as a labourer at iron ore works, was taken by Supt. Drewett before Mr. James Ford, at the Bourton Petty Sessions court, and charged by him on suspicion of having murdered Mark Cox.

Mr. Ford - "was the deceased a labourer also?"

Supt. Drewett - "He was in the same capacity."

Mr. Ford - "In the same employ?"

Supt. Drewett - "No; in the employ of a different person, but at the same description of work."

Mr. Ford - "This occurred on Sunday night, the 17th. Where about?"

Supt. Drewett - "On the high road, in the village of Ridgehill."

Mr. Ford - "Do you wish to mark the spot in any way?"

Supt. Drewett - "It is near Mr. King's farmhouse."

Mr. Ford - "Do you wish to bring any further evidence, or do you merely content yourself with this?"

Supt. Drewett - "I do not propose to offer any evidence now. The inquest is tomorrow, at 11a.m., and I ask for a remand. I may add that I was present today at the post mortem examination of the deceased's body, and from the appearance of the head, the man was very badly beaten. The skull was completely battered in."

Mr. Ford (to prisoner) - "You are remanded until Saturday."

Mr. Ford (to Supt. Drewett) - "What time will suit you?"

Supt. Drewett - "Any time you please, sir?"

Mr. Ford - "Then we will have it early - at ten or half past 9."

Supt. Drewett - "Will you require the presence of another magistrate?"

Mr. Ford - "I think not, but I will let you know between this and then."

The prisoner was then remanded to the cells. He made no statement, and was unmoved when the charge was made against him. He is said to be 17 years of age, although he appears older. He is rather tall, well built, and has no hair on his face. He was attired in a suit of fustian, [*thick, hard-wearing twilled cloth with a short nap, usually dyed in dark colours*] covered in Redding or iron-ore. Although his clothes were examined, no traces of blood were found upon them. The colour from the mineral from which his cloths are stained could make the detection of blood spots rather difficult.

Source - Bristol Times and Mirror - 11 January 1883

THE BRUTAL MURDER AT WINFORD - THE INQUEST

Dr. Lionel A. Weatherley, deputy coroner for Somersetshire, held an inquest yesterday in the Ridgehill Parochial school, respecting the death of Mark Cox aged 17, a labourer at the Redding Works, Winford, who was so brutally murdered on Sunday night. 16 Jurymen were sworn with Mr. James Elworthy as foreman. Much excitement was manifested in the enquiry, the school-room was filled, and outside there were many of the workmen residing in the neighbourhood. The jury having taken the oath, they went to the house of the deceased's parents to view the body. On their return the coroner observed that he had but a few remarks to make. He would ask them to dismiss from their minds entirely all reports that they had either seen or heard, because such an event occurring in a district as that, numerous reports were started, and one young man had been arrested on suspicion.

He wished them to come before him as he did before, then apparently knowing nothing about the case, but to gather the story simply and solely from the evidence that would be offered. The following witnesses were called - George Cox said he lived in the parish of Winford. The body the jury had viewed was his son, who was 17 years old last May. He last saw him alive on Sunday evening, January 7th at about 11:30 p.m.



Winford Redding Pitts – Geoff Taylor collection.

He left at that time to go to work at the Red House Company's Works, Winford, where he had been engaged about 12 months. He had with him his food basket with a jar of tea in it, and nothing more. Before leaving he said to him, his wife, and his daughter, "I wish you were going up as far as the works with me". He did not then give any reason, and went off very uneasy he thought. All the day witness had felt very low. His son did not tell him anything. His son seemed tolerably cheerful, and did not say he had had a quarrel with anyone, lately. One evening in August (he thought it was) he was at the Red House Company's Works with his son. That evening Mr. Argall had given the men a treat after haymaking. When they were leaving for home they met 3 "chaps" lying down beside a gate on the road. The men were Charles Rees, Job Wedlake, and his brother James Wedlake. Reed spoke first, and said "Who beest looking at" Witness said "I know who you are," Charles "Yes, and I do know you" he retorted. Witness had not known him a long time, Reed said further "If you want anything, I'll let thee have it". A quarrel there upon ensued, all three men setting on the deceased. Witness interfered, and they "went into" him. John Rawlings came also and took part of the men. A Mr. Horwell and Mr. Joseph Vowles came and assisted in stopping the fight otherwise matters would have been serious. Witness did not know why these men were so much against his son. Afterwards Messrs Horwell and Vowles accompanied them on the way, and then left. The men, however, went on in advance, and on approaching nearer home the men met them and black ganged them once more. They also picked up stones and threw one nearly striking his wife. After some time the men went away. They had had drink that day. Since then there had been disaffection between the Wedlakes and deceased, who had expressed to his mother fear of the Wedlakes, but the deceased had never spoken to witness about any quarrel. On Sunday last witness was at home and remained there all night. He was called about 6 a.m. next morning, and told of the occurrence. John Haberfield, residing at Dundry, stated that on Sunday afternoon he came to

Ridgehill, and started from Ridgehill to go to Dundry on Monday morning about 5:30 a.m. When he came to the top of Ridgehill – Street he saw something in the road, which he found was a man, apparently dead. He at once called Mr. Alfred King, whose house was about 100 yards distant, and afterwards Mr. Isaac Weaver. All three went back. It was dark at the time, and they had a lantern. They then found the young man dead nearly in the middle of the road, lying on his back. His legs were straight and towards Winford. His left hand was in his trousers pocket, and his right hand was on his breast. A flask basket was slung round his shoulder by a piece of string. Seeing the state of affairs he went for a policeman, who was soon on the spot. No one touched the body until he came. There was a very large quantity of blood in the road. Alfred King said he resided at Winford, and on Monday morning at 25 minutes to six John Haberfield called him up and told him that he had found a man, whom he thought was dead, lying in the road. He got up at once and went to the spot, and there discovered the deceased, whom at once recognised. The deceased was lying on his back with his head down the hill, and his legs towards Winford. He remained by the body until the policeman came, and no one touched it until then.

By the Foreman – There were no marks of a struggle. It would seem that the deceased fell down without a struggle.

By the Coroner – On either side the hedge was 7 feet high, and the fields were about 4 or 5 feet above the level of the hedge, on the left side of the road going towards Winford.

By Supt. Drewett – His house was about 75 yards from the place where the body was lying.

By the coroner – He heard no noise during the night. He went to bed about 10 p.m. Sunday evening.

Edmund George Orman said he was a police constable stationed at Winford. On Monday morning, about 7 a.m., Haberfield came to his house and informed him he had found a man lying dead in the road near Mr. Alfred King's gate and the cross roads. Deceased was on his back with his left hand in his trousers pocket, his right hand on his chest, and a basket was underneath him. There was a large pool of blood under his head, but blood was not then flowing. He examined the spot, but could not see footmarks. He also inspected the hedges, and fields on both sides, but found no footmarks. The ground was soft. There was a ploughed field on the left-hand side through which there was no pathway, neither was there a pathway through the green field on the other side. By this time a doctor had been sent for. Witness had the body removed to the house of Mr. Cox, before the arrival of the doctor.

By Dr. Collins – There were no marks on the piece of waste ground on the left-hand side.

By Supt. Drewett – The deceased's pockets had not been rifled. He did not understand that the man had been robbed. There was only a knife on him – in his right hand trouser pocket.

Mr. Charles H. Collins said that he was a surgeon, and practised at Chew Magna. At about 7:30 a.m. he received a message to go to Ridgehill. He started off, and on his way passed the spot where the deceased had been found. There he saw a large quantity of blood. At the residence of the deceased's father he discovered the body lying. The man was dead and cold, having been dead some hours. His examination told him there had been severe injuries about the head. Then he was joined by Dr. Edwards, who confirmed his opinion.

Mr. William Richard Edwards, surgeon of Chew Magna, deposed that on the 9th January he made a post mortem examination of the body of Mark Cox. The body was dressed in the usual working clothes, which was covered with redding dirt, and with the exception of a tear on the right sleeve jacket, there was no disarrangement of them, the hat, of stout soft felt (billy cock), was saturated with blood, it being on his head. There was no hole, tear or cut in it, but it was crushed where the head had been resting upon it. On removing the clothes, the body was seen to be that of a strong, well-developed man, measuring about 5 feet 9 inches. There were no marks of violence on the trunk and limbs. There were the unusual post mortem lividity on the

parts of the body underneath. Rigor mortis was extremely well marked. The face was partially covered with clotted blood, which had issued primarily from the nose or mouth. Blood had also flowed from both ears, and there was considerable ecchymosis of both eyelids. There was a lacerated and contused wound above the upper margin of the left eyebrow, extending almost directly upwards in the forehead for about 1½ inches, and surrounded by a margin of dark ecchymosed skin. The direction of the wound was oblique, from left to right, as regards its deeper portion, extending towards the middle line under the skin for about one inch along its course was a depressed fracture of the frontal bone extending to the upper margin of the left orbit. There was considerable bruising of the left cheek and side of the head and neck behind the angle of the left jaw, a slight abrasion over the left malar bone; laceration of the lobe of the left ear; the lower jaw on the left side, was fractured near the angle and symphysis – two fractures; there was a small lacerated wound along the outer part of the right eye brow, one inch in length, the outer part being of a punctured character. There was a slight abrasion and much contusion of the right side of the head over and behind the temple. On cutting through the scalp he found very extensive extravasation of blood over the front and both sides of the head, a slight fissured fracture ran along the junction of the upper part of the temporal and the frontal bones on the right side. There was a semi-circular depression of the left side of the frontal bone. This fracture corresponded with the wound described above the left orbit. The left temporal and parietal bones were extensively fractured and comminuted and some of the fragments were driven into the brain exposing it. The general direction of this fracture was from the outer angle of the left orbit directly backwards. There was a fissure of the temporal, parietal, and anterior portion of the occiput on the right side. On removing the skull cap there was a slight extrusion of blood over the anterior part of the durra matter, otherwise it seemed healthy. The surface of the anterior portion of the brain was much congested, and the extravasation extended into the substance of the brain, which was also lacerated by fragments of bone at the point corresponding to the comminuted fracture. On removing the brain and examining the base of the skull, he found that the fracture of the right side of the skull extended from the posterior angle of the right parietal bone obliquely downwards and forwards through the bone forming the base of the skull, and then backwards and upwards till it joined the posterior extremity of the large comminution on the left side, thus practically separating the fore and back parts of the skull at the base and sides. The other organs of the body were perfectly healthy.

The coroner observed that rarely was it that a medical man met with such extensive mischief and such a mass of fracture, and he complemented Dr. Edmonds on the careful way in which he conducted the examination.

Mr. Collins said he never in his life examined a body with such extensive fractures. Mr. Collins was called, and said he assisted Dr. Edmonds on the post mortem examination, and confirmed the evidence he had given.

Sarah Cox stated that the deceased was her son. She last saw him alive on Sunday night, January 7th at 11:30 p.m., when he left her house to go to work. He told her before he left that he would rather go to bed than to work, and that he wished 2 or 3 of them would go with him as far as the works, but he did not tell them the reason. She put his food in his basket, which he slung over his shoulder, and then he said I suppose if none of you are going my way I must wish you all good night. Deceased worked a fortnight by day and a fortnight by night, and he had told her that he liked his work, only he feared going in the dark of the night on Sunday. The reason of his fear he told her was that he knew they would come and kill him. He meant by them Job and James Wedlake. He said there were three; they would not come one at a time but come all three. He did not tell her the name of the third man. This conversation took place on the Saturday before Christmas day in the afternoon. She knew he had been for some time on unfortunate terms with the Wedlakes. Job Wedlake shot his two pigeons about a month ago and she wanted to have a summons, but thought of his poor mother and father, and did not. One evening after

this, as her son was coming home, he saw Job Wedlake, who said "Thee's blamed me for shooting thy pigeons, and I'll serve thee the same". Deceased never had a quarrel with any other men.

By Supt. Drewett – She did not hear anyone threaten her son on the Saturday before Christmas day.

She went to Chew Magna, and when she arrived at the top of Chew Street she saw three young men there. She was with her sister-in-law. She did not know the men, but they teased the dog which she had with her, and the dog barked. She said if the dog bit them they could not blame the dog. They made some remark about some meat, and she said "What I have got I did not come to you to pay for." One replied, "It is thy son Mark that keeps thee up, and he paid for the meat." She said "I'm proud of my son;" and he returned "Yes, and I'll settle him" She believed it was James Wedlake who said this, but could not swear. She then said "I suppose you mean to serve him as you did his pigeons?" and the same young man answered, "I'll go now at once and have the rest of them and some of thy fowls before thee comes home." She said "if I catch you on my premises I'll put you between the walls." That was all that passed. She knew that both the Wedlakes were against her son. She did not know the reason, but her son told her that they wanted him to go drinking with them, and he would not.

Dr. Edmonds, recalled, said on again examining he had found two cuts in it – one an old one on the left side, and a new cut on the right. He was of the opinion that the wound over the left orbit was the 1st inflicted, and that the man then fell in the road senseless immediately, that the same wound was likely to be caused by the chisel edge of a pick-axe, or the sharp edge of a large masons hammer; and that this wound was evidently struck from the man's left side.

William Argall, manager of the Winford Iron Ore and Redding Co. Ltd., produced some tools from each of the works. The deceased was engaged at the redding works, where the redding was manufactured. At the place where the tools were used none of the men mentioned were engaged. Job's father only worked for him. He was not aware that the tools were taken away. The two short picks (produced) were used in the Yellow Mines for cleaning the red from the yellow; the two larger picks (produced) were used in the works where young Mark was engaged. The other picks still longer, were used in the mines. The instruments were from each department of the works.

Dr. Edmonds having examined the tolls, said a large pick with a chisel end would have inflicted such a wound. There was another tool smaller, that would have caused the injuries, but the terrible fractures would hardly have been caused by the lighter instrument. He inclined to the belief that one of the tools used in the yellow mines caused the wound on the left side of the deceased's head.

James Wedlake residing at Winford, deposed that he had been working for Farmer Samuel Evans, but left his employ at about 5 p.m. on Sunday night, he then went to John Weaver, who kept a public-house at Chew Stoke. He reached home just after 6, I remained there till about 9:30 p.m. He then joined Thomas Chapman at his house, between Chew Stoke and Chew Magna. He remained there until between 3 and 4 am next morning, when he left with Chapman to go sparrow catching. They went to Moreton way across to Sutton and back to Chapman's house, reaching there about 8 a.m. He saw his brother Job at 11:30 a.m. of Sunday at his home, and was in his company until 4 p.m. He had not lived at home for about two months, but lodged at Chew Stoke. There was a difference sometime ago between him, his brother, and Mark Cox, but not recently. The last time he saw Cox was Sunday week, when witness spoke to him, but there was no altercation.

By the jury – Last Sunday he was with his brother during the afternoon, and John Rawlings was with them for a short period. He was about Ridgehill until 5 p.m., when he went back to Chew. Whilst he was with his brother they did not talk about Mark Cox. He did not see Mrs. Cox on the evening of Saturday before Christmas. He was then at work at farmer Evan's until 8pm. Mrs. Evans sent him between 8 and 9 pm on an errand to Chew Magna, but he did not see his brother that night, nor did he see Mrs. Cox.

Mr. Argall, recalled, said Cox was about the steadiest man on the works. All the men engaged at the three works respected deceased very much. He had not heard of any quarrel amongst any of the men. Job Wedlake was engaged by Malago Vale Callow Co., at Winford which works adjoined their yellow mine.

By the jury – Everyone was cut up by the affair. One man Webb told witness that deceased frequently asked him since Christmas to accompany him to attend to the fires, as he was afraid to go alone.

By the coroner – Job Wedlake was formerly employed under him, but was dismissed because of his unsteadiness.

John Cox stated that he was brother of the deceased and last saw him on the 28th December. He told him that he liked his work very well, but dreaded going to work in the dead of the night on Sunday. He remained with him on Christmas day, when deceased said he did not like his work about there because there were three or four mixed up together who threatened, and that there was one very often interrupted him – threatened him – one by the name of Wedlake. His wife in his hearing asked him why, and Mark replied that it was because he kept his money in his pocket and would not mix up and go drinking with them.

By Supt. Drewett – Deceased did not say before him that he was afraid they would murder him, but he did say that he felt in danger of his life, mentioning Wedlake's name. He added that he did not care if they came one at a time, but they came together. To his brother George he said that he (George) was not to be surprised to hear that he was murdered.

Charles Horler, living at Winford, deposed that he was passing from Winford to Strode on Sunday night, January 7th at about 11:30 p.m., he met a man at Ridgehill, about 300 yards the Ridgehill side from where the body of Mark Cox was found. It was very dark. He wished the man good night, but he never spoke. The man was walking towards Winford, and had an overcoat, which did not seem to be buttoned up. He had a soft felt hat, turned up all round and high in the crown, and his overcoat was open. He appeared to have his left hand under his coat behind him or in his trouser pocket. He could not think who the man was.

By Supt. Drewett – he would not say that the man was not Job Wedlake.

John Rawlings said he lived at Stoke. On Sunday morning he went with Job Wedlake and his brother round the fields. He reached home at about 1 p.m. and did not see Wedlake again that day.

In the evening he went to chapel, and went straight home. Mark Cox was a cousin of his. He quarrelled with Mark on the 29th May last, but not since. He lodged with him after 29th May. He remembered Job and James Wedlake and Charles Read fighting with Mark Cox and his father, but he did not interfere, although he was knocked down. He was not at Chew Magna on the Saturday before Christmas.

Mr. Angall again called, said he remembered that in August last after haymaking, an entertainment was given to the men on the work. As he was walking along the road after the entertainment he heard cries of "Murder". He ran to the spot where the cries came, where he saw the deceased in the ditch and his father and mother in the hedge. Mrs. Cox appealed to him to save their lives, and he then told the men that they ought to be ashamed of themselves to attack an old couple. Rawlings, Reed and the two Wedlakes were present. He suddenly heard them say "Lets us go for them". Job Wedlake led the way, and rushed upon him, followed by his brother and Rawlings. Witness knocked down Job Wedlake, his brother next and then Rawlings. He afterwards shook Reed and made him put his clothes on. If he had not been there he believed serious mischief would have been done.

Joseph Vowles, who was also present at the fight and took the part of the deceased and his parents, deposed that he heard Job Wedlake say to the other three, "If me can't give it to the --- tonight we will another night". Several other expressions were made use of by the men which he did not hear.

(Adjourned until Friday.)

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 15 January 1883

THE WINFORD MURDER

At the Long Ashton Petty Sessions court on Saturday, Job Wedlake was again brought up before Hon. James Ford, charged by Supt. Drewett on suspicion of having wilfully murdered Mark Cox at Ridgehill, in the parish of Winford, on Sunday January 7th. Before the prisoner was brought into the room Sup. Drewett, in reply to Mr. Ford said that the friends of the prisoner had shown no anxiety about the position of the accused. They had not suggested that the wrong man was in custody, nor complained of the treatment Wedlake had received.

When the prisoner was brought into the room, Mr. O'Donoghue (addressing him) said You know what you are charged with? The prisoner – Yes.

Mr. Ford – Have you any further evidence to give,

Supt. Drewett ? – Well, sir, I arrested the prisoner on suspicion of having committed this murder from circumstances that came to my knowledge on Monday.

Mr. O'Donoghue - I believe the inquest is not completed? – Not yet, sir.

Mr. Ford – When is the adjournment to? – The inquest is adjourned until Wednesday, at the school room at Winford. And you apply for a further remand until the inquest is completed? – Yes sir.

Mr. Ford – Very well; prisoner, you are remanded until the petty sessions on Friday, remaining in custody.

Job Wedlake, the man charged with the murder, expresses no concern at the position he is placed in. He takes his food readily, and seems cheerful. Up to the present he has not made any admission or confession beyond that which at first said, and which he repeated on oath before the coroner on Friday – that he knew nothing about the murder, and that he was at home at 6 o'clock on Sunday night, went to bed before 9, and did not again leave home until he went to work the next morning.

THE WINFORD MURDER – FUNERAL OF THE DECEASED

On Sunday afternoon the funeral of the murdered man, Mark Cox, took place in Chew Stoke church yard. A very large concourse of inhabitants from the surrounding villages, estimated at 1,000, were present, drawn hither though the interest that had been manifested in the event, and to pay respect to the young man, whose gentleness and uprightness of character had made him generally liked. Cox's comrades bore the coffin, and workmen employed at the Iron Ore Works at Winford principally formed the funeral procession. Mr. S. Taylor and Mr. W. Argall, the sec. and manager of the Winford Iron and Redding Co., were also present. On the way to the place of burial the spot where the terrible deed was committed was passed, and singular to state, the bearers were changed at the spot where the body of Cox was found. The Winford Iron-Ore Co., provided a handsome coffin and paid the expenses of the funeral, and at their request, with the consent of the vicar of Chew Stoke, the Rev. H. Tripp, of Winford, read the service at the grave assisted by the Rev. J. Ellershaw (Chew Stoke).

At the close of the service the Rev. J. Ellershaw addressed the crowd, warning those who were leading godless lives of the awful suddenness with which death came upon many. The crowd were most orderly and attentive, and before leaving the graveside the hymn "After more years shall roll," was impressively sung. In the evening the church was crowded to excess. The sermon was preached by the Rev. J. Ellershaw, who took for his text the first words of the evening lesson, Isaiah 1vii.,1. After speaking of the circumstances under which the prophet wrote, and the general teaching that men may be cut off in early life in mercy, God taking them away from evil to come, he alluded to the fearful crime which had been committed just outside the borders of the parish on the previous Sunday evening, and the victim of which had been laid to his rest in their own churchyard that afternoon. He spoke of the good character which the youth had borne, in particular how everyone reported him to have been a good son, which was a point of very great importance; for him they might have good hope that he had entered into rest. Pity and sympathy, however, were naturally called forth for him and his parents, but the person really most in need of their pity and their prayers was the wretched murderer. They must be careful not to prejudice the case as to who the murderer might be; they had no right to assume the guilt of any person till it was clearly established after a fair trial. But he hoped and prayed that the murderer, whatever he might be, would be discovered and convicted, for it would be a public calamity that such a crime should be undetected and unpunished. There seemed nothing wanting to make the atrocity of the deed complete – it appeared to have been entirely unprovoked, cold-blooded, brutal cowardly. But the worse they thought of the guilty man, the more need to pity and pray for him. What must be his feelings at this moment! – what guilty terrors filled his mind! – ---fearing every moment that some evidence might be forth-coming which he had hoped to conceal. If it were only for that constant racking dread of discovery, and the penalty to which it might lead, they might pity the miserable wretch. But that was not all, more the worst – there were the stings of guilt conscience, the agony of remorse which would probably be felt more and more as long as the crime remained unconfessed, the intolerable burden which had often led men to give themselves up to justice of their own accord. If he did not feel this, he was yet more to be pitied, for he must be utterly hardened, and his conscience seared as with a hot iron. It might almost seem, as they thought of the horrible nature of the crime, that it was unavoidable; but God's mercy was infinite, to seek pardon with a broken and contrite heart, it would be granted to him; the blood of Jesus Christ was sufficient to cleanse from all sin. Let them pray that it might be so; and let them lay to heart the lessons to which their thoughts would lead them. There was no Christian parent who would not far rather be the parent of the murdered man than of the murderer; it was far better to part with their children

while innocent, by however sudden and awful death, than that they should grow up to be guilty of great crimes. And this truth should be applied as widely as possible; it was far better to see their children endure wrong or to endure wrong themselves at the hands of others; better to be cheated than to cheat; to be slandered than to slander; to suffer in any way than to sin. Suffering in this world could not last very long, and God in his mercy often took his faithful servants away early from evil to come. "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours." But "the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot die" enter into peace, "but there is no peace, said God, for the wicked.

The Rev. H. Tripp preached at Winford and Regis from Deut. 21,7 and 8 – "And they shall answer and say, "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto thy people, whom thou hast redeemed; and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge."

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 18 January 1883

THE WINFORD MURDER – PROPOSED GOVERNMENT REWARD

At the adjourned enquiry yesterday, before the coroner, respecting the death of Mark Cox, Dr. Weatherly suggested to the jury that he should petition the Home Secretary, on their behalf, to offer a reward for the discovery of the murderer of the deceased, as up to the present no evidence of a direct character had been given connecting anyone with the crime. This suggestion was readily concurred in by the jury, who, with the coroner, expressed a hope that it would be the means of bringing the culprit to justice.

The adjourned inquest

Dr. Lionel Weatherly, deputy coroner for Somersetshire, continued his inquiry at Winford concerning the death of Mark Cox who was brutally murdered on the night of Sunday, the 7th January. As on previous occasions there was a large attendance at the enquiry, and around Winford School a crowd of villagers had assembled. The Pomeroy (from the office of Messrs. Clifton and Carter, Bristol) appeared to watch the case on behalf of the Winford Iron Ore and Redding Co. The coroner, before continuing the inquiry, referred to the evidence at the previous occasional. He thought if Harler was so well able to describe the clothes of the person whom he met on Sunday night, he must have had some suspicion as to who the person was. The evidence of the Wedlake family was rather conflicting, for it would appear that not one of them slept well on Sunday night, with the exception of Job Wedlake. He thought it would be necessary, to clear up these and some other points, that certain witnesses should be recalled.

Thomas Chapman recalled, said it was between seven and eight o'clock on the night of Sunday, January 7th, when he went to Weaver's public-house, at Chew Stoke, and he remained there between five and ten minutes. James Wedlake, whom he met there, came to his house shortly after half past nine. He thought about two hours elapsed between his visit to the public house and the arrival of James Wedlake at his house.

Charles Groves said that he was in the company of Mark Cox on the night of Sunday, the 7th January; the latter called at his house at about 6 p.m.. They went to a public-house at Butcombe, where they saw a couple of men. Then afterwards looked into another tavern, where they saw a person whom they knew. They did not see anyone from Ridgehill, nor did they see Thomas Wedlake that day. Deceased did not express any fear of anyone to him at any time. Mark Cox did not leave his company.

By Supt. Drewett – Mark Cox did not see any female at Butcombe on Sunday night. Cox drank very little liquor. Witness parted with him that evening at about half past nine.

Charles Harler re-examined, said that when he met the man at 11 p.m. on Sunday evening he had no suspicion who he was. He could not swear that the coat the man wore was not a light mackintosh, as the night was dark. By the Jury – He met the person about three yards above Weaver's stable – between 200 and 300 yards from the place where the murder was committed. He could not judge who the man was from his walk or any other circumstances.

By Supt. Drewett – He knew people generally from their appearance, he was not afraid to say whom he really thought the man was. If he knew who the man was or who he appeared to be, he would state.

By the coroner – he could not remember seeing the man's face and therefore did not observe whether or not he had whiskers. He thought the man had his left hand under his coat at the back because he saw the coat sticking out.

William Cox recalled stated that a Miss Cook, residing at Redhill, told him, on Wednesday, January 10th that Job Wedlake's mother said that Job told her to lock the door when she went to bed on Sunday night, but she refused, and went to bed leaving Job on the settle. Maria Cook, living at Strode, deposed that she recollected seeing William and Mrs. Cox on the day, when she told him that Job Wedlake was on the settle of house on Sunday evening, January 7th, and he asked his mother if the door was locked. His mother replied that she did not know, but would go and see. She did not tell William Cox that Job's mother went to bed leaving Job on the settle. This she heard from amongst the crowd, and not from Mrs. Wedlake.

Thomas Weaver, recalled, stated that when he said in his former evidence that Chapman came to his house at Chew Stoke at nine o'clock he meant seven. Chapman remained a considerable time – until after eight. James Wedlake left after nine o'clock.

James Wedlake, re-examined, repeated that he left Weaver's public-house at half-past nine on Saturday night, 6th January. Chapman left about half past seven. When he reached Chapman's house he did not leave again until three o'clock the following morning.

Charles Vowles living at Chew Stoke, deposed that on Saturday evening, January 7th, he went to the house of John Weaver. He was there from about six o'clock to half-past nine. Wedlake came in afterwards, and still later Chapman entered, remained a short time, and went away. James Wedlake left the house before him. He went to the house of Chapman, where he found Chapman, his wife (witness's daughter), and James Wedlake. Witness went to bed some time after twelve, leaving James Wedlake downstairs in company with his son-in-law.

By Supt. Drewett – He was positive that James Wedlake was at Chapman's house from nine until twelve that night. In reply to Mr. Pomeroy, witness said he did not observe to Chapman and Wedlake, before they went out, "it is a rum time to go bird catching."

John Albert Wedlake, aged 7 years said he remembered Sunday, the 7th January. In the evening of that day he went with his mother to Ridgehill Chapel. On his return he went to bed at about 8 p.m., and his brother Job followed about an hour afterwards. He was awake up to the time Job came to bed. He also was awake several times during the night and each time he found Job beside him. His father came to bed with Job.

Supt. Drewett observed that the Wedlake family seems to be a very sleepless one. The coroner – Yes; except Job, who, according to one witness, snored all the night through.

William Argall, manager of the Winford Works, said on that Sunday night four men had to be at their work at 12 p.m. Their names were James Payne, of Winford (engine driver); Charles Williams, of Chew Stoke; Henry Hazel, of Chew Stoke; and Mark Cox. There was an understood rule that anyone taking away tools would be charged with stealing them. The duty of Mark Cox was to look after the kilns. Charles William stated that he resided at Chew Stoke. He left home to go to his work at 11:30 p.m. on the night of Sunday, 7th January. Henry Hazell accompanied him. He reached the works at 10 minutes before 12 p.m., and an hour elapsed before he observed that Mark Cox was absent. He had a few words with Cox about two months ago, but they soon again became friendly and had been so ever since.

By Supt. Drewett – He did not see anyone on the road whilst he was going to his work on the Sunday night.

Henry Hazell departed to accompany the last witness to work on the night of Sunday, January 7th. He never had a misword with Mark Cox.

James Payne of Winford said he was an engine-driver at Redding Works, He arrived at his work at 20 minutes past 11, and Williams and Hazell arrived shortly before 12 p.m. Whenever Cox was on duty at night he always showed timidity at having to go out.

George Reed, residing at Winford, said he was working for the Malago Vale Co. before Christmas. He and Job Wedlake worked close together. Job sometimes spoke to him about Mark Cox, and on one occasion Job told him that Mark had accused him of shooting his pigeons, and that if he blamed him again he would make him suffer for it.

By Mr. Pomeroy. He did not remember telling James Payne that he was not surprised to hear that Job Wedlake was arrested.

James Payne, recalled, said that Reed told him that when he heard of the murder he had suspicion on Job as whilst he was working with Job the later said Mark Cox had blamed him for shooting his pigeons, and that if he did he would “do for him.”

George Reed, being further examined, said he could swear that Job Wedlake told him he would make Mark Cox suffer for it, but he could not swear that he told Payne that Job said he would “do” for him.

P.C. Edward George said he had further searched the house of Job Wedlake’s parents. No other member of the family except Job wore clogs. Robert Wedlake said his house was about 200 or 300 yards from where the murder was committed, and was situated on the opposite side to that of Mr. King’s house. His son Thomas always slept with him. On the evening of Sunday, January 7th, his son arrived home at about 10:30 p.m. They both went to bed together at 11 p.m. He was certain Thomas did not leave his bed again. He could not recollect the day when he last wore his son’s mackintosh. It was since Christmas. Shortly before Christmas the mac. was lent to James Tovey, a butcher. Replying to Supt. Drewett, witness said he did not think his son knew Mark Cox sufficiently well to be a companion of his.

James Tovey, a butcher, of Winford, gave evidence to the effect that he wore the white mac. coat between 2 and 3 months ago. He only wore it once – from the house of Robert Wedlake to his own house. He returned it about 3 or 4 days after. During the few days that elapsed his brother wore the coat once to fetch some butter, and also whilst he skinned a calf.

By Supt. Drewett – He did not remember seeing bloodstains on the mac at the time.

Henry Tovey deposed to wearing the coat on two occasions mentioned by his brother. He, however, took it off when he commenced to skin the calf. He did not know there was any blood on the coat. He put the coat on the ground, and no blood could get to it without it ran in that direction.

Thomas Wedlake, re-called, said he reached home at 10:30 on the night of Sunday, January 7th, the mac coat had been hanging in his father's house for a long time. When the police sergeant took the coat he asked him how the stains came on the coat, and he replied that he did not know.

By Supt. Drewett – He was not on friendly terms with his cousin, Job Wedlake. Occasionally he had been in his company, but he had not heard him speak of Mark Cox.

By the coroner – He never lent the coat to Job Wedlake.

This was all the evidence taken yesterday, many of the large company present volunteering to give evidence. The Coroner said he had received from Mr. H. J Alford, the county analyst, his report respecting the state of the clothes forwarded him for examination. There were sent a suit of clothes, a shirt, and a pair of boots, belonging to Job Wedlake, and a white mac belonging to Thomas Wedlake and found at the house of his father. On the suit of clothes the shirt and the boots the analyst said he found no trace of blood, although they were stained with mud and iron-ore. Of the mac he reported as follows – “The waterproof coat was generally damp, especially the front part, as well inside as outside. On the right side, beneath the collar, were six dark stains. These I found to be blood stains. Under the microscope I found corpuscles of the size and appearance of those of human blood. There was a stain adjoining them, and also several on the left side, but they were all but obliterated and gave no evidence of their origin. The whole of the front of the coat gave the appearance of being washed.”

The coroner addressing the jury, said he proposed adjourning the inquiry again until Wednesday, his reason being that there were only two courts which could deal with the matter – that was the magistrates court and the present one. The magistrates could not examine witnesses unless there was a prisoner, and if there was no fresh evidence against the man now in custody he would be discharged, and there would then be no court before which evidence could be taken. The exception was his own court; he could go on taking evidence for months, and he should certainly go on adjourning until he had exhausted the evidence, or at least until he could find some clue. He wanted a letter to be written by himself, on their (the jury's) behalf, to the Home Secretary, laying before him the depositions that had been taken so far, and asking him if he would offer a reward for the apprehension of the murderer. There was no doubt that a foul and brutal murder had been committed within a ring fence. They knew the history of the deceased, and that there seemed to be some sort of ill-feeling towards him, but up to the present there was little, if any, evidence against anybody. To the course suggested by the coroner the jury consented, and the inquest was further adjourned until Wednesday.

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 25 January 1883

THE WINFORD MURDER – A FURTHER REVELATION

The police have continued with vigour their enquiries and search to discover the perpetrator of the foul deed at Winford, but they have not yet succeeded in obtaining a direct clue. The majority of the houses in Ridgehill have been searched, the hedges, ditches, wells, etc., have

been overhauled, showing that the police are determined to leave no stone unturned. A few days ago a police officer found a sickle embedded in a rick of corn, and on pulling it out drew with it several stalks of straw which adhered to some stains resembling blood near the point. This implement was produced at the inquest yesterday, when Dr. Alfond, the county analyst, who was present, said, he thought the stains were those of blood, and afterwards took away the weapon for the purpose of examining it more closely in his laboratory.

Supt. Drewett has issued the following bill, which has been extensively published in the neighbourhood –

“Winford Murder – The man who met Charles Horler in Ridgehill on the night of the murder namely, Sunday, 7th January, between the hours of 11 and 12 p.m., is requested to communicate by letter or otherwise with Supt. Drewett, Flax Bourton, Bristol, or any police officer in the county of Somerset – J. Drewett, Flax Bourton, 20th January 1883.”

The Adjourned Inquest

Dr. Lionel Weatherly yesterday continued his inquest as to the death of Mark Cox, at Winford parochial schoolroom. There was a very large number of persons present, inside and outside the room, as before, and much excitement was manifested. Mr. Pomeroy (from the offices of Messrs. Clifton and Carter, Bristol) was again present to watch the case on behalf of the Winford Iron Ore Co., and Supt. Drewett represented the police. The following evidence was taken –

James Knight, police sergeant, stated that he searched the house of Thomas Wedlake on the night of Friday, January 12th. When he went there he found Thomas Wedlake at the gate, and told him he wanted him as a witness at the inquest, to which he replied “Allright.” Witness then asked how many top coats he had, and he said one or two, which witness asked to see. Wedlake went across the room, took down from a peg a mac coat, and handed it to him. He examined it, and discovered blood stains just below the collar on the right side. He pointed them out to Thomas who said he did not know anything about them, that his father wore the coat last about a fortnight or three weeks previously, and that he had not worn it for a long time. Witness took the coat into the light outside the door, and said that it had been sponged or wiped down the front. Thomas Wedlake heard him say this, but did not reply. He then asked him what shirt he wore, where upon he took witness to a tub in which were dirty clothes and water and pointed out a white linen shirt, and said that was his best shirt, which he wore on Sunday. He examined the shirt, and he should think it had been washed. To the question, “what shirt did you wear on the previous week,” he replied, “The one I got on,” at the same time showing him the wristbands of the flannel shirt. He made a further search on the same day and took possession of another coat, the one which Wedlake said he wore at Butcombe on Sunday, January 7th. At a still later date he took another coat from the house, but he had since ascertained that it had been lent to the father of Thomas Wedlake.

George Cox, father of the deceased, recalled, stated that during the last two months his son Mark went to work on Sunday nights down Ridgehill. His reason for going that way was because it was not so lonely. His son never mentioned to him any other names than Job and James Wedlake, always referring to any others as the men they would bring with them. Job’s name he always mentioned. Witness had no idea who he meant by the other men. His son had expressed a fear that these men might at any time meet him in the dark, throw a stone, and knock his brains out. In August last, when deceased, and himself and his wife were assaulted, his son was the first who was pitched upon. Charles Reed then began the assault. The men used their fists at the time. By Sup. Drewett – His son had never said that he was particularly afraid

of Rawlings, but he said once or twice that he should not go with him any more, as he was rather sly. He was not aware that Rawlings and his son ever quarrelled, but he believed his wife said something.

By the Foreman – He did not know who were Job Wedlake’s companions.

By the Coroner – He never heard his son mention Thomas Wedlake’s name specially, nor did he hear of his courting a young woman at Butcombe or elsewhere.

By the Jury – He heard that Rawlings and his deceased son had some words at Butcombe last summer, when blows also passed.

Sarah Cox, mother of the deceased was also recalled, and said her son told her that John Rawlings held with the rest against him, that he would not come forward like a man, but would come sly. She remembered her son telling her that he lent Rawlings 2/- but he told her not to ask for the money. He further said that about three weeks ago Job Wedlake and John Rawlings had a bit of a row, and that he would not go out with him any more. He added that he knocked Job Wedlake down two or three times and asked him if he wanted anymore, and Job replied “No Mark; I shall have thee another time.” Rawlings took Job’s part on that occasion. This was before the pigeon shooting affair. Her son could never go out but these men “pitched into him,” and he did not care to go out because he was so afraid of them. Her son did not associate with anyone with the exception of Charles Cooper. Mark had several times remembered that he did not know how it was that whenever he went out he met these men, but he did not say that Job would waylay him.

William Hawkins, residing at Hounsley, said he worked at the Yellow Mines, adjoining the Malago Vale Works. He remembered Monday January 8th when Job Wedlake came to him and Michael Young, from the Malago Vale Works and asked them if they had heard that Mark Cox was dead. They, in return, asked how Mark came by his death, and Job said he thought he fell down in a pit. This was before breakfast. At 10:30 a.m. Job came over again. There were present William Stokes, Michael Young, and himself. Job first asked them if Charles Evans had returned from Ridgehill, to which they replied in the negative. At this time Job was on a plank, and witness, observing that the plank shook asked if he was cold, to which he replied that he was, as he had not done much work. The weather was then rather cold. Witness had not told anyone that he noticed that Job looked bad that morning. One of the men asked Job where he was on Sunday evening, and he said he went to Mrs. Crocker’s to fetch some tobacco, and that he returned home at 6 p.m. and did not go out afterwards until he went to work the next morning. He did not know why Michael Young asked this question.

Michael Young stated that he recollected Job Wedlake coming to where he was working on the morning of January 7th. He asked them if they had heard of the death of Mark Cox, as he had seen him dead in the road as he was coming to work. He added that he did not know whether he fell down a pit or whether he was shot, as it was dark. When, after breakfast, Job again came to them, he asked him where he was on Sunday night, and he replied that he went to Mrs. Crocker’s for some tobacco, and returned again about 6 p.m. Witness then observed, “Then you were right enough if you were not out.”

By the Coroner – he had heard but little about the quarrel between Job Wedlake and Mark Cox. He had no special reason for putting the question he did. Job several times came over to their works. He heard Hawkins say to Job, “What’s the matter with thee, Job, how thee do’st quiver; be thee cold?” to which Job answered that he was cold.

John Wedlake, living at Ridgehill, deposed that he was the Uncle of Job Wedlake. On the morning of Monday, January 8th, he started to work at about 6:30 a.m., and being called by his nephew Job, he accompanied him to the mine. At that time he had heard nothing about the finding of the body of Mark Cox. When they arrived near Mr. King's farm he saw lanterns. When he asked what was the matter, Job said it appeared if something had been lost. When they arrived at the spot they found the body of Mark Cox lying on the ground with 6 or 7 people standing around. He and Job remained about 10 minutes. Witness asked if the man was down a pit, and someone replied "The poor man is dead," at the same time putting down a lantern for him to see the blood. He did not recollect that Job said anything. Job looked at the body, and drew attention to a mark over deceased's eye. One man present observed that he thought Cox had been shot. Job returned that if they did not go on they would be late too their work.

William Masters police officer, produced a sickle, which he found on Friday, the 19th, in the back premises of the house where Thomas Wedlake lived. The hook was embedded in an oat mow. He examined it, and found several spots at the point which he thought to be clotted blood, to which the straw adhered. The blood was then dry. He delivered the hook to Supt. Drewett, Dr. Edmonds said he had inspected the sickle, but in his opinion it was unlikely to cause the wound in the head of the deceased. He could hardly conceive that it would cause such a fracture. He was not prepared to say it was not impossible that such a wound might be caused by the sickle, but it was not probable. The Coroner here observed that it was necessary that every particle of evidence should be sifted. Here was a weapon found on the premises where Thomas Wedlake lived, and where also a coat bearing blood stains was found. Although Dr. Edmonds had said it was not probable that such a wound as that on the deceased's head on the left side was caused by the sickle, yet he did not say that it was not possible. Upon the weapon were spots of blood which had not been accounted for. Speaking for himself, he should think that the wound which extended under the skin, and was punctured at one point, was likely to be caused by the sickle. The hook must have been placed in the mow with the blood wet upon it, and thus the straw stuck to it when it was withdrawn by the police officer. The blood also appeared on the very point where it was likely to occur to inflict a wound. Dr. Edmonds was shown a double-edged pick, found by Sergt. Knight in the garden of Job Wedlake's house. He said he thought that a weapon of that character was more likely to cause the wound, as it was more heavy.

Thomas Wedlake, who is in custody, was sworn at his own desire. On being shown the sickle he said he didn't know it, and was not aware that he ever saw it. His sister Mary generally did the washing for himself and his father. He did not give her anything to wash; she took what she found dirty herself. He wore a white shirt on Sundays, and a coloured one other days.

Robert Wedlake, the father of the last witness, being shown the sickle, said it belonged to him. He used it some time ago for chopping round a mow. After using it he stuck it up in the oat mow.

By Supt. Drewett – He did not remember using the hook about anything by which blood would come upon it. He did not know whether or not other persons had used it.

Dr. Alford, of Taunton, county analyst, deposed to the accuracy of the report respecting the inspection and analysis of the clothes forwarded to him for examination. Replying to the questions, he stated that the spots of blood on the right shoulder of the waterproof coat could not be more recent than 4 or 5 days. To say when the stains were placed there was impossible. They might have dated from Sunday, 7th January. The stains had every appearance of being human blood, although he could not swear it was. A spurt of blood must have caused the stains, and not a trickle. If the coat had been wet a fortnight before he received it he should not have expected to find patches of wet on it. The coat appeared to have been sponged or washed. If the

spots were on the coat two months ago, and the coat was afterwards worn through heavy rain, he should not have expected to find the spots in the state they were when the coat reached him. They would have been more washed out, and not so distinct.

By the Jury – The blood spots were not finger marks. If a man's nose bled and the blood spurted the stains might have been produced.

By the Coroner – He had seen the sickle produced, and to the best of his belief there were blood spots on it. On the hammer or pick shown him there was a dark stain, but he could not express an opinion respecting it.

George Mark of Chew Stoke, recollected the morning of Monday January 8th. He started from home alone. He heard of the murder of Mark Cox, and went to the place and stood by the body. Job Wedlake arrived soon after, but he did not hear Job say anything. He walked about ¼ of a mile with Job and John Wedlake, and said it was a shocking thing and he could not tell how it could happen. Job replied that he could not think who could have done such a thing as that; but Job said that he thought the deceased was in a fit, and that they would hear how it happened.

Thomas Wedlake, brother of Job, said when he was examined before he stated that his grandmother got out of bed during the night of Sunday, the 7th January but he was mistaken, as it was his father. He was half asleep and half awake. His father told him that he, and not his grandmother, got out of bed during the Sunday night. This was after he and his father had given evidence. The coroner observed that he did not know whether the gentlemen of the jury could believe the boy, but he could not. Speaking to the witness, the coroner said he was telling a whole mass of lies, and that he knew it. He was not telling the truth, but simple what had been told him. Witness in reply to further questions, said he was not relating that which his father and mother told him.

By the Jury – He did not hear Job tell his mother that he intended to remain on the settle during Sunday night. Thomas Wedlake, father of the last witness, said he had not said a word to his son Thomas as to what he had said or should say. Replying to a remark from the coroner, a juryman observed that the lad Thomas Wedlake was very young, and might have said “Yes” or “no” to a question that he did not mean to.

The Coroner – If he is young in years he is not very young in intellect.

Edward Allister, of Winford, in the employ of Malago Vale Co., said he kept the key of the tool-house. When the men had finished their work they brought their tools to him, and he gave them out again in the morning. On Saturday, 6th January, Job Wedlake had no tools, as he did not use any. On the morning of January 8th Job Wedlake told him he had seen Mark Cox on the road, but he did not remember him saying anything more.

Mary Wedlake, sister of Thomas Wedlake (in custody), stated that she did the washing for her father and brother. On Thursday 11th January, she put some clothes to soak amongst which were two shirts, one belonging to her father and the other her brother. She found the shirts upstairs.

By Supt Drewett – She did not see any blood on the shirt.

By the Coroner – Her brother did not tell her to put the shirt to soak. She did not wash her brother's mac.

The Coroner mentioned that, in accordance with the suggestion he made, and to warn the jury assembled, he had forwarded a letter to the Home Secretary and had received a reply. For reasons which he would not then explain, he would not read this letter (which they would see in the newspapers on the following morning), but he would read the reply he had received.

The Coroner's letter and the reply are as follows –

“Portishead, Somerset, January 17th 1883”

Sir – A jury empanelled and sworn by me to inquire into the death of Mark Cox, of the parish of Winford, Somerset, who was found murdered on the highway in the parish of Winford on Monday morning, January 8th 1883, have desired me to ask if you, in your discretion, would cause a reward to be immediately offered for any evidence which would lead to the apprehension of the person or persons who committed this murder. A man named Job Wedlake is now in custody on suspicion, but Supt. Drewett, does not consider evidence strong enough to justify a further remand after Friday next, when he will be brought before the magistrates. My court has sat three days now, and heard evidence of 37 witnesses, and have again adjourned until Wednesday next in the hope of more evidence coming out, and both myself and the jury respectfully hope you may think fit to offer a reward before that date. If required I will at once forward a copy of the depositions taken by me on Wednesday, January 10th, Friday, January 12th, and Wednesday (to-day), January 17th. I remain, sir, Your obedient servant, Lionel A. Weatherly, M.D. Deputy Coroner for North Somerset.

“Whitehall 18th January 1883”

Sir, With reference to your letter of the 17th, inst., respecting the murder of Mark Cox, who was found murdered at Winford on the 8th inst., I am directed by the Secretary of State to acquaint you that it would be contrary to the practice of this Department to offer a reward before the coroner's jury have found a verdict, and when a person is in custody.

I am, sir, your obedient servant, A.T.O Liddell

“L. A. Weatherly Esq., M.D. Deputy Coroner for Somerset, Portishead, Somerset.”

The Coroner further stated that both Supt. Drewett and the magistrates thought there was no reason to keep the prisoner in custody, but until the coroner's jury had decided upon their verdict, which must be an open one, the Government would not offer a reward. The coroner asked if there was any person present who would come forward and give evidence in the case, but there was no response. The Coroner further stated that he had intended to complete the case that day, but owing to the new evidence that had been given, and the production of the sickle, which Dr. Alford had taken possession of for the purpose of examining more closely, he must further adjourn that Dr. Alford might have an opportunity of stating what the stains on the sickle were. The inquiry was then further adjourned until Friday morning, at ten o'clock.

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 29 January 1883

THE WINFORD MURDER – A LONDON DETECTIVE ENGAGED

Job Wedlake and Thomas Wedlake, charged with the murder of Mark Cox, on January 7th were brought up on remand before Mr. James Ford, at the Long Ashton Petty Sessions, Bourton, on Saturday.

Supt. Drewett having been sworn, stated that since the last remand he had obtained evidence which brought the case more strongly against the prisoners. He had not yet finished his enquiries, and he had every reason to believe he should produce further evidence against them. Under these circumstances he strongly requested a further remand.

Mr. Ford – I believe you have been assisted in the enquiry by a detective from London? – I have. In consequence of a request from the magistrates? – Yes, sir. Mr. Ford – I will ask that the letter be read.

Mr. Gill read the letter from the Home Office as follows –

Whitehall 22nd January 1883.

Sir – With reference to your letter of the 19th instant, I am directed by the Secretary of State to request that you will inform the Justices of the Long Ashton Division that, although the Metropolitan police detectives have no special experience in dealing with miners, he has, in compliance with the magistrates' request, given directions for an officer being sent to aid the local police in the investigation of the murder of Mark Cox at Winford.

I am sir, your obedient servant,

A. F. O. Liddell

“The Clerk to the Justices, Long Ashton, near Bristol”

Mr. Ford (to Supt. Drewett) – That officer is here now? He is sir; assisting in the enquiry. And you firmly believe if a further remand is granted you will get additional evidence? – I do.

You ask for a remand until Friday,, when the prisoners will appear before the magistrates, and full evidence will be taken? Yes, sir. Mr. Ford (to prisoners) – Have you anything to say why you should not be remanded. Job Wedlake replied that he had nothing to say, and Thomas Wedlake replied that he had no answer to make.

Mr. Ford – Then you stand remanded until Friday, when you will be brought up here before a bench of magistrates.

Mr. Ford (to Supt. Drewett) – They were not present at the inquiry? No sir.

I believe an open verdict has been returned? – Yes, sir.

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 30 January 1883

THE WINFORD MURDER

The police, as we stated in our latest news yesterday, have made an important arrest in connection with the mysterious murder at Winford. Thomas Wedlake, who has been in custody for some time on suspicion of being the murderer, gave information which led to his brother Joseph, a farm labourer, 29, being arrested on Sunday morning. Thomas Wedlake stated that Joseph was the actual murderer of Mark Cox, that he lay to wait for another man, whom he suspected of having taken away his sweetheart, and attacked Cox in mistake. Joseph Wedlake, who feels his position acutely, was brought before the magistrate yesterday and remanded.

The police have at length obtained important information, which has enabled them to make another arrest, as we announced yesterday, and they now fully believe they have the murderer in their hands. The story, however, as it now stands, is a most startling one, and fully bears out the theory which was at first stated by some of the knowing ones in the locality, which was that a woman was at the bottom of it, and that the actual perpetrator of the dreadful deed was still at large, although one of the prisoners, if not both, knew all about it.

On Saturday Thomas Wedlake, who was apprehended subsequently to Job Wedlake and charged with the murder, showed symptoms of great uneasiness, and appeared to be very depressed. On Sunday morning he intimated to a policeman that he wished to have an interview with Supt. Drewett and upon that officer presenting himself in the cell he said he wished to make a statement. He said he did not see why he should be kept there for an offence which he never committed, while the guilty person was free. The Supt. cautioned him in the usual way, and the prisoner then made a statement which was to the effect that his brother Joseph committed the murder, adding that he did not intend to kill Cox, but a man named Thatcher.

His story is a most remarkable one. Joseph, it appears, lives with an uncle named Pearce, a well-to-do farmer at Winford, and acts in the capacity as farm labourer. He had fallen in love with Mr. Pearce's daughter, his cousin, and she until recently favoured his suit. At length, however, young Mr. Thatcher, son of a neighbouring farmer, commenced to woo the young lady, and she, it appears, at once transferred her affections to the new lover. Joseph Wedlake, enraged at this, determined to have his formidable rival out of the way, and on the Sunday morning on which the murder was committed told his brother Thomas that he meant to kill Thatcher that night. He had learned that Thatcher had an engagement the same night, and that he would most likely pass the place where the murder was committed at about 11:30 p.m., on his way home. Joseph was in waiting, and the blows that launched poor Cox into eternity were intended for the rival lover. The intended victim actually did pass the spot a few minutes later, and must have walked past the murdered body without seeing it. Upon hearing this statement, Supt. Drewett immediately drove over to Mr. Pearce's farm, at Winford. Wedlake, whom he found in the farm yard, undertook the care of his horse, but the Supt. ordered him to wipe his boots and follow him into the house, as he had an unpleasant duty to perform. He then charged him with the wilful murder of Mark Cox, on the 7th January. Prisoner turned pale, trembled violently, and began to cry, but made no reply. He was quite prostrated, and when at the station cried bitterly. The prisoner was taken before Mr. James Ford yesterday morning, at the Bourton Petty Sessions house. He looked exceedingly haggard and depressed. He got in the corner of the dock and never once looked around him. He is said to be 30 years of age, but he does not look more than 22, and he had a rather kindly-looking prepossessing face. Joseph Wedlake was charged with the wilful murder of Mark Cox, on the 7th January.

Sup. Drewett, having been sworn was examined by Mr. O'Donoghue, clerk to the magistrates. You are the superintendent of police of the district? – I am sir.

On Sunday, the 28th, did you, in consequence of something you heard, go to Winford? – To Redhill. That is in the parish of Winford? – Yes. What house did you go to? To Mr. Charles Pearce's. Does the prisoner live there? – He is a nephew; he lives there. Did you speak to Him? – I did. What did you say? Who was present? – I met him in the yard first, and he took my horse and put it in the stable. I told him to wipe his boots and come into the house with me and see his uncle, as I had a very unpleasant duty to perform. Did you go into the house? I did. I called his uncle into the room. We all went into the room together. I told him in consequence of a statement his brother Thomas had made to me that morning I should have to arrest him on a

charge of wilful murder, and if he had anything to say I would take it down in writing, but he need not say anything unless he liked. He made no reply. I then brought him over here. When you first spoke to him, what effect did it seem to have upon him? – He appeared to tremble very much. Was that when you first came in? When was there any change in his appearance? As soon as I told him to wipe his shoes. What change did you see? – He seemed to change colour and trembled. He seemed to be very much cut up. After he got into the house he seemed very much hurt. He continued to cry all the way until he got here.

Mr. Ford – You brought him back in your own trap, I suppose? Yes sir.

Mr. O'Donoghue – about 5 miles? - About that.

You at once charged him, took him into custody? – I did. You drove him back in your dog carriage? – Yes.

He was quite prostrate? – Yes, quite. Have you had any communication with him since? – No, sir

Do you ask for a remand? – I do.

There are two other prisoners remanded till Friday on the same charge? – Yes

Mr. Ford – You have reason to believe that between this and then you will have further evidence? – I am quite satisfied we shall have evidence by that time. You will proceed to obtain that evidence immediately? – Yes sir.

Mr. Ford (to the prisoner) - You have heard the Supt. Evidence; have you any question to ask him?

Prisoner – Nothing sir.

Have you any reason to give why you should not be remanded? – No sir.

The prisoner was then remanded till Friday next.

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 7 February 1883

THE WINFORD TRAGEDY

Prisoners before the Magistrates. Thomas Wedlake discharged. Joseph Wedlake's confession.

At the long Ashton petty sessions held yesterday before J. Ford, W. Metcalfe, Q.C. and W. J. Braikenridge, Esqrs. Joseph Wedlake was charged on remand with having, on the 7th January, in the parish of Winford, feloniously and with malice aforethought killed one Mark Cox; Thomas Wedlake was charged with aiding, abetting and procuring the same, and with being an accessory before the fact and after the fact. Mr. Poole instructed by Mr. Perham, appeared for the prisoner Joseph.

The prisoners having been placed in the docks, Joseph took up his old position in the corner, looking very down cast, while Thomas stepped to the front and appeared continually cheerful. The Clerk (Mr. O'Donoghue) asked Supt. Drewett whether he had any application to make.

Supt. Drewett – I apply that Thomas Wedlake be discharged, as I intend to call him as a witness.

Mr. Ford – And you have good reason for making the application? – Yes

Mr. Ford (to the prisoner) – You are discharged. Prisoner – Thank you sir.

The following evidence was then taken –

George Cox said I am a labourer living at Ridgehill, Winford. Mark Cox was one of my sons. He was 17 years old last May. He worked for the Iron Ore Co., at Winford, about 1½ miles from my cottage. He lived with me. I last saw my son alive at about 11:30 on the night of Sunday, 7th January. He then left the cottage to go to his work during the night. He was on the night shift. He took with him a basket containing food for the night. For the last two months or so he went the way of Ridgehill, and he said it was not so lonely that way. There is another way to go there. When he left he was in good health. I next saw his body about 6 a.m. next morning. Mr. Isaac Weaver came to our cottage and said my son was lying in a fit or something, and I went to the top of Ridgehill, where I saw the body lying in the road near Farmer King's, about ½ way from my cottage to his work. It did not appear to have been moved. Mr. Ford – Your son was a very affectionate, dutiful one, was he not? Witness – Yes. He bore very good character? – Yes. Had he shown any anxiety, any fear about going to work? – My daughter came home that day, and her mother had not seen her for 3 years; when he was going out to work he wished us all good-night, and we wished him good-night, and that was all he said. Did he show any presentiment of coming evil? – No, not that night. He had said before that perhaps someone would fling stones at him and hit his brain out. He occasionally said that.

John Haberfield said – I live on Dundry, and I am a farm labourer. On Sunday 7th January I was at Ridgehill, and I left that place to go to Dundry about 5:20. When I came to the top of Ridgehill Street I saw something in the road, I went close to it, and found it was a man dead in the road. I went and called Mr. Alfred King, who lives close by and afterwards went to Mr. Isaac Weaver. We got some lights, and came back to where the body lay. The body of the man was lying on its back. His head was towards Ridgehill and his feet towards Winford. His left hand was in his trousers' pocket, and his right hand was on his breast. A flask basket was hung by a string over his left shoulder. There was a large quantity of blood by his head. I went for P.C. Horman, who lives about 1 mile away, and returned with him to where the body was lying. The body was in the same position. I did not examine the body, but shortly afterwards went on to Dundry.

Alfred King said – I am a farmer, living at Ridgehill. I know the deceased. On Monday morning the 8th January, the last witness come to me at about 5:30. I did not touch the body, but I saw he had two cuts on his head. Haberfield went away for a policeman, and I remained with the body until he returned with P. C. Horman. There was soon a lot of people there, but the body was not touched until the policeman came. Witness said he went to bed on Sunday night about 10 p.m. and he did not hear anything during the night. The body lay about 70 yards from his house. Cross examination by Mr. Poole – There were two distinct cuts, one on the right temple and the other on the left, just above the eyebrow. He did not notice anything at the back of the head.

Edmond George Horman P.C. stationed at Winford, said about 7 a.m. on the 7th January Haberfield came to his house, and in consequence of what he said witness went with him to Ridgehill. He saw the body of a young man lying in the road, near Mr. King's house. There was a great quantity of blood on the ground by deceased head. There was a great cut on his upper left temple, and a hole at the back of his head. He had his hat on. With the assistance of other people witness lifted up the body, and blood ran out of the man's hat, which fell off as they lifted him. He sent a message to Supt. Drewett, and assisted in removing the body to George Cox's house. It was quite cold. He did not see any traces of a struggle. The body was not undressed before the doctor came.

By Mr. Metcalfe – He looked to see if there was any appearance of a struggle, but he found none. The clothes were not torn.

Mr. Charles Howell Collins, surgeon, practising at Chew Magna, said that on Monday 8th January, he went to Winford. He went to George Cox house at Ridgehill. He reached there at about 9:30 a.m. just as the body was being taken in. He made a casual examination of the body, which was cold and stiff. The clothes were undisturbed, and the body was in the usual working dress. There were marks of congealed blood from the mouth, nose, ears, more especially the left ear. There was a bruise and slight jagged cut and severe contused wound over the left eye. There was a punctured wound running underneath the skin. There was also a severe contusion around the left ear and to the angle of the jaw. There was also an abrasion on the left ear. On examining the wound and contusion deceased, he saw there was a depressed fracture of the skull area the left eye, and a severe fracture behind the left ear, the skull being apparently smashed into the head. The lower jaw was fractured through in two places on the left side. He also examined the remainder of the body, but he could find no injuries. His impression was that two distinct blows must have been given to produce the wounds, and his impression was afterwards strengthened by a post mortem. The wound on the right side appeared as though it may have been done by a fall upon a stone in the road. The body had been dead for several hours. Next day he assisted Dr. Edmonds in making a post mortem.

Cross examined by Poole – There were two separate injuries on the left side of the head, which must have been caused by two distinct blows.

Mr. William Richardson Edmonds said he was a surgeon practising at Chew Magna. On Monday 8th January, he went to George Cox's cottage at Ridgehill and there saw the body of the deceased. On Tuesday 9th, with Mr. Collins, he made a post mortem examination. The external appearance of the head was as follows – The face was covered with clotted blood, which had come from the nose and mouth and a little from a wound above the left eye-brow. The eyelids were greatly swollen and bruised. Above the left eye-brow there was a congealed wound extending almost directly upwards for an inch and a half, and surrounded by bruised skin. The margins of the wound were oblique from left to right. On the outer part of the right eye-brow there was a small lacerated wound which appeared of a slightly punctured character on the outer part. On the left side of the head on both sides of the ear and extending downwards and upwards was a very severe contusion. There was a slight abrasion of the cheek bone.

The lobe of the ear was split, the lower jaw on that side was fractured in two places, and there was a smaller contusion of the right temple. The hair at the back of the head was very much clotted with blood, but there was no external injuries there. The wound above the left eyebrow extended under the scalp for one inch, showing that the blow was struck from left to right. On removing the scalp under the wound above the left eyebrow there was a depressed fracture of a serious nature. Under the contusion the skull was driven in, but not into the brain. That blow would certainly have caused the person receiving it to be stunned. He would have fallen at once. From the end of the fracture there was a crack of the skull extending to about an inch behind the ear, being about 4 inches in length. This showed that the blow was a very severe one. Under the contusion near the ear on the left side the skull was completely smashed in. This must have been caused by a terrible blow given with a heavy and blunt weapon. He would say that the weapon now produced by Supt. Drewett might have caused both injuries. The front of the weapon would have done the injury over the eyebrow, and the flat side would have done the other. There was no fracture corresponding with the small wound under the left eyebrow. The bones forming the base of the skull were fractured across, so that the front portion of the skull was separated from the hinder part so far as the base was concerned. This accounted for the large quantity of blood that flowed from the deceased, and must have been the result of a terrible

blow. He did not think the injury over the left eyebrow would have produced immediate death, but it would be a very dangerous wound. The injury behind the ear was sufficient to have caused speedy death. No man could survive it long. From the injuries he had described and the evidence of Haberfield, he would think that the man died without sense or feeling from the first blow. He thought that the injury over the right eyebrow would have been caused by a fall on a stone.

Alfred Howe Thatcher deposed that he lived with his father at Downside, in the parish of Wrington, his father was a farmer there. He knew Emma Pearce, daughter of Charles Pearce, who lived at Ridgehill. He had been in the habit of going to her house and meeting her for about two weeks past.

Mr. Ford – You have been keeping company with her?

Witness – Yes, Sir.

Examination continued – He had been in the habit of going to Winford Church on Sunday evenings and walking home with her. Sometimes he went into her uncle's house with her, remaining there for some time, and had supper with them. He did not go there on Sunday, the 31st December last. He did not know the prisoner, but knew a man of his name like him at Pearce's farm. He did not know him by sight. He had never spoken to him but once, and that was about a week before Xmas. He had been walking home with Miss Pearce, when a young man came out from Pearce's barn to see if he (witness) was good-looking. Witness was talking to Miss Pearce. He could not identify the prisoner as the man who held the lamp up to his face and said "I am come along to see whether you are good-looking or no." Witness replied, "Don't you think we are?" He was holding the light between Miss Pearce and witness. He then said, "There is not much the matter;" and then witness thought he said "Good night." The Clerk – He did not threaten you? – No. Did he say anything to Miss Pearce that might in your presence? – I cannot remember anything. Mr. Ford – Did she speak to him? Witness – Not to my knowledge. You don't recollect? – No. Did you know him since that time? – No.

Examination continued – On the evening of Sunday, 7th January, he met Miss Pearce at Winford Church after the service was over. There was no one with her then. They walked from Winford to Ridgehill about 1½ miles. He went to Pearce's house, and got there he should think about 9. He went into the house with Miss Pearce. A Miss Elizabeth Marshall was in the house when they got in. Witness stopped sometime, but he did not have supper. About 10 p.m. Miss Pearce, Miss Marshall, and himself left the house together and went to see Miss Marshall part of the way home, towards Nempnett. When they were all 3 walking along the road, about ¾ of a mile from Farmer Pearce's house they heard footsteps behind, but could not tell whether they were those of man or woman. They were walking slowly. The person whose footsteps they heard walked slowly also and did not overtake them. The footsteps sounded about 7 or 8 yards from them. Witness looked round but could not see anyone. He heard the footsteps for 5 minutes. They passed a man on the road who was going in the opposite direction towards Ridgehill, when near to Mr. Weaver's. A little further on they left Miss Marshall, and Miss Pearce and himself walked back towards Ridgehill. They did not meet anyone on the road. Witness went into the house and remained there till past 12. Before he left the house, somewhere about 12, he thought he heard a noise which sounded like someone walking in the house. He heard the footsteps. Could not say if it was upstairs or downstairs. Mr. Ford – Where there any of the other members of the family up? Witness – No; they went to bed just as we returned the second time.

Examination continued – Only Mr., Mrs., and Miss Pearce with the prisoner lived in the house. There was no servant. Witness went home by Ridgehill-street and the cross-roads. He passed

by Mr. King's house but he did not see anybody on his road home. It was about 3 miles. The night was very dark and foggy.

Cross examined by Mr. Poole – It was nearer 11 than 12 when he came back from taking Miss Marshall. He should say it was about 10 minutes past 11. He did not hear Mr. and Mrs. Pearce moving about, but he knew they were awake as he saw a light. He was certain he heard a door creak. He was not sure that it was anyone going downstairs. Miss Pearce and himself were alone in the kitchen. He went away 20 minutes or 30 minutes after he fancied he heard the noise. He passed by the very place where the body was found. He could not say how far he was from it. He could hardly see if he was walking on the road or on the grass. He was on the right-hand side of the road, about 2 feet from the hedge. He met no one nor saw anything to attract his attention. The house he lived in was not by the roadside, but he had to go across a field. He could see very well there the difference between the white of the road and the grass. The door of the room in which Miss Pearce and himself sat was not closed.

(Adjourned for lunch)

Emma Pearce, who said she lived with her uncle and aunt, Mr. and Mrs. C. Pearce, Ridgehill, Winford. The prisoner had been who had been living there for many years, was a nephew of Mr. Pearce. Witness was now 21, and had lived there for about 9 years. The prisoner had not been attached to her or showed her any affection. The Clerk – Has he ever proposed to be engaged to you? Witness – No, sir. Has he ever told you that he cared for you? – No, sir. Did he used to walk home from church with you? Yes, but not alone. On Sunday evening? – Yes. Mr. Poole – Who else were with you? – My friends and companions. The Clerk – Have you walked home with him from church within the last 2 or 3 months? – No. Has he within that time asked you to walk home with him? – No. You have become acquainted with Mr. A. H. Thatcher? – Yes. Within the last 2 months? – Yes. Has he walked home from church with you? – Yes. Generally, or once, or sometimes? – Sometimes. Three or four times, or half a dozen times? – I don't know. Has he usually come into keeping company with you? – Yes. The Clerk – On Sunday evening, the 7th January, did you meet him after evening church at Winford? – Yes. Did he walk home with you to your uncle's house? – Yes. Did he come in with you? – Yes. There was no one else with us. They got to the house a little after 9, and stayed there a little more than an hour. Miss Marshall was there when they got home. Witness and Mr. Thatcher walked with Miss Marshall towards Nempnett. As they were going down towards James Reed's she heard footsteps behind. They were walking slowly, and the person whose footsteps they heard did not overtake them. The footsteps followed for about 5 minutes. After they had heard those footsteps a man went and passed them, going towards Ridgehill. She did not know the man. The Clerk – Did you meet anybody on the road back to your uncle's house? – No. What time was that? – A little after 11. What room did you go into? – The kitchen. And how long did you remain there? Until between 12 and 1, when Mr. Thatcher went. Did you have a light and talk to one another? – Yes. Did you hear anything while you were talking? I thought I heard someone about. About where? Upstairs or downstairs? – I thought it was upstairs. I thought it went upstairs. Did you hear anybody come down stairs or go upstairs? – No. Did you hear a door creak? – Yes; upstairs. There were 3 doors that creaked – the one of the room that Joseph Wedlake slept in, her aunt's and a spare room. She did not hear any footsteps outside in the yard or barton. The Clerk – Do you remember about a week before Xmas being at your front gate talking to Thatcher? – Yes. Did somebody come to you? – Yes. Who – the prisoner. Had he anything with him? – A lantern. What did he do? – He flashed it in our faces. What did he say? – He said, "I am come to see if you are good-looking. What answer was made? – Mr. Thatcher said, "are we?" Witness did not say anything. Did not remember what the prisoner said after. Did not say anything to Wedlake that evening, either before or after he had put the lamp in their faces. The prisoner had never said anything to her about the lamp

incident, or about her being with Mr. Thatcher that night. He had never threatened her. The prisoner and herself had always been on good terms, and just as good within the last 2 months as they were before.

Cross examination by Mr. Poole – The person walking behind then was walking in the usual way, and not attempting to conceal his footsteps. What struck her was that he was walking about the same pace as them. The house was a very large one, and at night the doors creaked of their own accord very often. Very often the wind would cause them to creak. She was never surprised to hear it when she was lying in bed at night.

Thomas Wedlake deposed that he lived at Ridgehill, Winford, with his father, about 100 yards from Mr. Pearce's. The prisoner was his brother. He remembered Sunday 7th January. The Clerk Where were you that evening? – At Butcombe. What time were you near James Reed's cottage? – About 10:30 p.m. Who did you meet on the road? – 3 people – 2 females and a man. Were they going towards Nempnett? – Yes. You did not know them? – No. After you had passed them did you walk on? – Yes. Did you see anybody near James Reed's? – Yes; a man walked out from the gate. That was a lonely part of the road. Did somebody come out and step up to you? – Yes. Who? – My brother the prisoner. What did he say? – He asked me if I had met anyone, and I said 3. What did he say? – He said they are Thatcher our maid, and Miss Thatcher (Pearce) "I am going to kill him" What did you say? – I said, "Come home and go to bed." What did he do? – He came on with me and walked up the road. Did you speak to one another? – No, sir. When you got a little way above the chapel what happened? – He did not come on so fast, and I said, "Come on" He did not come on any faster. What did you do? – I went on home. Did you go on? – I went into my father's house. What did you do? – Had my supper and went up to bed. And after you had gone upstairs to bed? – Well, before I got into bed I wound my watch up. What time was it then? – It was about 11 p.m. What did you hear? – I heard someone walk by the house.

Which way did they go? Up towards Farmer Pearce's. Could you tell whether it was a man's step or a woman's? – No, sir; I could not. Did you notice anything about your brother? – He had a little drink. How do you know it? – By his address. How was he dressed? – He had a soft dark hat and a long dark coat. I do not know what colour it was. Did you see anything about the brim of the hat? – Yes, I saw it turned up. Did you notice his right-hand? – He had it under the tail of his coat. Did you notice anything about the coat? – Yes, it appeared to stick out a little just below the length of his arm. Did you see anymore of your brother that night? – No. Next morning did you hear anything? – Yes. About what time? – about 9:30 I heard my brother come in and speak to my father. What did you hear him say? – I heard him say "Father, there is Mark Cox up the road, lying dead. They think he has broken a blood-vessel. What did you do? – I got up and dressed. When you came downstairs was your brother in the house? – No, he was gone. Did you go into the road? – Yes. Where was your brother? – Down by Farmer Pearce's gate. What did you do? – I went to my brother. What did he ask you? – Whether I was going up the road to see Cox. I said I was. What did he say? – He said he would go up with me. Did he go up with you? – Yes. Did anything pass between you and him on the way? – Yes, he told me to say I did not see him last night. Where did you go? – To the place where the young man was lying dead. There were a great many people there. They only remained a few minutes. On the day of the inquest he and his brother Joseph attended. Witness had been warned to attend.

On the way his brother told him to say he did not see him on Sunday night. Did not know that there was any affection between his brother and Miss Pearce. He had never expressed any hatred of her.

By Mr. Ford – He had never heard his brother threaten Miss Pearce? - He had never expressed any hatred of her. By Mr. Ford – He had never heard his brother threaten Miss Pearce.

Cross examined by Mr. Pool – He distinctly saw his brother’s hat and coat. Witness was asked to give evidence at the inquest by the constable. He was in the custody of Supt. Drewett and another constable. Mr. Poole – Did the policemen speak to you about the case? – No. Did they tell you they had found blood upon your clothes? – Yes. Then they did tell you that? – Yes. Did you speak to anyone during the time you were in custody? – I spoke to a good many. Who were they? – A young man in the next cell spoke backwards and forwards. Did anyone else speak to you? - The man who brought my food. Did he speak to you about the murder? – Very Likely. Did he tell you about the blood on your clothes? – No. Did he tell you about your clothes having been examined by a doctor? – No. Did your brother say, “You need not say anything about having seen me” or “Say you didn’t see him”? He said I must say I did not see him. He told Tripp to tell Mr. Drewett he wanted to see him. He did not know that Thatcher was keeping company with Miss Pearce. He had never seen them together except on that night. Mr. Ford – Did you make this statement to Mr. Drewett of your own free will? – I told him I wanted to tell him what I knew.

Charles Horler of Strode, Winford, said he helped his father on the farm. On Sunday night 7th January he was going home. He passed through Ridgehill about 11p.m. and met a man near Isaac Weaver’s stable. It was about 150 yards from Farmer Pearce’s, on the Winford side, that he met the man. Witness said “Goodnight” as he was passing. The man made no reply. He never saw the man’s face. He had on what appeared to be a dark overcoat buttoned at the top. He seemed to have a round soft hat on turned up. His coat appeared to be sticking back on the left hand side. His left hand was under his coat or in his trousers pocket.

Dr. Henry James Alford county analyst, living at Taunton, said Supt. Drewett brought him the coat, hat and broken axe produced on 31st January. He examined them, and on the handle of the axe he found 5 small spots of blood. He found no other blood stains on the axe at all. The upper portion of the handle appeared to have been rubbed or washed. He examined the coat; on the front of the skirt of the coat he found marks of mud, and some blood underneath. On the hat he found one spot of blood. An examination under the microscope showed blood corpuscles. The blood was not particularly recent.

Cross examined by Mr. Poole – It was quite impossible to tell whether all or any of the blood was that of a pig or a man. He had been told the axe had been used to kill pigs with.

Supt. Drewett said on Sunday 28th January, I went to the house of Farmer Pearce. The prisoner came out into the yard and took my horse, I told him that in consequence of what his brother Thomas had said I should have to take him into custody on a charge of wilful murder. I told him he need not say anything, and if he did it must be taken down in writing, and might be used against him. He made no reply. He changed colour and was much agitated. When I got him into the house he began crying, and cried all the way back to the station. At the station I fully charged him, and he made no reply. I found this axe in his Pearce’s cellar among other tools, and brought it away with me. On the 29th January I went again to Ridgehill and received from Mr. Pearce the coat and hat now produced. On the 30th January P.C. Tripp came to me about 10 p.m. and in consequence I went to see Joseph Wedlake in his cell. He said my brother has been telling lies about me. It was Job Wedlake who killed the man, and he do know it. I told him I was going away by train, I could not stop, but as soon as I came back I would take it down – all he had to say. I went away, and returned about 2 o’clock. The constable made another communication to me, in consequence of which I went to the cell where the prisoner was. He said “I am very sorry

for what I told you this morning; it was a lot of lies. Job Wedlake doesn't know anything about it. I wish to tell you all about it myself."

I brought him into my office, and got some paper, and told him that I should have to write out whatever he said, and that he need not say anything; but whatever he did say might be used in evidence either against him or for him. He made the following statement, which I wrote down at the time –

I killed the man sir. He was killed in mistake, sir. I killed him with a thing we got home what uncle do kill the pigs with. (The weapon was produced by Supt Drewett) That's the thing sir. I was jealous of that young man Thatcher. I had a drop of drink. I am sorry now ever since I done it. I have no sleep since, I should have been bound to split. I have had it on my mind ever since. I could not bear to go outside the door. Job Wedlake knew nothing about it. I done it myself. I keep dreaming about it. I fancy I see him all the time. It was Harler that I met and would not speak. It was a pity Harler did not catch hold of me. I should not have touched him. I cannot think how Harler did not know me. This statement I make without any promise or threat. Signed in the presence of Supt. Drewett and Constable Tripp." I read it over to him in the presence of P.C. Tripp and the prisoner made his mark. The prisoner talked afterwards, and said he was sorry for it, and he dreamed about it. He said "I met Cox and wished him "Good night." He said "Good night" and with that I struck him on the forehead, and before the blow hardly reached him I knew it was Cox, but I could not keep it back, it was too far gone. That stunned him, and he fell down and did not move. I hit him once or twice after he was down. I trembled so and was so frightened that I cannot tell whether it was once or twice. I did not touch him afterwards." Cross examined by Mr. Poole – Did not read the latter part of the statement over to the prisoner. Heard him sobbing and crying when he walked up the passage. He was very prostrate. Prisoner saw the clergyman after he had confessed. He did not see anyone before the confession because he never asked to see anyone, and no one been to see him. The prisoner was about the same on both occasions – scarcely master of himself on the occasion when he charged Job as well as when he charged himself. He first charged Job Wedlake with the murder because he had a spite against him.

Mr. Charles Pearce, farmer, Winford deposed that the prisoner was his nephew, and had lived with him for years. He did not know there was any affection between Wedlake and Miss Pearce. The coat, hat, and axe produced were taken by Supt Drewett from his house. The axe was kept in a cellar, to which Joseph Wedlake had access.

Cross examined by Mr. Poole – The axe was used for knocking down pigs just before Christmas, and it was sometimes covered with blood. Prisoner always assisted him in killing pigs.

Mr. Collins, recalled, said he quite concurred in the evidence of Dr. Edward. The prisoner was then cautioned in the usual way, and he said he would leave his case in the hands of his counsel.

Mr. Ford said the magistrates had given very great consideration to this terrible case, and they had come to the only conclusion they could come to – namely, to commit the prisoner for trial at the next assizes. He trusted that he would take advantage of the somewhat large interval between that day and the trial to make his peace with Almighty God. It was not for them to anticipate what the verdict would be; but even if it were decided he was not guilty, the interval would be well spent if he listened with attention to the instruction and advice he would receive. He thought it was only just and right, as far as the bench was concerned, to express their obligations to Mr. Supt. Drewett for the zeal, ability and perseverance with which he had conducted that most painful case, and that his efforts were thoroughly appreciated by them. Mr.

Braikenridge begged leave to express his entire concurrence with what had fallen from his fellow brother magistrate. Mr. Supt. Drewett – I thank you worships.

Although admission to the court was by ticket, the place was extremely excited, and large numbers waited outside all day in the hope of obtaining entrance.

During the hearing of the case the prisoner was accommodated with a seat in the dock, and could not be seen. As on former occasions, he appeared to be thoroughly prostrate. The hearing of the case lasted over seven hours.

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 27 April 1883

TAUNTON THURSDAY (BEFORE BAROW HUDDLESTON)

There was a case of a most singular kind. A young man named Wedlake was charged with the murder of a youth named Cox. By an extraordinary circumstance the unhappy man who was alleged to have been the victim of the prisoner was certainly not the person he intended to murder. The young man, Alfred Cox, [*incorrect name in newspaper should be Mark Cox*] a collier, aged 17, on a Sunday in January, late at night left home in good health and spirits for the purpose of going to his duties at some works where he was employed.

Early the next morning, about 5 o'clock, he was found lying on his back with one hand on his breast and the other in his trousers pocket. On his head were some frightful wounds. One, of the most fearful character, had smashed in the brain and caused if not instantaneous, almost instantaneous death. There were two other wounds less in importance, but indicating that a great violence had been used. At the spot where the body was found were no indications of a struggle having taken place, showing that death must have been sudden and without previous suffering. Suspicion fell upon many persons – certainly upon one person – who was taken into custody.

This was the brother of the prisoner. When at the police station he made a statement respecting his brother and respecting what had occurred in the early part of the day preceding the murder. It turned out that the prisoner was the nephew of a farmer, and lived in the house with his uncle. A young girl about 18 or 19 years of age resided in the same house. She had a sweetheart named Thatcher, and this seems to have given rise to ill feeling on the part of the prisoner. The young lady, however, was not conscious that there was any desire on the part of the prisoner to approach her in any other way except that of relationship, and, as far as she was aware, he never paid her any special attention at all. There was one circumstance that might not be without importance. On one occasion, when the young lady and her sweet heart were walking out, the prisoner came from behind a hedge with a candle, and made a remark of a somewhat trivial character. Upon the evening preceding the day of which the body of the deceased was found, the young lady and her sweetheart were accompanied by a third person, a female. They walked a considerable distance to see this young person, and then returned by themselves. It was obvious that on that night which was very dark and foggy, their footsteps were tracked by some person who followed immediately behind, although not in sight. When the young couple had returned home, and were sitting in the kitchen at about 12:30 or one o'clock, talking in low tones, they heard a door open in the house, and a creaking noise on the stairs, as if someone were about the house. Shortly after this Thatcher bade his young lady good night, and went away. It seemed quite clear that the mortal blow which was intended for him by some fortunate accident, as far as he was concerned, fell upon Cox, who happened to be going the same road somewhere about the same time. These circumstances were mentioned by the brother first

taken, and this led to the apprehension of the prisoner. The prisoner having been incarcerated a little time sent for a police constable to whom he made a deliberate statement by which he exculpated his brother, and then proceeded to narrate how he had tracked Thatcher and his sweetheart, how he waited for him, and how, when the unhappy man Cox came along the road, he struck him with a heavy instrument – a species of coal axe. He said that whilst striking him, and before the blow reached his victim, he discovered that he was not the man whom he intended to murder. That was, to a certain extent, improbable. It was obvious from the appearance of the body that a severe blow must have been struck, and that other blows were inflicted afterwards. He (his lordship) should add that if a man, bent upon taking the life of one man, took the life of another, he was equally guilty of the crime.

Source – Bristol Times and Mirror – 22 May 1883

THE WINFORD AND HENSTRIDGE MURDERS DOUBLE EXECUTION AT TAUNTON YESTERDAY

Within the precincts of Taunton Prison yesterday morning the extreme sentence of the law was carried out upon Joseph Wedlake, convicted for the murder of Mark Cox, at Winford, and George White, convicted for the murder of his wife at Henstridge, near Wincanton; and in accordance with regulations issued by the High Sheriff of the county, the proceedings were conducted with as much privacy as the law would allow. The prison doors were closed yesterday morning against all who were not officially connected with the goal, so that the double execution was witnessed by the Sheriff, the chaplain, and the warders only.

For some days up to the eve of the execution the condemned men spent the greater part of the time in Scripture reading and prayer. Both were resigned to their fate, and frequently expressed their preference for the extreme penalty of the law to be carried out than for the sentence of death to be altered to penal servitude for life. Wedlake, who ever since the trial had been very penitent, frequently gave way to fits of remorse and grief; but White, though equally resigned, had all along been more composed. Marwood, who was the executioner, arrived in Taunton on Saturday by the down express due shortly after one o'clock, having travelled direct from Dublin, where on Friday, he executed Daniel Curley, one of the Phoenix park murderers. The scaffold, which was completed on Saturday, was erected within the precincts of the civil prison, the site formerly used for such purposes being now included in the section of the goal which has for the last few years been devoted exclusively to military prisoners. On arriving at the goal on Saturday evening Marwood inspected the scaffold, and saw that everything was in readiness for the execution. The chaplain, who had been in constant attendance upon the condemned men, remained with them the greater portion of their last evening on earth.

Shortly before eight yesterday morning the goal bell began to toll, and a procession, consisting of the goal officials, the Sheriff, and the two culprits, wended its way to the place of execution. They took their positions under the drop, having previously had their arms pinioned in their cells. Their legs were then strapped, white caps were drawn over their faces, and in a few seconds the bolt was drawn and both men were launched into eternity. Meanwhile the chaplain, the Rev. W. Howse, repeated the Burial Service, and the prisoners repeated the responses aloud. Immediately the drop fell a black flag was hoisted over the entrance to the prison, and those assembled without knew that the dread sentence of the law had been carried out. The bodies, according to the provisions of the Capital Punishment Act, were allowed to hang for an hour, after which they were taken down and placed in rough wooden coffins. The black flag was lowered on the bodies being taken down and placed in the coffins, and the usual declaration was posted on the prison door, signed by the High Sheriff, Mr. Vincent Stuckey, the prison

chaplain, the Rev. W. Howse, and the governor of the prison, Mr. Kiteley, stating that judgement had been executed on both the condemned men. The certificate of the prison surgeon that the sentence had been properly carried out was posted alongside it.

The circumstances of the crimes for which the unfortunate men suffered must be fresh in the minds of our readers. Joseph Wedlake, who was a farmer, about 29 years of age, lived with his uncle, Charles Pearce, near Winford, and in the same house lived a cousin of his, a young woman of considerable personal attractions, named Emma Pearce. Wedlake suddenly became jealous of a young man named Thatcher, who was keeping company with his cousin, for whom he had some special regard, although he had not divulged it. He dogged the steps of Thatcher and his sweetheart on the evening of 7th January, and afterwards waited for the former in the road along which he was expected to pass. Mark Cox left his house to go to his work shortly before midnight, and the night being dark Wedlake, unable to distinguish the face, thinking the man was Thatcher, struck Cox a fearful blow on the head, which knocked him senseless to the ground, and whilst there he finished the terrible crime by battering his head with an axe. As the first blow was being given Wedlake himself says he suddenly recognised Cox, but the axe being swinging towards him, he was unable to restrain the stroke. With regard to the Henstridge tragedy, George White, of loose character, married his wife less than a year before. His conduct to her was of so shameful a character that she left him. On the day of the murder he fetched his wife from the house where she resided, drank with her all day, and in the evening kicked and stabbed her to death. At the trial he pleaded guilty, which plea he repeated after he had been told the awful result of it, and he was sentenced to death. Wedlake had been constantly attended during his incarceration by the Rev. F. Howse, chaplain of the goal, and attended closely to his spiritual ministrations. There can be no doubt he died deeply penitent for his crime.

At ten o'clock a jury were admitted to the goal in company with the coroner for the district, Mr. W. W. Munckton, to hold the formal inquiry required by law into the death of the two culprits. The inquest was held in a small room on the right hand side of the corridor, and the bodies were laid out in a room adjoining that in which the jury sat. The jury, having chosen their foreman, were sworn, and then proceeded to view the bodies. The features of both the deceased men bore a placid appearance, and there was no evidence of a struggle having taken place. The necks of both were dislocated, and death must in each instance have been instantaneous. The jury having returned to their room, the following evidence was received :-

William Kiteley said : I am governor of her Majesty's prison at Taunton. George White and Joseph Wedlake, whose bodies the jury have just viewed, were prisoners in this goal. George White pleaded guilty to the wilful murder of his wife Clara White, at Henstridge, on the 28th of March last, at the last assizes, opened at Taunton on 25th of April. He was tried on the 27th of April, before Baron Huddleston, and was sentenced to be hanged. Joseph Wedlake was tried for the wilful murder of Mark Cox, at Winford, on 7th of January last. He was found guilty on the 30th of April, and sentenced by the same judge to be hanged. The sentence was carried out on both prisoners this morning at eight o'clock, in the presence of myself, the High Sheriff (Mr. Stuckey), the chaplain (Rev. W. Howse), the medical officer of the prison and other officers. The bodies hanged about an hour, and were taken down at nine o'clock.

William Henaman said : I am medical officer at Taunton prison, I was present this morning when White and Wedlake were hanged, as stated by the governor, I examined the bodies after they were cut down. The deceased died from dislocation of the vertebrae and injury to the spinal cord. Death must have been instantaneous. The vertebrae was completely severed and the cord was crushed.

The jury returned a verdict to the effect that White and Wedlake were executed within the prison according to law.

Source – The Times – 22 May 1883

DOUBLE EXECUTION AT TAUNTON.

Yesterday at Taunton, George White, labourer, and Joseph Wedlake farmer, were executed within the precincts of Her Majesty's prison, the former for the murder of his wife, Clara White, at Henstridge, near Wincanton, Somerset. on the 28th of March, the latter for the murder of Mark Cox, at Winford, near Bristol, on the 7th of January.

White deliberately and brutally kicked his wife to death less than 12 months after they were married. He pleaded guilty at the last Taunton Assizes, and never attempted to deny or to palliate his offence.

Wedlake's case was peculiar. He was jealous of a young man named Thatcher, who was courting his cousin, Emma Pearce. On Sunday night, the 7th of January, he lay in wait for Thatcher with the intention of killing him, with an axe, but he mistook Cox for his intended victim and killed him. The facts were revealed to the police by Wedlake's own brother, who was arrested on suspicion of having committed the crime, and then Joseph Wedlake confessed.

Both prisoners since their conviction abandoned all hope of being reprieved and gave due attention to the spiritual ministrations of the gaol chaplain. They walked firmly to the scaffold, which was erected in a room at the end of a corridor in the gaol, and were executed by Marwood.

Death was in each case instantaneous, and in each case there was absolute separation of the vertebrae. The prison bell was tolled a few minutes before 8 o'clock, and at 8 to the minute the black flag was hoisted. About 200 persons assembled outside the gaol during the execution. Members of the Press were excluded, the only persons who witnessed the execution being the high sheriff, the under. sheriff, the Guvnor and surgeon of the gaol and several warders.

11th June 1883 The Will of Joseph Wedlake late of Ridghill in the Parish of Winford in the County of Somerset, Labourer who died 21st May 1883 at Her Majesty's Prison Taunton in the said County, was proved at Bristol by Charles Pearce of Ridghill Yeoman the Uncle the sole Executor.

Personal Estate £169 5s. 6d.

September 1884 – Mendip Lead Mines

Source – Western Daily Press – 10 September 1884

INQUEST

On Monday afternoon an inquest was held at the Ubley Inn, before Dr. Weatherly, deputy coroner, on the body of William Charles Panes, aged 20 years, who was drowned at the Mendip Lead Mines. The evidence of Richard Nichols, manager of the mine, having been taken, the Coroner deemed it expedient that the jury should visit the scene of the accident (some two miles distant), which was accordingly done. On their return, the Coroner adjourned the inquiry till Monday next, in order that the inspector of mines be communicated with.

Source – Western Daily Press – 17 September 1884

INQUEST

The adjourned inquest on the body of William Charles Pane, aged 20 years, who drowned at the Mendip Lead Mines was resumed on Monday, before Dr. Weatherly, deputy coroner. The inspector of factories was present to watch the proceedings, also Supt. Emson on behalf of the police. The friends of the deceased were also legally represented. Richard Nichols, the manager of the mine, gave some additional evidence, to the effect that he had the staging where the accident occurred put in thorough repair about a fortnight previously, and his evidence was corroborated by Samuel Monk and James Bugler, the workmen who performed the repairs in question. Edward Wellington, another witness, having been examined, the coroner summed up the case very carefully to the jury, who after several minutes' deliberation returned a verdict of "Accidentally drowned through the breaking of a rotten plank, on which he was standing in his work."

30 September 1886 – Winford Redding Pits (Probably surface mining in the Quarry)

Source – Western Daily Press – 1 October 1886

FATAL ACCIDENT AT WINFORD

A fatal accident occurred yesterday morning at the Redhouse Mines at Winford to a young man named Cox, son of a labouring man, living at Nempnett. The deceased was at work with other men in the quarries when some mineral fell upon him, killing him instantly. Frank Hayward, also a young man, of Felton, who was working with the deceased, was severely injured by the falling material, and was taken home. Dr. W. R. Edmond, of Chew Magna, attended.

Source – Weston-super-Mare Gazette and General Advertiser – 2 October 1886

WINFORD – FATAL ACCIDENT

On Thursday morning, soon after the men commenced work in the mines of Winford Redding Company, about two tons of heading fell on the men working below, killing a man named George Cox, living at Nempnett, and severely injuring Frank Hayward, of Felton and another man. Dr. Edmond, of Chew Magna, was sent for, and was soon in attendance, and rendered every possible assistance to the injured. The unfortunate deceased was a brother to the man Cox, murdered at Ridgehill, Winford, some few years ago.

Source – The Bristol Mirror – 6 October 1886

FATAL ACCIDENT AT WINFORD

An inquest was resumed yesterday, at the Prince of Waterloo Inn, Winford, before Mr. S. Craddock, coroner for the Northern Division of Somerset, on the body of George Cox, 23 years of age, in the employ of the Winford Iron Ore and Redding Co., who was killed on Thursday, the 30th ult., from a fall of earth in the company's workings.

Mr. Carter (Clifton and Carter) watched the case on behalf of the company. Supt. Drewett, chief of police for the division was also present. The workings not coming under the Mines Regulations Act, H. M. inspector wrote stating there was no necessity for him to attend the inquiry.

Charles Grove deposed that he was the ganger in the employ of Winford Iron Ore Co. On the day of the accident, September 30th, witness was working about fifty yards from the fall; he heard Job Wedlake call out to his fellow labourers to look out for themselves. Witness at once ran to the spot and was informed that two men, Hayward and Cox, were buried. He directed the men to remove the earth, and in about a quarter of an hour they were released. Cox was dead having sustained the full weight of about 9 cwt. Of earth. The men were engaged in removing the earth, and the usual way of effecting this operation was to undermine to the extent of six inches, and then from the top with bars break it off. The previous evening witness cautioned the labourers engaged at the heap to be careful when they resumed work the next morning. Witness had had nearly twenty years experience, and that was the way they usually got down a heap of the kind. The soil was not damp neither were there any large stones in it, and he could not account for the sudden fall without giving warning.

By Mr. Carter – It was the witness's duty as bailiff to look round the workings and to warn the men in case of any of the workings being dangerous. He did so the previous afternoon. Wedlake called out, and if deceased had run out at the warning he might have escaped the like the others. He appeared, however, to have looked round before moving, and he was then too late to escape the fall.

Job Wedlake, labourer, employed by the company, said on 30th ult. He was working with the deceased. They were engaged in removing the earth, which was about nine feet high. Their way of operation was first to get the face flat, then undermine slightly and force it down afterwards from the top. On this occasion they had only undermined for the width of three feet and to the depth of six inches. Witness was using the pick above the others, and whilst at work heard the grass and the earth parting. He looked and saw that it had parted about half an inch. He at once called out to the others below to look out. Those who escaped ran straight away at his warning., but deceased, who was in the least dangerous part, stopped to look round at the fall, and this cut off his escape. The earth fell and completely buried him; he made no outcry. They extricated him and the man Hayward, who was slightly injured, under the direction of the bailiff, as speedily as possible. Grove had warned the men the night before to be especially careful, telling them that a fall, no matter how small, might be very dangerous.

Constable Fletcher informed the coroner that if the jury required additional evidence the man Hayward was in attendance.

The Coroner said personally he did not want it, but if the jury thought that additional evidence was required he should be very pleased to call it.

The foreman said he and his brother jurors felt that the occurrence was an accidental one.

The Coroner quite concurred, but thought that there was a certain amount of danger in the manner in which the earth was brought down. Although it had been remarked that this was the way in which operations of this kind had been carried on for years, yet he thought there was an element of danger, and if the company could manage it in a different way he thought it would be better. With regard to their actual verdict, the jury's duty was simply to return one of accidental death. It was to the interest of the company that the workings should be carried out with the least possible danger to the men, and he was sure that they would only be too desirous to act upon any suggestion which might be made to minimise the danger.

Mr. S. Taylor (secretary and manager) – Quite so sir.

The Foreman said that the jury had seen the spot, and after hearing the evidence were quite of opinion that the occurrence was an accidental one, and that was their unanimous verdict.

August 1891 - The Murder Hole (Bathampton)

Source – Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette – 28 September 1893

SHOCKING DISCOVERY AT HAMPTON ROCKS. A MYSTERIOUS MURDER.

Two boys who are in the habit of exploring the caves on Hampton Down on Friday last met with an adventure which they little imagined would fall to their share. They were a son of Commander Brand, R.N., who resides on Bathwick-hill, and school friend named Emerson. In a small cavern in one of the disused quarries they came across the skeleton of a woman. The spot where the discovery was made being outside the city the county constabulary were informed of the occurrence, and on Saturday morning, guided by P.C. Wall, of the city police, who was taken to the cave on the previous day by Captain Brand, P.S. Edwards, of Batheaston, and P.C. Brunt, of Bathford, proceeded to the cavern where the repulsive find was made. It is a secluded cavity at the farther end of the cluster of disused quarries, which in summer are a favourite rendezvous for picnic parties. There are two openings into the cavern, but through only one of the entrances can an adult gain admission. The cave is a small one, only a few yards in extent, and those engaged in the gruesome exploration had ample natural light to enable them to conduct the examination.

The remains were so disposed that it would appear the woman was placed in the cavern with her face downwards; the skeleton – for it was little more – was not lying at full length, the left leg being drawn up towards the body. No flesh remained, the bones being dry and mouldy, and the very little clothing remaining is unrecognisable. The hair, of a light brown shade, clung in a plated coil, containing several rusted pins, to the back of the head, but most of it had been eaten into short lengths by rodents. White corsets in a fair state of preservation and discoloured shreds of garments were attached to the bones. The shoes, a pair of laced Oxfords, nearly new, were almost perfect and still on the feet. It also could be seen that the woman had worn black ribbed stockings.

Unmistakable evidence of foul play was found on examination of the skull, for on the left temple was the mark of a terrible blow; the bone is broken and bent in, the fracture being about the size of a penny. Then the numerous large flat stones covering the remains showed that the murderer or his accomplices had hastily hidden the body from view.

Some clue to the date at which the woman was thus put out of sight is afforded by the fact that she was wearing a “bustle,” the steel wire springs of which were found.

The police officers mentioned, with the assistance of P.C. Brunt’s son, removed the remains from the cave in less than an hour, placed them in a sack and took them to the George Inn, at Bathampton, the only witnesses of the uncanny exhumation being two press-men. At the George the bones and fragments of clothing were laid on a table in an outhouse to await a Coroner’s inquest. A close search was made for any trinkets that the victim of the terrible murder might have been wearing but none was found. It was also remarked that there appeared to be no trace of a hat or bonnet.

The horrible discovery set the police busily at work, and Superintendent Rutherford, of the Weston Division, and Detective Sergeant Smith, of the Bath Police, are endeavouring to unravel the mysterious tragedy, for there can be no question that the woman was foully murdered. An

important circumstance and one which is with reason thought to bear upon the discovery has been brought to light. Detective-Sergeant Smith recovered a pair of lady's cuffs and an embroidered handkerchief, both saturated with blood, and also a lady's gold watch. The cuffs and handkerchief were handed to Detective Sergeant Smith by a man named Dill, well-known in Bath, where he enjoys the soubriquet of "Colonel." Dill, who is at present employed as time-keeper and clerk by Mr. Mahony, builder, upon some buildings at Weston, stated that he was strolling on the Down at eight o'clock in the morning about two years ago, when he discovered the blood-stained articles at a spot close to where the skeleton was found on Friday. He also found with them the gold watch with a gold chain attached. After keeping the watch for some time, Dill raffled it at the Exeter Inn, Southgate-street, and the winner chanced to be Miss Cotterell, the daughter of the landlord. This young lady has since been married to a farmer living at Limpley Stoke, and from her the officer recovered the watch. It is of 14-carat gold, prettily chased and bears the number 57080. The chain Dill disposed of privately, and the person to whom he sold it appears to have re-sold the chain to someone else, but the detectives expect to recover it. The cuffs and handkerchief Dill seems to have kept in his possession, for he at once handed them to the police when asked as to their whereabouts.

A clue to the woman's identity would seem to be given in the fact that the handkerchief bears the name "A.H. Kerry" written in marking ink.

Another remarkable incident is that in August, 1891, corresponding with the date when Dill says he found the cuffs, handkerchief, and watch, a lady's hat was picked up near Hampton Rocks by a son of Mr. D. Clark, headmaster of St. Mark's parochial schools, and at once brought by him to the Central Police-station.

Mr. Timothy Cotterell, interviewed by a Chronicle reporter on Monday, said he well remembers the watch being raffled at the Exeter Inn, of which he was landlord at the time. Dill showed him the watch and said it had been given to him by his sister. The glass was broken, and Mrs. Cotterell suggested that before the raffle this should be repaired, and the cost deducted from the proceeds of the tickets. Dill agreed to this; several tickets were held by members of Mr. Cotterell's family, and the winner chanced to be his daughter, who is now married to a Mr. Harding. Mr. Cotterell further remarked that there was no chain attached to the watch, but he remembered Dill having shown him in the bar of his house the blood stained cuffs and handkerchief; these he said he had found while walking on Hampton Down.

Mr. Clark, in an interview with the Chronicle representative, said he had a distinct recollection of his son Frank, who was then thirteen years old, finding a woman's hat on Hampton Down, near Claverton Woods, on the 7th of August, 1891, in the evening. Frank, who was there playing with several school-fellows, brought home the hat and gave it to his mother, who with presentiment of a tragedy said, "I believe it belongs to someone who has been murdered, it shan't stop in the house;" the boy accordingly took it to the Police-station. Mr. Clark on reading a description of the remains in Saturday's Chronicle, at once connected the hat his boy had found with the mystery, especially as it was stated no traces of a hat were discovered; he went to the Police-station, and reminded the Inspector on duty of the circumstance, but although an entry of the hat found was brought to light in the police books the hat itself had gone, and no description of it had been recorded.

Mrs. Clark, however, was able to supply the missing information, for she stated, in answer to inquiries by our reporter, that the hat was a black fancy open work straw, turned up at the side or back, trimmed with black and a little cream material, and it looked as if it had been worn about a month and inside the crown was the name of Gardiner Bros. The hat appeared to have been on the ground a night or two, as it was wet with dew, but she said it could not have been there long, as a few days previously her son had been playing on the same spot.

OPENING OF THE INQUEST.

At the George Inn, Bathampton, on Tuesday morning, Mr. Samuel Craddock, Coroner for North Somerset, opened an inquest on the remains. Mr. Henry Dolman was chosen as foreman of the jury. Supt. Rutherford, of the Somerset County Constabulary (Weston Division) was present, and also Detective-Sergt. Smith, of the City Police.

The Coroner, having examined the remains, addressed the jury. He said they were summoned to investigate a somewhat unusual case – the death evidently of a young woman. The published accounts of the finding of the body certainly presupposed that a horrible and villainous murder had been possibly perpetrated. That supposition, he might say, was very much accentuated by the position and place in which the body was found – in a cave at the Bathampton rocks. No doubt considerable difficulty must have arisen in dragging the body into the cave, as he was given to understand that the sergeant of the police could only get into the cave by going backwards, with his legs first. There was also evidently some method in the way the body had been disposed of. From what was stated in the published accounts the body was practically covered with stones, some of which were of considerable superficial area and thickness. Further, they were given to believe that somewhere about two years ago a watch and chain and certain linen, a handkerchief he believed, were picked up by a person named Dill, very near the entrance to this cave; and further, that a hat belonging to a lady was picked up by some boys about the same time. It was impossible for him to tell them how long the body had been in the cave. No doubt conjectures, and reasonable conjectures, would be offered by the medical man during the course of his examination. As he had said at the beginning of his remarks, everything led one to believe that a most horrible tragedy had been committed. He need scarcely say that it would be the duty of the jury to devote such patience as they possibly could to the investigation of the case. It was an investigation they could not possibly hurry; it might extend over many weeks, because it would be necessary for the police to advertise and do everything in their power to identify that poor woman, and if possible to bring to justice the perpetrator of this horrible deed. Without further comment he would proceed to examine the witnesses.

The first witness called was, Cecil Brand, son of Captain Brand, R.N. of 8 Bathwick-hill, whose father was present in Court. This witness said that on Friday, the 22nd September, about 10.30 a.m., in company with a friend, named Alec Emerson, he was playing at Hampton Rocks. They entered a cave, and witness saw a bone; his friend, lifting up a large stone, found a human skull. There was also a pair of shoes (produced) on the feet. They saw it was a corpse, and witness went home and told his father who informed the police.

P.S. Charles Edwards, of the Somerset Constabulary, stationed at Batheaston, proved removing the remains from the cavern on Saturday in company with P.C. Brunt. He was guided to the spot by P.C. Wall, of the Bath police, to whom it had been pointed out by Master Brand. The cave was in a quarry, about fifteen feet deep, on the Claverton side of Hampton Down, and it was at the side of the quarry nearest to the Warminster-road. There was a large stone projecting at the entrance, and he entered with great difficulty, feet first. The first thing he noticed was a leg bone with a shoe attached. Stones, some of which were a foot across and which varied in thickness from an inch to five inches, entirely covered the skeleton. The left leg was drawn up over the right thigh, the right leg being extended.

Witness then produced a portion of linen underclothing found beneath the remains. This was brown with discolouration, but on the band could be clearly deciphered “H. Kerry,” with traces of another initial before the “H”. Below was the date “85,” and also a number. The marking was in ink in a female handwriting, the characters being beautifully formed and distinct. This

marking, which had been done by a good writer, agreed with the name "A. H. Kerry" found on the blood-stained handkerchief produced at a later stage of the inquiry.

Mr. Harper remarked that from the fragment produced it was evident the article was hand-sewn and of good quality.

The Coroner then asked if Mr. Dill were present, as he proposed asking the witness about the articles found, and Mr. Dill entered the room. Sergt. Edwards, however, said he had no conversation with Mr. Dill and he must leave that to Supt. Rutherford. He only produced the top half of a walking stick (of natural wood) which was found on the Down by Mr. Dill.

Mr. Dill: That was not picked up at the same time or anything like it.

Sergt. Edwards said he obtained it from Mr. Head to whom Mr. Dill gave it to repair.

Mr. Dill: That was not picked up near the place but at the back of Sham Castle. I took it to Head and he said he would splice it for me.

Sergt. Edwards, in answer to a juror, said without doubt had not the boys removed some of the stones the whole of the body would have been covered.

Superintendent Rutherford stated that on Saturday last, in company with Detective-Sergeant Smith, of the Bath Force, he saw Mr. Dill. They asked him if he remembered picking up something on the Down about two years ago. He said he picked up a gold watch and chain, and also a cuff which had blood on it, and he said he afterwards mentioned it to a man named Field. He made further search in company with Field, and picked up another cuff and a pocket handkerchief. Dill then produced the handkerchief and cuffs and gave them to witness. Witness found on the handkerchief the name "A. H. Kerry." The cuffs and handkerchief were covered with blood. The cuffs bore in print the name of the style, "Ascot," and the number "8". He stated that he had disposed of the watch and had given the chain to his nephew. Witness and D. S. Smith then proceeded to the cave and found its condition such as described by P.S. Edwards.

D. S. Smith, of the Bath Police, corroborated Supt. Rutherford as to their visit to Dill. On Saturday, in consequence of a conversation he had with Mrs. Harding, she handed witness the lady's small gold Geneva watch (produced) with the No. 57,080 on both cases. It also bore the stamped letters "J.D." evidently the maker's mark. Dill admitted, in answer to questions by witness, that he raffled the watch at the Exeter Inn about two years ago, and that it was won by Mr. Cotterell, the landlord, for his daughter. He said he gave the gold chain to his nephew Ernest, who witness had ascertained had pledged it for 15s. The pledge ran out, was offered at an auction by Mr. Head, bought in again and then sold. Witness hoped to be able to trace the chain, which was a lady's short Albert. Mrs. Harding was Mr. Cotterell's daughter, who won the watch. Witness added that he could prove the entry made in the police books in August, 1891, of a lady's hat being found on Hampton Down by a son of Mr. Clark. He had seen the lad who found it. The Coroner said he would get that out later on.

Mr. Dill stated that the pawnbroker with whom the chain was pledged was Mr. P.C. Young, of Bath-street. William Henry Dill, who described himself as an accountant, of Rose-cottage, Newbridge-road, Lower Weston, was then examined by the Coroner. He said he found something about two years ago; he could not tell the exact date. He kept a diary then and did now, but he could not find it. About August or September, 1891, when walking over the Down by himself, about 20 yards from the wall at the father end of the Down, he saw a blood-stained cuff on the ground. It had a very small plated solitaire in it, a trumpery little thing. On stooping to pick it up he found a small gold watch and chain – he believed the one produced. Witness used to assist at the Volunteer Shooting Butts at marking, and when he got there he showed the cuff to the markers.

Did you show the watch? – No, only the cuff. Field, one of the markers, said “Let us go over and see if there is anything else.” Witness replied that it was quite in the open and there was nothing else to be seen. Field, out of curiosity, persisted in going with witness, and Field, looking over a ravine, saw something white in the nettles, which were very high. Field dived down and found the fellow cuff, also stained with blood. The cuffs were found as produced, they had never been touched. Witness then joined Field in the place which was called a quarry. They beat about the nettles and eventually found the handkerchief produced. He found the first cuff and watch and chain on the flat, about four or five feet from the edge of the quarry. The quarry was several feet down.

How far from the cave was it? – I saw no cave; that’s where I’m in a fog. I saw a small crevice in the stone which one could squeeze through. – He should like to say that he showed the cuffs and handkerchief to two or three of the county police, who were there, on the Down. One of the constables in the room, who came in with him, was one of them, No. 87.

P.C. Brunt (87) – I’m the constable spoken of; I never saw or heard anything of it.

Witness: I showed them to you!

P.C. Brunt: No, never.

A Juror (to Dill): You said just now it was No. 87 who came in with you.

Witness: I looked round and saw his number and thought it was him.

The Foreman: It’s a rather funny affair to my eye.

Witness said he was certain he showed the things to two policemen; he believed one of them was stationed on Combe Down, a tall slight man. It was a point at which constables met.

P.C. Brunt: About the time in question –

The Coroner (interrupting the constable): It may be necessary to examine you, by-and-by. You have just interlarded his evidence with a total denial of the fact that Mr. Dill told you what he says.

P.C. Brunt: He never showed it to me or told me.

Witness: I’m sorry I made a mistake. It is only a mistake. I showed them to two policemen.

The Coroner: Where did you show them to them?

Witness: At the hut which the markers use.

Superintendent Rutherford: Were they two constables or a constable and a sergeant?

Witness: I would not be sure. They were both in uniform.

Superintendent Rutherford: Did you say anything to them about the watch?

Witness: No, nothing like that.

Superintendent Rutherford: But you had found the watch then?

Witness: Yes, at the same time as the cuff. I was waiting for a reward to be offered. I wanted to get something out of that.

The Foreman thought it looked rather strange that he should pick up the cuff and watch and chain, then go back and pick up another cuff and the handkerchief, and then wait for a reward. He must have thought that there had been foul play or a bad deed committed.

Witness: I did not.

The Foreman: I think I should or any other man of your education.

Witness said he did not think anything of the kind. It did not strike him that there had been any foul play.

The Foreman: It looks rather fishy; that’s what I think about it.

Another juror: That’s in the vernacular.

The Foreman: What about the stick?

Witness: I could tell you of lots of things I have found up there.

In answer to Supt. Rutherford, witness said he found the stick four or five months afterwards just behind Sham Castle. It had nothing to do with it unless the man roved about the Down for months.

A Juror: You are quite sure about the year?

Witness said he was not certain but he thought it was two years from what one and another had told him. He should have thought it was not so long ago as two years.

A Juror: Are you in the habit of sleeping up there at night?

Witness: Not in the habit. I have done so occasionally when I was marking. They often shot right up to dusk and there was no chance of picking up the empty cartridges, which have to be returned, the same night; so, being an early riser, I picked them up in the morning.

The Foreman: You didn't sleep in that particular cave?

Witness: No; I never slept in a cave, thank you. I had a hut and bed up there.

Mr. Charles Harper, of Batheaston, surgeon, deposed: On Monday September 25th, at the request of the Coroner, I examined the remains of the female body said to have been found in a cave on Hampton Rocks. I found it almost entirely reduced to a skeleton, except on the lower extremities, which I shall refer to later on. Fragments of clothing partly covered some of the bones, and the feet were covered with the remains of stockings, over which were shoes in a very fair condition. All the bones of the body were lying in a heap on the table, disarticulated with the exception of the two ankle joints, and the small bones of the hands and feet. Lying underneath the skull were portions of hair of a light brown colour; on the hands and bones of the leg portions of dry skin were attached. On examining the skull on the left side, on the frontal bone near the junction of the parietal a piece of bone an inch square was found depressed, which could only have been caused by direct violence of great force, the inner table being also depressed in the same way. I could find no other mischief in the skull. The bones of the body were perfect with the exception of the right foot and instep, the latter being dislocated and an appearance of deformity on the three outside toes which were greatly contracted and drawn up. The bones of the fingers of both hands were also contracted. The teeth in the upper and lower jaw were perfect, including the wisdom teeth, no signs of decay being observed in any of them. Three or four in the lower jaw were missing, probably having fallen out in removing the remains.

On measuring the various bones and comparing them with Dr. Humphreys' tables as given in Tidy's Legal Medicine I infer that when living the body measured about 5 feet to 5 feet 2 inches in height, and that its age would be from 19 to 21 years. From the general character of the bones and the smallness of the hands and feet it must have been that of a slight person. The various portions of clothing mixed up with the bones were remains of an under skirt with figured band attached and spiral wire dress improver with portions of horse hair used as stuffing adhering; also the back portions of stays, laced, and front steels. Portions of a flannel petticoat marked with red cotton probably a washing mark and remains of a slip bodice and part of a linen collar. Portions of black worsted stocking in good condition, protected by shoe of right foot which was tightly laced. Back portion of linen drawers buttoned with small portion of band attached, bearing the name in marking ink of Kerry with initials H.J. or A.J. with figures below. After examining the cave where the bones were found which was dry and well ventilated from front and back, I think it possible that from the appearance of the clothing the remains might have been there for a considerable period, how long it is impossible to say, as the skeleton only remained with the exception of small pieces of dry skin adhering to some of the bones, there being total destruction of the soft parts.

In answer to the Coroner, Mr. Harper said it was impossible to say how long the body had been in the cave. It would depend upon the number of rats and mice about.

Captain Brand remarked that the place swarmed with stoats.

Mr. Harper said he should like to say it was his belief from the dislocation of the foot that the body was thrown over into the quarry. What happened on top he did not know, evidently something must have happened there by the finding of the cuffs and handkerchief. Whether the

skull was fractured in the fall or fractured on the top and the body thrown over he did not know, but there must have been immense violence to have fractured the skull in the way it was, and to have dislocated the ankle.

The Foreman: it is very evident it was a foul murder.

The Coroner thought that would be a convenient point at which to adjourn. There was not much more evidence of moment to be taken then. It would be necessary to adjourn for a considerable time. The inquest was then adjourned until Wednesday, 25th October, at 9.30 a.m.

The Coroner before leaving made out a certificate for the burial of "a certain woman," and this was handed to the police. The remains will be interred at the expense of the parish, and if necessary they will be exhumed. Acting upon the advice of the Coroner, Supt. Rutherford will have the cave and its surroundings photographed, and a plan of the locality prepared. The marks on the linen also will be reproduced in facsimile. Before the opening of the inquest the members of the jury had made a thorough inspection of the cavern.

After the inquest at the George Inn had been adjourned on Tuesday morning the witness Dill accompanied Detective-Sergt. Smith to the quarry on Hampton Down, where the cave which contained the remains is situated. He pointed out the spot where he picked up the bloodstained handkerchief among the nettles. It is only a few feet from the cavern where the corpse evidently was concealed at the time Dill discovered the handkerchief.

Another son of Mrs. D. Clark, an elder brother of the lad who found the lady's hat on the Down on August 7th, 1891, has informed the police of a somewhat curious incident which is thought to have a bearing on the tragedy. On the Bank Holiday in August, 1891, which in that year fell on the 3rd of the month, he states that he was with a picnic party at Hampton Rocks. They were having tea when they suddenly saw a man walking about the rocks. He had no hat on and was in his shirt sleeves. Mr. Clark says he appeared to be in an agitated condition, and explained that he had been bathing in the Avon and that someone had taken his hat and coat. Those who heard the explanation regarded it as curious as the river is quite a mile from the Rocks. The man walked away, and the incident was not remembered until the discovery of the remains. Mr. Clark, as far as he can recollect, says the man was between 20 and 30 years of age, and had a light brown moustache.

REMARKABLE CLUE TO THE MYSTERY



Since the above was written information has reached us indicating that a clue has been obtained to the identity of the body. There is reason to believe that the remains are of a young girl not of the name of Kerry, but who was formerly in the service of Mr. James Kerry, of Cheriton House, Oldfield-park, and that the portions of underclothing found had belonged to her mistress, hence the marking with the name of Kerry. She had received notice to leave her situation, but before its expiration obtained her wages on the representation that she was going to London, an uncle having died from whom she was to receive money. This was on a Saturday, and she was to have returned on the Monday, but did not do so, and Mr. and Mrs. Kerry have not heard of her since. It has transpired that the girl did not go to London at all, but was seen in Bath afterwards, and it is believed stayed with a friend on Kingsmead-terrace.

This friend afterwards took to Mr. Kerry's some articles of clothing the girl had left behind, and one of these Mrs. Kerry identified as her property. It is known that the girl possessed a gold watch and chain, having bought the former off a travelling jeweller from Bristol. The name by which she was known to her employers was Elsie Wilkie; her home was said to be in or near London, but of this there is some doubt. She also represented that she had an uncle at Turleigh, near Bradford-on-Avon, whom she occasionally visited.

Source - Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette – 28 September 1893 (Bath and Country Notes)

The "Hampton Rocks mystery" is the local sensation of the week. That "murder most foul" has been committed there is no doubt whatever. At present, but for the gruesome revelations, the discovery is invested with a halo of romance. That a young woman should have disappeared altogether without any inquiry, so far as is known, having been made about her almost passes comprehension. Who she was, where she came from, how did she die, are questions which have yet to be answered. We may never know. Yet there is material not simply for conjecture, but for patient investigation and diligent inquiry. We want now some of the prescience and tact of a Sherlock Holmes. But for the prying curiosity of two schoolboys we should have still been in ignorance even of the commission of a crime. If the unfortunate victim of lust or passion, or both, was a stranger to Bath, and there is reason to suppose she was, her murderer certainly was not unfamiliar with Hampton Down, since the cavern in which the remains were found could not be known to one unfamiliar with the locality. A casual visitor could hardly have discovered it, and those who knew of its existence could with difficulty effect an entrance by a method we may call "backwardation." But more than one or two murders have been brought home on less evidence than that of which the police are in possession, and we are not without hope that the so-called mystery may be divulged. That the victim did not belong to the uncared for, unfortunate class upon which ruthless demons, on occasion, are wont to wreak their vengeance, we may fairly conclude from the relics that have been found and rescued. It remains for the police to do their work, and, difficult as it may appear, it ought not to be impossible not simply to identify the person, but to trace her associates, if not the manner of her death. Since the above was in type evidence has been obtained (details of which will be found elsewhere) revealing the identity of the murdered girl. She had been a servant in a family in Bath – that of Mr. James Kerry, in Oldfield-park, but her home and family are not yet known.

Source – Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette – 5 October 1893

THE HAMPTON ROCKS MYSTERY- ARREST OF A BATH MAN - ACCUSED BEFORE THE MAGISTRATES

In last week's Chronicle we recorded the finding of the remains of a woman in a cave in Hampton Rocks, on Friday the 22nd September, the opening of the Coroner's inquest and the identification of the remains as those of Elsie Luke alias Wilkie. Since then there have been startling developments in connection with the mystery.

On Thursday a reporter of the Chronicle had an interview with Mrs. Restarick, who now keeps a servants' registry office in Northumberland-place. It appears that the murdered girl went into Mr. Kerry's service through the medium of Mrs. Restarick's agency. Mrs. Restarick has a distinct recollection of the young woman who gave her name as Elizabeth Luke, and her address as 38, Hungerford-road, Lower Weston. She said she desired a situation as a plain cook or a thoroughly good kitchen maid, and the wages she required were £12 to £14 a year. These particulars were given to Mrs. Restarick on the 21st March, 1891. Luke gave as her reference, Mrs. Davy, housekeeper to Mr. Nicholls, 13, Sussex-square, Kemp Town, Brighton, where she said she had been in service a year and nine months, and only left because of her mother's

illness. She added, however, that she had filled short engagements since then, and this was entered by Mrs. Restarick in her register. The reference was given to Mrs. Kerry, but Mrs. Restarick believes that no answer was received to the letter sent to the address given.

Luke, who, however, seems to have gone by the name of Wilkie (as explained above) entered service at Cheriton House on the 25th March, 1891. Mrs. Restarick judged the woman to have been from 25 to 30 years of age, and says she seemed to be a quiet and well-conducted servant, very respectable and well-spoken. Mrs. Restarick's books were examined by Superintendent Rutherford, of the County police, and P.S. Edwards.

Our correspondent at Brighton, in answer to a telegram despatched by us, stated that the house, 13, Sussex-square, had changed hands, and that Mrs. Davey, the reference given by the girl, had gone.

As the result of further inquiries we learn that Mrs. Bryant, of 61, Hungerford-road, Lower Weston, was acquainted with the unfortunate girl. Miss Wilkie (the name by which she was known) worked with Mrs. Bryant, who was then Miss Jefferies at Messrs. Deane's Irish linen warehouse, opposite the Post Office. This was towards the end of 1890 or the beginning of 1891. She described Miss Wilkie as being well educated, of a highly nervous temperament, and twenty-five years of age, and said she could not wish for a better girl. She came from London to Bath, and was a decided Cockney. She did not get on very well at Messrs. Deane's because of the fainting fits to which she was subject.

She left and took a situation at 3, Norfolk-crescent, the residence of Mr. Dykes, but she did not stop there long; for the fortnight before she stayed with Miss Jefferies, who had in the meantime become Mrs. Bryant, and was living at 38, Hungerford-road. There Miss Wilkie continued to visit till she mysteriously disappeared.

The watch and chain which Miss Wilkie was wearing she stated had been her mother's. She represented that she had a bosom friend at Turleigh, and Mrs. Bryant suggests she was going across the Down to visit her when she met with her death. Mrs. Bryant was aware that she attended the Railway Mission Hall, and that she was for a time friendly with a young man named Arthur Coombs, but the engagement, if there was one, was broken off.

At a quarter to five on Thursday afternoon, as a result of investigations made during the day, the police arrested Arthur Stevenson Coombs, a young man employed at the carriage works of Messrs. S. and A. Fuller, Kingsmead-street. The charge was that he did during August, 1891, murder Elsie Adeline Luke, alias Wilkie, Coombs, who is 20 years of age and not yet out of his apprenticeship, lived with his parents at 25, Kingsmead-terrace, and his father and his brother also are employed at Messrs. Fuller's, the father being a coach bodymaker.

The apprehension was very quietly effected by Supt. Rutherford, of the Weston Division, dressed in plain clothes, who was accompanied by P.S. Edwards, of the County Police, also out of uniform, and Detective-Sergeant Smith, of the Bath Force. A cab was in waiting outside Messrs. Fuller's premises, and in this Coombs was driven to the Weston Police Station. The accused is said to have manifested much coolness when he was apprehended.

The accused man Coombs was brought up at the Weston Courthouse on Friday and formally charged with the murder before Mr. Murch (Mayor of Bath) who presided, Mr. E. T. D. Foxcroft, Mr. A. E. Pole, Lieut.-Colonel A. Thrale Perkins and Mr. G. Woodiwiss. The proceedings were timed to commence at eleven o'clock, but long before that hour a large crowd had assembled outside the gates of the Police-station. When the public were admitted shortly

after eleven o'clock there was a rush for the Session Court which was thronged in a few seconds. Great eagerness was manifested to catch a sight of the accused as he was brought up from the cells. Coombs, who looks much older than 20, seemed to be in a state of agitation and nervousness. He is a young man of middle height, thin and pale, he has a large square nose, full staring eyes and a prominent mouth, the upper lip protruding. He has a mass of curly light brown hair, and no hair on his face. As he entered the Court he said "Good morning," presumably to the Police Superintendent. His father was present in Court, occupying a seat immediately behind the prisoner, his face bore the traces of tears.

Capt. Alison, Chief Constable of Somerset, was present in Court.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Frank Glover) read the warrant which charged Arthur Stevenson Coombs with, that he, during the month of August, in the year 1891, in the parish of Bathampton, in the County of Somerset, did feloniously and of malice aforethought kill and murder one Elsie Adeline Luke alias Wilkie.

Mr. E. B. Titley said he appeared to defend the prisoner. He was arrested on the previous evening, and he (Mr. Titley) only received the instructions late at night. It would be impossible therefore for him properly to cross-examine any witnesses who might be brought forward that day. With their Worships' permission he would reserve his examination until the next hearing. He understood that a remand would be applied for.

Supt. Rutherford: Yes.

The Chairman: You have no objection to the matter going on now?

Mr. Titley: Of course I cannot have any. But it is impossible for me properly to cross-examine the witness now. Of course I may ask one or two questions.

Prisoner having been allowed to sit down at the suggestion of Supt. Rutherford, who said the proceedings might be of long duration, the evidence was proceeded with.

Supt. Mark Rutherford then deposed: -

On Saturday the 23rd of September I received information of the finding of the dead body of a woman in a cave at Hampton Rocks in the parish of Bathampton, and on the Eastern side of Hampton Down. I then went to see a Mr. Dill from whom I received the pair of white linen cuffs and pocket handkerchief. They were then in the same bloodstained state as they now are. They appear to be lady's cuffs and handkerchief. On examining the handkerchief I observe the name on it which appeared to be "A. H. Kerry." I then proceeded to the Down with D. S. Smith who was with me when I received the cuffs and the handkerchief, to the cave in question. The remains had then been removed. P.C. Wall pointed out the cave to us.

There is a small opening about a foot and a half deep and about four feet wide. It is low down in the ground. Outside this opening there is a large stone, which partly concealed the opening and would make it more difficult to enter. I crawled in feet first and inside found the cave was about twenty feet long and ten or twelve feet wide and about three and a half feet high. In entering the cave there is a slight descent. The floor was composed of loose stones. There was some black dust and hair about two or three feet from the entrance, where the body had been lying. The inquest was opened at the George Inn, on the 26th September, the following Tuesday, on the remains. Before visiting the cave I had seen the remains of the body at the George Inn.

I have, with D. S. Smith and P. S. Edwards of my own force, been making inquiries, and as a result I obtained a warrant on Thursday, the 28th September, for the arrest of the prisoner. Accompanied by those officers about a quarter to five we went to Messrs. Fuller's Coach-building works in Kingsmead-street, Bath, where the prisoner was employed. D. S. Smith went in and brought prisoner to me outside the works. I said to Smith, "Is this Coombs?" He said,

“Yes.” I then said to Coombs, “I charge you with murdering Elsie Adeline Luke, otherwise Wilkie, on or about August, 1891, at Hampton Down.” He replied, “I did not do it. I kept company with her; after that I am of no further use to you.” P. S. Edwards then arrested him.

During the latter part of this witness’s evidence, D. S. Smith and P. S. Edwards left the court at the desire of Mr. Titley.

Mr. Titley (to Superintendent Rutherford): Did you find the prisoner at Messrs. Fuller’s carriage works?

Witness: That was where he was brought out of.

Mr. Pole suggested to Mr. Titley that if he meant to reserve his cross-examination he should not ask questions then. Mr. Titley said perhaps it would be better, and did not further examine the witness.

P. S. Edwards said: I am stationed at Batheaston, near Bath. Bathampton is an adjoining parish. On Saturday, the 23rd of September, about ten o’clock in the morning I accompanied P. C. Brunt and two reporters and a constable named Wall, of the Bath force, to a cave which is situated at the end of Hampton Down, near to the wall which parts Claverton parish and Hampton parish. There is a disused quarry about 15 feet deep, and I should think about 20 yards across, and in the side near the Warminster-road there is a cave at the bottom level.

I entered the cave, immediately followed by P. C. Brunt. I got in feet first with some difficulty. The first thing I saw was a leg bone from the knee with an Oxford shoe on it. This was separated from the other part of the remains. I passed that out and moved some flat stones and came upon the other part of the skeleton. The left leg was drawn over the right. All the other bones were mixed up with the garments. The head was detached from the body. It was an uneven floor; there were big stones underneath. The stones covering up the skeleton were large. The stones were in such a position on the remains that they appeared to have been placed there. We carefully collected the remains, placed them in a sack and carried them to the George, Bathampton. Where the bones lay was a deposit of a dark, sticky, mouldy substance, as though the body had decayed. Among the remains was a piece of a pair of linen drawers. On this I find marks in writing ink, which looks like “M. A. K., 9, 75”. There also appeared to be parts of an outer dress. The piece of linen has been in my custody ever since. I produce the human hair which I found with the remains, some of which is plaited.

After prisoner had been apprehended I conveyed him to Weston Station. No conversation took place between us with respect to the charge. I merely said “You appear to be a young man,” and he replied “I am not yet out of my time.”

Detective-Sergt. Smith, of the Bath police, said: On Saturday morning, the 23rd of this month, in company with Supt. Rutherford, I saw a man named Dill. In consequence of a conversation with him he handed Supt. Rutherford two blood-stained cuffs and a blood-stained handkerchief which I produce. We then went to the George at Bathampton and inspected the remains, and afterwards to Hampton Down with P. C. Wall, who pointed out to us the cave. I went inside with Supt. Rutherford and P. C. Wall, and found it as described by the Superintendent.

Mr. Rutherford and myself proceeded to a cottage near the Viaduct Inn, where we saw Mrs. Harding. In consequence of conversation with her, she handed me a lady’s small gold watch (produced). Since then I have continued my inquiries, and on Thursday afternoon I accompanied Supt. Rutherford to Messrs. Fuller’s carriage works. Mr. Rutherford remained outside and I went in. I had a conversation with Mr. Fuller and prisoner came to me. I had known him since he was a boy. I said, “Arthur, I have some very sad news for you. “He said, “For me Mr. Smith?” And I answered “Yes, for you.” Mr. Supt. Rutherford is outside; he is

going to charge you with the wilful murder of the girl were found in the cave on the Down. He said "Not me, Mr. Smith?" I said "Yes." He said "How do you know it is her?" and I replied "We have proved it beyond doubt." I had told him who the girl was. He went outside with me to Supt. Rutherford, who charged him, when he said "I did not do it." I then went for a cab and heard no further conversation.

Margaret Anne Kerry deposed: I am the wife of James Kerry, and reside at Cheriton-house, Oldfield Park. In March or April, 1891, a young woman named Elsie Adeline Wilkie, entered our service as cook. She said she'd come from London three or four months previously to nurse her mother in Bath. We had given her notice to leave, but her time was not up when she asked to be allowed to leave sooner, saying a relative in London had died. She was paid her wages and left on Saturday 25th July. I expected her back the following evening to stay a few days to serve her time, but she never returned. I did not know whether she had taken her things, but she left her box. After three months I opened it; it contained one old print dress and one old black one, but not her regular clothes. I don't know how she removed her clothes and not until I opened the box did I know that she had done so. She had other clothes besides what she wore and what were left in the box (witness was understood to say there were letters in the box, but they had been burnt). I missed a new dress which had been made for my daughter, but I don't know what became of it. We sent a pattern of the dress to Superintendent Berry. Besides the dress I missed a night-dress, a pair of drawers and a bodice. Of those articles the night-dress was returned to me about a week after Wilkie left, by someone from Kingsmead-street I think.

Witness then identified the bloodstained handkerchief found by Dill as her property. She knew the marking on it which was done by a friend. She also identified the fragments of drawers found in the cave by the marking on the band which was exactly similar to that on a garment produced "M. A. Kerry, 9, 75." She had no doubt about the linen and the handkerchief being her property. She missed one of her handkerchiefs after Wilkie left.

Witness's examination being continued, she said: I have no other handkerchief like the one produced. It was a special one brought from India. The cuffs I do not identify. I know the girl had a gold watch and chain. It was a gold chain with a tassel to it. The watch was similar to the one produced. I saw the account in the newspapers about the finding of the body, and the name upon the linen, whereupon I spoke to my husband.

The Clerk: Do you know if the deceased had a young man? Witness: She said she had. I did not know the prisoner, and have not seen him until now. The hair produced is about the colour of that of the girl. She told me she was 22 years old. She was a short girl, slightly built. I had noticed she had a nice set of neat teeth. She wore shoes of the style, and quality produced. Speaking generally she was a superior looking girl for a servant. I should think she was of a quick, sharp temper.

The Chairman: Had she any illness when with you? Witness: No. Sometimes she said she felt faint and would go into the garden. She never discontinued her work.

John Edwards said: I am a fishmonger in the service of Mr. Clack at the back of the Market. I live at 8, James'-street-west. I have known the accused for about five years. I have known him to speak to. I met him at Monmouth-street Railway Mission Hall. One evening some time ago – how long I cannot say – I had a conversation with prisoner in New-street. He said of the young woman "She ought to be dead or killed." I knew prisoner had been friendly with the young woman Wilkie; I had seen her at the Mission many a time. I believe I have seen them walking together. I saw them at Sidmouth together when there was an excursion there in connection with the Mission.

Witness was questioned as to what led up to the remark by Coombs. At first he could not remember what took place. He did not think any girl's name was mentioned by him or by the prisoner, but he understood Coombs referred to Wilkie. The Chairman asked the witness to give a plain straightforward answer. Witness said he might have said to the prisoner, "I don't see you at the Mission with so and so," meaning the deceased. The Clerk: Did you say that? Witness: I suppose that's how it came out. He further added that it happened so long ago, he would not pledge himself to saying it.

Mr. Foxcroft: In what way or manner did he say it: angrily, or bitterly, or quietly, or calmly or what? Witness said he did not believe prisoner said it crossly. He never saw him cross. Witness added that when he read it in the paper of Coomb's arrest the words came back to him.

Kate Bullock, whose parents live at 12, Gloucester-buildings, Swainswick, and who said she was a housemaid, stated: I was in service at Mrs. Kerry's in 1891, when the deceased was there and left. I cannot quite recognise the prisoner. I know a young man came to see her. I don't know his name. I cannot say who it was for certain. When he came she used to have him in the cellar. He was rather light.

The Clerk: Was his hair straight or curly?

Witness: I believe it was rather curly.

The Clerk: Are you pretty sure about it?

Witness: I'm not quite sure.

She added that the young man came in the evenings and stayed about half-an-hour. She knew that in the week Wilkie was leaving she took two bundles of clothes down the garden and handed them over the garden wall to a young girl witness did not know. Deceased told witness she did not mean to come back. Witness could swear to the shoes produced as being Wilkie's; she wore a black straw hat with some light in it; there were no flowers or feathers. She did not say where she intended to stay the evening she left. Witness never saw her again. Wilkie was very short.

William Henry Dill was called. At first he objected to go on the other side of the barrier to give evidence and the Clerk remarked that evidently Dill had been fortifying himself. It was decided not to take his evidence that day and

The Chairman addressing Dill said: Take care in what state you come next time.

Dill: I beg your pardon.

The Chairman repeated the remark.

Dill: I don't know what you mean.

Before Dill left the court he put on his hat.

P. S. Edwards: Take off your hat in court!

Dill (laughing): I beg your pardon.

He then withdrew.

Annie Hayman, of 11, Kingsmead-terrace, wife of William Christopher Hayman, engine-driver, said: I knew the deceased and the prisoner. I saw them together at the Mission Hall in May, 1891, and I also saw them walking outside together. After the end of May, 1891, I did not see the prisoner with Wilkie often. The girl was frequently in and out of our house from our first meeting her at the Mission Hall. Accused lived with his father at 25, Kingsmead-terrace. On the Saturday before the Bank Holiday Wilkie came to me in the afternoon and asked me to let her sleep at my house until the following Tuesday morning. She said her people had gone away. I could not do so, but I sent her to Mrs. Dillon. On the Sunday morning she called at my house, and I also saw her on the morning of the Bank Holiday, I believe between ten and eleven o'clock, and she asked me if I were going out. I told her no. She said she was going to Turleigh by the two o'clock train. She left, and I didn't see her again until about five o'clock the same afternoon, when I saw her talking to a woman I don't know at the bottom of the terrace. She

left the woman and walked alongside the river in the direction of the G.W.R. She was alone and was not carrying anything. She was wearing a black straw hat with white flowers in it. I can't tell where the flowers were. I saw Wilkie talking to prisoner on the terrace in the afternoon of the Sunday. I did not see Coombs on the Bank Holiday. I never saw Wilkie after she was walking alongside the river. I had not seen Wilkie in the week previous to the Saturday preceding the Bank Holiday. I understood on the Saturday afternoon she had just left Mrs. Kerry's.

Questioned by the Clerk, Mrs. Kerry said she fixed the date when Wilkie left her service as the 25th of July, as her husband went away on the Saturday before Bank Holiday, and she believed Wilkie left on the previous Saturday.

Mrs. Hayman, in answer to the Clerk, said on the Saturday afternoon Wilkie told her she had been *enceinte* [*pregnant*] for three months. She was not very bright as she usually was, but never said anything to lead witness to believe she would commit suicide.

Harriet Dillon, wife of Andrew William Dillon, clerk to Mr. Pratt, assistant overseer for Walcot, said she lived at Kingsmead-terrace; she had known Wilkie about a month previous to the Bank Holiday. She called and said Mrs. Hayman had told her witness had children ill. She inquired how they were and asked witness to accept a few roses for them. She called several times afterwards, and on the Saturday previous to Bank Holiday in August she came at three in the afternoon. She said she had just seen Mr. and Mrs. Kerry off to London until Tuesday morning, and that Mrs. Kerry would pay witness if she could accommodate her until their return. Wilkie stayed until Monday morning at half-past ten. Coombs lived next to witness. She had heard Wilkie speak of him, but had never seen them talking or walking together. On the Bank Holiday Wilkie said she was going into the country – Turleigh she believed – for the day. Witness went out for the day, but Wilkie had previously left. They were all out of the house before ten o'clock, and witness never saw her again. When Wilkie came she brought nothing with her, but said she would get a night gown and a best dress. Witness slept with the girl for the two nights, and on the Monday morning Wilkie made the bed and put the night dresses on the pillow. As Wilkie had not returned on Tuesday morning witness concluded she had returned to Mrs. Kerry's, and without seeing any mark on it she sent back the night dress.

On the Saturday evening Wilkie offered her half-a-sovereign or a sovereign to pay the bill, but witness told her to leave it until she left. She had not received anything. Wilkie appeared to be a highly respectable girl, there was nothing about her to attract attention, and she had no idea of anything going wrong. She wore a black straw hat, trimmed with black and cream ribbon and cream flowers. She said she had bought it at Gardiner Brothers'. When Wilkie called on the Saturday afternoon she had on an old black dress and she brought a new light dress and the nightdress with her in the evening. She said she had given £2 10s for the dress.

Prisoner was at this point remanded until Tuesday morning at 10:30. The Bench granted an application by Mr. Titley to be allowed to see the prisoner in private and to examine the fragments of clothes.

At Weston on Tuesday Coombs was brought up on remand. For a long time previous to the hour fixed for the resumption of the magisterial inquiry, the approaches to the Court-house were thronged, and when the doors were thrown open the public literally fought their way upstairs in order to obtain access to the Court, and the noise made by the eager contestants was loud and confusing. It was 10:40 when the magistrates took their seats. Mr. Murch (Mayor of Bath) presided, and there were also on the Bench – Lieut. Col. A. Thrale Perkins, Mr. A. E. Pole, Mr. S. F. G. Bythesea, and Mr. G. Woodiwiss. Captain Alison, Chief Constable of Somerset, was

again present throughout the proceedings. Mr. Cannings Collins, acting under instructions from the Treasury, prosecuted on behalf of the Crown, and the accused was again defended by Mr. E. B. Titley.

Mr. Collins, in opening the proceedings, said since the accused was last before the Bench he had received instructions from the Treasury to appear on behalf of the Crown, and assist in that investigation. Considerable evidence had already been given, and they were now more or less in possession of the leading features of the case, and it would not be necessary for him to trouble them with remarks at any length. He should continue to call evidence with reference to the finding of the remains, and also Mr. Harper, surgeon, who would give them the result of his examination of them. He need hardly say that the difficulties in the way of the police in a matter of that kind, where so long a time had elapsed since the commission of the offence were very great indeed, and he (Mr. Collins) had been unable to give that amount of attention to the matter which it should receive. After the evidence had been offered that day it would be his duty to ask the Bench to grant a further remand. It might be convenient if he just addressed a few remarks to them with regard to the evidence he should offer from that day as regarded the prisoner personally as distinct from that part of the case which might be called as having to do with the remains.

In a case of murder, especially in a case where there was an amount of mystery surrounding the circumstances as there was there, the subject of motive was a matter deserving the most serious consideration. Of course in the absence of motive in any individual they would naturally and probably suppose there was no inducement to commit the offence. Whereas on the other hand if they found a motive there was greater probability that a person likely to be influenced by that motive would commit an offence. Of course, motives influenced different persons in different ways. Where men had become entangled with two women in order to be rid of the embarrassment relating to one, crime had followed. With regard to that observation bearing upon the present case, let them see how the evidence stood at the present moment. It had been shown to them by some of the witnesses, indeed the prisoner had admitted he believed, that he had been keeping company with the deceased, and further evidence with regard to that it was his duty to lay before them. It would show that these two were constantly together, and that afterwards they were at all events seen talking together. The evidence went to prove that as late as the Sunday preceding August Bank Holiday, 1891, prisoner was seen to be speaking to the deceased. So their friendship at any rate had continued up to that time. After the arrest of the prisoner two detectives went to his home and there amongst other things they found – there was no concealment – a leather bag with Coombs's initials upon it. It was not opened until the previous evening and there were then found a great number of letters. There had not been time to read them all but some of them he proposed to read as bearing upon the subject of motive, because they were letters to the prisoner, and kept by him, from a person who signed herself "Sheppard," and dated Melrose, Wells-road. It was clear from these letters that these parties were keeping company if not actually engaged to be married, and they would find in those letters reference to the deceased woman. The first letter which he would read was as follows: -

February 5, 1891. Melrose, Wells-road, Bath.

Dearest Arthur, -- I suppose you think I am a bother to you, but really I feel so dreadfully sorry you was so upset; do not think no more about her, she is a beast of a girl, cannot call her anything else. If course it cannot be true what she said because it is nearly six months ago she left Dike's. She left in August, just before we went to the seaside. If course she would have told you of it before, and you would had seen before this time. She only wants to get you back again. Do not take any notice of it. If course your parents would not believe such a girl as her, and if course

you would not lower your character for her now. Mind you do not upset yourself no more about it.

If you are out to-morrow night (Friday) if you do not mind come up, and I will run out to post about quarter-past eight o'clock. I want to tell you about that person what me and Annie went to. Perhaps she would be able to tell you something about her as you do not know I would if I was you. Come up and I will tell you where she lives and her name. If you cannot it does not matter. Perhaps I may see you in town Saturday if I come down. She will sure to come to bad. Annie always thought if anything occurred between you and her she would go home. I should not be a bit surprised if she never came to Bath again. I don't think she will, she will not be able to look anyone in the face again, I should not think. I expect it is true, about her going to prison and the "industrious" school no wonder. If she accuse people of what they never do she is bad enough for anything I believe. I don't see why other people should be upset by her through her hasty abusive temper. I should think she was out of her mind; now mind you do not take any more notice of it, upset yourself for her. It is not worthwhile. If you do not come up on Friday I shall look out for you in town Saturday if I am out. I would go to that woman if I was you. She told me true enough everything. Dear, I think I must bring this scribble to a close, hoping to see or hear from you soon. From your ever loving friend, Pollie Sheppard.

Mr. Collins explained that at one time the prisoner was in the service of Mr. Dykes, traffic superintendent of the Somerset and Dorset Railway; he also remarked that Miss Sheppard always wrote "if course" and not "of course."

Mr. Titley objected to the letters, but Mr. Collins said he was entitled to read them as part of his statement. Mr. Collins then read an extract from a letter, dated the 9th February, 1891. In it Miss Sheppard said, "My dearest Arthur, - No doubt you will think I am writing to you very quick. I thought I would write to you a little every day and then I should not forget the news from day to day. I forgot to ask you if you went to that woman. I forgot to tell you her name; it is Mrs. Pain. If you have not been perhaps you will go before Friday, and then you can tell me what she says when you write." There was a great deal more in the letter, but it did not bear on the matter, and he did not propose to read it.

Mr. Titley again objected to the reading of the letters and Mr. Collins said it was quite within his province to read letters which were found on the prisoner. He proposed to read them. Mr. Titley: The proper time to read them is when they are proved. The Clerk (Mr. I. Williams) ruled that Mr. Collins could read them if he meant to put them in evidence. Mr. Collins: Anything found on the prisoner is evidence against the accused.

In answer to Mr. Pole, Mr. Collins said he only proposed to read those portions of the letters which bore on the case. In a letter dated 10th March, 1891, Miss Sheppard wrote: "Fancy that Elsie Wilkie showing herself down your way. I should think she was ashamed to; just fancy me running in town with my cap and apron. I should think she was proud to think she had one. I expect she thought she looked fetching in your eye again, but she is mistaken. Dearest, I will be down on the Old Bridge, Friday, few minutes after six o'clock."

On March 17th, Miss Sheppard in a letter said: "Fancy that girl going to the open air meeting and then to the hall also in the vestry. I should think she knew that vestry well, going there so many times. I should think she was ashamed to show her face. She must be out of her mind. I call it wicked mockery for them to try to talk to a girl like her. I really do not know what is bad enough for her. Fancy you seeing her Monday. I suppose she thought if she did not insult you now she was converted, so called, that she might bring you again. She cannot be in a situation to be about the town so much. The baker asked me to-day if she was in Bath. I told him 'Yes'. He said he thought you and her was going to be married soon. He had a good laugh about her and went."

On April 5th Sheppard wrote, "Every cloud got a silver lining, but that girl thinks she is going to mar our happiness but she is mistaken, she lives down Oldfield-park, because Emma seen her run up and seen her tare back as though she was mad, a lunatic; she cannot be anything else or she would not act so silly; she had not better say anything to me or she will know the reason for why. I shall let her know that she is talking to someone better than herself." On the 25th of April a letter contained the following: "I have some news to tell you Sunday, that girl was took in again last night. Such a joke. I will tell you the rest Sunday. I fancy she can faint when she likes. What do you say. Someone run in here for water. Such a joke. Dearest I am so sorry I sent you that letter last week, I know you did not take it very well but I hope you will forgive me for sending it, but I was in a little temper then."

On the 22nd June the girl Sheppard wrote a letter again commencing "Dearest Arthur." She referred to an accident prisoner had met with a bayonet, and proceeded, "Do not take any notice of that girl, nor speak to her if you see her. She put her friend to waylay me on Friday about nine, but I was in. Emma went to post, so when she was coming in this girl asked her if Miss Sheppard was gone in. So Emma said, 'It is no business of yours.' So she told Mrs. Titley as she was in the front. Mrs. Titley walked out to the gate, and then she went. A great cheek on her part. It shows she is as ignorant as the other. Dear Arthur, I hope we shall not have another such a time as we have had. It is such a upset. I never experienced such a time before in love matters, and I truly hope I never shall again. Hoping you will not worry yourself with her and you will soon be better again. I cannot do anything for you as you are so far away."

Mr. Collins said they had no letters of the prisoner but it was evident he was writing to Miss Sheppard. He was not in a position to say what had taken place between them since the previous letter, but on July 19th Miss Sheppard addressed the prisoner as "Dear Mr. Coombs." He offered no explanation but the letter was as follows: - "I am writing to know why it is you are acting so underhanded with me, for if you was a little schoolboy it would be different. Of course you are acting like one. I think it is so 'too faced' for you to be as you have been to my face and before my friends and then when you are behind my back to act like you have, as I have shown you no reason whatever. I should be ashamed if I had treated you like you have treated me. I have not said anything to any of my friends about it, as I am really ashamed. You have acted so mean and cruel. If course I cannot say any more than that you have deceived me. I am very sorry now this has occurred that I ever knew you. You could not have meant to meet me last Sunday, when you spoke of it on the Thursday you seen me; as you did not come and I know you had no excuse, as she did not follow you on Sunday. She nodded to you as you passed her on the terrace, and I seen her about twenty-past six. Little does she think what she has said about me and you would come back again. I have one or two friends on the terrace now but not her friends. She is forbidden to have anyone to the house now. The nurse girl had to go at a minute's notice. I wonder you take any notice of her after she saying what she has about you, and also how you have spoke to me about her. If I was you I would not be such a coward as to take any notice of her. Young man like you being afraid of a girl like her; I am not afraid of her if you are. I would not be such a coward. I have never been deceived in anyone like I have in you. I really think it very wrong of you to treat me in such a cruel manner as if course there is not many girls as would be fooled with as I have. As if course you supposed that you was engaged there is some as would make you pay dear for making a fool of them, but that is a thing I should never take the trouble to do. But if you go on serving girls like you have me, you will get yourself into a scrape some day. If course I think now that you do not care to correspond with me in treating me like you have, but if you have another I hope you will have one as you think will treat you better than I have. I tell you what I mean, I do not go behind your back and tell someone else. Will you kindly return a note or letter as quickly as possible to tell me your reason, as I shall have one. If you do not reply I shall be down on the terrace Friday or Sunday,

and I will see you. If course you cannot expect me to write any different to you, after treating me so. An early reply will oblige, yours sincerely, Louie Sheppard.”

This letter showed there was something going on and that the girl was probably the cause of the strife between them. Coombs appeared to have written a letter to Sheppard and it was satisfactory because on the 21st July there was another letter in which the accused was again addressed as “Dearest Arthur.” In the letter occurred the following: - “I was very pleased to receive a letter at last, I am very glad you have been away for a change. I hope you are looking better now. I hope I shall not have to write another unpleasant letter to you because it goes greatly against me to do so. I should not have wrote at all but I went down to Lucy’s. Mrs. Cornock and she persuaded me to write so I thought I would. Dearest Arthur I will freely forgive you this time, but I hope it will not occur again as the upset and worry lately have made me feel quite ill. I suppose I shall see you on Friday as I shall be out. I shall have two or three places to go to. I shall see you outside Stoffell’s in the Market place, if that will suit you about quarter-past six o’clock. “Miss Sheppard sent love with the letter and several kisses, and in a P.S. said, “Hoping you will forget the past and burn that letter mind.”

Mr. Collins remarked that evidently these two women were causing a considerable amount of harassing, and under the circumstances there was the question whether it did not supply a motive for the accused in the absence of a motive against anyone else. With reference to the question of motive, there was nothing to show that the deceased girl was in any way connected with any other man or was known to have been about with any other man but the prisoner. The question of motive in a case like this was all important, and it might be that the position, the situation, of this man between these two women was such that he was worked upon to such a pitch that he was led to do this deed.

Mr. Collins, proceeding, said the police found at the prisoner’s house a small brooch. That brooch would be shown to have been given to the deceased girl by a friend who would be called before them. When found by D.S. Smith, the brooch was broken, it was without a pin, but it was only fair to say it was without a pin when given to the deceased. Mrs. Hayman, one of the witnesses already examined, would depose that the girl was wearing the brooch on the Saturday preceding the August Bank-holiday. If this were true it was a circumstance of considerable importance. There was another circumstance of considerable importance.

There was another circumstance which it would be his duty to bring before them. On the 5th August prisoner was found to be suffering from an injury to his hand. He was at Mr. Vigis’s shop on the 5th August, but he supposed he was not satisfied with the treatment received, for on the 7th August he appeared to have gone to the Hospital and to have been treated there by Mr. Lace who at that time was the house surgeon. Mr. Lace had not seen the man since then up to the present time, and he (Mr. Collins) did not know whether he would be able to say it was the same man or not. On the 7th August 1891 Mr. Lace treated a man of the name of Arthur Coombs living at 25, Kingsmead-terrace for a wound in the thumb, and from reference to the Hospital book it was seen that the wound was a human bite. It was so described in the hospital books. In fairness to the prisoner he wished to say that Mr. Titley had suggested to him that it could be proved that the injury was caused at any rate before Saturday the 1st of August. At present he was not able to say whether that explanation was satisfactory or not. Whoever committed this crime probably engaged in a death struggle on the bank above the cave and that coupled with the disposition of the body would probably lead to some wound on the hand of the man who did it. Up to the present time those were the facts he was able to lay before them, and at the conclusion of the evidence he would ask for a further remand.

Photographs had been taken of the *locus in quo* [*scene of the event*]; there had been no opportunity to prepare plans, but if they were of assistance they would be prepared. F. J. Moody then deposed to the accuracy of photographs of the cave and its surroundings and of the skull of the victim showing the terrible fracture on the left temple.

The evidence of the witnesses examined on Friday was then read over. Superintendent Rutherford, cross-examined by Mr. Titley said: At the prisoner's house he was shown the prisoner's room by his mother and brother. The bag was locked and they did not have it opened until the preceding evening. He had been told that the accused was in the Volunteers, but he did not know that he was still in the force and acted as body servant to Captain Robertson. Inquiries had been pursued in London. He knew the deceased had a friend at Turleigh – about five miles from Bath – a Mrs. Bowles, and that she had been to Limpley Stoke Reformatory, which is about one-and-a-half miles from Turleigh. There was a way down from Hampton Rocks into the Warminster-road. He knew of a statement in the papers that a young man named Arthur Clark on a Bank Holiday saw a man at the Rocks who acted in a strange way. Witness had not seen Arthur Clark, and did not know whether he was there. He had been interviewed. Both constables who were on duty at the time denied that Dill ever showed the bloodstained cuffs and handkerchief to them. He knew the young woman Mary Sheppard was in Court. Mr. Titley asked the Superintendent whether it was not a fact that the police had been told they could inspect the letters from the prisoner to Miss Sheppard. Witness: I did not understand that. Mr. Collins: It is the first intimation I have had of it. He received a letter at ten o'clock that morning and it was on the faith of what it contained he made the observations he did in his opening. Supt. Rutherford knew nothing about it.

Mr. Titley then read the letter. The first part ran: -- "From inquiries made by me on behalf of the prisoner I have ascertained that the following persons will be able to give evidence on the important question as to where the prisoner was on the evening of the 3rd of August:--

- 1) May Sheppard, to whom he was engaged;
- 2) Mrs. Arthur Titley, in whose service May Sheppard was, and still is;
- 3) Mrs. Ernest Eyres;
- 4) Miss May Shaw.

"I ask you, are you prepared to call these witness? Mr. Collins—The prosecution is in my hands. Mr. Titley (to witness) – Do you call these witnesses today? – No.

You do not suggest any exception can be taken to either of these witnesses? – No.

Mr. Titley then read the rest of the letter, as follows: -- "Further, with regard to the report in the newspapers of some possible evidence of Mr. Vigie, I am informed that Mr. Hodges, of 10, Somerset-street, and Miss Coles, of 25 Kingsmead-terrace, can say as to the injury of the hand having occurred before August 3rd; and a Mr. James, who was secretary to the sick club, has a book in which the cases are entered will throw a light on the matter. He lives, I understand, in Kingsmead-terrace. In justice to the prisoner I think these witnesses should be called. I have instructed my clerk to notice these last to attend, and before calling Mr. Vigis you may like to see them. As to the witnesses on the Bank Holiday question, they will be at the court." Of the three witnesses mentioned are you calling any to-day or have you seen any of them? – No. Mr. Titley (to Supt. Rutherford): Do you propose to call those witnesses? Mr. Collins: The prosecution is in my hands. I only received the letter when on my way to the court. P.S. Edwards repeated the evidence as to the removal of the remains in the cave.

Cross examined: Mr. Harper (the doctor) did not see the remains in the cave. D.S. Smith added to his evidence of Friday last that he obtained the bag containing the letters on the evening of the arrest. There were several bundles of letters in the bag, and he had not had time to peruse

them all carefully. The letters read by Mr. Collins were included in the lot. Mr. Collins said there was a letter on the 24th August, 1891, in which Sheppard said, "I hope your thumb is alright." On the 2nd February in a letter she wrote, "I am wondering whether you have heard from Elsie Wilkie." That identified the woman who was mentioned in the letters; throughout in various places the name of the woman was mentioned.

Mr. Titley objected to the letters being put in unless the person who wrote them was called. The young woman Sheppard who wrote them was in court and could be called. The Clerk and Mr. Pole informed Mr. Collins that the letter could not be regarded as evidence unless the woman was called. Mr. Collins contended that it did not devolve on the prosecution to produce the person who wrote the letter. Whether she would be called was a question which required grave consideration knowing as they did from the letter her feelings towards the deceased. The Bench decided that if Mr. Collins endeavoured to prove motive from the letters he must produce the writer.

D. S. Smith cross-examined, said he had known the accused all his life. As far as he knew he was a very well-conducted young man. He knew he was engaged to Mary Sheppard. Mr. Titley: And about to be married? Witness: I don't know that, they don't tell me all their secrets. The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Glover): Perhaps the young woman will tell us that. Cross-examination continued: He went to Melrose to see the young woman Sheppard immediately after the arrest of Coombs, and he did not think she had any idea then that suspicion rested on him. He also went on Monday evening, the 2nd October. She then said she went to the Theatre with Coombs on the night of August 3rd, 1891, Bank Holiday.

Mr. Titley: Did you ask her what the piece was?

Witness: No. I knew it was no use then. She knew what to say then.

In answer to further questions witness said Sheppard told him that the piece they saw was "The Dancing Girl." She did not give the names of Mrs. Ernest Eyres and Miss Shaw as being able to state they saw Coombs at the Theatre with her on that night. Mrs. Titley said they went to the Theatre that night. Mr. Collins: How can she say that. She can say they went out of the house.

Re-examined by Mr. Collins, D. S. Smith said that at the first interview with Miss Sheppard he asked her whether she was with the prisoner on the night of August 3rd, 1891. He asked her three times and gave her plenty of time to think, but she did not answer. He went again to Melrose on Saturday to see Miss Sheppard, but he was told she was too ill to be seen. Miss Sheppard was his cousin and he might say she complained to him in 1891 of the deceased girl having assaulted and annoyed her. Mr. Titley was surprised at the witness stating that; it was not evidence. The Clerk: We won't put that in.

Mr. Kerry was recalled and deposed to the accuracy of the statements she made on Friday. She was now certain that the deceased left her house on Saturday, 25th July, 1891, and not on the Saturday preceding Bank Holiday. Cross-examined: The deceased had an evening out in the week. She could not recollect what evening it was. She went out also on Sundays sometimes in the afternoon. Witness knew Wilkie had a sovereign when she left her house as she had paid it to her, but could not say whether she had any more money. Questioned by the Clerk witness said she was certain deceased left on the 25th July. Witness's daughter's birthday was on the 4th August, and she left home on the 1st August. Her new dress was then missed. Wilkie had left on the previous Saturday. By Mr. Pole: She made no entry of paying the girl to which she could refer.

Edwards, the fishmonger, was then re-called as to the alleged conversation with Coombs. He could not say that the excursion of the Railway Mission to Sidmouth when he saw Coombs and

Wilkie together was in 1890. He did not know Miss Sheppard. He could not remember what was said to lead up to the remark of Coombs- "She ought to be dead or killed." He did not know when the Railway Mission went into Monmouth-street, but he knew he saw Coombs and Wilkie there several times.

Kate Bullock, the housemaid engaged at Mrs. Kerr's when Wilkie was there, said she did not remember the brooch produced; she had never seen it before. She thought it was always the same young man who came to see Wilkie; she never saw him in the daylight. By Mr. Titley: She had told her mother the young man was short, fair, and with a light moustache. To the best of her recollection that was her opinion of his appearance now. By the Chairman: The young man would have had to pass through the kitchen to go into the cellar, but witness never saw him in the light of the kitchen. Wilkie used to take him down herself.

Mrs. Hayman, of Kingsmead-terrace, was re-called. Mr. Titley said the statement of the witness that Wilkie told her she was *enceinte* was not evidence. It was only hearsay.

It has transpired that the murdered girl Luke, alias Wilkie, was for several years an inmate of the Girls' Reformatory at Limpley Stoke having been sent there in 1880 on the order of a London magistrate. A representative of the *Chronicle* on Saturday had an interview with Miss Rodman, who has held the responsible position of matron of the Reformatory for many years. Miss Rodman at once produced the register of this institution, in which full particulars are given concerning each girl received at the school. From this it appeared that Elizabeth "Wilkie" or Luke was sentenced at the Thames Police-court on April 12th, 1880, by Mr. F. Lushington, the stipendiary magistrate, to ten days' imprisonment and five years' detention in a reformatory, the offence being "felony in service." It was her first conviction. At that time her father, Frederick Wilkey, and her mother, Elizabeth Wilkey, were living at 21, Bedford-street, Commercial-road, London, the father being a bootmaker. Wilkey was her step-father and the girl is described as having one brother and two sisters, three half-sisters and one half-brother. At the time of her conviction she was fourteen years of age. She was discharged on the 3rd May, 1885, having served her full time in the Reformatory. Luke went home when she left. Other particulars mentioned in the book were that the girl's general health was good, and that her mental capacity was fair. Miss Rodman remarked that most of her girls went into service when they left the Reformatory. But this girl did not, remarked our representative. – No. I could not send this poor thing out, she had such a violent temper.

An entry in the register recorded the fact that in July, 1881, the girl was confirmed at Winsley Church by the Bishop of Salisbury. Did you see the girl after she went away? – Oh, yes, several times. We always look after our old girls. I visited her twice in London – at Plaistow – which perhaps you know is more out in the country. I saw her at 14, King-street there, in 1886 and 1887. She was then working at dressmaking, going out day by day to a place near her home. What opinion had you of her relatives? – Well, they seemed to be in very poor circumstances. The mother was a German. They left Plaistow, and I was told by Wilkie – that is the name we know her by – that her father had gone to an emigrants' home.

What was her conduct in the home? – On the whole it was bad, but we have had many worse. She had such a bad temper, and was a revengeful girl.

What about her appearance? – She was a nice looking girl and very quick and sharp: she was a good worker. She would have been 27 years of age now had she lived; She was nineteen when she left the reformatory.

When did you see her in Bath? – Oh, she often came out here on Sundays. I should say it was about 1891, early in the year, when she first came. I had received several letters from her from London, and she said she was coming back to Bath as she did not get on well at home. I am

going to see if I can find any of the letters I received from her between 1887 and 1891. I believe she first came here in 1891.

What did you judge by her appearance? – She said she was in service, and I spoke to her about her dress, as she was dressed rather more than was fit or proper for a servant. I told her I hoped she was living a good life, and she said she was working at the stay factory, but I found that was not true. I well remember the last Sunday afternoon she came out in 1891. I believe it was in July. I do not think it was the Saturday before Bank Holiday. She said she had left a situation and was going back to London about Bank Holiday. She went in to see the girls.

Were there any in the reformatory then she knew while here? – oh no, they had gone, but she knew the mistresses and she stopped about an hour and seemed to enjoy herself.

Had you reason to believe anything was wrong with her? – No, only that she was rather over dressed for a servant girl; I had not the least suspicion of anything. On the Sunday I refer to she said, “I have come to say ‘Good-bye,’ I’m going back to London.” I have never seen her since.

The description given of the remains would agree with what you knew of the girl? –Yes I remember those shoes. She was wearing them on the Sunday and I particularly noticed them as being stylish. However, I did not allude to them especially. She was a nice mannered, and well behaved girl, and whatever she did she did well; the only thing was her violent temper.

I suppose you often had to correct her? – Yes, I had to lock her up in a room by herself and give her a task of needlework, she was a splendid needle woman.

When did you connect your former charge with the murdered girl? – On Thursday last, when I saw the names in the paper. I couldn’t rest until I made known the fact that she used to be here. Miss Sheppard, our lady superintendent, came yesterday afternoon. I told her and I believe she gave information to the police at Bath. I wish they could find the girl who received the clothes over the garden wall.

In answer to further questions, Miss Rodman said the girl when at the reformatory was in Standard V., the highest standard, and was recorded in the register as being “good at lessons.” The deceased, when she visited the home, never brought anyone with her, and Miss Rodman never saw her with a young man. The friend at Turleigh, who had been alluded to in the newspapers, was Mrs. Bowles, who before she was married was the head laundress at the Reformatory. Miss Rodman knew that Luke was in the habit of visiting her, and that Mrs. Bowles who was a very good-natured woman, had been kind and generous to the poor girl. After leaving the Limpley Stoke Reformatory our representative lost no time in reaching Turleigh. It is a small hamlet between the village of Winsley and Bradford-on-Avon, in fact, a few houses nestling in one of the most charming spots in a lovely neighbourhood. Mrs. Bowles lives in a picturesque cottage just beyond Turleigh-house, for many years the residence of the Rev. C. C. Layard, and now occupied by Mr. Applegate. Mrs. John Bowles is the wife of a carter and herself is engaged as a laundress; she very willingly gave us information with regard to Wilkie or Luke. She was somewhat annoyed that she had been spoken of as a relative of the deceased, who when in the reformatory was under the charge of Mrs. Bowles – then Miss Fanny Spratt – for part of the time. Mrs. Bowles was married in 1888 and she appears to have heard and seen a good deal of the deceased since then, in fact, to use her own language, Wilkie had “plagued” her.

How did you come to hear of the girl after she had left the home? – Well, I had a letter from her – I believe it is in 1889 or 1890. She said she was in great distress; that she had been ordered

into the country because she suffered from epileptic fits. She said she had a friend in Bath to come to and asked me to help her pay the fare to Bath from London. She enclosed the bill of an excursion and I sent her half-a-crown. It was difficult to find out when she was speaking the truth, but she came to Bath. I am not certain as to dates, but it was in 1889 or 1890. Her friend was Mary Ann Smith, a London girl, also a former inmate of the Limpley Stoke reformatory. Smith said she was married and gave the name of Mrs. Stafford, and Wilkie told me her husband had left her. Stafford, or Smith, and Wilkie lodged together at a house on St. James's parade, Bath, opposite the Lighthouse, kept by Mrs. Coombes. Deceased then took in needlework.

Asked if she had any idea of Wilkie's behaviour at this time, Mrs. Bowles said she had not, but added: One night when I was ill in bed the deceased came to our house in a pitiful condition between 10 and 11 at night. My husband went down and let her in. She was wet through, and said she did not know what to do. She had nowhere to go as she was unable to pay her rent. She slept here and has done so on several occasions. She wanted me to employ her but she knew nothing of laundry work. However, I gave her sewing work for which I paid her. I cannot remember dates but she frequently came here. Once she told me she thought she could get into Messrs. Deane's if she had proper clothes to wear, and I know she went there. She would walk out here sometimes as often as two or three times a week, and I gave her baskets of vegetables to take back, and she always had food here.

Do you know anything about her friendship with young men? – She never came here with any and that was a thing she would keep from me. Once the girl I knew as Mary Ann Smith came out with her. She told me when she came to Bath from London that she was engaged to a young man in London, and that she wanted to get out of his way, but I cannot say whether it was true.

She does not appear to have been truthful? – Indeed no; she was far from it. She was very bad tempered and tiresome.

You seem to have acted very kindly to her, Mrs. Bowles? – Well, she said she was in difficulties and could not pay her rent. She also said she only had what she stood upright in. I understood that she was badly treated at home and I have been looking for the letters I received. Did you see her in London? – Yes, in 1886 or 1887 I visited her in King-street, Plaistow. The family appeared to be in very poor circumstances. I saw the father and mother and had a long conversation with the mother. When did you see her last? – I cannot say exactly but it was some time in 1891; she said she meant to go back to London. She did not come out to Turleigh on the August Bank Holiday? – No, she did not. I should be glad if you could contradict the tales that are about – that she used to give me money, that my husband is her uncle and that I am her half-sister.

Our representative assured Mrs. Bowles that he would gladly state the real facts and bade her "Good morning."

Following up the information obtained from Mrs. Bowles, our reporter called at 12, St. James's-parade, the house referred to. Mrs. Coombes has been dead 12 months and the house is now occupied by Mr. J. Coombes, her married son. He had no recollection of a girl of the name Wilkie or Luke having lodged there, but explained that he was away from home at about that time. However, he remembers a young woman, who was known as Mrs. Stafford, having been the tenant of the garret. She worked at the stay factory, but left a long time ago – as Mr. Coombes understood – to rejoin her husband who was in London. Mr. Coombes, we believe, is not related to the young man now in custody.

On Saturday persons visited the cave at Hampton Rocks with the hope of finding the money which the deceased is supposed to have had upon her at the time of her death. On Sunday the

cavern at Hampton Rocks, where the remains of the murdered woman were discovered, was visited by thousands of people, the cave being explored as early as six o'clock in the morning, among the earliest to do so being two girls. So large a company assembled at the spot in the afternoon that vendors of ginger beer, apples, &c., with an eye to business, took up their position at the Rocks and apparently did a profitable trade.

[Here text appears to be missing from original Newspaper article]

Mr. Pole: It is too late now to object. It is on the depositions. You should have objected at the time.

The Clerk: There is a heap there (on the depositions) that is not evidence.

Mrs. Hayman, asked by Mr. Collins, said on the Saturday before the Bank Holiday, Wilkie was wearing a small silver brooch similar to that produced. It was of the same pattern, but brighter than the brooch produced. (The brooch found by the police was tarnished from disuse). Witness added that she saw the deceased on Sunday the 26th July on Kingsmead-terrace. She did not call at the witness's then. She was alone and not carrying anything.

Mrs. Harriet Dillon re-examined, said she could not swear to the brooch produced. She never saw the deceased with it.

This concluded the repetition and cross-examination of the witnesses heard on Friday.

Cecil Rose Herbert Brand, son of Commander Brand, R.N., deposed to finding the skeleton in the cavern, which he pointed out on the photographs produced. They had a candle when they came across the bones as they were going exploring, but there was light in the cave.

William Henry Dill, accountant, repeated the evidence which he gave before the Coroner, as to the finding of the gold watch and chain, two bloodstained cuffs and a blood-stained handkerchief near the scene of the horrible discovery. He said he went to Devizes with the Volunteers on August the 10th. By Mr. Titley: I was clerk to the stores to the Volunteers when they went into camp. I have acted as marker for the last four or five years. It all depended whether the sergeant wanted an extra hand. I occasionally slept in the marker's hut. I was frequently up there in August after the Volunteers returned from camp. The hut was always locked except when someone was there. I have known the Down for 40 years; not every nook, one would have a marvellous memory to know that. There are three ways down to the Warminster-road. I had seen respectable as well as rough people lying about there. I first said where the watch was found at the raffle or soon afterwards. I gave no notice of finding the watch and chain to the police. I wanted them myself, that is the reason why I did not tell the police, even though I found the blood-stained articles besides. I wanted the money for myself. I gave the chain away. I had the handkerchief in my possession for two years. I never noticed the name on it.

The Clerk: Did not the blood on the handkerchief arouse your suspicion? Witness: Not at all. I have seen so much going on on the down that I guessed what game was up.

Frank Clark, clerk, 22, Alexander-road, spoke to finding a woman's hat on Hampton Down in August, 1891, about 20 or 30 yards dividing the down from the wood. I could not say how far I was from the cave, but it was near the quarry. It was a black straw hat trimmed with black and cream. (On the photograph produced witness pointed out a spot near the mouth of the cave as where he found the hat). Ex-Inspector Beaton, of the Bath force, produced the book in which the finding of the hat was recorded on August 7, 1891. It was (he said) labelled by him and placed on the lost property board. He believed it was hanging there when he left last September. It could not now be found.

Frederick Field, 16, Herbert-road, Oldfield Park West, assistant marker at the butts at Hampton, said about the 11th or 13th of August, Dill showed him a cuff with blood stains on it. They went in search, and walking from the top of the quarry they found another bloodstained cuff in the nettles near the cave. By Mr. Titley: Mr. Dill kept the discovery of the watch and chain to himself. I did not suggest that he should bring the cuffs to the notice of the police. By the Clerk: You found three articles covered with blood and yet it did not strike you as suspicious? – Witness: No.

Timothy Cottrell, 2, St Mark's-place, Widcombe, said he formerly kept the Exeter Inn, Southgate-street, where in January or February, 1892, Dill raffled a lady's watch in his house. He won it with his daughter's chance. It had been in his daughter's possession ever since. By Mr. Titley: Dill told me that the watch was given to him by his sister.

Mr. Charles Harper, surgeon, deposed to making an examination of the remains at the George Inn, Bathampton, and repeated the fracture to the skull – an inch square on the left side of the frontal bone. The injury could only have been caused by great violence of great force. He should decidedly say that the injury was ante-mortem. By the Bench: It might be the result of a blow or through a fall from a height on a pointed stone. The bones of the fingers of both hands were contracted. By the Clerk: My theory is that something took place on the down, and that she was afterwards thrown into the quarry from the dislocation of the instep. The dislocation could not possibly have been done on the down. By the Chairman: The fall into the cave might have caused the fracture to the skull and the dislocation. The Clerk: The blood-stained garments – can you account for them? Witness: I cannot, but there must have been something done previous to the fall into the quarry.

Mr. Lewis Vigis, chemist, Chapel Row, said: I remember a young man coming to my shop in Bank Holiday week, 1891 to have his hand treated. I recognise the prisoner. He had a wound on his right hand. It was an open sore. It was near the thumb or the first forefinger. By the Chairman: I cannot tell whether he told me what caused it. It was Wednesday, August 5th, 1891. I treated him and he came next day. I cannot tell what caused it. He said it was painful, and witness suggested a poultice. I think he told me he was not at work. The injury must have been done twenty or thirty hours. I have never seen him since. By Mr. Titley: I made no entry of the wound. I cannot remember whether there was a Liberal Fete on Monday, July 27 (laughter).

Mr. Frederick Lace, medical practitioner, of Bath, said in August, 1891, he was house surgeon at the Royal United Hospital. He produced the Hospital out-patients book. In it he found the following entry in his own writing on the 7th of August, 1891: -- “Arthur Coombs; aged 19; residence, 25, Kingsmead-terrace; disease bite of thumb, human. Mr. Collins: Have you any remembrance of that case? Witness: I have no particular recollection of it. Mr. Collins: Or of any person you attended? Witness: No, I cannot say anything about the individual case. The word human denotes that the patient told me it was a human bite. Mr. Titley: Did he say anything about having sustained injury at the Liberal Fete? The Clerk: They don't bite one another at Liberal Fetes (laughter). Mr. Titley: I am afraid they did at this one. Mr. Titley asked that the lady witnesses whose names he had given to Mr. Collins should be called. They could get rid of the whole point about the injury to his hand. The Chairman said when the witnesses for the prosecution had been called then witnesses for the defence might be called. Mr. Titley said he was not putting forward witnesses for the defence in order to prevent the prisoner going for trial. He suggested they should be called by the prosecution. He thought it was unfair to the prisoner if they were not called; what they would have to say would destroy any suggestion for the evidence that had been given that the wound on prisoner's hand had anything to do with the crime. The Chairman said the statement that Mr. Titley was making was quite uncorroborated. Mr. Titley: The witnesses will show that it had no connection whatever with the crime. Mr. A.

E. Pole: It is for the prosecution to conduct their own case. This only deals with one particular fact, and the prosecution may want to bring another to rebut what the other has said. The course you propose is quite unusual. Mr. Titley: I submit not. The case was then adjourned till Monday next.

LATEST PARTICULARS.

When the proceedings at the Weston Court-house concluded on Tuesday afternoon, the accused was taken back to the cells, but before he left the Court he shook hands with his father, the young woman Mary Sheppard, whose letters to the prisoner formed such a prominent feature in the day's examination, and also with several friends who had managed to obtain a front place in the dense crowd of people which filled the public portion of the Court-house. During the evening Coombs was taken to the Weston Midland Railway station and from there he travelled in the custody of two police officers to Horfield Gaol, where he will be detained until Monday next.

The young woman Sheppard is a native of Chilcompton, and Coombs is well-known at that place, having visited Miss Sheppard's parents in company with her on several occasions. It is stated that on Friday, the 7th August, 1891, Coombs's brother was married, and that the accused was present at the wedding. According to the evidence given yesterday by Mr. Frederick Lace, a former house surgeon at the Royal United Hospital, this was the day on which Coombs was treated at that institution for a human bite.

A sensational story has been told to police which the detectives are busily engaged in investigating. A young man living in Walcot, who has given his name and address at the Central Police Station, states that he was told by two men that some time ago they were in conversation with the prisoner Coombs. Some sensational murder was at the time attracting widespread interest, and the men were discussing the tragedy. Coombs in course of the discussion is said to have stated, "Well I committed a murder and it has never been found out." His hearers at the time paid no particular attention to the remark regarding the statement as a joke. Every effort is being made by the police to reduce this narrative to a form in which it could be presented as evidence.

At the resumed hearing on Monday there are many more witnesses to be examined. Evidence will be forthcoming further to establish the identity of the remains found in the cavern at Hampton Rocks. The identification of the skeleton now rests almost entirely on the circumstance that a fragment of the underlinen bore the name of Mrs. Kerry, the deceased's late employer, and that after Wilkie left Cheriton-house the article, the fragment of which fortunately remained, was missed by Mrs. Kerry. Inquiries prosecuted by the police have brought to their knowledge that the Oxford shoes found on the bones of the feet were purchased by Wilkie at a bootshop in the lower part of the city. An assistant is to be produced who will depose to the murdered woman buying the shoes, which he has declared to be the same as those discovered in the cave. This is an important connecting link.

Very general have been the comments upon the fact that the witness Dill had retained the blood-stained cuffs and handkerchief in his possession ever since he and Field discovered them, and in precisely the same condition. It is believed, however, that a satisfactory explanation of this circumstance will be forthcoming, for we are informed that it was mentioned to the police that the things had been picked up and their condition described. The officer thus acquainted with the finding of the linen is said to have directed the man who told him to inform Dill that he had better keep the articles in the same state as they were when he found them on the Rocks. It is further stated that the police officer in question himself made a minute inspection of the locality,

but failed to discover anything which would lead him to suppose that a horrible crime had been perpetrated. Mr. Cannings Collins intimated on Tuesday that P.C. Brunt, stationed at Bathford, would be examined by him, and we understand he is to be called on Monday next.

Though the police have exerted themselves to their utmost, they have not yet in their possession the gold Albert watch chain which was discovered with the gold watch. Still they have not given up the quest as fruitless, and they now believe that the chain is in the possession of a party living in a Midland town, from whom they hope to regain it.

The positive statement made by Mrs. Kerry that Wilkie left her house on July 25th, 1891, leaves a week's blank in the movements of the murdered woman immediately preceding her disappearance. She did not take up her temporary abode at 26, Kingsmead-terrace – next door to Coombs's home – until Saturday August 1st. This is conclusively proved by Mrs. Dillon and Mrs. Hayman. The latter yesterday, however, deposed that she remembered seeing the deceased on the previous Sunday July 26th. What occurred in this week may be of great importance and efforts are being made to trace Mary Ann Smith, alias Mrs. Stafford, who is believed to have been on terms of close acquaintance with Wilkie about this time. This is the woman Mrs. Bowles, of Turleigh, spoke of as having lived with the deceased on St James's-parade. Smith is known to have been a temporary inmate of the Bath Workhouse two or three years ago, but her whereabouts at present is unknown.

Arthur Coombs received his education at the Bathforum school, being a pupil there from 1880 to 1887. Mr. Prosser, the headmaster of the school, has a distinct recollection of the boy and gives him the best of characters. He says 'he was quiet, industrious, and of a genial disposition; he passed through all the standards and shortly after he left school he entered into his apprenticeship at Messrs. S. and A. Fuller's coachbuilding factory.

Portraits of the victim and the accused:

The young man Arthur Stevenson Coombs, who is charged with the murder of his former sweetheart, has been already described in our columns, but his features are well portrayed in the accompanying picture; also reproduced from a photograph.

No crime in recent years has stirred the feelings of the people locally more deeply or created greater or more widespread interest than what is known as the Hampton Rocks mystery. The unfortunate victim has been identified as Elsie Luke, alias Wilkie, and we subjoin a portrait of her, reproduced from a photograph.

Surroundings of the cave.

The above shows the general surroundings of the quarry or pit in which the cave is situate. The surface of the ground here was probably undermined by the quarrying once carried on, and fell in, and in the course of time the broken and jagged surface has become overgrown with bramble, thistles and suchlike, and in the adjoining pit elm and other trees have attained some size, shutting out a little the view on the north-east extremity of the lovely Warleigh valley, and of the wooded hills stretching away beyond the Avon. Adjoining the quarry are other underground extensive caves or recesses into which also probably in time the surface will fall, and in that case all this portion of the Down will become rough, jagged and broken. The cross seen in the centre marks the position of the Cave, and was placed over the entrance after the remains were found.

The opening to the cave.

This view shows position and opening to cave. The opening looks south, facing the wood with a dwarf wall in front which stands a short distance off. The sward on which the first struggle is supposed to have taken place, and where the man Dill found the watch and chain, is quite flat and the fall from it to the bottom of the pit is a perpendicular one of 15 feet. If Luke or Wilkie was pushed over this, the fracture of the skull would be accounted for, and the dragging then of the body into the cave by the murderer, whoever he was, would be a comparatively easy task. The loose stones about afforded ample materials for covering it up for partially at least filling up the entrance. The remains were found on the left hand side of the opening, the feet being foremost in the cave.

The interior of the cave.

The above shows the interior of the Cave. There was considerable difficulty in obtaining this view, owing partly to the defective light and surroundings, and partly to the want of height in the Cave itself, this being only about three feet. As described by the police witnesses, access is obtained with considerable difficulty, the person entering having to do so backwards on the hands and feet, face downwards. The body was at the spot marked V.

All the foregoing views are from photographs excellently taken specially for the Bath Chronicle by Mr. B. Davis of Somerset-house, Wells-road. The photographs may be had on application at the Chronicle Office, price 1s 6d each.

Source – Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette – 5 October 1893.

Bath and Country Notes

The Hampton Rocks mystery, or murder, as it may be more correctly called, since there is no doubt there was a murder, the question who did it remaining to be solved, has created widespread interest, which it is not too much to say has intensified to excitement as the details and incidents collected by the ubiquitous news-gatherers have been published from day to day. How painstaking and industrious have been the reporters the Daily Chronicle has borne witness. The bearings of the case, the life history of the unfortunate victim, the story of her love, her mysterious disappearance, and the remarkable discovery of her remains, -- all these had been revealed through the diligent inquiries of our staff ere the judicial proceedings began. The arrest of the young man Coombs on the charge of murder, the suggestion of motive, to free himself from the toils of a woman who had suffered at his hands, when he had transferred his affections to another – this is the theory of the prosecution, and it is formulated with becoming gravity by the learned gentleman who has been instructed by the Treasury to take up the case, than which we have had none more remarkable in this part of the country since the Road murder sent a thrill throughout England. The further development of the case will be awaited with increasing anxiety, and while a sense of pity cannot but be felt for the cruel fate of the poor girl, sympathy will not be withheld from the family of the young man upon whom rests so heavy and serious a charge.

The story of the girl's life, so far as it has been revealed – for diligent and persistent as have been the inquiries, her birth, parentage and early years are still invested with a cloud of obscurity and doubt – is both sad and pathetic. When yet in her teens she transgressed, and for her offence suffered imprisonment and was for some years an inmate of the Limpley Stoke Reformatory. The training and discipline of that institution seem to have developed her ability and capacity for work, but strong will, hot temper and carelessness of truth appear to have been her failings then and always. Those who knew her say that she was a clever girl, an excellent needle-woman, and did well all she undertook. In her shortcomings was she the victim of heredity, or her

environment, or both? She had in her what is called the making of a good and useful member of society, but failed to use the opportunities or to profit by the kindness of which she was the subject. It is needless now to speculate upon what her future might have been; it is just possible that if she could have kept within the sphere of the motherly influence of Miss Rodman, she might have been saved from influences and associations which invariably have a baleful effect upon a disposition naturally wayward and impulsive.

One curious effect of the Hampton Rocks tragedy is the sense of insecurity that it has diffused among all classes. Many ladies have refused to take their walks at evening unaccompanied; fathers have put their daughters under stricter surveillance, and lone spinsters have thought it needful to have a servant to sleep in their bedrooms, to say nothing of the extra attention paid to locks, bolts and bars. This vague terror, weak as it may seem, is testimony to the exceptional atrocity of the crime and the cold-bloodedness with which it was planned and executed. The nearest approach to it in this part of the country was the Leigh Woods murder. In that case the body of the victim, a woman named Pugsley, was found by boys in a secluded part of the Nightingale Valley a week or ten days after the deed was perpetrated. After a while the mystery was cleared up and the murderer, who was a butler in a family at Daventry, Northamptonshire, was convicted and hanged.

There were two similar crimes which, though the perpetrators have not been discovered to this day, helped indirectly to give additional security to life and property in rural districts. We allude to the murders at Frome Woodlands and Priston. Both occurred within a few months of each other, and in neither case were the old constables conspicuous either for their vigilance or intelligence. At Frome, after wasting much time in a Dogberry-like fashion, they tried to vindicate their reputation for sagacity by capturing four or five men, the only evidence against whom was the somewhat evil reputation they had earned. In the case of the Priston crime, two or three persons were pounced upon and arraigned in succession before the justices, but only to be discharged. One of these was a young butcher who happened to be at an auction sale the same day as the murdered man, and was found in possession of an instrument for bleeding cattle, which the sapient constables surmised must have been used to cut the throat of the victim. Another of the apprehended was a poor woman; her guilt was sought to be proved by the fact that she had known the deceased and his circumstances well, and that she went out the same evening as the deed was done, the locality being a field through which the unfortunate man was walking on his way home.

An illustration of the danger of jumping to conclusions occurred during the examination of this woman. At the close of the formal evidence, there was the customary remand ordered, and all were prepared to leave the Court, including the prisoner. She, however, after taking a few steps, returned and clutched the rail of the dock in an agonised matter. She uttered not a word. A death-like silence prevailed for a few seconds, the impression rife being accurately conveyed in a whisper by the Chairman (the late Colonel Blathwayt) to a brother magistrate; "She's going to confess," said he. She did nothing of the kind; but gradually releasing her hold of the bar she walked slowly out with the constable. The impotence of the police authorities in these two cases was regarded as a scandal; and the hands of the Government of that day were strengthened by the fact when the County Constabulary Bill was introduced, the necessity for which these untraced crimes were held to demonstrate.

It is to be hoped that the Hampton Down horror will not have to be added to the list of murderous mysteries. That it would have been but for one circumstance is, perhaps, placed beyond doubt. Had not the unhappy young woman appropriated some of her mistress's apparel, the clue which led to the identification of the skeleton would not have been available. As she was comparatively friendless, she was missed by nobody, and no one would have troubled to inquire

whether the find at Hampton Rocks was her remains. There is no doubt who the victim was, and we trust we shall have the same assurance as to the villain who compassed her death under circumstances so horrible.

Source - Bath Chronicle – 14 December 1893

THE HAMPTON DOWN TRAGEDY - INTERMENT OF THE REMAINS

The last stage for the present in the Hampton Down tragedy was reached in the churchyard at Bathampton on Monday when what remained of the murdered girl Luke was given decent sepulchre - at the expense of the parish - at half-past two. The remains, contained in a small coffin covered with a black pall having a white border, were borne from the skittle alley at the George to the lych gate on the opposite side of the road. Here it was met by the Vicar, the Rev. H. Girdlestone, and the only mourners were P.S. Edwards and P.C. Brunt, and those who had gathered out of curiosity and followed the remains into the church. The Burial Service over, the coffin was taken to a grave on the railway side of the churchyard next to a tombstone which reminded one of the tragedy on Claverton Down in the last century when Viscount Du Barry lost his life in a duel. The inscription on the stone runs: - Here rest the remains of John Baptiste, Viscount Du Barry. Obiit 18th Nov., 1778.

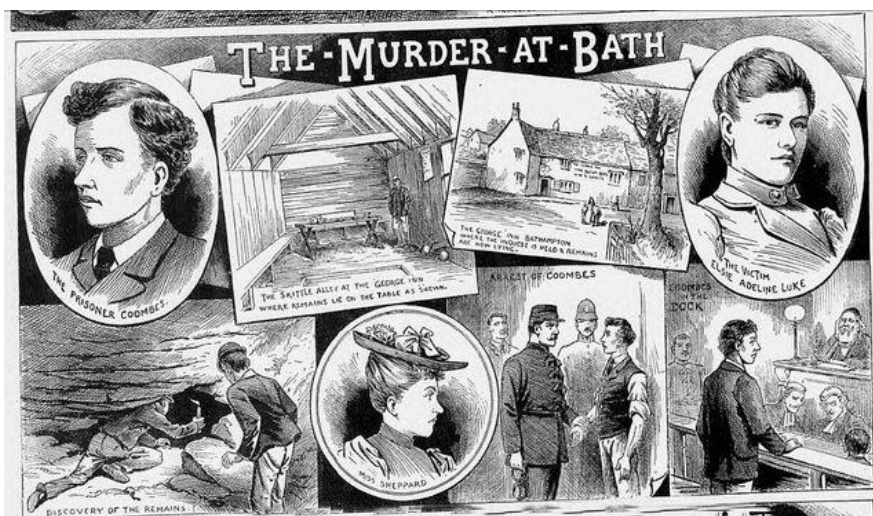
The coffin of the victim of the late tragedy bore on the breastplate the name and the year of burial - Elsie A. Luke. 1893. The bell was tolled mournfully before and after the service.

Source Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette – 1 March 1894

A suitable memorial stone is about to be placed over the grave of the victim of the Hampton Down tragedy in Bathampton Churchyard. The pennant stone bears the following inscription:-

Here lie the remains of
ELIZABETH LUKE
Who was cruelly murdered on
Hampton Down.
About August, 1891.

The necessary funds, between £4 and £5, have been collected by Mr. C. Harper, of Batheaston.



*Also – Bathampton Down A Hill Divided by Mary Clark Pages 103 to 119
The Hampton Rocks Mystery – the life and death of Elsie Luke.*

23 December 1892 – Wookey Hole Cave

Sources –

Wookey Hole – Its Caves and Cave Dwellers by H. E. Balch (1914) page 35

WCC Jnl. 290 June 2004 pages 170 to 172 Mendip Cave Rescues Prior to 1951 by Dave Irwin – for date

Balch himself was a member of a team that searched and rescued three young boys from Wookey Hole in September 1892.

Standing on this summit; the form of the Boulder Chamber is well seen and as you look straight down its eastern side into the dangerous pit fifty feet below. This spot was the scene of a narrow escape by some young friends of mine some years ago, and it was only the fact that they had sense enough to remain stationary for many hours in the darkness, that allowed a happy termination to what might have ended otherwise. Three lads had gone down into the cave with inadequate matches and candle; after two matches had been used the third refused to strike, unluckily this happened just at the moment at which they had reached the top of the Spur and Wedge. It was on Christmas Eve in the morning and they had told no one their destination; not until late in the evening did enquiries by their friends raise the alarm, when a search party resulted in their discovery. The only watch in the party had been broken long before, by constant feeling trying to follow the lapse of time, and they imagined that many times the actual period had elapsed before they heard the welcome cries of the search party. Had they not known the danger of attempting to move from their perilous perch, they would certainly have been killed on the rocks below.

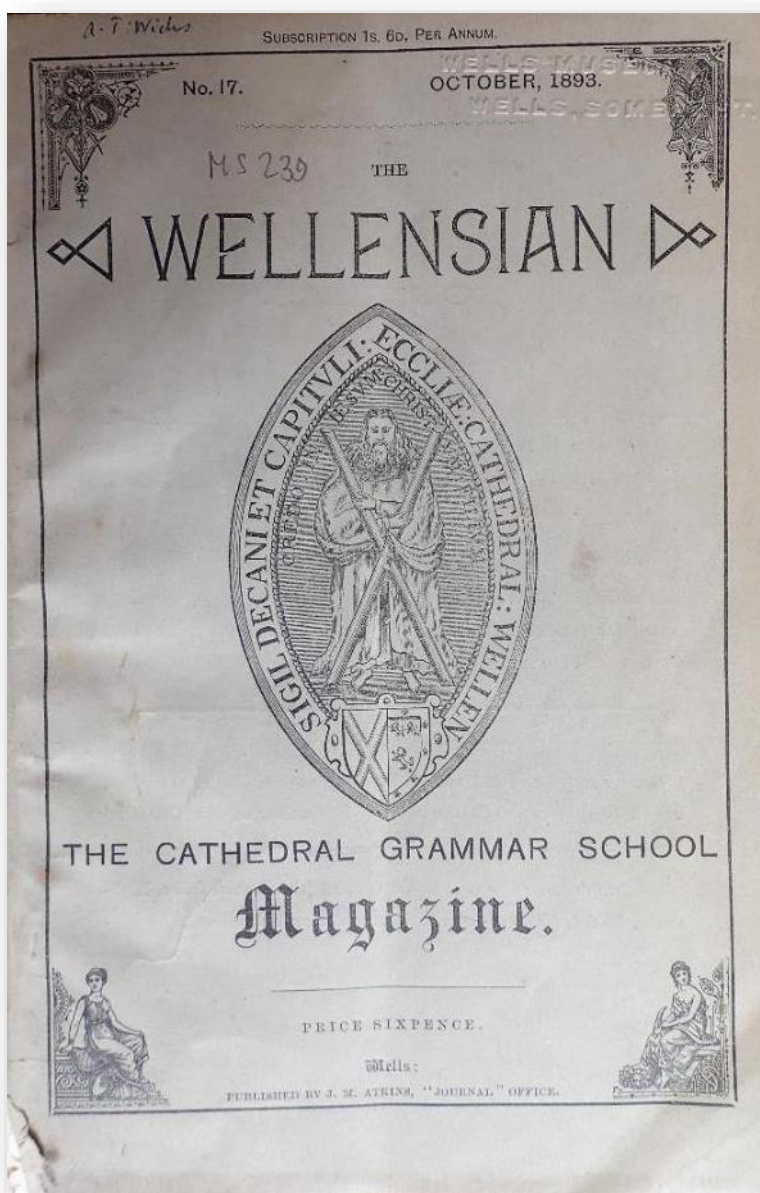
Source – An Adventure in Wookey Hole Cave, The Wellensian (The Magazine of the Cathedral Grammar School) October 1893 by H. A. Da C. Pereira

The day before Christmas–Eve, 1882, proved a memorable occasion to two households in Wells. On that date we three friends, H., C., and G., aged thirteen, eleven, and ten respectively, found ourselves involved in an adventure which might have resulted in a serious calamity to the two above mentioned families, as well as ourselves. On the morning of the day in question we met, according to previous agreement, by the Mill gates at about 10 o'clock, proposing to search for bones in the Hyaena Den.

We all had candles and a few matches; so, proceeding to the scene of operations, we dug on steadily with moderate success till about 11 o'clock, when we stopped for a little refreshment. After this, digging being voted "slow," and a council of war having been held, we decided to go and explore the Great Cave, as we had frequently done before, through the kindness of Mr. G. Adlam in allowing us to go in at will. We did not care to tramp off to his farm for the keys, as we knew of a hole by which entrance is feasible.

When this had been settled, after a survey of our stocks of candles, I said that I thought we should have plenty of them, but I asked G. to go and get more matches, while C. and I waited. This he did, and so in we went, and entered the passages which are not at present open to the public. After crawling for nearly an hour and a half, I said that it was time to turn back. The stock of candles was now getting a little low; I therefore thought that, in case of anything unforeseen happening, we had better use only one at a time. We intended to take turns in leading with the light, and I took first turn. Unfortunately, I tripped over a rock and fell, putting out the candle. I called on G. for a match; he, however, could only produce one, and that one was – damp! Imagine our dismay! Our last hope, the damp match would not strike, and soon its head fell off. There we were, stranded in one of the passages, in blank darkness, danger surrounding

each step, and with no means of making our position known to the outer world [it will be noticed that neither did we lose our way, for we all knew perfectly well where we were, nor did our candles fail us; we still preserve one as a relic, as also the match.]



I knew that we could never get to the entrance, for there are many turns and twists of the passages, as well as great clefts in the rock, some of the latter being more than 10 feet in depth, as we one day found by actual measurement. We therefore dared not to try to get out; but I thought that we might reach a small hole which I knew of, and thence might attract attention by shouting. This we accordingly made for, I leading, G. next and C. last, each hanging on to his leader's boot-heels to pull him back if necessary. We got within sight of the distant light, glimmering faintly through the aperture, but alas! A chasm intervened between us and it; so, telling the others to make themselves at home I made an endeavour to get to the hole. This, however, I lost sight of in trying to get round the separating chasm, nor could I retrace my steps; I was therefore obliged to stay where I was. As is my custom when I go into a cave, I had a stick with me, and this I dropped down a depth of what sounded about two feet;

and thinking to recover it, I descended into this hole, which proved to be about 4 feet 6 inches deep. I found there, not my stick, but a most comfortable couch of rock, on which I lay down.

All this time we had been talking to keep up our spirits. Fortunately, I had my watch, and by opening the face and feeling the hands I could make a pretty near conjecture as to the time. But for this, hours would have seemed almost like days. We amused ourselves with guessing at what hour we should be found. G. said about 7:30 p.m., C. thought about 9, I said about 8; and towards the latter hour we began to expect help, which came about 8:30 in the shape of Mr. Hodgkinson and his man servants, Mr. Grant the schoolmaster, some villagers, and Mr. Balch senior, of Wells. They said that they had come there first, thinking we might be in the cave. So out trooped we three hungry, tired mortals; hoarse as ravens with the shouting, which we kept

up at intervals till about half past three, in the vain hope that our shouts might possibly be heard outside.

I forgot to mention that in the earlier part of the day we had captured eight or nine bats; these, being let loose after the candle went out, had worried us unceasingly by flying round us; and their sharp squeaks really sounded quite weird in the total darkness.

We were rather tired the next day, but otherwise not much worse for our eight hours' imprisonment in the dark.

1890's – Lamb Leer Cavern

Source – Balch's Mendip, Its Swallet Caves 2nd Edition 1948 – pages 44 to 46

In the closing years of last century, a small party including both ladies and gentlemen of the locality desired to descend the cave. Mr. J. W. Wyatt, the head of St. Cuthbert's Paper Mill, whose sister was one of the party, asked me to lead them. He proposed, and I reluctantly agreed that, to save time, some of his workmen should go ahead, make certain improvements by renewing the wedges holding the platform, fix a stout cable of cotton twist weighted with a stone at the side of the windlass (so that the ladies could use a sliding iron runner to prevent the spinning), and to test the whole before we arrived. A long and safe rope had been used by Mr. Thomas Willcox, Mr. Richard Harris and myself in exploring a deep pit on Rookham. We decided as this Lamb Lair trip was in the offing, to leave the rope in the custody of a gamekeeper at Rookham and call for it en route. The workmen called for the rope, and apparently, all went well. We duly reached the cave and found the men at the windlass.

Inquiries met the response that all was well and the rope tested. An empty iron skip close by was the means by which, loaded with stones, the test should have been made; it had not been done, and its emptiness should have told us so. I fastened myself on the rope and swung off. The old well-sinker workman knelt on the edge of the platform to steady the rope as the others controlled the windlass. I swung off, and as I passed the overhang my light was extinguished by the drip, and all was pitchy blackness. A moment later I felt the jerky movement on the windlass cease. An uprush of air followed, and I realized I was falling: I suppose that involuntary I threw out my hands, and as I fell like a flash, one hand came in contact with the belt of cotton twist before mentioned, which doubtless I frantically gripped, cutting my fingers to the bone but keeping my head upwards, so that I crashed into unconsciousness instead of being instantly killed. My recollection is of a searing heat to my hand and of my legs being driven up into my body. What had happened was that the gamekeeper had unwittingly hung the rope beneath a leaky roof and it had rotted in many places, and this should have been discovered by the test. The failure was now admitted, and the old workman was overwhelmed with self-reproach. The broken rope had come away in his hands. Not a sound came up from below, and they imagined me lying there dead.

Hurriedly a messenger was dispatched for new ropes. For long I lay there, and well remember coming to consciousness in pitchy blackness with, far overhead, the faint gleam of a light from the passage beyond the windlass. Benumbed by the heavy drip that had for a long time been falling upon me, I moved on the boulder pile without sense of motion. I presently realized what had happened, and then thought of a light. Feeling in my satchel, I found the waterproof matches and at last got a light. Someone above caught sight of it and what a hubbub ensued. Shortly after, the ropes from Wells arrived and the party, including two ladies, came down; my hand was bound up and after a short time below we were safely all hauled to the top. A poisoned hand was a small price to pay, but I sustained other bodily injuries too, the effect of which remain.

For a long time, I could not think of the experience without perspiration breaking out on hands and face, reduced somewhat after the next trip down, which I forced myself to face.

Source –The History of Mendip Caving by Peter Johnson page 21

Another visit was then made to Lamb Leer and while Balch was being lowered down into the main chamber the rope broke and he fell nearly 60 ft to the bottom, where he lay unconscious. This was probably the first serious caving accident to occur in this country and could easily have had disastrous consequences. As it was, it stopped all caving activities on the Mendips for some time and archaeological work once more took pride of place.

2 September 1898 –Winford

Source – The Bristol Mercury – 9 September 1898

Dr. Craddock, coroner for North Somerset, held an inquiry at the Waterloo Arms into the death of Henry Smith, aged 54, who died suddenly while at work at the strontian mines at Winford on Friday.

Dr. S (?) of Chew Magna, stated that he attended deceased, but not recently. Death was due to cardiac syncope. A verdict in accordance with medical testimony was returned.

1900's

Early 1900's – Goatchurch Cavern

Sources – Mendip, Its Swallet Caves by H. E. Balch (Second edition 1948) page 85

Many years ago I visited it and knew its windings well. Once, my friend Harry Willcox (now long dead), wearing loose jacket overalls, was effectively jammed in the long and narrow horizontal tunnel at the bottom of the cave, through the accident of trying to pass it with an apple in his pocket. He was really jammed tight, unable to move forward or back; but, having gone feet first, he was able to grasp my ankles so that we got a pull on him and released him.

March 1909 – Sally's Rift, Bathford Hill

Source – Western Daily Press – 29 October 1930

MYSTERY OF REMAINS FOUND IN CAVE – LONELY DEATH OF UNKNOWN MAN WITH HOBNAIL BOOTS – HOW WAS HERMIT SHOT

The chance entry of two Bristol men into a cave at Warleigh Woods, almost on the boundary line of the Somerset and Wiltshire, reported in yesterday's "Western Daily Press," brought to light a tragedy of years ago

The men were working on cable-laying, and by the light of their lamp they saw a human skeleton with a small revolver near by.

Haunted by bats and foxes, a cave situated in a picnic spot at Warleigh Woods, near Bath, known as "Sally-in-the Wood" had been the scene of the remarkable discovery.

There as reported in yesterday's "Western Daily Press," has been found the skeleton of a man with a pistol at his side and a hole in the right temple, evidence of a tragedy believed to date back at least ten years and maybe a quarter of a century.

The two Bristol men, Messrs. E. Sly and A. Brown working on a cable which is being laid for the Post Office, entered the cave by chance on Monday and their electric lamp disclosed the skeleton.

Officers of the Somerset and Wiltshire Police Forces were notified and a search was made of the cave with lanterns. Owing to thick fog, however, it could not immediately be located.

The search succeeded yesterday after the police had crawled into a deep hole and made a perilous descent into the cave. After inspection by the police surgeon, Dr. J. M. Harker, the bones were brought out and removed to the Crown Inn, Bathford, to await an inquest.

There are legends of hermits having lived in caves in the district for years and the fact that matches and a piece of candle were found in this instance suggests that the dead man may have lived in the cave for some time before his death.

The cave is entered by a narrow fissure and there is a drop of some feet to the main chamber. Here it was that the skeleton was found lying on the ground with the revolver which was rusty by the side of it. A ladder was obtained and the officers and police surgeon made an examination. The clothes had crumbled to powder. The remains were removed to the outside

of the cave and after the police surgeon had made an examination it was established that the victim of this lonely tragedy was apparently a man of middle age.

A silver watch, which had stopped at a quarter past five, a fountain pen in a leather case, a pair of hobnail boots, a few coins, and a truss which the man was wearing are the only clues the police were able to gather. These are not considered likely to lead to the identification of the body.

There was a bullet wound in the right temple of the skull but the police could not find the spent bullet.

The police surgeon told a "Wester Daily Press" reported that the circumstances point to the wound being self inflicted – it would have been impossible for a man to have dragged a body into the cave. It appears that the man was not of the tramp class.

Supt. Stewart was on the scene and after an examination, the remains were reverently gathered together and conveyed to the village.

The Coroner for North Somerset has been informed. Meanwhile the county police are making inquiries.

The Police told a "press" reporter last evening that the watch had been examined, but there was no inscription.

The Coroner has not yet fixed the date of the inquest.

Source – Bath Chronicle and Herald – 1 November 1930

SALLY-IN-THE-WOODS MYSTERY – HAUNT OF BATS AND FOXES GIVES UP A GRIM SECRET – TRAGEDY OF MANY YEARS AGO – MAN WITH REVOLVER BY HIS SIDE AND WOUND IN HIS TEMPLE

The chance entry of two Bristol men into a cave at Warleigh Woods, almost on the boundary line of Somerset and Wiltshire, on Monday, brought to light a tragedy of several years ago.

The men who were working on cable laying for the Post Office, had with them an electric lamp, by the light of which they saw a human skeleton, with a small revolver near by.

They told their superintendent, who notified the Police, and officers of the Somerset and Wiltshire Police Forces made a search, but could not find the cave, as it was then dark and very foggy. These considerations, added to the risk of a stumble into a hole, or over the rough ground, caused the searchers to suspend their efforts towards midnight.

On Tuesday the search was renewed, the cave was found and the skeleton discovered just as the men had said. Obviously the remains had been there for a period of years. There was a hole in the right temple such as would have been caused by the pistol bullet.

But for the fact that the two men, whose names are E. Sly and A. Brown, stumbled upon the cave, the remains might not have been discovered for years, if at all. From the state of the bones, and from the fact that not a vestige of clothing could be found, the tragedy appears to have occurred a considerable time ago, five or six years, or even longer. Among the things found beside the body were several coins, including a penny of 1907, and another coin of 1900.

The men who found the skeleton are engaged in cable jointing on the Bradford road, where recently the Post Office Engineering Department have laid an underground cable along the road

side, which runs through the picturesque Warleigh Woods. They were working on Monday at a spot rather more than half a mile beyond the four mile stone from Bath, and during their dinner hour they wandered into the woods.

Their stroll took them to the Wiltshire side of the road – left-hand side going from Bath – and they passed through a leaf-strewn glade, which is a favourite spot for picnic parties in the summer months. Journeying further inwards, over a rough patch for a distance of about 100 yards from the road, they came to the rocks which tower upwards for a height of about 25 feet, and marks the boundary line of Somerset and Wiltshire. Here they came upon a hole in the ground level, which, however, is partly obscured by a large boulder which juts out at the side. They had with them an electric lamp, by the light of which they proceeded to explore the hole. To do this they had to crawl in almost on their stomachs. Once inside, by the light of the lamp, they discovered that the cave bore to the right, and just in front of them was a drop to a lower level.

“I went down over,” Mr. Sly told a representative of this paper on Tuesday, “and walked along a matter of 10 feet, where I found some bones. I called to my mate to come in and have a look at them. We started to turn them over, and then we found more bones, which looked like ribs. There was a pair of boots with some bones in them, a rusty revolver lying by the side. We came out and told our inspector, who told the Wiltshire Police.

“That was all that happened then, and this morning we went with P.S. March and other police officers, and found the cave. We had no difficulty in locating it, and we crawled in and found the skeleton. It was lying on some rising ground, but the skull was on a slightly lower level, as though it had fallen off.”

The delay in investigating the sensational discovery was due to the fact that it was not until dusk was fast approaching on Monday afternoon that the police received information of it. A message was then sent by P.C. Rowden, of the Wiltshire Police, to P.C. Savage, who is stationed at Bathford. He notified P.S. March, and they went to the spot. By this time darkness had fallen, and there was a blanket of fog over the area, so thick it was impossible to see more than a yard or two ahead.

With the aid of storm lanterns and electric torches a search was made, but the rough nature of the ground made it somewhat risky, coupled with the fact that there are plenty of holes into which one might easily have fallen. It was therefore decided to suspend operations until daylight. Meanwhile many rumours had got afloat that a murder and suicide had taken place there, and a woman’s body and that of a man had been found with a revolver lying nearby. Nothing, of course, had been found to justify these rumours, and this morning’s discovery proved them to have been grossly exaggerated.

At an early hour on Tuesday P.S. March, with P.C.’s Priddle and Savage, armed with hurricane lanterns and torches, went to the cave, accompanied by Messrs. Sly and Brown. They entered the opening, crawling through the narrow aperture, and then got into the cave itself. A glance upwards showed a small crevice through which light filtered, but not strongly enough to light the interior. Satisfying themselves that the skeleton was that of a human being, they returned, and Dr. J. M. Harper, the police surgeon, was sent for. A small ladder also was obtained to enable the officials to get down to the lower levels of the cave.

Meanwhile a police officer on duty prevented any unauthorised person from approaching the cave entrance. Later Dr. Harper came, and, crawling over a ground sheet which had been laid to the entrance to the tunnel, he entered the cave with P.S. March. Having examined the bones,

Dr. Harper came out, and the police officers brought out the remains. A small pocket revolver, well rusted, and with what appeared to be a piece of cloth on it, was one of the first relics to be brought in to the light. It was carefully examined by P.S. March, but had such a coating of rust that it was impossible to say whether there were any unspent cartridges in it. It appeared to be .32 calibre.

Meanwhile a box had been obtained in which to put the remains as they were brought out of the cave in several lots wrapped in the ground sheet. They were then more closely examined by Dr. Harper, and P.S. March and placed in the receptacle.

The skull had a hole in the right temple about an inch in diameter, from which radiated one or two cracks, such as might be caused by a revolver shot.

A pair of leather boots was also brought out, with bones and earth inside, and also what appeared to be fibrous root growth of some plant. This would appear to show that the body had been undisturbed for a number of years. A silver watch, which had stopped at 5:15, and a fountain pen were included in one of the lots, and this was followed by more bones, some of which appeared to be almost rotted through, portions of an abdominal appliance, and finally there was a piece of candle covered with earth, a box of matches worn by the weather, and a piece of pencil.

All were carefully put in the box, which after examination by Supt. Stewart, who had come from Frome, and in whose area the discovery was made – the things were removed to the Crown Inn, Bathford, to await the Coroner's inquiry. By mid-day everything had been cleared away.

Who the dead man was, will probably remain a mystery unless there is any number on the watch or revolver, which may aid in establishing identity. The fact that not a vestige of clothing was found, would appear to show that whatever happened, occurred a good while ago. The position of the hole in the skull suggests that the wound probably was self-inflicted, but definite information on this point will probably be forthcoming at the inquest. The possibilities of a murder having taken place and the body having been placed in the cave, can be discounted with a fair amount of confidence, for to get a body into a cave in the position in which the remains were found, would appear to be almost impossible for an ordinary person single handed.

The woods and caves are frequented by much wild life. Evidence of this was the discovery in the same cave of the skull of a fox and while the police were inside they disturbed several bats which flew into the brilliant light outside.

Source – Bath Chronicle and Herald – 8 November 1930

WARLEIGH CAVE SECRET. REMAINS THOSE OF MR. JABEZ HUMPHRIES OF FRESHFORD. SON IDENTIFIES HIS WATCH. FATHER DISAPPEARED SUDDENLY IN MARCH 1909

The secret of the cave in Warleigh Woods was revealed at the inquest at the Crown Inn, Bathford, on Wednesday.

Mr. Henry Humphries gave evidence that he had seen the human remains and the silver watch and the pen found with them.

He identified the watch as that of Jabez Humphries, of Freshford, Somerset, a grocer, who disappeared suddenly on March 23, 1909. There was no doubt about it.

A week ago last Monday two Bristolians in work on overhead wires entered the cave out of curiosity, and were astonished to see the skeleton of a man in the glare of their flashlight. They notified the police who, despite a search during the night with the aid of hurricane lamps and electric torches, could not locate the cave for these lonely woods, known as “Sally in the Wood,” once the haunt of hermits, are riddled with similar caverns; but early the following morning the police came upon the human remains, together with a rusty pistol, a stump of candle, a box of matches, a watch, a fountain pen and holder, a piece of pencil, and a pair of boots. There was a hole in the forehead of the skull.

For the past week the bones, which the police took away in a box, have been at the Crown Inn, Bathford, and in the meantime Sergt. Marsh has carried out unremitting inquiries with the greatest secrecy in the hope of establishing the identity of the man who had remained undiscovered for probably 20 years, which is suggested by the fact that of the coins found near the body, none was later than 1907. Records of missing men have been carefully searched and scores of lines of investigation pursued. The result of these was placed before the Coroner for North Somerset, Mr. W. D. Burrough, on Wednesday.

Superintendent Stewart attended on behalf of Somerset Police. Mr. Charles Thresher was elected foreman of the jury. The oath referred to the “finding of certain human remains.” Henry Humphries said he had viewed the human remains, and had had a silver watch produced to him (which he looked at in court). He identified it as the watch of Jabez Humphries of Freshford, Somerset. A grocer by occupation. The pen was a similar one to that which he used. There was no doubt it was the watch; it had peculiarities about it. Jabez disappeared suddenly – believed on March 23rd, 1909. Inquiries were made without success. He was on good terms with everybody so far as he (witness) was aware. He had never threatened to do himself any injury.

Dr. J. Maurice Harper, police surgeon, of Bath, who was called to see the remains in the cave, into which he groped his way with a police officer said the remains were right away in a crevice, with the head and shoulders slightly inclined upwards and pointing away from Bath. The skeleton had fallen towards the right foot. Witness examined photographs taken by a “Chronicle and Herald” photographer.

There was, he went on, on flesh on the bones, which had been there many years. The bones were removed. He examined each one carefully. The skull was normal except for an irregular aperture about the size of a half-crown in the right temple bone. He surmised that it might have been caused by a bullet. This was search for, but they could not find it, nor could they find an outlet. They discovered part of an old truss. The parts of teeth were of a person about middle age. Everything was well preserved. Witness arrived at the conclusion that the man must have got there himself, as there would be the greatest difficulty in putting anyone there. In his opinion he died from a revolver shot wound, such as would be caused by the weapon produced and found in the cave.

Superintendent Stewart : As a matter of fact, it was a most difficult place to get in? – I know that, sir (laughter).

It was necessary to have a ladder? – That is so. There was a 10 ft. drop.

Replying to a juryman, witness said the body must have been there 20 years.

A bit of cloth was produced. The juryman said it was wonderfully well-preserved.

P.S. Marsh said that fragment was all that had been left.

The doctor said it was a very dry place.

A juryman : The ink in the pen has not corroded.

The Coroner examined the photographs taken for the police by our photographer.

P.S. Marsh said the weapon was loaded but could not be moved.

Supt. Stewart : Neither leg was broken.

A juryman asked the doctor if it was a case of suicide?

The Coroner (to Dr. Harper) : It is quite possible the wound was self inflicted? This is as far as you can go? Yes it is.

The son (recalled) said he believed his father wore a truss. There was one in the house.

Edwin Sly, 1 Langham Road, Knowle, Bristol, P.O. engineer, said on Monday Oct. 27th he and a fellow workman named Brown entered the cave. On the Friday previous he had found the cave, crawled in, found there was a drop, and decided to go in on Monday with a lamp. This they did. The cave was nameless. Witness, on reaching the lower level, saw two large bones. He called Brown, who followed into the cave. They looked at the bones, and saw what looked like ribs, also a pair of boots with bones in them, and a revolver lying on the right-hand side. They moved the bones before they realised what it was, but never saw the skull. Returning to work they notified the inspector who informed the police. Witness had never been in the cave before. He only knew the district slightly.

Juryman : You were having a casual look round in the dinner hour? – That is so.

Albert George Henry Brown, Myrtle House, Wick, Bristol P. O. engineer said he had heard evidence given by Mr. Edwin Sly. It was true. He could add nothing.

P.S. March described his search with P.C.'s Savage and Priddle, after the witnesses Brown and Sly had pointed out the cave, which was 100 yards from the main road. By getting down on their hands and knees they entered the cave about 8 ft., then dropped down about 8 ft. Ten feet further on he saw a pair of boots and a human skull. Acting on Coroner's instructions he called Dr. Harper, eventually brought the remains out into the open, and finally removed them to the Crown, Bathford. With the remains was a five chamber revolver, which contained four live shells and evidently one empty shell. It was impossible to open the weapon. There was a fountain pen and case, 5s. in money (2s. 6d. dated 1900, the latest dated 1907, mixed with earth; a rake had been used, even to collect the bones.

In the Police records appeared : "Missing from his home in Freshford, Jabez Humphries, aged about 55, height 5 ft. 6 in., fresh complexion, hair light brown, whiskers and moustache; dressed in a dark suit and cap and dark overcoat. This man is Clerk to the Parish Council and Assistant Overseer."

The entry was dated March 23rd, 1909.

The Police officer said he went to Freshford on Tuesday night and saw the minute books of the Parish Council and the rate books and he could find no evidence of anything having been wrong with the books or money. There was an entry recording the disappearance and ordering a letter of condolence to be sent to Mrs. Humphries.

Answering the foreman, witness said nothing in the cave had been disturbed for years.

The jury were away for some time and at the conclusion of their private deliberations the foreman said, "On the evidence we find it was Mr. Jabez Humphries, and our verdict is he was "found shot."

The jury expressed their sympathy with the family and thanked Mr. Humphries for having come forward as he had done to give evidence.

MUCH RESPECTED – MR. JABEZ LIFE IN FRESHFORD.

The chief topic of conversation in Freshford at the moment is the remarkable solution of the mystery.

It was from Freshford on March 23rd, 1909, that Mr. Jabez Humphries, a villager disappeared. There were various conjectures as to his fate, but nothing definite was ascertained until the lonely cave gave up its grim secret and his remains were identified.

Inquiries made by a representative of this paper at Freshford on Thursday showed that there are still people in the village who remember Mr. Humphries, for, in the capacity of overseer and clerk to the Parish Council he was known to practically everybody. He was the licensee of the Golden Lion Inn in conjunction with which he ran a grocery business.

Mr. T. A. Morris, of Freshford Post Office, said that he knew Mr. Humphries well. He was much respected in the village and was generally regarded a "good sport." Other residents of Freshford spoke highly of Mr. Humphries. One of them said, "Nobody here thought he was dead. The popular belief was that he had simply left the district."

c. 1910 – Wookey Hole

Source – Somerset and West of England Advertiser – 23 October 1914 – page 5 (extract)

ADVENTURE IN THE MENDIP CAVES

An interesting account of the adventures which had befallen those who explored the Mendip caverns was delivered by Mr. H. E. E. Balch, F.S.A., at the Church Room on Tuesday evening, under the auspices of the St. Cuthbert's branch of the C.E.M.S. Unfortunately, troubles with the lantern caused some inconvenience, but in spite of this those present followed the lecturer's remarks with great attention. Exploration, said Mr. Balch, must be accompanied by a considerable amount of risk, and the various "thrillers" he afterwards disclosed fully justified his remark.

Mr. Balch quoted one of his own adventures which might easily have cost him his life. At a time when the river was low, by means of a raft he proceeded to explore unaccompanied, underneath an arch of the river. He soon found himself in a new and large chamber, but this was not enough he wanted to know what was beyond. For this purpose he poured a can of benzine on the water, and knowing how this would spread over the surface and when ignited would light up the darkness ahead, put a match to the liquid. "But," said the lecturer. "I reckoned without the tide, which I found, when too late, was flowing toward me. I was at once surrounded by a sheet of flame, which threatened to burn me and the raft." By keeping his head, Mr. Balch extricated himself from his perilous position through rocking the craft about and beating the surface of the water with his oar. His presence of mind saved him, and, incidentally, spared him to give us much knowledge of the Mendip caves which would not have been available but for his venturesome efforts since that day.

28 August 1910 – Eastwater Cavern

Sources –

Balch's Mendip, Its Swallet Caves 2nd Edition 1948 – pages 35 to 36

A Man Deep in Mendip – The Diaries of Harry Savory 1910 – 1921 provides date page 3

An event with all the elements of possible tragedy, but with its humorous side also, took place before the 1914 – 18 war. Mendip was the chosen area for army manoeuvres and there were thousands of men in camp on our hills. At Priddy some of the officers heard of the cave of Eastwater and wished to explore it. They prevailed upon some of our cave men to take them down, and I intended to go. The weather became very threatening, and I advised cancelling the trip for fear of possible flood, and for the purpose of stopping it the others went to the rendezvous, only to find that the visitors had gone on down the cave. They could do no less than follow. At the base of the boulders where they came up with them, there was heavy downpour, but only to the extent of discomfort, and it was decided to go on. The exploration proceeded as usual till the party arrived within sound of the waterfall below the second vertical descent. They had heard the distant booming echoing up the cave, and, as they drew near, this was becoming an ominous roar, unlike anything in their experience. Realising that some great change must have occurred in the weather to cause such a torrent they decided to return forthwith. So far, the flood was out of sight following lower channels. When they reached the head of the Canyon and Mr. Troup, with an electric lamp, essayed the passage of the Boulder Chamber, he was met by a raging torrent pouring in from every direction and making the ascent utterly impossible. Thus, they were trapped and no one knew to what an extent these cavities became flooded under such conditions. Two of the party had been members of an expedition shortly before, which had discovered a connecting way between this and the 380-ft. way, and it was decided to attempt the exit that way. The link between the two routes, however, is a narrow chimney, difficult to pass downwards, but much more so when a climb is attempted. The taller and more slender of the party with difficulty made the ascent, and a process of selection reduced their numbers to two, whose bodily diameter had not been planned on such ascetic lines. To them the climb was impossible, though they tried bravely, urged by the sound of the downpour in the chamber close by. Those in the upper level had a rope with which they tried to pull them up by the way they themselves had passed, but failed. Then it was that a second chimney was discovered, and another man was hauled up with difficulty. Finally, the last man undressed and was drawn up the narrow way to safety, doubtless lamenting, not silently, the generous proportions with which Nature had endowed him. The fact that all these limestone waterways have large numbers of fossils projecting from the rocks, encrinites, jagged little corals and shells, may perhaps help the reader to realise the nature of the remarks that accompanied the passage.

By the upper route it was found just possible to pass and the party emerged, to the great relief of their friends on the surface, who had become alarmed for their safety, when a great cloudburst had converted the little stream into a raging torrent, with a whirlpool at the top of the entrance pit. The run-off must have been as rapid as the passing of the storm, but the risk was very great and would have been much more so had they been caught in the pot holes far below.

Source - Hand written pages inserted in a copy of Mendip It's Swallet Caves And Rock Shelters, opposite Page 70. These notes were written by Robert D. R. Troup who was a pioneer M.N.R.C. member who came from Wrington, North Somerset. He was always known by his third Christian name, Reginald, as his father was also a Robert. (In the possession of Alan Gray)

We met some of the officers at Wookey Hole on Saturday and they said they would like to go down Eastwater next day as there were no manoeuvres. We arranged to meet at 11 o'clock. Baker, Kentish, myself and a couple of others. Having gone down fairly deeply and heard the roar of the water we decided to return as the officers should have been out for mess at 7 o'clock. We saw slight signs of water on the way up till we reached the chamber at the bottom of the boulder pile. We then heard water rushing and splashing. On entering the chamber we found numerous cascades falling from the roof and conditions to say the very least very wet. I volunteered to try the small climb up to and through into the 280' [380'] Way, but had only got

a short way when I was drenched to the skin by the rush of water and my acetylene lamp extinguished. I had to return and reported no go. We retreated to the head of the canyon where 100 days before we had found a connection with the upper traverse by a tight squeeze in the west wall where there was a narrow rift into a small chamber. E. A. Baker as most experienced explorer was in charge and went first with a couple of others to go on across the traverse of the 280' [380'] Way and report conditions there. All except a couple of officers negotiated the squeezes. Here was a nice fix to be in. However on our visit 100 days before we had noticed a chimney near Kentish's Cairn. This opened in the ceiling about 4' above the canyon. I took charge and asked for a rope to be dropped down the chimney and lassoing one of the officers round the chest I helped him up into the chimney which he managed to pass. I then sent up the others. I finally had to negotiate it myself. All this time I was soaked and shivering with teeth chattering. With help from above I got up into the chimney. By the time I was up Baker had returned from across the traverse with the wind properly up. "A gale blowing from 280' [380'] Way and torrents of water and all candles extinguished." I then took charge and assembled everyone in the low sloping chamber of Kentish's Cairn. We sorted pooled candles and put out all except one. Pooled out remaining sandwiches and I dolled out one each as it was impossible to say how long we might be kept in by the water. After a short while I led the way back across the traverse and found conditions must have improved enormously as the 280' [380'] Way was quite passable. I then went on and made my way up through the falling water to the base of the boulder pile and then called back for the next man. We all got out safely about 10 o'clock. Meanwhile above ground there had been a fair hullabaloo. When the water going into the cave shaft got bad the wind was properly up. The General was told officers were below and possibly being drowned. Balch was sent for to Wells but could not be found for some time. Plans were discussed to try and dam the water and goodness knows what else. There was of course no need for excitement as owing to the numerous old passages and the depth of the cave no flooding of the upper chambers was possible. The greatest danger would have been a possible shifting of part of the boulder pile when indeed we might have been entombed. All caves were put out of bounds for troops and that ended our cave hunting with the Army.

Source – Unpublished - Dave Irwin – February 1998 (Edited by Alan Gray)

THE EASTWATER CAVERN FLOOD

Introduction

In the country 1910 was a momentous year for the British public at large. On the national home front Edward VII had died, and the famous Crippen murder trial was fascinating a morbid public.

On Mendip, the regular army camps were assembling at Priddy and Crapnell for a fortnight of manoeuvres. The men arriving at Wells were paraded through the city streets and then sent off to the camp site at Eastwater.

In August, the Priddy Fair was held that year on Monday the twentieth. The weather was fine early in the week, but by the end of the week the weather broke bringing exceptionally heavy rain. The papers were full of reports from various parts of the country and the local Somerset region. The moors were flooded, gales combined with the rain had seriously damaged crops and the army camps quickly became a quagmire, so much so that the Commanding Officer seriously considered de-camping and moving off the hill to Wells. Two men were taken ill with pneumonia and taken to Shepton Mallet Hospital - as a result of the atrocious conditions. Most Mendip cavers are familiar with the near disastrous flood that swept through Eastwater Cavern in August 1910. It has been recorded in the two most popular books relating to Mendip

caving in the early part of the twentieth century. The event involved cavers from Wookey Hole, Wells and four subalterns from the 2nd Northamptonshire Regiment and this was possibly the first self-rescue took which took place in August 1910 in Eastwater Cavern.

Source Material

The 1910 'Great Flood' of Eastwater Cavern is well known to most Mendip cavers from the variety of accounts published by Balch,⁴ Baker,⁵ and Johnson.⁶ Less well-known is the account that was published in the SMCC Journal in 1963.

The main source - Balch - is misleading and avoids the stark truth on mistakes having been made by his 'cave-men'. To some extent this is understandable for the book was intended for general public consumption. In fact, Balch wrote two accounts - the first for the M.N.R.C.

Report 1911 washes over the event in one sentence! His later account shows some involvement by himself but this is not substantiated in the other reports.

A secondary source - Peter Johnson is an erroneous report.

However, there are two contemporary detailed reports, one by Baker in a national magazine [1911]⁴ and one that was published in Wells Journal for 1st September (Appendix 2) and then there is also a manuscript notebook account by Colonel Barton - un-dated - but written shortly after the event. This latter account was published in Speleological literature in 1963 in the S.M.C.C. Journal [3(10)9-15] without additional comment except to say how it came to be in the hands of the current owner, Fred Davies of Oakhill. The original transcript made on the infamous 'Gestetner' stencils, contained a number of typographical errors, some serious. In Appendix 1 is a new and checked transcript, made by the author.

Working on Eastwater history - comparing the various accounts and the S.M.C.C. accounts there were several important differences.

However, in 1965 a carbon copy manuscript came into the possession of Fred Davies, then Honorary Editor of the Shepton Mallet Caving Club Journal. This account differed in minor details that are important to the overall view of what actually happened. Nonetheless the importance of this document is immense as it gives a contemporary first-hand account of what happened on this famous incident in the history of Mendip caving. So, what did happen and why are there variations relating to the basic parts of the story?

As a result of the new manuscript and the fact that the two basic reference books were written over twenty years after the event, the writer has searched for contemporary accounts, which are discussed below, and pieced together the events of that difficult day 88 years ago.

Great Flood, Sunday, 28th August 1910

For many years prior to the First World War, various army regiments held a summer camp at Priddy. Set up in the Eastwater area or on the north side of North Hill several thousand soldiers would invade the village during the summer months each year. On one such occasion, in 1910,

⁴Balch, Herbert E., 1936, Mendip, Its Swallet Caves and Rock Shelters. John Wright & Sons. Pages 24 to 37.

⁵Baker, E.A., 1932, Caving episodes of underground exploration. Chapman & Hall.

⁶Johnson, Peter, 1967, The History of Mendip Caving. David & Charles. Page 61.

the 58th Northamptonshire Regiment were camping at Priddy and a group of young subalterns including (later Colonel), L.W. Barton arrived on the scene and who were, unknowingly, to become part of Mendip caving history. Fortunately, Barton wrote an account of the visit which may have been the draft for a regimental report of the incident that was to follow.

At this time Ernest Baker wanted to descend to the bottom of the cave to inspect any changes that might have taken place since the last visit in 1908.⁷ He wrote that there was always the unexpected when entering this cave ... one always seems to be on the brink of unparalleled experiences.

A party of men physically fit to carry out a safe descent of Eastwater, and prepared to face the hardships of a day's navying underground at their own charges, cannot always be got together. During the week, several of the 'Wookey Hole cavers' had met up with the Army officers who were enthused sufficiently to join the local group on a visit to Wookey Hole. The 'Wookey Hole cavers' were probably Troup, Webb and Wheeler. Baker was there at the same time for he wrote:

I gladly enlisted some officers of the Northamptonshire Regiment in the adventure .. and had joined us in a visit to some newly found galleries in Wookey Hole

The subalterns interest in the pastime had been fired when they were informed that the locals were going into Eastwater Cavern later that week. Discussions followed and the fact that Eastwater Cavern was still being explored fired Barton's imagination resulting in him and his friends being invited to join Baker and Troup on their next visit to the cave on 28th August.

Two earlier trips had taken place that year and their new discoveries was to play an important part in the events that was to unfold. Harold Kentish had reached the bedding planes above the Canyon and the route from entrance to First Rift Chamber to Hallelujah Hole had been discovered only a couple of weeks before.

The morning in question was wet. It has been reliably reported that it had been one of the wettest summers for some thirty years. The flatlands at the foot of Mendip was badly flooded over an area of several miles. Baker was in his bungalow (at Rookham?) and it was raining heavily when Troup arrived informing him that two of the local cavers had started out and gone ahead. Baker wrote in an account a year later.⁸

' ... We cycled after them through the downpour and the wind, picking up another enthusiast on the way, undecided whether we ought to put a stop to the thing at once or take the opportunity, by going down a short distance, of seeing what the cave looked like under such conditions. At Eastwater Farm we learned that the four officers had punctually kept their appointment, and our friends had entered the swallet with them, leaving certain coils of rope for us to bring down. Thus, very much against our better judgement, nine of us, men of mature age and some discretion, committed ourselves to an undertaking which on such a day was foolhardy in the extreme. ...'

The stream entering the entrance shaft was at a slightly higher level than normal and there was no sign that the water was rising; though Baker commented that if there had been any thought at all of all the water falling on North Hill were the collect and flow down the narrow channel into the cave they dismissed it. They worked their way into the boulder ruckle and on down into Boulder Chamber where the water was cascading from the roof. Baker reflected that the size of the waterfall had been this for many years and should have turned back at this point.⁹

⁷[Baker, E.A.], 1911, An Adventure Underground. Blackwoods Magazine, Vol. CXC - No. MCL, pp. 194-202 [August]

⁸[Baker, E.A.], 1911, [as above]

⁹ Baker realised the potential difficulties if the cave flooded and the paragraph must indicate that there was criticism of taking a party underground in such weather conditions. The August weather on Mendip can be quite

But conditions were much as he knew it from past trips. However, excitement spurred them on and passing through the crawl they entered the Canyon. Passing the 'S' Bend they entered the 1st Rift Chamber where they had lunch. With such a large party, it took them two and a half hours to reach this point. Lunch over they moved back to the side passage that allows access to the head of the first Twin Vertical. Roping the men down the pitch took over an hour. Baker descended first and, he commented later, with –

' ... candle in one hand and grabbing the fixed rope with the other, I slipped through into the chasm. It is a wide, irregular fissure, altogether about 100 feet deep, but our route did not take us quite to the bottom. By clinging to the ledges of the nearer wall, one descends obliquely, until, at a depth of 60 feet, a side passage reached leading towards the final vertical. For the best part of an hour it was my business to stand on the lip of this passage and guide the novices across the 40 - foot pit underneath, which seemed to have a deadly fascination for our guests ... '

Eventually all the men that were to descend congregated at the head of the second vertical but the lack of a third rope ended the trip at this point, leaving a sizeable party at the head of the first vertical to assist in the haul up. At the top of the second pitch the noise of the cascading water was thunderous and the men realised that

' ... beyond all our calculations had happened overhead. Nothing short of a heavy cloud-burst on Mendip could have created this new torrent; ... We had to confess to the three of the Northhamptons ... that we had heedlessly led them into a serious scrape. At any rate, we were in the same boat ourselves; they would not hear of our apologising, and cheerfully trusted to us to get them out. ... '

Re-ascending the first vertical the party moved back into the 1st Rift Chamber but the flow of water seeping out of many of the fissures and cascading over the floor produced a sight quite different from what had been there only a few hours before. Moving the party and all of the tackle back up through the 'S' Bend, now quite wet, took a considerable time and on reaching the entrance to Boulder Chamber the water level was so high that there was no way through. Eventually, Troup and Baker climbed to the roof of the Canyon, via Baker's Chimney and the rest of the party followed. Some coming up via the tight rift and others, not able to make it that way were roped up the external wall. Crossing through Kentish Cairn and on down the Upper Traverse they gained access to the 380ft. Way. Their luck changed for the better; they had all expected to remain at this spot, in their sodden clothes for many hours until such time that the flood had abated. The water flow into the cave was falling and the lead men made a move to the ruckle. Finding it passable they all made the surface safely at about 10.30 that night.¹⁰

A fortnight later two men attempted to recover the tackle that had been left at Boulder Chamber but were unable to get through. A later try succeeded but the route through the ruckle had changed and in Baker's words:¹¹

' ... but the boulders in the great Ruckle had been left in a threatening state, and big cavities had opened in the chamber below. Their journey to and fro had been so risky that it was decided to fire a charge among the boulders, in the hope of shifting those most dangerously poised. A bomb was exploded with inconsiderable results, but no one has been in any distance since. The next visit to the bottom of Eastwater, if it is still possible to reach it, will be of unusual interest. Ernest A. Baker. '

treacherous - flash flooding if thunder storms follow dry, hot weather or alternatively - following prolonged rain the caves will rise to spate levels very quickly.

¹⁰The various accounts of this event are all common except for one major difference. The Barton account omits the fact that the party entered the cave as two separate groups and so committed the later party including Baker and Troup to follow. No doubt the Barton account was a 'political' version of what happened not wanting his superiors to suspect foolishness on the part of Barton and his fellow officers.

¹¹[Baker, E.A.], 1911, [as above], p.202

Much later, Baker musing on a thought what if they had on that day successfully passed Swildon's Hole 40ft Pot, wrote:¹²

'... it would have gone hard indeed with us had we found ourselves beyond the waterfall between the upper and lower series on the day of our imprisonment below the Ruckle of Boulders in Eastwater. ...'

The various accounts written about this event gives a remarkable feel of the cave and the route they took is clearly described. The climbing of the First Vertical by rope and the use of pulleys, albeit only 25ft to the ledge, would put considerable strains on many of the modern-day cavers. The climbing ability and stamina of the 'cave-men' during this period must be classed as equal to the best of the modern cavers who have the comfort of ladders or SRT equipment; this tackle not being available I doubt if many people would be visiting the bottom of Eastwater today! A report appeared of this event shortly after in the Wells Journal ¹³ and differs slightly from the account given by Barton

Whatever the verdict on the trip, the fact is that the northern part of Somerset had received extremely wet weather flooding the flats at the foot of Mendip for several miles¹⁴

Conclusions

The accounts of this incident by Baker and Balch differ only in detail. Baker's is perhaps the more relevant because of his first-hand experience and he acknowledges the weather as being a severe problem that cave explorers must take into consideration. Balch (1948) on the other hand is more scathing and though not mentioning Baker by name he states that he had warned the leaders that because of the weather conditions it would be inadvisable to undertake this trip. In the earlier Balch account (1926) it is at times hard to believe that what he wrote then bore any resemblance to the Barton account - the problems of receiving information third hand - further he states that his brother Reginald was a member of the Troup team - did Barton forget or was he one of the two farmers? The number of men on this trip appears to have been 15; eight with Baker and 6 including the officers

Was Barton attempting to clear himself of having undertaken a foolhardy action? Had the reporter misunderstood the situation, if so the definite statement '... but on the arrival of the local party it was found that the visitors had gone down...' is nothing less than fiction. Both Balch in his Swallet Caves of Mendip (all editions) and Baker in Caving, 1932, agree that the army party (with or without the less experienced local cavers), depending upon the account that is read, had descended the cave before Baker and his associates had arrived.

The reader must decide for himself.

Appendix 1

¹²Baker, Caving, pp19

¹³Wells Journal, 1st September 1910. Barton's account implies that the party all entered the cave at the same time. However, the Wells Journal differs significantly on the point. The relevant section is reprinted in full in Appendix 2

¹⁴Baker, E., 1932, [as above]

Colonel Barton's account transcribed from a 'carbon copy', unsigned, manuscript but annotated in a different hand: 'Written by Col Barton, then a young officer in Camp.' The punctuation and spelling of this transcript is exactly as written:

PRIDDY CAMP, Wells, Somerset

Sunday, August 28, 1910

As some of the 58th had met Wookey Hole Cavern, certain local cave experts, the latter very kindly invited a party of ours to go down East Water hole Cave, about 3/4 of a mile from our camp.

It being a long time since I had had any holiday away from Mess Accounts and Correspondence I took the opportunity of a day off, and after early Morning Service joined the party at 11 a.m.

Our hosts were Dr. Baker from Kent who has done some climbing in Switzerland, and writes books on the Mendip Hills, Mr. Troup who lives in Wells & has been at the game for some ten years, two young farmers who live near, and a Mr. Bonner from London who studies Archaeology, but who was new to Cave exploration - Russell, Capell, and Elston with myself made up four from the 58th - all novices.

Soon after 11 we started down a small shaft about 15ft deep an easy climb down projecting rocks, then worked through a small tunnel to the boulder basin which is like a sugar basin some 80ft deep filled with large boulders instead of sugar and one winds ones way, sliding & crawling between the chinks. We were armed with Candles for after leaving the entrance there was no light below, three acetylene lamps were carried, and I had an electric lamp as a reserve with a spare battery.

We now came to a point where surface water poured from above in a fine cascade, clear of which we clambered along a ledge, a rough wet slope on one side, a solid rock on the other, then we came to a very small tunnel through which one could just wriggle head first, in one place bent like an S. We now came to more open passages & clambered along the sharp shelving rocks, a very small stream of water trickling along a V shaped gully 4 to 8 feet below. There were no stalactites in this subterranean waterway save here & there a small one of a few inches. The waterway deepened to some 10 ft & one worked along by half lying against one side on a sloping ledge & pushing one's feet against the opposite wall. After a few yards of this we got good sitting room on wet rocks and had lunch, about 2 p.m. We then commenced the 2nd part of the exploration.

Taking a side gallery we worked down to a large chamber & stood on the edge of a natural shaft some 100ft deep a vertical drop into a black abyss. Ropes had been brought and Dr. Baker & Mr. Troup were down below just a faint gleam of their lights could be seen in the inky blackness over the edge. The guests were asked to go on. Now in broad day light I feel extraordinary uncomfortable looking over the stair case of an hotel, but moral courage was not enough to make me honest & say I preferred to stay on top and in a few moments with a life line under my arms, I was sliding down the second rope and dangling in the dark. Down, down, down for 50 feet then one was just above the men waiting below on a ledge, but some feet away from it horizontally. "Now swing in to the ledge" so kicking the rocks at the side one swung on to the ledge & had a firm footing again.

We then crawled head first down another small tunnel & came to a crack in the rocks through which one could only squeeze oneself with difficulty & then we came to another vertical shaft some 100 ft deep. There were no more ropes so we terminated our trip some 400 feet deep below ground. The experts had been down this shaft also on previous occasions. Magnesium wire only lighted up the upper part of this well but we heard stones bounding down against the sides for a long time before the final splash came. A heavy cascade was falling into this well from a point in the roof some way off us, & roared like a huge water pump. It was now about 5 p.m. and we turned back.

At the ledge on the first shaft one put on the life line took hold of the climbing rope & gave the signal to those above to haul away then out one swung to the centre of the shaft. Before I got to the top I had very good reason to regret that past months have be given to handling a pen instead of doing gymnastics & there was not much wind left or strength in the arms, although the men at the top practically hauled me up the whole way.

An electric light strapped to my belt was certainly better than carrying a candle in ones mouth. The experts scaled up the sides without the men above taking their weight & one has been known to go down & up the 60 ft in the dark without any rope or life line. We moved back the way we came. The music if the water had now increased & on reaching the first cascade it was found that heavy rain had swelled the torrent & our retreat was cut off. The deluge splashing over the narrow footway which would have instantly extinguished candles and lamps.

Now the cave experts are made of stuff rather better than average men & holding a council they started to economise the lights for once lights are expended the game is over. They decided to try and work up through another passage to one side of the water.

Dr. Baker squeezed himself up through narrow slit some 15 ft high, so narrow that neither Russell nor I could force our way two others followed & worked their way to a chamber above us, then let down a rope through a natural chimney some 25 feet high & using feet knees, elbows and hands one struggled through to

another narrow gallery. A sandwich was issued to all & the remains about 2 more kept for the possible contingency of a 24 hours stay below ground.

We started again down a sharp rift & then turned off and had 50 yds sliding in spread eagle fashion along a steep slippery slope of rock which shelved to the unknown regions above as the rock came down to within a few inches so that we were like the ham in the sandwich. So narrow was the slit that at times one had to take out the things in ones breast pocket to squeeze along.

With practically nothing to grip with ones hands one had to keep from slipping by pushing ones back and heels against the upper part of the sandwich.

Occasionally one dislodged a small stone which went rattling away to the depths beneath. Rounding a corner we got to a natural water worn staircase and climbing became easier. At the top we got into a small shower bath but passing through the leaders reported that the cascade had lessened in volume so working through another crack in the rocks we turned in the main water channel. The leaders took on my electric light and acetylene lamps & pushing up through the showers of dripping water turned round and gave us light for our candles were soon extinguished. On a few yards of this and we were again in the boulder basin, clear of the water rush and very shortly at about 11.30 at night we reached the surface to find some half dozen of the 58th. awaiting anxiously our return. The heavy rain all day had swelled the small stream & they were much concerned to see the water pouring down the entrance to the cavern. It was a curious experience. I certainly admired the skill resources of our cave experts to whom this water difficulty was also a novelty.

Of an old suit of service dress uniform I had not much left all the prominent parts of the garment having disappeared.

A hot bath & blankets were very acceptable after the prospect of a 24 hour stay below ground in drenched clothes with the likelihood of failure of lighting arrangements. So ended a Mendip holiday.

Appendix 2

Report of the great flood at Eastwater Cavern on 28th August, 1910 published in the Wells Journal [use of italics is solely that of Irwin to emphasis comments in the general text]

In a Mendip Cavern - Military Officers Exciting Adventure -Trapped by Flood Water

The danger of exploration in the great caverns of the Mendip's were clearly shown a few days ago, when a number of officers from the camp at Priddy visited the great Eastwater Cavern, under the guidance of a party of local explorers. These included Mr. R. D. H. Troup, Dr. Baker, Mr. Reginald Balch, and Mr. Wheeler. The officers numbered four, and where from the 2nd. Northhamptons. There had been considerable rain, and a consultation was held as to the advisability of postponing the attempt, and this was conditionally decided upon, *but on arrival of the local party it was found that the visitors had gone down, and had reached a point where the first serious check in the descent is experienced.* Here the appearance of the water was such that the descent seemed safe enough, and against their better judgement the party proceeded. All went well till they reached a point far in the depth of the hills, where a huge chasm opens at the explorers feet, and his ears are asserted by the roar of water rushing and tumbling along the floor of the chasm 200 feet below. The explorers through devious ways and torturous passages, had reached a depth of 400 feet below the surface, and the thunderous roar of the hidden water in the night-black chasm below roused serious misgivings as to what was happening above their heads nearer the surface and they turned back. When they reached what is known as the first rift chamber where a few hours before they lunched comparatively in the dry, and where usually there is a cascade from the roof and some trickles here and there in other parts, they were astonished to see the change which a few hours had wrought. From every possible inlet water was pouring down in a deluge and forming leaping cascades with dashing spray which soaked the party to the skin. Mr. Troup climbed to a point where, standing on a pebble covered ledge, and amidst falling water, which completely drenched him through and through he could catch sight of the pit which they had recently descended, and through which lay their way to the surface. It was a simple millrace, against which no living thing could stand, and as for carrying a light, that was utterly impossible. He returned to the party below and reported the unwelcome news. A hurried consultation was held, and it was decided to attempt a detour by a difficult, narrow, and intricate way, only discovered a week or two ago, and so endeavour to reach a point beyond the flooded pit. Dr. Baker, with one companion, went to a point known as the 380 foot way, where a bye way leaves this channel. He had no sooner thrust his head through the small entrance than he encountered a very turmoil of water with driving wind and spray which effectively drove him back and extinguished his light. He returned to the party, who began dismally to look forward to a night in the cavern in their sodden clothes. It was resolved, however, to break out, and a move was made for the 380 foot way. Using acetylene lamps and an electric torch, which, fortunately, one of the party carried, the channel was entered and climbed. There was, providentially, a lull in the rush of water, and the drenched explorers managed to reach the "boulder pile," close to, but on the right

side, of the flooded pit, and soon were once more on the surface of Mendip, with a rousing welcome from many friends from the adjacent camp, who had spent several hours anxiously watching the torrents of water, pouring in on their friends below, and discussing the possibility of damming the torrents to enable them to come out. Luckily this was not done, or the consequences might have been much more serious.'

Source – Londonderry Sentinel – Saturday 3 September 1910

TRAPPED UNDERGROUND – OFFICERS' ADVENTURES

Four officers of the 2nd Northhamptons, with a number of local explorers, had an exciting experience in an underground cavern, 400 feet below the Mendip Hills. They were trapped by torrents of water. It had been arranged to explore the great Eastwater Cavern. But when the local party arrived at the mouth they seriously deliberated whether it would not be better to abandon the attempt, in view of the recent downpour of rain, which, they considered, might have swollen the torrents inside to a dangerous extent. They found, however, that the officers had already gone some way into the cave, so joined them, all the party passing some tortuous tunnels to the point where a huge chasm opens at the explorer's feet, and the roar of rushing waters is heard 200 feet below. Then they turned back. But when they came to the first rift chamber, as it is called – a great cave, which when they left it was practically dry – they found cascades of water pouring down through every possible inlet from the ground above. Spray drenched them all to the skin, and when one of them, Mr. Troup, climbed onto a ledge amid the falling water, and looked up the pit down which they had descended, he saw the water was pouring through like a millrace, making it impossible to get back. The party dropped their tackle and tried another way out – a narrow path only discovered a few weeks ago. Here, again, rushing water met them and drove them back. Meanwhile their friends above were becoming extremely anxious, and even considered damming the stream which was pouring into the cavern. At last, however, the explorers found the water-fall in the second and more difficult passage was declining, and they managed to scramble through.

1911 – Lamb Leer Cavern

Source – Balch's Mendip, Its Swallet Caves 2nd Edition 1948 – page 46

Another adventure years later befell the then chaplain of Wells Theological College and his plucky sister, and the story was told by him in the Wide World Magazine. They had heard of Lamb Lair and thought it would be a fine experience to explore it alone. By that time, the entrance shaft was in a state of decay, and the ladders had been strengthened by us with struts across the pit. They were afraid to use the windlass, and planned to climb a knotted rope, and to use a second rope as a life-line. Anyone with experience of rope work on a free descent would have told them it was impossible. The free rope was at once twisted round the fixed rope, and presently Mr. Marle was in the unenviable position of hanging in mid-air with the lifeline fixed round his lightly clad body, unable to go up or down, and with the rope ever cutting deeper. His sister tried in vain to lift the weight of ropes and man, and at last left him and went away for help. With that dread of the underworld which is the Mendip labourer's inheritance from years of stifling in the charcoal fumes of the lead mines, not a soul could she get to come to the rescue till at last, by the Waldegrave pond near Priddy, two gentlemen who were fishing came to her aid, and Mr. Marle was got out, wiser than he went in, and a lucky escape with no serious injury. A kindly providence watched over them all, for the passage of the entrance shaft was the most dangerous part of the rescue work. The shaft afterwards collapsed.

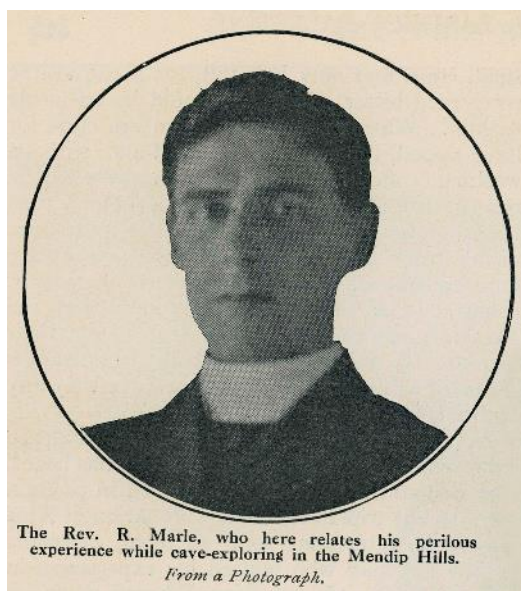
Source – Marle, R., 1912, Hung up in a cave. Wide World Mag 28(166)346-350(Jan)

Of course, I was a fool - though, like many another, it needed a practical demonstration to convince me of the fact; and I should like to plead a fool's privilege and, as far as possible, hide my identity, but an adamant Editor refuses to allow me to blush unseen. It will suffice to say that the district was one of England's happiest cave-hunting grounds - the Mendip Hills, the time a glorious summer's day in July 1911, when my sister and I decided to explore an out-of-the-way cave known locally as Lamb's Bottom - a place where mining operations were carried on not many years ago.

We set off on bicycles and arrived at the spot in time for an early lunch; but, heated by our exertions, we were no match for a host of flies, and decided to have our little meal far from their impertinent attentions, below the ground.

Knowing something of the moist and muddy nature of a cave, we had come prepared for the fray, and intended to divest ourselves of the respectable part of our costume at the first convenient spot below the surface.

The cave itself, somewhat similar in appearance to a "pot-hole," has a preliminary perpendicular descent of some forty to fifty feet; this is simplified to some extent by a series of ladders fastened to the side, though hardly safe, so rotted are they by exposure to the damp.



The Rev. R. Marle, who here relates his perilous experience while cave-exploring in the Mendip Hills.
From a Photograph.

Probably for this reason the uppermost ladder has been broken off, and its topmost rung is about twelve feet below the surface of the earth, so that a careful scramble down the rocky side is necessary as a start. This we successfully negotiated, and a little farther down we left our outer garments on a ledge and prepared to attack the cave in what was practically bathing costume only. Having wormed our way between the rungs of the ladder - a course that was necessary owing to an old fall of earth which had partially blocked the way - there was little more difficulty for a time; the rope (a strong cart-line about a hundred and sixty feet in length) and a bag containing lunch, magnesium wire, candles, etc., were

carried safely to the bottom of the first descent, an acetylene lamp providing excellent light for the purpose. Hardly more difficult was the crawl down a little slide of loose stones and a scramble through an eighteen-inch hole, and we were in the passage of the cave proper. A hundred yards or so, past walls of rock literally covered with beautiful stalactite formation, brought us to a chamber nearly filled by an enormous mass of stalagmite, where we enjoyed a lunch un-harassed by the buzzing pests above.

Lunch over, our real task commenced. Some fifty yards beyond the scene of the lunch the narrow passage suddenly ended, partly blocked up by a small hand-winch of primitive type. In front, nothing was to be seen but pitchy blackness. The

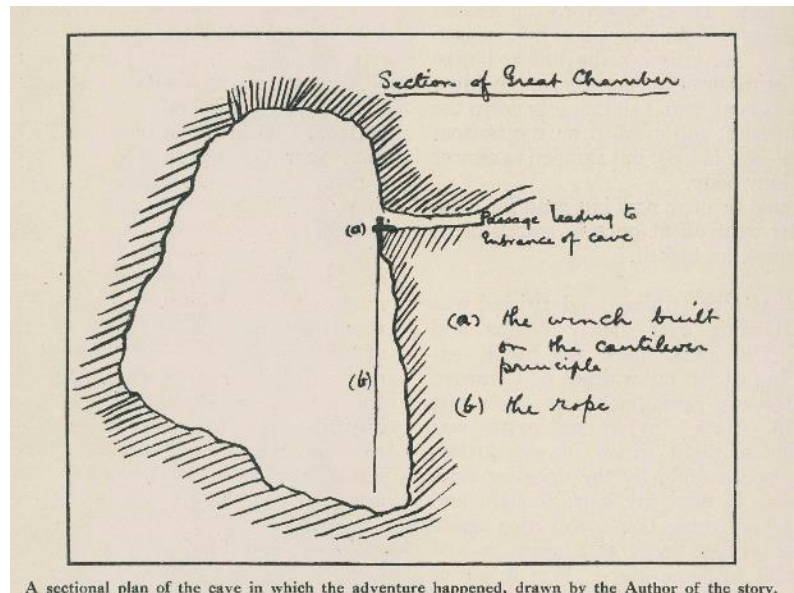


The Author's sister, who made a brave attempt to rescue her brother.
From a Photograph.

glare from some ignited magnesium wire showed an enormous chamber, its top far above the level of the passage, its bottom still farther below; in breadth, it appeared to be some eighty or ninety feet. This chamber it was that we had determined to explore, and, having once more peeped over the overhanging rock into the depths beneath, I must confess that it was with a faint heart that I let down the rope and fixed it securely to a beam of the winch. Then, to make climbing easier, we drew it up again and knotted it at intervals of from three to four feet. Finally, we let down the extra length of rope as a possible assistance in getting back - a little detail that probably delayed funeral expenses, though we little guessed it at the time.

To hesitate was to fail, so, without further ado, I seized the rope and started on the journey down. But what a distance it seemed much farther than it had looked from above; and how thankful I was to reach the bottom breathless but safe. Moreover, I had enough sense to implore my sister not to attempt the descent. Exploring had lost its interest, and I longed to be again at the top. Any investigation of the cave was put quite out of the question when we found that our string, was not long enough to allow the lamp to be lowered, and it proved impossible to find a box of matches which my sister threw down to me. However, it was possible to throw sufficient light from above to show why the distance down had seemed so much greater; a glance at the diagram will best explain this. Looking from above we had not detected any great slope at the bottom, and what had seemed like a forty-foot drop was in reality just over seventy feet.

After a little rest, I started on my journey back up the rope. Prepared as I was for difficulty, I had not even dimly realized the task that lay before me. For the first thirty feet all went well, and at a convenient knot I took a well-earned rest; twenty feet more and another long rest; a few more feet, then rest again, and beads of perspiration stood upon my face as I gazed down into the depths I could dimly see below - so terrible a distance away. Then I made another effort, but it proved fruitless.



A sectional plan of the cave in which the adventure happened, drawn by the Author of the story.

The next knot above I failed to reach, and a sinking feeling seized me as I slipped helplessly down again to the knot I had just left. Then came the awful realization that my strength was rapidly failing. The top was still some fifteen feet away, and at any moment my feet might slip from the knot, and my hands were powerless to hold me up. The thinness of the rope allowed no firm grip with the legs, and so far, the second end of rope hanging down had been more of a hindrance than a help. Now, however, it must be used, while strength remained. So, bit by bit, I hauled it up from below and coiled it time after time around my waist, grasping it as well as I could above to prevent it from unwinding. Then followed five minutes of comparative rest, made blissful by the thought that a momentary slip would matter little. Briefly I explained the situation to my sister, who was beginning to get anxious, and she arranged to help me all she could by hauling on the second end of rope. A game struggle followed, which ended in a gain of some ten feet - but no more blissful rest! The coils around my waist had fastened me securely to the knotted rope, but it meant that the extra weight of this rope had to be dragged upwards with me. Worse still, the coils were drawn so tightly round me that every moment the pain became more agonizing and no longer able to hold on by my own strength, the rope around my body alone saved me from being dashed to pieces below: Yet the pain it caused as I limply hung

was almost unbearable, and the only remedy to try and stand on one of the coils which happened



“All right, dear,” I shouted out, “I must go down again.”

to be hanging loose - was worse than the disease, as it only served to tighten the other coils. With the quietness of despair, I called out to my sister “I can’t do another inch, you’ll have to do the rest.” There was only five feet to go, but alas! it was over the overhanging rock; and while a terrific haul came from above, I vainly tried to find a crevice in which to gain some purchase for my foot. A little groan from above, and I knew that the end of the effort had come breathing more and more difficult. It was a case of being between the devil and the deep sea; - the poor girl’s strength, like mine, had given out. Safety was almost within reach of my hand, but five feet or five miles - it mattered little - somehow or other I had to get to the bottom again, for I could no longer endure the torture of those clinging coils of rope.

“All right, dear,” I called out. “I must go down again.”

Hanging helpless there, the problem remained, “How?” For now, I was held up simply by the coil of rope. Sick, breathless, and panting, almost cut in two, how happily would I have cut the rope had it been possible! The coils, catching in every knot of the rope, made sliding down an impossibility; each in turn had somehow or other to be unloosed, and the series of jerks as I slipped from knot to knot was horrible. Then came an apparent crisis - the ropes were entangled somewhere above me, so

that I found myself stuck - no going up, no going down, and the bottom forty feet away! I must make an effort, I realised, and just at that critical moment my hand happened upon a loose end of rope. As quickly as possible, swaying on the rope, I unwound coil by coil. As luck would have it, the last coil proved to be a sort of seat, and, holding the rope above, I had a momentary rest. Then, with vigour renewed by the blessed release from the awful pressure, I gradually lowered my seat. Here, however, the second end of rope came to a finish. I had no strength left to hold on, so, gripping the knotted rope between my legs as firmly as possible, and holding on by the crook of an arm, I slid rapidly down the remaining distance, and crashed on the bottom of the cavern - safe indeed, but skinned in almost every part of my body.

Nothing could be done now but send for help; and my sister went off at once in search of it. But let her speak for herself.

The way that rope strained and twisted was appalling. Hanging over greasy beams and gazing into dark, black space was hardly encouraging. In fact (let me whisper it) I crawled very

cautiously two yards back, and - well, just listened hard. Hark! What on earth was that? Merely a slight groan of exhaustion, magnified a thousand-fold by the dripping sides - quite enough to raise my hair, though, and make me start watching that awful rope again. How I longed for it to break, if it meant to, and get the horrible suspense over! Was it one or two hours since he'd started climbing up?

Thank Heaven! At last I could help a little. My brother, with many gasps, had managed to wind the loose end of rope round his body; then I pulled, and up he came, at least a foot or two. Hurrah! We were getting on - a muffled sound, horribly far away, assured me of the fact. But oh, how slimy that rope was, and what nasty lumps of clay always seemed to come lovingly into my grasp! I gave three pulls, then - oh, horror! I discovered that the rope was slipping. I must hold on at all costs, I told myself. Thank goodness, my hands were numb, so that I could not feel the pain in them as I clung to the rope.

Presently a bright idea came, and I carefully wound my foot round the rope and wedged it hard against a beam. Another pull, with arms nearly dragged out of their sockets, and - oh, was my leg pulled off, or merely tied into a knot? I gave a groan - I couldn't help it - and my brother heard it.

"I must go down again, dear," he said, in a hoarse voice. "We shall never do it."

Realising the futility of further endeavour, I let the rope slide through my hands, only hoping that there wouldn't be a splash at the bottom and then silence. After an awful wait, a ghastly quiet broken by gasps for breath, there was a crash, a rattle of stones, and a sigh. How far had he fallen, and had he broken any bones?

Anxious inquiries soothed my fears; there were no breaks at all, he said, only a few pounds of flesh left on the rope and a dead-beat body on the stones. He was safe for a time, at any rate, so, gathering vague directions, I set off for daylight and help in the form of man.

A very few moments sufficed to make my exit and, strong in hope, off I went to the nearest cottage. Words fail to adequately describe the next four hours; suffice it to say I learned a great lesson - everything in trousers is not a man; and if you want help of any kind with personal risk attached, you must get a real man. The other sort refuse, even if it is a case of life and death—it matters not to their phlegmatic minds. I will not dwell on those four hours, which gave me such an insight into the character of some of the so-called "men" of England; enough to say that when they reached the entrance to the cave and saw the ladders disappearing in darkness they were "afeared" - "afeared" to follow where a girl had gone, even though a fellow-creature was possibly perishing of cold and damp. One woman, too, was sweetly encouraging.

"Yes," said she; "you'll have to find someone - 'e'll be perished by the marnin'."

A final effort with a passing cyclist proved unavailing, so I set off for a village two miles farther away. I never got there. To my weary eyes appeared a vision, beautiful as water in a desert - only two motor-cars by the roadside, with their owners fishing not many yards distant. A brief explanation, and off we went. There was no need to beg or beseech them to attempt it; they realised they were needed, and fear was no part of their composition; so down we went as fast as we could, clinging to the slimy ladders. One small incident might well have marred the rescue - a large stone, loosened above, narrowly missed the head of a would-be rescuer. Such details had no deterrent effect, however, and soon we found ourselves at the brink of the great chamber assuring the torpid inhabitant of a speedy return to safety. And now let him conclude the story.

Yes; torpid is the right word. Clad only in a bathing dress, now tattered and torn, with water dripping upon me from every part of the roof and not a dry spot to be found, I waited, shivering as I never shivered before. An attack of cramp soon passed, and I struggled about in an attempt to find a puddle in which to quench my overwhelming thirst; but it was a hopeless effort; the light left above had gone out, and the darkness could almost be felt. The bottom was covered with rocks, and, after a stumble or two into holes, the safest course seemed to be to crawl into as comfortable a spot as possible and so avoid the chance of a bad fall. How the time passed can hardly be imagined; it was, as it were, a long, bad dream. A quarter of an hour spent in catching drops of water in my hands as they fell not only passed the time but gave relief. Singing and whistling helped along, with an occasional effort to restore circulation, but, what with cramp and skinned limbs, it was altogether too painful. Imagination played unpleasant pranks with me; suppose my sister's light had gone out and that she was blindly wandering, lost in the maze of the cave; suppose she had fallen at the ladders. Once I gleefully "coo eed" to what was only, after all, a phantom voice. At last, almost perished with cold, a happy lethargy came over me and, cuddling up on the soaking ground, I lost all sense of time and space.

Again, I heard the sound of voices - real this time - and it seemed but a moment while the rope was pulled up and the knots taken out. Soon I was seated in a loop and hauled, revolving, to the top. Even then disaster almost overtook us, for my sister, in her excitement, stepped into a hole leading straight to the depths below. Fortunately, we had hold of one another, and the danger was safely escaped.

Nothing remained now but to clear out while the candle lasted, and, collecting our various belongings, we soon regained light and air above. Four hours of lonesome darkness in the depths below had proved a perfect cure for my cave exploring mania, and, after heartily thanking my rescuers, we rode off to a hot bath and the comforts of the world above - determined to leave rope-climbing and its attendant pleasures to those who have still to realize that they may be fools.

1912 – Eastwater Cavern

Sources –

Balch's Mendip, Its Swallet Caves 2nd Edition 1948 – pages 34 to 35

WCC Jnl. 290 June 2004 pages 170 to 172 Mendip Cave Rescues Prior to 1951 by Dave Irwin – for date and victim's name.

But to recount a more tragic episode, and a warning. A very daring, plucky, but reckless recruit [*Kenneth Ward of Cambridge*] had joined our ranks and had given cause for anxiety on more than one occasion. He figures elsewhere in this book. He was a good photographer, and was willing and anxious to be of service. I agreed that he should try to get a photograph at the bottom of the second vertical, before described. His party consisted of three, with two single ropes only, of ample length, but with no life-lines and no ladders. A man must be very fit and sure of himself under such conditions. I have never climbed out of Eastwater with such inadequate tackle. All went well till they got to the scene of operations, for it is not difficult to climb down a rope. The camera was put up and focused. It is a great dark place with little of light to relieve its sombre walls. With this in mind a double charge of an intense illuminating powder was prepared and held up on, I think, a flat stone. Of course, even a single charge is normally fired by a touch paper and that was intended in this instance. He put his candle to the touch paper, as he supposed, but, perhaps due to the darkness, he fired the whole charge. The burst of concentrated flame followed and nearly the whole skin of his right hand was burned off. With nothing to dress his burns, he screamed in agony for two hours. Then, exhausted, the others set about getting him out. To this day it is a mystery to me how they managed it. He could not climb the

rope with one hand, and he exhausted. Only one man could stand at the top of the vertical ascent. The second man has to be well back in the passage where he can do very little to help, as he is several yards away. It took them seven hours to get him to the surface, more dead than alive, and they arrived on Mendip in the small hours of the morning, in pouring rain, with only a little hiking tent to shelter them, and all Mendip sound asleep.

The first I knew of the affair, was when I met, in the streets of Wells, at nine in the morning, a farmer's cart with a woebegone wretch, almost unrecognizable, who gave me a sickly smile, as he tried to tell me what had happened. He lay ill for a long time in Wells, nursed by a devoted mother, till he was well enough to travel. It says something for the spirit of the man, that many months later he wrote to ask if I had gathered up his tackle, which had been thrown aside in their efforts to get him out of the cave. If so he would like to have his ropes, as he proposed to spend Christmas climbing in Skye. These I sent on to him, only to hear from him later that he found he could not hold on to a rope, and had to abandon the idea of climbing. I should much like to hear what later exploits fell to his lot, if by chance this book should meet his eye.

1913 – Swildon's Hole

Sources –

Balch's Mendip, Its Swallet Caves 2nd Edition 1948 – pages 21 to 22

WCC Jnl. 290 June 2004 pages 170 to 172 Mendip Cave Rescues Prior to 1951 by Dave Irwin – for date and victim's name.

The reader will expect to hear that such a place as this has provided its share of thrills and adventures, but considering its nature it has been singularly free from them. One such, that might have been a tragedy, occurred years ago when the Forty Foot Pot had not been passed. A young enthusiast [*Kenneth Ward of Cambridge*] had reached and looked with longing eyes at this unexplored pit, and apparently made up his mind to be the first man down, though he said nothing of such an intention. Mr. Barnes consented to go with him and I had no qualms about the trip. A lad of about 14 accompanied them. They had taken two ropes, a main line and a life-line, and duly reached the head of the pot. There was a moderate flow of water going over, but fortunately not the heavy flow which often makes such a roar, as if to warn off intruders. The purpose of the trip was to examine a ledge which it was thought might afford a climb down, avoiding the waterfall. The leader climbed up to fix the main rope through a stalagmite mass, and was still above the other members of the party when the impatient one threw the coiled life-line down the pit, seized the main rope and let himself slide into the depths. The first thing that the leader realised was that a man was missing and that a yell from below was trying to convey a message above the noise of the falling water. It was nearly impossible to distinguish what words were shouted, but gradually they took shape as "I'm in a well". A first unsuccessful effort to pull him up was abandoned, and a message was shouted to him to tie himself on. The folly of the single rope was apparent, for he had nothing to assist his climb, and the streaming main line was quite unclimbable. It was, of course, impossible in the darkness to find the coiled life-line. The dead weight was over thirteen stone, a weight quite beyond the ordinary powers of a man and a boy to lift when dragging over a rock surface, where the friction is considerable. Mr. Barnes then tried taking a single turn round his body to rest themselves as they pulled, but soon this was torture and had to be abandoned. Then began a long fight to overcome the difficult task and bit by bit they got him up, themselves more exhausted than he, but he chilled to the bone by long immersion in the very cold water pouring down upon his head.

Yet this was not the end of the adventure by any means. In my account of the "Water Rift" I described the little upper hole which at that time was the only approach to the Forty Foot Pot. The larger and lower passage was not opened till 1921. I know by experience that it was very

difficult indeed for a man of thirteen stone to pass that little hole if he is quite fit, has dry clothes, and has not fed too well. For exhausted men to pass it, and they were utterly exhausted, was quite another matter. Mr. Barnes and the lad passed it with much more than the usual difficulty, but the third man could not do so. Only after removing much of his sodden clothes was it at last possible, and they made their way to the surface. To make matters worse, the visitors were occupying a tiny hiking tent on the slope of Rookham, and without proper facilities for drying their clothing. They were to leave next morning and were thought to have arrived home safely, when three days later a telegram arrived asking me for news of them. Police and telephones got busy, and it was found that on reaching Chewton Mendip they had sought the shelter of a cottage, where the victim of his own rashness was lying very ill with rheumatic fever, and he lay for the usual long period before recovery. One would have thought that this would be a lesson even to the most daring of men, but it was not the end of the story – see next entry.

Source – Hand written pages inserted in a copy of Mendip It's Swallet Caves And Rock Shelters, opposite Page 48. These notes were written by Robert D. R. Troup who was a pioneer M.N.R.C. member who came from Wrington, North Somerset. He was always known by his third Christian name, Reginald, as his father was also a Robert. (In the possession of Alan Gray)

Young Ward's escapade

S and a friend had come for a caving holiday and Balch passed them on to me as guide. We visited Lambs Lair and descended as far as the windlass. The shaft was badly choked and it was not till we got out that Ward told me he had shifted one of the boulders (holding up tons of loose soil) slightly to one side before he could squeeze through. Some time later this earth in the shaft fell in to make it impassable. Next day Ward wished to go down Swildon's Hole, as I could not go I passed him on to E. G. Barnes. I gave him detailed instructions about the 40' drop which had not till then been negotiated. I told him to go through the small hole with the water, when he could climb down some 10' and below that was the 40' drop. They had a 60' rope with them. On reaching the way through to the drop "cleverly" they found an upper hole about 10' up and negotiated this. I was quite unaware this upper entrance was there. Having got through they fixed the rope and Ward without warning started to descend, having first thrown his satchel with candles etc. into the void. He slid down the rope and found himself standing in about 1' of water with one hand grasping the end of the rope. Owing to the undercut of the lower part of the drop he was now quite unable to use his feet to climb up again. As Ward had no light of course Barnes did not know the fix he was in and only having candles themselves could not see the bottom of the pit. If Barnes had climbed down a bit he could have fixed the 60' rope lower down and this would have made the ascent much easier as Ward could have climbed up the rope a little way.

1913 – Swildon's Hole

Sources –

Balch's Mendip, Its Swallet Caves 2nd Edition 1948 – pages 21 to 22

WCC Jnl. 290 June 2004 pages 170 to 172 Mendip Cave Rescues Prior to 1951 by Dave Irwin – for date and victim's name.

A while after he [Kenneth Ward of Cambridge] returned with two friends, both very tall men, whom he had persuaded that their height would enable them to climb down in some way which he had imagined would be possible. One of them with a rope attached was plucky enough to make the venture, depending on what he had been told. Like a pendulum at full swing he fell off his precarious perch and crashed into the rock wall below. At least he must have been badly bruised. They pulled him up and went away, and I do not think the Mendip caves have seen

them since, though the optimist of the party figures in a later exploit of which I have told in another chapter.

9 November 1929 – Pride Evans' Hole

Sources –Western Daily Dress – 18 November 1929

CRY FOR HELP FROM CAVE IN CHEDDAR GORGE

Inquest Story of Birmingham Man's Sad End

Mr. M. Pulliblack (deputy Coroner for North Somerset) with a jury of seven, held an inquest at Ilex Lodge, Axbridge, on Saturday, on Thomas Hood (20) of 231, Cape Hill, Smethwick, Birmingham, who died in the Axbridge Infirmary on Thursday.

Mrs. Eliza Wood, of Cape Hill, Smethwick, stated that deceased, her son, was missing on the morning of October 29. He had gone away on three previous occasions but had only stayed away for a few days in each case. She did not notify the police at once on this occasion as they thought he would be returning. He was of a bright and happy nature, but had got depressed through being out of work.

Reginald Gould, market gardener, of Catty Lane, Cheddar, said that on Saturday November 9 he was walking up the Cheddar Gorge when he heard a faint cry for help. He could not at first locate it, but answered the cry. He then heard a second call, and recognised that it came from a cave called "Pride Evan's Cave."

Witness went back to Gough's Cave and Mr. Gough and another man returned with him. They climbed up to the entrance to the cave, and just inside they found Wood, who said he had been there 12 or 14 days. He only knew of one entrance to the cave, and he did not think it would have been possible for Wood to have got away from the cave without help.

Mrs. Ellen Ethel Gane matron of the Axbridge Infirmary, stated that deceased was in a very weak condition very cold, and suffering from shock. He could not say what his name was and he did not think he had a home. He said he had been living on water and blackberries but she doubted the latter statement.

Dr. A. V. Leche (Medical Officer of Axbridge Infirmary), stated that in his opinion death was due to cardiac syncope and pneumonia.

The jury returned a verdict of "Death from natural causes."

Sources –Wells Journal – 22 November 1929

CHEDDAR GORGE CAVE TRAGEDY

Inquest Story of Birmingham Man's Sad End

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He seemed to wish to conceal his identity, and was very loath to answer questions. On Tuesday morning a letter arrived for him, which he opened and read. Witness asked him if he was the man referred to in the letter, and he nodded assent. She asked him if he had seen these two girls, and he nodded assent.

By a juryman: Diseased never suggested in conversation with me that he had been the victim of foul play.

BRISTOL GIRLS LETTER

The Deputy Coroner read the letter as follows "27 Cotham Road, Bristol, November 11th.

Dear Mr. Wood – we believe we are the little girls whom you saw in the cave. We came into the cave described in the paper, and thought we heard someone inside, and went to tell Mr. Rahtz. This was on Friday morning, November 1st. When we came into the cave later in the day we found no one there, but we think that we saw you walking near the cave from the cliffs opposite. Had we known you were ill we should have liked to help you, and we hope that you are now recovered – With best wishes, yours sincerely Katherine Rahtz (13), Joyce Green (14)." (Examination of the letter shows that it is written in good round writing, by the younger girl, the other having appended her signature).

Dr. Arthur Victor Leche, Medical Officer to Axbridge Infirmary, stated that when he saw deceased on Wednesday, the 13th November, he was suffering from pneumonia and a weak heart, with a very feeble pulse, and was unconscious. He continued to get weaker, and died on Thursday at 5:20 a.m., his death being probably precipitated by previous exposure and lack of nourishment. There were no marks of violence on the body, nor was it markedly emacipated considering his lack of food. In his opinion death was due to cardiac syncope and pneumonia. He had not made a post mortem examination.

The jury returned a verdict of “Death from natural causes.”
The jury and the witness who found Wood gave their fees to his mother.

1930's

26 August 1932 – Avon Gorge

Source – Gloucester Journal – 26 August 1932

RESCUED FROM CLIFFS – YOUTHS ADVENTURE IN AVON GORGE

Flares were held over the cliffs of the Avon Gorge, Bristol, hundreds of feet above the roadway during a remarkable rescue last evening. Shouts of “Help” attracted the attention of passers-by, who looked over the edge of the cliff and saw a youth lying on a narrow ledge above a sheer drop to the jagged rocks beneath. The police were called and by the light of flares held by members of the local fire brigade rescue apparatus was lowered by rope down the face of the cliff.

Spectators in the road below saw the youth reach out and catch the rope, tie himself into the rescue jacket and be hauled to safety in the fitful light of the flares. The youth was named T. Agney, of Cotham Vale, Cotham, Bristol, and he told his rescuers that he climbed up the Gorge to explore some caves. “I had clambered a long way up on to a ledge and could get no further,” he said, “I tried to get back, but could find no foothold.” He was uninjured and little the worse for his terrifying experience.

19 June 1934 – Mercavity Cave, Avon Gorge

Source – Western Daily Press – 20 June 1934

ADVENTURE THAT WENT BEYOND A JOKE THRILLING RESCUE DRAMA ON AVON GORGE CLIFFS

Two Bristol youths had an exciting experience when they were trapped in a cave in the cliff face, 90 feet above Portway yesterday morning. They were Edward Arthur Laughton (20), of 267, Hotwell Road, and his friend, Stephen Harrington (18), of 48, Jacob’s Wells Road, who were climbing the Avon Gorge rocks, after having walked to Avonmouth in search of work. A heroic rescue was effected by P.C. Shearn, a motorcycle patrol, who made a perilous climb up the cliffs and hauled the stranded youths to safety. Laughton and Harrington decided to do some climbing, to pass the time – “More as a joke than anything.” They met fairly easy going for the first few dozen yards, after leaving the ground near the Portway tennis courts, but higher up they got into difficulties and Mr. E. Ford, the courts groundsman, shouted to them to come down.

The only result was that the climbers suddenly disappeared from view behind a screen of bushes.

A canons crowd on Portway awaited events, while a group of police held a “council of war” P.C. Shearn then volunteered to climb up and see what had happened. Stripping off his jacket, he worked slowly up the rock face, the crowd watching with bated breath as he maneuvered along the last 20 or 30 feet of slippery ledge. Parting the bushes, he found Laughton and Harrington had fallen into a deep cave. Both were badly shaken, and the former had injured his hand and wrist. They could not climb out without assistance. Ropes were quickly fetched and thrown up the last few yards to P.C. Shearn, who hauled both men out of the hole.

Then, making a rope fast to a spur of rock, he helped them to climb safety back to the ground, some 90 feet below. There the St. John Ambulance were waiting and took them to the Royal Infirmary to have their “wounds” treated.

Later yesterday, Laughton and Harrington were little worse for their thrilling experience. Laughton has served nine months naval training and could not get back his former employment when he returned home.

4 November 1934 – un-named ochre pit

Source – Wells Journal – 9 November 1934

HORSE RESCUED

On Sunday last a Cheddar man was walking near an ochre pit on the Mendips, when he heard groans emanating from it. Looking down the 15 feet shaft he saw that a horse had fallen into it, and become jammed between the rocks at the bottom. With the assistance of about a dozen others the animal was raised to the surface, and it was able to walk back to the farm of its owner, Mr. E. J. Small, of Charterhouse.

1937 – Burrington Combe

Jim Hanwell's profile of the M.R.O. (dated September 1993) recalls that the first incident - which was attended by the Dr. Alan Woolley who arrived in his open top M.G and met the village Bobby there who arrived by push bike with a runner!

13 March 1938 – Sidcot Swallet

Source – WCC Journal 290 June 2004 Page 170 – Mendip Cave Rescues Prior to 1951 by Dave Irwin

The earliest rescue recorded and attended by members of M.R.O. was on Sunday 13th March 1938 in Sidcot Swallet. It made the headlines not only of the local press but of the national daily papers. Two Bristol men Donald Robbins (16), from Eastville and Peter Bredael (18), Bishopston had cycled to Burrington Combe and descended Sidcot Swallet; became lost after reaching a "big cavern". Their lights failed and their spare candles spent as they tried to find their way out. They became hopelessly lost. At midnight, their families alerted the police who called M.R.O. involving members of the Wessex Cave Club and the Mendip Nature Research Committee. Not knowing which cave had been descended the rescuers searched both Goatchurch Cavern and Sidcot Swallet. The men were soon located and led out of the cave. Whilst waiting to be rescued the boys went to sleep and lost all awareness of time. When they were rescued they thought that it was still Sunday.

The Wells Journal report was headlined –

TRAPPED ALL NIGHT IN MENDIP CAVE. WELLS CAVERS IN RESCUE PARTY

[The report concluded]

...As soon as the boys walked down to the main road they were taken by a "Wells Journal" reporter in his car to have some food at the cafe at the foot of the combe.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 14 March 1938

TWO BRISTOL BOYS LOST FOR OVER 17 HOURS

RESCUE PARTY WITH SPECIAL EQUIPMENT FIND THEM AFTER HEARING THEIR SHOUTS AND WHISTLES - THEN 100 FEET BELOW ENTRY

Two Bristol boys who since 4 o'clock yesterday had been lost hundreds of feet below ground in one of the caves of Burrington Combe, were rescued early this morning by the Mendip Rescue Organisation.

They were - Donald Robbing (16), of Eastville, and Peter Bredael (18), of Bishopston. The boys set out on their bicycles yesterday, taking their lunch with them, to explore the countryside. Night came on, and when they did not return the parents, growing anxious, consulted the Bristol Police, who, in turn, got in touch with the Glastonbury Police. They informed the Mendip Rescue Brigade at 9:30 this morning, and half an hour later they arrived at Burrington Combe, where the boys' bicycles were found lying together near the end of the Combe. The rescue party were uncertain which cave the boys had intended to explore, and the party, numbering about 10, split up, and entered Goatchurch Cave on one side of a narrow gully and Sidcot Cave on the other. Within half an hour the rescuers heard shouts and whistles from Sidcot Cave, and found the boys about 100 feet below ground. They were able to walk up under the rescuers' direction, and both were fortunately quite uninjured.

In an interview Bredael told an Evening Post reporter: "It was rather an unpleasant experience, but fortunately we were able to sleep through the greater part of the night, so it was not as bad as it sounded. We went down' about 4 o'clock yesterday and after about half an hour reached a big cavern. "We went on a little way, and then thought we had better get back to the top. We discovered, however, that we had lost our way, and our lights failed. We had some candles, but they soon went out as well. "We felt then that the only thing to do was to stay there for the night, and we knew that someone would come to look for us as soon as it was light.

"We managed to sleep quite a bit, and we were very pleased to hear the rescue party shouting to us this morning, as we had no food with us and no coats."

It was a dramatic scene as the nine or ten men from the Mendip Rescue Organisation scrambled up to the mouth of the caves, wearing boiler suits caps or crash helmets with lights attached to the front of them, and with huge coils of rope over their shoulders.

There were two doctors attached to the Party who had come fully equipped for any emergency. The organisation is composed of members from Bristol University Speleological Society, the Mendip Exploration Society, the Wessex Cave Club, and the Mendip Nature Research Committee. The members of the party wish to remain anonymous, but one of them told the Evening Post: We have an arrangement with the police whereby if anybody is lost in the caves, one of our members is notified, and steps are taken to send out a rescue party immediately from any members available.

"This morning, after the communication from the Glastonbury police, we were soon on the scene. When we found the two boys they were shouting and whistling, and actually we discovered them right on the path which leads up to the surface.

"They could have walked themselves, but they had got quite lost, and had no idea that they were actually going in the right direction, so that they were wise to wait until assistance reached them.

"When we got to them they had no idea how long they had been there, and still thought it was Sunday. They were able to walk out of the cave and made light of their experience.

“I should like to make it clear that our organisation is drawn from all the cave clubs. on Mendip, and we are available at any time for any emergency.”

The father of one of the boys was anxiously waiting outside the cave in company with a police officer while the rescue party were searching inside it, and it is believed that the uncle of the other boy also came down from Bristol.

As soon as the boys walked down to the main road they were taken by their relatives in a car, to have some food at the cafe at the foot of the combe.

Source – Wells Journal – 18 March 1938

TRAPPED ALL NIGHT IN MENDIP CAVE – WELLS CAVERS IN RESCUE PARTY

Two Bristol lads were trapped for over 18 hours in a cave at Burrington Combe on Sunday night.

They entered the cave on Sunday afternoon at 4 o'clock, and when they were reported missing at midnight, and their bicycles later found in the Combe, the Warden of the Mendip Rescue Organisation was communicated with and rescue parties from Bristol and Wells took part in a search of the several caves in the Combe.

The lads were found in a cave known as Sidcot Swallet and were rescued from a chamber 100 feet below ground.

They were Donald Robbins (16), of 3, Bridge Road, Glenfrome Road, Eastville, and Peter Bredael (18), of 1, Cricklade Road, Bishopston.

The boys set out on their bicycles on Sunday, taking lunch with them, to explore the countryside. Night came on, and when they did not return the parents, growing anxious, consulted the Bristol Police, who in turn got in touch with the Axbridge Police.

They informed the Mendip Rescue Organisation at 8:45 on Monday morning, and half an hour later they arrived at Burrington Combe, where the boys' bicycles were found against a tree in the Combe.

The rescue party were uncertain which cave the boys had intended to explore, and the party, which included several Wells members of the Wessex Caving Club and Wells Mendip Nature Research Committee, split up, and entered Goatchurch Cave on one side of a narrow gully and Sidcot Swallet on the other.

Within half an hour the rescuers heard shouts and whistles from Sidcot Swallet and found the boys about 100 feet below ground. They were able to walk up under the rescuers' direction, and both were fortunately uninjured.

Sergt. A. Robertson of Axbridge and P.C. Allen of Cheddar assisted in the rescue.

The elder lad said, “It was rather an unpleasant experience, but fortunately we were able to sleep through the greater part of the night, so it was not so bad as it sounded. We went down about 4 o'clock and after about half an hour reached a big cavern.

“We went on a little way, and then thought we had better get back to the top. We discovered, however, that we had lost our way, and our lights failed. We had some candles, but they soon went out.

“We felt that the only thing to do was to stay there the night, and we knew that someone would come and look for us as soon as it was light.

“We managed to sleep quite a bit, and we were very pleased to hear the rescue party shouting to us, as we had no food with us and no coats.”

There were two doctors attached to the party, who had come fully equipped for any emergency. The organisation is comprised of members from Bristol University Speleological Society, the Wessex Cave Club and the Mendip Nature Research Committee. One of them said : “we have an arrangement with the police whereby if anybody is lost in the caves the Warden is notified, and steps are taken to send out a rescue party immediately from any members available. This morning, after communication from the police we were soon on the scene. When we found the boys they were shouting and whistling they having heard our approach.

“When we got to them they had no idea how long they had been down there, and still thought it was Sunday. They were able to walk out of the cave and made light of their experience.

As soon as the boys walked down to the main road they were taken by a “Wells Journal” reporter in his car to have some food at the café at the foot of the combe.

Source – Somerset County Herald – 19 March 1938

TRAPPED IN A CAVE – ADVENTURES OF TWO BRISTOL YOUTHS 100 FEET UNDERGROUND

Two Bristol boys were rescued on Monday after being trapped all night in one of the Mendip caves at Burrington Combe, Somerset, near the famous cleft which inspired Toplady to write the hymn “Rock of Ages.” The cave in which they were found is one of the most difficult to penetrate for narrow channels lead to considerable depths. And near at hand are other caves with dangerous shafts dropping suddenly 50 feet into subterranean rivers.

The boys were Donald Robbins, ages 16, of Bridge-road, Glenfrome-road, Eastville, and Peter Bredael, aged 18 of Cricklade-road, Bishopston. They cycled to Burrington Combe on Sunday, and when they did not return home their parents told the police.

The Mendip Rescue Organisation sent out two parties wearing boiler suits and crash helmets with lights on their peaks. They found the bicycles, and the party split up to make a search of the caverns on either side of the gorge.

Within half an hour the rescuers heard shouts and whistles from the tunnels leading down to the Sidcot cave, and found the boys about 100 feet underground. Neither was injured. They had been trapped for 10 hours.

Bredael told a reporter it had been an unpleasant experience. “We went down about 4 o’clock on Sunday afternoon.” he said, “and after half an hour reached a big cavern. We went on a little way and then thought we had better get back to the top. We found, however, that we had lost our way in a maze of passages. And soon our lights – the lamps from our cycles – failed. We

felt then that the only thing to do was stay where we were for the night. We managed to sleep quite a bit, but we were very pleased to hear the rescue party shouting to us as we had no food with us and no coats.”

1939

25 August 1939 – Goatchurch Cavern

Source – WCC Journal 290 June 2004 Page 170 – Mendip Cave Rescues Prior to 1951 by Dave Irwin

Goatchurch Cavern rescue. The second occurred in Goatchurch Cavern in late August 1939 when a 19-year-old lad dislodged a boulder, which wedged his boot in a narrow chimney down which flowed a small stream. This must have been at the lower end of the tight route from floor of the Boulder Chamber entering Water Chamber in the stream channel.

A group of three young men and a girl formed the party and when they were heading towards the Water Chamber accident occurred. The trapped man, Peter Bridgman of Stoke Gifford, Bristol was lying in the streambed for some five hours before he was released. M.R.O. had been called and to keep the 'victim' warm hot water bottles were placed under his back. Two doctors were also in attendance.

Source – Wells Journal – 25 August 1939

BOY TRAPPED IN CAVE AT BURRINGTON FOR FIVE HOURS FOOT WEDGED IN ROCKS

With one foot wedged beneath a heavy boulder, a Bristol youth, aged nineteen, was trapped in pitch darkness for five hours 110 ft. below the surface in a narrow chimney of rock in Goatchurch Cavern, Burrington, Somerset.

Icy water streamed ceaselessly down the boy's back, and hot water bottles, were lowered to him while rescue workers laboured to free him.

The boy was Peter Bridgman, of The Limes, Stoke Gifford, near Bristol, who went into the water chamber of the cave with two other boys and a girl. Bridgman tried to work his way down a narrow rift in the floor, when he dislodged a large piece of rock which fell on his ankle. He was trapped lying against ice-cold stone with a stream running down it. One of the boys stayed with him whilst the other two of the party went for help. Eventually members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation arrived on the scene with two doctors. It was found impossible to release Bridgman from above as his body filled the chimney, the rescuers excavated the floor below and eventually got through and chipped the rock away from the boy's foot. The boulder was then timbered up and Bridgman raised from his precarious position by ropes. His foot was saved from serious injury by his heavy climbing boot.

7 December 1939 – un-named Mine Shaft at Chewton Mendip

Source – The Wells Journal – 8 December 1939

HOUNDS RESCUED FROM MINESHAFT MENDIP HUNTSWOMAN'S HEROISM RISKY AND COURAGEOUS ACT

It has now been revealed that the huntswoman who descended a 60 foot deep disused mineshaft in the Mendips in order to take a prominent part in the rescue of three hounds, savage with hunger, is Mrs. T. D. Corpe, wife of Bristol and West Country solicitor, whose home is at Priddy Hill, Wells. Mr. Corpe is well known as an advocate in Bath and the surrounding districts. Mrs. Corpe endeavoured to keep the news of her exploit secret, saying, "I don't want to make a song of it." Mrs. Corpe is a member of the Mendip Hunt, and after a meet last week-end she was concerned because three hounds did not return to the kennels.

On Thursday they were still missing, and Mrs. Corpe explored a lonely subterranean cave in the Mendip Hills at Chewton Mendip, near where the hounds were last seen.

When she drew a blank at the cave, Mrs. Corpe enlisted the help of the huntsman, and began a search of the numerous dead mineshafts in the near-by wood.

They lowered food down several shafts, and then from the dark depths of one of them came faint sounds of growling. Mrs. Corpe sent an S.O.S. for help to Mr. H. A. Tiarks and he enlisted the assistance of a couple of quarry workers, following himself with ropes and tackle.

Ex Miner's descent – "When we reached the shaft, which is at least 60 feet deep, one of the quarrymen, an ex-Welsh miner, volunteered to go down,," said Mr. Tiarks. As soon as he reached the bottom he signalled to be hauled up. When we got him to the top he said the hounds were savage, obviously as the result of starvation.

Mrs. Corpe then volunteered to go down, saying she thought the hounds might recognise her. She remained at the bottom for some time and when she had been hauled up said the hounds had soon become friendly with her.

Then the miner went down again, taking biscuits with him to help make friends. He succeeded after a while, and was able to rope the dogs for us to pull them up one by one. They were exhausted, but will soon be all right.

The miner had a wonderful escape, for as we got him up to the top the sides of the shaft collapsed."

1940's

11 May 1940 – G.B. Cave

Source – UBSS Camp Log November 1939 to June 1943, pages 26 to 27 (not signed but in Rod Pearce's handwriting)

G.B. trip. Started down cave at 2:30. Party of nine started including Frost and Weaver of Wessex. After spending five hours in the cave photographing and exploring, the returning journey was made.

A lady member of the party was trapped by her left foot under a boulder above the second pothole below the rope ladder. Tackle was immediately obtained from Camp, and M.R.O. equipment from Wessex headquarters. The boulder, which was five feet long x three feet wide and one foot thick could not be removed without crushing the lady's foot.

Fortunately, her foot was in a small pothole, on the rock behind some four inches thick and five inches deep was removed, and the foot freed.

The patient was removed from the cave at 12:30 a.m. suffering from shock and some trauma, which were effectively treated by Dr. Crook and Dr. Baxter.

A stew was prepared and enjoyed by all at 1:30 a.m. Patient slept well after this.

1941

17 June 1941 – G.B. Cave

Source – UBSS Camp Log November 1939 to June 1943, page 39 (Rod Pearce)

Parties taken down G.B. Sidcot, Read's and Goatchurch. Chapman fell off ladder from lip in G.B. and rescue party organised.

Dr. Crook, Walton, Goddard and Pearce hauled Chapman out of cave and he was transported to B.R.I. in ambulance.

Remainder had good supper in camp and bus left at 7 p.m.

Remainder of party returned on bikes for C.H.H. dance [*Clifton Hill House*].

Source – Balch's Mendip, Its Swallet Caves 2nd Edition 1948 – page 62

Once an unfortunate caver fell from the steel ladder especially placed in position to facilitate descent into the Boulder Chamber; he fractured his skull, and the difficulty of getting him back through the twisting tunnels can be imagined, although fortunately he remained unconscious throughout. He subsequently made a complete recovery.

1944

13 & 14 April 1944 – Read's Cavern

Source – SSSS Log Book No. 2, pages 44 to 47

R. Stride and B. Wills visited this cave (Wills for the first time) with intention to descend rapidly to the bottom of Zed Alley, re ascend and visit the western end of the Main Chamber. Without incident, they got $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way down Zed Alley, but accidentally turned off down a wrong passage – Stride realised he was off the main track but continued, having heard of another part of the cave - they reached a 15 foot drop which was climbable and Stride descended leaving Wills at the top with his acetylene lamp. At the bottom, he turned right angles and continued for about 20 foot and reached a 10 foot drop which he descended. At the bottom was a nearly dry sump which was passable on one's back. A flat rift shaped passage continued for 25 foot, twisted a little and continued in a small rift that should be difficult to pass.

On descending the 15-foot drop, after Stride, Wills dropped his lamp which got bunged up and would not burn, so they used candles.

They returned to Zed Alley, rested in the Waterfall Chamber which was quite dry. Upon enquiry Stride found that they had only about 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ candles between them, when they had brought a dozen (having lost them!), so they decided to return hastily. Missing the way on starting back, they finished off their candles in trying to find it, but succeeded in lighting the lamp; thinking it safer to dry their matches before restarting their search. They accidentally put out the lamp whose jet got bunged up and would not relight. Finding that attempts at relighting the lamp were useless they decided that it would be best to wait and await some rescue attempt.

They had entered that cave at 2:30 in the afternoon of the 13th and must have been actively caving until 5:30. They told stories and jokes to pass the time away. They lay upon a most uncomfortable boulder floor with constant drip from the ceiling and bats flying around them. They were cold and shivering all the time in the pitch dark and had to hug each other to keep warm at all. Although unable to sleep they did succeed in becoming semi-conscious and nearly dozed off. (They were not affected by melancholia or claustrophobia) Hearing a sound of scraping, they shouted and went on shouting, and a minute later got a reply. In a few minutes, they saw a light and three members of the rescue organisation of the Bristol Speleological Society appeared (including "Taffy" Morgan) who informed them, to their astonishment, that the time was 6:30 in the morning, when they thought it to be no more than midnight. In twenty minutes, they were out of the cave and in half an hour along at the "Uni" Hut where they breakfasted and later returned home to their beds.

Their parents were particularly pleased and overjoyed to see them having been up all night, also retired to bed. Mr. Hutchinson and Mr. Potts went to their beds after returning the "Uni" students to the "Uni".

The culprits, sorry to have caused the trouble but pleased to have had the experience trust it will not occur again and trust that no one was unduly over worked by their trouble in the renowned Z Alley of the Keltic Cavern [*Read's Cavern*] on Mendips.

They were 16 hours down the cave.

Source – UBSS Camp Log November July 1943 to April 1946, page 13 (Rod Pearce)

Called up by Taffy Morgan 2:20 a.m. Roused Bertie + ?, Pearce, Morgan went out to camp in Dr. Hutchinson's car. The Sidcot boys down Read's since 2 p.m. Thursday. Bertie and Charlie, Mollie and Marjorie arrived 5:15 a.m. Had breakfast and went down cave. Two parties explored Z-alley and Boulder Chamber. Found two boys in dark in boulders below Z-alley. Came back to camp and had breakfast. Left 7:30 a.m.

1945

18 June 1945 – Coral Cave

SSSS Log Book No. 3, pages 23 to 25

W. Stanton, A. Morgan and A. Richardson descended Coral Cave without permission. They successfully reached the Mud Chamber, where a mud fight ensued. They then returned and WIS and ARM assembled without difficulty leaving APR until last as he wanted to recuperate. He got half way up the bottom drop, but dropped his lamp and had to go back and get it. He then tried to ascend the bottom drop, but failed, so I went down and helped him up it, and then climbed out with some difficulty. He then tried to ascend to the entrance, but failed, so Taffy and I told him to go back to the ledge and we would pull him up. He did so, but slipped on the ledge, let go of the rope, shrieked and fell. There was a crash and a rumble, and then absolute silence, I slid down the rope, at the bottom yelled but there was no sound. Then suddenly there was a sound of breathing, and I found him half way down the boulder slope, head down breathing and coughing in short gasps. I yelled to Taffy to come down, and we found he had a wound in the back of his head that was bleeding, and was quite unconscious.

I left Taffy with him, and with great difficulty climbed out, and ran to the Post Office to telephone for a doctor, fearing he had concussion. Telephoned for Dr. Cooper, who told Mr. Hutchinson, and a rescue party was organised. I then went up to the cave again, and shouting from the top, found that Titch had regained consciousness in part and knew who he was, but not where he was. After half an hour the rescue party arrived, Dr. Cooper, Mr. Hutchinson, Rees, J Ritter and Trott. Rees went down in a Bosun's Chair, and put Tich in it. With some difficulty he was hauled up, and taken to Weston in an ambulance. We heard later that he had only been severely bruised, and had one rib broken. It was a luck escape for him. Taffy was down with him for 1¾ hours before he was hauled up, which must have been pretty awful. A suitable punishment was melted out to the culprits.

Caving club leave was lost for three weeks. The culprits lost their leave until January 1946. Richardson came back after four weeks none the worse.

Source - Willie Stanton's personal Log Book No. 2, pages 81 to 86 (extracts)

“But when he reached the ledge he went on slipping, and suddenly gave a yell, let go of the rope, and fell over the brink. There was a horrible crashing sound and then absolute silence. Taffy & I overcome with horror, shrieked down, but there was no response. We feared he was quite dead.”

“Apparently the first sensible thing Tich has said was “Where's Sam?” [Sam was Willie's school nickname] In reply to other questions he said his back hurt; his head hurt; that it was dark because the clouds had come over; that if he told us his name it would be telling; he wouldn't go down again for some time.”

Newspaper Report – Egyptian Mail – Thursday July 5th 1945

BOY FALL 45 FEET IN CAVERN

Tony Richardson, 15 years old pupil at Sidcote (sic) School, Somerset, fell 45 feet down a shaft in a cave in the Mendip Hills and escaped with a shaking and minor injuries. He is now in Weston-super-Mare Hospital. This is his story.

With two other boys Alun Morgan of Tenby and William Stanton of Street, Somerset, he went to explore Coral Cave at Compton Bishop. They had two lamps and a 120 feet rope.

“We tied the rope to a tree and went down 60 feet into the cave.” Said Tony. “After collecting some coral we started to return.

At a ledge about half way up the lamp fell out of my belt, and I went down to fetch it. When I climbed the rope again I could not pass the ledge and Stanton came down to help me. About three quarters of the way up I was so exhausted that I let go of the rope. I think I fell on the ledge rolling off, and fell another 30 feet to the bottom.”

When Tony fell Stanton ran half a mile and telephoned Dr. Norman Cooper, a cave explorer, and rescue squads arrived.

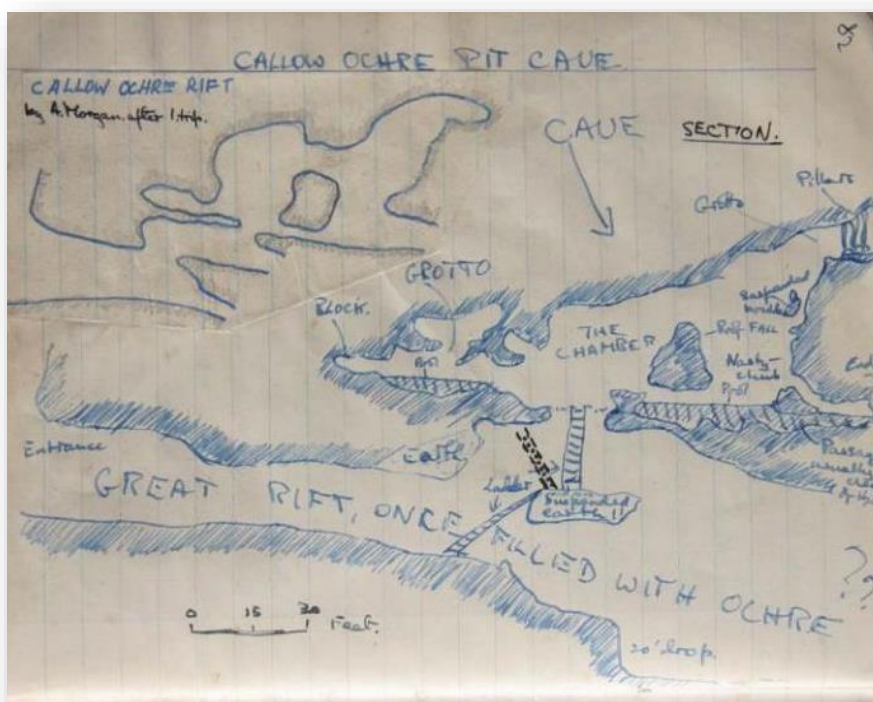
Source – Sidcot School Speleological Society Log Book – Volume 3, page 64

The entrance to Coral Cave has been cemented up! Presumably by Axbridge R.D.C., as they made a bit of fuss about it when Tich fell down. They might as well cement up the Yorkshire Pots!

19 October 1945 – Axbridge Ochre Cavern

Source - Willie Stanton's Log Book Vol. 2, Page 105

Went and rescued Hawkes, Cons and Sayce from C. Ochre Pit Cave. At 5:45 p.m. they were found missing and George came and asked me to come with him to try and find them. I told him Wills had better come too. We thought the ladder had probably fallen down and that they were marooned.



*Plan of
15 June 1945*

With rope, spades, first-aid and refreshments we motored to Axbridge Station and climbed up to the mine in darkness except for the moon and my headlamp. On arriving at the mine we dumped the kit and yelled. An answering yell came from the depths (heights). We entered and found they were quite safe, and up in the top cave. The ladder had occupied the position shown by the dotted line in the Plan of 15 June 1945 owing to Hawkes having stretched out his foot and brushed it aside. I therefore chimneyed up the 1st drop, finding it very nasty and tricky, and feeling weak, with a lifeline round me, which though pretty useless, gave me a bit of moral support. After about 10 minutes I did it, and straightened up the ladder. I went up and let Cons down on the lifeline, and then let the others down the ladder on the 1st drop with lifelines attached.

Outside they drank tea, and we came down the hill in the moonlight. The view was superb, the moon on Cheddar reservoir and the lights all along Mendip standing out through the mist. I should have liked to have a photo of us coming down, with lights, carrying the ladder. Wills cycled back, and we motored back in comfort to a good supper for me, but bread and milk for the “Three Bears” (Violet’s idea).

1947

3 September 1947 – Swildon’s Hole

Source – Luke Devenish Diary – Volume 1, Pages 11 to 12

Mr. Leach & four friends and brothers and sister.

We went down the Middle way, inspected the 40’ – quite a lot of water passing, and came up the wet way. One member of the party dropped his lamp down the waterfall on the way down – we recovered it later. The lady of the party required much helping, and was very nervous – apparently I instilled confidence in her. Two members (both boys) wore shorts without ill effects. All enjoyed themselves and were interested in the odd side passages. On emerging I closed the grate (newly cemented). The party were embarrassed as to whether to give me a tip. On my saying that it was one of the Museum’s services, they gave a 5/- contribution.

25 October 1947 - Wookey Hole Cave

Source – Bath Chronicle & Western Gazette – 1 November 1947

[In the article (Daily Herald – 14 April 1949) relating to the death of cave diver Gordon Marriott on 9 April 1949 in Wookey Hole Cave it states that Professor Haldane blacked out whilst diving – this incident probably occurred during this dive] –

CAVE DIVERS FIND A SKULL

BELIVED TO BE ROMAN – BRITISH

Cave divers, who included Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, discovered in Wookey Hole Cave during Saturday night and Sunday morning a well preserved human skull and arm bones believed to be more than 1,700 years old.

The divers wearing self-contained shallow water equipment went down at 8 p.m. In a survey lasting until 2 a.m. they explored and charted underwater chambers connecting the Witch’s Kitchen and the second and third chambers, penetrating to the fifth chamber.

It was the first time Prof. Haldane, who is 55, had done any cave diving, but he in an honorary member of the cave diving group and conducted diving experiments for the Admiralty during the war.

1949

9 April 1949 – Wookey Hole Cave

Source – Wookey Hole 75 Years of Cave Diving & Exploration – Hanwell, Price, Witcombe pages 84 to 87

The first week of April 1949 saw preparations for the next and uncertain push. ‘Operation Innominate’, therefore, would be ‘an inspection of Eleven, especially the cliff face for the best drop’; divers would ‘swim out singly over the deep water’, but ‘must not descend below the 30-foot level.’ The three divers would be Graham Balcombe, Don Coase and Robert E. Davies. Bob Davies, often referred to as ‘RED’, was an experienced Peak Cavern man from Derbyshire though a relative newcomer to Wookey Hole. It was noted that P-Party equipment which could be converted to an oxygen-nitrogen mixture would have to be used for the eventual descent of Eleven below 30 feet. Bottom walking divers in support at the beach-head in Nine would be Tom Grosvenor and George Lucy. Gordon Ingram-Marriott was invited to join them again, for although he was not a caver, he had recently visited Peak Cavern and now knew what to expect at Wookey Hole. The wide publicity after the discovery of Nine had renewed the interest of both the Navy and former frogmen such as Marriott who probably needed some excitement from his mundane demonstration dives at Butlins. The ‘Wing Co’ approved, of course. Moreover, Marriott knew all about ‘finning’ and ‘mixture breathing’ and the C.D.G. was anxious to learn more at first hand. Marriott would go with the advance party so that the more experienced C.D.G. members could help him to adjust and observe how to tackle cave diving using swim-fins. But Marriott would not go beyond the Tenth Chamber and would wait with the support divers in Nine.

On the actual day, however, things did not go right from the start. After a bit of to-ing and fro-ing to the platform in the Sixth Chamber, Balcombe withdrew because he could not cope with his unaccustomed fins to an adequate degree of safety and Grosvenor cried off with face mask problems. Marriott had a light failure whilst on the platform, but this was put right by Coase. During this, Coase himself had created ‘plenty of splash’ and had been ‘a very comical sight’ to his recorder, Sybil Bowden-Lyle. He also lost a weight whilst sorting out Marriott’s lights. Eventually, when they had got their kit and revised plans together, Coase led the way from base followed by Marriott, Davies and Lucy. By now it had become a ‘look and see’ trip. Whilst Marriott and Lucy surfaced in Nine-One to take the overland route to Nine-Two, Coase showed Davies around his Loop. After making some kit adjustments in Nine-Two, they both dived on to the Eleventh, but found no way on above the 30-foot level and so returned for a rest and chat on the beach-head in the Ninth Chamber. Coase had been discomforted by frontal sinus pains during his dive and his log sheet records slight nose bleeding which got worse on going to Eleven. So, he took the short way back, accompanied by Lucy. Meanwhile, Marriott elected to go around the longer loop with Davies so that he could see Ten before returning. Both divers had mastered the extremely difficult technique of communicating underwater by spitting out their gag behind the face mask, then placing the plate against the head of a colleague and talking. Speech was thus conducted through the bone of the skull and clearly received. Conversations were limited, of course, and the gag had to be relocated by using one’s tongue; an awkward manoeuvre that needed skill and practice, to say nothing of confidence in each other’s ability. Bob Davies and Don Coase frequently talked like this underwater, for example. The divers had incorporated a flutter valve which enabled water that leaked into the face mask at any time especially during conversations, to be expelled.

After the usual equipment checks and breathing drills, Marriot set off with Davies close behind. On reaching the Tenth Chamber, they had a brief underwater chat, then headed for home. By now, the visibility was very bad, but Davies was reassured by the tugs on the line ahead that Marriott was making good progress. When they stopped he concluded that his companion had made it to the next belay and, closely following the guide line himself, he arrived back in Three. But Marriott wasn't there!

Despite being low on oxygen reserves Davies dived back immediately to look for Marriott, hoping to find him on the platform, or somewhere safe. Balcombe and Coase, neither fully fit, kitted-up in record time and followed. But it must have felt like an age in the circumstances. Davies and Coase found Gordon Marriott's body just a few feet upstream of the platform, face down, pointing upstream and his kit spent of oxygen. He was hauled quickly to the platform, but attempts to resuscitate him failed. Marriott had drowned and Wookey Hole Cave had claimed the first cave diving tragedy. His missing reserve cylinder was discovered by Bob Davies on 7th May 1949, a fortnight after the inquest.

It must have been difficult for all involved to imagine that anything other than equipment failure had caused such a highly trained and experienced Royal Marines diver to lose the line and drown. The inquest thus records:

Death was due to anoxic anoxaemia, accidentally sustained during diving operations when his oxygen supply became exhausted due to a fault in the test pressure gauge.

But Bob Davies's subsequent discovery of the ample reserve of gas in the missing cylinder leads to a different interpretation. To the vexed question of, 'Why did Marriott die?' Davies replies:

Well, first of all it was the flow-meter that was at fault but it certainly played no role in the situation. I swam right behind Marriott to Wookey Nine and he was not blowing off oxygen. At the time of the inquest the missing oxygen cylinder had not been found. He had started with a spare one tied to his waist and no cylinder set was there when Don Coase and I found him. Thus, at the time of the inquest no one knew whether he had used it or not. Now, I found that cylinder on 7.5.49 and I have a Kodachrome slide showing it to contain 117 atmospheres of oxygen. This changes the whole complexion of the case. Marriott knew he had very little left when he did his last breathing drills. Yet he still spent many minutes looking round in Wookey Ten before we started back. As stated earlier his gas supply ran out where later calculations showed it would. The cylinder was under the Eighth Chamber surface. His body was under the Seventh Chamber surface. Dropping the cylinder would make him float. His light was still working hours later. We should have found him swimming on one of the many surfaces if he had lost the wire and if it really was an accident. I personally don't believe that his death was due to 'loss of line'. At best, it was gross negligence in not changing the cylinder; at worst, it was deliberate. I do not wish to believe the latter because both Don Coase and I went back for him with very little reserve gas and seriously risked our lives for him. Yet his dresser Nell Davies, said afterwards that he absolutely couldn't care less about anything that night. We may never know the whole truth. Certainly, his last words to me were 'I can't see a thing in this fucking mud' as he moved ahead of me towards the Third Chamber and the safety he never reached alive.

Source – Luke Devenish Diary, Page 83

C.D.G. Balcombe, Coase, Lucy, Marriot, Grosvenor, Davies

Two divers swam from 1 to 3 having been a short way downstream from 1 to examine something in the passage. Grosvenor, Davies, Marriot & Coase then went to 6 to recover a lamp left there from pre-war ops. They then returned, bringing the lamp.

Coase Balcombe Marriot & Davies then went to 10 & 11. Coase & Balcombe returned and were giving their reports when Davies returned & inquired where Marriot was. On being told that he had not returned he said that he had not passed him. Whereupon he returned to search for him closely followed by Coase & Balcombe. After 40 mins Coase reappeared to say that he had been found dead and was on the emergency platform in 6(ii) where artificial respiration was being performed on him. I then went to the village to collect supplies of Oxygen & soda lime & notify the WinCo.

When I returned Lucy had left for 6(ii) and had been gone some time. When Grosvenor was sent in to see what progress was being made and whether any supplies were needed. He returned and said no progress made nor supplies needed.

Sometime later Davies appeared and collapsed on surfacing in 3. He was dragged out and recovered on having his mask removed.

Coase subsequently went in and Lucy? returned leaving the other two to bring out Marriot. When he was brought out I photographed, which was a failure, and then pulled him out of the water. He was then undressed, pronounced dead by Dr. Melrose and carried out. He was taken to the car park by jeep.

Source – Wells Journal – 15 April 1949

DIVER LOOSES HIS LIFE IN WOOKEY HOLE CAVE GALLANT BUT VAIN RESCUE ATTEMPT

A 27-year-old Exeter man, a member of the Cave Diving Group, Gordon Marriott, an ex-frogman of the Royal Marines, lost his life in a diving expedition in Wookey Hole Caves on Saturday evening.

He was engaged with five other members of the Diving Group, who set out to explore the subterranean chambers and he is believed to have lost his life owing to the exhaustion of his oxygen supply

When missed, a gallant rescue attempt was made by the other divers, and when found he was carried to an emergency platform and artificial respiration continued for half an hour, but to no avail. The body was later removed to Wells Mortuary.

The facts will be investigated by the Coroner at an inquest at Wells this (Wednesday) afternoon. Mr. Gordon Marriott, who, as a Royal Marines frogman, helped to clear the Normandy Beaches for D-Day, only recently joined the Diving Group and this was his first big operation with them.

The leader of the expedition was Mr. F. G. Balcombe, of London, and the other divers taking part were Dr. R. E. Davies, of Sheffield, Mr. Donald Coase, of London, Mr. T. H. Grosvenor, of Portsmouth, and Mr. George Lucy, of Henleaze, Bristol.

After the caves had been closed to the public for the night the party entered the water at Witch's Kitchen. Conditions were bad as the mud was very disturbed, and visibility was almost zero. But they pushed on until they reached the forward base at cavern nine. There Marriott and Lucy

stood by, as the other two went on into the eleventh cave. Some time later the two returned, and the fatal journey back started.

Lucy led, followed by Coase, Marriott and Davies. They carried torches and followed the guide line. Everything seemed to be going to plan, but when Dr. Davies arrived back at base in the dry, flood-lit cavern three he found that Marriott had not returned.

His companions immediately retraced their steps. Wherever possible they removed their helmets to call out. Their cries echoed around, them, but there was no answering call. At last they found their companion, lying half submerged in the River. They carried him to an emergency platform 25 feet away, removed his helmet and worked for 80 minutes in their rubber diving suits in an attempt to revive him. But it was of no use. Then they struggled to carry Marriott back to the Chamber opening.

Meanwhile Dr. T. G. Melrose had been summoned, also the St. John Ambulance Brigade. The doctor and the Ambulance Squad waited in the fifth Chamber until the divers returned. The doctor could only pronounce life extinct and the body was removed to the Wells Mortuary. Mr. Lucy, telling the story of the 'fatal expedition to a reporter said he was accompanying Mr. Marriott into the ninth chamber, where there was a beach and where they had established a base of operations.

He said: "Mr. Coase and Dr. Davies went round a loopway - an alternative route - which led into the far end of the ninth chamber and through the 10th into the beginning of the 11th chamber, where the divers are stopped by a deep, rocky submerged chasm.

"After Mr. Marriott and - I had established tele-communications at our base we were joined by the others, and after a breathing space we started back by about 8 p.m. Mr. Marriott wanted to see as much of the cave system as was possible, and he and Dr. Davies returned via the loopway, while Mr. Coase and I went back by the direct, route. We reached the third chamber and were joined by Dr. Davies, who was surprised to find his companion diver had not arrived. "He dived back immediately,' followed by Mr. Coase, and they found Mr. Marriott near the entrance to the seventh chamber, lying face down across the safety line and towards the Giant Staircase, a pile of boulders forming natural steps. They struggled with him to the emergency platform - two beams erected across the narrow way of 'the sixth chamber. Visibility in the cave, where the mud had been stirred by the divers, was 'down to a" foot.

"Mr. Graham Balcombe – who had stood by in another chamber - and I 'joined Mr. Coase in the sixth chamber, where we applied artificial respiration until there was obviously no hope, after which the body and equipment were brought through the murky submerged chambers to the surface of the third."

All the divers were equipped with frogman-type diving suits and all had, fins for swimming except Mr. Lucy who wore weighted boots and walked along the Axe river bed. Mr. Balcombe said it was presumed that Mr. Marriott's death was due to the exhaustion of his oxygen supply. He said he was a very experienced diver, with an outstanding war record. He must have lost the guide line because his companion diver followed the line, through the mud to base where he found Mr. Marriott had not returned.

Mr. Balcombe said they had been exploring the Caves since 1935 and this was the first accident. He said everything possible was done to ensure safety. Posts were set up along the route with a telephone, extra oxygen supplies. He felt certain that only the fact that Mr. Marriott lost his grip on the lead wire caused the tragedy.

Mr. Marriott, who lived at Bestleigh Hotel, Powerham Crescent, Exeter, was married and had a son age 2½. Police took statements from all members of the group.

Wing-Commander G. W. Hodgkinson, an hon. member of the Cave Diving Group, paid tribute to the “very gallant rescue attempt” by Dr. Davies, who immediately returned for his companion, taking a big risk, as his oxygen was getting short.

“It is a fair supposition that Marriott must have wandered from the path of the line and actually passed within a few feet of his companion without either noticing the other. Wing-Commander Hodgkinson referred to the “tremendous labours” to revive Marriott once he had been located.

“Marriott, without oxygen in his mask or in his feeder apparatus was a dead weight. Dr. Davies, with the other divers, had to haul him from the water, in itself a considerable achievement, hoist him on to a narrow emergency platform, and then cut away his diving suit. All the time their own supplies were running short.

One of the rescuers collapsed after the rescue attempt, but quickly revived. The inquest will open at Wells this (Wednesday) afternoon.

Source – Daily Herald – 14 April 1949

WOOKEY FROGMAN VANISHED FROM LIFE – LINE IN CAVE MAN BEHIND WALKED ON

The 13th chair was vacant when members of the Cave Diving Group lunched in this Somerset village today.

It belonged to 27-years-old Gordon Marriot, first known victim of the eerie bat-filled Wookey Hole caves since Celtic tribes offered up human sacrifices there 2,000 years ago. Marriot, an ex-Royal Marines frogman, died last night in the seventh of the 11 discovered chambers that honeycomb the Mendip Hills.

He was found 12 ft. down in the underground River Axe, at the top of “The Giant’s Staircase” - huge underwater steps which lead from the 7th to 8th chambers.

Since midnight Graham Balcombe, the group’s 42-years-old leader, and 11 other members of the group, including two women, have been giving statements to the police. Marriot was one of four frogmen who set out to reach the 11th chamber - first penetrated only three weeks ago by Graham Balcombe.

He was attendant diver to Dr. R. B. Davies, 29-years-old biochemist, of Sheffield. Mr. G. T. Lucy, of Bristol, was similarly assisting Londoner, Donald Coase.

Davies and Coase made the 500 ft. long trip to Chamber No. 11, while Marriot and Lucy stood by at the forward base in Chamber No. 9.

At about 9 p.m. the party started to return to their base in dry, floodlit Chamber No. 3. Lucy led, followed by Coase, Marriot and Davies.

Bespectacled Dr. Davies told me today: "As I started to swim back I felt the twitching of the lifeline on the floor of the caves. That told me that Marriot was making his way back ahead of me.

"When I reached base and found Marriot missing I started the 150 ft. return journey with Don Coase.

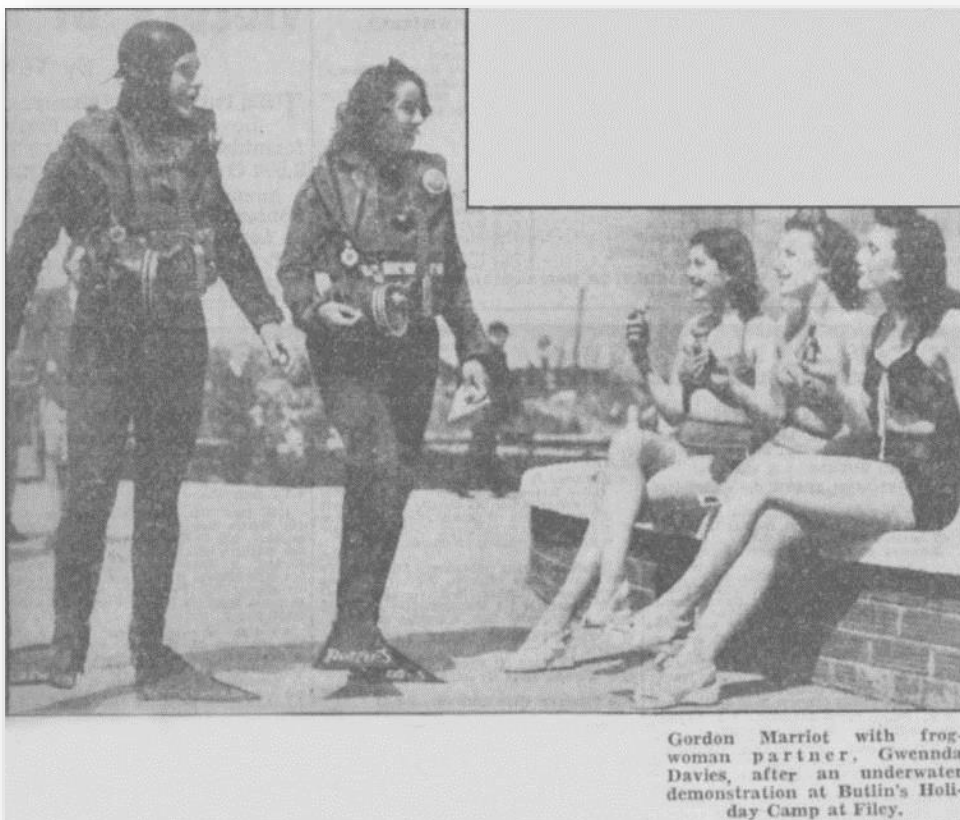
We found Marriot in the muddy water of Chamber No. 7 and dragged him about 20 ft. to an emergency platform above the surface of the water in the chamber."

The oxygen bottle attached to Marriot's frogman's suit was found empty. Members take this as indicating that he had not renewed his supply, as he should have done in accordance with the group's safety rules, before making the return journey.

Davies and Coase gave 14st. Marriot artificial respiration in vain. It took the two men, helped by Graham Balcombe, three hours to drag him back to base.

A doctor was waiting and Marriot's skin-tight frogman's suit was cut off. He was found to be dead.

"I am sure Marriot was in the place we found him when I was returning to base," Dr. Davies said. "His body may have momentarily floated to the surface, causing me to walk underneath it."



A notice recently put up at the entrance to the caves says of the diving group members: "They are a band of adventurous spirits, who love pioneering and exploring for exploring's sake."

Recalling that 18 months ago Professor J. B. S. Haldane had a narrow escape when he “blacked out” while diving in the caves, the notice adds.

“It made us realise that the principals in these operations take grave risks every time they go further into Mendip’s underworld of water, rocks and mud.”

Thirteen ancient skulls have been found in Wookey Hole caves in recent years.

Post August 1949 – Stoke Lane Slocker

Source – BEC Bulletin No. 26 August 1949

Members entering Stoke Lane are warned of loose boulders. A short time ago a party had a very narrow escape from serious accident when a boulder weighing in the neighbourhood of 24 cwt. fell from the pile on the slope from the stream to the Main Chamber. It hit Sybil Bowden-Lyle in the back but luckily had no very serious consequences. Hard luck Sybil it’s a good job that you’re tough.

1951

27 March 1951 – G.B. Cave

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 19 No. 211 pages, 12 to 15 (December 1986)

The caving party were:

James Pembry, 23, of Bristol. Engineering student at London. Leader: quite a bit of previous Mendip caving. First visit to G.B. Cave.

Derek Reynolds, 26, of Bristol. Draughtsman for a Bristol company.

Rosemary Reynolds, 21, (sister of Derek). Nurse at Weston General Hospital.

Norman Goodman, 23, of Taunton. Student, Reading University.

Mary Goodman, 16, (sister). Wierfield School, Taunton. Previous experience: Goatchurch and Sidcot only, on Good Friday.

09:00 26 March - The approximate time that the party had their last food and drink before the trip. They reached Mendip by motorcycle and presumably requested permission to park their bikes at Lower Farm and to change in the hayloft, although one notes that some parties never asked permission and could enter a cave without being spotted by the farmer. All members had caving clothes: "dry grots" - doesn't that word look out of place for 1951?

14:00 26 March - Party entered G.B. The blockhouse did not exist then, and as often as not the entrance lock was vandalised. I cannot recall asking for a key in those days. Their lights were one hand-held torch, candles and matches carried in waterproof material. The party thought that the entrance was tight because they had to lie flat on their backs for the first 20ft. (At that time, we often thought of doing a "reverse rescue" with Herbert Balch in the stretcher, to let him see the cave. This was always treated as serious proposition. The '68 Flood changed this spot a great deal.) They made normal progress to the Devil's Elbow, where a trickle of water was found. Then, there was a knotted rope ladder below the Elbow, later replaced with a knotted chain.

15:30 26 March - Party reached Main Chamber, in those days often called The Gorge. They lit flares to admire the view; these were probably home-made from magnesium as were those that I have seen. No mention is made of the main drop further down the chamber, and I suspect they did not venture that far.

16:00 26 March - The E.T.A. of 18.00, decided amongst themselves before the trip, seemed to be well within their grasp, and they started their return journey intending to follow the same route. Prior to the '68 Flood it was quite a struggle getting into the old route from the Main Chamber. At its junction it was a narrow, inclined rift which widened at a level some 4 feet above the floor, and the constriction extended for about 10 feet. We take it for granted that with modern lights we can make a quick visual sweep of the Main Chamber and can quickly assess the water situation. However, with candles, one can only rely on the noise level, and being less perceptive through inexperience they made no mention of an awareness of changing conditions.

They were also unaware that a strong flow in the stream passage meant that the Devil's Elbow would be flooded. This passage always carries a strong airflow when the stream is high, and even carbide lights can be affected. The party must have struggled hard to reach the ladder, and in the effort, they dropped and lost the torch. Somehow, they achieved their aim only to realise that the Elbow was impassable, and even access to the ladder was denied by the resulting waterfall.

16:30 26 March - A quick decision was made, that another route should be sought. None of the party was familiar with the cave survey, but they reasoned that an attempt should be made from the Main Chamber itself. They were now experiencing trouble with the candles, and one can imagine how first one would go out, be relit, would then be the lighter of the next, and so on. They descended as far as the largest pot between the Elbow and the Main Chamber. This had also become impassable now, with their lighting, lack of a rope and general inexperience. Events now lose their clarity, but it seems that they attempted to regain the ladder chamber and look at the other water inlets for a new route. Derek fell three times in his efforts to climb, either from one of these inlets or from the largest pot, either with or without lights, fortunately without injury. They now found that matches are only waterproof if kept in a waterproof container. They also found that matches cannot stay alight in a draughty passage.

18:00 26 March - The last burning candle failed, then came the realisation that they would have to remain in that chamber until rescue came. In Derek's words, "The girls were wonderful about it all". They intuitively followed the emperor penguin technique – huddle together in a group, periodically changing from periphery to centre - varied by the wasteful human technique of jumping up and down and singing.

22:00 26 March - Frank Brooker, 25, of Brighton. Research engineer, lodging with Derek and Rosemary Reynolds. He knew that the party was on Mendip, but did not know the particular cave. He also knew that they intended to have a reasonable E.T.A., expecting them home in time to join him at a dance in the Vic. Rooms. He eventually went alone to the dance, at 22:00

23:59 26 March - Frank returned home from the dance and found that the Reynolds parents were worried.

0:30 27 March - Frank set off from Clifton on his motorcycle, intending to locate his friends' motor-cycles and thus deduce the cave that they might have entered. After touring Burrington without success he decided to call the police.

03:30 27 March - Frank rang Axbridge Police, requesting help to locate a party of overdue cavers.

04:00 27 March - Frank fell asleep in the telephone box. At 05:00, the police rang Frank, waking him, and told him that they had everything ready. They had contacted Harry Stanbury, who was effectively in charge of M.R.O. at that date. Harry joined the police party.

05:30 27 March - The police collected Frank and began a new tour of Burrington area. Control was now in their hands as Frank was unaware of the locations of other Mendip caves. With Burrington still showing a blank the police decided to try the Charterhouse area. From their point of view, it was better to visit the farmers rather than the caves, so their next location was Lower Farm, Charterhouse.

06:30 27 March - police called on Messrs. Young. If you think that Mendip farmers are reasonably alert to transport or clothing left on their properties, then it is only as a result of incidents like this one. The party's motor-cycles were found, and from prior conversation G.B. was recognised as the cave to search.

06:45 27 March - Wells Police Rescue Team put on standby. Leader, Ken Russell, C.I.D., called back from a proposed trip to Plymouth. One assumes that the Police Rescue Teams, of that name, were more in the nature of Civil Defence teams then.

07:00 27 March - Police call at "Mendip Mansions", Colin Vowles' hut adjacent to the Lower Farm yard. "You are doing a rescue". The weather was dry but cold, with some snow under the hedges. The last few days had been very wet, but not abnormally so for the Charterhouse area. In the traditional manner, our dry grots had been draped over the wall to dry, but were of course wringing wet. The police made us walk to the cave. We did not spend any time having food or drinks.

08:00 27 March - Rescue party entered cave. Harry Stanbury remained at entrance to coordinate with the police. There was no water within sight of the entrance. The rescue party were: – Frank Brooker (previously described). Colin Vowles, 24, of Wells. Wells Cathedral School contemporary of Howard Kenney. Dental student, Guys Hospital, London. Charles Alexander Pitt–Steele ('Sandy'), 23, of Wanstead. Evacuee to East Horrington. Wells C.S. contemporary of R.R.K. Dental student, Guys Hospital. Cpl. R.R. Kenney, 22, of Wells. Royal Engineers Field Survey, Singapore (on compassionate leave). Our route was the new one, recently opened. At that time, there was no drop beyond the squeeze, which was at a lower level, and wider. We headed down the Main Chamber as far as the drop, where I left the others and went over the Bridge to the Gallery. From here I turned left to the Hall and down the Oxbow meeting the others at its lower end. They had been down to the choke without success. Sandy now joined me, and Colin and Frank headed directly back towards Devil's Elbow. My route was back up the Oxbow, then via The Loop to Rumba Allay, White Passage and a return to The Gallery. Sandy and I headed up the new route to the surface.

08:45 27 March - Sandy and I reached the surface and reported to Harry Stanbury. Time for a quick smoke.

08:55 27 March - Re-entered the cave, this time taking the old route towards Devil's Elbow. Water level just a few inches: no problem. At this time, we had no idea that there had been a flood pulse.

09:00 27 March - Trapped party found by Colin and Frank just below the Devil's Elbow. No injuries, and all capable of moving under their own steam after a few moments candle-lighting and jerks to loosen up a bit. As the new route was less tiring that's the way they went.

09:15 27 March - Sandy and I deduced that the party had been found and were now in front of us. We joined them halfway up the new route.

09:40 27 March - Everyone out of the cave. Colin and I suddenly realised that we were on our own, the police having found transport for everyone else. It was a distinctly cold walk back to Lower Farm.

10:00 27 March - The Youngs' hospitality was everything one would expect from them. There were people everywhere. Colin and I were busy trying to ensure that the Press had the right picture - us as well - and we had to make sure we were described as camping. 'Mendip Mansions' had no planning permission, and officially did not exist, neither did Colin possess a necessary permit to buy concrete building blocks (Austerity period). The whole structure contravened all building, drainage and other regulations. As far as I can remember, no M.R.O. teams were called out by Harry Stanbury, but I assume some people were put on alert. Howard, from Wells, definitely did not appear.

11:30 27 March - Colin and I at the Wells Journal Office: "Sit down, pick up your pen, write this, - and don't get it wrong".

Some notable quotes from the Press: "It could happen to anybody" "It was not really dangerous" – Mary Goodman. "I think that if we are going to tackle any more caves like this one, it would be better to make sure we have the right equipment, with helmets fixed with lights" – Derek Reynolds. "I wish that they would seal up the caves. I can't see that this kind of thing serves any useful purpose" - I. Pembry (father of James Pembry). "The girls behaved marvellously, singing and telling stories. They never faltered once". - Bristol Evening Post.

Harry Stanbury replied in a letter to Bristol Evening Post, that if the caves should be filled in, then why not start by filling Avon Gorge and the docks. He pointed out the existence of caving clubs and the general safety practiced by cavers who were properly introduced to the sport. He signed his letter: Warden, Mendip Rescue Organisation; Member, Bristol Exploration Club, Wessex Cave Club, South Wales Caving Club, Cave Diving Group.

Howard wrote a long letter in the same vein, to the Wells Journal, concerning training and equipment. He pointed out how inconvenient it was for the rescuers. He signed as: Secretary, Mendip Nature Research Committee of the Wells Natural History & Archaeological Society. Nowadays we might write and say, "Silly B's", but then all correspondents were anxious to show that caving could be respectable and safe.

Richard Kenney

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 25 No. 269 pages, 143 to 144 (May 2000)

Recollections on this Rescue from Richard Kenney

Being March and dark in the early mornings the bikes were not spotted but in later years some farmers became more aware of their caving parties and reported possible problems. I am not knocking the M.R.O. as it then existed but here are some relevant comments. The list of wardens included "time servers" who may have limited their caving to Saturday afternoons at Badger Hole for example. However, they knew what caving was all about and may have been able to assemble a reasonable party after perhaps a few hours. Specialist equipment was not available and they would merely have turned up with normal caving gear. The Police Rescue team could work effectively in a quarry but down a cave? -- no! The time from 03.30 to 08.80 to get people into the cave highlights the prevailing conditions. At no time during or after or in the media was hypothermia mentioned. I doubt that any of us were aware of its clinical manifestations. I was severely criticised afterwards for not waiting until an M.R.O. warden had appeared on the scene. My assumption was that with the Police present then the M.R.O. must have been called. However, my task was "Locate and Report" which I did. The next task of "Immediate rescue if possible" was also done. We could have had five hypothermia casualties or victims plus one casualty with broken limbs. I don't think that M.R.O. had appropriate stretchers or body bags available and certainly no resuscitation gear so at worst my choice of "horrendous" would have fitted the bill. The Warden was the only other caver who turned up. Communication between the accident site and the surface by alternating from one to the other is warming work!

Source – Bristol Evening World – 27 March 1951

BRISTOL EXPLORERS TRAPPED 14 HOURS IN CAVE RESCUERS FIND THEM DRENCHED, WITHOUT A LIGHT

Three men and two girls, soaked to the skin and without food, were rescued to-day after being trapped between two flood-swollen waterfalls in a small cavern in a Mendip cave near Charterhouse for 14 hours.

A rescue party reached them at 9.30 a.m. after a friend made a midnight dash from Bristol by motor-cycle, called in the police and toured Mendip farms in search of their base.

Their motor-cycles were found at Lower Farm, Charterhouse, and two rescue parties made their descent into G.B. Cave.

They found the trapped five huddled together for warmth and guided them to safety. The five were: Derek Reynolds (26), engineer and leader of the party of Alma Vale-rd., Clifton, his sister Rosemary (21) a nurse at Weston Hospital. Norman Goodman (24) of Sherford Lodge, Taunton and his sister Mary (16), and James Pembry (23) of 2, Grove-terrace, Hambrook. After their rescue the party returned to Lower Farm to collect their belongings from a loft in a barn. There Derek Reynolds told the "Evening World": "It was a terrifying experience, we went down the cave at 2 p.m. yesterday intending to be back at the farm by 6 o'clock, we climbed down the wet way and it took about one and a half hours. We got to the main cavern where the roof is 365ft. high and examined the wonderful stalactites.

"When we came to make our way back we found the waterfall had increased terrifically, but gradually we made our way along it and then we came to a tunnel, 18 inches in diameter, through which we had to crawl, and found it completely blocked by a torrent of water. We turned back and decided we would make our way up another route. On our way back we came to another waterfall.

"The waterfall was swollen and it would have been dangerous to have attempt to climb up through it; we would have been washed away.

"We couldn't climb above it because of the risk of someone falling and injuring himself; we had to find another way out. Then our torch was dropped.

"We thought we were all right because we had plenty of candles and matches, but the volume of water was bringing a terrific gust of air which blew out our candles. Our matches were in waterproof containers, but we could not get them alight in the blast of air.

Then our predicament became terrifying because we could not see our way out.

"We began to climb up a smaller waterfall and the first few got through easily. I was the last up and fell back three times over a 15 foot drop in my attempts to get to the top. Eventually we made it and we found ourselves in a small cavern in which there were two roaring waterfalls.

"We decided we would have to wait until help came."

We made ourselves as comfortable as we could but we were all wet through and hungry. The girls were wonderful about it all.

"We lay on the floor side by side as close as we could for warmth and every now and then the one at the end would change places with someone else so he could have his share of the warmth of our bodies.

"It was so cold that we had to sometimes jump and sing to keep our circulation up. As it was, we began to suffer from exposure in the intense cold."

Youngest member of the party, 16-years-old Mary Goodman, who goes to Weirfield School, Taunton, summed up her experience like this: "It could happen to anybody. It was not really dangerous. The worst part of it was that we were cold and wet and couldn't see a thing." "It was easy getting in although the entrance is narrow, and there are several side passages leading off.

“The river runs near-by - Devil’s Elbow - and it was swollen with flood water.

“We found later that we couldn’t return by the way we had entered because flood water was pouring through in a torrent. Then we dropped the torch and the cave was plunged into pitch darkness. We tried to light our candles but they were damp and our matches were sodden.

“At 7 p.m. we knew we couldn’t get out. The way was blocked by pouring water so we made our way into one of the smaller chambers and huddled together, cold, wet and feeling rather miserable.

On the way to the smaller chamber Derek had to climb up a waterfall in complete darkness. It was a difficult job, but he managed it.



“Then during the early hours we saw lights approaching and heard shouts. We shouted back and discovered that the rescue party had arrived.

We had entered by a wet passage, but we left by a dry passage the existence of which we were not aware of until the rescue.

“I think that if we are going to tackle any more caves like this one, it would be better to make sure we have the right equipment with helmets fixed with lights.”

Frank Brooker, 25, of Brighton, described how he toured

Mendip on his motor-cycle looking for the party’s base farm.

“At 3.30 a.m. I telephoned the police and asked them to help. I fell asleep in the telephone kiosk for about an hour and then the police ‘phoned back and said they had everything ready,” he said.

A police car came and we eventually went to Lower Farm and knocked up Mr. Young, the farmer and three Londoners who were on a caving holiday.

“At 6 a.m. we went to G.B. cave and the three Londoners and I split up into two groups and made the descent. One group turned back because they could go no further and found no trace.

I and my companion went shouting through the caves and made the descent by a waterfall with some difficulty.

“But our shouts were drowned in the roar of waterfalls and then we found them. They were in wonderful spirits despite their terrible experience and overjoyed to see us.’

Footnote: G.B. Cave is well known among Mendip cavers. Its main feature is a large chamber full of stalactites and stalagmites. There are three known ways of entering – one nearly impossible, one extremely difficult, and another, opened up only a few weeks ago, which is fairly easy. Parts are still unexplored.

Source – Daily Telegraph – 28 March 1951

5 TRAPPED 15 HOURS IN CAVE - PARTY WITHOUT LIGHT AND FOOD

From our own correspondent Bristol, Tuesday.

After being trapped for more than 15 hours in a flooded cave in the Mendips three men and two girls were rescued unhurt early to-day. They had spent most of the time in darkness and without food.

The party, led by Mr. Derek Reynolds, 26, of Alma Vale-road, Clifton, included his sister Rosemary, 21, a nurse at Weston-super-Mare, Mr. James Pembry, 23, of Hambrook, near Bristol, Mr. Norman Goodman, 24, of Sherford Lodge, Taunton, and his sister Mary, 16. They set out from Bristol at 11 a.m. yesterday to explore the "G.B." cave near Charterhouse, entering it at 2 p.m. They had one torch, candles and some matches.

Heavy rains flooded the narrow passages by which they had made their descent into the main cavern and prevented their return. Their torch was accidentally dropped and lost. The candles and matches became sodden. It was 6 p.m. when they realised that they were trapped.

"We Were Wet Through" - Mr. Reynolds said: "We managed to make our way to a small cavern in which there were two waterfalls, and decided we would have to wait until help arrived. We made ourselves as comfortable as we could, but we were all wet through and hungry. We huddled together to keep warm."

Miss Goodman said: "It was an experience I don't want to repeat. When we realised we were stranded we knew there was nothing we could do until rescued. We kept together and sang songs and told stories."

The alarm was raised by Mr. Frank Brooker, a friend, of Alma Vale-road. He left his home at midnight on his motor-cycle to make a search.

He telephoned the police, who organised a rescue team. It consisted of Mr. Colin Vowles and Mr. Richard Kenney of Wells, and Mr. William Steel of Wanstead, Essex, who was spending the week-end in exploring caves.

Search for hours - A police officer said: "There are hundreds of caves in this district and we had to try one after another until we found someone who remembered seeing a party go into the, "G.B." cave.

"The rescue party entered the cave from two directions. After searching for several hours without a break under the most arduous conditions they found the missing people, who were 350ft into the cave system."

The men and girls were brought out about 9:30 this morning and given hot drinks and a change of clothing.

Source –The History of Mendip Caving by Peter Johnson, page 79

Matters were brought to a head at Easter the following year. On 26 March 1951, five young novices sneaked down the cave, with only candles and matches, at about one o'clock in the afternoon. They went in via the Wet Way and when all their lights went out on reaching the Devil's Elbow, they sat in the dark above the 10-ft pot waiting to be rescued. The alarm was raised by an anxious parent at Bristol in the early hours of the following morning and the party was eventually found at 9.30 the following morning, after sitting in the dark for no less than twenty hours.

This incident so alarmed the Axbridge R.D.C. that they promptly erected a new gate and allowed no one at all to go down the cave. Three months later, in July 1951, they erected a massive concrete blockhouse at the entrance, with a door of hardened steel, and it began to look as if the cave was going to be permanently closed, until a meeting was held between the A.R.D.C. and the U.B.S.S. on 6 October 1951. New terms of access were agreed upon – the U.B.S.S. should have the sole right of access to the cave but responsible members of other clubs could go down on special 'guest days', provided they were shown round by the U.B.S.S..

This system worked for two years but was not very satisfactory, guest days being infrequent and the 'guests' often being rude and even threatening about the limited access to the cave. There were also several unsuccessful attempts to get past the blockhouse by forcing the doors. In April 1958, the land around the cave was transferred from the Axbridge R.D.C. to the Bristol Waterworks and, once again, access to it became the subject of controversy. As several clubs wanted to use the cave and the Bristol Waterworks would deal with only one body, a new organization was formed, called the Charterhouse Caving Committee and representative of all the responsible Mendip caving clubs. The outcome was a new charter under which members of certain clubs could go down unaccompanied by the U.B.S.S., provided they signed a declaration indemnifying the Bristol Waterworks in case of accident. This was a considerable improvement on the previous arrangement and the system has worked quite well.

27 August 1951 – Ogof Ffynon Ddu

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 2 No. 3, page 4 (October 1951)

On the morning of Saturday, 25th August, Bill Little and Louis Railton; members of South Wales Cave Club entered Ogof Ffynnon Ddu to survey a passage in the Rawl System. They expected to come out at about 8 p.m. However, during the afternoon heavy rain started and the stream rose rapidly. Mrs. Railton saw the rise in the stream and realised that the party could not get out before Sunday morning.

No alarm was felt as the S.W.C.C maintained an emergency supply of food, lights, and a solid fuel cooker in the Rawl System. Rain continued during Sunday morning, and in the afternoon Mrs. Railton informed the Hon. Secretary of the S.W.C.C. Arrangements were quickly made to call a party of S.W.C.C. members who were working on the Gower Coast.

During the evening the S.W.C.C. party, about thirty miners and thirty Artillery men from Sennybridge started work on the mountain above Ogof Ffynnon Ddu to dam Byfre Fechan from the swallet Pwll Byfre and by digging trenches to divert it into Nant Byfre.

Digging continued all night on the mountain in the rain and all-day Monday. A mechanical excavator was borrowed, but did not arrive in time owing to its low speed.

Early on Monday morning it was decided that fresh cavers were needed and Dr. Crook was asked to put the Mendip Rescue Organisation into operation and send over cavers familiar with Ogof Ffynnon Ddu.

At 7:15 a.m. our Hon. Secretary was telephoned by Dr. Crook and about one hour later a W.C.C. party consisting of the Hon. Secretary, B. Donnan, P. Harvey, L. and P. Millward and G. Williams were ready to leave.

J. Ifold telephoned the Hon Secretary to say that the Cave Diving Group has been called, and were making arrangements for transport with L. Devenish (actually he was away and Mrs. Devenish lent them her car).

Dr. Crook was advised of arrangements made, and it was decided that he should stay as Headquarters, and the party should leave as soon as possible. Dr. Crook said that a U.B.S.S. party – Dr. R. Pearce, J. Parkes and D. Thomson would be going over.

Very good co-operation was experienced at Aust ferry, L. Millward's car being permitted to jump the queue and was loaded so as to be first off. After a journey in heavy rain the first car arrived at the Gwyn Arms at noon. Dr. Crook was telephoned and told that the two men were still in the cave.

The W.C.C. party went to the cave and had a discussion with the Hon. Secretary; S.W.C.C. As the river was still high it was decided that nothing could be done yet. After lunch, the party changed and went into the cave. The cave was then lit throughout with candles. Abercrave Colliery loaned a number of electric cap lamps for the use of rescuers.

The party including members of the C.D.G. made a reconnaissance up the stream, which had fallen considerably, and at 6 p.m. as the U.B.S.S. party had arrived, it was decided to make an attempt on the rescue trip with the strong party now available. It was arranged for fifty miners to be placed in pairs through the cave from the stream passage to the entrance to be ready if it was necessary to get any injured person out quickly.

The trip up the stream was made without a hitch and by 8.30 p.m. news was received on the surface that Railton and Little had been found and were quite alright and well.

At 8 p.m. a rescue party arrived from Yorkshire.

Great assistance was given to the rescuers by John and Sylvia Barrows, who kept open house on Sunday and Monday and with their helpers provided endless sandwiches, cups of tea and soup.

By 9:30 p.m. the cave had been cleared and tackle recovered. After a meal most of the Mendip party left, reaching Bristol between 3 and 6 a.m. the following morning.

Letter from Arthur Hill, Hon. Secretary, South Wales Cave Club to the Hon. Secretary, W.C.C.:-

Dear Frank,

Many thanks for your letter.

We are deeply grateful to you and members of Wessex Cave Club for their assistance in effecting the safe rescue of Railton and Little. The help which has come from all quarters has been absolutely astounding.

I have written an official letter to Bertie Crook and can say that we intend holding a private enquiry regarding our actions during the rescue. The safe rescue of the trapped men rather overrides feelings of right or wrong actions, but we are aware that there was a tremendous diversion of people from their daily labours, and this does place on us a great responsibility to ensure that things of this sort do not become regular occurrences.

With very best wishes, and thanks,
Yours, Arthur.

Letter from Arthur Hill, Hon. Secretary, South Wales Cave Club to Dr. Bertie Crook: -

Dear Bertie,

Please accept my apologies for delay in writing you following the cave rescue at Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, but there has been a tremendous amount of clearing - up to be done. Will you please accept and convey to all members of the Mendip C.R.O. our deep gratitude and thanks for the wonderful way your party answered the call, and made the final push which resulted in the safe rescue of Railton and Little. There is no doubt that the Mendip people arrived at the right time, and it was a matter of luck that the trapped men were found in reasonable physical condition. Things might have been very different.

In some ways this has been an unusual case of rescue and we intend holding a private enquiry to examine our actions throughout, and to decide whether a future rescue of this type can be handled better. We shall, no doubt, communicate again with you as we feel this case has shown up the need for inter - C.R.O. communication when parties are called on to stand ready for long periods as we were. People who have been without sleep for 36 hours or more, as most of our local people had been, are in no shape to make a final assault in the grand manner of the Mendip C.R.O.

I have now located your folding stretcher and hope to return this to you tomorrow. We feel the least we can do is to offer to pay the expenses of Mendip C.R.O. for their visit here, and will be pleased to hear from you about this. Once again many thanks and apologies for all the trouble you took in organising the parties, and, of course, best wishes to you and yours.

Yours very sincerely,
Arthur H. Hill.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 28 August 1951

EXPLORERS TRAPPED 59 HOURS – WEST CAVERS IN RESCUE OF TWO

Bristol and Mendip cavers were resting today after helping to complete the rescue of two Birmingham cavern explorers, trapped for 59 hours in “the Cave of the Black Spring” at the head of the Swansea Valley. They will remember the operation as one of the most arduous they have been called upon to assist in for a long time.

They had not only to squeeze through narrow apertures, but to divert a swollen stream feeding the river that passes through the cave,

A Timsbury doctor, who organised the party of Mendip men, told the Evening Post today: "I received the first call for help at 7:30 a.m. By midday the advance guard had reached the spot by car. It was a very good effort on their part.

"I spent the entire morning rounding people up by phone. In all 14 went over." Mr. Don Thompson, a Bristol medical student, was the first to reach the two men - Mr. Lewis Railton (45) and Mr. William Little (31).

Of him, they said: "We were never so pleased to see anyone before."

Thomson was quickly followed by a dozen other cavers and miners who had been trying all day to penetrate the flooded channel leading to the grotto. Among those who joined the Swansea Valley rescuers was Mrs. Phyllis Miliward, of Bristol. Wearing an oilskin suit, she repeatedly made trips into the caves, emerging wet through.

Wearing diving apparatus, Dennis Hazell, of Chew Stoke, and Roger Cattle and Pat Ifold, of Blagdon, struggled through the rapidly-rising waters of the Pwll Byfre. With them was George Lucy, of Blagdon. Their war-time "frogmen" equipment was invaluable, for they had to make their way inch by inch through the torrent before placing staples in nooks along the sides of the river to facilitate the progress of other teams.

1952

12 January 1952 – Drunkard's Hole

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 2 No. 32, page 12 (January 1952)

Saturday Jan 12th two persons caving on their own were down Drunkard's Hole. They had left a message at their homes to say they were going down the Bath Swallet and had mistakenly gone down Drunkard's Hole. In this cave the main rift, which runs steeply downwards in an approximate north south direction expands a little at about 30 feet from the surface. At the bottom of this wider portion are some wedged boulders and the way on lies round and under them. The passage is tight. While the men were down the cave one of the smaller boulders shifted down about a foot and the one immediately above about an inch or so, but was fortunately held by a chock stone on the east. The passage was partially blocked. One of the cavers who was very slim, managed to crawl out past the obstruction, at considerable risk, and was lucky to find someone available at the U.B.S.S. headquarters. A stand by message was sent to Dr. Crook and handed on to the Hon. Sec.

Rescue work was undertaken. The loose boulder was pulled up some way but could not be pulled quite back to its original position and the passage remained blocked. A way was cleared round the west side of the boulders and through a very tight squeeze, with the aid of a rope pull, the trapped man was freed. Time taken between receipt of the first news of the mishap and rescue about four hours.

Once again, this episode illustrates the folly of those who go caving on their own. It was purely luck that the way out was not completely blocked and purely luck that someone was immediately available to start the rescue work. The false location given in the message at the homes of the cavers would have caused great delay in finding them. It needed only another inch movement on the upper boulder to have made the rescue a really long job.

Drunkard's Hole round and beyond these boulders should be regarded as unsafe. The most feasible way to tackle the obstruction is to knock out the chock stone of the upper boulder and allow it to fall. It might block the way on but could be broken up with hammers and removed in pieces. The entrance to this cave is not too safe and in case of accidents an alternative way in could be made in the floor of the southern one of the twin hollows of this cave entrance.

E.K. Tratman.

14 May 1952 – Tower Mine or Great Maple Mine

ACG Newsletter – Summer 1989, pages 6 to 9

Editor, Axbridge Caving Group,

Recently, Jim Hunt loaned to me a Winter issue of the magazine. Unfortunately, although I believe this to be a current issue, it is not dated. As I read the contents I noticed reference to the Banwell Hill 'Mines' written by Cliff Dockerell.

I write to you now so that you will have a record of some dramatic history for your records and library.

During Friday evening of 7th May 1952, a group of cavers entered the Banwell Stalactite Cave. About twenty feet from the 'Bishops Chair' we found a fissure and as we examined it, it seemed possible that if we chipped away some rock, we might open up a new cave area. It was then agreed that one member – Syd Davis – would borrow suitably heavy hammers and chisels and we would all return the next Friday to commence work on the fissure.

However, when we all met at the entrance of the Stalactite Cave, Friday 14th May 1952, some of the members were carrying rope ladders and ropes they had borrowed from the Axbridge Group. This because, a rare event, the ladders and ropes were not being used that evening by Axbridge.

As a result of this good fortune, we changed plans and thus Jim Hunt and R. J. Cousins and R. J. Weare decided to continue some work in the Cave whilst the remainder of the Party would explore Banwell Hill for vertical shafts.

Thus, a Party comprising Jim Emmerson, P. F. Baker, D. Neades, B. Pruen and yours truly, Syd Davis with possibly R. Pruen and G. Ellis, set off on their exploration tour along the Hill. We located several shallow holes and they were all examined without the use of ladders or ropes. Then we reached the Tower and, down the Hill found the entrance to a shaft. NOTE. During March of 1989 my wife and I searched the Hill and using the map references given in the Caving Magazine we tried to locate this shaft. But everything is so overgrown and some of the shafts have been filled in and covered that we could only surmise that the shaft we originally found was Tower Mine.

The map reference given for this Mine is 3875866 [*Grid Ref equates to Great Maple Mine*] and the article by 'Cliff' does mention that 'It was first explored by Percy Baker and friends in the early fifties' and thus this could well be the shaft. (Good God and how time flies it was thirty-five years ago, and I am now retired and nearing seventy and Barry Pruen is in his eighties!

Now back to that Friday evening, May 14th, 1952. We found a dip in the ground. It was surrounded by several large trees and in its centre, a hole about three feet in diameter.

Inspection, and we realised that we had found a vertical shaft of unknown depth. We lowered the forty-foot rope ladder down and I prepared to descend.

It was at this point that Jim Emmerson insisted that I wear a rope round my waist. At that time he could not know it but that rope was to save my life.

I entered the hole and descended about five feet and realised that the shaft was about ten feet in diameter and that the entrance hole was through what had become a cover to the shaft. A cover formed as if somebody had laid a few branches over the shaft and undergrowth and rocks had formed upon those branches.

As I hung there I asked myself, "What is holding this cover up?"

Meanwhile, I was encouraged by the team to begin my descent into what was a very deep shaft. I had descended about two feet when small stones began to trickle past me, and as I looked up so an avalanche began. An avalanche that forced me off the ladder. I clung to the rungs as, above me, the team members felt horror as the ground beneath them rumbled and they moved backwards to gain a firm footing and to haul on the rope and haul me from the shaft. I stumbled out, shocked and collapsed on the ground. I didn't know it but a rock had sliced across my forehead and flesh hung over my eyes and I looked a ghastly mess! It was Barry Pruen who ran half a mile in the approaching darkness to use the telephone in the 'Caves' house and call an Ambulance. But they were the days before Radio and the Ambulance reached Banwell, couldn't find a road accident and so they went back to Weston! Meanwhile, Barry Pruen contacted the members who were working in the Bone Cave. They immediately ran to the scene of the accident and as they arrived, so R. J. Weare, who was a qualified first aider, tested me for possible spinal damage. He gave me an OK and, assisted by other members I walked to the Caves house.

Somebody else had re-telephoned the Ambulance and soon I was laying on a hard-medical inspection bed. A lady doctor appeared, asked me if I could wait, because she was having her dinner! Half an hour later she appeared to face a decision. Thus, should she try to clean my wound or just sew me up and dose me with appropriate anti everything drugs? The 'sew up and drugs' won. Thinking back, obviously the dust from the cave had blocked off and congealed any bleeding.

I went to work next day, but my temperature rose and I had to have four days off. Meanwhile, my accident was reported by the Press as a road casualty and had to be corrected. Meanwhile, back at site, at that time I lived in a house in Hillend and my wife, heavily pregnant, heard footsteps at the front door, put the kettle on but as a few minutes went by she wondered why I was 'hanging about' and she opened the door to find Barry Pruen who had been walking about trying to face the task of breaking the news to my wife that "Syd has been injured in a cave collapse and he is in Hospital but he's alright and will be home tomorrow!"

As my wife said later, "Wonder I didn't lose the baby!" Today, that 'baby' is six feet five inches and fifteen stone!

As today's members can appreciate, as I read Cliff article in the mag. so it revived those memories of a traumatic evening. And it occurred to me that if such incidents are not written they will never go on record for others to read.

So, I consulted 'our Jim' (Hunt) who, since I first met him during about 1952 has never ceased to amaze with his meticulous accuracy in observation, his recording of facts which, at the time,

do not appear to be of any interest. But Jim has a sixth sense because he knows that one day they will be of very great value! And this has proved to be true in the 'case of the shaft disaster'. Thus, during February of this year, 1989, I asked Jim for any information and only two days later I received report from him, thus, thirty-seven years after the incident! And here I quote from its final paragraph,

“Attempt was made to retrieve the ladders by means of block and chains but to no avail. We also used a tractor! But the ladders had to be dug out. Only fourteen rungs (of a forty-foot ladder) could be seen and the visible shaft was now only twenty feet deep! Two rungs of the ladder were smashed. The ladder and rope were eventually released on 21st June after the excavation of some nine hundred bucketfuls of earth and stones with a rope and pulley.” But for Jim Emmerson’s insistence that I wear a safety rope I would have been crushed under thirty feet of stones!

Syd Davis

22 June 1952 – G.B. Cave

MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – UBSS letter dated 23 June 1952.

Stand by call was received on account of accidents in G.B. – injured ankle. The assistance of the M.R.O. was not needed owing to the large number of C.R.G. members who were already in the cave. The UBSS member involved in the accident is now progressing favourably under the care of Dr. Crook, having cracked a small bone in his foot.

July 1952 – Bridge Cave, South Wales

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 4 No. 57, page 77 (July 1956)

Stand by call was received on account of an accident in Bridge Cave in South Wales. A party of 18 were already in the cave and were able to release the student, who was caught by the heel by a moving boulder.

July 1952 – Stoke Lane Slocker

A pair of discarded shoes, in good condition, found outside Stoke Lane. The circumstances were investigated until the wardens were satisfied that no cavers were, in fact in the cave.

1953

2 May 1953 – Read's Cavern

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 2 No. 40, page 3 (June 1953)

A report was received by the U.B.S.S. that a party of R.A.F. cavers was missing. An officer told Prof. Tratman that the police had been notified, but the latter did not pass the message on to the M.R.O. The missing party was found in Read’s Cavern.

2 May 1953 – Swildon's Hole

Source – MRO Rescue List

False alarm.

14 May 1953 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 2 No. 40, page 3 (June 1953)

The police informed the M.R.O. that two people from Weston–super–Mare had been reported missing overnight and it was thought that they may be in Swildon's. It was ascertained that the cover was off the entrance to the cave and Bristol was contacted by phone with the information that Kenney, Devenish and Simpson were about to leave to make a search for the missing couple in the upper parts of the cave. A partial standby was sent out from Bristol but two hours after receiving the call from the police it was reported that the missing pair had been found and were out of the cave. They were actually found in the Middle Dry Way, having been unable to find a way back to the surface.

It is gratifying to note that in this case there was no sensational newspaper report, and the M.R.O. is to be congratulated on the efficiency with which it conducted the rescue.

6 June 1953 – Rod's Pot

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 4 No. 57, page 78 (July 1956)

In June 1953, a standby was given for an airman who had fallen down the first vertical in Rod's Pot; and about the same time another was given for a student who fell off a broken ladder in Swildon's. In neither case did a call–out prove necessary.

6 June 1953 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 4 No. 57, page 78 (July 1956)

In June 1953, a standby was given for an airman who had fallen down the first vertical in Rod's Pot; and about the same time another was given for a student who fell off a broken ladder in Swildon's. In neither case did a call–out prove necessary.

1954

21 March 1954 – Rod's Pot

MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – UBSS report

The accident occurred when a woman member of a party of U.B.S.S. members were going through Rod's Pot. The girl, an inexperienced caver, was climbing the first vertical on a rope ladder when she slipped off when nearly at the top. Just how is not clear. Her fall was partly broken by two members who tried to catch her at the bottom. Her helmet saved her skull but she sustained an appreciable scalp wound and compound fractures of the tibia and fibula of the left leg.

The accident happened about 4:45 p.m. News was brought to H.Q. about 5 p.m. Instructions about blankets, hot water bottles etc., were given. The medical warden, Dr. Crook was summoned. He arrived and was ready to descend the cave about 6 p.m.

The patient was put in splints and was ready to be moved by about 7 p.m. or a little later. Return to the hut was accomplished by about 9:15 p.m. Ambulance arrived about 9:30 p.m. All were instructed to say nothing to the press, though there was unfortunately one omission, the actual casualty. The ambulance staff indicated that they would give information about the accident to the press. U.B.S.S. members travelling in the ambulance asked them not to do so and refused to give any details. The press in their usual ghoulish manner almost forced their way to the ward where the casualty was hardly round from an anaesthetic and as usual made a nuisance of themselves to the patient and to the staff. The press had been refused information by a number of other members.

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 4 No. 45, pages 1 and 2 (May 1954)

Members living in the Bristol district may have read the reports in the local press of the recent accident in Rods Pot, when a girl fell, while climbing a ladder, and broke her leg. Dr. Crook set the leg on the spot, and although the accident happened at a place in the cave not far from the entrance, it was a couple of hours before the U.B.S.S. got the injured girl out of the cave. It is Dr. Crook's considered opinion that in the event of a similar type of injury to a caver in the more remote parts of certain Mendip caves, a large party would be required for the actual rescue, and even then it would take quite a long time to get the victim out. To return to the Rods Pot incident, both Dr. Crook and Prof. Tratman took, (as they thought) all precautions to prevent details getting into the press by warning the students in the party, but they forgot to warn the injured girl. The ambulance officers as is their wont, reported the accident to the press, and we gathered that a reporter was more or less waiting at the girl's bed when she woke in the morning. Hence the "article".

The above explanation is given because, as older members will know, unnecessary publicity can result in a lot of worry to parents, etc., of cavers, and both Dr. Crook and Prof. Tratman were more than a little upset when they saw the article in the newspaper.

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 4 No. 57, page 78 (July 1956)

This accident took place from a combination of circumstances. The caver was inexperienced, the ladder rungs were of metal and slippery with mud, and no life-line was being used. The rule on Mendip is that a life-line should be used on every vertical of more than 20 ft.

Source – Birmingham Daily Post – 23 March 1954

GIRL RESCUED FROM CAVE INCH BY INCH

Lying in hospital with her leg in plaster Miss Sheila Watts, an 18 year old Bristol University student, yesterday told how she was rescued inch by inch from a deep cave in the Mendip Hills.

Miss Watts was one of 10 members of the University of Bristol Speleological Society who were exploring Rod's Pot cave at Burrington Combe on Sunday when she fell 40 feet and broke her leg.

They were 150 yards inside the cave and while she lay unconscious Dr. B. A. Crook, leader of the Mendip Rescue Organisation was sent for.

"He put my leg in splints," Miss Watts said, "A lifeline was tied round me and I was pushed and pulled through narrow passages inch by inch, holding on with one hand and balancing on

my one good leg. The accident happened about 4:30 p.m., and it was 9 p.m. when we got out.”

1955

8 April 1955 – Longwood Swallet

False alarm re party in August Hole – had left for London without advising those concerned.

10 April 1955 – Longwood Swallet

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 4 No. 57, page 78 (July 1956)

At Easter 1955 the "Mendip Caving Group" had an accident in Longwood in the middle of the night. A boy of 16 wearing unsuitable shoes slipped on the traverse in the main chamber and fell about 50 ft. (not vertically). A delay of about 6 hours in calling out M.R.O. was occasioned by the party not following the instructions on the notice at the cave entrance. The boy was found to have three bad bruises, one of them on his head, but no broken bones. He was got out with the help of a rope attached to a St. John's Ambulance carrying sheet, in which he sat, using his legs and arms as much as possible.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 11 April 1955

BOY LAY HELPLESS 100 FT. DOWN A CAVE FOR EIGHT HOURS

A 16-year-old boy lay helpless and partly stunned in the darkness and a temperature of about 40 degrees, 100ft. down in Longwood Cave Charterhouse; for about eight hours before being rescued after falling 50ft from a subterranean ledge.

The boy, Michael Callahan of Merryhill Court, Reservoir Road, Southgate, London, was taken to Paulton Memorial, Hospital where he was detained with an ankle injury, shock and bruises to the head.

He was in a party of about 10 mostly from London, who arrived to spend Easter “caving” in the Mendips. They camped at Black rock, on Piney Sleight Farm,

Charterhouse, and it is understood; they set, out just before midnight on Saturday for Longwood Cave considered a “tricky” one even experienced potholers.

The mouth, only about 2ft. wide, leads into tortuous passages, barely wide enough; to permit the passage of a body, and then drops, down for about 50ft. into a cavern, terraced with ledges above another 50ft drop. While edging along one of these ledges, Michael slipped and plunged through the darkness to the bottom hitting his head on the way.

Called at 4:30 a.m. - Hearing his cries some companions cambered down to him while another motor-cycled to, Cheddar Gorge nearly seven miles away, to give the alarm from a phone box, ironically enough, only a few hundred yards from Cheddar St. John Ambulance station. Cheddar police routed the call to Wells and from there the Mendip Rescue Organisation was alerted under Mr. L. W. Devenish, of Priddy, at 4.30 a.m. Later Cheddar Ambulance was directed to: the spot by Wells police but, was found not to be needed.

Eighteen cavers from the M.R.O., arrived by car through a heavy mist which cloaked the Mendips for most of the day and crawled into the cave entrance with ‘ropes torches and

climbing gear. The entrance was so small that one rescuer in the party - Dr. B. A. Crook, of The Laurels, Timsbury was unable to enter. But keeping in touch with "walkie talkies", other cavers, who took several hours to reach the boy, were able to radio his condition to the doctor waiting above. Meanwhile Dr. Lloyd another member of the M.R.O. had managed to squirm into the cave and was able to give treatment to the boy.

Piloted to the top - Suffering from cold and exposure, the boy was asked to climb as much as possible on the way back to restore his circulation. Ropes were tied beneath his arm pits and other cavers helped pilot him to the top and through the long, low-roofed passages. The party emerged in daylight at about 10.15 a.m., on Easter Sunday.

Michael had been underground for nearly 12 hours. Commented a rescuer "If he had been seriously injured it would have been as extremely difficult rescue. It takes an experienced climber about two hours to get out of the pit he fell in."

11 September 1955 – Eastwater Cavern

Source for date – Fred Davies Caving Log Books Vol. 1, page 118

Party lost in Eastwater boulder maze.

1955 – False Alarm

False alarm. Two Wells boys – Luke Devenish found them in bed.

10 December 1955 – Wookey Hole Cave

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 4 (1955 to 1956), pages 48a to 48e – Divers Log Sheet

Diver – Oliver C. Wells

Notes –

21:17 Disappeared from 3rd Chamber.

21:30 Arrived at 9th Chamber (9). Bob Davies checked aqualung in 9.1. It was then necessary to climb boulders and down the mud slope the other side to 9.2. Carrying all the equipment about six journeys were made.

23:45 Left 9 for 11 in the order Davies, Buxton, Wells. John Buxton was laying a line. Bob waited for us in 10. John had difficulty in getting his line off the reel. Mud getting stirred up, so O.C.W. went 2 feet ahead in clear water, while John was getting it sorted out. Meanwhile Bob went on to 11. We arrived at the edge of 11 (no note as to time) and saw Bob away below me (about 20 feet); he had not waited on the edge of 11. He was in clear water, but the mud was rising rapidly from our feet.

According to the reports of a previous visit the bank between 10 and 11 is sand, but we found it to be muddy. Bob's line had not been fixed to anything, yet (by arrangement). The other two were going to beacon him out. He was wearing fins.

At this time everything seemed OK. Bob then swam up to us and tried unsuccessfully to fix his line to the line we were holding (John's afloat, Oliver's left hand holding line). Bob was picking

away at the mud end of his line with his fingers, trying to get it undone. He was trying to fix the end of his line to John's line. Bob was then two feet away from me. Visibility was about two feet. Bob then went towards John. Visibility worse (zero).

I then felt a steady pull on the wire. The wire went very close to the left-hand wall in a sort of niche. It then felt as though one or two people bumped into me. I thought I saw Bob's aqualung cylinders near my face, but no one could have got back along the line to 9. I was about two feet from the edge of 11. I moved back towards 9 about two to three yards and held the line above my head, so that Bob could flip along it in order to get past to 9. In moving back, I lost contact with both the other divers. Visibility about one foot.

About a minute later John arrived along the wire and gave me a push back to 9 (a distance of 75 feet from 11) No Bob. I unmasked in 9 but John didn't. After about 1½ minutes, we returned to 11, John laying out the guide wire again. Visibility was about two feet. Shone lights. No sign of Bob. After an interval John said he was running out of oxygen. I had noticed that I was getting a bit low too.

24:20 (estimated to within two to three minutes). Returned to 9. Switched off main cylinders, dived using reserve cylinders and returned to 11. The place where I stopped was probably about six yards short of 11. John was leading the way and laying out the guide line again. Visibility about three feet. Returned to 9.

24:35. Arrived back at 9. Changed cylinders.

02:50 Left 9 for home. Time of arrival in 3 not noted but must have been between 3:00 and 3:05 on 11 December 1955.

Soon after 3 a.m. on the 11th, two of the divers returned to the third chamber, having lost Bob Davies in 11. They had concluded that either he had reached air surface and was waiting for rescue, or that he was dead. His aqualung was calculated to last for one hour at atmospheric pressure, 30 minutes at a depth of 30 feet of water or 15 at a depth of 90. Frank Frost then rang up the Wells Police and the Rescue Programme was put into action. Graham Balcombe was contacted successfully, but not Jack Thompson. The Marines at Plymouth were prepared to send a party equipped with deep sea rescue apparatus, by helicopter, if necessary. Three Sherpas were left in 3 and the rest of the party left the cave. At about 5:30 they were unexpectedly joined by Bob Davies himself. The following is the account of his adventures which he gave on return to the Wing Co.'s house.

From Bob Davis' Log

Tested aqualung in 9.1; carried all rest of gear to 9.2.

11:45 p.m. left 9.2

12:24 p.m. reached 12.

I swam to the rim of 11 which used to be a rock and is now a steep slope. Not recognising it as 11 I went to the bottom and realised it must be 11, since my depth gauge read 47 feet of water. It is known that the rim of 11 is 24 to 25 feet below water level, so I had gone some 22 to 23 feet below this. I found that the way ahead of me was on the opposite wall under a flake of rock, so I then returned to the beacon divers to tie on the wire as previously planned. On reaching them I found it impossible to pull the wire through the stop hole in the bobbin, so I cut the wire.

I then found that my aflo had opened, the bolts apparently pulling undone. Numerous attempts to close it failed. The extra energy expended caused me to breathe deeply and thus become buoyant. I had one arm round John's wire but let go of it in my efforts to close the aflo. Almost immediately I found myself against the roof of 11 at a depth of 10 feet., visibility 6 inches.

I descended but found no way backwards; re-ascended and still found no way backwards, nor found the other divers. It is now clear that I descended to the bottom of 11 and ascended the other side of the flake in the mud (12). During this time I was still rather despairingly trying to close my aflo, which had to be held together by hand. At this stage my first cylinder became empty (clock invisible). I continued to spiral around the walls, attempting to find divers, exit or clear water, all of which were unsuccessful. I had equalised the pressure in the cylinders and one cylinder again became empty, thus leaving me with one quarter of the original supply.

I decided that since something must be done soon all attempts to return had failed, and since I had reached clear water upstream, that I should go upstream in the hope that another chamber with an air surface (12) existed and was accessible.

At 25 feet I came under a rift which seemed to go high, so I ascended and was pleased to find air surface (in 13); moreover that it was possible to climb out of the water, ditching the aqualung, to a passage going backwards for 30 feet, where it entered a cross rift in which was another water level. This must be called 12 that I had previously ascended, if not, then must be called 12.1 and 12.2.

I towed my aqualung out of the water by one of the straps and pondered on the eternal verities. I checked the aqualung cylinders and found they contained 35 ats. (I started with 120 ats.); I then recorded the following on the aflo pad:

11 is 47 feet deep.

There are three major rifts in the roof and the 3rd gets up to 12 (N.B. this is really 13, according to the numbering decided upon later on 11 December).

I had 40 ats. (really 37, as stated) in each of the two cylinders and will lay a line until one of the two cylinders is empty and will then go on or over, wherever I am at the time.

Signed. 2:50 11 December 1955.

I waited altogether three hours in the expectation that the water would clear, and that no rescue attempt could be laid on before this time. The alternatives were to wait and be rescued, which might take two days and cause a certain amount of nuisance; or attempt to return, according to the plan. I decided to return.

I set the compass for 10 degrees south of west with the intention of following it; fixed the wire to the rock and started off. By now the aqualung cylinders were nearly empty, and it was only possible to descend by swimming head first vertically downwards. The compass bearing proved correct and I recognised the slope to 11, but found no wires. There were two alternative routes; I chose the right, which was wrong, so slithered down in the mud to find the left, which was right.

At this stage I saw the wire left by Coase in 1949 and my first cylinder gave out. Although less than half way I decided to continue. I pulled on the wire to increase speed and it snapped. Visibility four feet. In 15 feet my line reel jammed, But I had thought of this possibility in 13 and had put aflohonk in its standby position. So I removed the line reel, which is still there, on the 11 side of 10.

I progressed to the second loop, which I recognised and started to ascend from 20 feet, at which stage breathing became difficult. I ascended as fast as was reasonable, dropping the aflo en route and hit an air surface in complete darkness. I hoped it was 9. I removed the aqualung, waded ashore, fished out my emergency torch and confirmed it was 9. After five minutes the mud cleared sufficiently to see the light of the aflo about 12 feet down.

Several coils of wire had “grown” beside the belay point. I removed the weight belt, swam onto 9.2 and fished for the aflo with the wire. This was successful. I considered returning cleanly with all kit, but decided to return as soon as possible, in case anyone was eating my sandwiches. I climbed over to 9.1 and put on a P-party set (oxygen breathing apparatus) single handed, which I am sure has never been done before; turned to say farewell, hit a rock and knocked my bypass open.

Having lost what I estimated to be 20 ats. I closed it and decided that not too much more could happen and that if it did it didn't matter and returned uneventfully to 3. Visibility three feet.

Lessons:

1. Fix bolts on aflo properly.
2. See that line reels work smoothly.
3. Swimming is a hazardous technique, because of the danger of floating away, in unknown territory.
4. Spit on the Witch.

1956

4 May 1956 – Swildon's Hole

At 9 p.m. Friday the 4th May, a party of three men and three woman entered Swildon's Hole, having only shortly before arrived at Priddy by car. This was the first cave trip for the girl who was later to need rescuing. Not long after passing the drops she began to complain of tiredness and also expressed her general dislike of the surroundings. She was assured that she would be “all right” and the party continued to the Sump. There, the girl collapsed from what appeared to be exhaustion. The party then realised the seriousness of the position and began to assist her back to the surface. The 20' drop was only negotiated with considerable difficulty, and by this time, the morale of the rest of the party was considerably shaken. The 40' became an impossible barrier and no attempt was made to get the girl to climb the ladder and it was decided to call for assistance. Some of the party climbed the ladder, and at this stage the position was made more serious by one side of the ladder breaking. One of the party quickly reached the surface and to his credit carefully read the Rescue Notice and then complied with procedure by ringing the Wells Police. The police contacted Howard Kenney at 1:45 a.m. and he roused two cavers who were staying with him and David Willis at Wells, The Medical Warden, Dr. Crook, was informed and also Prof. Tratman and within a short time there were assembled at Priddy, three Wardens, the Medical Warden and two other cavers. Reserve help arrived later in the rescue, but was not needed apart from removing tackle. All but the Medical Warden entered the cave. Meanwhile the caver who had called out the Rescue party had returned to the girl with dry clothing and a thermos of coffee - a very commendable action. One warden went ahead of the main party, and descended the drop getting into minor difficulties himself owing to the broken ladder of which the rescue party were not aware.

The girl was sitting on a ledge not far from the bottom of the drop. Her morale was obviously very low and she was trembling violently with cold. She was given glucose and a dexedrine

tablet, and reassuring conversation did much to restore her spirits and it became apparent that much of her physical debility was due to fear of her surroundings, and in particular the 40' before her. By now the rest of the rescue party had arrived and the broken ladder was reversed so that the break was at the bottom, a second ladder was hung and two life lines prepared. It seemed obvious that the girl was incapable of climbing the ladder, and so it was decided to pull her up on a St. Johns Ambulance carrying sheet. This is an oblong piece of canvas with a rope threaded round the edge. The girl was placed in it in a sitting position with knees drawn up, one end of the sheet being pulled round her shoulders and the other wrapped round her feet and back to the knees. The whole bundle was then securely bound with a light line so that there could be no question of her falling out. The bundle was then fastened to the end of a life line. A hauling party of three stood in the water rift, a fourth prepared to lifeline David Willis who was to follow the bundle up the drop and another Warden sat on the edge, guiding the two lines and preventing the ropes becoming jammed. The task of hauling was not easy, not because of the weight of 9 stone, for three easily managed this, but because the line kept jamming in the crack by the water pipe. David Willis did a grand job climbing beneath the girl and often taking most of her weight while the ropes were readjusted at the top. The most difficult part was getting her over the lip, but this was achieved eventually and the canvas was removed. From the 40' to the entrance the girl was able to help herself to a large extent, assistance being given on small drops, etc. The girl seemed none the worse the following day for her experience, but all desire to cave was quite gone.

The Mendip Rescue Organisation nearly always learn something from the rescues, First, a self-criticism. Undoubtedly, a second line should have been fastened to the girl, for the condition of the line used was an unknown factor, and was subject to considerable strain when the line jammed. This is, however, easier said than done, for the space to lifeline is restricted at the top of the drop. A suggestion that would solve this difficulty follows this article.

The following suggestions would seem to be pertinent to this rescue: -

1. Is it wise to cave at night immediately after long road journey? The difficulties of those living away is appreciated, but might not say three hours sleep first make a great difference? In particular, is it wise to take a novice on a first trip at night? We all know that a novice uses much more energy than a more experienced caver.
2. Is it wise to take a novice below the 40' drop on a first trip?
3. A party should always turn back if a member either does not like the cave, or is tired.

A final word of thanks to the members of the rescued party who did all they could to help the rescue team.

C.H. Kenney

Medical Warden's Resort.

On examination on the return to Priddy, the girl was suffering from a condition akin to surgical shock. That is, she had a weak rapid pulse, temperature of the body lowered, cold clammy sweat and reactions extremely slow. This condition in my opinion is brought on from exhaustion, cold and wet and lack of blood sugar (hypoglycaemia). There is an added psychological element. The obvious lesson is to correct these causes - do not allow caver to be exhausted and the blood sugar must be kept up by some form of glucose, chocolate will do. The psychological element is difficult, and each case must be approached on its own merits. This condition is serious and has been the probable cause of two deaths in Yorkshire.

B.A. Crook.

Easier haul up the 40' drop.

An iron bar 2' 8" long will be made to fit into grooves on each side of the passage above the 40' drop, known as "Suicide 's Leap". A pulley can be fixed to this. To haul up a patient it will then be necessary to put the bar and pulley in position, fit a 100-ft. line round it and pull from the bottom of the pitch. A life line can be fitted to the patient and worked from the usual place; it will serve to draw the patient on to the lip when he or she has been raised high enough.

24 June 1956 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 4 (1955 to 1956), pages 107 to 108

Went to Swildon's with O. Lloyd and K. Evans to fix bar above the 40 for rescue work. Four hour trip.

September 1956 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Journal No. 59, Volume 4, page 142

LETTER TO THE SECRETARY

Dear Secretary,

Recently two friends and myself visited Paradise Regained in Swildon's Hole, to investigate certain side passages there. On arrival at Hillgrove to collect ladders for the cave, we met two other members of the Club, from Bristol. They told us they were visiting G.B. with two more members, from London, who had not yet arrived.

We told them that we expected to be underground for seven hours, it was then 3.30 pm., and would see them at Hillgrove around midnight. We entered the cave at 4.30 pm. At that time it appears that the two from London reached Hillgrove and, with the others, decided to visit Swildon's II instead of G.B. Without telling Mr. Maine or leaving a note anywhere for us, they descended at 5.30.

Things went well with our Paradise Regained party and we came out at 9.30 pm., bringing the ladders with us. As a result we unwittingly trapped the others. As we had no idea at what time they had finally left Hillgrove, we did not raise the alarm until I chanced to wake at 5 o'clock the following morning. By the time it had been ascertained which cave they were actually in, it was two hours later, and we released four very cold sumpers, who had been in the cave 14 hours: 10 longer than they had anticipated.

4 November 1956 – Sidcot Swallet

At about 6 p.m. a party of four cavers (Roland Godfrey, Barrie Harvey, David Newbury and David Rogers) were in the hole when the last named got stuck in the Hell Squeeze. The party went to the Mendip Gate Café and contacted Dr. Tratman, who alerted M.R.O. and went to the cave with two members of the U.B.S.S. When he got there, he found that the victim had already freed himself and had returned to the cave to retrieve the rope.

11 November 1956 – Stoke Lane Slocker

Norman Brooks and Miss Celia Martin, caving with the Westminster Speleological Group, had light failure, after the main party had already left the cave. Three members of the W.S.G. called for them in the evening and at about 7:30 p.m., when the two were already about two hours overdue, they called the Wells Police. The latter unfortunately omitted to warn the callers to stay by the phone until re-called by a Warden, and they didn't take the number of the phone from which the call was made. In consequence about 20 minutes were wasted in finding the callers.

Stand-by orders were received in Bristol at about 7:40 p.m., and at 8 p.m. Howard Kenney rang up to say that he had collected a party in Wells to go to the cave. It seemed, however, on arrival at Cook's Farm, that his party might be unable by itself to effect a rescue from beyond the sump, and so he and Luke Devenish decided to call out the Bristol party and Bertie Crook. This was done via the police at 10:25 p.m. Dr. Tratman was also called out.

However, Kenney's party found the lost couple in Browne's Passage and the rescue was carried out with ease. Bertie Crook gave the stand-down to Bristol on arrival, while Luke and Tratty stayed to turn home the Bristol party, which had already set out.

It was unsatisfactory that the three W.S.G. cavers should not themselves have entered the cave to look for the lost ones before calling out M.R.O.

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 5 No. 70, page 109 (September 1958)

There was the Stoke Lane incident of November 1956, when a certain notable caver and his girl had light trouble. "We only had one candle between us, so we cut it in half to make it last longer." In all fairness, this was not quite as absurd as it sounds, as their candle was in imminent danger of being extinguished by drips from the roof. But the discreditable part of this affair was the behaviour of other members of that club, who had been down the cave earlier and knew that these two were overdue. They didn't go back to find out what had happened, neither did they try to get help from other members of their club, who were on Mendip. They rang for M.R.O. right away. By way of an excuse they said that their clothes were wet, and that they had to get back to London that night.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 12 November 1956.

SOAKED, THEY SANG TO KEEP UP THEIR SPIRITS.
TWO ARE RESCUED AFTER 11 HOURS IN A CAVE.

Soaked to the skins, and in complete darkness, a man and girl sang to keep their spirits up as they waited for rescuers to find them stranded in Stoke Lane Cavern, on the Mendips near Priddy, last night. They were found after 11 hours underground.

The girl, Redland Training College student, Miss Celia Martin (19), today described their harrowing experience to the Evening Post. The man, Mr. Norman Brooks (28), has returned to Farnborough, Hampshire, where he works at the Royal Aircraft Establishment.



MISS CELIA MARTIN examining the lamp (fitted to her helmet) which failed during her caving adventure

She said “We had arranged to explore Stoke Lane Cavern with a party of seven – four men and three girls. We all changed at a nearby farm, but Mr. Brooks and I were delayed a little, and did not enter the cave until about 12:30 p.m. – about half an. hour after the others. Neither of us knew the cave, but I have been caving for a year and Mr. Brooks for five years, so we were not at all worried.

“For several hours, we explored the cave, passing a ‘sump,’ where we had to swim under some rock, and at one point we met some of the other cavers.

“It must have been at about four o’clock that the carbide lamps on our helmets showed signs of failing, so we started making our way out immediately.

“The carbide lamps eventually failed completely, and we cut two candles we had into four so that they would last longer.

“Luckily, we managed to get back past the ‘sump’ - which, of course, made us wetter than ever - before our lights failed completely. We

had a torch, but the bulb had gone.

“It would have been madness to try and go on . . . we were not far from the main route and we might have made our position much worse by moving on in the dark . . . so we found a dry spot with the aid of a candle end, and settled down there to wait. We had a little chocolate, but nothing else.

“We tried to wring out our clothing, but it was still very wet and cold. We sang songs, and chatted at first. We even did exercises to keep us warm, but it got so cold eventually that we could not even talk. We tried to dose, but it was very uncomfortable.”

The arrival of a rescue party brought relief. “At about 11:30 p.m. we heard a shout, and answered. Before long, we saw lights, and then a Mendip Rescue Organisation party, led by Mr. Howard Kenny, arrived.”

The rescuers had been called by Wells police, who had received a message from the other cavers, worried at finding the clothes of Mr. Brooks and Miss Martin still at the farm. Fortified with glucose tablets, the lost cavers followed the party back to the farm, and were soon enjoying hot baths.

Mr. Kenny told the Evening Post: ‘We found the couple only a few hundred feet from the entrance, but it would have taken them about half-an-hour to get out.

“They were lost, but they had had the good sense to sit tight and wait for a rescue party. They were very tired, wet and cold.”

Mr. Kenny said the incident proved the danger of pot-holing without ample reserves of light. "Their two acetylene lamps had burned out and they had no spare carbide. Their only electric torch had a fused bulb, and their supply of candles was exhausted while they were still lost. "If they could have found the stream they could have followed it out, but without reserves of light they were in a hopeless position."

1957

13 January 1957 – Cleeve Hill, Gloucestershire

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 4 No. 61, pages 176 to 178 (March 1957)

On the great oolite cliffs of Cleeve Hill near Cheltenham, there is a cave about 100 ft. long known by some as Isaac's Cave and by others as Winchcombe No. 1, as there are two other holes in that cliff and they do not communicate. A party was exploring this one on Sunday the 13th January 1957 when one of its members, a tall heavy chap of 28 called Harry Thierons got stuck in a narrow place. This was a vertical rift near the end of the cave, about eleven inches wide in its upper part and tapering more narrowly in its lower part, where there was a chock-stone. Thierons had wriggled in horizontally above this stone, but on passing it had slipped down into the narrow part, where he became firmly wedged. Four hours later, at about 3 p.m. his companions sent for the police, who sent for the fire brigade, who were unable to get anywhere near. They then sent for a party of miners from Cinderford to come and chip away some of the rock. They also communicated with the Somerset Constabulary, who put them in touch with the Mendip Rescue Organization.

At 7.40 p.m. the Bristol Wardens were given a stand-by warning and the turn-out order came at 8.10 p.m. The party which assembled at 22 Wolseley Rd. at 9.15 p.m. consisted of Frank Frost, Bertie Crook, Molly Hall, Harry Stanbury, Oliver Lloyd, Derek Ford, Struan Robertson and Jim Swithenbank. Johnny Parkes was picked up on the way and Trevor Shaw followed later from Bath. We had been asked to bring some thin cavers and our party included three of these. Most of us had spent the whole afternoon exploring the lower parts of Pen Park Hole for the first time by ladder. Those who had had a meal immediately they got home were at an advantage compared with those who had a bath first. A meal after a standby call is a hurried affair.

Transport was provided by Bertie, Trevor and the police. Travelling at seventy miles an hour in a police patrol car, we reached the cave at about 10.35 p.m. only just in front of Bertie, whose car was able to take the rough track leading up to the cave from the "Rising Sun". We met the mining engineer in charge of operations, as we walked up. He explained the situation and said that he was not at all hopeful, and that it might even be necessary to get compressors there, in order to work mechanical drills. He wanted us to take over as soon as his miners had freed the victim.

On reaching the cave we sent the two thin members of the party (Jim Swithenbank and Struan Robertson) down to reconnoitre. They found the miners busy chipping away rock. They had freed one foot and had managed to support the fore part of the body, so that the subject was reasonably comfortable and in good heart. A doctor (P. R. B. Sankey) had visited the place earlier, but not being a caver and not being able to reach the victim had contented himself with offering brandy. The bottle was empty by the time we got there. (In parenthesis one must condemn the giving of brandy to the victim until such a time as he can be kept properly warm, because it puts the temperature regulating mechanism out of action, and makes shock more likely, if the rescue proceedings are prolonged and the conditions cold and wet.)

There was only room for two miners and intermittently for two other thin cavers, who had been there all the afternoon. These were local chaps, the brothers Timothy and Patrick Hamblett.

They had done a good job and were tired. It would have been wise to replace them by our two thin cavers, but the mining engineer (Mr. Tallis) did not see fit to do so.

By midnight they had chipped away enough rock to try to get the victim out. Patrick Hamblett squeezed past him and lifted his head end, while the miners lifted his feet and also used a rope, which Tim Hamblett had managed earlier on to pass round his body. Everything was smothered with Castrol machine grease, an adjuvant of doubtful value. They were successful in moving Thierons. Patrick Hamblett came out first in a state of collapse and was passed from arm to arm until he was out of the cave, when the ambulance took over.

Thierons was out by about 12:15 p.m. mostly under his own steam, but with help from a rope up the steep crack. The miners saw him out and they all had their pictures taken together by Press photographers at the cave entrance. The M.R.O. party then removed all the tackle and equipment in the cave. Their services had scarcely been required, in the event, but their presence was vital. If the attempt which proved successful had failed, as well it might, our party would have had to take over and finish the job begun by the others.

The police were most kind and grateful to us, which made it a pleasure to have been able to help. Don Thomson, when he heard about the accident on the nine-o'clock news immediately phoned Frank, and being told by Ivy that our party was already on its way, he set off at once by road from Farnham in Surrey to come and help.

They make the most wonderful coffee at the "Rising Sun". It tastes like the sauce that goes with Christmas pudding.

The police were most kind and grateful to us, particularly Inspector Herbert of Tewkesbury, who was present, and the Chief Constable of Gloucester, Col. W.F. Henn, who was not. They provided us with transport and allowed petrol coupons to those of us that used their own cars. Col. Henn also suggested that if we had any expenses to claim that they would be considered. After discussing this matter with Frank Frost and Bertie Crook I replied that our members had incurred no expenses for which they wished to make a claim. I have also sent to Col. Henn copies of the M.R.O. Rules of Procedure and List of Wardens, with the suggestion that the order of call out for any place to the north of Bristol should start with the Bristol Wardens.

Oliver C. Lloyd.

Source – The Times – 14 January 1957

EXPLORER TRAPPED IN CAVE – RESCUERS' ATTEMPT TO BREAK ROCK.

Henry Thierons, trapped 80ft inside a cave while exploring on Cleeve Hill, was sending cheerful messages back to those rescuing him. A mining rescue team from the Forest of Dean and potholers from Bristol to-night joined police and firemen in attempts to reach Thierons, but it was thought that it will be many hours before the rock, by which he is trapped, can be broken sufficiently to allow him to be brought out.

Thierons became trapped this morning, and during the day he was reached by a 13-year-old schoolboy, Timothy Hamblett, who lives nearby and has explored the cave many times. He volunteered to enter after an unsuccessful attempt by Dr. P. Sankey to reach the trapped man. Hamblett got as far as the boulder by which Thierons is trapped, and passed to him brandy, hot water bottles, and blankets. At one stage, he covered Thierons' limbs with grease in the hope that this would make it possible to pull him out, but the attempt failed.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 14 January 1957(extract)

BRISTOL CAVERS IN RESCUE DRAMA

Local cave known as Isaac's Cave.

Hamblett managed to put a length rope round the man. The boy was very courageous indeed. It was terribly cold and there were a few flakes of snow.

After the miners and other rescuers had worked until midnight Patrick Hamblett (21), brother of Timothy, was lowered into the cave and brought Thierons to the surface.

6 March 1957 – Eastwater Cavern

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 5 (1956 to 1958), page 45- Report by Oliver Lloyd

Operation rawlbolts in Eastwater. Object : To make it easier to lug a body up the pitches next time (but as Bertie Crook says, "Next time is always different"). Owing to various defection on the part of Wessex members, there were only two of us (Brian Collingridge (?) and myself) instead of the six required to fix three rawlbolts. The two Taunton types couldn't come, because of motorbike smash. Robert Wooley couldn't come because his motorbike broke own. Chris Hawkes didn't come, because he had also promised to go down Stoke Lane with Derek Ford, and Roger Tudway, just didn't arrive.

However, "Marcel" turned up (a free-lance type) so we called into the Belfry to see who we could collect, and found a chap called John Lamb there, who came and made a fourth. This enabled us to get two of the rawlbolts fitted: one at the head of the Dolphin Chimney and the other at the head of the second vertical. A good trip, in spite of getting entangled in a shower of Birmingham Caves and Crag types at the verticals. None of them knew how large their party was, but G. Weeks (?) said he had received twenty shillings. Above party 27 in number including coach driver (poor sod)!!!

17 March 1957 – Eastwater Cavern

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 4 No. 62, pages 207 to 211 (May 1957)

On Sunday afternoon, March. 17th, 1957, Roger Forse, a Bedminster scout, of 19 years, went down Eastwater Swallet. It was his fifth, and probably last, caving trip. He is a senior scout and was in the company of the troop leader and the scoutmaster. On the way out, Forse fell the forty feet from the ledge at the Second Vertical to the bottom, and placed before the Mendip Rescue Organization the most serious problem with which it has yet had to contend. Several factors made the accident likely. The party was apparently too inexperienced for a rather difficult cave, and they were certainly ill equipped. Forse himself was wearing shoes with smooth rubber soles, and a beret. It was decided that a round trip should be conducted, and to make this possible the party descended by the Dolphin Pot Vertical, while another scout party withdrew the ladder and tackled the Two Verticals Route. Before he reached the Dolphin Pot Vertical, Forse was showing signs of fatigue, but in spite of this the party continued, and by the time they had returned from the end to the bottom of the Second Vertical, Forse was very tired indeed. In retrospect, it is difficult to piece together just what happened next. Forse tied what he presumably thought was a bowline in the life line and after some delay he got onto the first rung of the ladder. The slack on the life line was taken in, tightened, and suddenly went slack. Forse

shouted, "My God, the line's gone!" and after a brief pause lost balance and fell 40 ft. to the bottom.

The party sent out one of their number who contacted a Wessex Party at the Eastwater Hut. One of these then rang the Wells Police, who fortunately contacted the M.R.O. Wardens, just as they were about to leave for Bristol. The first alerts were sent out at about 5 p.m., one and a quarter hours after the accident, and throughout the evening further alerts were sent out from Bristol to provide relief parties. Cavers turned out from Bristol, Bath and Weston-super-Mare, besides from the Mendip area, so that altogether at least 40 people were present.

Meanwhile a number of small parties descended the cave very soon after the accident. The Medical Warden arrived about half an hour after the call out, bringing a St. John's carrying sheet, which went down with the second party, followed by the Medical Warden himself. The information originally brought out of the cave by the scout suggested that the accident had occurred on the Dolphin Pot route, but the first of the rescue parties corrected this and sent out accurate information. There was also a lack of information regarding the tackle available in the cave, so that the second party found themselves short of hauling ropes. However, they wrapped the patient in a blanket and the carrying sheet and began hauling operations with a rope attached to the sheet.

At the head of the Second Vertical the Medical Warden was able to make some assessment of the injuries. His patient was unconscious and it appeared probable, from the extensive bruising of his right eye, that he had a fractured skull. It also seemed possible that he had some fractured ribs. During his progress through the cave his condition varied, and although he appeared to have quite definite evidence of brain damage, this did not get any worse. He was noticed to be very restless in the "S" bend, when he was lying on what was later found to be a fractured collar bone.

Progress through the cave was quite rapid. Hauling up the verticals was comparatively easy, although the constricted region above the Second Vertical was much more difficult. At the First Vertical, it was greatly helped by belaying the M.R.O. pulley to rocks above the ladder belay. The most difficult places were the constricted passages between the verticals and in the "S" bend, and on four occasions the patient had to be hauled over prostrate rescuers. The "S" bend, which was particularly difficult, took two hours to pass. The Canyon and Boulder Ruckle proved comparatively easy and good progress was made.

Forse was brought to the surface at 3.45 a.m., and very soon after the last of the rescuers was checked off at the entrance. In the Eastwater Hut he was wrapped in blankets and warmed with hot water bottles. The ambulance from Wells got lost on Mendip but eventually arrived and the patient was dispatched to the Bristol Royal Infirmary. Once the clothes and stretcher were removed he improved rapidly but did not regain consciousness for a further 24 hours. He was x-rayed later, confirming the fractured ribs and collar bone, but no fracture of the skull was detected.

So much for the rescue. Every call out illustrates improvements that should be made, and there were lessons to be learned from this one. It has been suggested that there were too many rescuers. I think this is rather a good thing, especially in a tiring cave like Eastwater, as relief parties are then easier to recruit.

I do not think the time of mobilisation could have been speeded up. The first rescue party was down the cave before the Medical Warden arrived thirty minutes after the call out. The remaining parties were summoned as they were considered necessary, and in fact were waiting

ready at the entrance an hour or two before they had to go down. In regard to the speed of mobilization it might be useful to remind people that if they are likely to be called on a rescue they should keep caving gear (including lighting) ready, preferably packed. The organization of rescue equipment is purely the concern of the M.R.O. Committee of Wardens, and this Eastwater rescue has shown this to be efficient.

Many subsidiary people attended to back up the rescue squads. Listing and later checking off all people who entered the cave is a good idea and worked well at Eastwater. The continual processing of tea and food on the surface is very necessary for tired parties and was very adequately done.

This rescue showed how important it is to have one of the wardens waiting at the 'phone to call out reserves from the alerted groups as these become necessary. In the Eastwater rescue this was done by a Bristol Warden, in consultation with those in charge at the cave. The latter took more than usual care with public relations; at least the Press did not produce its usual garbled account.

Rather unfortunately, Roger Forse's father arrived unknown to the rescuers and waited around the hut for several hours. During this time, he was treated to loud, lengthy, gloomy prognostications, delivered with much relish, on his son's condition. Many people were guilty. One can never be sure relatives are not present, and I think it should be emphasized that such discussions are unnecessary. However, all was well in the end. My wife and I visited Roger Forse in the Bristol Royal Infirmary a few days later. He still had a black eye and sore ribs, but looked very well. As the most important participant in this drama he has a right to have his views recorded. "The M.R.O." he said "is a very fine organization, and I would like to thank everybody who came and helped."

Donald Thomson

Source – Log of Rescue of Roger Forse – Nick Barrington’s Scrapbook (on-line)

Sunday	
06:00	Raining hard. Worried about stream levels.
10:10	Party of eight went underground. No names known.
10:15	Cons party to de-ladder; Vons, Byrne, Barrington, Picknett, Donovan, went underground.
11:30	Scout party with two masters went down the cave. Stated they would be “out by 18:00”. Bad kit; gym clothes and hand held torches. Surface Geomorphology photographs by Woods and party. Water level down.
13:30	Woods party (exploration) went underground to explore Baker’s Chimney and other passages. Richer, Brunsdon, Wicks, Woods. Surface survey of swallet depression by Cons, Picknett, Barrington, Byrne. Donovan preparing supper.
16:00	Party came out, rather tired. Surface survey of swallet depression by Cons, Picknett, Barrington, Byrne. Donovan preparing supper.
16:55	Master with two scouts came out requesting immediate call out of the Mendip Rescue Organisation (M.R.O.). Not much known about the state of the patient, except he had fallen off the second vertical. When the Scout party arrived at the surface no member of their team had reached the fallen caver.
17:00	Woods and Cons went in Dormobile to Priddy stores to phone M.R.O. (Wells 3481).

17:20	Woods and Cons returned. Barrington went to the Belfry and found five W.S.G. members who were willing to stand by. Borrowed thermos.
17:30	D. and B. Willis arrived.
17:40	D. Willis, Barrington, Picknett, Richer went underground with haversacks containing thermos of tea, glucose sweets, pressure stove, ladders and 120 nylon life-line. Willis went down to the patient and reported to Barrington who waited at the first vertical. Condition of patient was: bleeding from the nose and cut on one arm, right black eye, semi-conscious but able to move arms and legs (i.e. no limbs broken).
18:15	Barrington arrived at the surface with a report on the condition of the patient. Spoke to Doctor Crook and L. Devenish.
18:20	Party of six including R. and H. Kenney and B. Willis went underground with dragging sheet and rope.
19:40	Brunsdan, Wicks and two W.S.G. members briefed to go down and relay messages.
20:00	Cons went for heavy ropes.
20:15	two 100 foot lengths taken down by two W.S.G. members.
20:30	One of the original Scout party came out asking for 120 feet of life-line, 120 feet of heavy rope and any other heavy rope. Devenish undertook to get the rope. Name of Casualty first known by those on surface. Roger Forse, age 19 years. 13 St. Peters Rise, Headly Park, Bristol 3. Scout Master and party leader still down.
20:40	Started to rain
20:45	Long life-line snaked down.
21:20	Brunsdan, Williams, Haskins came up asking for someone to go down to the S bend and take rope.
21:22	Chapman, Emerson, Weir, Hunt, Baker, Ridley went down (120 Hemp already down). This party established close communication with rescue party and act as messengers.
21:35	R. Kenny out. O. Lloyd went down to relieve Dr. Crook. So did Dr. R. Pearce and Dr. Evans. Messages passed for anyone to come out who is tired.
22:20	Professor Tratman went down to bolder ruckle to have a look round.
22:30	Tratman out.
22:40	Dr. Crook up. Have a cup of tea and then tell press.
22:50	Still raining.
23:10	Relief party to take place of those at the entrance who were moved down to take over from the front Rescuers. Wheeler, Lee, Dene, Pruin, Warlow.
23:30	Boy's father arrived.
24:00	Devenish went down to get help. Left watch.
Monday	
00:10	Message sent down "there are additional rescuers available. Darbon and Talgay went down.
00:15	Darbon out.
00:45	Darbon down with message "we have complete reserves to replace everyone, would tired people come out."
00:58	Darbon out with 120 feet rope and message to send two men down to establish contact between rescuers nearest entrance and surface.
01:05	Devenish out.

01:10	Started to rain.
01:20	Swithenback, Wooley, Tuck, Walden, Hooper, down with instructions to send out two or three Axbridge members and form liaison to the surface.
01:40	Darbon down to establish communication.
01:55	Thomson, Ford, Glenister, Price down to bottom of boulder ruckle.
02:00	Message passed "Just this side of the S bend. No further news of the patient's condition."
02:15	Message passed at Dolphin Pot entrance " Condition no change"
02:20	Hunt, Weare, Weare, Pruin out.
02:26	R. Kenny, Thomas out.
02:35	Willis, Picknett out with message "Now at top of the Wind Tunnel."
02:40	H. Kenny, Dr. Evans, Richer, Witts out.
02:44	Tangye, Graham, Cannal out, with message "Two more people down please."
02:50	Darbon and Devenish down.
02:53	Darbon up with message to Professor Tratman "They are at the bottom of the boulder ruckle. Patient's condition slightly improved."
02:55	Woods, Barrington down.
03:00	Barrington passed up end of hauling rope.
03:20	More rope taken down.
03:25	Call for more people. Byrne down.
03:35	Graham at entrance.
03:40	Patient out. Also Devenish, Barrington, Ford, Byrne, Woods, Pearce, Darbon, Glenister, Price, Swithenbank out.
03:42	Hooper, Thompson, Chapman, Baker, Lloyd, Tailor, Willis B., Walden, Tuck Ridley, Dene, Robb, Emerson, Lee out.
04:00	Woods, Barrington, Cons, Donovan, Byrne, Darbon down to get tackle out.
04:20	The following tackle brought out by Barrington, Byrne, Darbon, Woolley, Warlow, Tudgay, Wicks – 2 steel ladders, 2 rope ladders, 1 heavy nylon, 1 nylon, 1 nylon and pulley block, two hemp ropes, 1 nylon, 1 belt, two hemp ladders.
05:20	Donovan out with end of heavy hemp rope, being snaked through the ruckle.
05:34	Cons, Wood out with three packs.
05:35	Everyone out of the cave.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 18 March 1957

BRISTOL SCOUT BROUGHT TO SURFACE AFTER 40FT FALL IN CAVERN.

Members of the Mendip caving rescue organisation struggled for hours during the night to bring an unconscious Bristol Scout to the surface after he had fallen over a precipice at Eastwater Cavern, near Priddy.

They finally carried the canvas sling, to which the Scout was strapped, to the entrance to the cavern at 4 a.m. The Scout, Roger Forse (19), was taken to the B.R.I., still unconscious. With other members of the St. Oswald's Troop, Bedminster Down, Roger left early yesterday morning to explore the cave. Later in the afternoon, Roger's companions, Peter Marsh (17), Arthur Ottrey and Philip Williams, came to the surface and told experienced cavers who were nearby that he had fallen.

He had fallen at least 40 feet, said a member of the Mendip Rescue Organisation. "He was moving from a ledge in a deep pit to a ladder when he fell." When the members of the rescue

organisation, called from Bristol, Wells and other places, reached him he was still unconscious. They put into action the agreed drill for such accident, strapping Roger to the canvas sling which replaces a stretcher in narrow passages. They first had to raise him from the pit. Then they carried him, inch by inch, towards the cave entrance. Several hours elapsed between the time the rescuers reached the boy and the time he was carried to a waiting ambulance. Mr. and Mrs. Forse, who first heard of the accident at 9 o'clock last night, were called out of bed at five this morning to see their son at the B.R.I. "He was still unconscious when we left at 7.30," said Mrs. Forse, "and it was decided not to X-ray him until he had recovered consciousness."

The rescue organisation was formed by caving clubs and societies some time ago because of the number of incidents involving cavers in the Mendips. Dr. B. A. Crook, of Timsbury, was called in to attend to the boy and was one of the first rescuers to reach him. Roger has a fractured collar bone and cuts and bruises.

The B.R.I. said this afternoon that he was semi-conscious. His condition was described as "fair."

Source – Daily Mirror – 19 March 1957

UP THEY COME – MUDDY AND TRIUMPHANT

Rescuers reach the surface with injured Roger Forse after a ten-hour fight to save him in the "underworld" where he was trapped beneath the Mendip Hills. Three doctors looked after Forse as, unconscious, he was inched through narrow passages.

A nineteen-year-old assistant Scout master was rescued unconscious yesterday after being ten hours in caves beneath the Mendip Hills, in Somerset. The Scoutmaster, Roger Forse, was injured and knocked unconscious when he missed his footing in Eastwater Cavern and fell 30 ft. down an underground precipice. The Scout party he was with raised the alarm and the Mendip Rescue Organisation, including three doctors went into action.

The doctors took turns to be with the unconscious man as he was pushed and hauled inch by inch through narrow clefts. At every haul, there was a hazard that he might receive additional injuries as he swung helplessly in a canvas stretcher.

When he reached the surface Forse was taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary suffering from head wounds, a fractured collar bone and severe bruising. Forse's mother said yesterday "I pleaded with him not to go. I hope he will not want to make any more trips."



SCOUT FALLS IN MENDIP CAVE.—A member of the Mendip Rescue Organisation descends into Eastwater Cavern to assist in bringing the injured Scout, 18-year-old Roger Forse, to the surface.



END OF THE STRUGGLE.—Roger Forse is carried on a stretcher to the ambulance after his underground ordeal.

Bristol Evening World photograph 18 March 1957

Source – Wells & Mendip Museum Archives – Letter of thanks from Arthur Forse – 25 March 1957

Dear Sir,

Roger's mother and I still find it difficult to put into words our thanks and appreciation to you and all the rescue parties who did so much to bring Roger safely out of Eastwater.

You all did a magnificent job and we shall always be grateful. We still do not know all who were there, but his troop are making enquires and I will try to contact all parties and thank them too.

Roger is making wonderful progress at the B.R.I. and although he has spoken to the World reporter he hasn't told him the correct story, although he probably did better than I should have done in the same circumstances.

Thanking you again for your perfect cooperation, it is still a mystery to me how many were got together in so short a time.

I am, Your Sincerely, Arthur Forse.

21 April 1957 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 5 (1956 to 1958), page 51 by Marcel

Chris Hawkes and Willie Stanton, with Mike Holland and Marcel as "Sherpas" went down Swildon's to Balch's Forbidden Grotto, where Marcel turned back after waiting to see Denis Kemp and five of his party arrive. The "Sherpas" had a rendezvous at Trat's Temple at 11 a.m., and as Mike had gone on through Marcel went down with Steve and Tony of Southampton School. After waiting for half an hour, it was decided to see if Chris and Willie had by-passed then at Barnes' Loop and to check at Fountain Cottage. On arrival the master in charge informed them that if no sign of them was to be seen by 2 a.m., the five Bedford boys would join us in a rescue party. At 2:30 a.m. Steve, Marcel and the Bedford boys descended Swildon's and met the two errant cavers above the Double Pots and escorted them to the surface emerging at 4:30 a.m.

Their excuse for the delay was they had no means of telling the time!! A vote of thanks is due to the Bedford boys for rising uncomplainingly at 2 a.m. to rescue two bods who didn't need rescuing.

1958

2 February 1958 – Swildon's Hole

A partial Stand-by warning was given by Dr. Tratman, to Luke Devenish, Howard Kenny and the Medical Warden, on account of a party of the U.B.S.S., who was believed to be overdue from Swildon's Hole. On calling at the U.B.S.S. hut, however (at about 11pm) Dr. Tratman found that the party had returned and had already left again for Bristol. The Stand-down was then given.

21 February 1958 – Swildon's Hole

Source – MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – Incident Report

Time of Alert 8:45 p.m.

Rescue Party L. Devenish and H. Kenney.

Arrived at Priddy at 9:23. p.m.

Nature of Incident Party trapped below 20ft. drop when a different party removed tackle. Rescuers entered cave approximately 10p.m., and retackled drops.

The trapped party consisted of 2 youths and 2 girls. One of the girls, who was on her first caving trip, was in poor condition i.e. violent shivering, and slow to respond to our instructions. The party were given glucose, and all climbed the drops satisfactorily with the exception of the girl mentioned above, who had considerable difficulty on the 20ft. drop, losing one helmet and lamp and one shoe on the way up the ladder. Her shoes were of a plimsole type.

The rescue party returned home at 1 a.m.

This incident was primarily caused by the second party using the tackle of the first party without prior arrangement, and without taking due care to avoid missing the first party. The incident was turned into a rescue when the first party, on discovering what had happened, failed to make an immediate return to the cave. This latter fact undoubtedly kept the second party underground about one and a half hours longer than would otherwise have been the case.

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 5 No. 70, page 52 (September 1958)

The third incident I have in mind combines both these trends. It was in February of this year. Two parties from another club went down Swildon's, without making proper arrangements about who was going where, or who was likely to be the last out. As a result, party "A" came out first, removed all the ladders, and then discovered that party "B" was still down there. Like the London cavers in the first story, they neither rectified their mistake nor sought help from the other members of their club, large numbers of whom were at that moment propping up the bar at the Hunters'; they called out M.R.O. The Warden first on the list (to whom be all credit) was ready for them this time.

"Get your clothes on, chum," said he, "you're coming down with me."

"We can't," said they, "our clothes are all wet."

"Put them on wet, then!" said he.

"Anyway," said they, "we've run out of carbide."

"That's all right, chum, I've brought some for you."

In this way he shamed some of them into accompanying him on the rescue. Some clubs make it a firm rule that all caving parties must leave a note at the hut saying where they have gone and when they expect to return. It would be a good plan if all clubs made this their rule. Some cavers don't even bother to let their people at home know when to expect them back, so that our long suffering friends on Mendip get called up in the small hours of the morning by our equally long suffering friends, the police. Needless to say, notes left at the hut should be cancelled by the cavers on their return. It is always pleasant to go touring about Mendip, but one likes to be saved a wild goose chase.

6 April 1958 – Goatchurch Cavern

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 5 No. 69, page 52 (May 1958)

Dr. B.A. Crook did a particularly good job of work at Goatchurch during the Easter holidays. A lad broke his leg in the cave, and using plaster, Dr. Crook set the limb at the scene of the accident, and so enabled the boy to travel under his own steam, so to speak. We believe that Dr. Crook arrived at the cave while the M.R.O. Wardens were still "organising". Not too bad for a fourteen-day old grandfather?

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 7 April 1958

Michael John Gunter (17), from Bristol, was rescued from Goatchurch Cavern, Burrington Combe, after he had broken his leg in a fall yesterday. With a friend, Robin Windmill, of Whitchurch, he was exploring Goatchurch, one of the best-known Mendip caves. When they were 50 feet below the surface and a considerable distance from the entrance, Michael fell and told Robin that he believed that he had broken his leg. Robin went to the surface and telephoned the headquarters at Wells of the Mendip Rescue Organisation. A party of rescuers headed by Dr. B. A. Crook, of Timsbury, were soon at the cavern and descended to the spot where the injured youth was lying. Dr. Crook put the broken leg in plaster and Michael crawled to the entrance of the cave, assisted by lifelines attached to him by the rescuers. A Cheddar ambulance brought him to the Bristol Royal Infirmary. More than three hours had elapsed from the time Michael fell to the time he was placed in the ambulance.

Source – MRO Archives

Medical Warden Report

Accident happened 1:20 p.m. - call out by Luke Devenish at 2 p.m.; I arrived at cave about 2:45 p.m. Police and about 20 cavers were on the surface. On enquiry, I was told that a young man (inexperienced caver) Michael Gunter had slipped down the Coal Chute and was lying at the foot of the drop with a broken leg. A party of four and the medical warden went down immediately with a following party for liaison. The patient was lying well wrapped up in blankets, suffering from a fractured tibia and fibula, but in good condition. I removed his boot and cut up the overalls, but left his sock and trouser leg. With help of the others, I put his leg in plaster over sock and trouser. After the plaster had set (about 10 to 15 mins) the patient was able to crawl out on his hands and knees with one man supporting the plaster. He travelled very well and at good speed no difficulties were noticed and at the cave entrance he was transferred to a stretcher and removed to the B.R.I at 4:30 p.m.

Observation: Plaster technique: very good in dry cave but doubtful in wet cave unless plaster could be protected. Patient is mobile and can negotiate difficult squeezes e.g. Swildon's 4. Care should be taken that plaster is not too tight and always over sock and trouser and layer of cotton wool.

Notes: The plaster technique is revolutionary. It has the great advantage that the fracture can be immobilized sufficiently to relieve pain and allow the victim to move under his own steam and help himself out of the cave. This keeps him warm and keeps up his moral.

27 July 1958 – Eastwater Cavern

Account taken from a letter by David Farr, written 25 August 1958 (times approximate)

On the evening of Saturday July 26th, the Primrose Pot was laddered by Noel Cleave, David Farr, Brian King and Mike Smith. They entered the cave at about 10:30 p.m., arrived at the top

of the Primrose Pot at 11:30, had the ladders in position by 12:30 a.m. on the 27th July, and Mike Smith descended to the bottom and returned, so that they were out of the cave by 4:30 a.m.

At 11 a.m. on the 27th July David Farr went into the cave again with Tony Oldham, Roger Horton, Peter Honey, Malcom Cooke and Peter Staddon. Having seen the night before how tight the squeeze was and how deep the pitch, David Farr decided that Roger Horton and Peter Staddon only (the thinnest members) should attempt to go down the pitch. They reached the top of the pitch by 12 noon and Rogers Horton attempted to go through the squeeze. He was unsuccessful and returned at 12:30 p.m. Peter Staddon then went through the squeeze with little difficulty and started to descend. He reached the bottom of the pitch at 2 p.m. and was at the top again at about 3 p.m. He continued trying to get through the squeeze until about 3:30 p.m., when he said he was too tired, and went down again onto the first ledge. Roger Horton, Malcom Cooke and Peter Honey left the cave to get help from Mike Weedon and "Prew" in B.E.C. hut at 3:30. They arrived at the hut at about 4:20 p.m.

Meanwhile Tony Oldham and David Farr were left at the top of the squeeze with Peter Staddon on the ledge 32 feet down. He began to complain that he was cold and hungry (Roger Horton's party were going to get food and clothes for him) and later that he doubted whether he would be able to climb the ladder, and suggested that a Neil Robertson stretcher would be needed to lift him. At this time, about 3:45 p.m., Tony Oldham went out of the cave to alert the M.R.O., as Staddon's condition appeared to be worse than had previously thought.

Horton's party reached the B.E.C. hut at about 4:20 p.m. and at 4:40 p.m. Mike Weedon, "Prew" and Roger Horton entered the cave and were at the top of the Primrose Pot by 5 p.m. Mike Weedon went through the squeeze down to the ledge and encouraged Staddon to climb up the ladder and through the squeeze. He was at the top of the squeeze at about 5.30 and Mike Weedon was through at 5:45 p.m. At about this time the Medical Warden and Alan Fincham must have entered the cave, because Farr started out then and met them at the Cross Roads and told the all was well. Everybody was clear of the cave by 6:30 p.m.

On Monday evening (28th July) the tackle was taken out of the cave by Roger Horton and Chris Hawkes.

Farr's account concludes –

"I should like to say many thanks to the M.R.O. Medical Warden for turning out so promptly when the organisation was only given an "alert" and to the other members for standing by. I am sorry that the incident occurred and hope that no similar incidents will occur whether to parties that I am in, or to any other party, but let's face it, getting stuck is one of the risks one takes in caving!"

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 7 (1958), page 55

D. Farr, A. Oldham, R. Horton, P. Honey, M. Cooke and P. Staddon. P. Staddon got through the squeeze, descended but found difficulty in getting back – necessitating call out of M.R.O. Rescue magnificently carried out by Mike Weedon, Prew etc. of B.E.C. Part out, all well by 8 p.m.

10 December 1958 – Swildon's Hole

At midnight on the 10th/11th December an alert was received by Dr. Lloyd from the Sub Warden of Wills Hall, because a student had failed to return from a caving expedition, not having applied for late leave. Dr. Lloyd rang up Dr. Tratman, who went to the Burrington Hut and found that all cavers had returned to Bristol. At 12.45 a.m. the missing student returned to Wills Hall.

14 December 1958 – Longwood Swallet

A case of failed lights. At about mid-day a party of five boys from the Bristol Grammar School, led by Stephen Moss descended this cave. They proceeded to the beginning of the August Hole Series, where Moss went ahead to look for the way. He was heard calling that his light had gone out. One other member of the party went near enough to hand him another light, but this was dropped. Moss then climbed down the 30ft. chimney in search of this second light and the others lost contact with him. They did not venture further as there was a great deal of water and they had only carbide lamps. After waiting for a while and not hearing from Moss they returned to the surface, where they telephoned M.R.O. (approximately 2:30 p.m.). Three of them went down the cave again with an electric torch. The M.R.O. party arrived at about 3:15 p.m. David Willis was just entering the cave (to seek information as to the help required) with the one remaining member of the original party, when the others were heard returning. Moss was cold, tired and wet, but unharmed.

1959

17 January 1959 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 5 No. 73, page 196 to 205 (March 1959)

This was the week-end on which the Cave Diving Group had planned to make a full-scale attempt to further the exploration of Six, and perhaps, onwards.

Early in the week snow had fallen on Mendip but by Friday the weather had improved and there appeared to be no reason why the trip should not proceed as arranged, so the party of over 35 people met at Maine's Barn on Saturday morning.

The plan of action was for the divers, J. Bevan, J. Buxton, P. Davies and O. C. Wells to dive to Swildon's 6 and then to try to eliminate Sump 5. L. Davies, D. Ford, and J. Wright were to dive to Swildon's Five and act as support for the main diving party. A kitchen would be set up in Four.

It had been decided to make the gear into 35 loads, and these would be brought to the head of Blue Pencil Passage by teams of porters. A specially selected team under the leadership of Dawes would relay the packs through the passage.

The stream was a little larger than normal when the first party led by Dawes went underground, at 11:15 a.m., but not sufficient to cause any concern. The diving party entered the cave at about 12:15.

The porters were divided into 6 parties, each with a leader, and descended at 15 minutes intervals. Clear and precise instructions had been given by the organisers as to the methods to be used by all members of the party when journeying through the cave and these included the use of a life-line at the 40'.

Party 4 caught up with party 3 at the 40' and were in turn caught up by party 5. The leader of 4, Lawder, decided that his party should proceed in pairs to Trat's Temple, but it was quite a long time before the last of his party caught up with the leading pair. The stream at this time (1:30 p.m.) was quite normal and had not risen at all. Party 4 proceeded to the Base camp, but it was a long time before Party 5, (which included Wallington turned up. During this wait the stream rose, and the Blue Pencil Passage stream increased considerably, but those who had been down in similar conditions were not perturbed.

All the diving party had reached Sump 4 by about 3 p.m., and shortly after, the packs were passed through Blue Pencil Passage and collected by the Support Party, who took them to a camp 80' upstream where the divers began to assemble their gear. Two of the porters who had complained of headaches were told by C. Hawkes that it would be advisable for them to make their way out of the cave. By about 4:30 p.m. all available packs had been sent down but it was noticed that two were missing. These arrived at about 5:15 p.m. with the last party, who, after a short rest began the return journey to the surface.

The Support Party had also noticed the increase in volume of water flowing from the B.P. Passage while they were working there, but the main stream did not rise, although the flow became much stronger and the water was very discoloured.

At 5:15 p.m. (or a little later) it was decided that diving should be abandoned, and leaving the assembled gear in a safe place, the diving party retreated at 5:30 p.m.

The main stream had become a torrent but the 20' was not too bad, as most of the water shot clear of the ladder, but getting a line to people was a little tricky.

Outside the cave there had been a deterioration in the weather and it had begun to pour with rain. The water ran off the frozen earth, and the stream rose so that at 3.30 p.m. it was within a foot of the top of the grating. O. C. Lloyd had arranged to go down with other members of the U.B.S.S. to help with the luggage and life-lining at the 40' but with a view of getting there as soon as possible, three only of the party of seven, went into the cave. On reaching the 40' they found a torrent pouring over the lip, and although it appeared impassable, they held the life line in case one of the party below tried to climb the ladder. It would not have been possible to communicate with anyone at the bottom of the pitch.

At about 4:30 p.m. they decided to leave the cave as the grating at the entrance was about to flood, and at 5 p.m. Lloyd phoned L. Devenish and asked him to give a "Stand By" to the Mendip Rescue Organisation, and to send along the special hauling gear for the 40' together with the carrying sheet. He told Devenish that the 40' was impossible and that it was likely to take up to six hours for the water to subside. Six of the U.B.S.S. party then left Priddy and returned to Burrington to get a meal, having been asked to return to Swildon's at 9 p.m.

A very short while after this, the first members of the party came out of the cave having climbed the 40' without help. At 6:05 p.m. another appeared and he reported that a party was collecting at the foot of the 40'. Lloyd and M. Dale went into the cave, leaving a request for a relief in about 1½ hours' time. On the way into the cave yet another member of the party was met who said someone with a sprained wrist was being pulled up the 40' pot. In view of this Lloyd told him to ask Devenish to send someone down as soon as possible with all the 40' hauling gear. Information had been sent from the bottom of the 40' that one person was suffering from exposure and a couple more needed treatment. When Lloyd and Dale got to the top of the pitch they found that Dawes and five others had hauled up the fellow with the sprained wrist. This

party took the injured man out of the cave. Lloyd took over the life-lining and got another five people up before handing over to Dale.

The party at the bottom of the pitch were mostly in good spirits, singing and slapping each other on the back to keep warm. The policy was to get those up first who were not wearing exposure suits.

After someone had made an abortive attempt climb the pitch, Wallington was helped to tie on the life-line. He was told that whatever else he did he must keep climbing up. He climbed about 15–20' then stopped and went back, and came off the ladder, the life-line looping around the pipe at the top of the pitch.

As Wallington fell, his feet caught in the rungs of the ladder, and he was help upside down under the falling water. F. Darbon rushed forward and tried to lift Wallington's shoulders so that he could free himself but this was not possible. He signalled N. Humphries for help but in spite of a combined effort they still could not lift Wallington's shoulders. All this was taking place under the waterfall. Darbon then decided to try another method to free the victim, and scrambled up the ladder until he was above him. By forcing his feet against one wall and his back against the other he managed to get sufficient purchase to enable him to release Wallington's feet, and the resulting fall was broken by Humphries.

Wallington's life-line was removed and he was helped on to a ledge to await the arrival of the special hauling gear. The time of Wallington's attempted ascent was about 7:30 p.m. Devenish, at the surface had been told of the difficulty of communications between the top and bottom of the 40', and so he had, at 7:15 p.m., called out the Axbridge rescue team as he knew they had a portable telephone, but as it seemed all was going well in the cave he cancelled the instructions about a quarter of an hour later. In Bristol, I had received the stand-by at 5:10 p.m. and had arranged for H. Stanbury to be ready to transport a rescue party if required. Dr. Crook, the Medical Warden of the M.R.O. could not be contacted at that time, and he only learnt of the call-out at about 9.0 p.m. when he returned to Timsbury from Bristol. He then phoned and told me that one of the party was unconscious at the top of the 40', and asked me to get in touch with Dr. S. Robertson at Southmead Hospital and ask him to stand by in case extra medical help was required in the cave. Dr. Crook then left for Priddy. Unfortunately, Dr. Robertson was on weekend leave, but Dr. Beaty offered to stand by to assist if this became necessary. (He was not a caver but had been to the bottom of Swildon's when a student at Bristol University).

At the bottom of the 40' the party looking after Wallington awaited the arrival of the hauling tackle. He was in poor shape and had been given chocolate and glucose tablets, but by now others too were feeling the cold and one other appeared to be in poor shape – he also was without an exposure suit. On the other hand, there was nothing to suggest that Wallington would not revive once he was past the 40' obstacle.

On its arrival, the hauling gear was rigged by Lloyd, and it was decided to send up the four strongest men to act as a hauling party. Bevan, Buxton, Lord and Wells climbed the ladder where they found Dale on the lifeline and Lloyd standing back in the Water Rift. These two had been doing the hauling for some time, but had been joined by the party of three who had brought in the special gear.

The pulley was fixed about 10' above the top of the 40', and an attempt was made to haul from the Water Rift through the keyhole entrance, but the rope jammed and the gear had to be re-rigged. A bosuns chair (?) was fixed, and Lloyd and Dale took up stations at the top of the pitch, the others made up the hauling party in the Water Rift.

After Wallington had been placed in the bosuns chair the party began to haul and Hawkes climbed the ladder below him. When he was about 20' up, Wallington's foot got caught in the rungs of the ladder, and Hawkes tried to free him. Unfortunately, the party had no idea that this was happening and continued to haul, so Hawkes, Wallington and the ladder were all pulled up together. It took about five minutes to get them up.

The party at the top of the 40' lifted and pushed Wallington into the Water Rift where he was given chocolate, which he ate. He was unable to stand unsupported, and Lloyd decided that he must be got out of the cave as soon as possible. There was some concern for the non-exposure suited people still at the bottom of the 40' and Ford took over the life-lining from Dale. He pulled up the other who had seemed near to collapse at the bottom of the 40' but he recovered as soon as he reached the top of the pitch. The party with Wallington were having difficulty in getting him along, and to make matters worse he began to struggle. They supported him above the water but could do no more to move him. P. Thomas, a medical student had come down from the surface and noticing a deterioration in Wallington, called Lloyd, who said that he thought he was dead. This was about 9 p.m.

The carrying sheet was fetched and he was put into it, and taken out of the cave via the Old Grotto, Kenney's Dig and the Wet Way. Transporting him this way presented no difficulty at all. He was got out by 11:30 p.m.

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 9 No. 95, page 85 (March 1964)

CAVERS DYING OF COLD

by Oliver C. Lloyd Department of Pathology, University of Bristol

There have been two fatal accidents to cavers on Mendip due to cold. It is the purpose of this paper to describe them briefly, to say what is known about the effect of cold on the human body and to outline principles of prevention and treatment.

Case 1.

J.W. was a young man of 23, who had been caving occasionally for two years, but was inexperienced. On Saturday 17th January 1959, he went down Swildon's Hole in company with a great many others to help as a porter on a diving expedition to Swildon's IV, descending the cave at about noon. At 3.30 p.m. the cave began to flood. Diving was abandoned and at 7.30 p.m. J.W., tired, cold and inadequately clad for such conditions, tried unsuccessfully to climb the flooded 40 ft. pot. He was with difficulty hauled upon a line, and became unconscious while the water was pouring onto him. At the head of the pitch he recovered consciousness and was able to stand up with support, and to eat some chocolate, but he was unable to converse. He was very cold. The temperature of the water was not measured but was likely to have been about 40°F (4.5°C). While he was being taken out of the cave he died suddenly at about 9 p.m., that is one-and-a-half hours after his condition had first given rise to alarm. J.W. did not have a robust constitution and was likely to faint, if he was hurt. Post-mortem examination performed by Dr. R.L. Bishton the next day showed death to have been due to acute heart failure, with extreme dilation of the right auricle and ventricle and of the great veins which enter them. The lungs were dry. The chocolate had reached the stomach.

Source – The Daily Telegraph – 19 January 1959

MAN DIES IN MENDIPS CAVE FIGHT THROUGH 40 ft. CASCADE

A young engineer died, it is thought from exhaustion and exposure, in a cave in the Mendip Hills at Priddy, near Wells, Somerset, on Saturday night. The cave was Swildon's Hole, 10,000 ft. long and 400 ft. deep.

The dead man was John Frank Wallington, 22, of Great Brockridge, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol. He was one of 30 members of a party which intended to investigate a new part of the cave, known as the streamway passages, beyond the cavern's known limits.

The party included a number of experienced men, some of whom were equipped with diving apparatus. The expedition had been planned for some time but melting snow made the operation more than usually dangerous.

The party made their way underground at about 11.30 in the morning. During the afternoon the melting snow caused the water level in the cave to rise alarmingly. Eventually the cave entrance was flooded and the rising water threatened to cut off the way out.

In response to an SOS call, the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation went with its equipment and waited at the cave. It was powerless to do anything until the floodwater subsided.

One by one those in the cave made their way, with the aid of a rope ladder, to the surface. At a point about 400 ft. from the entrance there is a hazardous 40 ft. vertical drop. There, a great volume of water was falling, making exit exceptionally difficult.

Wallington reached the top of the vertical drop, forcing his way inch by inch through the water. He then collapsed.

Dr. Oliver Lloyd, of Bristol, an experienced cave climber was taking part in the exploration. He gave Wallington treatment but the young man died.

For several hours members of the rescue party struggled to bring the body to the surface strapped to a carrying sheet. They succeeded shortly before midnight.

Source – The Western Daily Press & Bristol Mirror – 19 January 1959

BRISTOL MAN'S DEATH IN MENDIP CAVE DRAMA TRAGEDY 400ft. UNDERGROUND AFTER ESCAPE FROM FLOOD WATER

After struggling up a hazardous 40-foot drop, with water cascading over him, a young Bristol man taking part in a caving exploration in the Mendip Hills on Saturday, collapsed and died. He was Mr. John Frank Wallington (22), of Great Brockridge, Westbury-on-Trym, an aircraft technical engineer. It is thought that he was affected by exhaustion and exposure. The incident occurred after melting snow had caused the water level in the cave to rise alarmingly.

Mr. Wallington was one of about 30 members of a working party who were investigating a previously unexplored part of Swildon's Hole, near Priddy, known as Streamway Passage. Efforts to revive him failed. His body was brought to the surface shortly before midnight, and was taken to Radstock Mortuary to await a post-mortem examination.

Swildon's Hole is an intricate system of subterranean passages 10,000 feet long and descending to 400 feet. Some of the party, all of whom are experienced cavers, were equipped with diving

apparatus. The expedition had been planned for some time but what was not anticipated was that the sudden thaw and melting snow would make the operation more than usually dangerous. The cavers made their way underground at about 11:30 on Saturday morning. During the afternoon, melting snow in the surrounding countryside caused the water-level in the cave to rise in alarming fashion. Eventually, the cave entrance was flooded, and the rising water threatened to cut off the way of escape.

In response to an S.O.S. the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation under the direction of Mr. L. Devenish, was alerted. They assembled with their equipment at the entrance, but were unable to do anything until the flood water had subsided. In the meantime, the trapped cavers endeavoured to escape, and one by one made their way towards the surface. At a point about 400 feet from the entrance there is an extremely hazardous 40 ft. vertical drop, and here the water was cascading down in great volume, making exit exceptionally difficult. With the other cavers, Mr. Wallington succeeded in reaching the top of this vertical drop on a rope ladder. But he then immediately collapsed, apparently from exhaustion. Dr. Oliver Lloyd, an experienced caver, who was taking part in the exploration, rendered first aid, but without success.

For several hours, members of the rescue party struggled to bring the body to the surface strapped to: carrying sheet. This task was accomplished shortly before midnight.

THE INQUEST.

This was opened on 19th January and adjourned until 3rd February when the Coroner resumed the case with a jury.

The first to give evidence was O. C. Lloyd who said the expedition was under the auspices of the Cave Diving Group. In reply to questions from the Coroner he said that each member of the party provided their own clothing which would consist of plenty of old clothes and particularly woollen materials. He did not notice what clothes Wallington was wearing. On the subject of medical supplies, he said that these were not available at the time but were brought in later. In his view, these would not have been of any avail, and that applied to restoratives, tonics or hot drinks. Once the caver was out these would have been invaluable. The first thing to do was to get the man out of the water and all energies were applied to doing this. Restoratives were available if he had got to the surface. He said that he knew of no test that would be valid as to fitness. It was up to the individual concerned.

F. Darbon described the incident at the 40' and said that the water coming down the pitch was above normal and very cold.

N. Humphries gave details of his help in freeing Wallington after he had got his feet tangled in the ladder and M. Palmer, a member of the party of three sent in with the hauling gear by the Mendip Rescue Organisation also gave evidence.

The Coroner in summing up said it was not the duty of the jury to attribute or apportion blame for the young man's unfortunate death. They had been told that it was up to the caver himself to consider whether he was sufficiently experienced to embark on such expedition, which no doubt the jury would agree was hazardous.

The jury return a verdict of accidental death from exposure to cold. They added a rider that in future caving operations precautions should be taken by providing a safety line from the highest point.

This article was compiled from reports sent to me by Len Dawes, Frank Darbon, Christopher Hawkes, Derek Ford, Robert Lawder and Oliver Wells.

NOTE FROM THE MEDICAL WARDEN OF THE MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION.
(DR. B.A. CROOK).

Apart from serious and severe cave accidents there would appear to be fatalities in caves associated with little or no trauma; the cause of death (according to Coroners verdicts) being exposure to cold.

This calls for further explanation, and my report to the M.R.O. on the rescue at Swildon's Hole, 4 May 1956, gives details of a similar but non-fatal case. This case shows a condition allied to surgical shock, i.e. circulatory failure as shown by weak, rapid pulse, cold clammy skin, reactions extremely slow, progressing to unconsciousness.

The same condition will lead to death and appears to be mainly psychological following exposure to wet and cold in a patient suffering from exhaustion and lack of blood sugar. In the fatal case at Swildon's, 17 January 1959, the post mortem showed a terminal right sided heart failure.

It would appear that in certain people - at some point of exhaustion plus cold and wet - they lack the will 'to live'. Very soon there appears to a 'point of no return' - the control from the brain and mind cease, and in consequence, the body reactions, especially the circulation, cease to uncton, and death ensues.

" Conclusions. There is no doubt the abnormal increase in the size of the stream was due to the heavy rain, which, and this should be made quite clear, did not begin until after the party had entered the cave. From the start, every reasonable effort was taken to try to make certain all the members of the party were up to the standard required for this type of trip. There would seem to be no known method whereby it is possible to 'measure' a person's reaction to cold and exhaustion, but from an examination of other deaths caused by exhaustion during caving, it would appear that most of the people concerned were comparatively inexperienced cavers. It can therefore, be assumed that the more caving one does, the less will be the chance of a person reaching the dangerous condition outlined by Dr. Crook.

One point I must make and that is the ever-increasing risk that will attend these efforts to extend the exploration of the major caves of Mendip. A simple accident could so very easily turn into a tragedy if it happens a long way from the surface, and even when conditions are favourable for long and highly organised trips involving diving, etc., the risk of exhaustion could become a very serious factor.

It may be a good plan to warn all members a party that they must inform some responsible person if and when they begin to feel exhausted, and I would go even further and suggest the appointment of a suitable member of the party to act as a 'welfare officer'. His duty would be to watch for signs of exhaustion and if such cases occur to take prompt steps to get the victim out of the cave."

Frank Frost.

24 March 1959 – Peak Cavern, Derbyshire

Source – MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – Incident Report

Following an appeal on the wireless by the police for experienced cavers to go to Peak Cavern, Castleton, Frank Frost and Howard Kenny discussed the best course of action, the time being 8:45a.m. It was understood that a well-built student of 20 had been lodged in a chimney and was unconscious and all efforts to extricate him has so far failed. As it was clear that experienced cavers were already on the spot, Frost and Kenny questioned the necessity of this call by the police, and having had no appeal from responsible cavers, they decided to check that M.R.O. were really needed. By 10 a.m. it was found impossible to obtain any clear information and it was decided to organise a rescue party. 15 competent cavers were organised under the control of Kenny and Devenish and it was decided to take the full equipment despite the likelihood that a great deal of material would be already at Peak Cavern. The object of doing this was to be fully self-sufficient on arrival. It was planned that Devenish should look after the needs of the party on the surface, and Kenny to take control underground.

Arrangements were made to meet at Bristol at Frank Frost's home in case any further information was available. Frank was to act as telephone liaison and the party was to telephone him after leaving Bristol, from time to time, in case the party was no longer needed. The main party arrived at Frost's just after 12:30 to hear that the patient had died.

It was felt that there were sufficient cavers in Derbyshire to deal with the removal of the body, so members of the party returned to their homes.

The incident illustrated that it is possible to organise a strong party on a weekday and that everyone contacted, without exception, was prepared to seriously inconvenience themselves for what was likely to be a two-day absence. This involved the loss of pay for several of the team.

Some concern was expressed that no contact was made with the M.R.O. by the Derbyshire rescue teams and felt that the reason should be enquired into.

29 March 1959 – Swildon's Hole

Phillip Warlow (Wessex) phoned at 4:15 Sunday, re dangerous boulders in the entrance to Swildon's. I obtained rough information from him and then tried to contact several wardens, Kenny, Luke, Frank, Trat, and then finally managed to find Bertie Crook at home; he went there with a party and could detect no visible danger. He suggested to leave it unless anything more happened, but agreed that he would talk to Warlow and find an exact position. There was a party of six in the cave.

There can be little doubt that the boulders were moving under the ash tree, where they are unstable due to flood waters. A fall of rock at the entrance to the Wet Way has occurred since then.

1 October 1959 – Goatchurch Cavern

Call via Mrs. Hare, Mendip Gate Café, at 2045 hrs October 1st from a Mr. Stacey. His son aged 13 and daughter aged 28 (looked nearer 18 to us) had gone off caving to Goatchurch in the afternoon reaching the cave by motorcycle about 1500 hrs. Had not returned. He, Mr. Stacey, had found the motorcycle at bottom of track to Goatchurch and had gone to Mendip Caving Group. Stand-by was given to Bertie. Collected four U.B.S.S. who happened to be about, (on way to Plume of Feathers actually). Back to the hut to change and then via café to cave. Father had left the café and gone to the cave, blast him, he had been told to stay at the café, with Andrew Hare who knew the cave. Went on to cave and found that contact had been established

by Andrew and the party was on the way out. Met them on the Terrace and took them on out. Andrew had found them at the entrance to the Tunnel [*Drainpipe*] with no lights. They had gone down with one fairly good torch and one bad one leaving their bag with helmets, candles and matches at the entrance gate. They had dropped their good light and lost it and the other had failed. Out of cave by 2145 hrs. Mr. Stacey offered a donation to the M.R.O., £2, and was duly grateful. He was left to settle up with Mrs. Hare and Andrew, who had done a really good job.

1960's

24 January 1960 – St. Cuthbert's Swallet

Source – MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – Incident Report

On 22 January 1960 at approximately 11:30 a.m. I descended St. Cuthbert's Swallet with six other experienced cavers. There had been a fairly large amount of rain and snow in the previous week resulting in a moderate stream at the first pitch in the cave. The stream was fed by a large pool above the entrance shaft. Although this stream entailed a drenching I decided that it would be quite safe to continue our descent. I had experienced a similar although smaller stream a few weeks previously.

We were returning to the surface at 3 p.m. when we met a party of 12 or 13 people in Mud Hall led by M. Marriot of the B.E.C. After some discussion, I formed the impression that some of the party may have been inexperienced and would probably require assistance on the way out. One of the party returned with us to the surface, he needed some amount of encouragement before climbing the entrance pitch.

The last man left the cave at 4:30 (myself) and we returned to the B.E.C. Hut to change. After some desultory discussion concerning the party below and state of the water a standby call was made to Ken Dawe S.M.C.C.. Rowena Lewis B.E.C. volunteered to go down and find out if anyone would require assistance.

I returned to the Wessex Hut with my party for a meal stating I would return later to see if any help was required.

At 7 p.m. upon returning I found that some of the party had come up saying that help would be needed for certain members of their party.

Meanwhile I was informed that K. Dawe was at the bottom of the entrance rift and required the services of the M.R.O. Messers Collins and Prewer were at the head of the pitch. I went to Priddy Green call box at approximately 7:30 and telephoned the police asking for the M.R.O. to be called out and a call to be made to Luke Devenish.

Within half an hour the first of the M.R.O. team had arrived. I told Marriot to enquire if a pump could be obtained to pump the entrance stream into Plantation Swallet. I asked Nicholas Barrington, Michael Palmer and George Ponting to prepare to enter the cave when exposure suits were given to them. I also prepared myself for this. I joined Jim Hanwell, Collins and Prewer at the top of the entrance pitch and assisted in the rescue operation.

Michael Holland

Source – MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – Letter

I received a phone call from the Belfry (Shepton & Belfry are connected by a couple of Govt. surplus phones) asking me to hang around, as there was a possibility of a bit of trouble in Cuthbert's, this was about 17:00. At 18:15 Jill Rollinson came over and asked me to help with a hauling party. It was suggested that I wear a goon suit as it was pretty wet. At about 18:40 I arrived at the entrance. Alfie Collins was there, changed, and a large party were attempting to dam the pool outside the entrance. This pool was overflowing causing the trouble. Apparently, Mr. Marriott, the B.E.C. guide to the party, had found the rift very bad and had climbed out to

get help, leaving the Gloucester party below. He, of course, left the actual rescue work to a fourth party, having been down for about 6 hours. By the time I arrived Rowena Lewis B.E.C., had descended the shaft to find the party, it being decided that it would be preferable to keep the men at the top to haul.

When Alfie and I got to the rift, water was absolutely bucketing down and all attempts to reach Rowena vocally failed. Being the only one in a goon suit at that time, apart from Rowena who was already down, I had to climb down to see what was what. It wasn't too bad.

I found the party below cold but in fairly good spirits and made arrangements for signalling with whistles for hauling them up the shaft. In the meantime, Alfie had sent someone off to get whistles from the Shepton Hut. I then went to climb back up to the hauling party. This proved a very difficult kettle of fish to the descent and I had considerable difficulty getting up. The volume of water and the tightness of the rift made it very unpleasant. Now since I was a) fresh, b) recently well fed and c) goon suited, it was obvious that it would not be safe to attempt to force the Gloucester lads up the pitch, particularly seeing as one or two of them were relatively inexperienced. Consequently, Alfie and I decided to leave them there for a while. Whilst Alfie organised hot drinks, dry clothes, food and cigarettes and to call out the M.R.O. I went back down again to inform the party of our change of plan. They accepted it quite cheerfully, in fact one of them actually climbed part way up and fallen off before my arrival, and was far from keen about climbing again.

Thermos's of hot tea and dry sweaters started arriving in a very quick time and Rowena and I distributed these amongst the party of seven. In an unbelievably short time the M.R.O. box of food was lowered, and chocolate, glucose tablets etc. were dished out. Shortly afterwards goon suits started appearing and we gradually got the whole party dressed. During this stage of the proceedings voice communications being impossible, we passed written messages up and down in one of the M.R.O. ammo boxes.

Now whilst all this had been going on the Fire Brigade arrived and commenced pumping out the pond. By 23:00 hours (approx.) the shaft was fairly dry and we decided to start getting out. The apparent leader of the party was a very cool headed and capable fellow John - and I suggested that he be sent up one of the most reliable members first to see how difficult it was then, if it wasn't too bad, to move out the least experienced lads. Anyhow it proved fairly reasonable, and we moved them out. One rather tubby youth experienced some difficulty, but returned to remove his goon suit, and then got out OK. After that there was never any real trouble, although understandably, one or two of them didn't exactly rush up the pitch.

After the novices had left, we persuaded Rowena, much against her will, to leave. We then collected together all the kit, sent it up and followed.

As I reached the top of the shaft one of the line party (then Prew, Jim Hanwell and Mike Palmer) shouted "Stop pumps". I went straight to the surface and was joined not more than a few minutes later by the other three. In those few minutes, the water in the rift had reached almost the same level as it had been at the start.

Ken

Source – W.C.C. Hillgrove Log Books, page 64

Dave Kinsman, Brian Young, George Pointing, J. James, Mike Holland and Mike Palmer (B.E.C.) went down St. Cuthbert's as far as the Dining Room after seeing some really fine formations. A return to surface was made at 4.30 pm. Very wet!

After leaving St. Cuthbert's we disrobed at the Belfry and after some discussion concerning the safety of a party of Gloucester Speleological Society cavers who we had met in Mud Hall, we returned to Hillgrove for tea. George Pointing, David Berry and myself went back to the Belfry in order to find out if the party had come out all right.

Upon arrival, we were greeted with a scene of great speleo pandemonium; it would appear that a number of the G.S.S. party were trapped below the entrance rift (which was very wet and horrid).

The M.R.O. was summoned at 7.45 pm and after half an hour Luke Devenish arrived with 10 exposure suits which were rapidly sent down the shaft to the cavers below. The Fire Brigade was summoned to pump the stream into Plantation Swallet. After an hour or so the stream dried up completely and the task commenced of persuading the blokes that 10 inches was not too tight to squeeze through and at 2.00 am. the last man came out (Ken Dawe).

The Press, B.B.C. and ITV were there in hordes, not to mention Police and Firemen. The admiration of most cavers went to Rowena Lewis who went down the cave alone to maintain contact with the entrapped.

M. Holland.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 25 January 1960

CAVERS SEEK CAUSE OF TRAP AS 10 ARE FREED.

West Country potholers were today trying to find out why conditions deteriorated so quickly that 10 people were trapped in St. Cuthbert's Swallet, near Priddy, for more than 12 hours. Conditions were favourable when the party disappeared into the cave at midday yesterday. But three hours later, water began to cascade into the cave trapping the men 60ft below the surface. Before the men could be released, firemen from Wells and Yeovil had to drain a nearby pond which was emptying itself into the pothole. The cave is well known amongst potholers, but is not popular because it is difficult - even to experienced enthusiasts. Five years ago, potholers started to survey the cave, but because it is so complex with a maze of tunnels leading off many chambers, its mapping is far from complete. As soon as the entrance to the cave is negotiated, the potholers have to inch their way down a spiral chimney for 50ft before they can start to scramble. Returning to the surface is even more tricky, and potholers have to press themselves against the walls of the chimney to move. Rope ladders are useless because the route is too narrow to allow the knees to be lifted. Water always trickles into the cave near the entrance and then falls 530 feet through the explored tunnels to drop into Wookey Hole near Wells.

When the party, which consisted mainly of members of the Gloucester Speleological Society, arrived at the cave, water was trickling into the cave but experts declared the cave "safe". There were 15 in the party, including two guides. Two of them stayed near the surface.

When the pressure of water from the heavy rain over the weekend started to make the conditions difficult, three returned to the surface to join the other two. The rest, however, decided to wait until the torrent of water subsided but at eight o'clock conditions were even worse and the alarm was given.

Within minutes members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation were on the scene and they were strengthened by the arrival of members from all over Somerset and Bristol. Four rescuers, including a woman, Rowena Lewis climbed part way into the cave during the five-hour operation and kept in constant contact with the trapped by means of a rope.



ONE OF THE trapped potholers being helped out of the entrance to the cave.

Bristol Evening World photograph 25 January 1960

“Goon Suits” – waterproof clothing, hot drinks and snacks were sent down, and the trapped potholers were kept in fairly good spirits. When they came out, the potholers were treated for shock and possible exposure by local doctors in the Bristol Exploration Club hut. Firemen started to pump out thousands of gallons of water from the pond at 9 a.m. and the party of rescuers gave a loud cheer two hours later when the first of the trapped party surfaced. The second man out couldn’t negotiate the 10-inch gap at the first attempt and had to return to strip off clothing before escaping. The last man escaped at 1 a.m.

Source – Western Daily Press – 25 January 1960.

NINE MEN SAVED FROM TRAP IN CAVE AT PRIDDY ALL SAFE AND WELL

A party of nine men ‘were trapped for many hours beneath a roaring torrent in St. Cuthbert’s Cave, Priddy, near Wells, yesterday. By two o’clock this morning all had been brought to the surface by rescue squads which included two girls.

The girl, Rowena Lewis, of Rowacre, Limpley Stoke, was uninjured despite her long ordeal and the hard struggle to reach the surface.

One of the rescued men, 23-year-old Anthony Hunt, of 40, Acre Lane, Alveston, told a ‘Western Daily Press’ reporter, “We could not breathe because of the pressure of water coming down on our heads.

”Water was bursting down the 10 inch gap of the vertical entrance but this eased off as fire brigades from Yeovil and Wells began continuous pumping.

At 11 p.m. the first of the cavers, Robin Hail of 93 London Road, Cheltenham, was brought to the surface and taken to the Bristol Exploration Club Hut.

Both Hall and Hunt, the second man up, were suffering from shock 'and were attended by two local doctors.

Full list of names and addresses of those rescued is:

Andrew Marriott, of 715, Muller Road, Eastville;
Keith Franklin, of 20, Clayton Street, Avonmouth;
George Hail, of 25, Barton Street, Gloucester;
Brian Thomas, of 46, Hatfield Rd., Gloucester.;
M. D. Collins, of 85, Tuffley Lane, Gloucester;
Rowena Lewis and Robin Hall (addresses above);
Keith Martin, of 36, Arms Croft Crescent, Gloucester, and Anthony Hunt.

The trapped party members, all aged between 18 and 25, were "visitors" to this cave. It is not their regular pot-holing ground.

There were 15 people in the party of whom 12 originally went down into the cave. Three of these struggled up unassisted about three o'clock and raised the alarm. When the rescue party arrived two experts went down to stay with the trapped party.

Anthony Hunt said rescuers sent down 'goon-suits' (waterproof clothing) and this helped them to get up. He added: "We were not in any danger below, but we could not get up."

Then the fire brigades' pumping began to take effect and the torrent of water abated. When Hunt reached the surface he was given hot drinks and food prepared by volunteer women's organisations from the district.

A local caver said that conditions were favourable when the party went down at mid-day, but the rising flood water had made conditions in St. Cuthbert's Cave impossible.

An underground stream flows through the cave and the party had been cut off by an inrush of water.

He said that the cave was looked after by a local caving club and a member of the club would be acting as leader of the party.

2 & 3 May 1960 – General search of all caves

Source – MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – Incident Report

A call was received by Wells Police at about noon, Monday May 2nd 1960 from Major Carey of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst. He stated that two Officer Cadets were missing, and it was thought that they were caving in Mendip over the weekend. Major Carey was put in touch with a Warden - C. H. Kenney.

Kenney first spoke to Major Carey at 12.15. (mid-day) and was given the following information:

Cadets missing – P. D. Barnard and G. Humble
Left Sandhurst, Saturday 30th April.

Told friends that they were going caving on Mendips.
Not known whether they had any transport.
Little or no experience of caving (which, was not quite clear)
Due back first thing in the morning.
Bernard probably had sleeping bag and rucksack.
Told friend that they might join up with London University party.

Kenney asked Major Carey to seek the following further information –

1. Did parents of cadets have any information.
2. Their descriptions.
3. What caving equipment did they take
4. Ascertain from London University if any of their clubs were caving on Mendip over the weekend, and if so, contact individuals concerned for information
5. What time did they leave.
6. Any more details from their cadet friends.

During the next twelve hours, the following additional information was received from Sandhurst –

- (a) No news from London University
- (b) Cadets had no personal transport and do not appear to have borrowed any
- (c) Parents have no information
- (d) The earliest they could have left Sandhurst was after lunch on Saturday.
- (e) The cadets had drawn caving equipment from the stores.
(This information was incorrect and at 1.a.m. on Tuesday M.R.O. was informed that no equipment was drawn by them.)

Both the police and Kenney found it difficult to obtain the information they required from Sandhurst.

By 12.45 mid-day Monday, Kenney had contacted L.W. E. Devenish (Warden) and W. I. Stanton (of Street), and requested them to search between them 22 sites on Mendip where cavers might reasonably be expected to leave their personal possessions while caving.

Devenish found a car at Eastwater with clothes in it, he broke in and established that it belonged to a party who entered Eastwater that day, and papers in the car showed no connection with Barnard and Humble. Devenish also ascertained that there had been a climbing accident in Cheddar on Sunday, and with the help of the police it was proved that this incident had no connection.

Stanton, having completed his round, called on Dr. E. K. Tratman (Warden) about 3.30 p.m. and the latter 'phoned Kenney. It was agreed to assemble a search party at Burrington to await further instructions and to inform Dr. Crook (senior Medical Warden). Kenney informed Dr. O. C. Lloyd (Warden and Secretary) of the situation about 2.30 p.m. At 5 p.m. (Devenish's and Stanton's search having now been completed) Kenney took steps to have a rescue party standing by in Wells.

Kenney until now had been at Street, so he moved to Wells and set up an office at his home where Devenish joined him. Together they decided to stay put, as a central organisation was clearly essential.

Frank Frost (Warden) was informed at 6.15.p.m. and asked to have a party standing to in Bristol. A little later the same request was made to Keith Gardener (Bristol).

During the course of the evening the following search parties were organised and despatched –

1. From Wells - to search Swildon's upper levels (3 main ways), streamway to Sump 1, and Tratman's Temple.
2. From Wells - Eastwater to head of Dolphin Pot, to let Vertical, Rift chambers, traverse route and 380' way.
3. From Axbridge - to search main caves in Western Mendip (the Axbridge Group were holding a meeting at their Museum & were easily contacted from Axbridge Police Station John Chapman (Warden) was in charge).
4. From Wells - a complete search of Stoke Lane by David Willis (warden) and his wife.
5. From Burrington - (Dr. Tratman) a complete search of the Burrington caves, Longwood and August Hole.
6. From Draycott - Jim Hanwell (Warden) search the Cheddar Gorge caves and the police the Gorge generally.

While these searches proceeded, Kenney and Devenish. maintained a record of all cavers involved and where they were, and listed helpers in reserve. They also discussed the situation with the police. The telephone was in continuous use, and there was a stream of visitors to the house.

Five separate reports were received by Kenney of two cavers seen wandering on Mendip on Sunday, all of whom made enquiries about caves, and in some ways seemed to fit the description of the cadets. This information was passed on to the police.

The following medical wardens were now standing by -

1. Dr. Crook at Burrington
2. Dr. Struan Robertson at Bristol.

Further information from Sandhurst suggested that the cadets were going to Wells. In case this had been confused with WALES, the rescue organisation was contacted in Wales, but they reported no known incidents.

The police were asked by Kenney & Devenish on Monday evening, if it would be wise to make a radio appeal for information. The police did not wish this done immediately, owing to the disadvantage of visits by the Press, and the public did not therefore know until Tuesday morning. The eventual publicity did lead to information which stopped the rescue operation. The publicity also led to offers of help from all over the country by experienced and inexperienced cavers. Their names and particulars were listed and they were asked to stand by.

The police during Monday evening contacted several pubs and cafes on Mendip, working on a list drawn up in consultation with Kenney and Devenish.

From about 2 a.m. Tuesday, Kenney and Devenish had the assistance of Brian Prewer at rescue Headquarters and he remained there until the rescue was called off. There was enough work to keep all three busy.

All the search parties reported the completion of their allotted tasks in the small hours of Tuesday morning, with nothing to report, with the exception of the Swildon's party. On this latter party, Albert Strong dived Sump 1, to find a carbide tin on the mud bank on the far side. On Sunday May 1st, he had been on the last party in Swildon's and was the last person but one to come back through the Sump. He was positive that the carbide tin was not there then. The only person who could possibly have left it was the last person through the sump, Julian Fortham of Slough, near London. Dr. Alan Rogers (Bristol) was advised of the possibility that this information might mean that the missing cadets were beyond Sump 1, and that the rescue diving equipment (at present being developed) might be required. As the equipment was at his home, he was requested to prepare it for use, and stand by for further instructions.

Meanwhile, the Slough police were asked to rouse Julian Fortham and get him to ring Kenney. On cross examination, it was ascertained that he did in fact leave his carbide tin where Strong had noted it.

Enquiries had made it certain that G.B., Lamb Leer, Hillier's and Fairy Cave had been continuously locked over the weekend and therefore no search was necessary in these caves.

At about dawn the following parties were organised -

1. The Hanwell brothers to search the Wet Way Oxbows of Swildon's Hole, and other small Upper Level passages.
2. Mr. Cunningham and his brother-in-law to search Holwell Cavern in the Quantocks.
3. A party under Derek Ford and Ken Dawe to search Eastwater beyond the Verticals and also the Primrose Path to the head of the Pot.; A party had been down the Verticals on Sunday and the ladders might therefore have been used by the cadets,
4. St. Cuthbert's Swallet to be searched by five members of the club which controls it. All five were leaders for this cave, and were able to cover all the main passages in a remarkably short time. The complexity of the cave made it impossible to search every corner of the cave. The entrance had been unlocked for several hours on Sunday.

At this stage, it was decided to use Barrington's "Caves of Mendip" as a basis for covering the whole of Mendip, and 44 small caves not yet visited were listed and divided into five areas.

1. Eastern Mendip
2. Central-East
3. Central-West
4. Charterhouse and Burrington
5. Western Mendip

Parties were immediately organised to take an area each and were instructed to 'phone progress from time to time. All were completed by mid-day on mid-day Tuesday.

At 9 a.m. Tuesday, the three public show caves were asked to make certain that the missing cadets were not in their caves.

Employers of some of the rescuers were contacted to explain their absence from work.

During the morning, the police received reports that two cadets had been seen in Jersey, but their identity could not be ascertained. This information was kept as secret as possible from the rescue helpers, as it was felt that the search must continue unabated until the cadets were proved to be elsewhere.

It was now felt that Swildon's Hole must be further explored, and a party of five set out to search the St. Paul Series, Paradise Regained and Swildon's 4 at 11.20 a.m. The exploration of the Black Hole Series was considered, and it was felt that Stanton was the only person fresh after a night's sleep who knew all the passages including the old approach route. He himself made contact with rescue headquarters from Uxbridge and was asked to stand by.

With the list of Mendip caves being rapidly dealt with, it was considered by Kenney, Devenish and the police what further action could be taken. It was decided to complete all known caves first, and then to consider shafts and also the search of rough ground with dogs.

At the request of the police, the rescue Headquarters was moved to Wells Police Station at mid-day Tuesday. At about 1.30 p.m. conclusive proof was received that the cadets had been in Jersey on Sunday, and the task of standing down everyone concerned was tackled. This was difficult but the principal people involved were advised. A party, under Bob Bagshaw was sent down Swildon's to meet the party searching Swildon's 4 and to assist them out with tackle. No other rescuers were in caves at the time of the stand down.

It is not clear at the time of writing whether the cadets had deliberately laid a false trail to Mendip or not.

A summary of the caves searched is as follows –

Search complete	83
In course of searching (Swildon's)	1
Ruled out by deduction	18
Still not searched	<u>50</u>
	152

This total is reconciled as follows:

Listed in Barrington's book	142
Not listed in "Caves of Mendip"	9
Holwell Cave (unlocked)	<u>1</u>
	152

The 50 still not searched are very insignificant and could have been very quickly dealt with.

It has now been proved that every Mendip Cave can be searched in 24 hours, but only with the magnificent co-operation by Mendip cavers received by the Warden in charge.

During the whole of the rescue operation there was always a fresh team in reserve to deal with the situation if the cadets were found, or if any mishap befell a rescue team.

A press conference was given by the Chief Constable of Somerset and Kenney at 2.30 p.m. Tuesday, and the opportunity was taken to emphasise the importance of parties advising someone where they are going, and also the tremendous expense of this particular operation in

terms of direct and indirect expenditure. An interview was given by Kenney to the B.B.C. stressing the same points.

The nature of this call-out meant that a large number of cavers was needed and 75 were actually active with 69 alerted as reserves. It would probably be possible to mobilise more, as not all possible contacts were made. This satisfactory turn-out indicates that it would be possible to deal with two rescues at the same time if this should ever be necessary.

Source - Willie Stanton's Log Book Vol. 9, page 106

Howard rang up at lunch time, as I was packing in preparation to return to London, and asked if I would help Luke to search for two Sandhurst cadets who were thought to be lost in a Mendip cave, as they had not returned to Sandhurst at the proper time. Luke would visit all the major caves entrances in East and Central Mendip, looking for traces (car or motorbike, clothes etc.) and I would do the same for part of West Mendip. I snatched some lunch, to Mother's anguish, and set off. Fred and Leonard said there was no-one in Longwood or August Hole, and there was no sign of life at Longbarn and G.B. Nor in the M.C.G. Hut in Velvet Bottom, East Twin, Sidcot, Goatchurch, Aveline's, Bath, Rod's, Cow's, Bos, or Keltic [*Read's Cavern*]. Here I was caught in a rainstorm. Then to Tratty's at Burrington, where I phoned Howard to report. Luke also had found nowt.

So home, phoned a worried Howard, and up to London later than planned. The sequel to this was that M.R.O. and many other cavers were called out that night, and searched more than 90 caves for Bernard and Humble. The search continued till noon on Tuesday when they were reported to have gone to Jersey and to be "getting out of Sandhurst". Irresponsible bastards.

Source - Axbridge Caving Group Newsletter May 1960, page 6

The May monthly meeting could not have been a more fitting occasion for the balloon to go up. As the Chapman Chariot swept into Axbridge Square at 7:45 p.m. complete with the Weston contingent they were greeted with the word RESCUE.

John Chapman, the Axbridge Caving Group Rescue Warden, disappeared into the Police Station to return shortly with a call for volunteers and very quickly 15 members dispersed to their homes to collect equipment. By 9:30 p.m. the Rescue Section was ready for action and held themselves at the disposal of the M.R.O.

The Situation Report was vague - "two officer cadets had left Sandhurst at lunchtime on Saturday and had not been seen since. It was believed that they had gone caving on Mendip." With an area of 100 square miles and 90 caves, the task undertaken by the M.R.O. was enormous. By the early evening M.R.O. had organised a search of the Cheddar Gorge area and required the Axbridge Rescue Squad to search west of a line Burrington Combe/Cheddar Gorge. We searched 15 caves, travelling over 100 miles by road and many miles by foot through field and copse. One member was heard to say he had never before seen the dawn from Crook Peak. The Police at Axbridge were very helpful and provided the three girls in the party with a bed for a few hours - in a cell!

After lunch on Tuesday the word was received for an all out search of Swildon's and the Axbridge team would provide telephone communications. Fortunately before arrangements could be completed the "Stand down" was received with the guarded report that the cadets had "definitely been seen", followed soon after by another report that they had been seen in Jersey.

Even though the Rescue Section spent 19 hours on a wild goose chase it provided the M.R.O. and ourselves with a real test of the call-out system and proved that a rapid search of all the caves on Mendip could be carried out if required.

Source – Belfry Bulletin No. 147 May 1960, pages 12 to 14

THE NIGHT WE HEARD THE WILD GOOSE CRY

We always try to include an account of any rescue trip as soon as possible after the event. Especially one which involves the press, so that members and others can receive a reasonable account of what really happened. This one has been sent in by our M.R.O. Warden, Keith Gardner.

It is not unknown for false alarms to be sounded in the field of cave rescues but when the Trumpet of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, sounds the alarm, one might perhaps be excused for thinking that it is genuine.

About midday on Monday 2nd May 1960, the R.M.A. at Sandhurst contacted the Somerset Constabulary with a request that they be put in touch with the M.R.O. Two officers cadets were absent from the academy and it was thought that they had left on Saturday for a weekend's caving on Mendip.

Howard Kenny, the first warden to be contacted, organised a surface check to see if any clothes or other gear had been left in such places as Maine's Barn or near the entrances to some of the more popular caves. When this search failed to produce any results; other parties, including local B.E.C. members, were sent from Wells to Swildon's, Eastwater, Stoke Lane and other caves. The Burrington caves were checked by the U.B.S.S. and the Axbridge Caving Group covered the western extremities of Mendip.

At 8 p.m., the B.E.C. were alerted and an initial party of ten warned to stand by. St. Cuthbert's had been left open during Sunday and it was considered possible that the two men could have got in without anyone noticing. Sandhurst gave little useful information in the matter and it was uncertain whether the two men, Barnard and Humble, were experienced or not.

At 1 a.m., the alerted B.E.C. party was awakened and left for Priddy. The only signs of activity to greet them were a number of police officers looking for Swildon's with miniature searchlights. Having assisted them, and with a growing party, K. Gardner joined B. Prewer and L. Devenish at Howard Kenny's H.Q. in Wells. A party consisting of A. Sandall, N. Petty, J. Stafford and R. King were despatched to St. Cuthbert's, while G. Mossman waited in the Belfry for Ken Dawe and Derek Ford. This party was to check the verticals in Eastwater.

With the large caves taken care of, H.Q. started to organise parties to check the numerous small swallets and at 5.30 a.m. rang Spike Rees to wish him a bright and breezy "Good Morning". Spikes reply was unprintable, but was no doubt similar to that he himself received on hammering at Sod Obbs door a few minutes later. Keith Gardner joined these at the Belfry with a police patrol car and with Dick Hartley, checked over a dozen small caves and some mineshafts between the Belfry and Chewton, radioing the results back to H.Q.

With Tuesday dawning bright and sunny, Anne Gardner got in touch with other B.E.C. members in and around Bristol and members of them, including our secretary, joined the parties at Priddy. Some of the ex-Cuthbert's team now centred their attentions on Ebbor, while a Sump IV team entered Swildon's. Support parties were waiting on call in Bristol. Alfie had ten at the B.A.C. while offers of help were coming in from our friends in Yorkshire, London, etc.

All over Mendip, every club was co-operating. By 1 p.m., ninety of the most likely caves had been searched. Police radios were humming with reports to and from the new H.Q. set up in Wells Police Station the biggest ever Mendip Rescue search was on with no results whatsoever. Two potential officers from England's finest O.C.T.U. [*Officer Cadets Training Unit*] had disappeared into thin air. Schoolboys could play truant; lesser soldiery desert; but officer cadets! They would surely have the integrity to contact their unit if humanly possible if they were still alive. if!

Meanwhile, at H.Q. reports were coming in that they had been seen everywhere from Land's End to John O'Groats. Even, said one rumour, in the Channel Islands. But everything had to be checked and so it was eventually learned that a Mrs. Le Masurier of St. Helier who knew Barnard, had seen him in the streets of that town, and had invited him to tea with his friend Humble on Sunday afternoon. At Sandhurst, it eventually transpired that neither of them had drawn caving kit a fact that could surely have been asserted earlier and that the suggestion that they had gone to Mendip had been based on the flimsiest of evidence. At 1.30 p.m., the message was relayed. Emergency over. M.R.O. stand down.

So all that energy all that lost sleep all that money was wasted on a wild goose chase. But perhaps not altogether wasted. For the first time, a full-scale search of Mendip Caves had been made by the M.R.O. Next time it might be genuine and lessons learned on May 2nd and 3rd may well save someone's life.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 7 (1959 to 1963), pages 60 to 61

1st Report

3rd May D. J. Causer arrived 5:30 a.m., joined D. Ford, K. Davies and J. Mason and descended Eastwater in search of the two missing Sandhurst men. Down 6½ hours, searched all of the cave below the pitches thoroughly, and emerged at midday to find the search in full operation still. By late afternoon news came that they had been located in Jersey, apparently having gone a.w.o.l. there after leaving word they were going caving on Mendip.

A feeling of general disgust on Mendip at the time, effort and money wasted by everyone involved, and hope the two responsible get what they deserve.

2nd Report

George Pointing and Dave Berry arrived at 10 a.m. on stand-by after ringing M.R.O. from Bristol, having heard the news on the radio.

3rd Report

A. Oldham and B. S. Roach arrived on Mendip a little late at 7 a.m. We then proceeded to investigate the following caves: Blake Swallet and/or V. H. Swallet, Little London Swallet, Withybrook Swallet, Waterslip Caves, St. Dunstan Well Cave, Downside Swallet, Midway Slocker, Thrupe Swallet.

Also checked with Mr. Garnet of Fairy Cave Quarry for Fairy Cave, Hillier's Cave and Duck Hole.

At 2:50 p.m. when check with Howard Kenny at Wells we were told the rescue was off. We then made arrangements to charter a plane to Jersey.

It is interesting to note that within two days practically every cave and every part of the major caves on Mendip had been explored.

This shows how very well the M.R.O. organisation worked. It also brings to light again the vital importance of leaving word which cave or caves one has gone down. Remember even a coat left outside a cave will act as a marker in case of difficulty.

4th Report

D. Fosse arrived 11 a.m. searched in Paradise Regained and side passages to Blue Pencil and searched Swildon's IV to no avail. Were greeted at the surface by B. S. Roach at 3 p.m. with the message that the rescue was off.

Sources – Bristol Evening World – 3 May 1960

CAVERS IN NEW SEARCH FOR CADETS IN MENDIPS

There was still no news early this afternoon of the missing cadets. The search has now entered its second phase, and police and members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation have intensified their sweep of over 100 square miles of the Mendip Hills.

There are nearly 200 pot-holes and caves in the area and at noon less than half had been looked into.



The cadets failed to report at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, on Monday. When last seen they were both wearing caving kit and had announced that they intended to go potholing in the Mendips. Both are inexperienced.

They are 21-year-old Peter Donald Barnard, 5ft. 7in. to 5ft. 8in., fresh complexion, dark brown curly hair; and Gordon Humble (20), 5ft 8in., swarthy complexion, heavy build.

It was on this slender information that the police started last night's hunt, and while rescue teams stumbled into the subterranean caverns of 40 better known caves, police contacted every hotel and guest house in the area.

Shortly before dawn today I spoke to Brian Prewer, of Bloomfield Drive, Bath, who provided the police with leads which concentrated the search in the Priddy area. He told the police: Two young men in olive green sweaters were seen in Priddy on Sunday.

They asked where the local potholes were:

A carbide tin was found a 100 ft. down in Swildon's hole, the biggest of the Mendip caves. At 3 a.m. the rescuers gathered at Swildon's Hole and about a dozen crawled through the inky blackness. For three hours they wandered through the vast caverns, stumbled through the flowing waterfalls and toured the maze of passages.

Their efforts proved fruitless and when they emerged today they knew their task would have to be repeated 50 times in 50 more caves before the search could be called off.

Mr. Derek Ford, 25-year-old Son of Bath's Chief Constable, Supt. C. Ford, an experienced caver and a member of a number of clubs, was called out early today to help with rescue work. Derek is a lecturer at McMasters University. Hamilton, Canada. He came home on leave last Wednesday.

Search for the cadets was also being made in Jersey. A Jersey police spokesman said that there was reason to believe that the cadets arrived in the Island on Sunday. It was thought that they had been trying to get to a France.

29 May 1960 – Clarcken Combe Ochre Workings

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 30 May 1960

HURT MAN'S ORDEAL IN MINE SHAFT

Six foot Police Sgt. Bill Quick, of Long Ashton, told today of one and a half hours he spent down a disused mine shaft comforting a 62 year old Bristol man who had lain entombed and seriously hurt 120 feet below ground level.

Former Civil Servant Mr. Sidney Gray, 14 Hampton Road, Redland, was today in Bristol Royal Infirmary with a fractured pelvis, fractured rib and suspected abdominal injuries after falling down the mine shaft on the fringe of Long Ashton golf course.

Mr. Gray's ordeal began yesterday afternoon when he went to Long Ashton Gold Club to watch a match. He fell down the shaft and was there for some three hours before search parties heard his cries for help.

Then there followed a two hour battle to bring Mr. Gray to the surface. It engaged police, firemen, ambulancemen and golf club members who had helped to find him.

Sgt. Quick, father of two school age children, was first to be lowered down the shaft by rope.

He was quickly followed by ambulance driver Mr. Eric Rundle, 41, Beaconsfield Road, Clevedon.

“It was very dark and I came across Mr. Gray lodged on a ledge,” said Sgt. Quick. “Torches were lowered and, with Mr. Rundle’s help, we gave Mr. Gray first aid and comfort for about an hour and a half.”

He said the shaft was narrow at first then began to widen. At their feet was an earlier victim of the shaft – a dead fox.

“Mr. Gray said very little, but was moaning and had a nasty head wound,” said Sgt. Quick. “He must have lost a lot of blood.”

Finally they secured Mr. Gray to a stretcher and he was hauled to safety at about 8:15 p.m.

Mr. Gray is past president and captain of Filton Golf Club, and former secretary of the Gloucester Captains’ Golfing Society. The game he went to see was a Western Daily Press league match between Filton and Long Ashton. Because of ill health Mr. Gray had not been able to play for the past eight months.

Mr. Eric Lampard captain of the Long Ashton Club said “We had search parties out combing the whole course when Mr. Gray was missed shortly before five o’clock.”

Mr. Gray’s cries for help were heard coming from a thicket near the ninth green. Fenced round, inside the thicket, is an old iron ore mine masked by bushes. A warning notice is posted at the sloping entrance.

“It was only by luck that the two players passing near the green heard his cries for help,” said Mr. Lampard. “It seems Mr. Gray lost his footing and slipped into the shaft.”

Mr. Gray could not be seen, but his shouts pin-pointed his plight. Emergency services went to the course from Nailsea, Flax Bourton, Bristol and Clevedon.

Mr. M. P. G. Hull the Filton captain went to the stretcher as it emerged. And Mr. Gray’s first remark? “Did we win?”

Source – The Times – 30 May 1960

MAN OF 62 SAVED FROM 100 FOOT SHAFT THREE HOURS BEFORE CRIES WERE HEARD

A Bristol civil servant, Mr. Sidney Gray, aged 62, of Hampton Road, Redland, lay seriously hurt for more than five hours more than 100 feet down a disused mineshaft on the edge of Long Ashton golf course, Bristol, today.

Firemen with 120 feet of rope aided by police, and ambulancemen struggled for two hours to bring Mr. Gray, lashed to a stretcher, to the surface. He was taken to hospital with multiple injuries.

Mr. Gray a well known golfer, went to the course to watch a match and was missed early in the afternoon. Search parties of club members combed the course for him and eventually his cries for help were heard by two players passing a thicket near the ninth green. Bushes at the spot conceal the shaft entrance, although a warning notice is displayed. It is believed that Mr. Gray slipped and fell into the shaft.

Mr. Eric Lampard, Long Ashton club captain, said later : “It was only luck that Mr. Gray’s shouts were heard at all.”

30 July 1960 – Eastwater Cavern

Source – MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – Incident Report

On Saturday 30 July 1960 a party of four students from Bristol Technical College went down the caves on the way out from the Boulder Chamber, Alan Hartwell lead across the head of the 380ft way to enter the Boulder Ruckle by the upper opening, when he triggered off a loose rock on the north face and brought the roof down. The fall was a considerable one, amounting to about 240cu ft. of rock. His chest was crushed by the fall, so that his back was broken and his lungs contused, but he was not actually pinned by the falling rocks.

The alarm was given by another member of the party at 8:50 p.m., and the rescue was directed by Luke Devenish of the Mendip Rescue Organisation assisted by Dr. Stanley Cannicott. Owing to the nature of the injuries the subject was placed face downwards in the carrying sheet, which prevented spinal injury from being worse.

By 11:20 p.m. he was out of the cave and was sent to Bristol Royal Infirmary by ambulance, where in spite of the most energetic treatment he died at 5:40 a.m. the next morning. The Boulder Ruckle in Eastwater has never been altogether stable, especially in those parts affected by flood water. The last fall of rock which occurred in this particular spot was in November 1957. This gave rise to some anxiety at the time, but appeared to have settled down well. The cave is very much used by cavers, all of whom pass this way.

At present this spot appears still to be in a very unstable and dangerous condition, and the owner is closing the cave for three months. After that it will be carefully examined and the position reviewed.

Supplementary –

This part of the Boulder Ruckle has been known to be dangerous ever since Balch’s earliest explorations 50 years ago. The last considerable fall of rock was in November 1957. This gave rise to some anxiety at the time, but appeared to have settled down well. The loose rock, which Hartnoll must have moved, appears to have been well known to some cavers.

Following the accident, the owner, Mr. G. Weeks, closed the cave and an M.R.O. notice was erected outside warning cavers that the cave was in an unusually dangerous state. On 19 November 1960 Howard Kenney and Oliver Lloyd went down and found that the roof was still falling. They explored the alternative route through the Dining Room and found that the Upper Traverse Passage could be reached without going near the danger spot.

At a meeting of the M.R.O. Committee of Wardens on 21 December 1960 it was decided that M.R.O. was not a proper body to advise Mr. Weeks whether he should re-open the cave or not. They said, however, that if he did decide to re-open the cave he should get the alternative route properly marked and have notices erected inside the cave, which would make it impossible for any caver to reach the danger spot by accident. On 14 January 1961 Mr. Weeks decided to do this, and the alternative route has been marked. The notices are not yet ready and the cave is still closed. No new fall of rock has occurred since 19 November 1960, but from its appearance, and history it would seem that the roof at that spot will never be safe.

Source - Willie Stanton's Log Book Vol. 9, page 142

Two hours later, after we had finished digging in Priddy Green sink, as we were finishing a belated tea about 9 p.m., a phone call came from Norma to say a rescue was on, someone being seriously hurt in Eastwater. Luckily, I hadn't yet had a bath. I changed at once into caving clothes and drove off, reaching the entrance about ½ an hour after the phone call. Some police and cavers including Alfie, Ian Dear and Mike Rennie, were at the entrance, and said that about 10 cavers were already below and there was no immediate need for more. Nearly an hour later many more people had arrived from above, and a messenger came from below to say send down all available cavers. I got nearly to the head of the 380 ft. Way, where I found part of a chain to pass the body, roped and wrapped in a canvas carrying sheet, up through the ruckle. Luke was clambering among the boulders looking for the best route, soon the end of the rope reached me and Dr. Kennicott who was efficiently organising and supervising the moving appeared. The man appeared partly conscious and was groaning at times. It was necessary to keep him as straight as possible. I was worried to see that his fist was clenched behind him, and catching on rocks and slowing him up. He was soon past me and having a little trouble in a tight vertical section. We followed him slowly out, emerging about ½ hour later, which was very good time. Angel had brewed coffee (whose?) in the Eastwater Hut, and we quickly set off for home which we reached about 12:15 a.m. The man died 2 hours later.

The accident was caused by falling boulders between the 380 Foot Way and the Boulder Chamber, causing broken ribs, punctured lungs and damaged spine.

Source – Bristol Evening Post clipping undated

YOUNG CAVER DIED ONLY A FEW FEET FROM SAFETY IN MENDIPS

A young Bristol potholer, who died after a fall of rock in a Mendip cave at the week-end, was only 25ft. from safety when the accident happened.

The dead man, Alan Hartnoll (24), was the son of the Rev. S. W. Hartnoll. chaplain of Bristol Deaf and Dumb Institute.

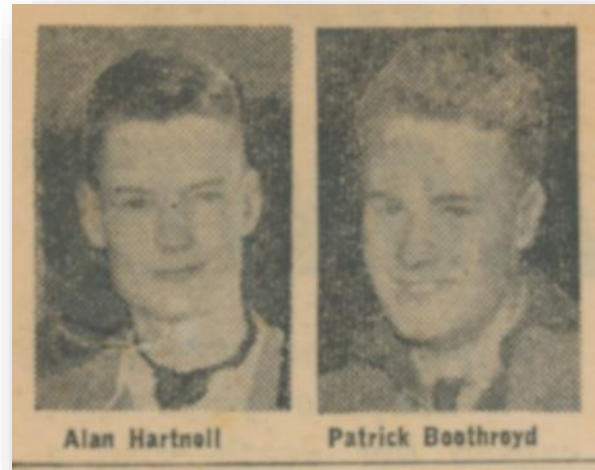
Mr. Hartnoll was leading three companions towards the surface of the 450ft.-deep East Water Cavern, near Priddy. on Saturday night when he plunged down as rocks gave way. He was seriously injured by the fall, and died in Bristol Royal Infirmary on Sunday. His companions took refuge in a nearby "chimney" and, although rained with pebbles and small rocks, were uninjured. They are Patrick Boothroyd (21) (Mr. Hartnoll's fellow student at Bristol Technical College), Kenneth Helmore (24), Thomas Baxter (21). Mr. Baxter was the only member of the party not experienced as a potholer.

The cave is the second largest on Mendip and well known among potholers. The party entered it at 5 p.m. on Saturday and descended to the full depth. Mr. Hartnoll led on the return journey and was a few feet in front of his companions. When he emerged from the chimney, he entered a chamber, climbed to the roof and stood on a ledge before entering a boulder ruckle leading to the surface.

Mr. Boothroyd told the Evening: Post: "Ken, Tom and myself were in the chimney as Alan reached the ledge Suddenly there was a roar as rocks started to fall. Tom was just emerging from the chimney, and I pulled him back to safety. The rocks seemed to fall for about two minutes and we all yelled out at the tops of our voices. Stones and pebbles rained down on us. We didn't hear any noise from Alan."

When the rocks stopped falling, Mr. Boothroyd overtook Mr. Baxter in the 2-ft. wide chimney and crawled to Mr. Hartnoll. "He was lying among boulders as large as upright pianos, which had fallen from the boulder ruckle, but he wasn't trapped," said Mr. Boothroyd.

The fall of rock had hidden the normal route to the surface, and While Mr. Boothroyd found another escape road the other members of the party moved Mr. Hartnoll to shelter him from minor rock falls. Mr. Boothroyd called the Mendip Rescue Organisation and Dr. Stanley Cannicott, of Round Oak Road, Cheddar, a member of Axbridge Caving Club. Mr. Luke Devenish, a warden of the organisation, led the rescue operation.



Dr. Cannicott gave Mr. Hartnoll morphine, and the rescue team tied him to a blanket stretcher. It took 21 hours to haul him to the surface, which was reached just before midnight He was taken straight to B.R.I.

Mr. Boothroyd said yesterday:

"The heavy rain recently must have loosened the boulders, and when Alan applied his weight to them they collapsed. "This cave is popular among potholers and used by hundreds every week-end. It has always seemed very safe in the past."

14 August 1960 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 7 (1959 to 1963), page 73

(After Hunters) on Sunday 14th. Blackwell-Jones' party being some hours overdue from Swildon's there was a grand turnout from Hillgrove expecting the worst. However all was well and we met them on their way out at Jacob's Ladder. T. Oldham and R. Horton used it as an excuse for a caving trip, as did David Berry, George Pointing and P. Padsfield (?). As a result there were cavers returning to the Hut at intervals from 1 a.m. to about 5:30 a.m. on Sunday morning. A most disturbed night.

27 August 1960 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 6 No. 78, pages 173 to 184 (February 1961)

Prelude. It has been an exceptionally wet summer on Mendip since the end of June, with water conditions underground often at or above winter norm. But the week preceding the events to be described was probably the wettest of the lot. For example, on the Wednesday, which was Priddy Fair day, 0.83" of rain fell between 6 and 10 a.m., thus ensuring an excellent attendance because it was far too wet for haymaking.

So, by the weekend the ground was thoroughly wetted and underground streams were running high, but not at levels that were abnormally dangerous.

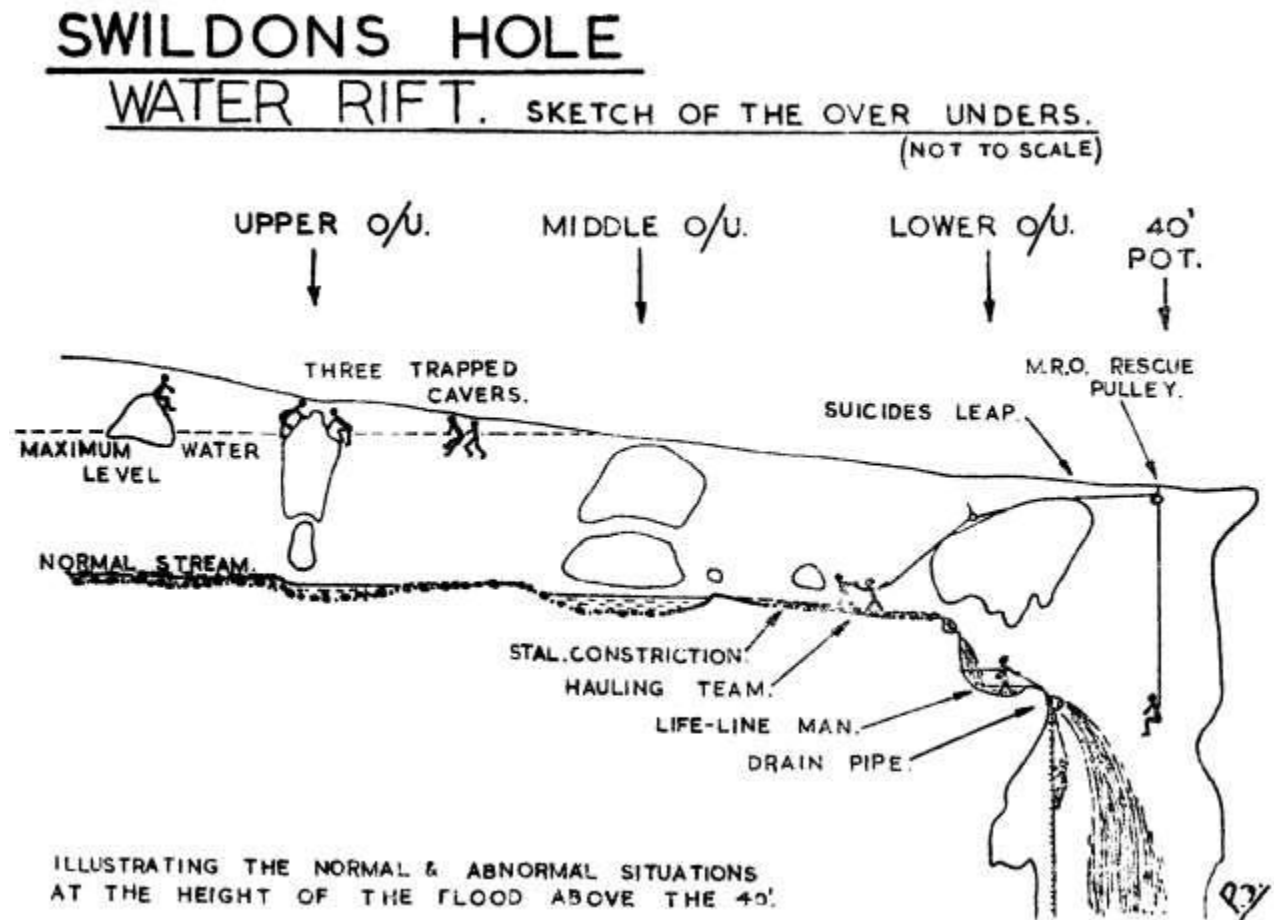
Act I. Though overcast, the weather was dry on Friday night and early Saturday. Several parties had made plans to visit parts of Swildon's. First into the cave was a Wessex group, David Berry, Vic Bennett, Anthony Dewey? and? who were going to the Mud Sump and possibly on towards IV. They laddered the 40' and 20' pitches. All were wearing exposure suits. A little later (about 11:30 a.m.) four others followed on a trip to the First Sump. Only the leader had any appreciable previous experience. Two of the party, schoolboys, were very poorly clad, one being without proper boots or helmet. Close behind them came Anne and Bob Lawder bound for IV and wearing exposure suits. I watched Bob and his wife leave Priddy Green at noon, when it was just beginning to rain. They were the last people to be able to descend the Forty for eleven hours. All parties below the pitch carried out their planned descents. It was only on returning that they found themselves trapped by high water.

At about 12:30, truly torrential rains began to fall and did not slacken appreciably until 3:30 at the earliest. One of those storms that occur only once or twice a year. It was accompanied by violent thunder overhead. Michael Boon of S.M.C.C. proposed to go maypoling in Paradise Regained with four others without exposure suits in the early afternoon.

At 3 p.m. Howard and Richard Kenney and Oliver Lloyd were to rendezvous to work in that series also. I had geological work of my own to complete there and so intended to descend with Boon's party and join up with Oliver's later. David Farr appeared with a friend who had not caved before and took him down for a look at the upper series at 1:30. Boon's party reached the cave three-quarters of an hour later. The stream was running very high and would obviously be going higher in the near future, but the entrance pipe was, at the time, still able to take it, and the thunder seemed to have moved away to the East. I thought that the storm was passing over. Because of water conditions I suggested that the Forty be approached with caution and, if it was very wet, the party wait in the Old Grotto for a while for things to improve. The others went on underground. My carbide jet had blocked and it was, of course, the one occasion of the year that no spare was available. So, I set off back to Hillgrove for a replacement, intending to catch the others up. Re-crossing the fields I met Frank Darbon (B.E.C.) taking two friends, and a beginner, to the Upper Series for a short trip. Driving to Hillgrove the roads were awash and the windscreen wipers could hardly cope. The storm quite evidently was not passing, but getting even heavier. At the hut I met George Pointing and Norman Tuck. They had abandoned plans to visit Stoke Lane and were preparing to go to Swildon's to help Dave Berry's party who would, if they had only gone as far as the Mud Sump, be returning by this time (2:45 p.m.) and might well run into trouble at the Forty. I think that we were all concerned about a possible repetition of the Wallington accident. So, I joined forces with Norman and George. Plodding through lashing rain we met David Farr and his friend returning from the cave. David joined us also, entering Swildon's for the second time that day. At the entrance now (about 3 p.m.) the pipe had quite ceased to cope, and the water was within an inch of pouring down the entrance grid. We took the Middle Dry route and met Darbon's party there, warning them to leave quickly if they didn't want to be trapped for a while. In the Old Grotto, we found Michael Boon and two of his group. They had decided that the Forty was too wet without exposure suits. With Michael, we hurried to it. Water conditions were obviously going to get worse shortly. My idea was that the others might be able to get David and I (with exposure suits and a supply of food) below the Forty to warn all parties there to hole up for a while and augment their food supplies for their wait.

For the purposes of this account the Water Rift can be said to contain three "Over-Unders", an Upper, where it is first entered, the Middle, classic, Over-Under of Balch, and a Lower, being the keyhole to the Forty and Suicides' Leap above it. When we entered the Rift the Upper Under

was water filled to 2 feet and a duck. The Middle Under was already a sump. At the forty we found the two remaining members of Boon's party.



The pitch was already obviously impassable to anyone on a ladder, exposure suit or no. We all started back, George, Norman and I bringing up the rear. Last through the Middle Over I found it beginning to take a stream. As I came through someone shouted that the Upper Under was impassable. Two got out over the Upper Over, then it sumped, the time between the two crawls closing being no more than three or four minutes at most. I launched myself at the Middle Over, thinking that we might retreat over Suicides' Leap. Having cleared away the foam I found that it, too, had sumped. George, Norman and I were trapped. Working in this area last year I found copious evidence that the entire Water Rift floods to the roof on occasion. Later Norman told me that he was also aware of this; for the time being we kept our reflections to ourselves. The water continued to rise. Above the Upper Over there is a small stalagmited hole, through which we maintained contact with David. He and I attacked it from either side with a hammer; I stripped off boiler-suit, exposure suit and boots to test it, but there was never a chance that it could be enlarged sufficiently to let us out. However, the chipping gave us something hopeful. David ducked to send a line through the Upper Under, it being our intention if the worst came to the worst to try a desperate sumping bid out that way. I made a couple of preliminary probes to test this notion and my body was swept out downstream as I let it into the water. I think that our chances of surviving such an attempt would have been negligible. But we did not intend such until our trap filled to the roof. The water rose to a height of 13' up the 16' high upstream end of the passage in the first half hour that we were there. The downstream end was fully submerged. Then from somewhere below, probably the Middle Under, we heard a dull clanging sound; an obstruction being swept away or rammed home by the water. We lit cigarettes but put them out after the first draw because the air was fouled. A couple of minutes after this

unhappy gesture of abstinence the air was sweet again. This could only mean that some draught had been created, and the only reasonable supposition, that it passed through a tiny hole in the top of the Middle obstruction, which George had reported under water ten minutes before. The water was evidently dropping. Trying not to hope too much we watched it drop indeed, until approximately 20 minutes later we were able to make a dampish exit via the Upper Over into safety. I was groping along over the two feet deep stream when my lamp suddenly failed. It was out of water!

With Michael Boon's party, we retreated to the top of Jacob's Ladder. There was a stream much larger than the normal main stream passing through the Old Grotto and another at the top of the Middle Dry Way. Michael Boon probed the exit via the Zig Zag and Showerbath Aven and found it impassable. David Farr tried the Kenney's Dig route and reached the same conclusion. Half an hour later Michael tried Kenney's Dig with our best electric and did not return; we assumed that he had got out. George Pointing and I made a probe with the only other electric that hadn't got lost or carried away and reached the little chamber 30' downstream of the entrance. Frank Darbon's party were there, having failed to get right out three hours earlier. Frank told us that the entrance was still a vertical sump and he was waiting for things to ease further, but that Michael had managed it. Frank and another with good electrics went off to bring the rest of our party up to the chamber. I went to the entrance and spied Howard Kenney peering in through a crack. He told me that, at the height of the flood, water stood three to four feet deep over the grating – probably the worst since 1956. The M.R.O. was called out. With a hand from him I ducked out with nothing worse than a mouthful of water by way of a parting shot and paddled bootless across the fields, hoping to get a dry set of kit from somewhere and stand by. At Maine's Barn, I found that it was 6:30 p.m. Definitely my hardest "Top Swildon's"!

Act II. The rest of those caught between the 40' pot and the entrance got out within half an hour or so. The first, George, gave his elbow a nasty bang whilst doing so. The lump that appeared immediately suggested that it was dislocated. Luke Devenish, who had arrived at control at the surface, arranged for him to go to the Wells Cottage Hospital and I ran him down. Fortunately, an X-ray revealed nothing more than a bruise of great medical rarity and George was released, strapped up, at 8:15.

Meanwhile, a first M.R.O. party had been raised. The Kenneys, Oliver Lloyd, Mike Thompson and Fred Davies, Michael Boon and five others took hauling equipment, emergency food and supplies in at about 7 p.m. The water was still falling but more slowly. They were able to reach the 40' but found it quite impassable up or down. An Axbridge party with a telephone followed them and stood by in the Old Grotto.

At about 10 p.m. the pitch was still impassable and the first party (excepting the telephone team) withdrew. A second party had been formed under the leadership of David Willis. I had been loaned fresh kit and joined it with David Farr, David Causer, Brenda Willis, Ebb Hanwell, Norman Tuck and George Pointing of W.C.C. and a team from the U.B.S.S.

Act III. When the first party came out, Willis's was to take over the vigil at the 40'. Upon reaching the cave we found Fred Davies just out, and he gave it as his opinion that, whilst it was still impracticable to use the ladder at the 40' or to haul anyone up it, a team might be dropped down on the hauling line to make contact with the trapped parties. He invited David Causer and me to join him in this attempt. We agreed and all descended at about 11 p.m. Back in the Water Rift even the Middle Under was open, but the pitch looked, to me, very unpleasant. Hanging from a "Bosun's Chair" modified for extra-rapid exit, Fred swung out over the falls and then dropped rapidly into them, in an explosion of water. The hauling line quickly came up

empty and it was evidently practicable. I think it was a very good lead. I went next, then David. We must all have been at the bottom shortly after midnight.

Fred had made contact with those below. At the first bend below the Forty we found Berry, Dewey and Bob Lawder just arrived and gasping for cigarettes. They told us the story of events below. The weak schoolboy party had been first to try to get out. They must have reached Barnes' Loop at a time when the flood was nearing its peak, and rather foolishly decided to try to get higher. The leader and one other apparently got as far as the top of the Double Pots. A third member lost his light and sat on a rock a little below them. The fourth was swept off at the Pots or a bit below and carried 20-30 yards downstream before coming to rest against jammed boulders at the approach climb to the Loop. His head was cut. He, too, climbed out of the water in total darkness and sat waiting.

David Berry's party reached the stream from Tratman's Temple at about the same time and managed to reach the Loop where they waited for a period until the water began to drop. Bob and Anne Lawder waited at Trat's Temple until things eased and then moved up to discover the others in the Loop. Some of the Loop party then went on to come upon the two lost in darkness just above. They brought them down, gave them more clothing and cheered them up. Anne and Vic Bennett were left to look after them whilst the others tried again to go higher. These events, chiefly waiting, must have occupied 7 to 8 hours from around 3 to 11 p.m.

The remaining half of the schoolboy party was found at the Double Pots and two of Berry's party stayed with them. Bob Lawder, Berry and Dewey were able to pass the narrow crawl below the 20' Pot (Although it had evidently sumped at the height of the flood) and the Pot itself, to reach the waiting point below the Forty shortly before we did. After three-quarters of an hour or so a telephone was rigged and we regained contact with the party above the 40'. Food, cooking equipment and medical supplies were lowered; we ordered exposure suits, hoots and helmets for the trapped men. Then, leaving David in charge of the phone and cooking, Fred and I set off with emergency supplies to find the remainder of the party and bring them up to the 40'. The 20' was perfectly practicable although the water was still high. It was noticeable during this period that there was no further apparent drop of water level: thus, it was still impracticable for anyone, rescued or rescuer, to get up the 40' by any means. I anticipated a long wait.

We found the four at the Double Pots looking rather inert with the waiting, but otherwise perfectly able. They were asked to move up to the foot of the 20' and await our return there. We joined the last group in Barnes' Loop. Anne Lawder (who, in my opinion, behaved quite splendidly throughout) and Vic Bennett, were in excellent spirits. The two boys whom they were looking after were whoosh (drowsy and listless) with exposure. We got them into spare clothing. A shirt was sacrificed to bind the feet of the one without boots. Then we moved out, Fred and I assisting one each. They needed a fair amount of help (placing feet in holds, pulling and lifting) until above the Double Pots, when they picked up very well and got along with nominal assistance. We re-joined the other six and life lined the whole party up the 20'. They came up quickly and well and we all gathered at the cooking base.

The water was now dropping rapidly again, after little or no fall for 3 to 4 hours. This second drop, we afterwards learned, was due to Wells Fire Brigade pumping at the entrance. It was an effective piece of work, for within 20 minutes of our return to base, David Willis climbed down the 40' ladder and pronounced it practicable for re-ascent. So the next hour was spent sending the trapped party up. None needed hauling, but three were given heart stimulants beforehand. Davies, Causer and I were last to leave, having packed the equipment for collection later. I went

straight out from the 40' carrying a telephone. It was 5 a.m. when I emerged, and I was in bed within the hour.

I consider that the M.R.O. operation, Acts II and III worked smoothly and well and would not query any of the decisions made. The M.R.O. stove needs replacing with something more modern and the correct fuel should be supplied. It would save much time and trouble in the future if a permanent telephone line could be hung at the Forty. It could easily be placed well out of the way of ordinary parties.

A NOTE ON BEING TRAPPED IN THE WATER RIFT

Clearly, we who were caught owe it to foolishness. Far too large a party rushed into the Water Rift bent upon rescuing at a time when the water was rising very rapidly. In defence, it may be said that we were caught by something quite exceptional; in my opinion probably the biggest flood in four years. Build-up on this scale hitherto seems only to have happened in winter. Further, we did not anticipate quite such a rapid rise. It took only five minutes at most to change the Upper and Middle Overs from dry crawls to impassable sumps.

For the future, should a rescue or succour party set out in rising water and find either the Upper or Middle Unders sumped, they should return without attempting to pass them. The Forty will be impracticable.

Any party below the Middle blockage in rising water and finding the Middle Under sumped, should avoid allowing more than two men at a time to concentrate in the Upper and Middle Overs and the passage between. If the Upper and Middle Overs begin to fill, it would be safer to stay downstream and straddle over Suicides' Leap until the water drops again.

D. G. FORD

NOTE FROM OLIVER LLOYD: –

"I have made notes of the times at which the various things happened. The maximum flood was almost simultaneous in different parts of the cave; about 3:35 p.m. in the Water Rift and just before 4 p.m. at Trat's Temple – well within observational error. The rapid subsiding of the flood is also notable.

"Other times; 4:30 p.m. Howard Kenney and I sent Fred Davies & Co., to Devenish's for tackle and goon suits, just in case.

6:15 Devenish asked to notify police, etc. (this from his log, but it must have been earlier, because we had time to get back to the entrance and help out the Upper Swildon's party, who were all out by 6:30 p.m.)

6:30 p.m. (about). Kenney and I and others went to the Forty and fitted the hauling gear.

7:0 p.m. Devenish sent down the soup kitchen.

9:15 p.m. Chapman and telephone party went down.

10 p.m. Lloyd-Kenney party came out and handed over to Willis.

The rest of the times are in Ford's Act II."

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 6 No. 78, pages 186 to 190 (February 1961)

The Farnham Group (Adrian Dewey and three others led by David Berry, entered the cave at about 11 a.m. and my wife and I followed at about noon; the weather was light rain. The two parties travelled independently and we did not meet until 2:15 p.m. when the Farnham group

were just leaving Base Camp and Anne and I were just approaching it. After a short rest the two of us started for the surface.

I first realised that the cave was in flood when I saw and heard water in abnormal places in Paradise Regained. Our return to the streamway was uneventful, but the main stream seemed dangerously high so we retreated up into Tratman's Temple, inflated our exposure suits and waited from about 4 to 5.30 p.m. (Adrian told me that they had gone up to Barnes' Loop, waited 30 minutes for us, started back to look for us, found the stream to be very high, gone back to the Loop and waited some more and had only found Patrick Buckley because they had gone upstream for a bit of exercise. As they had about 30 minutes start on us, the height of the flood probably occurred soon after we abandoned our first attempt to move on from Tratman's Temple.)

At about 5:30 p.m. I judged that the stream was negotiable and we moved up to the Loop. The only difficult part was the "sluice" at the head of the waterfall that flows into the "Big Pool". I had expected to find the others at the Loop; not finding them there I carried on and found most of the party, with Patrick, perched on ledges just above the Loop, the rest having gone up to the Double Pots. The time was about 6 p.m. This was the first I knew of the existence of the Bristol party. I first escorted Patrick to the Loop, the water having dropped enough for this to be safe, and then went off with Adrian to contact the others. We found one boy perched on a rock by himself; Adrian stayed with him while I went up to the Pots. Alan Nash, the leader of the Bristol Party, was there with, I think, three others. Alan told me that he had explored upstream and had found that the area off the "Shrine" was impracticable. He and his companions elected to stay where they were because they had managed to dry off a bit, so Adrian and I helped the solitary boy back to the Loop.

The party was therefore divided into seven at the Loop and four at the Pots. The distribution of exposure suits being five and two.

We got Patrick and the other boy to strip off and we wrung their clothes out; also we gave them some of our comparatively dry clothes. Adrian suggested that we put the boys' feet down the fronts of our exposure suits and this proved very effective. Patrick had no footwear and the other boy only had shoes. Both boys kept remarkably cheerful and co-operative although they must have been cold in their inadequate clothes. We then settled down to wait and were reasonably comfortable in our inflated suits - some people even managed to doze off for a bit. We had ample carbide, but economised by only burning one or two lamps at a time. We had no food or cigarettes left; one of the boys told me that he had left an ammunition box containing chocolate, etc., in the streamway, and in the course of a recce and liaison trip to the Pots with Adrian at about 10 p.m., I looked for it without success. Adrian joined the Pots party and, noting that the stream had gone down considerably since my last visit, I decided to make a bid to get to the 40' in about an hour's time.

At 11:30 p.m. an advance party, composed of David Berry, Adrian and myself, set out for the 40'. The "Shrine" section was quite passable and we were lucky enough to find at the foot of the 20' a rope that had been swept down from further up the cave. As David had the only powerful electric light he went up first and life-lined Adrian and myself. We proceeded without incident to the 40' where we met Fred Davies, who had just been lowered down. Fred told us of the narrow escape of Derek Ford and party in the Water Rift.

After repeated trials with our strikers, Adrian got his acetylene light going (they had been put out at the 20') and on the arrival of Derek Ford, Dave Causer and supplies we set to work to establish the telephone link and to get some soup heated. We could not get the stove to work

on methylated spirits, but improvised an effective, if uneconomical, stove by cutting food tins in half and filling them with fuel. When the "food point" had been established Derek and Fred went off to the rest of the party with an ammunition box of chocolate, etc., returning with them at about 2:30 a.m. The boots, helmets and exposure suits that had been sent down were fitted and we waited for David Willis's clearance of the drainpipe at the 40', the Fire Brigade's pump and the course of time to have their combined effect on the flow of water.

Once the ladder was negotiable we were life-lined up in fairly quick succession by David Willis and the others at the head of the pitch. I was, I think, the last but one of the trapped party to ascend and I was out of the cave at about 4 a.m.

The severity of our experience was greatly reduced by the fact that most of us had exposure suits and also that the water was not too cold. It was very fortunate that the members without suits stood up so well, particularly Patrick, who might well have been in a state of collapse after his ordeal. We owe a great debt of gratitude to our friends who were put in such danger by their efforts to help us and to the equipment and planning of the M.R.O. which "brought us moral support and physical aid just when it was needed most.

Although there were many abnormal streams in Paradise Regained, the Mud Sump did not fill; a sizeable streamlet was flowing into the hole into which the sump is bailed.

Foam markings showed that for a time the passage near "The Shrine" was flooded to a depth of eight or nine feet. It was possible to pass the Double Pots by a high-level climb, but I think that the water-chute above the "Big Pool Waterfall" was impassable for a time as one is forced to go on hands and knees there. The water had probably not reached its peak when I first reached the streamway; the stream was knee deep and very fast-flowing, but could be negotiated with care. In general, most parts of the streamway were passable by straddling, but it would have been very risky to attempt a down-stream journey due to the difficulty of keeping control.

The Farnham party reported that when they reached Patrick the stream was waist deep; as the passage immediately upstream from the Loop is quite wide I think that this extreme depth may have been because the water was backing up from the Inclined Rift; if the water was not backing up, the equivalent depth in the narrower passage at Tratman's Temple would have been five to six feet and although I only looked at the stream from well above it, I think that I would have noticed a twofold increase in depth. Another report was that at one time the knob of rock on the South side of the upstream edge of the Upper Double Pot was awash.

In retrospect, I should have passed on to the others the appreciation that I had made of how long we would have to wait for the stream to subside and when the M.R.O. could be expected to be able to enter the cave, given them a summary of the distance we had to go, why we were waiting in Barnes' Loop, the hazards and landmarks ahead, and so on. I think that I was the only person with experience of Swildon's in flood, and that was limited to the occasion when Wallington died.

At the time I decided not to give the boys our exposure suits since this would have weakened the members of the party who were in the best position to make possibly decisive efforts in the hours to come. They were not actually shivering and I think that this decision was justified.

R.E. Lawder

Source – W.C.C. Hillgrove Log Books, page 70

D. J. Causer arrived about 8.00 pm. Sat. evening, found a flap on at Swildon's, finally went down at about 10.00 pm and was lowered, together with D. Ford and F. Davies (Shepton), down the Forty – a very wet ride. We rigged a telephone on the pitch, which functioned fairly well, made contact with 3 people at the bottom, and established that there were a further 8 in the cave, 4 at the Double Pots and 4 at Barnes' Loop. These were all brought to the bottom of the 40 ft. Pot, the water level now falling rapidly, helped by the Waterworks pumping and the Fire Service. All were able to climb the ladder this time, and were out by 4 – 4:30 a.m.

Source – Maurice Hewins Log Book 1960, page 38

The trip that hit the headlines. John, Griff, Vic ?, Chas and a newcomer, Dave Goodge (who had been on the August trip with Chas) left Friday night for Hillgrove and entered Swildon's about 11 a.m. Griff was about then leaving Farnham to join them, and when he neared Amesbury it started to pelt with rain. By the time he got to Swildon's it was flooding fast. From what I have been told, it seems that Norman Tuck, George Pointing and Derek Ford went as far as the 40 foot to try and warn them and were themselves trapped for over an hour in the water rift. John's party with Dave Berry were up in Blue Pencil and only realised there was trouble with the freak weather. Eventually they got out after 17 hours after a full scale M.R.O. operation. The report from the Farnham Herald was by far the most accurate.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 7 (1959 to 1963), page 77

R.E.L. and A.L. descended Swildon's at 12 noon intending to do a six-hour trip to base camp and back. After passing through an ominously wet P.R. we found the main stream very high. Lug up at Trat's Temple 1½ hours, moved on to Barnes' Loop and connected with the others in the cave. More waiting until the stream was low enough to make a thrust for the 40. Many thanks to the M.R.O. for their moral and physical support and to the makers of goon suits. Emerged at 4 a.m. Sunday.

Source – The People – 28 August 1960

HUSBAND AND WIFE CUT OFF BY 40 ft. TORRENT FLOODS TRAP 5 IN HELL HOLE

Five potholers, including a husband and wife, were trapped by floodwater last night, in Swildon's Hole in the Mendip Hills, near Priddy Somerset

Firemen pumped water from the hole as members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation stood by. The trapped men entered the cave at 11 a.m. The alarm was raised when, other potholers noticed the volume of water gushing down the 40 ft. drop after a torrential thunderstorm.

Efforts were made to contact the trapped men by their portable telephone link-up without effect Swildon's Hole snakes for three quarters of a mile and is one of the most dangerous in the

Mendips. A young potholer died there last winter.

But the trapped men are believed to be experienced members of the Bristol Exploration Society trained to meet such an emergency - if they have a chance.

There is a rope ladder on the 40 ft. drop below which they are trapped. Water is cascading down, covering the ladder up which they must climb to safety.

Late last night police, took lighting equipment to the mouth of the cave to guide rescuers, led by Mr. David Berry, of Bristol, as they entered the shaft into the cave. Mr. Robert Main owner of the hole, said last night: "The position is not healthy. It is worrying that no contact has been made with them by their field telephone.

A police officer said: "All streams are swollen after the storm. It is believed the force of the cascade has stopped the potholers from climbing the ladder.

"It is not known if any have been swept away when struggling to get out." The trapped men - 1,200 feet underground are led by Mr. David Berry, of Bristol. The married couple are Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lawden.

It was really "Deadline Midnight" last night. Television viewers saw a pothole rescue in that newspaper serial twelve days ago.

[Deadline Midnight – A television series about life on a London daily newspaper broadcast in the early 1960's]

Source – Bristol Evening – Post 29 August 1960

POTHOLERS IN NIGHTMARE TRAP 250FT UNDER MENDIPS WAY OUT FLOODED BY STORM.

Eighteen-year-old Henbury schoolboy Patrick Muckley, had a birthday on Saturday that he will never forget. Trapped with 10 other potholers, underneath a raging waterfall, 250 feet below the Mendips, he was swept over 50 yards in a semi-conscious state before being marooned on a rock. Patrick was spending his birthday on a first-ever caving expedition in notorious Swildon's Hole when rising storm-water blocked the exit. The potholers, who spent 13 hours wondering if they would ever see daylight again, were finally hauled to the surface by members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation.

Rescuers who were unable to make contact with the entombed party until after 3 a.m. on Sunday, had feared that they might be suffering from severe exposure. Patrick and three other young Bristol cavers entered the Hole with the main party just before midday on Saturday. The party, which included only one experienced and fully-equipped caver, 18-year-old Army Sapper Alan Nash, 32, ran into trouble when they tried to negotiate a 40-ft. waterfall on their return trek. Two of the boys, Terry Taylor (17), and Thomas Logan (17), forced their way through, but Patrick slipped and was sucked beneath the surface by the currents. He was carried for over 50 yards beneath the swirling water, before a jutting rock in the narrow passage forced him to the surface. Half unconscious, Patrick managed to cling to the rock for three hours before he was seen by a party of five cavers from Surrey. Said Patrick today: "I thought it was the end. Everything seemed to be passing through my mind at once during the eternity I was under the water." The situation first gave cause for alarm in Swildon's Hole in mid-afternoon, when three separate parties were exploring below the level of the waterfall.

Besides the Bristol party and the party from Surrey, there were Capt. and Mrs. Robert Lawder, of Aborfield, Hertfordshire, who were potholing on their own.

Four members of the Wessex Caving Club who went below to warn of the danger from flooding, were nearly drowned themselves when water rose rapidly to within inches of the roof of the escape chimney. They were forced to turn back. The alarm was flashed to members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, and within an hour 50 experienced potholers were at the cave.

The three trapped parties met at the foot of the water fall just before midnight. "We kept each other cheerful with a sing-song and a few of us even managed to snatch some sleep," said 22-year-old John Thomas from Farnham, Surrey.

The final rescue drive was made by Wells Fire Brigade who stemmed the flow of water into the cave by pumping hundreds of thousands of gallons into an adjoining field. Earlier they had been pumping water from St. Cuthbert's Swallet, half a mile away, where Army Officer Richard Kitchen, stationed at Watchet, had been trapped for seven hours. He finally forced his way to the surface through a narrow tunnel when the water subsided. In another party of potholers who escaped the rising waters was Mr. Derek Ford, son of Bath's Deputy Chief Constable, Supt. C. Ford. Mr. Ford, who is on holiday from Canada, stayed on the scene all night and took part in rescue operations.

Source – Western Gazette – September 1960

POTHOLERS TRAPPED BY FLOODS UNDERGROUND 12 HOURS BEFORE RESCUE

Eleven potholers, most of them teenagers, were trapped by flood waters for more than 12 hours in Swildon's Hole, Priddy, during Saturday night. When they went down the cave in three different parties, shortly before midday, conditions were about normal. Torrential rain subsequently rose the level in the water course - which flows into the cave - several feet. Escape was cut by a great volume of water cascading down the Forty Foot Drop, a short distance from the entrance.

Once again, the Mendip Cave Rescue Organization came to the aid of the trapped people, who included one woman, Mrs. Ann Lawder. Dr. Oliver Lloyd (secretary) and Mr. Howard Kenney (warden), members of the organization, planned to make an exploration of the cave in the afternoon. They discovered the flooding and realized that potholers, known to be underground, might be in some difficulty. In response to their S.O.S., some 50 experienced cavers from North Somerset and Bristol were soon converging on Priddy and routine rescue operations were undertaken.

At first it was believed that there were just seven cavers trapped - Capt. Robert Lawder and his wife, both experienced potholers, and Mr. David Berry, who had taken a party of four from the Farnham area down the cave. Subsequently, information was received that another party from Bristol, led by Sapper Alan Nash (18) was trapped.

After making one abortive attempt to lay a field telephone down the Drop, the rescuers succeeded with a second effort. It was established that all the trapped people were safe and well. Dry clothing, chocolate and hot soup were taken down to them for the ascent through the waterfall at the Drop. All the potholers were brought out safely, being assisted one by one up the drop by lifeline. The rescue was completed shortly after four o'clock on Sunday morning. The three parties met at the bottom of the waterfall before midnight. Those who were experienced with conditions in Swildon's Hole realised they would have to wait for the water to subside. "We kept each other cheerful and a few of us managed to snatch some sleep," said 22-year-old John Thomas of Farnham. His companions were Victor Bennett (22), Adrian Dewey, David Goodge and David Berry (leader).

The worst experience was suffered by Patrick Muckley of Henbury, who was swept away by storm water in a semi-conscious state. He was celebrating his 18th birthday in the cave. He had gone down at about mid-day with three companions, Sapper Nash in charge. By 2:30 p.m. Nash

noticed that the water was beginning to rise in the cave and advised that they should return. Soon the party was separated into two groups of two. Muckley was making his way along a ledge when he slipped and fell into a torrent of water below. He was carried away for a distance of some 50 yards beneath the water.

“I went down a waterfall, and then somehow managed to grab a rock and clambered on to the dry part of it” he said. “I had lost my boots and my torch, and had a small cut on my head. I was practically knocked out. I waited on the rock for about three hours. I shouted, but no one heard me. It seemed an eternity.”

“All of a sudden I saw lights coming along the ledge. There were three or four chaps coming up the cave. They saw me sitting there, when I thought I was finished. They sat on the opposite side of the cavern, cheering me up and telling me it would be alright.”

“I was scared, but they said it would be all right. I told them about my friends and one of them went to try and reach them.” Eventually the party was reunited and they went to dry spots in the cave to wait for the water to recede.

In the meantime, Wells firemen brought a portable pump and commenced pumping water. Bristol Waterworks Company officials put all their pumps on full force at the Priddy pumping station, in an effort to lower the level of the water.

A great cheer went up amongst the trapped potholers when the members of the rescue team reached them. Hot soup and chocolate was served and those without them were issued with protective suits to keep them dry when ascending the waterfall.

High praise for the work of the rescue organization was given by Alan Nash. “If it had not been for them I think we should have been finished” he said. “They gave us clothing, soup and food just when it was needed. They could have done anything better for us.” Others in the rescued party were two 17-year-old lads – Terry Taylor and Thomas Logan both of Southmead, Bristol. Novice potholers are to be banned for Swildon’s Hole. Mr. Albert Main, the farmer who owns the land under which the cave lies, has decided to introduce this strict measure in the hope of preventing further incidents.

Mr. Main, in spite of his 70 years, was up for most of Saturday night, just in case he could be of assistance. He allows the potholers to use a loft over his barn for changing and is a friend of many of them.

He is now having an iron grill made to block the narrow entrance to the cave. It will be locked and only experienced cavers, whom he knows personally, will be allowed to go in.

Mr. Luke Devenish, a warden of the Mendip Rescue Organization, said: “Recently Swildon’s has become a hazardous proposition because of the increased flood water. In the years, I have been going down, the water has risen steadily.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 31 August 1960 (extract)

FARMER BLOCKS DANGER CAVE WITH IRON GRILL

His son, Mr. Jack Main, told the Evening Post today: “A grille on the narrow entrance some years ago used to prevent anybody going down. The grille mysteriously disappeared, but now we have decided to have another made. “We will keep it locked and people who want to explore

the cave will have to come to us for the key. They will be given it only if they can prove they are fully experienced and belong to a recognised potholing club.”

Source – Wells & Mendip Museum Archives – Letter of thanks from mother of Terry Taylor, who was in Alan Nash’s party – 3 September 1960

Dear Sirs,

My son and I would like to give you sincere thanks for the help you gave him and his companions last week end when they were trapped for so many hours in Swildon’s Hole. I’m sure no one but yourselves would appreciate the anxiety of mind when he hadn’t returned by 11 o’clock and then to hear it on the news, and then not knowing for sure if he was one of them.

I’m sure that the six or seven hours, between the time we knew he must be down there, and when the police came to say he was alright at 5:45 will stray forever on our minds like an awful nightmare, which I hope we never have to experience again. If it hadn’t been for your organisation it might have all ended very differently, I’m sure he was more scared than he has admitted, especially as it was his first experience of caving.

I would have written before, but I have hardly dared to think about what might have been. Once again profound thanks from my husband and I and also from my son.

Yours Sincerely, C. Taylor

27 August 1960 – St. Cuthbert’s Swallet

Source – Belfry Bulletin No. 152 September 1960

The Cuthbert’s party stopped their surveying at about 3:30 p.m., as they had changed their plans. On reaching the Main Stream, they found it a muddy torrent and realised that heavy rain must have fallen and that the Entrance Pitch might prove awkward. They left the Dining Room at 4 p.m., taking the drum of food and the stove and saucepan as far as Pillar Chamber, where they dumped it with the intention of returning there if the upper part of the cave proved too wet to negotiate. They arrived at the bottom of the Entrance Rift at 4:30, to find a sheet of water descending. They then decided to leave as much of the kit behind and attempt to climb the rift. They agreed that, if only one managed to get out, he would go and alert a rescue team, who would send another man down to keep him company. Bryan went first and managed to get up. He signalled to Bill and waited for about ten minutes, then went to alert a rescue team.

As soon as Bryan Ellis got out of the cave, he went to the Shepton Hut and alerted Ken Dawe. Ken volunteered to go down the rift if necessary and join Bill Kitchen at the bottom. Bryan then returned to the cave and tried to contact Bill by means of a message lowered in a tin. This was unsuccessful.

Meanwhile, Ken called in at the Belfry on his way to the cave and alerted the B.E.C. at 5:45 p.m. Prew and Alfie got changed and the party went in at five past six. Ken went down the rift, having agreed on a series of signals with Prew, who positioned himself in the water at the top of the rift. Alfie went to the squeeze, from which he could contact either Prew or the surface. Sett began investigating the state of the surface water and started re-enforcing the dams.

By 6:30, it was decided to call out the Fire Brigade, as this was the only method by which the water could be lowered. They arrived at ten past seven, and were pumping water into Plantation Swallet at the rate of 500 gallons a minute by half past. Although the level slowly dropped, the people down the cave reported that there was very little effect at the top of the pitch. Good communication existed with the two at the bottom, and supplies were passed down to them. They reported to the surface that they were in good spirits and not too cold.

In an effort to help the work of the pump, a temporary dam was built across the western exit from the pond. This had some effect, but not as much as had been expected. At 10:45, it was discovered that, although less water was pouring down the rift, the pump was only just keeping pace with the water coming into the pond. This meant that the water coming in was increasing and it was agreed that if Ken and Bill could not get through at this stage, they might have to wait for several more hours and perhaps all night. They were told of the situation and agreed to ascend as soon as possible. To help them further, a second bit of damming was carried out at 11:40 to stop the flow into the pond for a few minutes. By 12:15 Bill had got out, followed fifteen minutes later by Ken. The pump was then manhandled back to the Shepton track and taken from there to help in the Swildon's operation.

Source – Wells Journal – 2 September 1960 page 4

At St. Cuthbert's Swallet two men were trapped only a short distance from the entrance and were rescued quite early on thanks to the efforts of the Wells Fire Brigade.

23 October 1960 – Longwood Swallet

At about midday a party of three were climbing the 40ft climb from the Main Chamber when Coley-Smith fell to the bottom. He is an experienced climber but not a caver, from Bristol University. His companions were Dr. Powell (Mathematics) of Bristol University and a student from Oxford both experienced cavers. They were using a single line as a hand rail on the drop. As the accident occurred, a party of three Senior Scouts led by two members of the Birmingham Cave & Crag Club arrived at the head of the drop. They were asked to call out the M.R.O. and returning to the entrance they met a party of Westminster Speleological Association members entering the cave. Mr. Sage of this latter party went to the farm and telephoned Wells Police. The police rang Devenish who was out and then Kenny, at approximately 1 p.m. Sage had remained at the phone and Kenny contacted him and asked for a party to be sent down the cave to find out the extent of the injuries and return immediately. (The Scouts had no information on this matter).

Meanwhile Devenish had returned home and Kenny asked him to take all the equipment to Longwood, calling at Hillgrove, The Belfry and Priddy Green for cavers. Devenish also contacted Chapman and asked for the telephone equipment. Kenny tried to contact Willis and Frost but both were out. Other cavers were contacted, and Dr. Crook for medical assistance.

Sage rang again to say that the party had returned to the surface with news of the injured caver. On falling Coley-Smith was unconscious for a few minutes, but quickly came round and appeared to be suffering from abrasions to the face and head and extensive bruising, but otherwise unhurt, but his nose was bleeding. With assistance of the second rope belonging to the Scouts they were able to get him up the drop and move towards the entrance.

They were met by the party sent down by Kenny at the 10-foot overhang where they were waiting for the Rescue Organisation, feeling that they would be unwise to attempt the narrow passages between the overhang and the entrance, and the entrance rift without the assistance of

a rescue party. Coley-Smith was beginning to feel cold and two extra sweaters were given to him.

Kenny requested Sage to send the party down again and give instructions that Coley-Smith be kept on the move towards the entrance. Kenny then rang the police and asked for an ambulance, and for the calor gas lights to be provided at sun-down. He then drove to Longwood arriving at 2 p.m. to find Coley-Smith had just emerged from the cave. Dr. Crook and Struan Robertson arrived a few minutes later, and the telephones from Axbridge.

The ambulance (which had lost its way) arrived a little later and Coley-Smith was taken to the B.R.I. Bristol. About 30 cavers were at Longwood Farm. Kenny rang the police with the news.

This was a routine rescue but was interesting in that the call out system worked perfectly. There have been two cases of cavers falling on this drop and the question arises whether a ladder is more suitable for this hazard. To take a ladder is, these days, no more difficult than taking a rope, for the latter must be of adequate diameter if it is to be relied on as a handrail when cavers have muddy hands.

Additional Note

I saw Dr. John Powell on 28 October 1960. He is a free-lance type of caver, not a club man. He has never been a member of U.B.S.S. He tells me that he was leading up the drop out of the Main Chamber, Coley-Smith second and Peter Matthews third. There was not much water going down the drop. There was a hand line, which is no use there anyway, as there are lots of good handholds and footholds, but he was not using a lifeline, even though it was Coley-Smith's first cave, because he was an experienced climber. This was a mistake.

Coley-Smith appears to have lost his foothold, fallen ten feet or so then rolled down the rest of the slope to the first ledge. Powell is pretty sure that it wasn't the rock that gave way. The rock here is uncertain, because it is water washed, and is brittle though remaining firm.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 24 October 1960

HURTS NOSE IN 30 FT. CAVE FALL

A Bristol University research student escaped with facial injuries when he fell 30 feet while caving in the Mendips yesterday. Michael Collie-Smith (sic), was exploring 350 ft. deep Longwood Swallet, Lower Farm, Charterhouse, with two companions when he fell.

Another party were exploring the pothole at the time and one of these cavers raised the alarm. Police and members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation went to the scene, but Mr. Collie-Smith's companions reached the surface with the injured man. He was given first aid by a doctor member of the rescue part before taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary. His injuries were said to include a broken nose, but were not serious.

23 November 1960 – Swildon's Hole

At 10:40 p.m., M.R.O. was called out in respect of a party of three R.AF. men from Locking. Two of them were cavers, one experienced, but the third, a mountaineer, had never been down a cave before. They went down at 4:45 p.m. and visited Swildon's IV. On returning to the 40, the non-caver was too tired to climb the ladder, which was in any case too short by 4 or 5 feet. So one of the others climbed it, taking with him the ladder which had been on the 20 ft. pot,

went out of the cave and gave the alarm. A further difficulty they were experiencing was light trouble, though not having an emergency electric torch.

The call out worked smoothly. Chocolate, hot soup, glucose and dexedrine were given to the two who were stranded and the 20' ladder was taken down again and fastened to the bottom of the short 40. The weaker member of the party was now able to climb the ladder, and by 1:05 a.m. they were all out of the cave.

Supplementary

Michael Baker was changed into caving clothes first, and so was sent with the comforts bag to make contact with the two cavers trapped below the 40 ft. Jim Hanwell followed shortly afterwards with the idea of returning to the surface immediately he could judge what tackle was required. Howard Kenny and Ron Teagle were next to enter the cave, and were surprised to meet Hanwell returning. Meanwhile the 40-ft. hauling tackle was brought to the entrance by Luke Devenish.

Kenny descended the ladder on the 40 ft. which was in a state of near flood. The pipe was full, and a little water was going over the lip. On approaching the bottom, he was greeted with what sounded like a string of abuse from Hanwell, but Kenny eventually realised that Hanwell was telling him to go back up the ladder as it was too short by four to five feet. The caver who had given the alarm had left the 20-ft. drop tackle at the head of the 40 ft. and Kenny joined this on, and descended again. Baker and the two to be rescued were now enjoying chocolate, glucose and a self-heating drink of an indescribable taste (I have not yet made up my mind what it was). Dexedrine tablets (one each) was given to the two cavers, and after about ten minutes the party returned to the 40 ft. The weaker of the two (who was on his first caving trip and had been taken as far as Sump 4) was very slow on the ladder, but his companion seemed in good condition.

Baker and Hanwell escorted them back to the surface, and Kenny and Teagle brought out all the tackle. None of the first aid techniques learnt earlier in the evening were necessary.

The incident was caused by three factors –

1. Too long a trip for beginners.
2. The ladder too short for a tired caver to get on the bottom rung.
3. Inadequate lights (acetylene only) for very wet conditions. The 40 ft. can of course be climbed without lights, but darkness in this case caused complete lack of confidence.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 24 November 1960

R.A.F. MEN SAVED IN CAVE DRAMA

Three young R.A.F men were in difficulties in Swildon's Hole, Priddy, last night, and two were not rescued until early today.

The men are G. Whatley, G. Hall and E. Giles, all of R.A.F. Locking, Weston-super-Mare. They got into difficulty beyond a 40ft. drop, when their lamps failed. One was able to reach the entrance of the cave by the light of the failing torch, while the other two waited below the drop for help. The alarm was raised at 10:40 p.m. and It was about two hours later that the other two men were brought up.

An eight-man team of the Mendip Rescue Organisation brought the couple to the surface. "It would not have been difficult., for the R.A.F. men to get back if they had had good lights and had not been cold and tired," said a member of the rescue team. None of the trio was injured. The only casualty was a helper, who was hurrying to a telephone and fell and cut his knee.

1961

15 February 1961 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC. Hillgrove Log Book, page 74

Party from University College of Swansea descended Swildon's to Sump I in the morning. On the way out had a small accident. One bloke fell down the 20 ft. Pot; he was uninjured apart from a few bruises and a cut nose. Made way to surface and out at 4 pm. In future I think a life-line on the Twenty might come in handy.

31 March 1961 – Longwood Swallet

A party from Swindon who were exploring August left their spare lights at a point some 200 feet from the bottom and carried on down. Their lights failed. After some time Mr. Young rang the Hunters' and a party, including G. Dell, K. Gladman and several Wessex members (names unknown) arrived at the cave at 9:30 p.m.

The party was located by a Wessex member and all were out by 11:15 p.m.

1 April 1961 – Swildon's Hole

10:30 p.m. Tony O'Flaherty, who was leading a party in Lower Swildon's considered that their carbide was low and sent a messenger to obtain more. This person apparently made undue fuss and a party was raised under the impression that the others were stranded without lights. On arrival at Swildon's they met O'Flaherty and Co. on the way out however and returned to the Belfry. Garth Dell was in charge of the party from the B.E.C.

Source – Belfry Bulletin No. 158 April 1961

Garth and Keith. Quick trip to the bottom to provide lights for three Reading nits who had been waiting for approximately seven hours for us.

14 May 1961 – Shaft 120, Sandford Hill

SSSS Log Book Vol. 12, pages 18 to 23

This was somewhat memorable trip consisted of three people, myself, W Fox and R Cowling (Moo).

I think Sandford must be haunted as far as Moo and I go. The last time the two of us were caving down Pearl Mine, 70ft., on Sandford, a ladder broke. This time our experience was much more extraordinary.

After wearily trudging up the track to Sandford, and exploring some feeble caves near the quarry face, the three of us arrived at Shaft 120. We found to our amazement that it been

efficiently covered over by wire netting (and indeed, this netting made our discovery more amazing, as the netting it was relatively new).

After some trouble, we removed the netting, and threw down our ladders. With William life lining, Moo descended first.

At the bottom, he explored the small passage leading off roughly westward while I came down. At my arrival, I went off to explore this passage, while Moo descended the remaining 10ft. to the foot of the shaft. I was of little way down the passage, when I heard it an agonized yell from Moo – “Jumbo (that’s me) come quick.” So, I doubled back, and joined Moo. He’s yell was well justified, for at the bottom of the shaft, 120ft. below the ground, was a live pig!

Neither of us to really know why, but we were both scared. I suppose it was shock at finding anything alive at the bottom of the shaft, for several sheep and one cow have fallen down, and been killed on previous occasions. Anyhow, we both got back to the surface as soon as we could, and discussed the matter with William.

It was 3:40 when we decided on our action. I returned to school with all possible haste, adding about two years onto my bike on the track at Sandford, while Moo and William ran down the other side of Sandford to the Banwell Churchill road.

Back at school, I contacted Miss Clarke for advice; and then got some schools spuds left over from dinner. I also obtained a bucket and a forked stick, kindly led by Mr. Banner. I then returned to the shaft. Meanwhile, Moo and William had contacted the R.S.P.C.A. at Weston. About 4:30 the three of us met again at the top of the shaft, the other two accompanied by Inspector Peter Clapham, R.S.P.C.A. inspector for North Somerset. I went down to the bottom of the shaft, while the Inspector and Moo changed clothes. The Inspector followed me down, being obviously not used to caving.

When we were both down, Mr. Barnes’s bucket was lowered, and the spuds fed to the pig. It turned out that there were two pigs down, one dead, the other alive; the alive one had been feeding off the dead one.

The pig was too big to fit into the bucket, so we looked for other ways of getting him out. We wrapped an old shirt supplied by William) around the pig, and then wrapped the bottom of the ladder round the pig. During the sequence of events, we found a pig was completely unimpressed!

We started very carefully to haul up piggy on the end of the ladder, but even after 6 ft. or so, it proved to be impossible to get him out this way, as he struggled so much.

So Peter Clapham said that we would have to fetch a sack and from his van. We would also have to ring his wife and prepare her. It was too difficult to yell all this to the top, so I ascended again. At the top, Moo Immediately set off, in socks, (no boots) to the van. After an amazingly short time, he was back completely wacked out, with the sack. At the bottom, after considerable squealing from piggy, and cursing from Peter and I, piggy was eventually in the sack. We tied the life line firmly around the neck of the sack, and then I again ascended, keeping piggy steady and stopping him hitting the sides as he was hauled up.

At 6:15, piggy reached the surface, and then Peter himself ascended. Then came William’s turn to go down Shaft 120 for the first time, namely, to fetch the bucket and stick at the bottom of the ladder.

Finally, at 6:45, all of us and the ladders were up, and, after replacing the netting, and saying farewell to Peter Clapham we return to school reaching the latter at about 7:15 p.m.

The story of this rescue subsequently appeared rather inaccurately, in the Evening Post of Tuesday 16th May, the Western Daily Press of Wednesday 17th May, and the Western Mercury of Friday 19th May. Below is the account in the Daily Press.

The pig is now, unless claimed, the property of the Y.F.C., and Inspector Peter Clapham is a firm friend of all three of us.

This is the account and true account, and supersedes any other account of newspapers.

John R Tomalin.

Newspaper Report – Western Daily Press – 17 May 1961

TWO PIGS IN A POT HOLE

The mystery of two pigs found in a Sandford pot-hole on Sunday remains unsolved. An R.S.P.C.A. official Inspector Peter Clapham, climbed down a 120-ft. shaft and rescued one animal. The other was dead.

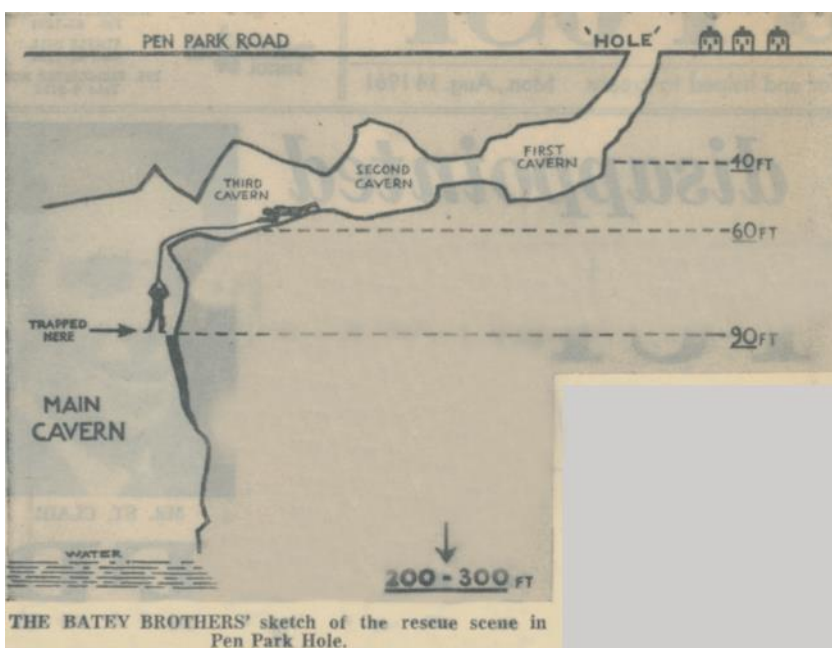
Three Sidcot schoolboy pot-holers, John Tomalin, Robert Cowling and William Fox, all aged 17 heard the surviving pig during an expedition in Sandford Hill.

They helped the inspector who said the 10-week-old animal must have been trapped about a week. Nobody knows who owns it.

12 August 1961 – Pen Park Hole

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 14 August 1961

BAR POTHOLE AMATEURS – DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF



A 200-300ft. disused lead mine - Pen Park Hole - from which a Bristol amateur potholer was rescued at the week-end, should be out of bounds to all but experienced explorers, said the city's Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Mr. F. C. Revelle, today.

Entrance to the cavern is a hole in a field near Pen Park Road adjoining hundreds of council houses. It was there that the Rev. Thomas Newnham met his death in 1775. On

Saturday night firemen were called to rescue 29-year-old Mr. Peter Batey of Cranmore Crescent, Southmead. He went exploring with his brother, Cuthbert.

Peter finished clinging for life on a narrow ledge overhanging a 100-foot drop, and hundreds of feet from the entrance. Cuthbert's 999 call brought a rescue team which hauled him to safety.

Mr. Revelle said today: "The opening to the shaft is enclosed with wire mesh; the actual opening is covered with pieces of wood like railway sleepers. Our feelings are that the place should be secured in such a way that access can only be obtained by authorised people properly equipped and properly supervised."

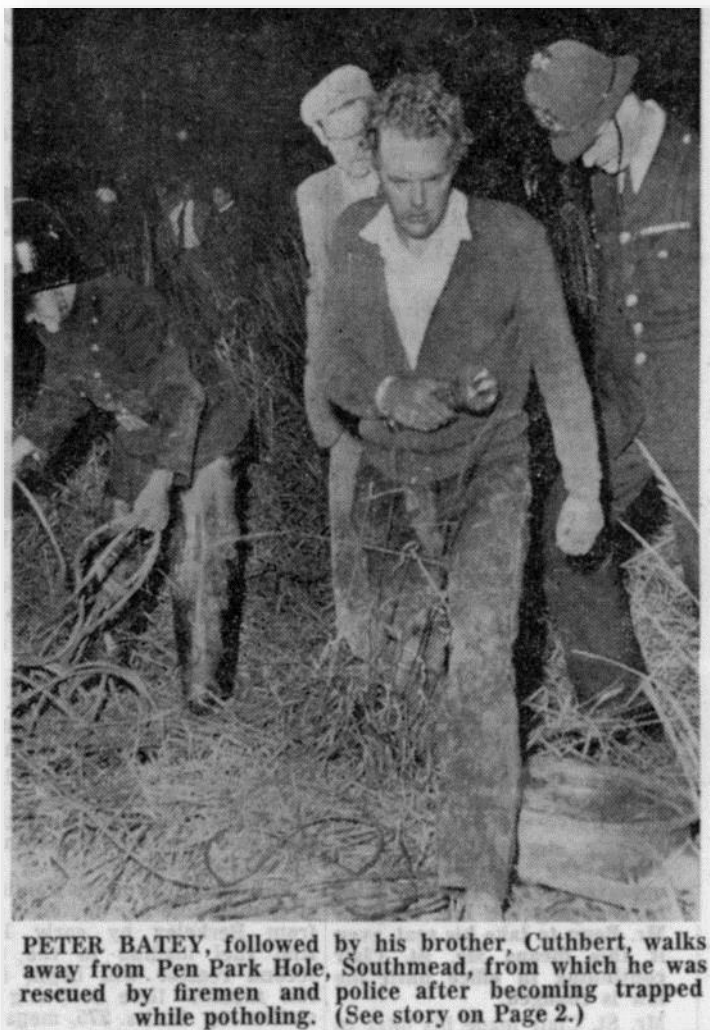
After the rescue, Cuthbert said: "It wasn't a prank. We went down to discover where the Rev. Thomas Newnham met his death, and to see what was at the bottom of the main cavern. Nobody has ever been down that far."

Peter found he was trapped when he could not climb back up the rope on which he had lowered himself.

Members of the rescue team spaced themselves out at intervals along the passageways and caverns as markers while Mr. Revelle and Sub Officer I. A. Tasker put a line around Peter and pulled him up.

Cuthbert, who lives at Crosscombe Drive, Hartcliffe, said: "I feel a bit ashamed over this. I know we should have asked for permission, but we afraid of being refused."

Note – M.R.O. not called out and not involved.



Source – Western Daily Press – 14 August 1961

FIREMEN SAVE CAVER FROM POT HOLE- NEXT TIME HE WILL SETTLE FOR THE MENDIPS, INSTEAD

Two potholing brothers set out on Saturday night to solve the mystery of Bristol's Pen Park Hole. But 29 year old Peter Batey, of 29, Cranmore Crescent, Southmead, finished up clinging to life on a narrow ledge overlooking a 100 foot drop while his elder brother, Cuthbert, fled for help.

Searchlights stabbed the inky blackness as a Bristol Fire Brigade rescue team descended the hole – a disused lead working – and hauled Peter to safety with a lifeline. The pair entered the hole at 7.30 p.m. as a result of a snap decision. “It wasn't a prank,” said Cuthbert. “We went down for two reasons. Firstly to discover where the Rev. Thomas Newnham met his death in 1775.

“Secondly, to see what was at the bottom of the main cavern. Nobody has ever been down that far.”

It was four hours later that Cuthbert made his 999 call, with Peter precariously balanced on the narrow ledge in the main cavern about 100 feet below ground.

“I got down there by attaching a rope to a hook and lowering myself down while Cuthbert took up the slack.

“I found a dangerous ledge and decided to have a rest on it. I wanted more light and other gear and tried to get back up the rope, but it had become soggy and I couldn't get a grip. “Three times I tried to get up but the rope spun. My body kept buffeting against the rocks, so I had to give up.

“Cuthbert couldn't lift me, so he sent me down a bottle of water and sandwiches while he went for help”

The rescue took a further 90 minutes, with Cuthbert acting as a guide for the firemen.

Members of the rescue team were spaced out at intervals along the passageways and caverns as markers while Deputy Chief Fire Officer F. C. Revelle and Sub Officer I. A. Tasker got a line round Peter and pulled him up.

A crowd of sightseers watching the rescue clapped when the mud-bespattered firemen and a grim faced Peter eventually emerged from the hole.

Did the ordeal frighten him? “No,” he said. “I felt as soggy as the rope, but I wasn't scared. In potholing, you have to accept your fate

“But the next time we go caving, we would like to take the Fire Brigade with us. They are natural cavers”

Peter, a storeman, and Cuthbert, a painter, told me they had been down Pen Park Hole three times in the last two months.

“Although we are amateurs, we have had plenty of experience,” said Cuthbert, a married man with one child, who lives at 90, Crosscombe Drive, Hartcliffe.

“I feel a bit ashamed over this. I know we should have asked for permission, but we were afraid of being refused.

“Besides, there are no Keep Out notices at the site. Some of the fencing was down and four of the boards covering the hole were missing,” he claimed.

They have decided not to explore the hole again, but to settle next time for the Mendips. The history of Pen Park Hole is as black and sombre as the cavern itself. Mystery, mishaps, even death. These are the ingredients of its chequered past.

At least two people are known to have died after daring the perils of the hole.

One was the Rev. Thomas Newnham, a minor Canon at Bristol Cathedral. With his fiancé he walked to the entrance to the hole. Then he said he would test its depth. But the plumb line he swung caught on a branch of a nearby tree. The twig snapped and the clergyman plunged down the hole. It was 39 days before his body was recovered.

The morning he died, Canon Newman had officiated at a service at Clifton Parish Church at which, while reading the lesson, he had spoken the prophetic words:-

“My life draweth nigh unto the grave. I am counted with them that go down into the pit. I am the man that hath no strength . . . Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit in darkness in the deeps. . . I am shut up and cannot come forth...”

14 October 1961 – Swildon’s Hole

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 7 (1959 to 1963,) page 105

D. Causer and F. Davies (Shepton) entered the cave at about 3:30 p.m., and started for VI. Before leaving sight of daylight we were involved in a short rescue – a lad stuck at the bottom of the 15-foot pitch in the wet way. He was tired and not helped by the incompetent leadership, and we managed to talk him up and through the squeeze at the top under his own steam. Saw him safely out of the cave and proceeded to VI without further incident.

1962

Early 1962 – Seven Sisters Mine, Bathampton

Source – Bath Stone Quarries by Derek Hawkins – page 35

On Bathampton Down, the large open quarries were supplemented by underground workings on a modest scale. The most extensive of these is now inaccessible since the entrances were blown-up by the Territorial Army in the 1960’s after some children became briefly lost in them.

Source – Bathampton Down A Hill Divided by Mary Clark (2107) – Pages 84 and 85

There are various unsubstantiated stories of boys being lost in the caves. These may have been told by parents to deter their children from entering as the underground quarries had become an extremely dangerous labyrinth of tunnels with frequent rock falls from the unstable roofs.

By 1961 the Seven Sisters was so unsafe that Bath Golf Club, so the landowner, decided to ask the local Territorial Army to seal it off by blowing up the entrances. They had been advised to do so by the convicting magistrate after a homeless man, Laurence Say, was found living in the caves and using Single Way as a store for stolen goods.

On the weekend of 4 – 5 November the soldiers began their work, which provided them with a valuable training exercise. They first blew up three of the cave entrances; tremendous explosions were heard in parts of Bath, houses shook and windows rattled. The Golf Club received a complaint from a lady in Bathampton whose ceiling had cracked and the Committee had to halt the demolition temporarily.

It took the Territorials until the end of the month to complete their task.

Source Bath Evening Chronicle – Friday 15 June 1962 – Page 14

MORE BANGS BY ARMY AT BATHAMPTON

Army Sappers are to continue demolition work at Hampton Rocks, Bath, this weekend. A spokesman said today : “We hope it will be the last time we shall disturb the inhabitants of Bathampton.”

Members of the 204 Field Squadron R. E. (T.A.) are once again to use live explosives on Bath Golf Club grounds, when they carry out their operations this week-end, and because of the danger of flying rock, sentries will be posted at different points and red flags flown.

The public are warned to keep at a safe distance during the demolition work. Children, in particular are asked not to go near the area. A member of the demolition squad said : “It is a long job because of the difficulty in blocking up the large cave entrances.” Troops will begin their work at 2 p.m. tomorrow and continue until 7.30 p.m. on Sunday, the Army plan to be working on the caves between 9.30 a.m. and 3.30 p.m.

Source - Bath Evening Chronicle – Monday 18 June 1962 – Page 5

CAVE BLASTING ENDS, BUT MORE WORK

Territorials worked throughout the weekend to complete the destruction of the seven caves at Hampton Rocks, Bath. It had been hoped that, as a result their work on Saturday and yesterday, the R.E.s would have ended the task on which they embarked some time ago. But an Army spokesman said today that it was expected it would be a month to six weeks before they could finish making a gradual slope from the golf course down into the hollow where the caves existed. Captain M. B. Harrison, second in command of 204 Field Squadron R.E. (T.A.) supervised the work at the weekend.

3 February 1962 – G.B. Cave

On Sat. Feb. 3rd. telephone message received approx. 17:05 that a girl, Susan Harrop in U.B.S.S. party down cave had fallen out of the entrance to Oxbow. Lots of blood from head injury, eyes slightly glazed and slight frothing at mouth. On this report accident seemed serious. Dr. Crook notified, Dr. Struan Robertson notified. Luke Devenish eventually contacted through his wife and he was asked to supply man power.

U.B.S.S. rescue party was set in motion and they took over carrying sheet, life line and hauling ropes. Met Dr. Crook at entrance and went down cave. Report soon received back on surface as per instruction from leader of first rescuers that conditions were quite good and patient was conscious and would be soon on move. Rest of party who had gone down with the injured girl were ordered out of cave. The man at Lower Farm telephone had in the meantime been stood down and came over to join in rescue but was not wanted. B.E.C. and other rescue parties had

by this time arrived 1830 hrs. approx. Luke Devenish appeared with further party, comforts box, and said police had been notified in case this proved to be a fatal injury as first reports suggested serious head injury. Police turned up with search lights (night foggy) and an ambulance came. Local farmer drove his land Rover over to just above cave entrance and gave welcome light.

All out by approx. 19:30 and so home. Injuries were found not to be serious and patient was discharged on Sunday. Cut head, minor facial injuries and some bad bruises. Fall had been approx. 10 ft.

N.B. For a vital half hour Bristol exchange could not be got to answer from 17:05 to 17:35 approx. My calls were taken by Weston with speed and accuracy when the number could not be dialled direct. Cheddar also answered promptly. At 20:00 hrs. a strong complaint was lodged with Officer i/c Telephone exchange at Bristol about this. Inquiry promised. FOG. Though the fog was not very thick rescuers, including myself, were constantly getting lost in fog between road and cave and between Long House Barn and cave. Devenish has suggested possible provision of some reflector discs for marking route to a cave under similar conditions on another occasion.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 5 February 1962

GIRL ART STUDENT “RESTING” AFTER MENDIPS CAVE FALL

Eighteen-year-old Susan Harrop, a Bristol University art student, who was knocked unconscious while caving in the Mendips at the weekend, is “resting” today. A university official said today: “Miss Harrop is taking it easy after her ordeal. She has been advised to rest.”

The girl was with a party of seven university cavers exploring G.B. Cavern near Lower Farm, Charterhouse, when she slipped and gashed her head.

The Mendip Rescue Service was alerted and two doctors arrived at the scene. They gave first aid in the cave, and Miss Harrop was brought to the surface an hour after the accident.

1 April 1962 – Combe Down Stone Mines, Bath

Sources – WCC Jnl. Vol. 7 No. 84, page 39 (May 1962) and M.R.O Archives.

After lunch on April 1st 1962, six fifteen-year-old boys from the Prior Park College at Bath set out for the freestone workings at Combe Down. They were celebrating the fifteenth birthday of one of the boys, and for such an important occasion were dressed in black jackets, ties, pin stripe trousers, white shirts and school caps, and the party tea consisted of chocolate cake, lemonade and chewing gum. Armed with four torches and candles the boys set about exploring the maze of workings. Fortunately, one of them left a haversack and school cap at the entrance and later, when the boys were reported missing, this gave the police a definite clue as to their whereabouts.

Over a considerable area, a bed of freestone has been removed, varying in thickness up to about ten feet, and every few feet a pillar of the natural stone has been left to support the roof. Some of the gaps between the pillars have been filled with the miners' waste and in other places there have been collapses. Old entrances have been filled with refuse, but by and large there are few landmarks to distinguish the many routes. No-one seems to know the full extent of the

workings, and one wonders how many of the happy occupiers of mortgaged houses above know what is beneath their feet.

The police searched from 9 until 11 p.m., without success. Then they decided to call in the experts, but had difficulty in making contact with the M.R.O., eventually doing so through the Somerset County Police at Taunton, which is the correct and agreed method.

Luke Devenish was contacted by the Bath Police at 11 p.m. and got on to Howard Kenney who took a party from Wells over to Bath. Dr. Lloyd was contacted in Bristol and sent two parties. Just after midnight Luke also went to Bath. On arrival a large and efficient crowd of police, press, fire brigade etc., was found at the workings, with generator and lighting for the first 200 yards of cave.

Unfortunately, nobody really knew their way round those workings, and there is no known survey of them. The workings are exceedingly complicated and extend for about a square mile. Howard and his party searched the cave, found their way into the main workings and used white tape provided by the police as a marker. A police tracker dog and handler was an unusual addition to the rescue team, but was of no help. The handler attributed this failure to the more powerful scent of the carbide lamps.

The boys' zeal for exploration satisfied, they tried to return to the entrance, but soon realised that they were lost. They walked through the maze of passages, perhaps having time to admire the occasional nest of cave pearls, and eventually came across on ascending passage blocked with soil and refuse. Knowing that they could not be far beneath the surface they began to dig with bare hands and continued for about six hours. The discovery of a jug the right way up, full of water, was a find that could have been important for their comfort or even survival, but perhaps the most exciting find was a worm. The naturalist in the party assured the rest that no worm went deeper than ten feet, so back to work with renewed hope. Eventually they emerged in a garden near the King William IV public house.

At 2:35 a.m., on 2 April 1962 the six schoolboys were found wandering in the road nearby. Returning to the main entrance to collect the cap and haversack, they were no doubt astounded to see ambulances, the Fire Brigade, police cars, the Press in force, a generator and floodlighting, civil defence vehicles, television cameras, a canteen and the Mendip Rescue Organisation waiting for them.

It is always a relief when a rescue ends happily, but perhaps a little disappointing for the rescue team to be deprived of the satisfaction of escorting the lost party from the cave. But congratulations to the boys on their initiative, and if any member wants a passage dug out they will know where to go!

The problem of how to organise a search in freestone mines (e.g. Bath and Boxhill) is a difficult one. The Hon. Secretary of M.R.O. has been pursuing this matter and has found several people who know these mines quite well. There is a complete plan of the Boxhill workings on a scale probably too small to be useful, but none of the Coombe Down Main Workings. He is taking steps to try to get this remedied. Any plan must have guide numbers which are also marked inside the mine. This is being done at Boxhill.

Source – Bath Evening Chronicle – 2 April 1962

**EVENING CHRONICLE REPORTER FINDS SIX AFTER ORDEAL IN BATH CAVES
BOYS DIG THROUGH 20FT. MUD TO SAFETY**

Six 15-years old Prior Park College boys tunnelled their way out of the maze of old underground quarry workings where they had wandered hopelessly lost for 12 hours, at Combe Down Bath, today.

Bath's Chief Constable, Mr. G. E. T. Nichols, said, "It is a miracle that they managed to get out where and when they did."

The boys came out of the ground into a tiny garden between the King William IV public house and an adjoining shop, but they might have easily have trapped themselves underneath the floor of either building.

The Chief Constable set up his headquarters in a large cavern about a mile inside the winding caves, to direct search operations which went on for five hours.

Evening Chronicle reporter, Gerald Goodman found the boys, Michael O'Dowd, Peter Lynch, Richard Carter, Christopher Kershaw, Patrick Robinson and Robert Raynor, dishevelled and caked in mud, wandering around not far from where they had made their million to one escape. The boys asked, "Is anyone looking for us?" and, assuring them that there was a full-scale search going on, our staff man took them to the scene about a quarter of a mile away.

He handed the boys into the care of Bath's chief fire officer, Mr. W. E. Hall, and the message, "The boys have been found," was relayed to the Chief Constable who called off the hunt.

Auxiliary Firewoman Mrs. Betty Allen and Mrs. Barbara Curtis, who were called from their beds to run a canteen for the searchers, gave the exhausted boys hot tea and sandwiches, and then they were quickly taken back to the college by the Chief Constable.

Rested after their ordeal, Peter Lynch said "We went into the caves to celebrate Kershaw's 15th birthday with chocolate cake, lemonade and chewing gum. We left the "tuck" and decided to investigate.

"Then we got lost. We must have walked miles, but when we saw a worm, we knew we could not be far below ground. Only two of us could work at a time, and while one of us chipped away with a sheath knife, the other at shovel the earth away with his hands.

Peter added, "We must who have worked in relays for about six hours before I, the smallest, was able to time on my way out. Then when I pushed the remaining earth away I shouted it's fresh air."

Peter who afterwards helped the rest of the boys to get out, said "none of us want to go into the quarry again."

The headmaster said: "There is no question of punishing them. They were on a free afternoon and but for unfortunately losing direction they would have been back for tea. In any case, they have been punished enough by the shock, and obviously they won't want to go there again."

This was the biggest search operation held at Bath for two years. It is estimated that the cost will run into at least £500.

The drama began at 9.30 on Sunday night, when the headmaster of the college Bro. R. B. Beattie, telephone the police to say that the boys, all in the same form and "O" Level examination students, had failed to return to the school.

Boys at the school said that the missing six had gone off armed with torches and candles to explore Cox's quarry-about a mile from the school.

Bath police, many who were due to go off duty, Somerset police with tracker dog Zeta, Bath Fire Brigade with portable lighting equipment, for fire aid and rescue tackle, and teams of expert cavers were drafted to the scene.

Floodlighting was set up inside a gloomy and cold underground workings for the first mile, where rescue headquarters were set up. Police Inspectors Alfred Kettleby, Pat Robinson Sgt. Cramb and the other officers went in the first and traversed two miles until they found impossible to make further progress.

The workings they were in narrowed down to a tunnel about two feet high, and only wide enough for a thin man. Then they returned with the thinnest officer they could find, 6 feet tall P.C. Hulland but he was unable to get far.

Early in the search, a haversack and a school cap with the name of one of the boys was found, and later the top of a track suit.

The first team of expert cavers were from Wells, Jim Hanwell, Mike Baker, Paul Duck, Mike Wheadon and Mike Palmer of the Bristol Exploration Club. Several other rescue teams of volunteers were standing by.

They took with them several miles of white tapes in order to keep in communication and to mark where they had travelled. The first tunnel investigated took a reel 500 yards long. They were moving through the second when the boys arrived with our staff reporter.

One of the cavers estimates that there are 15 miles of passageways, and the Chief Constable asked parents to impress on their children the dangerous practice of going into these places without proper equipment and without knowledge of the workings. "These quarries are very old, and there is no known map of the workings," he said.

The chief constable said, "These boys were very lucky. As it turned out they were just ahead of the search party. We later found stones and marks on the walls which they had used as pointers. Apparently, early in the afternoon they had gone down one working, and lost their sense of direction.

They wandered around trying to mark where they had gone and eventually, hours later, saw what they believed was an old-time slipway. They begin digging with their bare hands and tunnelled their way through about 20 feet of shale and mud into the garden."

While the search was on, there was a quarter-hourly check being made at the school, and reports telephoned the Central Police Station and then relayed by radio to the police wireless van at the entrance to the quarry.

This morning the six boys was sleeping off the effects of the terrifying night in the caves. "Fortunately, they appeared to have been suffering no bad effects, but they are extremely tired explain their headmaster, Brother R. B. Beattie. They had a few minor injuries such as cuts, and the doctor has ordered them to bed where, they must not be disturbed."

One of the boys is Robert Raynor, of 23 Holcombe Lane, Bathampton, and the others were Michael O'Dowd, of 6 High Street, Stonehouse, Glous., Richard Carter, Pine Hollow Budleigh Salterton Devon, Patrick Robinson Calton Road Erith, Kent, Hugo Peter Lynch Elmhurst Road, Goring-on-Thames, Oxon, and Christopher Kershaw, 73 Liverpool Road Birkdale Southport Lancs.

Brother Beattie described how a live worm and a water jug had brought hope to the boys as they tunnelled their way through nearly 20 feet of soft soil to escape from the caves.

“They had about 17 feet of soil in front of them and while two worked the other four rested and prayed, he said. Peter Lynch, the smallest of the boys and probably their leader, found a live worm. This inspired them all to make fresh efforts when Lynch said worms were never found more than 10 feet underground, even in the winter.

They knew then they were burrowing in the right direction.” Faced with the possibility of long-stay underground, the boys prayed for freshwater - and their prayers were answered. Embedded in the soft soil they found a water jug which had become lodged with its neck upwards. Water trickling through the soil had filled the jug and the boys found it clean and cool.

They put it to one side meaning to use it during today, but free themselves before they had need of it.

Brother Beattie said he thought the boys had gone into the cave for a celebration party because it was one of the boy's birthday.

“They were taking tremendous risks because they had very little experience. Fortunately they are all very highly intelligent boys and I think this help to keep their heads. We were almost terribly anxious.”

The caves are quite a definitely out of bounds to boys from the school in future, added Brother Beattie.

He expressed his wholehearted appreciation of the work done by the police, fire brigade rescue and ambulance organisations for their part in the search.

Source – The Mendip Caver – Volume 4 Number 2 – May 1968

Six former Prior Park Collage Schoolboys held a reunion recently to celebrate an occasion 6 years ago when they tunnelled their way to safety. The boys were aged 14-15 when they went exploring in a maze of underground quarry workings at Combe Down, Bath and got lost. On 31st March they met again to remember how they tunnelled up to safety after seeing a worm wiggling in the earth and realising they were not too far from the surface.

The reunion took place at Cambridge where 3 of the 6 are under-graduates, Richard Carter (21), at Peter House College, Christopher Kershaw (21) at Selwyn College, and Patrick Robinson (20) at Downing College. Reliving the hair raising schoolboy exploits with them were Bristol University students Robert Rayner (21) of Holcome Lane, Bath, and Michael O'Dowd (21) of Stonehouse, Glos. Peter Lynch (20) of St. Catherine's College, Oxford, travelled to Cambridge to complete the party.

7 April 1962 – Un-named Mineshaft near Sandford [*probably Sandford Hill*]

Source – Cheddar Valley Gazette – 13 April 1962

WINSCOMBE FIREMEN SAVE COW IN SHAFT

Part of the mouth of an old mine shaft on the side of the Mendip Hills near Winscombe, had to be cut away at the weekend to free a cow which had slipped into the opening.

The cow belongs to Mr. Sidney Avery, of Pool Farm, Sandford. It had wandered with a small herd through a break in a hedge, towards some rough woodland above the farm.

The side of the hill is very steep and pockmarked with vertical shafts of old ochre mines. The cow slipped backwards into one of the shafts. It jammed about seven feet down the hole, with its haunches pressed against the side and rear legs hanging.

Six firemen from Winscombe, and ten local farmers and farmworkers spent nearly four hours digging away the face of the hill to reach the cow. They cut down a tree and put it across the top of the hole. With a rope round the animal and over the tree, they managed to haul the cow free. The animal was unhurt and ran off as soon as it was released.

30 May 1962 – Swildon's Hole

The "Bassett Hounds Club", members of the R.A.F. at Compton Bassett, Wilts, were exploring Swildon's Hole down to Sump I in two parties of six each. The accident happened to the second party, under Flying Officer Fowler. Four had climbed the 40-foot pot, leaving two. The subject was David Hardy, aged 19, who was on his first caving trip. A life line was available but was not being used. He climbed as far as the drainpipe and then fell, breaking his left arm (Colles' fracture to wrist) at about 6:50 p.m. Fowler went to get help at about 7 p.m. and alerted the M.R.O. Meanwhile a party from R.A.F. Locking helped with dry clothing.

Mike Boon, Mike Thompson, who happened to be in Priddy went down the cave right away and hauled the subject up the 40 on a life-line. Rough splinting with wooden paling done at head of 40, then out.

Luke Devenish and Dr. Cannicot went down the cave and met the subject at Jacob's Ladder. David Willis party helped. By 9:30 p.m. subject was out of cave and was taken by ambulance to Weston-super-Mare General Hospital. I arrived about the same time and interviewed the members of the R.A.F. Compton Bassett.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 31 May 1962

POTHOLE MAN TRAPPED AFTER 40-FOOT FALL

A 19-year-old, airman from Wiltshire, rescued after falling 40 feet and being trapped for two hours in a pothole on the Mendips last night, was today nursing a broken arm, but otherwise little the worse for his experience. He is David Hardy (19), of R.A.F. Compton Bassett, who was trapped in the well-known Swildon's Hole, near Priddy. After he had been brought to the surface, with the aid of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, he was taken to Weston-super-Mare Hospital and detained. "It was an absolutely straightforward rescue operation, but we had to work fast," said one of the team. Two other cavers went to Hardy's assistance after he had fallen. By the time the rescue team arrived, the two cavers had brought Hardy half-way to the

surface. Hardy went down the pothole with a party of 11. His condition at Weston-super-Mare General Hospital today was stated to be “quite comfortable”.

16 September 1962 – Swildon’s Hole

Source – W.C.C. Hillgrove Log Book, page 86

Nick Hart took Mr. and Mrs. Linfoot and two Northern bods to Sump I, Swildon’s. Very slow and uninteresting trip was unfortunately livened up when Eileen Linfoot fell from half way up the 20 ft. Pot. She hurt her back and was tired as well. Got a rope and hauled her up. Roy Staynings (who was leading another party in Swildon’s - ed.) and his party helped us haul her up the 40 ft. Pot, and so on out. This work was hampered by two other parties meeting at the 40 ft. Pot. Roy had decided to try and get her out straight sway before any shock or fatigue set in, but Brian, her husband went to get coffee and cigarettes. As we were coming out we met some B.E.C rescuers coming over with stretcher first aid boxes and all. They were disappointed but seemed satisfied to hear that the Wessex were proud to be rescued by the B.E.C.

P.S. Hospital inspection revealed only severe bruising.

3 November 1962 – St. Cuthbert’ s Mineries Pool

Source – Wookey Hole 75 Years of Cave Diving & Exploration – Hanwell, Price, Witcombe, page 147

Tragically Jack Waddon was not so lucky. On 3 November 1962, he had planned to get through a recently pushed Sump 2 in Stoke Lane having re-rigged his own gear. In the event, heavy rain made the trip impossible and Jack decided to practice in the Priddy Mineries pond that evening instead. Something went badly wrong underwater for he experienced an acute lack of oxygen, passed out and failed to surface. In the gloom, it took Mike Boon and Fred Davies over an hour to locate him. They towed him ashore, even managed to resuscitate him, dashed to the hospital in Wells and hoped. But Jack died there about ninety minutes later without regaining consciousness.

Source – Wells Journal – 21 December 1962

A member of the Cave Diving Group who lost his life during a practice dive in the Mineries Pool a Priddy, was using unsuitable diving apparatus.

This was stated by an Admiralty expert who gave evidence at the resumed inquest at Wells on Thursday on Edwin John Waddon (30), a Post Office engineer instructor, of Eccleshall, Staffs., a son of a Taunton builder, who died in Wells and District Hospital on Saturday, November 3, a few hours after being dragged out of the Mineries Pool unconscious. The inquest was resumed by Mr. H. A. Homer, Coroner for North Somerset with a jury of eight, of which Mr. A. Campkin was chosen as foreman.

Dr. John Stephen, Wells, said: he was called to the District Hospital to see the deceased at 7:50 p.m. Mr. Waddon was deeply unconscious but was breathing deeply. Resuscitation measures were being taken and his condition improved for a time, but he collapsed and died at about 8:40. In reply to Mr. R. G. Ash, representing the family of the deceased, the doctor said his collapse was no surprise, having regard to his condition. He was surprised that he improved for a time. Dr. Arthur Charles Hunt, pathologist of Bristol said he carried out a post-mortem examination.

Mr. Waddon was a well-built and well nourished young man. There was no significant injury on the body, except a slight bruising on the right hand.

He said he examined the lungs to see if Waddon had inhaled water but found none. He said the cause of death was pulmonary oedema. Waddon's lung condition was in keeping with severe deprivation of oxygen.

In reply to Mr. Ash, witness said he was surprised Waddon survived so long. He would have anticipated him collapsing much sooner than he did.

John Edwin James Attwood, Shortwood, Macclesfield, near Bristol, a member of the giving Group of which Waddon was a member, said that on Saturday, November 3 he went to Mineries Pool for practice diving purposes. Mr. Waddon was to give him lessons.

He said that Waddon entered the water at 5:30. He surfaced about five minutes later to increase his body weights from 20 to 30 lbs. He then said he was going back into the water. The witness who said he was going to take over after that dive, went on to say that five or ten minutes later he became uneasy about the deceased as there was no sign of him, and the water was so still. He sent word to the divers' hut for assistance. Returning to the pool they saw no sign of deceased. One of the group entered the water and located Waddon. A rope was tied around his body and he was pulled out.

Artificial respiration was applied and Waddon started to breath. Although the ambulance had been sent for, Mr. Waddon was taken to Wells Hospital by car, mouth to mouth resuscitation continuing all the way to the hospital.

Witness said that when Waddon resurfaced for 'more weights he appeared quite normal. He took off his face mask to speak. His equipment belonged to Mr. Davies, of Street. The equipment was taken off of Waddon immediately he was pulled from the water. It looked to be in order.

Mr. Attwood said he had used this particular equipment without trouble. Answering Mr. Ash, the witness said a Mr. Thompson Went down with Mr. Waddon the first time. It was not always usual for two divers to go down together. When Waddon came up for the additional weights it was quite clear from his conversation that he intended to go down again.

John Michael Boon, Lansdown Close, Watford, Herts., another member of the Cave Diving Group, said he saw Waddon and Thompson go into the Pool. He went to the divers' hut, about 100 yds. away and was there when a message was received about Waddon. Davies changed into diver's kit and went into the pool to search for him.

He said the water varied from six to 12 feet and there was one or two feet of mud. He was not immediately successful in locating Waddon. He returned to the bank twice, but on the third dive found him, some 30 ft. from the bank.

"He was not moving and still wearing his face mask," said the witness. He tied a rope around him and he was pulled to the bank.

Mr. Boon said Waddon was a very expert diver.

Questioned by the Coroner, witness said it was getting dark. They had no lights. It was light enough to dive and visibility was good until a diver moved about and stirred up the mud. 'Frederick James Davies, Bramley Road, Street, said he loaned Waddon his diving gear, and he

substituted his own face mask, and a reducer valve, from the group's store, which he wanted to test. Witness had been using this kit since June. He inspected it the previous evening. He had had the apparatus for five or six months and had used it half a dozen times in caving operations without any trouble.

The suit was made of ex-Admiralty components and he had made many modifications to it. It was not a standard set but was made up of several different ex-Admiralty sets. As far as he knew there was no kit available on the market for cave work or designed for this particular purpose. These ex-Admiralty kits were most unsuitable for cave work without modification.

Mc. Davies said diving with oxygen was always difficult and required constant concentration. "One must keep a calm head," he said. Once he was in the Pool when the oxygen cylinder ran out but there was enough remaining in the breathing bag to get him back to the bank. Detective Constable John Michael Treloar, Flax Bourton, a member of the Police Sub-Aqua Club and deputy chief of the police diving aquatic club said that on November 10 a naval officer found Waddon's belt embedded in the mud. Attached to the belt was the lead ballast. The belt was partially fastened.

He said the conclusions drawn from this were that the diver, at some stage, made an effort to undo the belt in order to drop the weight and surface. It looked as if he partially unfastened the belt, and then it became incapable of any further release; his feet became bedded in the mud and he lost consciousness.

The final witness was Mr. Thomas Handley Grosvenor, senior officer of the Admiralty's Experimental Diving Unit, who said the apparatus Waddon was wearing was made up of three separate Admiralty types.

The mask and breathing tube were from an Admiralty model no longer in service. The breathing bag appeared to come from an amphibious escape apparatus, and his oxygen cylinder and valves were part of a submarine escape kit. The breathing bag was too small for anything but the lightest of exercises.

He said the set had been very well constructed and there was no complaint about its workmanship. It had been put together with considerable ingenuity.

Another modification was the use of a polythene tube connecting the oxygen directly to 'the mouth. The reducing valve was not working properly, and the pressure breathing arrangements were entirely inadequate.

Witness said that he had come to the conclusion that the apparatus was not suitable for continual under water swimming or cave diving work.

Saying that the apparatus was being used for a purpose for which it was not originally designed the officer said it was most inadvisable for ex-Admiralty equipment to be put together in this way.

The jury returned a verdict in accordance with the medical evidence and added that death was accidentally sustained during diving operations and consequent upon the use of unsuitable diving equipment.

1963

9 March 1963 – Drunkard's Hole

Source – MCG Log Book No. 1, page 174

After coming out of Rod's we were on our way to Read's, but stopped first at Drunkard's just to look at the entrance. Steve insisted on going down so we reluctantly agreed. Steve led and I went down 2nd with Dick and Bob following. In the entrance chamber I let Dick pass me. Whilst deciding on the best way of getting through the next bit I was continually moaning that I didn't really want to go down. Suddenly a large flat rock about 4 ft. 6 ins. By 2 ft. 6 ins. Started sliding down from the entrance, I leant against it to hold it steady and pushed my head and shoulders through the entrance where Bob was still waiting frozen to death.

Whilst in this position a large flat rock started pushing hard on my back and above it was a great mass of loose earth and boulders. A boulder was pinning my leg and before I could move further I had to push it loose and it crashed down with a loud noise. Steve and Dick were convinced that the entrance really was falling in. Bob held the flat rock above my back and prevented it crushing me still more and with much heaving, struggling and pulling from Bob I eventually passed him in the entrance and got out to fresh air. Without me under the rocks, they finally collapsed and I thought we would have to phone the M. R. O. to get out Steve and Dick. However Bob and I cleared out as many loose rocks as we could and sent down a rope for Dick and Steve to climb up.

The entrance was in a very loose state and we reported this fact to the U.B.S.S. hut suggesting a notice was put up. They appeared not very interested and didn't even offer us a cup of tea. None of us ever intend to go near Drunkard's again.

17 March 1963 – Longwood Swallet

Report 1

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 7 No. 89, page 182 (April 1963) and M.R.O. Incident Report

A pre-Easter gathering of Wessex cavers was rudely interrupted at Hillgrove on Sunday, March 17th, by a summons to Longwood Swallet, where members of the Bristol Technical College were in difficulties. In spite of the rain there were at least four parties in that cave, one from the R.M.A., Sandhurst, one from the M.C.G., and two of five each from the B.T.C. The latter had gone down at 1:45 p.m. after the rest, dressed as one might for a quick Goatchurch. This trip was neither quick nor dry. They went down as far as the Main Chamber but turned back early, as they had all got soaking wet. It was then the trouble started. One of the guests of the R.M.A.S. party, Jack Fell, sprained his ankle and took a very long time to get up the entrance shaft, which by now was taking water from the leaking dam outside.

The result was that the cave was blocked with cavers, nose to toes, all the way to the ten-foot overhangs.

Everyone got cold but not uncomfortably so, and when Miss Muirhead went through the S-bend at about 4:20 p.m. she had no difficulty. By now the water was pouring down the entrance shaft and she was getting drenched.

Here the last of the B.T.C. parties waited a long time, cold and shivering. When the turn of the last three came to climb the entrance shaft there was a lot of water coming down. They were John Veale, Heather Muirhead (on her first caving trip) and Robin Gay, in that order. John climbed about 15 ft. up the ladder and shone his torch down to give light.

At 4:30 p.m. she tried to climb a ladder in the entrance shaft but failed.

After about 10 minutes John got weak as well, so gave them his torch, climbed out and gave the alarm.

At 4:45 p.m. M.R.O., was called out. At 5:15 p.m. she was found by an advance party to be in a state of stupor, unconscious, curled up, groaning. At 5:30 p.m. she was offered some hot soup but was already dead.

When Robin was got out at about 6 p.m. he was as near death as anyone could be.

The fate which overcame this girl was exactly the same as that suffered by John Wallington in Swildon's Hole in January 1959. It is not generally realised how rapidly the condition of shock due to cold and exposure can lead to death. In Wallington's case, it was an hour and a half; with Miss Muirhead it was less than an hour. She had had no difficulty in getting back through the S-bend, but after that she was in a continual stream of water.

These young people were not equipped either physically or by experience for a crisis of this sort, which was not of their own making. They had very bad luck. One does not criticise. One merely states that, when a caver is seen to be suffering from being excessively cold and wet, he should be taken to a dry part of the cave, where there is room for him to be walked up and down. M.R.O. should be alerted as soon as possible, because the other remedies may not be at hand. These are glucose to eat, warm dry clothing, and enough encouragement to revive the inward force.

Protective Clothing

Dressing in nothing much for a quick Goatchurch is very pleasant. It will not do for long or wet caving trips. People like Luke Devenish never feel the cold. He was one of the original Black-Holers in 1949. But Howard Kenney and Willie Stanton gave up exploration of those parts mainly because of the physical exhaustion experienced. After the advent of goon suits things changed. We went back to "Abandon Hope"; the sting was taken out of sumping; Double Trouble and Vicarage Passage gave way to us. Now that goon suits are virtually unobtainable cavers are adopting wet suits made of neoprene foam.

Report 2

Source – MRO Archives

Fatal Accident in Longwood Swallet.

On Sunday March 17th, several parties arrived to go down this cave. They arrived at different times. Mr. Young of Lower Farm Charterhouse checked that they were on the list of clubs permitted to use the caving area as they were on the list provided by myself on behalf of the U.B.S.S. under the temporary agreement. Mr. Young at first refused permission for any of them to go down as he considered the water conditions were too bad. A small reconnaissance party

was eventually allowed down and reported, according to Mr. Young, that the “cave was as dry as they had ever seen it”.

It has not yet been possible to ascertain who these individuals were, but the report must have been incorrect as U.B.S.S. had a party down the cave on Saturday March 16th and the members of that party reported that the water was high in the cave.

On the report of the reconnaissance party Mr. Young permitted the parties to descend. They went down at intervals to avoid long waits at difficult parts. The last party to arrive and go down was the party from the Bristol Technical College.

Here a very understandable confusion arose for this club had no permission to use the caving area but the similar club of the Bristol College of Science and Technology had permission. I myself confused the two, in questioning persons after the accident.

The party from the Bristol Technical went down in two sections to avoid having to wait at difficult places. They went down about 1:55 p.m. and it had been raining hard for some time. They were perhaps unwise to go down.

The parties of the Technical College were to return at different times again to avoid delays. But owing to the conditions underground the parties did not go as far as they had intended and both parties arrived back near the entrance, at the same time. The position was further complicated because a member of one of the other parties had sustained a minor injury, a sprained ankle, and it took some time to get him out. The second party caught them up and so there was a long queue to get up the entrance shaft, and all the time the water conditions were getting worse. All members of parties 1 and 2 got out and dispersed but by the time the tail end of the second party was out not only was water entering the shaft at the usual place but water was actually going down through the top of the entrance shaft.

The leading section of party 3 got out with some difficulty. The rear section of party 3 attempted the shaft. Miss Muirhead was in this party and was already in poor shape from the effects of the long wait and suffering from cold and exposure. She was unable to climb the shaft, which, though not easy is not really difficult but she was inexperienced and the water coming down was too much for her. She went back out of the immediate water flow and a companion stayed with her. She soon became unconscious but exactly when death occurred is not known. One of party 3 alerted the Mendip Rescue Organisation. The first section of rescuers were soon on the spot and started to divert the water from the entrance shaft by repairing the broken dam. By the time I arrived about 35 minutes after receiving the callout the diversion of the stream had been completed sufficiently to let the members of the rear section of party 3 come up and all were soon up save Miss Muirhead and R. Gaye. A rescuer went down to assist at the bottom. Dr. Cannicott arrived, changed quickly and went down. He reported Miss Muirhead as already dead. This was about 5:30 p.m. Mr. R. Gaye was then brought out with some help and the recovery of the body commenced. The body was brought to the surface by about 6:30 p.m.

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 9 No. 95, page 85 (March 1964)

CAVERS DYING OF COLD

by Oliver C. Lloyd Department of Pathology, University of Bristol

There have been two fatal accidents to cavers on Mendip due to cold. It is the purpose of this paper to describe them briefly, to say what is known about the effect of cold on the human body and to outline principles of prevention and treatment.

Case 2.

H.M. was a thin, healthy young woman of 17. On Sunday 17th March 1963, she went down Longwood Swallet with a party from her college. It was her first caving trip. They entered the cave at 1.45 p.m. when it was raining heavily, and by 2.45 p.m. they had all got soaked through and turned back. She was only lightly clad. There was considerable delay at the 10 ft. overhang, because a member of one of the parties in front had sprained his ankle and was slow to get out. Everyone got cold but not uncomfortably so, and when H.M. went through the S-bend at about 4.20 p.m. she had no difficulty. By now the water was pouring down the entrance shaft (which is a narrow 40 ft. high vertical) and she was getting drenched, as there was no shelter. The temperature of the water was not measured, but was probably about 43°F (6°C). At 4.30 p.m. she tried to climb the ladder in the entrance shaft but failed. She was by now frightened. At 4.45 p.m. the Mendip Rescue Organisation was called out. At 5.15 p.m. she was found by an advance party to be in a state of stupor, unconscious, curled up, groaning. At 5.30 p.m. she was offered some hot soup but was not only unable to drink it; she did not even feel it burn her lips. Some was poured into her mouth and entered her larynx. It is evident that she was already dead. Only one hour had elapsed since her condition first gave rise to alarm. Post-mortem examination performed by Dr. D.H. Johnson the next day showed that death was due to acute heart failure, with the great veins distended with blood, dilation of the right auricle and ventricle, and acute gastric erosions.

Source – Western Daily Press – 18 March 1963

GIRL DIES 40 FEET DOWN IN MENDIPS

Seventeen-year-old Heather Muirhead died yesterday after going 250 feet down in a Mendip pot-hole. She was on her way out of the cave when she collapsed at the bottom of a 40 foot vertical rock face. This face is only a few yards from the entrance to the cave, Longwood Swallet, near Charterhouse.

Miss Muirhead, who with students of Bristol College of Technology, was hauled to the top in a sheet, but she was already dead. Another member of the college caving society, 18 year old Robin Gay, of Harmer Close, Henbury, Bristol, was taken to Weston-super-Mare hospital suffering from shock. But he was not detained.

He and Miss Muirhead, who lived in Cranleigh Gardens, Stoke Bishop, Bristol, were among a party of 10 who went down the cave shortly after lunch.

The party split into two groups. One group went to the bottom of the 350 ft. cave. The other section, including Miss Muirhead and Mr. Gay, went down to 250 ft.

This group spent some time sitting in the cave in near zero temperatures waiting for their colleagues to return before they went down to the bottom. When the first party came back the two groups decided to reform and return to the cave entrance together.

Miss Muirhead and Mr. Gay brought up the rear of the line and it was only when their friends reached the top that they realised something was wrong. They alerted the Mendip rescue team

at Wells and diverted a stream which was overflowing into the cave entrance and cascading down the rock face after the heavy rain.

“The water was pouring down near the place where Miss Muirhead and her friend were lying,” said Mr. Luke Devenish, a Mendip rescue team warden. “If it had not been diverted it could have meant death for Mr. Gay, as icy water and exhaustion can easily have fatal effects.” He said Mr. Gay tried to struggle to the top but he had to be helped up with ropes. “He was just about all in,” said Devenish. “Sitting down in those caves can be highly fatiguing.”

Then a caver went down the rock face and wrapped Miss Muirhead in a sheet.

Source – Daily Mirror – 18 March 1963

RESCUER FINDS GIRL DEAD IN A CAVE

A girl student trapped in a pothole with a youth died last night as a doctor crawled to their rescue. She was Heather Muirhead, 18, a twin, of Cranleigh Gardens, Stoke Bishop, Bristol. The youth, Robin Gay, 18, was brought out safely. He was taken to hospital with shock and exhaustion. Heather and Robin, from Bristol Technical College, were exploring underground caves known as Longwood Swallet, at Charterhouse, Somerset.

While they were in the caves heavy rain began. Soon the flood waters were rising inside. The Mendip Cave rescue organisation was called out. Firemen fought the flood waters with pumps. Then rescuers including Dr. Stanley Cannicott, of Wells, went in to search for the missing two. Robin, of Harmer Close, Henbury, Bristol, was found first. When Heather was found she was dead. Last night a police officer said: “We understand she was not injured but was overcome by exhaustion and probably shock.”

12 May 1963 – Longwood Swallet

Source – SSSS Log Book Vol. 13, pages 132 to 135

T. Atkinson, James Ferguson, Tony Watts, Andrew Parfitt, went with Mr. Lindley to August Hole. This was Mr. Lindley’s first big cave, but he was confident in his ability in spite of the fact that he has a bad leg. We went down the cave fairly slowly via Longwood and Christmas Crawl.

We found a larger stream going down Swing Pitch, but hung ladder over the ledge to the right, in a relatively dry area. When we reached the bottom of Fault Chamber Andrew, Tony and I went down stream to inspect right oxbow in search of a point to dig, while Jimmy went with Mr. Lindley to the first two chambers of Upper August Series. We found a fairly promising boulder choke in the oxbow, which we plan to visit in a few weeks. We returned to Fault Chamber quickly, where we met the others. We all ascended that chamber. Just before we climbed Swing Pitch I asked Mr. Lindley how he felt. He replied that he didn’t even feel tired, and this has borne out by the easy way in which he was moving. I climbed Swing Pitch followed by James and Mr. Lindley. When Mr. Lindley reached the top of the pitch he found that he had to step off with his weaker leg. This failed him, and, as I reached a hand to help him, he fell to the bottom of the pitch, about 12ft. He landed a half in the waterfall, but shouted that he was all right and was helped to the dry side of the ledge by Tony and Andrew. I rigged the pitch with a lifeline and Mr. Lindley climbed it without too much trouble, with help on the line. Tony re-ascended and then in order to get Mr. Lindley moving before shock set in, they went on with James while Andrew and I rolled the ladder. Mr. Lindley thrutched slither in Christmas Crawl,

and was moving in a rather uncoordinated way by the time Andrew and I passed them on a way to the surface to get help.

While on the traverse in the Great Chamber, shock effects set in and James had a very dangerous journey helping Mr. Lindley over. Meanwhile, Andrew and I went hell for leather to the surface. On the way, we laid the ladder on the first pitch where we had previously used a rope. On reaching the entrance I ran to the farm where the farmer was very helpful indeed. I rang the school and ask for Alan Redington to be sent up with two others by car. The farmer gave me two and a half bars of chocolate to take back down and said that he would send Alan's party with a thermos of tea as soon as they arrived. Andrew and I re-ascended and met the others at the far end of the Great Rift. Mr. Lindley had been further helped in the Great Chamber by some Kings School, Gloucestershire, chaps who were going down at the time. Mr. Lindley was now looking very tired, but managed the scramble along the Great Rift without very much help. He was clearly revived by the farmer's chocolate. However, on the lower of the 10ft. drops, climbing by the crack route he spent ten minutes, and had to be helped off the crack. From here he climbed First Pitch, on a lifeline from Andrew, and with help from James, who free climbed the pitch alongside Mr. Lindley. From here progress was naturally slow, but Alan, Peter Clarke, and Christopher Mann arrived just at the moment when they were most needed. Mr. Lindley, who is now suffering badly from cramp in his leg was consistently cheerful and did much of the work in the squeezes himself. He was helped from the first pitch to the bottom the entrance shaft by James, Alan and Peter. In the entrance shaft, he was hauled and pushed up by Chris Alan respectively. He was in the shaft for 25 minutes, during which time he was supported, in addition to his own efforts by Alan, on the latter's shoulders.

Meanwhile Peter and Andrew had got out, and Tony and I de-tackled the pitch. There was about one and a quarter hours waiting for those of us not actually engaged in helping Mr. Lindley. As the latter was entering the shaft, a party of twelve of the K.S.S.S. chaps we had met before arrived at the bottom of the first pitch. They had to wait for about half an hour. When Mr. Lindley was out these chaps started to come up, while we hauled tackle and ourselves up the entrance shaft.

Times were as follows –

Down 2:30 p.m.

Mr. Lindley's fall 4:15 p.m.

TA & AP to farm 5:00 p.m.

TA & AP down to cave 5:10 p.m.

TA's & AP's meeting with JJ, TW & Mr. Lindley 5:20 p.m.

Reached 1st pitch 5:35 p.m.

Met Alan 5:35 p.m.

Mr. Lindley out 6:40 p.m.

TA (Last man) out 6:55 p.m.

Our thanks due to Mr. Young, the Farmer Mr. Radley who brought up the rescue party, and all the others who helped us.

8 July 1963 – Wookey Hole Cave

Source – Belfry Bulletin No. 186 August 1963

It was reported to the police that a deaf mute, who had been staying at Cheddar Y.H.A. was missing. He had apparently cycled to Easton, where he had left his cycle at a farm and instructed

the farmer that he would collect it later, then he walked via Wookey Hole to the caves where his entrance was noticed but, when his bicycle was not claimed, nobody remembered him leaving the caves.

The M.R.O. were alerted at 12:15 p.m. via Howard Kenney. He did a search during the lunch hour and located Jack Johnson, Fred Davies and Herby Davies. Later E.M.I. of Wells were called at approx. 1:30 and released L. Strong, Bob Frost and myself to assist if possible. Gordon Selby and Prew were informed, but were on Mendip at Westbury.

When I arrived at the cave, searching was already in progress. Fred, Herby and Bob were sent by Howard to the Western Grottos while Howard, Eric and myself did as intensive a search of the Upper Series maze as possible. At 3:30, Luke appeared and Eric Strong went off to view Badger Hole, Hyena Den and the small rifts whilst Howard and Fred checked again the tourist route from the entrance. All results were negative.

After a while, the remainder of us tried free diving to 4 and Luke entered the water to snorkel around. At 4:30, the police arrived and told us that he had been traced to Birmingham, the bicycle apparently stolen or borrowed.

Mrs. Wingoo arranged sandwiches and cups of tea for us and disappointed reporters drifted off after the inevitable photographs. The cave was cleared of genuine cavers by 4:45. It may be noted that business was as usual during the rescue at 2/6 per head.

Source – Wells Journal – 12 July 1963

CAVES SEARCH FOR “MISSING” DEAF MUTE YOUTH WAS IN BIRMINGHAM

Many of the holiday visitors to Wookey Hole Caves on Monday afternoon were unaware of the extensive search that members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation were carrying out in the hope of finding a deaf and dumb youth. But the search was fruitless for the youth, 19-year-old Alfred Mills, was safe at home in Birmingham. The search began late on Sunday evening after Easton farmer, Mr. Wilf Hilborne, had telephoned the police because a deaf and dumb youth who left a cycle at Bridge Farm, just after 2 p.m., had not returned for it. The youth had written a note, “Wookey Cave, will you look after my bicycle?” This was the only communication they had with him. At 10:15 p.m. the boy’s bicycle and the three out-of-date American detective magazines were still at the farm, and Mr. Hilborne contacted the Wells Police.

Two police Officers, a sergeant and a constable, began making enquiries at Wookey Hole which culminated in a mid-night search of the Caves, with their owner Mrs. Olive Hodgkinson and guide Mr. Albert Plant. On Monday morning, after police had heard that Richard Taylor, one of the Cave Guides, remembered taking a boy answering the description into the caves, but did not remember him coming out, they called in the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation. Ten members of the group began a search, while nine others stood by in case they were needed. The Rescue party started by searching the upper series of the Cave, high over the heads of the visitors. This upper series extends to four different levels with innumerable side passages, which all had to be searched in case the boy had been lying injured. They also searched the small number of passages off the main three chambers.

While the upper series of the cave was being searched other cavers went to the Badger Hole; Hyena Den and Rhinoceros Den, across the River Axe outside the Caves.

When the party had searched all the dry parts of the cave, Rescue Wardens Howard Kenney and Luke Devenish, who were leading the search, decided to dive in the first Chamber (the Witch's Kitchen) in case the youth had got into the water and drowned. Mr. Devenish, who has much experience of cave diving, donned his rubber suit and with snorkel tube searched the river bed, carrying two torches. After his underwater search, Mr. Devenish crossed to the mud bank on the other side of the river and started to look into a further series of passages. It was while he was there, at 4:30 p.m., that Sgt. Morse, of the Wells Police came into the cave to tell the searchers that the youth had turned up at his home in Birmingham. It was afterwards learned that police had traced the youth after enquiring at youth hostels in the area.

A youth answering the description had been at the Cheddar Hostel. The local police checked with Birmingham Police who found the boy at home.

5 October 1963 – Longwood Swallet

An alert was received from Wells Police by J. Hanwell 4:45 p.m. A party of three from Walton and Weybridge Y.H.A. had gone down cave in morning and had not come back. 'Water was pouring down entrance shaft. They were known to be going on into August Hole via Christmas Crawl. They had food and a primus stove. They knew the cave. The weather when they went down was a gentle drizzle. Forecast at 10 p.m. on October 4th was for drizzle only with bright intervals. In fact, it rained very heavily from about noon onwards. Another party who had arrived overnight and had not intended to cave saw what the weather conditions were, went to the cave, found it open and, according to them, went down the cave to try to contact the others. Went as far as Main Chamber in Longwood, did not see the other party came out and changed by about 3:30 p.m. (N.B. They must have got out just in time). At About 4 p.m. Mr. Young informed them of the condition of the entrance. They inspected the entrance and rang Wells Police 4:40 p.m. asking for advice as to what they should be done. J. Hanwell received police message 4:45 p.m. Instructed men at cave to try and build a dam to divert water. Rang. E.K.T. he in turn rang Kenney and Devenish. Then went to U.B.S.S. hut to give a stand to. Then went on to Longwood arriving 5:15 p.m. Kenney went to Hillgrove alerting B.E.C. and S.M.C.C. en route.

E.K.T. inspected entrance. This quite impassable. Great quantities of water going down. Dam leaking like a sieve. Stream over 4 ft. wide and over 2 ft. deep. E.K.T., via a private telephone, asked for all manpower with picks and shovels from U.B.S.S. Police arrived 5:30 p.m. All present started an attempt to divert water. Hanwell arrived very soon afterwards. Large U.B.S.S party arrived 5:45 p.m. and work began on deepening and widening channel on right bank away from cave. At 6:30 Wessex reinforcements arrived. Luke Devenish informed via police radio to come over with gear including exposure suits.

By now rain had eased off and this with work on stream had reduced flow down entrance shaft considerably. By 7 pm. conditions good enough for a descent. Wessex party kitted up and went down. Found party at 10 ft. overhang "sitting it out" and in good shape. Lines rigged. Exposure suits sent down. First man out 7:30, 2nd at 7:45 and third at 8 p.m.

All gear recovered and cave locked up. All away by 8:30 p.m.

Party down cave intended to be down several hours. Had taken food and a primus stove. At Fault Chamber decided to have a brew up. Noticed water conditions were getting bad and decided to come out as fast as possible. Came back via Christmas Crawl to 10 ft. overhang. Found conditions quite impassable by 4 p.m. by their watch. Decided to sit it out away from the water.

Comment. Everyone concerned behaved very sensibly.

Recommendation. When block house built at entrance it should if possible have its walls high enough and solid enough to keep water out of the top of the shaft.

E. K. Tratman

Source – MCG Log Book Volume 1, page 194

Three members of an unknown small works club had been trapped by flood water in August. When we arrived at 6 p.m. they were 1 hour overdue, work was in progress to increase the size of the streambed going past the entrance and stop water flowing down. This was led by Prof. Tratman and U.B.S.S. were doing a fine job.

We laddered the chimney with club ladder (I got soaked doing it) and helped in damming the stream. By the time M. R. O. members dressed in exposure suits arrived all the water flowing over the lid had stopped. (but inside the chimney).

Four people went down and found the victims below the ten foot. Wet, but happy (sic). They were given exposure suits and were brought out, seven hours after entering the cave at 1 p.m. We stayed till 8:30 and retrieved the gear. The 30 foot ladder was found to have two rungs bent near the top. (Bad laddering perhaps – but under very poor conditions).

Comment: In view of the conditions the rescue was well organised by the M. R. O. (Luke Devenish and Prof. Tratman). Everything went well and the 30 or so people, including police, acted the part of rescuers very well, if a little too keenly at first (guilty). Weather has remained bad and the rain has now started again. The cave was under extreme conditions of flood, and I think no blame can be laid at the door of those rescued, who were very well equipped, all in all an unfortunate case with a happy ending.

30 October 1963 – Swildon's Hole

Report 1

The Southampton University Caving Club party of 11 members included Roland Fox, aged 18, who had never caved before.

Breakfast at 8:30 a.m. was not followed by lunch (only two packets of crisps in the case of R.F.) and the cave descent began at 4:30 p.m. On the way to Sump I Fox fell into the Double Pots and got very cold, and on the way back he found himself unable to climb the 20-ft. pot; he felt his arms and legs seize up. Two cavers stayed with him, while the rest went out and alerted M.R.O. at about 8:30 p.m.

The rescue party led by Howard Kenney reached the 20-ft. pot at about 9:20 p.m. and found Fox suffering from cold, collapse and probably shock. They easily fed him large quantities of chocolate and glucose with one tablet of Dexedrine. Exercise and conversation completed the cure, and with the help of two life lines he was made to climb the ladder. To allay his obvious anxiety, they said he would be hauled up the forty, intending to make him climb, if he could.

At the 40 Horlick's pack was opened and both rescuers and rescued found its contents very much to their taste, so that there was a little delay before the subject climbed the pitch, assisted by two life-lines already prepared. The time was about 10:15 p.m. and, between the 40 and the entrance Fox's energy flagged so much, that the last bit was quite a struggle for him. It is evident

that the effects if the Dexedrine had worn off. He surfaced at about 10:45 p.m. and was found by Dr. Cannicott to be in good shape with no sign of shock.

Report 2

By agreement with Luke Devenish, who was in charge of the rescue, I undertook to form an advance party. The nature of the incident was routine in so far as the steps to be taken were clear from previous almost identical incidents. I called on Peter Riches of Chewton Mendip to join me, and together we entered the cave before Devenish arrived. We reached the 20' in a few minutes and found Roland standing at the bottom, looking depressed, shivering violently and complaining he could not use his limbs. He needed no encouragement to eat not having had a meal since breakfast. This was clearly his main trouble. A large quantity of chocolate and glucose soon disappeared, and one tablet of Dexedrine was given. Cheerful, optimistic conversation combined with arm and leg exercises soon had their effect. With help of two who had stayed with him we secured two lines to him, one for lifting and one for life-lining, and made him climb the ladder. We told him we would haul him up the 40', although we intended in fact to make him climb; this relieved his obvious anxiety. At the 40' I gave instructions for two lines to be prepared to use as at the 20'. The main party arrived with the comfort pack and returned to the bend between the two drops, Roland began to eat again from a Horlicks pack. The wrappings were not easy to remove. In between mouthfuls I marched him to the 40' and back for exercise, and as he seemed more interested in eating than going up the 40' we remained there for a little while. He was now obviously at his best, and without complaining he agreed to climb the ladder, which he did very well. Between the 40' and the entrance he flagged very quickly and the last few feet were a big struggle for him. Obviously, the Dexedrine had lost its effect. This raises a vital question to which I should like an answer from the medical wardens. If this rescue had been from say near Sump I, the Dexedrine would have worn off before reaching the 20' and 40'. In these circumstances is one permitted to refuel with glucose, chocolate and Dexedrine or is this medically dangerous and likely to be a case of flogging a dead horse? Or is it correct at this stage to treat the patient as a carrying sheet case?

C.H. Kenny

Statement of the Leader – T.J. Matthews Southampton University Caving Club.

The Party consisted of eleven members all of whom had been up to the Sump in Swildon's Hole except three. R. Fox was one of these and had never caved previously.

They all had a full breakfast at 8:30 a.m. but lunch consisted only of very light snacks, in the case of R. Fox two packets of potato crisps. The Leader entered the cave first to set up the pitch at the 40' and the main party entered the cave at approximately 4:30 p.m.

On the trip down all went well and nobody appeared tired. The only incident being R. Fox falling in the double pots. On the return trip five of the party climbed the 20' and then Fox attempted this. He got almost to the top but then stated his arms and legs would not work and he proceeded down. An attempt was made to pull him up with a rope but this was unsuccessful and he was then left with two members of the party whilst the rest came out and the Leader carried out normal rescue warning. The Leader states that until the incident at the 20' Fox had not seemed in any way distressed.

Statement taken from Roland Fox aged 18.

He stated he had no caving experience but that on the way down he was enjoying himself although he fell into the double pots and felt very cold as a result He did not feel frightened but

on attempting to climb the 20' he suddenly found his arms and legs had seized up and he could make no further attempt. On being given Dexedrine, chocolate and food from the Horlicks Pack he felt very much stronger and with considerable assistance from the Rescue Party found that he could make his way out of the cave.

On reaching the surface he felt very cold and tired but not in other ways distressed. He had no comments to make except that he enjoyed the Horlicks Pack although great difficulty was found in opening it.

I examined him on his return to the surface and found him in good shape with warm hands and feet and in no way suffering from shock.

I have no special comments to make except to point out that two packets of crisps are not adequate for a young man whose energy turn over, would be particularly rapid.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 31 October 1963

RESCUE TEAM BATTLE THROUGH WATERFALLS

Roland Fox went on his first potholing expedition in the Mendip Hills last night – and spent three hours helpless with cramp beneath a waterfall 150 feet below ground. A full turnout of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, from Bristol and Wells, went to Swildon's Hole, near Priddy. Mr. Fox was brought exhausted to the surface after a 75-minute battle through two waterfalls.

Mr. Fox, an 18-year-old botany student at Southampton University, whose home is at Leytonstone, near London, was revived with glucose before he was brought to the surface. He was one of a party of 12 Southampton students who went to Priddy for a day's potholing. They entered Swildon's Hole – one of the deepest and most treacherous of the Mendip caves at 4 p.m. Mr. Fox was seized with cramp two and a half hours later at the bottom of a 20 ft. waterfall.

He said afterwards: "we were making our way back up the caves when it happened, and I couldn't go any further." Two members of the party stayed with him, while the others clambered through narrow passages, and over another 40-foot waterfall, to give the alarm.

Police were told and Mr. Luke Devenish mustered fellow members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation at Wells. Dr. Oliver Lloyd, of Bristol, secretary of the rescue service, was also told. He said: "I was kept informed of the situation, and I got in touch with other members of the service in Bristol in case their help was needed." Dr. S. Cannicott of The Gables, Cheddar, waited at the surface to give treatment to the young potholer. Then at midnight, the party headed back to Southampton.

5 November 1963 – Baker's Pit (Devon)

John Collins of the Devon rescue party telephoned Dr. O. C. Lloyd's home at about 4:30 a.m. for advice and possible help. The latter being, very ill, David Hobbs who was staying in the house, rang Kenney at Wells. They discussed the obvious steps to take, and David Hobbs passed these comments on to Collins and also told him to contact Kenney. A boy aged 15 was trapped by both ankles in a rift down which he had slipped during the previous afternoon, in Bakers Pit, Buckfastleigh, about 500 feet from the entrance. The reason for the call was (a) for ideas, as all methods tried so far had failed, (b) for assistance if the rescue should continue beyond daybreak as the present team would need rest and there were few cavers to call on in Devon.

Kenney rang Devenish to discuss possible techniques and in particular the use of air compressors and drills.

Kenney rang Hanwell (warden) and asked him to alert a party of six experienced cavers – experienced in rescue and resourceful by nature.

Kenney decided to consult Lionel Dingle of South Wales who has expert knowledge on the use of compressors. He advised having a compressor near the entrance (preferably one in good order to avoid fumes) with a one inch diameter hose for 250', reducing to ¾" for the last 250'. Pressure would be reduced over such a distance but would be sufficient for a small rock drill. (A small one would probably be best in a narrow difficult passage). A suitable one would be those used by Gas Boards to check leaks and also used by Water Boards. The make Atlas Cobco was mentioned. Drills used by monumental masons or quarries where dressed stone was produced would be suitable. The use of plug and severs would gradually enlarge a passage. Such a drill could be used where standard models would be unmanageable. Kenney then considered the possibility of foul air. This might be caused by fumes in the compressed air from the compressor, or arise because there were a lot of people in one place for a long time. He alerted Alan Rogers but apparently the foul air kit (air purifying apparatus) was not assembled. Rogers promised to assemble immediately.

No further plans could be made without seeing the actual situation. On ringing Buckfastleigh police station at about 6. a.m., Kenney was told that the boy had been released.

17 November 1963 – Swildon's Hole

I went to Priddy at approximately 4:30 p.m. to meet a party who had been to Swildon's II. They had just come out and told me that the water was rising, and that another party had just started on their way down. This party was only doing an "Upper Series". I went to the cave entrance to see what the water was like and found it to be rising but still eight inches below the grating; it had been raining heavily but was beginning to ease.

I went back to Maine's barn to see if I could find someone who knew how many parties were in the cave. At the barn, I was told that three parties were in the cave. One a party of five from the Wessex Caving Club.

I went back to the entrance again, the water had risen another five inches, the time was now 5:15 p.m. The "Upper Series" party came out, the leader was Richard Kenny. He had in his party a lone caver who he had found in the cave. Richard Kenny said that the drain pipe on the "40 foot" was full and the water beginning to go over the edge. The water was still well below the grating and we did not think it was necessary at this stage to call the M.R.O. but thought it would not do any harm to tell Howard Kenny, we telephoned him and decided I would stay and watch the water.

I returned to Swildon's at 6 p.m., the weather had cleared and the water level was beginning to drop.

Some B.E.C. members came over and brought a girl with them who was able to say that a party of six from a High Wycombe Scout Group were in the Cave, this party included a girl. This meant that with five in the Wessex party eleven people were in the cave. The Scouts were not expected to be out until after 7 p.m.

At 7:30 p.m. the water had dropped considerably at the entrance to the cave.

At 8:30 p.m. there was still no sign of anyone so I went back to Priddy to see if I could organise a search party.

I met the same B.E.C. members that I had seen earlier and they volunteered to help. They went back to the Belfry to get their gear. I telephoned Howard Kenny, who had telephoned the Hunter's and had arranged for Brian Ellis and Steve Wynne-Roberts to bring some more cavers to Priddy.

They arrived at 9 p.m. and a search party of six was sent down, Howard Kenny alerted the police, who provided the usual lighting and radios at the cave entrance. He also asked Dr. Cannicott to stand by, Luke Devenish brought the M.R.O. tackle, but did not stay because he was not feeling well.

The search party soon sent out a messenger to say that all eleven cavers had been found waiting at the bottom of the "40 foot", all were well were now on the way out. The last person left the cave at 11:30 p.m.

1964

4 January 1964 – Swildon's Hole

Four parties in the cave mostly Wessex. Particular party (Wessex) failed to recognise the agreed sign up and removed the ladders. When more than one party uses the same tackle, it is customary for each to tie a piece of string to the 20 ft. ladder and remove it when going out. Last party (= last piece of string) removes the tackle.

When they got to Maine's barn and saw the rucksacks, they realised that the last party was still in the cave. Being exhausted they didn't put back the ladders themselves but alerted the M.R.O. about 9 p.m. Devenish contacted Kenny, who rang the Hunters' and contacted Pointing. The latter sent someone to get ladders and go down the cave but he met Steve Wynne-Roberts on the way, who had climbed the 20 and then the 40, fetched the ladders from Maine's barn, castigated the guilty party, and went back to the cave to do the laddering. He lost his way in the fog, but found the cave eventually. All out without mishap. Steve notes the 40' a difficult climb. He did it facing the wall where the ladder hangs.

This is about the 5th time a party has been stranded in this place in this way. Generally M.R.O. doesn't get called out.

9 February 1964 – Llethrid Cave, South Wales

Source – Belfry Bulletin No. 193 March 1964

When the call out came through to the S.W.C.C. Headquarters at Penwyllt, the position was, fortunately, that the S.W.C.C. member with the local knowledge; the gen on S.W.C.R.O. procedure and luckily, a member with medical knowledge, had just returned from a dig. The W.S.G. party had eaten, packed ready to return to London, and was fresh. Important too was the fact that the entire C.R.O. gear was packed and ready for instant use. Due to all this, medical aid was on the spot with Butler with 70 minutes of the call out despite the fact that Llethrydd is about 30 miles away from Penwyllt.

The conditions in the cave may perhaps be understated as being tortuous and wet. Something like Sidcot, only tighter and longer with more ups and downs and with a healthy stream to

complicate matters. A very sporting cave, but impossible to bring out an injured man on a rigid stretcher though. The stretcher in fact could not be taken straight in places. One was not impressed by the stability in parts.

When we reached the man, he had apparently fallen awkwardly some 6 to 12 feet and had broken his right thigh in two places near the knee. It was also discovered that he had cracked ribs, chipped bones in his neck and was suffering from concussion. Even under Morphine, he was moaning occasionally. A temporary splint was effected, he was moved to a better spot and the splint remade.

At this time, the rescue possibilities seemed to be three fold. A shaft could be considered as close to the antechamber where the accident happened, is Root Chamber where tree roots can be seen in the roof and the walls. The depth of the roof below the surface at this point was then thought to be about thirty feet. Improvements to the original route was a second possibility. Although this was eventually done, there was more than a slight risk that the route might be blocked entirely if 'bang' was used and at least half the 300 to 500 feet of passage involved needed drastic improvement. The third possibility was to make a New Entrance by digging a subsidiary dry swallet a little further upstream. It was expected that this would short cut the tightest parts.

The decision reached on the spot was to concentrate on the shaft, with spare labour employed on improvement work, however the progress of events rather changed ideas. Meanwhile further supplies were brought in, the telephone set up, and non-essential bods cleared from the cave. This was about 11 or 12 o'clock. The depth of the cave at Root Chamber was measured using an electronic method and was found to be a hundred feet. This was letter checked and verified.

Around 2 a.m., the miners arrived with a compressor and started work on improvements. By all reports, the N.C.B. and the mine rescue men were surprisingly at home even in the severe conditions encountered. There were some delays, naturally, of the sort that are bound to arise in any such operation. The only valid criticism of the miners was perhaps of over caution, but this was a fault on the right side. The comments that were heard on the air and read in the press were mostly kept for the surface. It was noticeable that those who did the most work underground were not the most anxious to be on T.V.

At about 3 p.m. Monday, the work was practically finished and the first stretcher party (consisting of cavers) went down while the finishing touches were put to the passage. Working in relays, with fresh bearers, Butler was brought, still under Morphine, in the remarkably short time of about two hours.

During the time that Butler was having medical attention, his condition deteriorated up to the time that it was decided to give a blood plasma transfusion. It is very likely that this tricky task has never been attempted under such difficult and dirty conditions, and is a great credit to the medics. It was most unexpected to come across a caver with his sleeves rolled up to the elbows and his arms scrubbed. When Butler finally reached the hospital, his condition was said to be generally good.

The credit to this operation must go to the S.W.C.R.O., to the miners, the men of Thysons Ltd., the police, the W.V.S., the farmer and many others.

7 June 1964 – Swildon's Hole

Report 1

A party led by members of the Oxford University Cave Club included a pre-student of 18, Bruce Wilkins, who had a fall of about 10 ft. just beyond Barnes' Loop and sustained head injuries with fractured skull, which rendered him unconscious. Howard Kenney was alerted at 2:45 a.m. and at 3:45 a.m. entered the cave with Dr. Don Thomson and Peter Riches, reaching the subject in about 20 minutes. They sent out of the cave the party that was with him, dressed him in an exposure suit (neck entry type), tied him in a carrying sheet and began moving him at about 4:45 a.m. Progress was continuous but perhaps a little slow, which can be attributed partly to the lack of experience of the carrying party, partly to the nature of the subject's injury and (above the 40 ft. pot) partly to the presence of too many willing hands and the fact that the subject began to come round and make unhelpful movements. The system on the 40-ft. pot worked well but there was a short delay owing to lack of telephone communication. The cave entrance was reached at 9:10 a.m. The subject was accompanied to the Bristol Royal Infirmary by Dr. Lloyd which was reached at 9:55 a.m.

Report 2

Source – Belfry Bulletin No. 196 June 1964

Two club members; out for a walk late at night, brought the news back to the Belfry that there had been an accident in Swildon's and got everybody up at 3 a.m. on Sunday morning 7th June. By 3.15 the first party of five, including a doctor, entered the cave. They found the patient twenty of thirty feet downstream of the end of Barnes' Loop. About fifteen minutes later he was moved to a convenient ledge and put in a goon suit which was then blown up to keep him as warm as possible. The first report to reach the surface on the condition of the patient stated that he had a suspected fracture of the skull and his pulse was weak. The second party entered the cave at about 4 o'clock with the carrying sheet and ropes and reached the spot as soon as possible. While this party and the first began the task of moving the patient upstream, a third party put a heavy hauling rope of the Twenty Foot Pitch and arranged a pulley at the top of Suicide's Leap with another hauling rope.

The patient was semi-conscious and was successfully moved up to the twenty, where the carrying sheet had to be readjusted. He was then hauled up both pitches with comparative ease. A new party had meanwhile assembled in the Old Grotto, where a rescue kitchen with hot soup and Horlicks tablets were also set up. The patient was taken from the Old Grotto up the Short Dry Way to the top of Jacob's Ladder and then by way of Kenny's Dig to the Wet Way. At this stage, he regained consciousness temporarily, but was delirious and confused. From the top of the Forty, the time taken to reach the entrance was two hours, and the party finally emerged at approximately 9:15 a.m.

Source – Maurice Hewins Log Book 1964, page 5

Not long after we had gone to sleep, that evening, we were rudely awakened by Devenish with news of a rescue in Swildon's. The contents of the Hillgrove therefore removed themselves to Main's barn. When we arrived at about 3:30 a.m. we found that many had arrived before us. Tratman was warden in charge and a party with a doctor (Don Thompson) was below. News came out shortly that the victim from Birmingham University had a suspected skull fracture. Two more teams of five went below to rig the 40 and then another party. Tratman then told us to stand by, and we got into our kit. At this point the rescue seemed less heroic and a lot more frightening. The policeman at the entrance radioed for another party and we went off. I had lent my Nife set to a member of the earlier party and had to borrow one from Luke.

We went down the wet way and on arrival at the Water Rift, found many bods still above the 40 foot. Here my borrowed lamp began to fade. I tried to start my carbide and lost the jet. What a time to have lamp trouble. Several of us sat and waited, there was little else to do. The party rigging the 40 sent a bod out for another rope and he took my lamp to get it repaired. Another long wait and then the bods in the rift said go out and get five fresh bods in the Old Grotto. The victim was at the foot of the 40. Another bod and I went out with the message and five bods, including George and Dave went down. I collected my lamp and was going back, when Luke said to take down the field kitchen. This I and another chap did and we had three tins of soup hot in the Old Grotto just before the large party came up, bringing the victim.

We wondered what shape he was in but he looked fairly well and unconscious. He had been bleeding from both ears. No one was interested in soup and Howard Kenny, who was in charge, got all the available men to form a chain. We then passed the carrying sheet along the line. Sometimes this required lying on the floor of the rift and having the victim pulled over us. The line was then moved forward and the procedure repeated. Great care was needed to prevent banging his head.

All went well until the top of Jacob's Ladder, when the poor patient regained semi-consciousness and started yelling "please get me out" "get me out of this train" and other half meaningless things. I, Pete Riches and several others, went round the Zig-Zags to get in front of the party going through Kenny's Dig. I surfaced to give Luke a progress report – the people on the surface were worried that the rescue was going so slowly – and then I went back to help him out through the last part. We finally got him out about 9 a.m. and he was soon off to hospital.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 8 June 1964

CAVER, 18, BREAKS SKULL – STORM TRAPS PARTY IN MENDIPS

A vicar's son, knocked out when he fell 10 feet while deep in a Mendip cave, was still unconscious in Frenchay hospital today after an operation. Soon after the accident yesterday, a fierce thunderstorm sent the water level up in Swildon's Hole, near Priddy, trapping a party of Wolverhampton potholers. It took six hours to get 18-year-old Bruce Wilkins, of St. Bartholomew's Vicarage, Birmingham, to the surface. He fell when 300 feet below the surface and was taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary with a fractured skull, and was transferred to Frenchay. His condition this afternoon was "comfortable." Fifty members of the Mendip Cave Rescue organisation were called to the rescue. Bruce was a member of a party of cavers led by Mr. David Robertson, of Magdalen College, Oxford. Mr. Howard Kenney, the well-known Mendip caver, said: "We carried him out all the way. He was a stretcher case." Bruce's father, the Rev. R. J. Wilkins, arrived in Bristol yesterday. The Wolverhampton cavers who were trapped got out quickly as flood water receded helped by pumps from a Bristol Waterworks borehole nearby.

Source – Birmingham Post – 8 June 1964

SIX HOUR RESCUE FROM CAVE

Fifty members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation took part in the six hour rescue of an unconscious Birmingham youth yesterday.

Mr. Bruce Wilkins, of St. Bartholomew's Vicarage, Frankley Beeches Road, Northfield was knocked unconscious when he fell about 10 feet at a point 300 feet below the surface, and a quarter of a mile from the entrance to Swildon's Cave, Priddy, near Wells.

Mr. Wilkins was a member of a party of cavers led by Mr. David Robertson, of Magdalen College, Oxford, but it was not a university expedition.

He was taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary suffering from a fractured skull. He was unconscious throughout the rescue.

Mr. Howard Kenny, of the rescue organisation said : "We treated him as a normal stretcher case and carried him out all the way. A doctor went in with the first party and was on hand all the time."

Mr. Kenny said that the rescue was routine. Rescuers went into the cave at 2:45 a.m., and brought the youth out to an awaiting ambulance at 9 a.m.

7 June 1964 – Swildon's Hole

Later the same day, as a result of heavy rain, anxiety was felt about the plight of certain parties in the cave one from Wolverhampton. Other parties down the cave (e.g. M.N.R.C.) were able to look after themselves. At about 5:30 p.m. M.R.O. was called out, but the Warden in charge did not have to take action, as the situation was already being controlled by cavers on the spot. On occasions like this it may only be necessary for the Warden to find out what is already being done.

3 August 1964 – Swildon's Hole

Source – Belfry Bulletin No. 200 October 1964

On the 3rd August, another incident occurred in Swildon's whereby a party was trapped because of the absence of ladders. Fortunately, the rescue was only a case of Noel McSharry and Alan Thomas taking ladders to the top of the pitch.

Source – Richard Witcombe's transcriptions of his early Caving Log Books, page 13

A long and wearying trip to Swildon's Four but well worth the effort - the finest streamway on Mendip.

Upstream wading in roomy tunnels for 400' until one reaches the wide and deep Sump 3. Downstream in lofty rifts, following the cascading stream into deep pots with weird rock forms - erosive sculpture. The end is abrupt, just beyond Cowsh Aven. Blackened bones are scattered on sand banks, and carbide opposite Blue Pencil Passage, alas.

Three Gloucester Speleos who were attempting the Sump 1 round trip had arranged to use our tackle while we were in the cave. They expected to be underground four hours. We met them in Paradise Regained and when we emerged from the cave hours later, we presumed that they had come out before us. We had detackled the pitches. Back at Maine's Barn, we noticed their Land-Rover with clothes in the back - "They're probably partly changed and having a drink." We changed, time passed and no Gloucester Speleos returned. Indecision. "Oh well! There's nothing for it - back to Swildon's". Mr. Maine looked on. Nothing new for him.

There was no response to shouting at the 20' Pot and we retreated, having seen rather too much of the cave for one day. The Wessex by this time were wondering what had happened to their tackle. We met a contingent coming across the fields, and our story told, Keith and I were rushed to Hunters for a consultation with George Pointing - mildly drunk.

Returning to Priddy, we watched the stalwarts set off for the cave bent on rescue. The MRO were placed on "stand by."

Mr. Maine very kindly invited us into the farmhouse for a cup of tea while we waited for news. The end was undramatic. Our Gloucester Speleos in due course returned from Swildon's, escorted by their would-be rescuers. They had failed to complete their round trip and spent eleven hours underground. One should not underestimate Mendip caves.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 8 (1962 to 1965), page 96

At the Hunters' in the evening word came that three Gloucester Speleos were stuck down Swildon's without tackle. M.R.O. were put on stand by as they were possibly injured or lost. Alan Thomas, Noel McSharry, Tim Phillips and Tim Atkinson went down to find them at the foot of the 40. One was very tired and had to be talked out, otherwise all was well.

21 October 1964 – Eastwater Cavern

Bristol C.A.T. Cavers

On the evening of 21st October at approx. 9:20 p.m. we had cause to ask for the assistance of the MR.O. About one hour later we found we no longer required this assistance and we informed the Wells Police to this effect. We deeply regret any inconvenience caused to your organisation and we feel you are entitled to an explanation.

After returning from a fairly extensive trip in Eastwater Cavern, one of our party tried to enter the traverse by the wrong squeeze, being large in build and having entered feet first he very quickly became firmly trapped. We tried for some 30 minutes to free him before Mr. Christopher accompanied by one other member of our party of six went to the surface and called your organisation.

Meanwhile, Mr. Pritchard assisted by the remaining 3 members of the party with the use of a rope managed after about 40 minutes to free the trapped man.

Mr. Christopher on returning discovered he had been freed and returned again to the surface to inform your organisation of this. The man was brought out and taken to the Wessex Eastwater Hut by three members of that Club who had arrived at the cave entrance by that time. From here he was taken back to Bristol none the worse for his experience.

1965

21 February 1965 – Sidcot Swallet

Alert by Weston-super-Mare Police at 1:45 a.m. A party had entered the cave at 7:30 p.m. on 20 February 1965 and a chap had got stuck in the squeeze below the Water Chamber. On becoming hysterical and uncooperative one of his mates had gone to the Mendip Gate Cafe. He

had not read the notice properly, and instead of ringing the Wells Police dialled 999 and so got through to Weston. The latter did not contact Wells, as they should have done.

Mr. Kenney rang Dr. Tratman, who reported that there were no U.B.S.S. members up at the hut, and then began to rustle up a party, but before they turned out the Weston Police rang again to say that the news that a rescue party had been alerted was sufficient to encourage the subject to extricate himself. The stand down was given in time. Mr. Kenney pointed out to Inspector Buttle of Wells that the Weston Police appeared not to know the procedure, and he undertook to ring the Divisional Superintendent at Weston to sort things out.

7 June 1965 – Sidcot Swallet

Call out at 6:45 p.m. via Dr. Tratman. Dr. Crook called for volunteers at the Belfry, Wessex and Shepton Huts. A man of 18 called Alan Munn of 123 Rodburn Road, Manor Farm, Westbury-on-Trym, a twelve-stone six-footer, had managed to get through the squeeze into the final chamber and was unable to get out again. He was accompanied by a “ferret”.

Mr. P. Bird and Mr. B. Keevil arrived at the cave at 8 p.m. and soon after went down. They told the “ferret” of the alternative route back to the Water Chamber, created a few years ago by the removal of a boulder. This route is tight but vertical. Food and Benezdrine were passed down to the subject. He was then led to the new vertical and extracted as follows. He climbed on to the back of his companion, raised both arms and was pulled out by these, while relaxing his body to take less room. He hurt an old knee injury in the process, but the rescuers did not relent enough to allow the rescue to fail. It is fortunate that Mr. Bird had tried this route himself, as he is of the same build as the subject.

7 July 1965 – Carlswark Cavern, Derbyshire

At 1:45 a.m. Dr. Lloyd was stood by from Wells at the request of the Matlock Police, with a request to stand-by two cave divers. A boy soldier had dived a 90-foot sump and had not returned. Dr. Lloyd stood by Messrs. Wooding and Drew and Dr. Rogers. At 4:45 a.m. they were stood down. Much correspondence, followed.

Mr. J. K. Needham, Hon. Sec. of the Derbyshire C.R.O. wrote to me explaining the circumstances. This boy soldier, acting under orders, was on an initiative test to get from one entrance of the cave to the other. His party was ill equipped and was carrying candles. When he came to the sump he missed the obvious way out and being an exceptional swimmer plunged in and kept on until he surfaced in a small chamber.

Mr. K. Pearce was asked to do an underwater search for him, but was unsuccessful. Eventually the sump was pumped dry and rescue was effected. Mr. Needham had written to the lad's commanding officer complaining, but wished to take the matter to the highest level and asked for my support.

I knew no top brass, but did happen to know the Admiral of the Home Fleet, Sir John Frewen. So, I wrote to him explaining the circumstances. The training system was at fault. I wanted to suggest to the highest authority in the Army that caves should be excluded from initiative tests. This was not the first time such tests had given rise to alarm. The Army (same as the other services) had a number of reputable caving clubs, where such activities were done under proper supervision, which is as it should be. Members of such clubs were concerned that their good name might be dimmed by such incidents. The feeling in cave rescue circles was even stronger.

Sir John replied that it was quite right to feed such proposals into the machine at the top. If that didn't work, nothing would. He happened to know the Adjutant General, General Hewetson, who was responsible for Army training and welfare and he sent him a copy of my letter. On October 1st General Hewetson replied that he had acted. He had sent out a circular to all units to say that pot holing should be looked upon as an interesting and exciting hobby and that it was wrong to regard it as a form of initiative test. It was essential that pot holing expeditions should be carefully planned and supervised. An expedition should never be used in order to discover or test leadership potential.

This is a satisfactory outcome, since it is clear that the Adjutant General took the point perfectly and his word is law.

19 July 1965 – Swildon's Hole

At 1 a.m. the Wells Police alerted Mr. Kenney to say that Mr. P. Allen had rung to report that a party of four cavers, visiting Swildon's 6, last seen at 6 p.m., were overdue. The four were Messrs. R. G. Lewis, C. Coy, E. Glossop and K. Malone. Larger parties had started during Sunday to try to do the long round trip via 6 and Shatter Passage, but as a result of a combination of many minor accidents, mainly to lighting equipment, four of them eventually found themselves, tired after the bad air of the two bailed sumps, and with one light between them in Shatter Chamber. Here three of them awaited rescue, while Mr. Lewis took the light from Mr. Coy and pressed on to Shatter Pot.

At 2:30 a.m. three search parties entered the cave taking the following routes: –

1. Paradise Regained, Blue Pencil, 4, 5, 6 and up N.E. Tributary to the 1st and 2nd sumps, then returning to the head of Blue Pencil to meet the other search parties.
2. Swildon's 1 and 2 to Sump 2, Vicarage Passage, Double Trouble to rendezvous at top of Blue Pencil.
3. Shatter Passage and down to 2nd sump, searching side passages, return and make way to top of Blue Pencil.

The recorder at the entrance recorded the names of the 16 cavers who took part, on entry and exit. A telephone party was sent down at 3:40 a.m. to lay a line from the entrance to the 40'. Surface equipment was supplied by the police. Fountain Cottage was lent to us by the Sandhurst cadets. A support party was arranged to go down the cave at 5:30 a.m., establish a kitchen in Trat's Temple, and await call for aid from the first parties.

Search party No. 3, led by Dr. W.I. Stanton, met Mr. Lewis at Shatter Pot. He surfaced at 4:20 a.m. His three companions were found in Shatter Chamber and reached the surface at 6:30 a.m.

A party was sent down to the rendezvous to call away the remaining rescuers, the last of whom surfaced at 7:50 a.m.

The organisation went very smoothly and worked well. Messrs. Devenish and Kenney were jointly in charge on the surface, as it is found better to have two Wardens doing this than one.

Source – Wells Journal – 23 July 1965

CAVERS ARE STRANDED AS LIGHTS FAIL – SWILDON'S HOLE RESCUE

Forty members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation were involved for five hours on Monday in the search and rescue of four cavers in Swildon's Hole at Priddy. The four, members of the Severn Valley Caving Club, got into difficulties deep in the cave when the lights of three of the party failed. Shortly after midnight on Sunday parents of the cavers in Bristol and Weston-super-Mare contacted the police after their sons had not returned. Half an hour later the police at Wells were informed from another source that the party were several hours overdue. When the Rescue Organisation were called out they learned that the four had set out to do a "round trip" of the cave by going through a recently discovered section (Causer's Calamity to Swildon's 6).

The rescue effort was channelled into three search parties who were to search the three possible routes the party might have taken. One of the search parties on the way down met one of the party, in a part of the cave known as Shatter Passage He was on his way out. He told rescuers that he had taken the only light that was working, an electric one and was coming on out to get help, leaving the, others in darkness. When their lights had failed they had waited several hours for help and then wondered if it would come so they decided that one of the party should try to get out, he told them.

He was escorted out of the cave while the rest, of the search party went on find the three other members, very cold, tired and hungry. They were still able to move about and after having food from emergency rations were escorted to the surface, arriving about 6.30 a.m.

Meanwhile the other two search parties, unaware that rescue had been affected, continued on into the cave until they could be contacted. The last arrived at the surface at 7.50 a.m. The Mendip Rescue Organisation said this week they greatly appreciated the help given to them by the police who set up a walkie-talkie connection between the cave entrance and Priddy Green. Rescue members also laid a telephone cable from the entrance to the head of the 40-foot pot. It is understood that the route the party took lay through the Paradise Series and Blue Pencil Passage to Sump Four. They free-dived sumps four and five and came up the newly-found connection to Causer's Calamity where they struck trouble. One of the Rescue Wardens involved in the week-end search said they would emphasise strongly the necessity of caving parties undertaking long trips to carry spare lights. "Such a precaution would have made this rescue unnecessary," he said.

Source - Willie Stanton's Log Book Vol.11, page 66

At 1:30 a.m. I was rudely awakened by Howard on the phone announcing the need for a rescue in Swildon's, and following his instructions I pelted up to Priddy Green killing a fox on the way. On the Green, I joined about eight other cavers from various clubs changing. The trouble was four S.V.C.C. lads overdue from a Damp Link round trip (whence I had predicted trouble as soon as it was opened!). Their whereabouts being unknown Luke and Howard divided us into three groups: Tim Atkinson and Gareth? to SW.6 and Damp 1, Paul Allen and two others via Sump 1 and Troubles to Blue Pencil, and me and Julian ? and Mike ? (staying at Sandhurst Cottage) to Causer's Calamity and thence to Blue Pencil.

We entered the cave at 2:15 a.m. and made uneventful progress to Shatter Pot, following the other two groups. Here we heard a distant shout and saw a feeble light at the bottom. It turned out to be Bob Lewis, one of the "lost", who told us the other three were Ok but waiting in the dark at the near end of Causer's, all their lights having failed (two carbide, one torch). Bob seemed tired but otherwise fit, and I first told Julian to race to Blue Pencil to inform Tim, but he returned in a few minutes having become lost. So, I sent him with Bob to the surface.

Mike and I went on through Shatter, having some nasty moments in the first dip where there was 5” air space, and in the crystal pool squeeze which had flooded badly and only about 3” air. I was shaken to find that Mike had only been caving since this weekend – he did magnificently considering this (always calling me “Sir”!).

We found the lost ones as expected, and after some hard words provided them with lamps and emergency food. They were cold and tired but otherwise fit. We returned to Shatter Pot only delayed when one of them found he had dropped his valuable spectacles and wanted to go back to look for them. I stopped this plan, but went back and scabbled unsuccessfully in the first duck while they were negotiating the squeeze. I sent Mike with them to the surface, and traversed the nice commodious ways to Blue Pencil where I found Paul and Co. very cold. Paul + 1 went out, and I waited + 1 in cold conditions, rather anxious for Tim, until we gratefully heard him returning. He reported very bad air in Damp Link.

An uneventful return to the Forty, where two bods with a telephone announced our presence to the Controllers on the surface. Struggle with ladders up the Wet Way and so out. Good to see daylight and morning dew, Luke and police with walkie-talkies, and to drink hot tea at Fountain Cottage. All’s well that end well, except for loss of sleep and one Mendip fox, but I fear it will be a reoccurring and perhaps more serious event.

Source – Paul Allen’s Log Book Vol.3, pages 57 to 61

Back to the hut at 5 p.m. to get some ladder for the mineshaft at Charterhouse. Unfortunately, the ladder was still in Swildon’s (Shatter Pot round trip) and so we waited for the return of the last party, and waited, and waited, and waited ... John Wintle arrived about 7 p.m. after looking at mines and caves around Dulcote Quarry. We adjourned to the Victoria for a drink. We waited until 8 p.m. for the party and then decided to look for them. Entered the cave at 9 p.m., having told Ken Higgs and Pat Horton that they might be needed. We found all the ladders in place, and no signs of anybody in Swildon’s I (as far as Tratman’s Temple) or Paradise Regained (as far as Shatter Pot). At Shatter Pot Mike and myself descended and searched as far as the end of Causer’s Calamity. The sump here appeared quite clear, and had obviously not been baled. We got no replies to our frequent shouts. We returned to John at the head of Shatter Pot and journeyed out. Reached the surface at about midnight and called out the M.R.O. At the same time, I alerted the Sandhurst blokes, who provided us with tea. The Wessex contingent from Hillgrove arrived first, Tim Atkinson and friend, Mark Cadman and friend. Luke Devenish arrived soon afterwards with the “wagon” and we borrowed some goon suits.

After deliberation, we decided which parts of the cave should be searched, and descended about 1 a.m.

Parties were as follows –

1. Mark Cadman and friend, leader myself, to search Swildon’s 2 and Double Trouble, then to rendezvous with party 2 and 3 at the head of Blue Pencil Passage.
2. 3 anonymous led by Willie Stanton to search Shatter Series, then to meet parties 2 and 3 at head of Blue Pencil Passage.
3. Tim Atkinson and another to search Swildon’s V & IV as far as the second static sump in the connection between VI and Shatter Series. Rendezvous with either of other parties at the head of Blue Pencil Passage.

So, we set off. Our journey was relatively easy, save for there being no air space in the first trouble, and we soon ensconced at the head of Blue Pencil Passage. We waited only a short while before Willie Stanton appeared from Shatter Pot with news that the party were found. We began the long drag out, Willie and Mark waiting at our rendezvous for Tim Atkinson and friend, who were still in Six, and surfaced at about 6:30 a.m. Everyone out by 7:30 a.m.

It would appear that the party had a great deal of light trouble, in part due to negligence. The first static sump was taking a lot of water and was another reason for their unfortunate position. Once through the second sump they journeyed to Shatter Chamber where they huddled together for warmth. It is probable that we only just missed them on our first trip down.

My opinion is that this rescue would never have arisen had adequate spares been carried for the carbide lamps, also had the decision to turn back been taken at the first static sump. To clarify the position as regards the number of parties. There were three separate parties in the cave, all with different intentions. Party 1 was comprised of Dave Milford and Pat Horton – they went to Swildon's IV via Paradise regained, searched the roof, and reached the surface by about 5:30 p.m. They had seen party 2 at Sump IV, and party 3 in the streamway. Party 2 was comprised of Bob Lewis, Kevin Malone, Graham Horne and Keith Glossop. Graham returned to the surface in Swildon's I with another party, due to faulty lighting. They saw party 1 at Sump 4, and party 3 at the first static sump. Party 3 was comprised of Chris Coy, Ken Higgs and Mike Tait. They free dived Sump 2 and the journeyed to VI via the Troubles. In VI Chris joined party 2 on the round trip, and Ken and Mike returned to the surface after looking at Enema Passage. They helped to get party 2 lights going again before returning. It appears that party 3 had, originally, two prickers between them, but only one when they contacted party 2 in Swildon's VI. The other was lent to party 1 in Swildon's IV. Kevin's carbide had a leak from the water chamber, and Keith's was suffering from a blocked water supply. All in all a great bungle, and one that will take a great deal of sorting out.

Source – SVCC Journal Volume 4, page 7

On the morning of 18 July three parties of club members descended Swildon's Hole. Two of these parties reached the surface later in the day, whilst the third was overdue. An unsuccessful search was carried out. It is in order to clarify the course of events before and after the call out that this report has been written. The three parties which entered the cave were:

1. Bob Lewis, Keith Glossop, Graham Horne and Kerrin Malone.
2. Mike Tait, Ken Biggs and Chris Coy.
3. Dave Milford and Pat Horton.

Party 1 intended to do the round trip between Swildon's VI and Shatter Pot, Party 2 had gone to free dive sumps 1 and 2, and Party 3 had gone on a working trip to the IV streamway.

Party 1 were first to arrive at Sump 4, and they were seen by Party 3 just before they dived into Swildon's V. Graham Horne was not with them, for he had experienced light trouble in the I streamway and had returned to the surface with another party. Meanwhile Party 2 had free dived Sump 2 and was journeying to Swildon's IV via Double Trouble. They were seen in IV by Party 3, who borrowed one of their carbide lamp prickers. They then passed through into VI where they found Party 1 – bailing the first mud sump in the North East Inlet.

Apparently both Glossop and Kerrin Malone had been unable to relight their lamps after diving Sump 4, and it was not until the arrival of Party 2 that the lamps began to function again. At this juncture Chris Coy decided to join Party 1 on the round trip, leaving Party 2 to look at Enema Passage near sump 6. This done party 2 departed for the surface via Double Trouble. Party 3 had already started for the surface via Paradise Regained.

Party 3 were first to surface at approximately 6 p.m. and Party 2 arrived at the barn at 7 p.m. They reported that Party 1 was having some difficulty in bailing the first mud sump due to greater than usual amount of water.

From 5 p.m. onwards Mike Hennessey and myself had been waiting on the surface for the last party out of the cave to use their ladders elsewhere. We were joined at 7:30 p.m. by John Wintle. At 8 p.m. the party has still not appeared and so we decided to search for them, leaving word of our action with Ken Biggs and Pat Horton. We entered the cave at 9 p.m.

We searched down the streamway as far as Tratman's Temple and then continued to Shatter Pot whilst Mike and myself continued to the original dig after the Ten Foot Overhang. The water in this passage was crystal clear (an indication that no one had passed that way recently), and Mike continued alone to a point near the junction with Causer's Calamity. Our frequent shouts gained no reply (although John claimed to have heard us at the top of Shatter Pot) and all the water which Mike saw was very clear. We returned to the surface at midnight and called out Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation. At the same time John alerted all the people present in the Wessex, B.E.C. and Shepton huts, whilst Mike and myself enlisted the help of some cavers staying in Fountain Cottage.

When the M.R.O. was assembled and had taken stock of the situation three search parties were sent into the cave:

1. Tim Atkinson and ? (W.C.C.) – to search VI and bale the first mud sump in North East Swallet.
2. Willie Stanton and a group of Sandhurst cavers to search Shatter Series.
3. Myself, Mark Cadman and ? (W.C.C.) to search through Double trouble Series from Swildon's II.

Rendezvous point for all three parties was to be at the head of Blue Pencil Passage. A telephone was laid between the surface and the upstream end of the Water Rift.

When we arrived at the head of Blue Pencil Passage we had barely enough time to argue over who was going to eat the rum fudge from the Horlicks underground food packs before Willie Stanton arrived to tell us that the party had been found in Shatter Passage. Willie and Mark Cadman stayed at the top of Blue Pencil to await the arrival of Tim Atkinson party from VI whilst we journeyed out of the cave, meeting the tail end of the Shatter Pot search party and Keith Glossop at the bottom of the Forty Foot Pot. We reached the surface at 6 a.m. to be greeted by John Wintle (with tea) and Brian Roach.

Paul Allen

The recent unfortunate happening in Swildon's brings home to all cavers that "It could have been me." The majority of experienced men usually carry spare lighting but on occasion have been inclined to omit this very important factor. However I feel that the persons concerned were very sensible in staying where they were and waiting for help, the one fly in the ointment being

the person who came out alone using the only light still working, (what would have happened if that light had failed during some awkward climb?) The blessing is that nothing did happen and all I can say is : well done! (for completing the round trip).

One other thing is brought to mind, a certain member did not inform anyone that he was going to Swildon's and when he didn't arrive home by 11:30 p.m., we didn't really know where to start looking for him but when we heard of the Swildon's rescue we considered that he would be helping.

Brian Roach

Source – WCC Jnl. 103 October 1965, page 273

A little after midnight on the 19th July 1965 anxious parents at Weston and Bristol reported their sons missing and soon after a caver at Priddy reported a party of four overdue in Swildon's. And so the wheels of the Mendip Rescue Organisation sprang into action. It is a comforting thought for all cavers that the M.R.O. is ever striving to increase its efficiency and this enthusiasm for its task is due in no small measure to the driving force of its Secretary - Dr. Oliver Lloyd. The lessons of the major rescue in Swildon's the previous year had been learned; no longer were cavers allowed to enter the cave unchecked and communication between the cave and surface was much improved. The lost party of four had entered the cave about midday intending to make the round trip Swildon's 4, 5, 6, North-east tributary, Causer's Calamity and Shatter Passage. Their lights consisted of 2 hand torches, 2 acetylene lamps and one Nife-cell. The two acetylene lamps could not be re-lit after Sump 4, one hand torch was lost in the first "damp" and the other gave out. The party were then left with one Nife-cell (which itself was failing) in a part of the cave with which they were not familiar. The route in the region of Shatter Chamber is not easy to find and it would seem desirable to acquaint oneself with this part of the cave before attempting a round trip. This route should not in any case be lightly undertaken. Its major hazards are bad air and the sumps which have to be bailed. There is a real risk of parties being trapped between the sumps by water rising faster than is expected.

It is clear that a major trip of this kind should not be undertaken without adequate reserves of lighting. Even on the simplest trip it is desirable for each caver to have a second source of light. To fix an emergency electric light on one's helmet need not be bulky or costly and can prevent a trip being spoilt by a failing light. Users of acetylene lamps should learn the technique of re-lighting their lamps after a Sump if they are to rely on them as their main illumination. It is only too easy to criticise those who caused the rescue, and often the criticism comes from those who have themselves cause to blush when thinking of their past exploits but at least let us all learn from the incident - and check the adequacy of our lights.

Source – WCC Jnl. 103 October 1965, pages 317 to 318

Dear Sir,

I have read with great interest Mr. Kenney's article in the current Wessex Cave Club Journal on the recent rescue in Swildon's Hole. On the first of these two occurrences, the cavers lighting equipment is reported as having consisted of 2 hand torches, 2 Acetylene lamps and 1 Nife cell. It is many years since I personally have done any active caving and since then cavers' equipment and the extent of Swildon's Hole has increased beyond the wildest imaginations of we old men; but had the modern cave explorer never heard of a candle?

In my active days this simple piece of equipment was a sine qua non - indeed when I first explored caves it was the only source of light available to us. With the advent of acetylene

headlamps a great stride forward was made; but those who were fortunate enough to acquire one always carried a few candle stumps and a box of waterproof matches in case of emergency. May I respectfully suggest that some publicity be given to this reliable source of illumination, as it may possibly prevent a recurrence of the unfortunate incident referred to above.

To sum up, I would say that the candle is the most reliable source of light (not the most efficient or the most convenient) but an ever-present help in trouble. Provided that, (and this is important) a box of waterproof matches is carried:-

- (a) It can be saturated, and will still light
- (b) Does not cast glaring shadows
- (c) Can be stationed on any odd corner of rock, and serve as a beacon to followers in the party.
- (d) Takes up so little room in the pocket.

Finally, when "batteries fail, Carbide is lacking, or jets become choked, it is always there - cheap - convenient - and even a slight source of warmth!

I sincerely hope these few remarks will be taken to heart and acted upon; if you can find space in the next Journal to bring the subject up, it may avoid accident or at least unpleasantness for caving parties.

Yours sincerely, Jack W. Duck. Founder Member W.C.C.

25 July 1965 – Swildon's Hole

Torrential rain following a week's wet weather caused flooding and trapped two parties of cavers, one from Plymouth (Messrs. D. Pearce and R. & J. Steere) the other from Hants. (Messrs. A. Barwick, J. Bingham, R. Marking and J. Weston) at the Forty Foot Pot. The call out was made early owing to the vigilance of Messrs. Stanton, Hanwell and Thompson, who went to the cave entrance in the afternoon, found flood waters rising, learnt of the underground parties and anticipated trouble.

The Bristol Waterworks pumps were soon in action, at the rate of 50,000 gallons per hour, but eventually it needed eight of the Fire Brigade Pumps in addition (100,000 galls. /hr.) to abate the rising waters. Soon after 6:30 p.m. and while the grating was still awash, Mr. Kenney and four others went in and found two cavers at the head of the 40', sitting on top of the stalagmite barrier. They had climbed before the peak of the flood. A third caver was then found on the 15' ledge clipped on to the ladder. He had been unable to climb any further. He wore no protective clothing and was cold and exhausted. It is probable that any delay in the rescue operations would have cost this man his life.

As more pumps came into action on the surface the stream fell enough to allow the rescue party to descend the 40'. The water going over the lip was checked, each time someone neared the top of the ladder, by another man planting his behind in the keyhole. "Goon-suits", food and Nife cells were taken down to the 4 still stranded at the bottom of the drop. A telephone was rigged by Mr. Prewer and Mr. Thompson rigged the hauling line. By now it was known that one of the four had fallen off the ladder when attempting to climb during the flood. Fortunately, he had not fallen far and had been checked by a life-line and was only bruised and shocked. The party were brought up the drop by making them climb the ladder, but secured to both the hauling line and a life line. A good pull was given and rapid ascents made.

On the surface, the police "walkie-talkies" were put out of action by interference from the pumps, so Mr. Chapman and party laid a telephone from Priddy Green to the cave entrance. Fire Brigades from Wells, Glastonbury, Street, Shepton Mallet and Cheddar were present, so that when domestic flooding occurred at Cheddar and Wookey Hole there were no pumps available to deal with it. The firemen organised lighting at the entrance and a soup kitchen. They also dammed the stream to form a second pool from which to pump, there not being enough room for all the pumps at the entrance.

About 15 cavers were occupied in underground rescue work and completed their task soon after midnight. It took the surface workers much longer to clear up and the firemen did not get back until 5:45 a.m.

This incident resulted in a sharp and unfavourable reaction from the Press, the Public, the police and the Fire Brigade. Only the Bristol Waterworks remained unruffled. Justifiable complaints were that the flooding was predictable, that no sensible caver of any experience would have gone down Swildon's on that day, that the action of these cavers had caused a lot of trouble and an expenditure of some £300 of public money. Unjustifiable complaints were that the subjects were young, inexperienced, irresponsible and belonged to no caving club. It is not certain whether they had been adequately warned. Weather forecasts and local opinion were ambiguous. The notice at the cave entrance warns that the cave is liable to flooding, but that is all. The cave was usually not locked and clearly Mr. Maine's control over those entering was marginal.

As a result, Mr. Maine was under some pressure to secure the entrance more thoroughly and to limit the entry. Although the projected block house never got built, the cave has since then usually been kept locked, and Mr. Main has often advised cavers not to descend in bad weather. Early in September, a party unknown removed the drainpipe from the head of the 40' pot, so that a man climbing a ladder hung in the usual way gets the full force of the water on his head. These three incidents (and many others of which M.R.O. has no record) did not result in call-outs, but were occasioned by cavers being unable to re-ascend the 40' and having to be assisted.

Source – WCC Jnl. 103 October 1965, pages 273 to 274

The second rescue was a much more serious affair, for it involved not only danger to life, but unfavourable public reaction towards the activities of cavers. As most readers will know it has been a very wet July and a week of storms was followed by a succession of heavy showers at the weekend 24th/25th July. These are conditions under which flooding can be predicted, and in fact some of the Rescue Organisation got their kit ready before the call-out. The notice concerning flooding at the entrance does not just mean that the cave will be wetter and more sporting than usual, but real danger to life is involved. The Water Rift will sump and also the Shrine area and most parts of the stream-way will be dangerous owing to the likelihood of being swept off one's feet. Also stones are carried along by the water and are a danger on any vertical.

Despite advice from the Farmer, several cavers, entered the cave on the Sunday and inevitably seven were trapped in the cave by rising water. It was then that they made their second mistake trying to climb the 40 ft. against the rising flood. Two of the party made the top only to find that the Water Rift was a sump. A third caver climbed the ladder only to find that he could not climb over the lip of the drop owing to the pressure of the water. Stepping off into the little grotto below the top his light failed and there he had to remain until rescued. It was his good fortune that the M.R.O. called itself out at an early stage of the flood, for he might well have suffered the fate of others who have died of exposure under these conditions, since he wore no

"goon suit" or "wet suit". A fourth member of the party tried to climb the ladder but when about 10 feet up was swept off by the flood. Fortunately he wore a life-line and his fall was controlled.

The remaining three could now see the wisdom of waiting for the flood to subside or for rescue to come.

Meanwhile, the Bristol Waterworks had turned on their pumps at the springhead, removing 50,000 gallons per hour to a reservoir at the top of Easton Hill which overflowed into Brimble Pit Swallet. Fire pumps arrived from Wells and pumped into the adjacent field 40,000 gallons per hour, but this still left the stream dangerously high. Eventually further pumps arrived from Cheddar, Shepton Mallet, Glastonbury and Street and a total of 150,000 gallons per hour was taken from the stream. Even so, the 40 ft. drop was a noisy, frightening place, but just possible to climb. Confidence was given to the rescued by using a hauling line on the 40 ft. as well as the lifeline and the laying of a telephone on the drop helped a great deal.

On the surface the Police "walkie-talkies" were useless owing to interference from the pumps, so a telephone line was laid between the Green and the cave entrance.

The most serious aspect of this incident was unfavourable public reaction. Headlines were "stop these idiot cavers" - "petholers ignored warning" and "police criticise cavers". An Editorial commented on "this monstrous waste of public money" and "the time has come when entrances of all such caves should be better controlled". The practical causes of the public concern were the cost to ratepayers and the fact that flooded houses in Wookey Hole were denied the help of pumps because they were all at Swildon's. It is this kind of public pressure that could cause a cave owner to shut his cave to all, but fortunately in Mr. Main we have a wonderful friend. Let us help him by seeing that any system of control he may wish to introduce is allowed to work.

Source – Western Daily Press – 26 July 1965

CAVERS' ORDEAL 7 SAVED AFTER 10 HOURS IN FLOODS

Seven cavers were brought to safety at midnight after being trapped for 10 hours in Swildon's Hole.

They went into the notorious Mendip cave past a notice warning of the danger of so doing after heavy rain.

As the last were brought up, wet and shivering, a Wessex Caving Club member said: "Everyone is fine No one is hurt." All told how they found their escape route cut off, and spent three hours crouching under a waterfall.

"It was so powerful we could not get over the top," said 18-year-old David Pierce of Plymouth. "A wire ladder was very close against the rock, but the water forced us back. "One of the cavers fell from the ladder, head first into waist-deep water. My friends pulled him out."

Also rescued were Andrew Barwick, aged 19, of Farnborough Hants, John Bingham also 19, of Headly Down, Hants, Ron Marking and John Weston, also of Farnborough, and brothers John Steer, 21 and Robert, aged 15, of Millbridge, Plymouth.



Above, members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation at the entrance to the cave.

Bristol Evening Post photograph 26 July 1965

It was the second time within a week that the Mendip Rescue Organisation was called in to rescue cavers.

Yesterday, the alarm was raised when the cavers' clothing was found. The Mendip rescue squad of firemen and police immediately went into action.

Five of them climbed down into the hole and made contact with all seven. Some were inexperienced and rather weak after fighting through the floodwater pouring into the cave.

The rescuers sent a strong hauling tackle to pull the men out.

The cavers were 105ft. down and a quarter of a mile inside, the cave. Firemen, using four high speed pumps, fought hard to pump the water from a gushing stream away from the entrance to the cave.

They sent or two more pumps to cope with the floodwater. Heavy rain added to their difficulties. Just before midnight eight fire pumps succeeded in lowering the flood level in a chamber separating the four trapped cavers from their rescuers.

The rescue operation had taken four hours.

Source – Western Daily Press – undated clipping

POTHOLE LEARNERS WILL BE LOCKED OUT

A block house will be built over the entrance of Swildon's Hole – scene of recent cave rescue dramas. The cave at Priddy, near Wells, has four miles of underground passages and is a favourite haunt of potholers. But after two rescues in successive weeks, farmer Albert Maine, who owns the cave, has called in some experienced potholers from the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation, to see how ill- equipped and untrained potholers can be kept out. They came up with the block house idea. And a spokesman for the organisation said yesterday it will be put up as soon as possible. It is being designed at the moment.

“Responsible caving clubs will be able to obtain a key from Mr. Main in return for £2. The money will be used for building the block house,” said the spokesman.

“These clubs will be able to unlock the outer steel door with the key. When the party gets inside, they will lock themselves in, hang the key on a wall and enter in a book where they intend going, how many are in the party and the time they expect to come out.”

All this is vital information if a rescue is necessary, but it has not always been available in the past. To cut down the cost of the block house it is likely that the cavers will build it themselves.

Source – Daily Express – 27 July 1965

STOP THESE IDIOT CAVERS, POLICE CHIEF IS ASKED

Chief Constable of Somerset Mr. Kenneth Steele is to be asked to try and get some form of control over potholers at Swildon's Hole, Priddy, near Wells. The request will come from Mrs. Olive Hodgkinson, owner of Wookey Hole caves, near Wells, who yesterday described the seven cavers rescued on Sunday night as “a bunch of idiots.”

She was concerned at the “monstrous waste of public time and money” and damage to her home as a result of the rescue. For not long after the rescue was under way her house at the bottom of Wookey Hole village was flooded. Muddy water swirled round valuable antique furniture and wrecked Persian carpets. She dialled 999 for firemen to come and bale her out with pumps but was told all available pumps were being used to, lower the water level in Swildon's Hole. When the firemen arrived - straight from Swildon's Hole - they told her: “This is the same water we have just been pumping out.”

“Swildon's Hole is renowned for flooding and is known to be dangerous in times of heavy rain,” said Mrs. Hodgkinson. Anybody who attempts to go caving in it in the weather we have had recently must be out of their minds. A spokesman for the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation said that Mrs. Hodgkinson's house could possibly have been flooded by water pumped from Swildon's Hole, but it would have gone down, there anyway. Of the problem of the cavers, he said: “I have been discussing this with the police. “It is ‘difficult to say what one can do. There is a grating there and originally you used to ‘have to get a key to unlock the padlock. “But they threw the key and padlock away. We have had untold trouble and cannot see any answer except very strict supervision on the spot. “Those seven were very lucky ‘to get away with it. If the rescue organisation had not ‘turned out when they did in another one or two hours there might have been a corpse.”

Gough's Caves, Cheddar, may be closed for the third consecutive day today. Rain has caused flooding in the entrance and the chamber close to the Swiss Village.

Source – Mendip Caver – Volume 2 Number 1 – November 1965

RESCUE AFTERMATH

Following the recent rescue in Swildon's Hole, an unfortunate incident has come to light of which many cavers may not be aware.

Volunteer fireman Dennis Reeves was recently fined £10 at Axbridge following an accident in Cheddar Gorge. At the time he was going down to Cheddar Fire Station to collect a pump for the Swildon's Rescue.

The Mendip Caver proposes to open up a fund to reimburse the fireman for his misfortune in the course of duty. £10 is our aim.

Source – Wessex Cave Club Jnl. Number 102 July 1965

Following the cave rescue at Swildon's Hole on 25th July a considerable amount of unavoidable mess was left around the cave. In particular the firemen had found it necessary to pull down six and a half yards of dry-stone wall to construct a dam upstream of the entrance. Unfortunately, all this was left, presumably for Mr. Main to get cleared up, which was rather rubbing salt into the wound. It is nice to hear that two Wessex and two Cerberus members spent an afternoon of their holidays removing the dam, making the wall good again, and cleaning up the site.

Source – MRO Archives Letter from Chief Constables Office, Taunton to MRO dated 28 January 1966.

I have now had an opportunity of looking into the problems of Swildon's Hole and attach here to a copy of a press release that we issued shortly after the incident in July 1965. I have also obtained reports from Inspector Buttle, who is in charge of the Wells Sub-Division, and he confirms that at no time have the police done anything to persuade land-owners to close their caves. I understand that the position at Swildon's Hole is that as a result of the combined advice of your Organisation and the police, Mr. Maine, the land-owner, will shortly be building a stone shed around the Hole. Apparently, the shed will be kept locked, but caving clubs will be able to obtain their own key on the payment of £2.

The general procedure to be followed will be: -

Clubs, wishing to enter Swildon's Hole will use their key to enter the shed and lock the door behind them. The system of booking-in will be kept at the shed to show details of the cavers who have entered the cave etc.

This procedure would thus prevent unaccompanied, inexperienced cavers from entering the cave.

We hope that this system will provide control over people entering Swildon's Hole and reduce the need to call out your Organisation for rescue.

It has certainly never been my intention to stop caving. All we ask is that people who go caving should take reasonable precautions to avoid endangering the lives of others. We are always very grateful for the help you give to the Somerset Constabulary.

Source – WCC Jnl. Volume 8 – October 1965, page 330

The Speleologist issue No. 4 has arrived. I enjoy particularly the pages devoted to readers' letters, "Down to Earth". Either the Editor is short of letters or, like the "Daily Telegraph" editor, he prints the most outrageous. For sheer misinformed and irrelevant accusation the comments of Mr. Goodhart remain unsurpassed; he appears to demand that everyone else shall fix his belays for him. Selected for supreme irresponsibility is the defence offered by John Steere one of those of the night of July 25th. Although he does not specify to what accusations he is answering he would have us believe at least six preposterous premises. To wit, that a member of a major Mendip club was able to express an opinion on the safety of a Swildon's trip without seeing the entrance, that paying the farmer one shilling entitled him to a trouble free trip, that a party coming out was better able to assess danger than one going in, that the number of vehicles in the Sandhurst car park was an index of low water conditions, and that it was not his responsibility to make up his own mind anyway. John Steere et al. must get it quite straight; they were not blamed for their inability to forecast thunderstorms, they were blamed for going down in defiance of Mr. Main's warning that conditions were dangerous and further rain was expected. So much for that.

6 September 1965 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Jnl. Volume 8 – October 1965, pages 313 to 314

MENDIP NOTES by Cheramodytes

THE IRON PIPE

Most cavers active on Mendip will by now know of the loss of this pipe at the head of the forty in Swildon's Hole. It was taken on Monday, 6th September, 1965 by some strangers. Bryan Ellis saw the party in the Old Grotto coming out of the cave, but did not appreciate the fact that the iron pipe they had with them had only just been stolen. He did not recognize any faces. This pipe was put in by Luke Devenish and Colin Vowles in about 1948 to replace a smaller one that had been placed there by Old Balch; it thus has quite a long history. Its presence was essential in the days before cavers had protective clothing. Most of the exploration done before 1956, when dry suits came in, would have been impossible without it. Even recently, when the majority of cavers still do not have wet or dry suits, its presence has been making it possible and safe for many of the younger ones to enjoy lower Swildon's.

A feeling has been growing, however, that lower Swildon's is getting overpopulated, and many of our present day tigers, though they resented the manner in which the pipe had been stolen, relished the prospect of not having to queue up at the forty and enjoyed the sporting nature of the descent in the waterfall. At the time of writing the pitch is wet from top to bottom, if the ladder is hung in the usual place. The full force of the water is encountered about halfway down, but the foot of the ladder is about 2ft. inside the plunge point. Climbing against a high stream is indeed exhilarating.

A great many other cavers do not share this opinion. They feel that the tigers are being selfish. Far from keeping away all the weaker cavers, they fear that it may lead to accidents. How right they are was revealed on Sunday, 19th September, when two members of a school party went down the pitch, found the water was a bit heavy, decided not to press on with the rest of the party and began to re-ascend. One of them failed to climb against the force of the water, and a cave rescue was set in motion. M.R.O. was not called out as there were plenty of cavers on the spot, who were able to do all that was necessary. They gave him hot drinks and encouragement, hung the ladder from the iron bar in Suicide's Leap, so that the upper part was out of the

waterfall, and with a good pull got him out none the worse. He was not a novice and had been down the pitch three times previously.

Clearly something has got to be done to prevent further accidents of this kind, so on 23.9.65. Howard Kenney and Oliver Lloyd went and had a look at it and considered all the possibilities. If a ladder is hung from a slightly worn stalagmite column on the right of the pitch, the lower half is still in the waterfall. If it is hung from the iron bar only the bottom is in the waterfall. It is however undesirable and unrealistic to expect all parties to hang their ladders from up there. Undesirable, because the bar was put there exclusively for rescue purposes, and its continual use will weaken it. Unrealistic, because many cavers can't climb up there to fix the ladder. If it were hung from a rawlbolt fixed in the stal flow opposite, the ladder would be mostly out of the water, but it would be distinctly awkward for the first man up to climb off it, over the gap and onto the lip. A double life line would not help unless it was fixed to the iron bar.

The only alternative seems to be to replace the iron pipe, so they took measurements and went and discussed the matter with Mr. Maine. He told them that he does indeed wish to have the pipe replaced, and he is going to get a new one for this purpose. He doesn't want cavers to be discouraged and he doesn't want any more accidents.

OLD IRON

It cannot be an accident that the theft of this pipe comes at the crest of a campaign against the use of mechanical aids to caving, a campaign which is marred by an inability to distinguish between the essential and the superfluous. In August last year someone removed Stanton's aids to the Twenty, which were clearly superfluous, and also the ladder in the Greasy Chimney, which was nice but non-essential. They have nearly always respected fixtures which have been put in to promote particular pieces of exploration, such as the peg above Keith's Chamber, various things in Vicarage Passage and the lines through Swildon's sumps. But what is one to think of the individuals who remove the guide wire in Eastwater Swallet? This wire was put in to mark a particular route, which would enable the caver to get to the Canyon without going past a dangerous piece of boulder ruckle. Cavers with long memories will recollect that on 30.7.1960 Alan Hartnell was killed by a fall of rock in that part of the ruckle which lies at the head of the 380 ft. Way. The fall opened up a conical roof of loose rock, which has been dropping at intervals ever since. The farmer closed the cave, and to get it re-opened we marked the alternative route and put warning notices around the danger spot. The notice at the entrance, saying that the cave is in a particularly dangerous condition, is as true today as when it was erected. On 4.8.65. the guide wire, which has been slightly damaged over the years, was repaired.

A few weeks after this, however, some mischievous persons removed three quarters of the guide wire and rolled the rest up into bundles. At the request of the farmer repairs were begun on 17.9.65, but a good deal of new line still has to be laid. It is not certain who stole the line, but it looks like an outside job.

19 September 1965 – Swildon's Hole

On 19 September 1965, it was a Bristol Grammar School boy, who realised as soon as he had reached the bottom that he was going to be in trouble and so did not venture further. He was assisted by other parties in the cave.

23 October 1965 – Swildon's Hole

Report No. 1

On 23 October 1965, it was a party from London who were without a leader, tackle, experience or good manners. Finding a ladder on the 40' they went down it. A U.B.S.S. party on its way out met them at the bottom, advised them to return immediately, helped their first man up and then left. The Londoners' knowledge of life-lining proved rudimentary, so that when the third man (a novice) fell off from half way up, he landed flat in the pool. A party of Bath Scouts, whose tackle was on the pitch then came up on their return and helped the subject to try again. When this proved impossible, two of the Londoners were sent out of the cave to get help and hauling tackle. Three reasons have been given why M.R.O. was not called out. A bent penny in the phone box; a preference for rustling up a party from the Hunters'; a desire "to avoid publicity and police action which might cause the cave to be closed". At all events, a mixed party fetched the tackle, entered the cave, rigged the pulley and hauling rope and got the subject up. He was able to get himself out of the cave from there.

Report No. 2

The following is a log of a caving trip and rescue operation in which members of Bath Scout Caving Group took part in Swildon's Hole, Saturday, 23rd October 1965.

The following members of B.S.C.G. entered Swildon's Hole at 4:13 p.m. on Saturday, 23rd October, with the intention of exploring the cave to the first sump.

P.M. Taylor (leader) P. Bannister (second) Messers. Perkins, Hendon, Room, Butcher, Bowler. All the above were experienced in wet caves and the object of the trip was to enable them to gain ladder experience on two pitches, one of 40' and one of 20' that would be encountered on route. Tackle consisting of 4 - 20' ladders one 150 ft. lifeline, and one 80 ft. life line taken for this purpose.

The first pitch was found to be extremely difficult as a drain pipe had been removed from the top, causing two thirds of the ladder to be under the water fall. A double life line was rigged allowing the ladder to be life lined from above or below the pitch, eliminating the risk of free climbing in these conditions. After reaching sump one, and servicing lights, the party returned to the bottom of the '40'. Here they met four cavers from London who had come down the pitch, and had decided to go straight up again. Our party waited while they climbed. They appeared to be in some confusion over life lines, but two of their members climbed to the top. The third member started to climb, and when half way up became stuck, because he was looking up into the waterfall, which was drowning him. Eventually he was let go, and although a life line was tied to him he fell 15 to 20' landing on his back. The depth of water cushioned his fall, and he was uninjured. It being obvious that the party at the top did not know how to life line, the B.S.C.G. leader climbed the ladder and rigged a proper belay and life line, the double life line having been tangled and withdrawn by the Londoners. Meanwhile the B.S.C.G. members reassured the fallen man, and told him how to climb, keeping his head tucked well in. A second attempt to climb the ladder then made by him, half way up, he started to 'drown' again, and after collapsing was lowered on the life line to the bottom.

It was now obvious that this man could not climb the ladder, and being much frightened and wet was in danger of exposure. The two Londoners were dispatched out of the cave to get help. Three members of B.S.C.G. then climbed the pitch, and left the cave, the others elected to remain below and assist the fallen man until rescue came. These members under the leadership of P. Bannister gave him extra clothing and kept his spirits up, thereby reducing the risk of exposure which at this stage was very great.

After 40 minutes, rescuers came, re-rigged the ladder from Suicide leap, and the remaining cavers climbed the ladder, now free of water, and assisted the rescuers to haul the man up the pitch using rope and pulley. The man was able to leave, the cave under his own steam, none the worse for wear.

All were out of the cave by 11:30 p.m. Enquiry after revealed that the four cavers from London were without a leader, and had descended the pot using the B.S.C.G. tackle having no proper knowledge of its use. The member who was rescued was a novice on his first trip. Had the drain pipe been in position, at the top of the 'forty' this accident would probably have been avoided.

N.B. The rescue was carried out by Various Caving Club experts who were on the Mendip at the time, and the Mendip Organisation was not called to avoid publicity and police action which might cause the cave to be closed.

28 November 1965 – Swildon's Hole

On 28 November 1965 Mr. Macnab of the Grampians assisted a badly exhausted caver from another party to ascend the 40' pitch.

24 December 1965 – Castle Farm Swallet

Source – SVCC Newsletter January 1966, page 16

A cow broke its neck as the result of a fall into a collapsed pit adjacent to Castle Farm Swallet on December 24th 1965. The pit is a few feet away from the filled in shaft of this abandoned B.E.C. dig, but is thought to have occurred due to an unusual amount of soil erosion following the recent floods on Mendip. The resultant hole is being slowly filled with tipped debris.

1966

Extract from the M.R.O. Report for the Year 1965

The Mendip Rescue Organisation is an ad hoc body which exists for the purpose of effecting cave rescue. It is run by a committee of wardens, who see to the purchase and replacement of equipment, the posting of notices at cave entrances and keep lists of cavers willing and able to help. Their main function is to operate the call out system so that a rescue may be undertaken smoothly and expeditiously. The record for the last complete year as published in the Hon. Secretary's Annual Report for 1965 shows that this is done and that is why the Organisation receives the support of cavers on Mendip, both as individuals and through their clubs.

But there is more to it than that. Everybody who caves on Mendip is considered to be a member of the Organisation. All are responsible for making cave rescue possible and are liable to be called for help. This can best be done if the individuals have had some experience of rescue work and a minimal knowledge of First Aid. To this end, the Mendip Rescue Organisation actively encourages the carrying out of rescue practices.

These are best done by a party of eight tough cavers, who normally cave together and know one another well. Such groups are normally found within a single club, and for this reason clubs are encouraged to form such groups. This should be done whether or not the group can be called out in such an emergency, or whether the cavers come from nearby or a distance.

The correct drill is for the group that wants a rescue practice to fix a date and time, choose a cave and subject, provide the team and let the Hon. Sec. of the M.R.O. know in plenty of time (two months is usually enough). The Hon. Sec. will then arrange for a warden to attend the practice in the role of umpire or adviser and to bring the carrying sheet and hauling ropes and demonstrate the correct method of using them. Ladders, lifelines and leadership should be provided by the team.

Practices on these lines have been held by the B.E.C., the U.B.S.S., the Wessex, the Axbridge, the London C.R.O., the Border and Oxford University Caving Clubs. Others are contemplating following suit. Everyone who has the welfare of his fellow cavers at heart is asked to try to do likewise.

The absence of the drainpipe of the Forty Foot Pitch in Swildon's has created a hazard which has resulted in many cases of cavers being unable to climb. Some of these result in M.R.O. callouts while others are managed by cavers on the spot. It is felt that more could be done in latter way, now that the M.R.O. is keeping a pulley permanently on the iron bar in Suicide's Leap. The parties will need a hundred foot full weight nylon line, which they can usually provide themselves, and the ladders must be hung from new fixtures on the far side of the pot. The iron bar must not be used for ladders. It was put there for rescue purposes only. Instructions on how to rig the hauling pulley have been posted in Maine's Barn, and it is intended to leave with Mr. Maine a spare hauling rope and carrying sheet. If it is used, then Mr. Maine will give a standby warning to M.R.O.

O.C. Lloyd. Hon. Sec.

12 February 1966 – Swildon's Hole

Robert Marchant, a Bristol man caving with a S.W.E.T.C.C.C. party became cold and tired, when exploring the N.W. Stream Passage. He had never before been past Sump I and was not properly clothed for working when wet through. The other members of his party were wearing wet suits. Becoming tired he sat down and rested, but the cold was getting the better of him, so he took the opportunity of returning with a party of Wessex men. He soon warmed up and progress was good as far as the 20'. At the forty they were joined by two from the Shepton. The subject had two attempts at climbing the ladder, the second on a tight line, but failed. The second time, he fell off the ladder when only 10' from the top and the party tried to pull him up, but he jammed under the ledge. Here he was held, for several seconds with the water falling full in his face, and after being lowered to the bottom was half-conscious. M.R.O. was then called out.

Luke Devenish received the call at 7 p.m., whereupon he sent for the police and for such help as was necessary, sending down hot drinks. He tried to get telephones from John Chapman, but contact was not established. The pulley over the 40' was rigged but without the second pulley. After being given hot drinks and a change of clothes the subject was hauled up and was then able to make his way out of the cave.

Lessons – Clothing for sumping trips does have to be adequate. Sitting still when cold is as tiring as caving. Climbing on a tight life line is good, as long as the subject can climb. When he falls off the ladder, it is best to let him down to the bottom at once. It is only possible to haul him up by direct pull, if there is a second man on the ladder to stop the subject from jamming in the overhangs.

Source – Daily Telegraph – 14 February 1966

POTHOLER RESCUED

Rescuers hauled potholer Robert Marchant, 18, of Hazel Grove, Horfield, Bristol, up a 40 ft. underground cliff, and through a waterfall, in Swildon's Hole, Priddy, Somerset, yesterday. He had collapsed from exposure after spending nine hours in the cave 100 ft. below ground.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 9 (1965 to 1967), page 30

On returning from delivering Maypole to V T. Gilbert and T. Atkinson helped M.R.O. rescue of a boy who collapsed on the 40.

20 February 1966 – St. Cuthbert's Swallet

A short distance from the downstream entrance to Bypass Passage John Stafford a member of B.E.C., slipped and fell, injuring his head and ankle. Roger Stenner, who was in the cave, was contacted and came out for help at 2 p.m. M.R.O. was called out and Howard Kenney delivered to the Belfry the rescue equipment. A rescue party with medical kit reached the subject by 2:30 p.m. He was roped to the carrying sheet and lifted via Sentry Passage to Upper Traverse. By this time pitches were being rigged throughout the Lower Traverse – Pulpit rescue route and Dr. Cannicott had arrived at upper traverse. He bound up the ankle and recommended that the subject should help himself as much as possible, without being in the carrying sheet. He was put into an exposure suit, and a climbing harness consisting of a seat and shoulder sling linked with a karabiner was fitted. This was used for hauling him up Pulpit Pitch and the Entrance Pitch, where his harness was clipped to the ladder and the ladder pulled up. He was out of the cave by 8 p.m.

An hour before this Kenney had turned out a reserve party of Wessex members and also the telephones, when it began to look as though progress was slow. But this precaution proved unnecessary.

Lessons – The accident was a misfortune and nothing else. A club which takes the trouble to practise rescue in a cave over which it has control is in a good position to carry out a rescue with the minimum of help. Members of the B.E.C. had worked at the route, put rawlbolts in the right places and learnt rescue technique.

Source – Paul Allen's Log Book Vol.4, page 18 (Paul's report dated 20 February 1966)

Rescue in St. Cuthbert's. A bloke, John Stafford it later transpired, had fallen from the climb that leads to Sentry Passage from the New Route. He had ankle (left) and head injuries. We carted him to Lower Traverse Chamber on the carrying sheet, and then Doc. Cannicott examined him. It appeared that his ankle was only badly sprained, and so it was suggested he walk out himself with our aid. After a good deal of trouble getting him into goon-suit and boiler suit, and a bout of vomiting, he was able to walk out almost without our help.

There were a number of things that could have been better, however. Some very large karabiners were being used, and it was impossible to pass them through the "C" links of the BEC ladders. Whilst it seemed quite possible to pull anybody up Pulpit Pitch without a pulley block, one would have been beneficial on Arete Pitch and the Entrance Rift. This latter especially, is very difficult, for only two people at a time may pull. 4½ hours.

Source – Western Daily Press – 21 February 1966

A POTHOLER IS TRAPPED FIVE HOURS

Potholer John Stafford, aged 31 lay injured 400 feet below ground for five hours yesterday after falling from a ledge.

Mr. Stafford of Byher, Badgworth, Axbridge, was caving with the Bristol Exploration club.



The injured Mr. Stafford is carried on a stretcher to a waiting ambulance.

They were in the complex St. Cuthbert caverns near Priddy in the Mendips when he slipped.

Last night he was under observation at the Royal United Hospital, Bath, with head and ankle injuries.

The emergency call came just before 3 p.m. when the police and Mendip rescue organisation went to the caves.

Rescue warden Mr. Howard Kenney said: "We did not think he would be able to help himself but once a club member had bound his ankle, he was able to hobble a little. "Mr. Stafford is a very experienced potholer and knows these caves well.

"He must have slipped, on a treacherous ledge and fallen. I do not know how far he fell." As he was being put into ambulance Mr. Stafford smiled and joked with his rescuers.

13 March 1966 – Sidcot Swallet

Christopher Mead, aged 17, caving with the Y.M.C.A. Bridgwater Caving Club went down Sidcot Swallet at about 11:50 a.m., slid down a narrow slippery passage, hurt his ankle, lost his light and couldn't get out.

At 1:50 p.m., his companion telephoned the police, and Wells was contacted at 2:25 p.m. At 2:35 p.m. Luke Devenish was contacted and got Mike Thompson and Willie Stanton to go to the cave. Meanwhile Dr. Crook had contacted Dr. Tratman, who turned out a Party from the U.B.S.S. The subject was out by 4:40 p.m.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 14 March 1966

CAVE TRAP YOUTH RESCUED

Christopher Mead (17) of Gloucester Road, Bridgwater, was back at work at a local garage today after his rescue early yesterday from a pothole at Burrington Combe.

Christopher was brought out by the Mendip Cave rescue team after being trapped for more than three hours.

He was one of a party of Bridgwater Y.M.C.A. members who went to prepare their hut for the coming season and decided to do some caving while they were there.

Christopher said today: "I was the first of a party of four down the hole and I got my arm jammed. When I got it free I had no hold and I half slid and half fell about 30 feet down to the bottom.

"My helmet fell off so I had no light and could not see anything. I found myself sitting in a puddle and it was very wet all round. The hole was just about wide enough to stand up in.

"Eventually the rescue team put a rope round me and got me out."

Source - Willie Stanton's Log Book Vol.11, page 134

At the ungodly hour of 2:30 a.m. the phone rang and Luke said there was a rescue at Sidcot Swallet. A youth had fallen down the drop into Paradise and hurt his ankle.

At the site, I met Mike (T), two policemen and Luke. Mike vested himself in a lovely sweater, neoprene trousers and toeless boots, and we crept torturously down lugging M.R.O. rope and comforts. I noted that the entrance to Purgatory has vanished under a heap of stones; unless there is another way, this part of the cave is inaccessible.

In the Water Chamber Mike balked at the alternative route down to Paradise; it is a 12 foot drop and very tight, but looks better than the old route. We lowered the rope to get the injured man, who introduced himself as Fred, and were wondering how to get him up when fortunately, some U.B.S.S. arrived including skinny Ian Standing who flashed down to him. The victim was tied on and pulled up, getting through the squeeze more or less under his own steam. Emerging, his name was found to be Chris. What happened to Fred is a mystery, especially as Chris showed no trace of ankle trouble and exited rapidly without aid. Mike, Ian and I made a leisurely exit, moaned somewhat at the entrance, and homed at 5:30 a.m.

6 April 1966 – Leigh Woods Mine Shaft

Source – Western Daily Press – 7 April 1966

Forestry Commission "employee" Bidy had a lucky escape when she fell 50 feet down a mine shaft in Leigh Woods, Bristol yesterday.

Bidy, a two year old Welsh terrier was so busy chasing a rabbit she did not see the open well. But she was not even scratched.

She was stuck in the disused lead mine, until the fire brigade was called.

Then a ladder was lowered into the shaft and firemen Raymond Underhay climbed down and brought her up.

Bidy was with Mr. Sidney Baker of Manor Road, Abbot's Leigh, who was shooting rabbits. He is the Forestry Commission's warrener (responsible for keeping down vermin) in Leigh Woods.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 7 April 1977

Firemen Raymond Underhay climbed 50 feet down a mine shaft in Leigh Woods, Bristol to save Biddy a Welsh terrier.

Biddy, owned by Mr. Sidney Baker of Woodleigh, Manor Road, Abbot's Leigh, was chasing a rabbit when she fell into the shaft last night.

She escaped without a scratch.

Bristol Fire Brigade lowered a ladder down the disused lead mine.

14 May 1966 – Swildon's Hole

Source – ACG Log Bool Vol. 1, page 103

Mr. F Wall, Mr. & Mrs. R Haring, Mr. R. May, Mr. Chris Smale, Mr. J. Matthews, Mr. J. Green, Mr. B. Longman, Mr. John Biffin.

Trip organised to go as far as Tratman's which was not to be. Those who commonly read this Log will recall that our last visit to this cave terminated at the 40' Pot where we hauled shattered cavers to safety. This is as far as we got this time for the same reason

We reached the Water Rift, making good time, when a whistle was heard from the direction of the 40' Pot. We raced on and quickly laddered the pitch. A quick analysis of the situation showed that a beginner to caving was standing below, suffering from cold and the shock of a 10-foot fall from a ladder rigged to Suicide's Leap. This was a two-person team – a girl leader and six years a caver and a boy beginner.

The girl had already got to the top of Suicide's and seemed completely unconcerned about the safety of her companion saying, "He's pretty tough" and other such silly remarks.

In the next 45 minutes, we had the pitch rigged for hauling him out and in 46 minutes he came out; his head cut from the fall, cold and shocked. We set them out and then returned ourselves carrying their tackle.

There is a moral here, somewhere! The whole operation took about 2½ hours from entry to leaving the cave.

14 May 1966 – Swildon's Hole

Source – Paul Allen's Log Book Vol.4, page 29

Rescue in Swildon's: a miscellaneous party of lads got stuck below the Forty, one of them had got up but was incapable of traversing the rift from Suicide's Leap!

Fred Davies, Barry Lane, Bob Craig, Roger Askett, myself etc. etc. hauled them out. 2½ hours – got out after closing time!

Source - Bristol Cathedral School Caving Club Newsletter Volume 2 Number 1 – May 1966.

After Gwyn Mathias with Bob Gannicot returned from Vicarage Passage, while the rest of the club was doing the Hairy Passage Extension, Gwyn changed and then went back to the cave entrance to wait for the rest of the party to appear. He waited there for an hour, but neither the

Cathedral Party or the other party whom Gwyn had met at Sump I came out. He then went back to the barn and was going to wait about another half an hour and find some other cavers to investigate why the school party had not come out. After another quarter of an hour he made out a figure in a wet suit stumbling down the road, who told him that a novice in his party from Weston-super-Mare was stuck at the top of the 40 ft. Pot and refused to traverse across from Suicide's Leap. As he looked likely to faint the leader had lashed him to the Suicide's Bar, after failing to rescue him, and thus went for help. The unfortunate fellow had also, in some way, tangled the double lifeline, but he did have a dry suit on. When the leader got to the barn he took his car and Gwyn drove at high speed to the Hunters' Lodge, where Paul Allen, Bob Gannicot, George Pointing and other members of S.V.C.C. and B.E.C. were present. The whole party drove quickly back to the barn and descended the cave after a quick change. Meanwhile at the bottom of the 40 ft. Pot the school party together with the other two members of the other party whose lights had one out, were unable to ascend not knowing what was happening. The school party which was there for about two and a half hours had no exposure suits. Bob Gannicot and another caver managed to rescue the trapped person without difficulty. The do-it-yourself rescue was then rigged with Dolman's 100 ft. half weight nylon, using the lifeline for life lining in case anyone peeled from the ladder, as the school members were all very tired and exhausted after doing a super severe trip, being down some eight hours. No one peeled and on getting to the top of the pitch the rescued cavers were confronted by an argument between S.V.C.C. and B.E.C. which appeared to be of more concern to the rescuers than the life lining. In the end they all emerged from the cave by about 11.45 p.m. via various routes.

15 May 1966 – Swildon's Hole

Keith Gladman (B.E.C.) and Colin Graham (S.W.C.C.) went down Swildon's in the morning to do the long round trip. By 7 p.m. they were 3 hours overdue and M.R.O. was alerted. Dave Irwin got a search party together (Paul Allen, Barry Lane and Bob Craig) and contacted Howard Kenney at 7:45 p.m. It was agreed not to call out M.R.O. until more was known of the magnitude of the task. The police arrived at 8:15 p.m. The search party went down at 8:30 p.m. and met the overdue party at the 20' pot, and gave them assistance on the way out. Meanwhile, since it was thought the party might have been having trouble in the streamway sumps, Dr. Lloyd was alerted and collected some divers and the mark 2 sump rescue kit. Luke Devenish also had the mark 1 sump rescue kit handy. Brian Prewer's telephones were used down the cave and John Chapman's on the surface. This was a convenient arrangement.

The overdue party had lost their way in the Shatter connection, and eventually their lights had begun to fail. Neither of them knew the route beforehand. They were out of the cave by 10:30pm.

Lesson – The long round trip in Swildon's is exceptionally difficult and arduous, and has given more than half the parties attempting it serious trouble, including two M.R.O. call outs.

Source – ACG Log Bool Vol. 1, page 105

Swildon's IV – VI Link Passage to Shatter Pot - Colin Graham and Keith Gladman. Trip took 12 hours – should have been 8 hours!

We proceeded to VI via Paradise Regained and Blue Pencil, laddering Shatter en route. Keith had some zip problems before Sump IV. Enema Passage, above Sump VI was proceeded to extreme limits, as we believed this to be the "link". Link Passage commences above Sump V. This is a right B....D! The two sumps took ages to bail out. They could not be free dived. Long, tight, muddy crawls make up the rest of the passage, which went on and on. Eventually Shatter extension was reached and about three thousand passages pushed to extreme limits trying to

find the way out. We were by now quite convinced we would never find this and were doomed. The rest of our naturals were to be spent crawling around tight wet muddy tubes. Here Colin was fed up. Eventually one way only was left and this was attempted. Colin almost drowned free diving it and getting stuck half way. This proved to be the way out however, and was bailed. We eventually crawled out almost fagged out, to find the M.R.O. had been called out and a search was in progress. We were grateful for a tight line on the 40' Pot. A damn good trip and we'll try again someday and ten years' time

Our apologies to all those called away from their pints.

Source – Paul Allen's Log Book Vol.4, page 30

Enjoying a pint Sunday evening we were alerted or two blokes overdue from Swildon's (Colin Graham and Keith Gladman). They had gone to the VI – Shatter round trip, and were due out by 5 p.m. At 8:30 p.m., Bob Craig, Barry Lane and Ray Mansfield + myself went down to search Shatter Passage.

Fortunately, for the rescue party we found them at the bottom of the Forty, and were both in fairly good condition. Everybody then got out – and we missed closing time again!

3 June 1966 – Rod's Pot

Paul Lear, aged 15, of the Somerdale Youth Club, c/o J.S. Fry & Co., was on his first caving trip when he fell down the vertical and sustained a Pott's fracture of one ankle, at about 4:45 p.m. A member of his party was sent to call out M.R.O., went to the Burrington Cafe and asked the procedure. While this was being looked up for him he lost patience, dialled 999 and asked for an ambulance, which promptly came. Ambulance control notified Weston police, who notified Wells who called Luke Devenish at 5:30 p.m. The message passed by Wells was, "A man is trapped with a broken leg in Rod's Pot". A phone call to Burrington Cafe could not get any further details.

Mr. Devenish got Jim Hanwell to collect a party and Brian Prewer with telephones. Dr. Cannicott went down and used an inflatable splint to immobilize the fracture. This took away the pain and enabled the subject to progress on three limbs. He was out of the cave by 6:55pm. Lessons – If the correct call out procedure had been followed it would have helped M.R.O. a lot and saved a quarter of an hour. The man sent to call out M.R.O. should ring the Wells police (Wells 3481). Dialling 999 is less good, because there is delay while the call is being passed on to Wells. Rescue is the business of the police not the ambulance. The man calling out M.R.O. should then remain by the telephone until the M.R.O. Warden has rung him back for further details. Inflatable splints work very well but will need protection against tearing. They are also very expensive. Contrary to what is said of them it is possible to over-inflate them and stop the circulation in the limb.

6 August 1966 – Swildon's Hole

Clive North of the Bridgwater Technical College Exploration Club was leading a party of 3 others, including Roger Bawden. He had telephoned Mr. Maine in the morning to find out if it would be alright to go down Swildon's, and Mr. Maine had replied that although it was drizzling he thought it would be alright. It was not. The party went down at 11 a.m. as far as Shatter Pot. On the return, they had a long wait below the 40', as it was getting wet and slowing down the progress of other ascenders.

Also down the cave that afternoon went Dr. Oliver Lloyd with Allan Hawkes. The latter is a member of the Irish C.R.O., who wanted to know something of M.R.O. methods and technique, and this seemed likely to prove a suitable opportunity for him to learn.

Clive North was the first member of his party to go up the 40'. He life-lined Bawden next who, after about 20', found the water too heavy, blacked out and fell off the ladder. It is not certain if he was held, but when he came to he found himself lying in the pool at the bottom. He made a second attempt to climb, but was overcome by cramp, which started in his stomach and crept over his whole body. North then went and called out M.R.O. at about 6.p.m. Howard Kenney contacted Mike Thompson and asked him and Jim Hanwell to organise the rescue, which they did. He also asked Dr. Cannicott to go, because it was believed that the subject had fallen.

Meanwhile, Dr. Lloyd on returning to the 40' found the party at the foot in trouble and began to organise the rescue from below. He got the subject moving and sent Allan Hawkes up the pitch with instructions to rig the pulley, block the drainpipe and run the ladder to the far side of the pitch. When the pulley had been rigged Lloyd prepared a bosun's chair knot, and at that moment Mike Thompson arrived, and moved the ladder over to the far side of the pitch. After a little misunderstanding, Lloyd climbed the ladder and found out what was going on. The M.R.O. party decided to do the hauling from above and Lloyd re-descended to accompany up the subject, who was then put in the bosun's chair.

Unfortunately, owing to a second misunderstanding, the second pulley for hauling had been put in the wrong place, and the subject could only be raised about 12 feet. He was held in the water rather a long time, so Lloyd climbed the 40' again and asked them to let the subject down, send down a hauling party and do the hauling from below. He remained astride the top of the 40' to steer the subject clear of overhangs, while Bob Lewis descended from Suicide's Leap, free-climbed the 40, and gave valuable help on the 15' ledge opposite the lip, from which he could hold the ladder out of the water., The pipe had to be blocked, of course.

After this everything went smoothly. Bawden and one other both needed to be hauled up, the rest climbed. By 8:45 p.m. the last man was up and all were out in time for the Hunters!

Lessons – It is impossible to prevent this kind of incident by any kind of control of the cave that is foreseeable. The little drainpipe at the head of the 40' is a menace. It has to be blocked, before any effective rescue can be done. Subsequent rescue practices have shown that it is much easier and quicker for the hauling to be done from below the pitch. This eliminates friction and takes 4 men instead of 6. A fifth man should straddle the pot and prevent the subject from getting stuck under the overhangs. It also helps a lot if someone holds the ladder out of the way.

Source – Bridgwater Mercury – 9 August 1966

POTHOLERS RESCUED

A Burnham youth was one of a party of four young potholers who had to be rescued from Swildon's Hole at Priddy, near Wells, on Saturday night.

Because of heavy rain during the day the water level in the cave rose.

The two youths, Adrian Lewis, aged 16, of Amberry Road, Weston-super-Mare, and Roger Bawden, aged 17, of Laycroft Road, Burnham-on-Sea, were faced with a climb up a 40 ft. waterfall on the way out.

Also in the party were Clive North, aged 16, of Totterdown Road, Weston and Stephen Spratt, aged 17, of Burnham Road, Highbridge.

A spokesman for the Mendip cave rescue organisation, which was called out, said one of the boys fell at the waterfall and would not climb again, and another said he would not go up. "they were exhausted and frightened," he said.

Source – ACG Newsletter – August 1966, page 61

John Chapman reports – The rescue from Swildon's followed what is becoming a "Standard Rescue". Once again two lads found that the 40' was too much for them and they had to be hauled up. Neither had much caving experience.

The party consisted of four people and went as far as Shatter Pot. On returning to the bottom of the 40' the two more experience lads went up, but the next found the waterfall too much for him and he fell. Due to a misunderstanding, he was not on a life-line.

However, he had another go at climbing but had to give up. The last member of the party was also too tired to make it under his own steam and was also hauled up.

Source – MRO Archives – 6 August 1966

Letter from a very disgruntled M.R.O. Warden's wife –
CHEDDAR 488 August 6th 7.55pm.

Dear Dr. Lloyd,

My husband has just left for Swildon's, where earlier this evening a party were reported to be beyond the 40 ft. and incapable of returning, due to flood water. Now, one of them is reported to have fallen off the ladder and Luke Devenish has asked my husband to go along and see to the probably injured man/woman. 'Nit' would be a better word it would seem to me I am of course aware, in favour of, and admire, the most excellent and selfless work the M.R.O. performs and of course people who get into difficulties in the caves should be helped out or rescued no matter who they are - experienced club members or beginners. But, it would seem to me, after 6 years and more of having my husband called out for both the fools and the merely unfortunate, that there is some further organisation needed; WITHIN M.R.O. to PREVENT unnecessary accidents and callouts. I would most strongly suggest that those caves which, thanks to M.R.O., are now locked, and most especially those subject to flooding, should be further restricted as follows: - The owner of the land on which the cave is, should be tactfully approached by M.R.O. representatives and asked to co-operate in refusing the keys -

a) to anyone not in a recognised club party. (Club membership should benefit from this, also the standard and behaviour of L-Cavers),

b) If it is, or has been, raining, or the cave entrance nearly submerged, or there is a bad weather forecast, recourse should be made to telephoning an M.R.O. Warden for his 'clearance' (or otherwise) for a party to descend. One can imagine certain circumstances in which a party might be allowed in, providing they did not go beyond a certain point in some weather conditions. Or, as in the case of today, when we have had a continuous monsoon, that NO-ONE should be allowed down at all.

I can see no possible justification for putting the lives of M.R.O. members 'at risk' for people who go down Swildon's in such weather and those who do deserve what they get and no M.R.O. into the bargain but of course this cannot be contemplated, hence my suggestion of 'clearance' from an M.R.O. warden. I realise that no Warden can be an infallible weather forecaster, so, in the event of a sudden downpour or other unforeseeable circumstance, he would then be well informed IN ADVANCE of any call for assistance, and be able to warn a team in plenty of time. Those alerted would then be able to ensure they had proper food before setting out (if it came to it). My husband has before now been called out in the middle of a cocktail party not to mention many a home and away dinner, and I have no reason to believe he is unique in these experiences. This however is hardly a fit state for rescuers to go down.

I do hope you will give my suggestions some thought, as I do not think they are unreasonable, nor do they entirely stem from the long periods of anxiety one inevitably goes through when a rescue is 'on'.

The shortage of doctors who cave is acute, as you of course must know, and none of us gets any younger, so one can now foresee a time, unless new and young recruits are speedily found, when there will be NO doctor ON Mendip at all. It is therefore all the more urgent for 'the few' not to be unnecessarily called out. If my ideas, or something like them, were put into practice, then only real accidents, which can happen to anyone at any time in any cave, should be the subject of a call outs Flood calls and foolish behaviour would be - should be - outlawed.

Yours Sincerely
Shirley Cannicott

20 August 1966 – St. Cuthbert's Swallet

Barrie Parker, caving with the Pegasus on a party led by Phil Kingston, fell about 4ft. in Illusion Chamber, was struck by a falling boulder and dislocated his right shoulder. At 2:45 p.m. M.R.O. was called out. Keith Franklin directed the rescue underground, while Luke Devenish made the necessary contacts above. He got Dr. Crook to get a medick, but while Dr. Patrick Thomas was on his way Dr. Oliver Lloyd turned up by chance. He was therefore sent down the cave at 4.15 p.m. Telephone communication was working well.

Meanwhile the subject had been proceeding under his own steam, with some help and considerable pain. Dr. Lloyd met him at Upper Mud Hall. Attempted reduction of the dislocation was not immediately successful, but as soon as Parker began to walk again the joint clicked back into place to his great relief. After that he was able to get himself out alright and climbed the entrance rift with a little assistance. All out of cave by 5:40 p.m. Patrick Thomas took Barrie by car to the Royal Infirmary at Bristol, but he was allowed to go back to Mendip the same evening.

The reasons why the rescue went so well were (a) because the B.E.C. have studied rescue from St. Cuthbert's and (b) because the subject is one of the finest cavers in Derbyshire.

Source – Paul Allen's Log Book Vol.4, page 44

I had intended to work on the new club cottage, and was about to leave the Hunters' at 2:30 p.m. when the whole lot of us (Barry, Bob etc.) were called to a rescue in St. Cuthbert's. A northern bloke (Barry ?, Pegasus) had dislocated his arm in September Series.

As we had to scrape some gear together we didn't get underground for one hour, and met the rescue party at Pillar Chamber (the patient had virtually walked out). Brian Prewer had a very efficient telephone link-up with Alan Surrell on the surface. OCL arrived as the patient was moved to Lower Mud Hall, and there performed a "relocation" ceremony – the air turning blue with the patients screams! Fortunately his arm relocated as he started to climb the ladder into Wire Rift, and no further trouble was encountered. Got lost by attempting to find the route from Lower Mud Hall into the new streamway, and so removed the Pulpit Ladder by the route from Arete Chamber. 3½ hours.

21 August 1966 – Swildon's Hole

Source – ACG Log Book Vol. 1, page 119

Bob May, John Green, Peter Morgan, Mr. Hill, Tony Mackay, Vince O'Sullivan, Dr. David Iven, John Brooks.

Went down at 10:30 a.m. and had a very good descent without meeting any other people – straight to Sump I and though to Swildon's II. Went back to the 40' Pot and found that our ladder had been removed together with a 50-foot life-line!

As we had just finished changing a chap came up to us and told us that his mate Mr. Brooks, Axbridge Caving Group had fallen 30 feet from the entrance to Swildon's and had a suspected broken arm. We ran to the entrance and found him lying on his back clutching a broken arm. I tied his arm to his body with a strap and a jersey and we carefully lifted him and slid him towards the entrance where Peter, Terry and Vincent lifted him through the entrance and he was able to walk across to Maine's Farm to await an ambulance.

It was a pity that the M.R.O. were called out. It wasn't necessary for them to come, they were on the scene in 10 minutes which shows their efficiency and speed.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 9 (1965 to 1967), page 84

Call out for rescue in Swildon's via Mr. Sealy in late afternoon – great speed to Green via Beeches and Belfry only to be told the bloke was already out. Fell and broke his arm on the first drop of the wet way! M.R.O. called out but bod got out under own steam and professionally prodded by Bob Pyke till ambulance arrived.

31 August 1966 – St. Cuthbert's Swallet

Source – BEC Log Book 1966, page 57

R. Stenner + three Hartcliffe people – abortive survey trip – rapid exit taken by leader after finding KOH [Potassium hydroxide] burns – all NIFE users be warned! By the time you first feel any discomfort (a slight itch) the burn will be already quite serious. Recommend washing in copious amounts water immediately, thorough washing of all clothes likely to contain KOH, and get to surface as soon as possible. Treat with vinegar, obtain hospital treatment.

22 October 1966 – Swildon's Hole

A party from Millfield School, Street, got into trouble because of flooding on the 40' due to rain. The forecast had been fairly favourable with "perhaps rain later in the day" and the party

had been advised that it would probably be alright. Rain began at about 2 p.m. and grew steadily worse all the afternoon.

Peter MacNab was down the cave at about 8 p.m. and found the water rising. He also saw the schoolboys. At 9:30 p.m. he and a party re-entered the cave taking the hauling tackle with them from Main's house, as two of the schoolboys were reported in difficulties at the 40'. At the over-and-under barrier the lower passage had sumped. Rescue was effected and all were out by 11 p.m. The Sandhurst bods did a good job at Fountain Cottage with hospitality.

Fred Davies was alerted at the Wessex Dinner by Mike Wooding and went down the cave just as the rescue party was emerging. He had asked Dave Causer to get fire pumps via the police, but countermanded it in time. M.R.O. was not officially called out.

Lesson – This kind of incident is not always foreseeable. We shall be getting a lot more like it. The cure is to train lots of cavers in the technique of rescue from the 40'. It is a pleasure to note that some cavers will go to the help of other parties, without having to be told.

Source – MCG. Newsletter No. 51 November 1966

That evening – Saturday – while three of us were comfortably sitting yarning, a message came to the cottage that there were two people unable to scale the Forty foot pitch in Swildon's due to increase in water level after heavy rain for several hours. Dave Mitchell, myself [Arthur Spain] and a scouting buddy went to Main's Barn to investigate and to offer our help if necessary.

We found a small party had gone underground to see if they could lend a hand. In the meantime we wandered over to the entrance to find a roaring torrent, even going down the rabbit burrow – so different from the gentle stream at 3 p.m. Back we went to find Fred Davies hot from the Wessex "do". He decided to find out the score for himself so I volunteered to accompany him.

When he saw the level of the water he dispatched a runner for the fire brigade. Plunging through the raging torrents we were in a different cave. We came to Jacob's Ladder where we found the previous party with the two to be rescued; they had managed to scale the Forty foot unaided. A mad panic ensued to stop the fire brigade from coming, which was successfully done. Luckily a false alarm but it does show how unpredictable conditions can get in a few hours.

26 November 1966 – Swildon's Hole

This was another "mini-rescue" from the forty. Mrs. Bruce Bedford had difficulty climbing the ladder and fell off, hurting her shoulder. M.R.O. was called out at about 10:25 p.m. and a party of four led by Paul Allen went down at 11:05 p.m. Paul is one of the men who has taken the trouble to learn rescue technique. They recruited five other cavers who were in Upper Swildon's.

They went down the pitch, dressed the subject in a goon (dry) suit, rigged the pulley at the top and hauled her up without difficulty, using a triple bowline tied in the end of the hauling rope. The subject was out by 12:05 a.m.

Paul Allen's observations are as follows –

a) "The Main Ulstron is only just long enough for hauling purposes when the team is at the bottom of the pitch. Its length might cause difficulties in other circumstances.

b) I believe it would be possible for a minimum of three to haul an average weight (13 stone) up the Forty Foot. When hauling from the bottom the rope runs beautifully, less manpower is required, and the haulers can see the hauled.

c) The mini-pipe at the Forty is a bloody nuisance. It will not control anything like the normal stream and makes both ladder pitches wet. The person being hauled passes right through the stream. It was intentionally blocked up.

d) Only one-person present knew how to rig the pitch and tie a triple bowline (myself). The solution of this problem is obvious".

Source – Paul Allen's Log Book Vol.4, page 59

After the Hunters' I went to a rescue in Swildon's. A woman had sprained her wrist and was unable to climb the Forty Foot Ladder. We soon pulled her up the pitch (hauling from the bottom), and she then walked out on her own.

Surprisingly, I was the only person of all those present who knew how to tie a triple bowline and rig the pitch. 2½ hours

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 9 (1965 to 1967), page 101

Call out via Howard Kenny to Hunters' at 10:30 a.m. 1st bods to bottom by 11:10. Woman up 40 at very high speed with pull from five at bottom. On out under her own steam. Those involved – Pete Reynolds and Dave Drew from their trip to Shatter, two bods from East Somerset Caving Club, John Cornwell, Denis Worburton, Rich West and Paul Allen. Much griping back at Hillgrove when cooking started at 1:30 a.m.

22 December 1966 – Swildon's Hole

At 2 p.m. Mr. John Barratt took a party of two Clifton schoolboys down the cave, in order to do the short round trip. They took a long time bailing the troubles and lost their way in Vicarage Passage, going on to the Pot instead of down to II. They therefore retraced their steps, but stopped exhausted, when they reached Shatter Pot. After 9 pm, they were overdue and at 11:30 p.m. the School rang the police. Luke Devenish got Mr. Main to find out whether the party was still down the cave. The answer was "yes", so at about 12:30 a.m. Howard Kenney led a party of three down, the cave, followed by Brian Prewer and the telephones. Roy Staynings and a party of five were turned out to follow on behind. Divers were alerted in Bristol, prepared their kit and got ready the sumping apparatus. Kenney's party went through Sump I to the Vicarage Bend, found no sign of the party, returned to Trat's Temple and telephoned progress at 2:30 a.m. At 2.35 a.m. Roy Stayning's party entered the cave. Kenney's party then went through Paradise Regained to Shatter Pot, where they fed the lost ones on Horlick's pack and Dexedrine. They were then able to travel under their own steam, gathering new Nife cells In Trat's Temple. They met Stayning's party at the 20'. The lost ones were slow on the 40', but were made to climb it themselves. All were out by 5:23 a.m. and Bristol received the stand-down at 7:35 a.m.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 22 December 1966

COLLEGE POTHOLERS TRAPPED IN WEST CAVE MILE DEEP RESCUE FOR TRIO

A master and two boys from Clifton College Bristol, were rescued “in a state of complete collapse” today after an all-night ordeal a mile deep in the Mendip caves. They were brought to the surface, by 16 members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, more than 15 hours after they had entered Swildon’s Hole, near Priddy. And they had to be revived with stimulants before the rescuers could guide them through the labyrinth of passages to safety.



Mr. John Barrett with Ian Lister-Waugh and Christopher Baker after their ordeal today.

Members of the M.R.O., called to the wind-swept Mendips by a midnight S O S, searched the difficult pothole for four hours before finding the cavers. The master and the boys, described as moderately experienced cavers, had thought they lost their way while attempting a tricky round trip through Swildon’s Hole for the first time. They decided to retrace their steps, and they believed they were lost - although, in fact, they were still on the right ascent.

The alarm was raised shortly before midnight by a colleague who had been told they were making the caving trip. The master is Mr. John ‘Barratt (30), of Clifton College’s School House. With him were two members of the school’s caving

club, Ian Lister-Waugh (16), and Christopher Barker (16). Ian Lister-Waugh said after surfacing: “It is the nearest to death I have ever been. It was awful at the time. At the moment, I feel I don’t want to go caving again. But I expect my view will change after I have recovered.” Mr. Barratt said: “We intended making a round trip via Waterfalls and the Chimney. We lost track of time and became soaked to the skin, and at times just I managed to keep our faces above water. We became exhausted and realised we were too tired to get back. So, we decided to conserve our energy by huddling together to keep warm.”

Mr. Luke Devenish of Wells, who directed the M.R.O. operation from nearby Manor Farm, said the master and two boys decided to stay put when they believed they were lost, a mile from the cave mouth.

“They were exhausted and in a state of complete collapse when the rescuers reached them. They were given stimulants and food, and the very fact that our members had reached them quickly raised their morale.” He said.

The M.R.O. took special telephone equipment into the pothole to keep the rescuers in close contact with the surface, and lights and walkie-talkie sets, provided by the police, were also used.

Once the cavers had recovered some of their strength, they were helped to the surface, and the rescue was complete at 5:30 a.m. – two hours after they had been found.

After being given hot soup and tea at the surface, they returned to bath – and went straight to bed.

Many of the rescuers, who came from Bristol, Nailsea, and the Mendips area, went direct to work after the all-night operation.

Mr. Barratt's mother, Lady Barratt, of Crowe Hall, Widcombe, said to day her son, experienced potholer, had taken the boys down as an end of term treat. She had expected them back at about 10 o'clock last night.

26 December 1966 – Cuckoo Cleaves

Heavy rain caused subsidence at the foot of the entrance shaft, while a party consisting of Tony Dingle and Tony Oldham were working at the terminal rift. Dingle writes as follows: – "On the way out we were met by Garth Dell of the B.E.C., who had come to warn us that the entrance had become unstable and that M.R.O. had been called to the cave. We all returned to the surface and had no difficulty in reaching the entrance shaft. There was no obstruction as all the material that had fallen from behind the pipe had rolled down as far as the pot. The pipes were not slipping themselves but still resting on those three rock projections. We had entered the cave at 3 p.m. intending to be out by 6 p.m. John Cornwell and others had walked over to the entrance by about 4:30 and their arrival coincided with a subsidence of ground on the surface. There was a sound of falling stones below and they returned at once to Hillgrove where George Pointing decided to call out M.R.O. A large number of people then went to the cave with spades and pit props. Shortly after, at about 6 p.m. we returned to the surface. Later in the evening the police took brief details of the event from Tony Oldham and myself.

I have since received several offers of help to make the entrance to Cuckoo Cleaves more secure.....it is hoped to make a start within two or three weeks I am sure that the early call out of M.R.O. on Boxing Day was a very sensible precaution in view of the state of the cave entrance".

At Dingle's request Dr. Oliver Lloyd gave the necessary warning about the state of the shaft. He did this by word of mouth at the meeting of the Council of Southern Caving Clubs. Clubs are warned to treat the shaft as dangerous, unless they see that the repairs have been effected. This corner of the shaft has always been unstable. Falls of rock here have closed the cave about four times, on one occasion pinning a man who was crawling through.

Source – BEC Log Book 1966, page 94

And it came to pass that the poor decrepit members of the BEC had to portray Good Kind Wenceslas and take the Wee Sex [Wessex] under their protective wing again and save them from the fate that they deserve for going caving on Boxing Day. Time in 18:00; time out 18:15.

Source – MCG Log Book Volume 2, page 31

A rescue call out on Boxing Day lent a little excitement to the occasion; we dumped digging tools, 1st Aid Kits etc. in the car and rushed to Cuckoo Cleaves where there were already about 30 people, plus policemen. Just as we reached the entrance, the two to be rescued appeared from the cave, unaware of the panic. Never mind we had an exhilarating walk!

It turned out that the entrance to Cuckoo Cleaves had been filling in quite rapidly and there was alarm that the whole place would collapse onto Tony Oldham and friend.

30 December 1966 – Swildon's Hole

Les Hamblade and John Norris of the Axbridge C.G. went down the cave at about 4 p.m. without letting Mr. Main know. They intended to pay him afterwards. Neither had they left word with anybody about what time they expected to be out. When they returned at about 6:30 p.m. they found the grating locked, so after shouting for about half an hour they retired to the Old Grotto for the night, found it draughty and moved to Kenney's dig. At about 9 p.m. Mr. Main saw their car still on The Green, went over to the cave and unlocked it. Next morning the car was still on The Green, so he called out M.R.O. at about 10.30 a.m. It was a strong call out, in view of the lapse of time. Dr. Patrick Thomas was summoned as medick, Dr. Lloyd brought the sumping apparatus, but it was all over by the time they arrived from Bristol. Three parties went down at about 11:05 a.m. to search each of the three Upper Swildon's routes, and the lost ones were soon found. They had had a cold uncomfortable night but were none the worse for it.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 9 (1965 to 1967), page 109

A rescue call out which turned out to be unnecessary as the victims had been accidentally locked in. Resulted in five frustrated rescuers, Torinham (?), Alder, West, Reynolds T., Reynolds P. making a trip to the 40 via the wet way. Most enjoyable wet way, with three virtual sumps between the entrance and the 40. On returning Reynolds T. departed and Tony Dingle was escorted by the other four to the 40 again and back again.

Source – Wells & Mendip Museum Archives – Letter of thanks from Les Hamblade – 4 January 1967

Dear Dr. Lloyd

I wish to thank you and the rescue organisation for helping my friend and I out of Swildon's last weekend, when we were accidentally locked in.

On arriving at Priddy on Friday, seeing another cavers car on The Green we went straight to the entrance, meaning to pay the farmer after we came out and changed. I have often done this, especially at weekends when many cavers are there. But after our chilly nights stay I can assure you I will always see Mr. Maine first, in future.

I am enclosing a P.O. for £5 hoping it will do something to offset the expense we caused. Sorry once again for the trouble we put everyone to.

Yours Sincerely, Les Hamblade.

1967

28 January 1967 – Stoke Lane Slocker

This was a call out for breathing apparatus for a subject just inside the entrance.

After a night of heavy rain, the river was swollen and muddy. Dr. Oliver Lloyd, leading a U.B.S.S. party, saw a largish air space, notwithstanding, and entered the cave only to find that he couldn't get out again, as the water piled up in front of his face in the narrow part of the entrance. He prevented the rest of his party from following, and asked one to go to Bristol for his breathing apparatus (at about 3:30 p.m.). At about 4 p.m. considering it might be as well to have someone outside who knew how to assemble the apparatus he asked them to call out

M.R.O. The added advantage would be that Luke would bring the mark one sump rescue apparatus, which might prove easier to manage. He then retired to a dry tube out of the streamway, from which he could hear what was going on outside, and went to sleep.

The callout appears to have been somewhat irregular, but eventually both Luke Devenish and the police got it and brought the mark one sumping outfit, arriving at the same time as the tadpole from Bristol.

The tadpole might well have proved adequate, if the cylinder had been kept outside the case, and only the mouthpiece fed down to the subject. Instead, the whole apparatus was put into a fibreglass case and sent down on the end of a line. It proved impossible for the subject to push this out of the entrance in front of him against the force of the water. The mark one sump rescue apparatus was then assembled, with one instead of three face masks on the end. The joints were unduly stiff, because the apparatus needed servicing, two spanners and a mole grip. Another inconvenience is the pressure gauge on the far end, which is needed because of its two male joints. This kept jamming in the floor crack. Eventually the subject wriggled out at about 7:30 p.m. the apparatus working satisfactorily.

The effects of remaining still in the cold for 4 hours were not serious. It was essential to get out of the water, as that would have accelerated cooling. Full protection in a wet suit and hood conserves a lot of heat, but allows enough heat loss for shivering to start in about 1½ hrs. This is neither inconvenient nor uncomfortable and it serves to maintain the body's core temperature. But it takes it out of you as much as hard caving. The latter is undoubtedly preferable, if one is not tired.

This is the first time the mark one sump rescue apparatus has been used on a rescue.

Source – The Mendip Caver – Volume 3 Number 3 – March 1967

This could well prove to be the rescue of the Century, a tap-room story which will last for years and no doubt improve with the retelling, the day that Dr. Oliver Cromwell Lloyd, M.D, Doctor of Pathology, Chairman of the Cave Diving Group, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the Council of Southern Caving Clubs, Hon. Treasurer of the University of Bristol Speleological Society, and last, but by no means least, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, got stuck in the entrance passage of Stoke Lane Slocker.

On Saturday 28th January at 3 p.m., O.C.L. and 4 novices went across to Stoke. They found the cave entrance in flood, and Lloyd, had the good sense to tell the novices that the cave was not suitable, but, in his own words, just to have a look he got into the entrance, and the water backed up behind him and washed him into the cave.

O.C.L then tried to get out but after four frantic attempts when he was washed in again choking with water, he gave up and shouted instructions back to the novices at the entrance. His instructions were embarrassingly clear. Ring Harry Stanbury, get the sump rescue apparatus from my house, and do not ring the Police.

The Hon. Secretary of the Mendip Rescue Organisation was not even going to alert the members of his own organisation.

The "Long Sump Rescue Apparatus" was rushed to the scene., Briefly this consists of a full face mask with demand valve and a short length of high pressure hose attached to a 40 cu. foot cylinder. The idea is that the cylinder fits between the victim's legs and he is in turn tied up in a St. John's Sheet and well weighted and then towed by divers through the sump.

However, O.C.L. found the gear too bulky for the combined action of a right angled bend and the water and after using up all the air he was again forced to retire.

Next to arrive on the scene was Luke Devenish with the "Short Sump Rescue Apparatus". This again consists of a full face mask with demand valve, but with 60 ft. of high pressure hose connected to a gauge and a "tee-piece" with an On/Off valve. The "tee-piece" allows two cylinders to be connected. Then one is used up, the supply can be taken from the second cylinder and the first can be replaced by a full one, and so on ad infinitum without stopping the flow of air.

The kit was unpacked and a vital spanner was found to be missing. Fortunately, it was a "surface" rescue and an adjustable spanner was quickly borrowed from the farm. Even so it could have been at Sump I where such a slip would cost two hours or more and perhaps someone's life.

The system was finally assembled and checked. The facemask, harness and lifeline were floated in. The harness is attached to the face mask so that tension on the air hose will not dislodge the mask. O.C.L. kitted up and at 7.00 p.m. after using up 20 cu. ft. of air he finally struggled to the surface. His first words upon surfacing were "Thank you", rather unusual as rescuers are rarely thanked, but then this rescue was hardly a run of the mill affair.

In conclusion one can only remind O.C.L. of the correct procedure in the event of a cave rescue. Ring Wells 3481 and ask for the Mendip Rescue Organisation.

At is happens a reporter was in attendance and the national press printed the usual story the following morning. So all the secrecy did was to prolong a rather wet and cold wait!

Source – Unnamed Newspaper Report – 2 February 1967

LECTURER TRAPPED FOR FOUR HOURS

Dr. Oliver Lloyd, lecturer in the Department of Pathology, and secretary of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, was himself trapped by floodwater in a cave, and had to be rescued by his own organisation over the weekend. Dr. Lloyd, who is considered an experienced caver, was leading a party of Bristol pot-holers when he entered the "Stoke Lane Slocker", near Shepton Mallet.

On Saturday, the stream was high and flowing fast, and the students waited waist-deep in water at the entrance for the signal to follow.

A member of the rescue team said "Dr. Lloyd got a hard 'shove' from the water and in trying to get back found water building up over his head. We think that he realised he was in trouble soon after he entered the cave. He was able to shout over the noise of the water. "As it was he had to withstand the conditions for about four hours. There was a terrific current."

26 March 1967 – Swildon's Hole

Two Derbyshire cavers descended the 40 Foot Pot on a knotted rope. On their return one of them was too tired to climb up again. Assistance was summoned by members of an Ordnance Survey Caving Group party, who happened to be doing Upper Swildon's, and a rescue party of two Sandhurst chaps and six Surrey Youth Cavers, who provided the tackle, carried out the operation without having to call out M.R.O. Eric Corner of the Surrey Y.C. writes of the subject,

"Nothing more was heard from him or even a word of thanks. All we know is he came from Derbyshire. How anyone can be so stupid as he, I just don't know. However, the knotted rope is in my possession awaiting claim - if any, which will be returned with some pretty caustic comments".

Source – The Mendip Caver – Volume 3 Number 4 – April 1967

Yet another tired caver had to be hauled up the 40 ft. Pot in Swildon's Hole. On 21st March a member of the B.A.C. Aces Rucksac Club after a trip to Sump 1 decided that he was too tired to climb the 40 ft. Pot. After he had been hauled up by a rescue team of three he flexed his muscles and made off at great speed for the entrance.

This is a typical example of the Welfare State Mentality. A little more effort on the part of the individual concerned and possibly a little team-work could avert this type of call-out. It is unfortunately the attitude of many cavers today that "The M.R.O, will get us out". If there was not such an efficient rescue organisation in existence it could be pretty well acknowledged that a lot more effort would be made by the would-be rescued to extricate themselves.

5 May 1967 – Eastwater Swallet

A party from Fry's Outdoor Activities Club, Somerdale, Keynsham, was returning from the Traverse Passage into the Upper Traverse Passage, when their leader, Bruce Faux, got stuck. He had entered the smaller of the two holes. M.R.O. was alerted soon after 11 p.m. and a strong party of five cavers from the neighbourhood had contacted the subject by 12:15 a.m. Careful inspection showed what was holding him up, and a little readjustment of his clothing made it possible for him to slip through. He was free within twenty minutes.

Source – The Mendip Caver – Volume 3 Number 6 – July 1967

The Welfare State mentality of cavers grows.! On the evening of Wednesday, 3rd May a party of nine from Fry's (Chocolate) Outdoors Activities Club descended on Eastwater Swallet at Priddy. One of the party a Mr. Bruce Faux found himself stuck when he "took the wrong passage" The rest of the party were unable to release him and called out the Mendip Rescue Organisation who quickly freed him. This is just another example of "The rescue will get us out if we get stuck" attitude, which was very clearly brought to the public's notice when the secretary of the Activities Club was quoted as saying in the Evening Post "Bruce is an expert caver, but this was just one of those things."

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 5 May 1967

CAVER IN 4 HOUR ORDEAL

Caver Bruce Faux (24) won't be going down Eastwater Cavern, Priddy, again.

For today the Mendip cave rescue team spent four hours freeing Mr. Faux, from a narrow tunnel. At his home this afternoon Mr. Faux told the Evening Post: "I shan't be caving at Eastwater again. I reckon I'm just too big for those narrow passages – and I don't want to get stuck down there again."

Mr. Faux was with a party of potholers from Bristol and Keynsham when he became wedged. The party of nine were all members of Fry's Outdoors Activities Club. Mr. Faux is a chemist at Fry's Somerdale works.

He said: "I took the wrong passage at one point and missed the wide one. I was crawling along when I found I couldn't go any further. Once I was wedged the four people behind me were literally plugged in. They tried to free me, but it was no use so one of the others went up and called the Mendip Rescue Organisation."

He added: "The rescue team were wonderful. I'd really like to thank them for their work" Mr. James Buckee, secretary of the activities club, said: "Bruce is an expert caver, but this was just one, of those things."

11 June 1967 – Swildon's Hole

A party of three Londoners, Timothy Hawkins aged 24, Peter Eswin 23, and Edward Hammond 23, descended the cave at about 10 a.m. They had been caving not too frequently for nearly a year. Hawkins had been down Swildon's five times, the other less often. Their equipment was good, except for the fact that they had no ladders. They were rather good at climbing and descended the 40ft. on a single rope. Hawkins then climbed down the 20 ft. but re-ascended to help one of the others. Traversing across the top to where the ladder normally hangs his handhold broke and he fell and fractured his left femur. This must have been at about 11 a.m.

M.R.O. was alerted at about 12:20 p.m. Luke Devenish was out and so Howard Kenney was contacted. He phoned Hunters' Lodge at 12:40 p.m. and George Pointing went over to Washingpool to collect the equipment. Peter Short did the telephones, since Brian Prewer, who usually does them, was away. Jim Hanwell was called out at 12:50 and did the surface organisation. It was a long operation and did not finish until 6:30 p. m.

An advance party went down with ladders, coffee and glucose at 1 p.m., followed at 1:20 p.m. by a strong team of nine from the Shepton with the Washingpool tackle. At 1:30 p.m. the telephone was taken down to the 40 ft. Bob Craig organised the hauling at the 40 ft.

At 2:0 p.m. Howard Kenney and Dr. Don Thomson went down with splints, morphia, plaster of paris, bandages, etc. Meanwhile Luke Devenish had arrived and stayed by the phone to call ambulance and other rescuers, if needed. The latter he found exceedingly difficult. Sunday afternoon is the worst time in the week for finding cavers. Out of 14 telephone calls he only got two replies, but nevertheless succeeded in mobilising reserves. Six other cavers were available soon after 2 p.m. At 2:15 p.m. the police arrived and by 2:30 contact via walkie-talkie and telephone was established from the scene of the accident to Priddy Green.

At 2:50 p.m. a call came for more plaster of paris bandages to make a complete hip spica. The reserves of this material in Mr. Main's house were not known to the surface parties, so six boxes were fetched by police patrol from Wells Hospital. At 3:20 p.m. this was sent down the cave.

At 3:35 p.m. another hauling rope was requested and was immediately sent down. By 4 o'clock the subject had reached the top of the 40 ft. and the Water Rift by 4:30 p.m. Progress was exceedingly slow because the subject was suffering much pain. But he did very well and helped the rescue parties a lot. He was out by 6:15 p.m. and the considerable amount of willing help that had arrived in the meantime as a result of Devenish's general callout was not needed.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 12 June 1967

CAVER'S 20FT FALL AT SWILDON'S

Caver Timothy Hawkins (24), was satisfactory in a Bristol hospital today after falling in Swildon's Hole, in the Mendips. A rescue team crawled through underground tunnels for six hours to bring the injured caver to the surface. Mr. Hawkins, had been trapped 200 feet down. Dr. Donald Thompson, from near Wells, went down with the rescue team and gave first aid. He took down plaster of paris and splints but these proved insufficient and police fetched further supplies from Wells hospital. Mr. Hawkins had fallen 20ft. from a ledge and had to be hoisted up on a stretcher, sometimes by means of a pulley. During the ascent, the doctor had to renew the plaster because of the wet conditions underground. At the surface, an ambulance was waiting to take Mr. Hawkins a teacher, to Bristol Royal Infirmary.

Dr. Thompson said: "He was obviously in some pain and he was given some pain relief at the scene of the accident. But he remained cheerful and made our job much easier."

Source – The Mendip Caver – Volume 3 Number 6 – July 1967

They say that there is one born every minute, the only trouble is that they have to come to Mendip to be discovered. Timothy Hawkins a 24 year old teacher from London, who should have known better, descended Swildon's Hole in the company of 3 of his friends, without ladders! They descended the 40 ft. pot by climbing with the aid of a hand line. At the 20 ft. Hawkins descended a short distance and decided to return. He had just reached the top of the pitch when he fell. He broke his thigh in 2 places and also fractured his ankle. The Mendip Rescue Organisation attended. A medical warden, Dr. D. Thomson, descended the cave and put the injured leg in plaster. Mr. Hawkins was commended by the rescuers for his cheerful disposition which "made our job much easier". Even so it was still a 6 hour rescue.

14 October 1967 – Swildon's Hole

On this afternoon at about 5 p.m. the 40-ft. pitch flooded due to heavy rain. A member of a team of Bath students (college not identified, but not the University or Technical School) was unable to climb the ladder. Contact was made with a U.B.S.S. party under Colin High who were doing Upper Swildon's. They rigged the pulley over the 40 ft. for hauling with a line and pulley the party had with them. Hauling was done from below and was accomplished without much difficulty. The subject was cold and weak at the head of the pitch, but he was able to get out of the cave under his own steam. M.R.O. was not called out.

Note – In flood it is much easier to climb the 40ft. if it is laddered on the far side of the pitch. There are two fixed eyed rawl bolts there for this purpose.

28 October 1967 – Swildon's Hole

Unexpectedly bad weather brought flooding, and as some parties were known to be below the 40 ft. M.R.O. was alerted by a party staying at Fountain Cottage at 2 p.m. Luke Devenish stood by certain key personnel and waited. At 3 p.m. half of a party of Harrow Moles came out of the cave leaving the other half down there. At 4 p.m. Devenish called out those he had alerted and at 5 p.m. a party of seven went down the cave. Phil Kingston and Bob Lewis, who were in this party, were instructed to descend the 40 ft. if this could be done safely, contact the parties believed to be below and report back on message pad. At 6 p.m. they made contact with the Moles, led by Mr. John Lucas, and helped them out.

On the surface, there was still the difficulty of finding out how many parties were down the cave, but a prolonged search of Mendip, which did not end until 7:45 p.m. showed that this was the only one.

The Bristol Waterworks started their pumps at 5:10 p.m. and relieved the stream of 27,000 gallons per hour. Altogether 13 M.R.O. cavers took part in the operation underground, which was completed at 10:30 p.m.

Note – It is often difficult to know who is down Swildon's, since many parties do not let Mr. Maine know beforehand. If no party could get down without first obtaining a key from Mr. Maine, then the problem would be easier.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 11 (1967 to 1969), page 16

Rescue organisation more or less called out by itself. Party of three in Swildon's 5 required assistance out in high to very high water. Hauling on 40.

Source – SVCC Newsletter January 1968, page 1

Alan Mills, Bob Lewis and Paul Allen went to Swildon's to get wet. The stream was just surmounting the grating and the Water Rift impassable in places by the normal route. Thus the object of the trip was easily achieved, with RL, AM and PA exceedingly wet and the latter emerging sans left boot and trousers lost in a struggle with the torrent at the keyhole.

Later various members gave help on a rescue to find three scouts somewhere in Four. Bob Lewis and Phil Kingston eventually found them at the bottom of Blue Pencil. Where one of them was incapable of climbing up the chain.

Source – The Mendip Caver – Volume 3 Number 9 – December 1967

A party had descended the cave without permission, were overdue and the cave was in flood. A rescue team located them in Swildon's 4. They were too tired to climb the 10 ft. chain into Blue Pencil Passage. They were ill equipped for such a trip and their lights failed on the way out. However, when they got out they had the audacity to say that they did not need rescuing! It has been suggested that Farmer Main should sue these irresponsible youths for trespass.

29 October 1967 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 11 (1967 to 1969), page 16

False call out for a falling accident in Swildon's (on 40).

29 October 1967 – Lamb Leer Cavern

A party from the University of Surrey Potholing Club was down this cave, led by a member of the M.N.R.C., Brian Tilbury. Patricia March, aged 19, was descending the main ladder pitch when, owing to a misunderstanding with her life-liner, she fell about 20 ft. on a loose line and hurt herself. This was at about 3 p.m.

M.R.O. was called out. Jim Hanwell took charge on the surface and Dr. Don Thomson underground. It was suspected that the subject might have a fractured pelvis, but this proved not to be the case. The rescue was accomplished without incident.

Note – Life-lining is no mere formality. It should occupy the full attention of the life-liner.

Source – The Mendip Caver – Volume 3 Number 9 – December 1967

In Lamb Leer 19 year old student Patricia March of the University of Surrey Potholing Club fell 20 ft. from the 65 ft. ladder pitch in the Main Chamber. A party of 7 students entered the cave with members of the Mendip Nature Research Committee. Pat was descending when about 20 ft. from the bottom of the pitch she called out. The lifeline man, thinking she was down let go of the rope. She fell to the floor and sustained a fractured pelvis. A first-aider was in the party and thought that they could get her out under their power. After a time when paralysis had set in the Mendip Rescue Organisation was called out. They quickly removed the casualty from the cave. The highlight of the rescue was the descent to the top of the 2nd pitch by M.R.O. Warden, Luke Devenish!

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 11 (1967 to 1969), page 16

Girl fell 15 feet from main pitch in Lamb Leer – suspected hip fracture. Removed from cave without too much trouble in a little under two hours.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 30 October 1967



GIRL HURT IN CAVE FALL

University student Patricia Marsh was improving in Bristol Royal infirmary today after falling from a rope ladder while climbing a 65ft. cliff in a Mendip cave. She has a suspected fractured pelvis.

Pat, aged 19, was brought to the surface by volunteers from the Mendip Rescue Organisation, who staged a full-scale rescue operation. Pat, from Leek, Staffordshire, was with five other members of the University of Surrey potholing club. They met seven cavers from the Mendip Nature Research Council and teamed up with them to explore Lamb Leer Cavern, near the village of Green Ore. The cavern is a simple one for experienced cavers, but has two deep drops. Pat fell about 20 feet when the party was negotiating the second bigger cliff.

8 November 1967 – Swildon's Hole

A party of 4 from Bath University Caving Club were doing Swildon's I as far as the mud sump. On their return R. Cadwallader, aged 21, cold, wet and tired, was unable to climb the 40 ft. The party had by then split into two and it is agreed that had they remained as one party enough help on the life-line could have been given in the first place to help the subject to climb it.

Fred Davies and Mike Thompson went down the cave, rigged the 40 ft. and hauled him up via the ledge on the far side, where he was given Dexedrine and glucose. They had to use the pulley from Main's cottage, because the one over the 40 ft. had jammed solid.

Note – I changed the pulley on 12 November 1967 and found that the reason why the one down there had jammed was because it had been inexpertly used for hauling with its gate open. This had caused the block to bend. It is, of course, not known when the damage was done.

1968

There were six in the twelve months, which is again an improvement on last year. The most notable change has been an absence of Swildon's Hole rescues, since the loss of the 40 ft pitch due to the floods of July 10th. It must, however, not be assumed that the present route taken by the stream and by cavers would be passable in the event of a real flood.

10 March 1968 – Cuckoo Cleeves

Report of an incident in Cuckoo Cleeves in which a party from Adventure Unlimited were brought out by a party from the Axbridge Caving Group.

We entered the cave at about 11:30 a.m. on Sunday March 10th. The entrance shaft was rigged with an Electron Ladder which we used, leaving ours on the surface. The 13-foot Pot was rigged with a short-knotted rope. As we are not climbers we rigged our own 15 ft. ladder beside the rope. On reaching the bottom of this, we found the other party on their way out. We were surprised to notice that it consisted of two men, a woman, a girl, a horde of 12 to 14-year-old boys and a very scared 10-year-old boy. Most of them were wearing wellingtons or plimsoles, some had torches and others had dry carbide lamps. They all wore numbered helmets.

We gave them our spare water and after seeing the 10-year-old put on the ladder with only the light from his father's torch and no one to see him off at the top, we decided to help them out through the By-Pass, which they did not know about. Our ladder broke while one of the men was climbing clumsily. Luckily, he was not hurt - just shaken. The other man (German I think) was too large for the By-Pass so he used the knotted rope - with great difficulty - his wetsuit and wellingtons did not help.

It was about 2:30 by the time we got them all out so we abandoned our trip.

5 April 1968 – Bomb Mine (Potential for Incident)

ACG Log Book Vol. 2, page 48

Report 1

Tony Jarratt, Mark, Hill, the dreaded Thatch had a fester over Charterhouse. We found a grotty mine shaft and later came back to descend the dreaded chasm. At the bottom was a Bloody Bomb pile. Poor Mark Hill, one handed, brought up a live bomb. This was disposed of and later our good friends the police were informed. Mark is still suffering from severe shock. Bomb disposal bods expected any minute.

Report 2

“New Hazards in Caving” or “It’s Going Up Any Minute”

On a normal everyday fester to an unknown mine shaft at Charterhouse, the intrepid caver (led by that noble creature Thatch) risked life and limb in the cause of public safety.

Thatch descended first and stepped into what he thought was a pile of carbide - it wasn't - it was a bloody Bomb!

Upon its' being hauled out we took cover and hurled it over into a nearby rake (forgetting Chris Richards was in there!). No explosion followed but muttered curses from the afore mentioned Chris assailed our tender ears.

In the afternoon Sam, J.J., Thing and Thatch phoned the Fuzz (hoping to be covered in glory).

Tony heard about this just in time to hide his illegally run scooter in the M.C.G. hut (pew). The copper later arrived on his little motorbike and was relieved to find the mine to be out of his area so he phoned up the Frome Police and Bomb Disposal Unit. He then had a fag and cluttered up the kitchen for an hour.

Soon after, there arrived two hard looking sergeants, who turned out to be good chaps (when they saw the mine and the way we handled the bombs they pretended to search the area, but really hid behind some rocks in case of bangs!

There was mention of this event (without the club's name) on Points West and there was a short article on the front page of Monday's Evening Post.

The Bomb Disposal blokes have still not arrived.

Sources – Un-named and un-dated Newspaper Reports

ALL-CLEAR ON BOMB FINDS

An all-clear has been given today by the police over 25 bombs, found at the bottom of a disused lead mine shaft at Charterhouse on the Mendips. But how they came to be at the bottom of the 20-ft. shaft remains a mystery. They were discovered by members of the Axbridge Caving Group at the weekend. A police spokesman said that from the shape of the bombs they appeared to be mortar. The casings were empty of explosives and there was no danger to the public. A Southern Command spokesman said the bombs would be inspected and dealt with tomorrow.

MORTAR BOMBS FOUND IN OLD MINE SHAFT AXBRIDGE CAVERS' DISCOVERY

On Sunday morning members of the Axbridge Caving and Archaeological Society who were investigating old lead mines in the Charterhouse locality found objects resembling mortar bombs 25 feet below the surface. As a safety measure, it was decided to call in the police, and in the afternoon the cavers accompanied members of the constabulary to the shaft. Samples of the bombs were taken away for identification and subsequently an R.A.O.C. bomb disposal unit was called in to deal with the incident. The bombs had obviously been deposited in the shaft a long time.

13 April 1968 – Sidcot Swallet

Four members of the Kingston on Thames Scout Group visited Sidcot Swallet on 13 April. One of them Colin Clark, got stuck in the squeeze at the head of the final drop. Two of them stayed with Clark, and Timpson went to Mendip Gate Café and rang the police. Police rang Luke 1:55 p.m. Luke rang Howard 2:00 p.m. Howard rang Hunters' Lodge 2:05 p.m. and got hold of Alan Thomas. Alan Thomas got hold of Robin Richards (B.E.C.) and told him to get on with the

rescue. B.E.C. party reached the cave 2:20 p.m. and brought Clark to the surface at 3:00 p.m. A good example of chain command!

Source – Dave Yeandle's Log Book – Volume 1, pages 18 and 19

While sitting in the Pub with the B.E.C. at Dinner time we were called out on a rescue at Sidcot, Alan Thomas drove madly to the cave entrance. A Boy Scout was stuck (rather he thought he was). We dragged him out in half an hour. Their equipment for four was – one helmet and carbide, a twenty-foot ladder for the Lobster Pot and a two gallon water container to carry spare water for the carbide. Their inexperience showed up here because in the water container was only enough water for about 10 fills. Well this is OK if there is a streamway but not in Sidcot where there is no water. Burnt arse on electrolyte.

Rescue party – Robin, Tab and me and two others.

22 April 1968 – Sump Rescue Turnout to Pontypool

At 7:15 approximately on Monday 22nd April I received a telephone call from the police at Pontypool to say that 2 young children of about 4 years of age were believed to have been washed into a culvert at Pont-newynydd. I collected members of the Cwmbran Caving Club Rescue Team as follows:

Trainee divers Philip Jones, John Parker and Russell Pope; then Fred Probyn and Tony Parry whom I knew had neoprene 'wet suits'; Percy Playford and Mike Austwick were called out direct by the police.

We drove to Pontypool Police station and were guided to the site by a police car. This was a culvert about 50 yds. in length, taking something like 5 m.g.p.d. of water, i.e. a stream of about the same size as Llygad Llŵchwr. The influx end had several iron bars fixed across it with plenty of space for an adult to step through. It was about 5 ft. high and 6 ft. wide. 2 firemen, 1 policeman and Percy Playford went down stream to deep water, and turned back; meanwhile our trainee divers kitted up, I did not know whether it sumped or not, and local descriptions varied from "full of water" to "knee" deep. To be on the safe side and after conferring with the police, I telephoned Dr. O. C. Lloyd, Mendip Rescue Organisation and a diver, and asked for 2 divers (qualified), and the Sump Rescue Apparatus. Philip Jones and John Parker then went downstream at 8:05 p.m.

They came out within 10 minutes and reported a 2-ft. waterfall about halfway in, and only inches of air space from there on. It appeared to sump not far ahead. We decided to try the effluent end although local opinion said it was "full of water". The team moved down to the other end while contact was maintained between the 2 ends via police 'walkie-talkie'. This end was a similar tunnel at first with 3ft. of water, but a lower arch was encountered within 20 ft. which had only 3" of air space. It obviously sumped further in because there was no air current. I requested shovels which were quickly procured. Small amounts of Polar Ammon were available, but were not required. Several onlookers then jumped down into the knee-deep water and dug at the gravel and household rubbish in the exit. As dusk was now falling I asked the police for lights and they produce a powerful arc lamp run off a portable generator. After 10 minutes or so of digging a strong draught blew out over the top of the water, and driftwood and rubbish came floating out of the culvert. The sump had broken. I tested the air with a carbide lamp and it was quite fresh, apart from an odour of diesel oil. Philip Jones then went under the arch, vainly trying to keep his nose above water. We could communicate by shouting for a few moments, but then we could not hear him. After we had waited for a long 10 minutes he

appeared behind us, having swum and walked the 500 yards right through to the other end of the culvert and come back on the surface. Philip was fairly sure there was nobody in the culvert, and another conference with the police followed. In order to be absolutely sure, the helpers dug again in the gravel because the water had risen slightly, and Philip went back in. After some minutes of searching he swam out under the arch and reported that he was sure there was no one inside.

Another conference ensued and while the use of grappling hooks was being considered before the arrival of the Mendip divers, the police received a report that they were sure the 2 children not had gone into the culvert.

Police at the Severn Bridge who had been given the number of Lloyd's car were asked to turn him back. The rescue team retired to Pontypool Police Station for hot showers and tea. The Gloucester Police 'phoned to say that Lloyd's car had not passed the Bridge. Just then Lloyd walked into the Station in person, and said that he had spoken to, the police on the Bridge but must have been too early to receive our message.

All the Cwmbran team helped in the wet and smelly culvert dig, but the major credit goes to Philip Jones who alone dived into the water without knowing the length of the almost-submerged portion, and with his face in the green slime hanging from the culvert roof.

Once we had arrived on the scene and I had explained to the police and firemen what we intended to do, they left the organisation entirely to us, and this, together with their wholehearted cooperation, is much appreciated.

Finally, grateful thanks to Dr. O. C. Lloyd and Dave Savage who had a wasted journey over from Bristol.

Melvyn Davies, Cave Rescue Warden

12 May 1968 – Portishead Sea Cave

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 13 May 1968

BOY CAVER SAVERD FROM RISING TIDE

Two eighteen year old heroes were back at work as apprentice pilots today after saving the life of a 13 year old boy trapped by tides while caving.

Two part time firemen from Clevedon also risked their lives to rescue the boy from a hole in the cliff face beneath the coastguard station between Portishead and Clevedon.

Stephen Climpson was dragged to safety minutes before the cave entrance was completely covered by water.

Stephen, of 36, Kennaway Road, Clevedon, a pupil at Nailsea School, had gone with three schoolfriends to explore the hole at the weekend.

At the other end of the rope were his three friends – Billy Underhay (13), of 39 Dark Lane, Backwell; David Hill (13), and Brian Cowley (14), both of Wrington Mead, Congresbury.

The drama began when Stephen found he could not climb out from the bottom of a 25 foot pothole at the rear of the cave.

Police and firemen managed to haul his companions to safety. But they were unable to get into the cave to help Stephen, who clung to a rock as he was buffeted by the waves.

An S.O.S. message went to the Sharpness pilot boat at Portishead and apprentice pilots Ken Higg and Richard Morgan set off in the Alaska.

Fireman Derek Godfrey was dangling in the swirling water by a line from the top of the cliff. Mr. Godfrey, of 78, Old Church Road, Clevedon, had been lowered to help calm Stephen.

As the pilot boat moved in Mr. Holloman jumped down to it from the rocks and Richard Morgan swam to help haul Mr. Godfrey on to the Alaska's deck.

Then Richard swam into the cave tied to a line and he and Stephen were hauled on board.

Stephen, who was semi-conscious, and Fireman Godfrey, were taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary.

Stephen was allowed to go home after treatment for shock. Mr. Godfrey was kept in overnight for observation.

12 May 1968 – Nine Barrows Swallet

John Benham, aged 34, caving with the East Somerset Caving Club, was climbing in the Crystal Chamber when he fell and broke his tibia and fibula in one leg. At 2:50 p.m. Dr. Thomson was called out, getting there at about 3:10 p.m. He splinted both legs together and put him in the carrying sheet. He had morphia gr. ¼ at about 3:30 p.m. It took about an hour to get him out.

Brian Prewer laid a telephone line, Fred Davies did most of the pushing and Mike York most of the heaving.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 11 (1967 to 1969), page 48

James Cobbit, P. Cousins, P. Collet, F. Davis, D. Thompson, D. York, Prew, Butch, Milche, Ric (?), C. Hamman, D. Gumbleton, G. Bolt, J. Cornwell, Zot, P. Coles, Jerry & Nigel etc. Carried victim from Crystal Chamber to Entrance, call out 14:00 out 16:00. Victim had broken right lower leg.

Source – Western Daily Press 13 May 1968

POTHOLE'S FOUR-HOUR ORDEAL IN A CAVE

HE IS DRAGGED OUT AFTER BREAKING A LEG

Potholer John Benman, aged 34 had to be dragged along for four hours yesterday after he fell and broke a leg 100 feet underground in a Mendip cave. He was brought to the surface by 21 members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation. John, a washing machine engineer, of Northants,



was potholing at the Nine Barrows Swallet at Priddy, near Wells. He was with three friends, all members of the East Somerset Caving Club. Mr. David Gumbleton, of Sparkford, Somerset, a member of the caving party said: "John was climbing near Crystal Chamber, 500 feet from the cave entrance when he slipped and appeared to fall about eight feet, landing on his ankle. He could not move without extreme pain, so we decided to call for help."

A doctor put a plaster cast on John's leg in the Crystal Chamber before the four-hour ordeal. He was placed on a canvas carrying sheet. Then members of the rescue party dragged and carried him through several long narrow passages, some of which had to be widened. When his rescuers had brought him to the muddy cave entrance, John was taken in a stretcher across the fields to an ambulance, and then to Bristol Royal Infirmary.

A spokesman for the Mendip Rescue Organisation said: "It was not a particularly difficult rescue."

25 May 1968 – Swildon's Hole

A party of three cavers became exhausted in the Double Troubles. Jim Hanwell, George Pointing, Brain Prewer with telephones, Roy Staynings and about 8 or 9 others turned out. Meanwhile a party of Cave Diving Group divers returning from more distant parts met up with the three and escorted them to the 40 ft., where our parties met them.

Source – Dave Yeandle's Log Book – Volume 1, pages 22 and 23

"There is a party of 10 people trapped in Swildon's Hole, Somerset, near Wells, two are suffering from exposure. Mendip Rescue team fully operational." Said the Radio and Telly after one bloke had been stuck below the 40' and got out before the M.R.O. could reach him. I was called out but on arriving at Swildon's the bloke was out. Great panic and tribulations at home. Balls to the B.B.C. and I raise two illustrious fingers to the reporter. One bloke told the reporter (this bloke was the one in trouble after reaching the surface) that there are 10 people trapped. Stupid story seeking **** (censored by R. Mines), he caused panic i.e. old dears to panic all over Bristol. The party in trouble were quite reasonable.

26 May 1968 – Swildon's Hole

My party consisted of three people – Peter Webb, M. Worthing and John Martyn. On Saturday, we did Sidcot Swallet, Goatchurch Cavern and Drunkard's Hole. These caves were Mr. Martyn's first experience of caving. Mr. Worthing had caved before, his experience including doing Swildon's Sump I. I have caved with the Chelsea College for three years

We entered Swildon's Hole at about 12:30 p.m., on Sunday 26 May 1968. At the top of the 40 ft. Pot there was a queue of 8 to 10 people, and about 6 people at the bottom, waiting to come up. We waited ourselves for an hour, during which time I twice suggested that we three confine our activities to the entrance series, as we would have a similar wait when returning. Both other members disagreed.

Mr. Martyn descended the 40 ft. Pot quite successfully, and without any trouble, we arrived at Sump I, at about 3 p.m. Mr. Martyn said he would not do the sump, so Mr. Worthing and myself went through, intending to come back immediately. However, Mr. Martyn also came through, suddenly appearing on the far side of the sump. (At this stage, I should point out that neither Messrs. Martyn or Worthing had wet suits; I had a wet suit trousers on). We then returned through the sump, and made our way back to the bottom of the 40-ft. pitch. On the way back, Mr. Martyn complained of being cold, but said he would be "O.K.". On arrival at the 40 ft. (about 4 p.m. by now) there was a queue of about 10 people. I spoke to the leader of the largest party and he agreed that Mr. Martyn should go out first. However, he was unable to climb the ladder, as his arms had no strength left in them. I went up the ladder and sent a man at the top to alert the rescue. This would be about 4:15 p.m. There were about 5 or 6 people at the top of the pitch. One a caver from Clifton College, Bristol) had a block and tackle. We rigged this over Suicide's Leap and fitted it with a double lifeline. Both ends were thrown down the pitch. A second lifeline was also lowered. The latter, and one end of the double lifeline were belayed to Mr. Martyn. He was then pulled up to the top of Suicide's Leap, he climbed easily onto the shelf at the lip of the pitch, belayed by the second lifeline. Mr. Worthing followed, climbing the ladder quite successfully. I then sent another man out to call off the rescue at about 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.

At this juncture, I told Mr. Martyn and Mr. Worthing to proceed from the cave, and they would be led out by one of the people waiting at the top. My immediate concern was to get Mr. Martyn out, changed, and dry. They disagreed with his, saying they would rather wait for me. I left the matter and proceeded, with the chap from Clifton College, to pull everybody up from the bottom of the 40-ft. pitch. We pulled them up two at a time, one on Suicide's Leap (which had a ladder rigged), and the other using the ladder on the wet wall of the pitch.

During this phase, I persuaded Martyn and Worthing to leave the cave, and they went, led by another person. I finished seeing everybody up, cleared my own tackle, and went out myself, catching up with my other two-party members at the Well, on the Wet Way.

At the top, which we reached at about 5:30 p.m. we were met by a reporter, to whom we gave no names. We were then met by Mr. Kenny and various members of the rescue organisation, to whom we gave our names and the name of Chelsea Caving Club, although I said that we were not members of that College, although I had once been so.

Peter Webb

Source – The Mendip Caver – Volume 4 Number 4 – July 1968

THE LATEST SWILDON'S RESCUE, - FROM - A REPORTER ON THE SPOT!

On Sunday 28th May the B.B.C. News gave an account of yet another rescue in Swildon's Hole. We were told 10 cavers were stuck in Swildon's. I managed to get on the scene about. 1

hour after the supposed event. Not a soul in sight. I then called in at the Queen Victoria to try and find out the details. My attention was then drawn to some of my friends who had stayed there over the weekend. Well, they all laughed when I asked them what had been going on.

Apparently, the last member of a previous team arrived at the bottom rung of the ladder on the 40 ft. Pot, in a tired state. He could just reach the bottom rung of ladder but could not manage to pull himself up. (I presume from this the rigged ladder was a 30 ft. one.) So far then just ONE stuck. Then up came these friends of mine and gave him a bunk up. He then managed to get out under his own steam.

Outside a big reception committee was waiting, we were told of a meeting of Police, Ambulance, Fire Brigade and M.R.O. At this point it was a job to sort out fact from, fiction.

The question is what misguided individual called out all these services without finding out the correct, facts? I make no apologies for calling him misguided, because once again a nondescript event has been blown up into a national issue, and more serious, once again the sport of caving has been dragged through the mud of esteem.

Dan Harrison

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 27 May 1968

CAVER RESCUED AFTER FALL IN POTHOLE

An inexperienced cave had to be rescued from the bottom of a 40-ft. drop in Swildon's Hole, Priddy, near Wells. He is Mr. John Martyn, of London, who was out on his first week-end of pot-holing. A member of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, who were called out, said Mr. Martyn was suffering from exhaustion. Half way up the 40ft. drop he decided he could not make it and began to climb down. "In doing so he fell into a pool of water. He didn't hurt himself, but he was then too exhausted to carry on" said the spokesman. Four cavers from an A.T.C. Squadron at Southampton were also at the bottom of the drop. They fixed up a lifeline and pulled Mr. Martin to the top. The rescue organisation spokesman said this was Mr. Martyn's second caving trip.

2 July 1968 – Swildon's Hole

Last night at 9:30 p.m. Farmer Maine's grandson called the Belfry to report that two cavers had the Swildon's key at 12 noon to do the Upper Series. The cave was open and there had been no sign of them since and he thought that perhaps they were still down there.

We checked at all the local pubs to no avail so decided to check the cave although there were no clothes or cars at the farm. We entered the cave at 10:45 p.m. and checked the Upper Series.

There was no ladder on the 40 ft. and no sign of them in the cave. Between the five or us we checked all the Upper Series completely bar the Oxbows, there we went up to the tight parts in each direction and shouted - no reply. Since there was no reason to suspect them being still in the cave we came out at 11:30 p.m., locked the cave and reported our findings to Mr. Maine who had waited up to see what had happened.

Obviously, a couple of rude cavers who do not have the decency to return the keys. Although it is a nuisance having to go down the cave under those circumstances it is nice to know Mr.

Maine is still as concerned about cavers welfare and does not just assume such cavers have left the cave.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 11 (1967 to 1969), page 60

I. Jepson and D. Mockford were sitting in the Hunters' having a quiet pint when the calmness was broken by a rather anxious cry from a member of the B.E.C.. It turned out that a party of whom we don't know had descended Swildon's at noon and had apparently not returned. We changed and walked over to the cave, which was open and went in. With three others we searched the Upper Series and finding no one, and the 40 was not descended, we came out and locked up. Unfortunately we were too late for more drinks.

3 November 1968 – Swildon's Hole

Source – Pat Cronin's Log Book

Just as we were changing Ted ran back up the stairs of the barn saying to put our kit back on and get ready for a callout in Swildon's near Trat's Temple. Someone was cold and tired and had collapsed. Our group helped to carry kit following down four others, which included a Doctor. On arrival the guy wasn't well; as the phone line didn't work PC was asked to act as a runner to relay info to the surface, and return quickly. After two successive runs a weary PC was stood down when the phone lines were eventually got working. Need my own carbide light.

1969

15 March 1969 – Box Hill Mines

Stephen Carter, aged 16, and Roger Banks, 14, with three friends from Box village went into the mines about 2 p.m. on Saturday. Carter is reputed to have been down the mines before, but Banks and the others were probably on their first trip. They were clad in "play clothes" and their only source of light was plastic sheets used as flares. There is a plastic factory nearby which dumps waste at the mines, and this forms a regular cheap supply of lighting for the village lads.

At 10 p.m. the alarm was raised and Howard Kenney was alerted at 10:45 p.m. He called out Jim Hanwell at 11 p.m., who collected the equipment from Washingpool and went to Box. On arrival Hanwell found a number of young cavers present, some of whom knew the mines. He sent in a party of four via the Backdoor to search Oxo, Cathedral, towards Westgate; another party of four in at Westgate to work N.E. and rendezvous with party one; and a third party of four to search the un-surveyed passage S.W. of Westgate. The latter two parties found Carter and Banks quite near Westgate, cold, tired and despondent, but otherwise O.K. They were out at about 1:20 a.m. on the 16th. The Chief Constable of Wiltshire sent a letter of thanks.

Source – Bath & Wilts Evening Chronicle – 17 March 1969

THEY WALKED MILES, THEN THEY WAITED LOST BOYS RESCUED IN BIG CAVE SEARCH AT BOX

Two boys were rescued from a cave at Box During the weekend. They had been lost for hours before they were found, cold and soaked. The boys were traced by a recently formed cave and mine rescue organisation. They were Stephen Carter (16) and Roger Banks (14) of Box.

Police working from a mobile police station, called in three caving groups, including Bath Caving Group and airmen from the R.A.F. stations at Colerne and Rudloe Manor, which are all members of a cave and mine rescue organisation formed recently to tackle emergencies such as this. SAC Dave Burgess from Rudloe, is the team leader and Mr. Martin Bishop the deputy. This was the first rescue call that they had.



Stephen and Roger were found in the early hours yesterday by Graham Scarth and Anthony Nixon of both from Rudloe. The lost boys had originally gone with a party of six exploring the Bath and Portland quarries and caves. At 4:30 on Saturday afternoon three of the boys decided to go home, leaving the other two* continuing their adventure. When they failed to return home at 10 p.m. their parents told the police. Chippenham police mounted a full-scale rescue operation, calling in members of the Mendip Cave Rescue team, Bath caving Group and the East Devon Caving Group. Supt. Harry Hull directed operations from Chippenham police headquarters and a mobile caravan police station equipped with raid was taken to the scene under control of Chief Insp. Frank Dummett.

Maps prepared by caving groups during surveys of the old workings were used and each underground rescue group was allocated a search area. The Mendip team included a doctor. It was after midnight before the search started, but the boys were found within half an hour. The boys explained that their lighting had failed. They realised someone would start looking for them and they decided to stay where they were.

The boys went into the cave at about 2:15 p.m. on Saturday and were rescued at 1:45 a.m. yesterday. Stephen told a reported, "it was very frightening." He said that he and Roger tried to make identification tracks with stones. They also came across a large log which they attempted to use as a marker. "We must have walked miles and eventually we returned to the big log which indicated we had completed a big circle in the cave. The trouble was caused when they ran out of matches and could not light more Perspex which they were using as torches. Stephen said that if they had sufficient matches everything would have been alright. He said they gave up trying to get out of the cave about 6:30 p.m. and thought someone would be searching for them, so they sat down. Roger tried to go to sleep but was so cold and damp he was unable to do so. In some sections of the cave they had struggled through water up to their knees. Stephen only had a pair of shoes, jeans and a coat.

Roger's father was full of praise for the work of the R.A.F., the caving groups and the police. He was told that his son was missing at about 10:30 p.m. and immediately went to the caves. Mr. Banks said it was fortunate that only a fortnight ago the R.A.F. made a survey of the caves. A spokesman at Corsham School said that pupils had been advised not to venture into the caves.

* [Numbers don't tally - one boy not accounted for]

23 May 1969 – G.B. Cave

A party of three from St. Alban's Caving Club entered the cave at about 3:30 p.m. and locked themselves in. (It has been normal practice to lock the inner door, while the outer one was inoperative due to the floods). On their return at about 6:30 p.m. the key would not turn in the lock. Eventually it broke off in the lock: they tried to knock the padlock off with a shovel, but only succeeded in damaging the door. At 10:30 a.m. the next day Geoff Bayes from the Queen Victoria at Priddy turned up, having been alerted by the wife of one of the cavers. He eventually called out the Fire Brigade, who removed the trapdoor from above. The party got out at about 1 p.m. after nearly 22 hours underground. The call did not go through M.R.O.

Note - There have been several instances this year of keys failing to open padlocks on caves because they have got dirty. Grit gets down the central hollow of the key so that it will not fit properly. This is a consequence of taking the key down the cave thus getting it muddy.

Source – UBSS. Circular to members – May 1989

Many members may have heard about the incident involving a party from a visiting club who though not accompanied by a member of the host club went down G.B. Cave and, on their return, found that they could not open the lock on the entrance door. After being there all night they were missed and the Fire Brigade, not the M.R.O. was called. The club concerned subsequently wrote to us returning the two other keys, without the requisite tackle fees and described the episode. They went down the cave at about 2:30 p.m. on Sunday, unlocking the outer door and re-locking it after them. On returning they found that the "lock was jammed and the key would only turn $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way". After trying various ways of prising off the lock, they eventually broke off the head of the key. It transpired that the broken key was that of the second gate in the Ladder Dig Series, and the lock was that of the entrance gate. The party later returned the correct key for the entrance, unscathed. The B.B.C., who had broadcast the incident, the Press and Fire Brigade were promptly informed of the real cause of the incident and so were Bristol Waterworks .

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 24 May 1969

A TRAPDOOR TRAPS THREE UNDERGROUND

Three cavers from St. Albans were rescued today after spending the night trapped in G.B. Cavern, on Mendip.

When they tried to get out several hours after going underground yesterday, they were unable to open the trapdoor at the entrance to the cave.

Then the key broke. The alarm was raised today when the wife of one of the cavers telephoned the Queen Victoria Inn, Priddy, to find why they had not returned.

Somerset firemen freed the cavers using a hammer and chisel to cut the bolt holding the metal cover.

15 June 1969 – Swildon's Hole

Report - 1

At 7:45 p.m. there was a call-out from the Hunters' Lodge in respect of Miss Linda Tear, a young woman who on her return was unable to climb the 20-ft. pot. At the same time the party from the cave called out M.R.O. and Luke got the tackle. Bob Lewis, Ray Saxon, Stuart

McManus and others went straight down the cave at about 8:15 p.m. It was rather later that Bob Craig went down with the Swildon's rescue tackle.

The advance party found the subject very cold, wet, shivering and listless at the bottom of 20. She was assisted up, and once past this barrier was able to move on her own. She was very sensitive to a spray of cold water, which had the effect of making her faint and let go. At the Old Grotto, they were met by the party with the rescue tackle and she was equipped with a dry suit and given coffee and glucose. The party was out by 9:45 p.m.

Note – It is usually best for the advance party to take some of the rescue tackle with them. In the case of Swildon's it is kept in Mr. Maine's house.

Report - 2

A few points with regard to last evenings rescue from the 20-foot Pot. I am not trying to publicise anybody or place undue seriousness on this rescue, but I have seldom seen anyone look quite so ill and frightened as did this girl when we reached her - I was very alarmed indeed.

I believe the following points are valid.

I should like to emphasise the enormous assistance of Ray Saxton (Cerberus S.S.) who was present throughout the main rescue attempt. He succeeded in keeping the girl cheerful and chattering in a way which was wonderful to behold - not being a great conversationalist myself I could but admire him. Ray certainly deserves credit, apart from his general aid, for keeping her smiling as it were. This was of immense value, more so than one might initially believe, because one always knew just how she felt.

Though she appeared barely conscious when we first saw her below the 20 ft., she recovered to a remarkable extent as soon as she was up the ladder and had got moving. She was able to assist herself almost throughout once the pitch was behind her. The sole heartening aspect of her condition below the pitch was that she was still shivering a great deal. She did claim once or twice during exit to be very sleepy.

A "space blanket" was available as soon as she gained the top of the 20 ft., but it was felt that this would not assist to any great extent, as her condition had clearly been much influenced by the psychological "barrier" of the pitch.

She was most apprehensive about being in water or, especially, under falling water (hardly surprising as she was helmetless). I should have asked on the surface what she was wearing (I had a neoprene hood in the car which I omitted to take down). We acted accordingly, making exit by the Dry Way but avoiding the entrance "zigzags" section by going back down Kenny's Dig into the Wet Way, which route posed neither her nor rescuers any real problems. She was equipped with a dry suit which arrived when she was in the passage leading out from Old Grotto, and this garment would have been more useful than the "blanket"; had it arrived earlier, we should have used it without question.

In the absence of a large hauling team at the 20 ft., I thought the simplest and quickest ascent would be achieved by climbing the pitch with the casualty (who was very light) on my back, with a small hauling team (Stuart McManus, Martin Mills, Ray Saxton) serving the dual purpose of hauling and life-lining. This was a bad misjudgement on my part. The base of the ladder would not hold in position, with the result that we twice swung on the ladder under the water falling. She said she was unable to breathe when being hit by water from above. This

presumably caused her to let go of me, being held completely on the lifeline - I think this was panic as opposed to loss of strength in clinging, because she was well held and assisted by the line, and was able to cling on again some five or six seconds later when she swung back to me. Had the line, which looked grotty, failed, I should have been responsible, and this worries me much. I am thinking of buying or making a harness for use in such circumstances, in conjunction with placing a "bottom belay" to hold the foot of the ladder.

The important observation (to me anyway) is that even a light spray of water can have the effect on a climber who is very cold and/or inadequately dressed, of causing him/her to let go of whatever they are grasping, particularly if respiration is affected. I am convinced that the "fall" in this case was not the result of strength failure.

One hears conflicting evidence on hypothermia. Most of those who came into contact with the girl seemed to consider massage necessary. I did not take part, firstly because it simply increased, if anything, skin surface circulation, and secondly, because I know from personal experience that when wet in ordinary clothing or woollens the last thing I want is for these clothes to be pressed against me and rubbed. It makes me feel very chilly indeed.

In the Dry Way, coffee and glucose were taken, at a time when she was moving reasonably well. Ray and I were against her taking the coffee or a large amount of glucose, especially as we were well within one hour of gaining surface. The First Aid booklet which I own implies that my view was incorrect and that "tepid to warm, sweet drinks" are good. I previously read that there was not any urgency to dilate blood vessels around the stomach in such a case as this, which surely would be the immediate end of taking warm drinks?

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 16 June 1969

STUDENT RESCUED FROM CAVE AFTER DRENCHING

A 17-year-old student was rescued from Swildon's Hole Cave, Mendip, after she was drenched in water. "I was climbing up a steel ladder when it swung under a waterfall," said Linda Teer, of Churchill. "It was so sudden that it took my breath away. I felt weak and then I began to shake with the cold." Linda, who was with two other Weston-super-Mare Technical College friends, tried again but she was trembling too much. "I was frightened of going under the water again" said Linda. "So, one of my friends went for help."

Eventually 5 ft. 1 in. Linda was strapped to the back of Bob Lewis who took her to the surface last night. Linda added "There were several others with Bob and they were all absolutely terrific. All the way to the top they kept talking to me to cheer me up." This was Linda's second visit to Swildon's, although she had been caving six times. "I feel a bit of a fool, because I caused such a lot of trouble, but I intend to go again," she said.

25 October 1969 – Stoke Lane Slocker

At about 11:30 p.m. Luke Devenish received a 'phone call from Mrs. Martin Clotworthy to say that her husband had left Bath at 4 p.m. with two brothers (C.J. and R.G. Clotworthy) intending to visit Swildon's and be back in Bath for an appointment at 8 p.m. After a check had been made round the caving huts Wells Police informed Luke that a car believed to be the missing one was seen by a P.C. in Wells at 11:30 pm. Luke then retired to bed.

On Sunday 26th at 3:40 a.m. he was informed by the police that the car was outside Stoke Lane Slocker. Unable to contact Howard or Prewer, Luke got hold of Jim Hanwell, who told him that

for a certain reason most cavers were slightly unwell just then, but that he would collect a search party. Later Jim, John Cornwell and others found the missing men waiting in the Pebbly Crawl.

Their lights were adequate but they had lost their way. One of them had been down three times before. They had not been through the sump and were not very wet. They emerged at about 5:45 a.m. According to R.G. Clotworthy they heard not one word of criticism or rebuke from the rescue parties. (There are other versions! –Ed).

2 November 1969 – Swildon's Hole

At 10 a.m. four students (not U.B.S.S.) from the University of Bristol, David Lunan, Alan Hardie, Steve Jones and Peter Smart, all aged 20, went down the cave to do a Double Trouble round trip. They were due out at about 6 p.m. They were well equipped with wet suits, Nife cells, 60 ft. of ladder and two life lines. However, their equipment was better than their knowledge of the cave and their sense of caution was not highly developed for, on reaching that point in Vicarage Passage where one turns down left to reach the Landing in Swildon's II, they went straight on to Vicarage Pot, abseiled down it with all equipment, pulled the abseil rope down after them, and then discovered that they were in a blind pot.

At 10:15 p.m. Philip Shingler, a flatmate of theirs, rang Oliver Lloyd to report that they were overdue. Lloyd told him to ring the Wells Police while he himself immediately rang Luke Devenish. Alan Thomas and Tim Hodgkinson were stationed at the cave entrance while Tim Reynolds and Ian Jepson made an express trip through Sump I down the streamway starting at 11:10 p.m. Other cavers followed to lend assistance and to take in four goon suits and food.

Meanwhile a third party began a rapid search of Paradise Regained and the Troubles. Fortunately, Tim Reynolds thought to look along Vicarage Passage and found the four stranded in the Pot. A fourth party carried in more ladders and life line to speed the rescue. By now the first and third rescue parties had met and were moving out of the cave. At 2:40 a.m. everyone was out and the stand down was given to Bristol. The four victims were in good shape. The only problem was a serviceable stove to warm soups in the cave. It would be better to have polythene bottles of meths to burn in open tins, rather than rely on temperamental stoves.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 3 November 1969

TEAM SAVES STUDENTS IN WEST CAVE TRAP

Four students from Bristol University were rescued today from a Mendip cave. The Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation had been alerted after the cavers failed to return from Swildon's Hole, Priddy.

The students, all aged 20, were John Leman, Alan Hardy, Stephen Jones and Peter Smart all of 19a, The Mall Clifton. A police spokesman said later that although they were all suffering from slight exhaustion, they were not injured.

A spokesman for the rescue organisation said the cavers were on a trip to part of the cave called Double Troubles. They were 300 ft. below the surface. "It is considered quite a tough trip," he said.

The cavers failed to find a link way through the stream, and in error descended at the wrong place into Vicarage Pot.

"Thinking they were on the right route, they pulled down a rope after them, only to find they couldn't get back," said the spokesman.

The men were taken to the surface early today, four hours after the alert had been given.

4 November 1969 – Stoke Lane Slocker

The police contacted Jim Hanwell at 10:45 a.m. with news that a car containing clothes had been parked in Bector Lane above the cave since 9 a.m. the previous day. Jim took the Washingpool kit and met up with the others who had been contacted, just before mid-day, only to find it was a false alarm. The car owner was found in a West London Caving Club hut recently built in the valley near Browne's Hole. None of the party knew of this hut and it would have saved them a lot of trouble if they had been informed. Since then, the Club has written to inform M.R.O. and to offer help.

Source – The Mendip Caver Volume 5 Number 6 – December 1969/January 1970

Last Tuesday a Panda car was patrolling in the back lanes near Stoke Lane Slocker. They found parked in a lay-by a car containing caving equipment. Upon making enquiries in the nearby village, they found it had been there at least a day!

The Mendip Rescue Organisation was duly summoned from Wells. Upon arrival at the cave they found three squad cars and two Panda Cars in attendance, with "hundreds" of policemen milling around.

Before the rescue team descended they visited the caving hut near Browne's Hole. There, much to the embarrassment of the red-faced policemen, they found that the car owner was cooking his dinner.

27 November 1969 – Rod's Pot

At about 5 p.m. on the 26th Michael Hathaway (19) and John Mitchell (17) went down Rod's Pot. Both had had some previous caving experience; they had one Nife cell and one other light. They had left a message that they were going down Swildon's or Rod's Pot. When they did not return that night the police were informed, who later at 10 a.m. on the 27th called the M.R.O. Howard Kenney called out Brian Prewer, who raised a small party from E.M.I. in Wells. A lack of man power in Wells prompted him also to call out parties from Bristol, including Will Edwards, Tim Atkinson, Oliver Lloyd and Tony Philpott. Dr. Don Thomson was also called.

Brian Prewer collected the rescue tackle from Washingpool, in case one of the lost boys had fallen down the 50-ft. pot. First on the scene, however, was Malcolm Newson, who happened to be passing Rod's on his way to take water samples. He had already descended Rod's by the time Brian Prewer arrived, and at 11:30 a.m. re-appeared with the lost cavers, who were helped from the cave and given hot drinks and food. It appeared that the two lads had become lost in the boulders on the right-hand side of the main chamber. Their lights had failed after 5 hours, so they sat down and sang songs until Malcolm Newson arrived.

Note - It is very difficult to contact cavers after they have gone to work on a weekday morning. The rescue would have been carried out much more expeditiously if the police had informed M.R.O. as soon as they were told the two lads were overdue.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 27 November 1969

“LOST” CAVERS ARE FOUND SAFE

Two teenagers were taken to the surface of a Mendip cave this afternoon after spending all night lost underground.

John Mitchell (18), of 106 Queenshill Road, Knowle, Bristol and Michael Hathaway (19), of 22 South View, High Littleton, went into Rod's Pot, near Burrington, after work.

The alarm was raised after they failed to return home, and after a wide search, police found their car on a track near the cave.

Malcolm Newson, of the Wessex Cave Club, went into the pothole and found the two, who had no lights or food. The Mendip Rescue Organisation were also alerted.

As they drunk tea in a Mendip hut this afternoon, Michael said: "Going down was dead easy all the time. Then we discovered we couldn't get up again.

"We went round and round in circles, then my light packed up, and John's went very dim so we just sat and waited."

Source – Weston Mercury – 29 November 1969

CAVE RESCUE CALL

The Mendip cave rescue organisation was called out yesterday morning following a report that two youths and a girl were trapped in Rod's Pot, Burrington.

The call followed a police search for the vehicle in which they were travelling when they went caving.

14 December 1969 – G.B. Cave

On the Sunday evening M.R.O. was alerted by Dr. E.K. Tratman (not through the police) in respect of a party of cavers overdue from G.B. Cave. The party of four from the Croydon Caving Club went down G.B. at about 1 p.m. on the Sunday and went into the Ladder Dig locking the door behind them, according to instructions. On their return, the key would not open the lock. At 8 p.m. other members of the Club went to Dr. Tratman and collected a spare key. By 10:30 they had reached the Ladder Dig, where they found, as they had half expected to do, four scruffy, tired and miserable cavers locked on the inside of the gate. It was then, found that Dr. Tratman's key would not turn the lock either, and so they returned to Penrose Cottage to fetch a hacksaw. The gate was finally opened at midnight. Parties alerted at the Hunters' and elsewhere were then stood down.

Notes –

1. The practice of locking oneself down a cave should be discouraged.
2. The U.B.S.S. has decided no longer to gate the Ladder Dig Series.

Source – The Mendip Caver – Volume 5 Number 7 – February 1970

It happened to be the 15th Anniversary of the Club and on the Sunday a party of 4 decided to descend G.B. at 13.00 hours. The party correctly recorded the fact that they were down G.B.

at the M.C.G. cottage where all Croydon Caving Club members were staying, they were due to return by 17.00 hrs.

Between 4.30 and 6.30 that afternoon a mini bus stood near the cave entrance for the arrival of the 4 but no one appeared, as there were still a few of us at the cottage the bus returned and, all was cleared up and the cottage locked. We all returned, two of us went across the field still to find no one and the message which had been left, should they have returned during our absence (All thoughts of what had happened, to the party were that they were either lost or their lights had failed, not that they were hurt). Our first action came at 20.00 hrs when we decided to find what had happened so we decided, to get another set of keys if possible, so first going to the Axbridge hut without success, then on to Hunters. On arrival some discussion and varied help was given, finally a phone call was made to Professor Tratman in Burrington 3 to 4 hours later he was contacted complete with keys, so we hastily made for G.B. in the pouring rain with Professor Tratman following closely behind. On our return we informed, Professor Tratman that the police nor the M.R.O. had been, informed, so after a quick look at the cave entrance he made a general standby call to the M.R.O. Four of us changed quickly in the pouring rain and descended at a very quick pace complete with First Aid kit and food. It was 10.10 pm when the four entered. At 11.00 p.m. two of them came back with the news we were all waiting for, all were safe they had been locked behind the gate in the ladder dig and the key had stuck and they could not get it out. All were in high spirits after they had been locked in. All on the surface were informed by this time many people had turned up to give their assistance but it was not needed, only help needed was that of a hacksaw. At midnight 2 people descended with hacksaw and bag of tools to cut the four to freedom. All was quiet till the first of the rescued appeared at the entrance at 1:05 on Monday morning. By 1:20 all were out safely with the gate locked behind them.

Rescued: Paul Selby, Graham Denton, Eric Duggan and Lesley London.
Rescuers: Robin Walls, Allan Ockenden, John Joyce and Sue Taylor.

Source – MCG. Log Book Volume 3, page 42

A party of Croydon managed to lock themselves in the Ladder Dig Series until 2 a.m. on Sunday night – What idiots they managed to break the key off in the lock and were finally got out by the M. R. O.

Source – MCG. Newsletter No. 83, May 1970

Following a rescue after four Croydon cavers locked themselves in the G.B. Ladder Dig door was sawn off and is not to be replaced. The M.R.O. advise against ever locking yourself in a cave.

22 December 1969 – Poulmagollum

This was not an M.R.O. callout, but since M.R.O. tackle was used and is being called in question it is mentioned here. Two Dubliners were overdue from Poulmagollum on Monday, 22nd December due to failed lights. The Irish C.R.O. turned out from Belfast, Dublin and Loughrea and after 3 hours surfaced at noon on the 23rd with the two lost ones, who had by then spent 22 hours underground.

27 December 1969 – Swildon's Hole

Call out in respect of Miss Barbara Brown, aged 20, of Bath, who had difficulty in climbing back up the 20-ft. pot. The subject had a wet suit and had gone down the cave at 1 p.m. to Barnes' Loop. By 7:10 p.m. all were out of the cave. No further details available.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 12 (1969 to 1971), page 4

Mini rescue is Swildon's. Barbara Brown would like to thank all those involved in her extraction from the 20, and especially Bob Craig, Carl Pickstone, Mike York, Ian Jepson, Pete Bowler and the hauling parties.

Source – Pat Cronin's Log Book

Martin Bishop

After climbing at split rock quarry, drove up to Priddy, arrived just as M.R.O. were assembling on the green. Accompanied the second team down; casualty found at the base of the 20': Pat Cronin used as runner to convey initial update back to surface control.

1970's

14 February 1970 – Wookey Hole

Source – Daily Mail – 16 February 1970

LIFELINES TRAP WOOKEY HOLE DIVER

An underwater expedition to photograph the newly discovered 20th chamber in the Wookey Hole cave complex ended at the weekend when a diver twice became entangled in lifelines 50ft. beneath the surface of a subterranean lake.

Diver John Brooks of Southampton, was first in trouble in the Somerset cave lake when he got tangled in an old lifeline left by a previous underwater explorer.

His second mishap occurred in the 19th chamber of the tortuous underwater cave system. His own lifeline got so wrapped round him that he could not tell which way led to safety, and he was rapidly using up his oxygen.

Mr. Brooks said afterwards:

‘Luckily I headed in the right direction. I had enough air left for about 40 minutes, but I managed to free myself in ten minutes and swam to safety.’

The long-sought 20th chamber was discovered by a team led by Dr. Oliver Lloyd on a previous dive six weeks ago.

If it is sufficiently spectacular, the owner of the caves Mrs. Olive Hodgkinson, intends to sink a shaft from the surface to open it to tourists.

Mrs. Hodgkinson had other excitement over the weekend apart from the attempt to photograph the 20th chamber – her Alsatian Soula was having difficulty having pups.

But last night Soula was recovering from her confinement and six puppies survived.

21 February 1970 – Little Neath River Cave

A party of students from the U.B.S.S. were working down the cave when it flooded. They retired with ample lights and food to Genesis Gallery to wait for the flood to subside. Unfortunately the message they had left with the W.S.G. on the surface did not indicate that they were already prepared to "sweat it out", and the South Wales C.R.O. was turned out.

At 4:50 a.m. on Sunday 22nd February Dr. Tratman 'phoned Dr. Lloyd to say that a rescue party was wanted. Dr. Lloyd rang Luke (M.R.O. had not been officially alerted) and asked for divers from the Wessex and B.E.C. Huts, while he himself collected the sump rescue apparatus from the Medical School. He also rang Mel Davies to ask him to arouse John Parker. At 5:12 a.m., however, Luke rang to say that he had heard from the Wells Police that the operation was all over, so Mel Davies was stood down.

Note: It is a great help if M.R.O. is alerted at the earliest possible moment, instead of waiting until a call out is needed. It would also be helpful if telephones were installed at the Belfry and

Upper Pitts. A list of qualified divers in the Somerset Section of the Cave Diving Group has recently been circulated, which should be of assistance in a call out for sump rescue.

3 May 1970 – Goatchurch Cavern

Three youths from Bristol arrived at the entrance of Goatchurch at 7 p.m. They had one small torch between them and no boots or helmets. Only two went down as the third became scared. He sat at the entrance until 10 p.m. when, alarmed at their long absence, he ran down to the cafe in the Coombe and the manager rang the police. Luke Devenish was alerted at 10:20 p.m. and consulted Howard Kenney. The latter rang Tom Elkin at Churchill and asked him to carry out the rescue. Tom found them in the Boulder Chamber their light having failed, escorted them to the entrance and sent them home with a flea in their ear. He did not obtain their names. Stand-down to Kenney at 11:30 p.m.

9 May 1970 – Longwood Swallet

A party from Unit 2, Cave Research and Exploration of Thames Ditton, led by Martin Beales of Esher, Surrey, entered the cave at 10:30 a.m. The other members of the party were Mrs. Jackie Butler of Chessington, Surrey, Miss Katie O'Toole, Bernard Carter and Jim Haley.

In the main stream of August Hole between Fault Chamber and the end of the cave, Jackie Butler jumped about two feet, caught her foot in a crevice, fell and suffered a disabling injury to her ankle. Martin Beales decided to call out M.R.O. and instructed Carter and Haley to remain with the girl. Miss O'Toole had got no further than the main chamber of Longwood where she had decided to wait as she felt tired. Beales reached the surface quickly and ran to the farmhouse where Mr. Trim (the owner) permitted him to use the 'phone. There was some delay through contacting Axbridge, not Wells Police.

Kenney alerted Hunters Lodge and asked 12 competent cavers to go to Longwood Farm. Brian Prewer was instructed to collect kit from Devenish's home and take the spare Nifes, dry suits and telephones. William Stanton was called out and asked to collect the plaster of paris bandages from Manor Farm, Priddy to go to Longwood. Dr. Donald Thomson was asked to go to Longwood as quickly as possible. By 2:30 p.m. a party entered the cave with the usual rescue equipment and also a ladder for the Longwood main chamber drop. The 10' overhang and Swing Pitch were already laddered. Dr. Thomson entered shortly afterwards and caught up the main party. Brian Prewer began laying the telephone wire.

Mrs. Butler (widow aged 37) was found to be in good condition and cheerful. At 7 stone she was encouragingly light. Her boot was not removed so the ankle was not examined. Plaster of paris bandages were liberally applied and once set, Mrs. Butler began to walk out. The degree of co-operation by the patient was excellent and the nearer she got to the entrance the more rapidly she moved. Telephone communication was first established in Fault Chamber and from then on a fairly constant report of progress was received on the surface as Prewer followed up the rescue team. In the rift just above the Longwood main chamber drop, one of the rescue party dislodged several boulders at the point where one has to climb up vertically between boulders. This is an area which was made unstable by the 1968 flood. On the surface the suspense was considerable. Prewer was on the 'phone describing falling boulders and scattering cavers. Various noises could be heard over the line. It was some minutes before it became clear on the surface that no one was hurt and that the patient was on the up-side of the fall.

Haley came out at 4 p.m. looking very tired and Carter and Miss O'Toole at 4:50 with a huge box of photographic equipment. Mrs. Butler was life-lined up the entrance shaft with

instructions being given by 'phone from the bottom of the shaft. She emerged at 6:40 still smiling, colourful with her language and admired by all. Hot soup was given to her and then she was carried to the farmhouse and helped by other ladies to change. Mr. Trim happened to be going to the B.R.I. Bristol so he took Mrs. Butler in his car. Dr. Thomson had decided that an ambulance was not necessary.

Mr. Trim of Longwood Farm was most helpful, permitting us to use his telephone, house and yard. He lent us a thermos to take down a hot drink to the patient, but this was broken on its way out and will be replaced. There is a need for means of carrying hot drinks to injured or exhausted cavers. The soup kitchen is not the right answer. It wastes too much time when patients could be on the move. Suitably packed thermoses or self-heating soups are the answer and steps should be taken immediately to procure these for the main M.R.O. store.

Mrs. Butler was found to have a fractured ankle and was expected to be detained in hospital for 48 hours.

Source – Western Daily Press – 11 May 1970

FLYING ROCKS CUT OFF CAVE RESCUE TEAM



Martin Bishop on right

A rock fall brought drama to what started as a routine cave rescue operation in Longwood Swallet, Priddy, near Wells, on Saturday. Members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation were helping injured Mrs. Jacqueline Butler from Longwood August cave to the surface, when part of a roof collapsed. Huge boulders blocked an entrance. Mrs. Butler, aged 31, of Chessington, and two rescuers were left on one side of the wall of rock. Ten other Mendip rescuers, following behind were stranded on the other side. No one was hurt. It was a frightening moment for the party and for rescue warden Mr. Howard Kenny, who was directing the operation at the top with a mobile telephone. He said : "I heard someone shout that boulders were flying. Then over the telephone I could hear a roar. The next few seconds were very tense, waiting to find out what had happened. The rock collapse happened at a very narrow point. It was very fortunate that nobody was seriously injured," said Mr. Kenny.

Mrs. Butler and the two rescuers with her, eventually reached the surface with assistance from other cavers. She was taken to hospital with a suspected broken ankle. The other members of the rescue

party turned back and took a much longer route back to safety. Mrs. Butler fell while caving

400 feet below ground, with members of the Thames Ditton Cave Research and Exploration Society. The rescue took more than five hours. Dr. Donald Thompson, a caving enthusiast, from Leigh-on-Mendip, went below ground to treat Mrs. Butler's injuries.

Source – Willie Stanton's Log Book Vol.12, page 10

At 2:30 p.m. Howard called me out on a rescue (I was recently press-ganged into being 3rd M.R.O. warden). A girl had damaged her ankle in lower August Hole. I picked up plaster-of-paris bandages from Mrs. Maine and continued to Lower Farm (what changes!) where a Speleo Rhal party was ready to descend with them and the other kit. Don T. soon arrived and followed, as did Prew with telephone wire. I waited some time on the surface and then went down with a flask of hot coffee for the victim in response to a phone request. The route through Longwood seemed small at first but then quite short and easy through Christmas Crawl, which is reached by climbing up the opposite side of Great Chamber to the 40 foot drop without descending to the bottom of the Chamber. A 10 foot crawl enters August Hole above swing pitch. I found the party at the bottom of Fault Chamber, with victim plastered and in good spirits. Luckily she was lightweight (7 stone and a bit). Coffee drunk, all made a move outwards, and progress was slow but steady to above the 40 foot drop, where after the victim had passed the narrow vertical rift there was a mighty rumble of boulders and word came that two or three had moved and were precariously poised almost blocking the way. After some talk we (the rear-guard of seven) decided to return through August, and this was torturously managed, some of the tunnels seeming incredibly small before I got into them (when they weren't much bigger). So out, after the victim, and home at 7:30 p.m.. My new wet suit made in Grandola [Portugal] proved very satisfactory.

1 June 1970 – Agen Allwedd

At 4:05 p.m. Luke Devenish received a stand-by in respect of two cavers who had been lost down the cave for two days. He was to collect parties to arrive at 8 p.m. After 1½ hours telephoning he had raised three parties totalling 10 cavers. At 5:10 p.m. he received the stand-down. This shows how difficult it may be to rustle up parties during working hours. A full report has been received from Mel Davies and may be consulted.

5 July 1970 – Swildon's Hole

Two students from Clifton College, John Hopkins (18) and Philip Hoyland (15) descended the cave at 7 p.m. on the 4th July. They tried to get through the Troubles, got lost and started to return, but couldn't find their way back through Paradise Regained. So they waited in the Blue Pencil Area, where they were found at about 9 a.m. by Fred Davies on one of his early Sunday morning trips. M.R.O. had been alerted at 10 a.m. and Howard Kenney was busy on the surface when Fred got them out in good shape and with minimal trouble.

Source – Unnamed newspaper and undated

CAVERS LOST IN DOUBLE TROUBLE

Two students from Clifton College, Bristol, lost their way in Swildon's Hole, Priddy, and spent the night alone underground. When they failed to surface yesterday, police and rescue organisations were alerted. But the students were found 500 ft. along an underground passage by other cavers, who then guided them to the surface. The students were John Hopkins (18) and Phillip Hoyland (15). John said that they got as far as the section of the cave known as "Greasy Chimney" then became lost. "We found 'Double Trouble' but we could not find our way out

from there," he added. We were worried, rather than scared. I should have known the way, but I just forgot."

26 July 1970 – Sidcot Swallet

At 3 p.m. Howard Kenney received a call from the Weston Police to say that a party was overdue. Before he could get started, however, he received another call to say they were out.

4 August 1970 – Goatchurch Cavern

A schoolmaster called David Austin called at the Burrington Cafe and told the girl there that he was taking 5 or 6 of his boys down Goatchurch, and that if he was not back by 5:30 p.m. she was to take the appropriate action. The girl hadn't the least idea what this meant, but when the party became overdue had the good sense to get out the M.R.O. card and ring the Wells Police. Jim Hanwell was sent to the cave to investigate after Luke had checked at Burrington, and some hours later the schoolmaster rang up from Fontmell Magna, where he was staying at a holiday camp to say "Sorry, we forgot all about it". He subsequently wrote and apologised and sent £1.

13 September 1970 – Swildon's Hole

Two cave divers from the Plymouth Caving Group descended at 11 a.m. to do a figure of 8 trip. In the evening one of the surface party rang M.R.O. to say they were overdue. A later call to say that they were out was received soon enough to prevent rescue attempts. People often grossly underestimate the length of long round trips.

11 October 1970 – St. Cuthbert's Swallet

Sources – MRO records and BEC St. Cuthbert's Log Book 1969, page 34

About 12:30 p.m. a party of 5 B.E.C. cavers (Colin Priddle, Dick Wickins, Colin Dooley, Graham Phippen and Tom Gage) descended St. Cuthbert's with the intention of looking at Pyrolusite Series. Once there C.P. and G.P. climbed up in the terminal rift which was directly over the passage where D.W. and T.G. were standing. A ledge on which G.P. was standing started to crumble sending a shower of small stones to those below. He then yelled "there's a big one coming down". At the same time as the stone fell T.G. (aged 22 from Keynsham) was taking off his helmet to attend to his carbide lamp; when the stone hit him he had his helmet half off. The stone was about twice the size of a Nife cell, fell from about 25 feet and hit T.G. on the rear right hand side of his head. When the patient had quietened down he seemed very shocked, there was a large cut and so D.W. and C.D. went out of the cave for help. Meanwhile C.P. and G.P. helped the patient out of Pyrolusite Series and up out of the cave. All of the time he was slowly recovering and then caving without assistance. The party met Brian Woodward, Martin Mills and Pete Frankin at the top of Boulder Chamber. C.P. then went out of the cave to call off the rescue. Jim Abbott, Alan Butcher and Bob Lewis were passed on the way. On the surface everyone except a doctor was stood down. When the patient was near the entrance Alan Butcher requested one person to help in the Entrance Rift. Jock Orr was already there. At 4:07 p.m. the patient was out, looking quite fit. At hospital 3 stitches were needed.

Times –

2:40 p.m	Estimated accident time.
2:50	Estimated patient started out.
3:00	R.W., C.D., out of cave and alarm.
3:10	Martin Mills, Brian Woodward down with carrying sheet, rope.

3:20	Jim Abbott, Alan Butcher, Bob Lewis down.
3:35	C.P. out. Stand down called.
3:55	Alan Butcher out for one to help.
3:55	Jock Orr and Alan Butcher down.
4:07	Patient out and Jock, Alan, Martin, Brian.
4:25	Rest of cavers all out.

Lessons to be learned –

- Never take a helmet off underground.
- Don't climb directly over other cavers.
- Don't stand directly under climbing cavers.

The accident could have been prevented by observing any one of the above.

28 November 1970 – Swildon's Hole

At 11 a.m. a party of students from Cambridge University went down the cave and at 12:30 p.m. one of them, Roderick Leach (20) slipped down the Greasy Chimney and dislocated his shoulder. Two of the party returned to give the alarm, while the casualty remained where he was, unable to move for pain. After an hour and a half, he began to feel cold and the party moved towards the entrance.

The rescue was under way by 1:45 p.m. and Dr. Rogers, who had been somewhat delayed getting morphia, went down later with Fred Davies and met the casualty at about 4:30 p.m. in Trat's Temple. He was in considerable pain, supporting his injured arm with his other hand, but his morale was good. Rather than render him a stretcher case by giving morphia and attempting reduction of the dislocation, it was decided to go on as they were. He emerged at 6:30 to 7 p.m. and was taken to the Bristol Royal Infirmary, where his wet suit was removed, and the shoulder dislocation reduced.

Bob Craig writes as follows:

'When I was called out at 2:15 p.m. from the Hunters the rescue had already been in progress for about 30 mins. A caver had a suspected dislocated shoulder after attempting to climb the Greasy Chimney. A request was made for first aid equipment and it was suggested that I collect it from Upper Pitts on my way to the green. At Upper Pitts I asked for the first aid equipment and was given a large box, which was marked with a red cross on a white circular background – the usual sign with which first aid equipment is identified. On opening the box on the green it was seen not to contain first aid but a various assortment of tins containing food etc. A further 15 mins. was wasted getting first aid gear from the Belfry. Further time was wasted when we met a caver returning from the cave who said the 20' was not laddered. On arrival at the 20' there were at least two ladders, one of which was hanging down the pitch. I met the first rescue party about 100' past the mud sump and the injured caver was on the move and in good spirits. Apart from the earlier delays the rescue went quite smoothly especially at the 20' where Fred Davies did a good job arranging a traverse, making the 20' ladder climb un-necessary. Telephone communication was made with the surface when we reached the stream from Trat's Temple. Although taken down, the carrying sheet was not used.

Source – BEC Log Book 1969, page 43

Stobart, Bozeat, Abbot

Were informed at 1:30 p.m. by University Caving Club member a “bod” had dislocated shoulder in Greasy Chimney. Phone calls made to M.R.O. wardens from Dolphin Cottage. Quick dash down with tackle and met “bod” in shivery state. Abbot and Bozeat went out very quickly to get Doctor. Stobart stayed with other rescue party members and proceeded to exhume “bod”. Out at approximately 7:30 p.m.

Note – Doctor met “bod” at 20 and recommended “bod” to get out under his own steam.

Source – Bath & Wilts Evening Chronicle – November 1970

TEAM HAULS CAVER FREE

A cave rescue team brought an injured man from Swildon’s Hole, Priddy. Mendip Caving Rescue Organisation were alerted on Friday at 1:45 p.m. At 7 p.m. they brought Mr. Roderick Leach, 20, of Cambridge, to the surface. He had a shoulder injury which was treated by Dr. Alex Rogers before going to Bristol Royal Infirmary.

29 November 1970 – Rod's Pot

Stephen Close, aged 14 of 10 Green Dragon Road, Winterbourne was caving with the 1st Winterbourne Scouts when he fell down the crack just inside the first chamber and hurt his knee. The rescue party consisting of Dr. Cannicott and Messrs. Rees and Hanwell entered the cave at 12:45 p.m. Air splints were used, just in case the bone was broken, and the subject was extricated quickly.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 30 November 1970

YOUTH GROUPS ATTACKED OVER CAVE “EXODUS”

Youth organisations were criticised after a Bristol Boy Scout had to be rescued from a Mendip cave at Burrington Combe.

Mr. Howard Kenney, a member of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, said it was a matter of grave concern to the organisation that caving was being used to instil leadership and, initiative into young people.

“I am all for getting lads caving, but I am absolutely against a mass exodus into the underground,” he said.

“Quite often, ‘they go down just because they don’t want to lose face with their friends,’ said Mr. Kenny.

“This factor leads only too often to rescues of the sort we have just undertaken,” he said.

The boy, Stephen Close, (13), of Winterbourne, Bristol, was with a party of four Scouts and three Scouters, when he fell 15 feet down Rod’s Pot.

The Scouts are members of the Winterbourne Downs First Scout Troop.

Dr. Stanley Cannicott, of Cheddar, went down the cave to put the boy’s leg in a splint.

He was taken to the Bristol Royal Infirmary, and later discharged.

Source – The Times – 30 November 1970

Stephen Close, aged 13, of Winterbourne, near Bristol, lay in a pothole for three hours yesterday until Mendip cave rescue team reached him. He had fallen 15 feet from a ledge and was taken to hospital with a broken leg.

29 November 1970 – Eastwater Cavern

At the height of the storm that afternoon a party coming out found the stream too high to negotiate. One eventually emerged and went to one of the caving huts for a rope and some help. The other members of the party were then extricated. There was no M.R.O. call out. It is gratifying to note that on this afternoon Mr. Main closed Swildon's Hole because of the storm.

28 December 1970 – Longwood Swallet

Howard Kenney was called at 6:30 p.m. to say that a party was overdue from Longwood. He replied "Ring me back in an hour, my tea's getting cold". At 7 p.m. he was rung to say all was well.

1971

3 January 1971 – Malicious call

The Kent Police rang to say that a party was overdue from a cave near Folkestone. It was alleged that the caller had tried to get hold of Oliver Lloyd without success and that his name was Philpott. The police had no further information, no doubt because they seldom get cave rescue calls. We checked with our two Philpotts with no clue. Luke did some 'phoning with no luck. The Kent Police concluded that the call must have been malicious.

24 January 1971 – Swildon's Hole

Eleven Midsomer Norton scouts went into the cave about 10 a.m. They were led. by John Dando, from Midsomer Norton. Their driver, Dudley Soffe, a schoolmaster aged 38, accompanied. the party which included his son Adrian. Father was lightly clad and it was his first caving trip He stood 6 ft. and weighed 14 stone. In trying to get headfirst down through the tight rift at the head of the Lower Oxbow (Upper Series) he became jammed and unable to help himself. Dando alerted M.R.O. and Howard Kenney raised a party led. by Peter Franklin at 1:30 p.m.

Pete sent in John Van der Plank and Alan Butcher to assess the situation and report. Meanwhile, Fred Davies, Ray Mansfield and Steve Wynne-Roberts had arrived at the Oxbow from further down the cave. The smallest were able to touch Soffe from either end, but he was unable or unwilling to help himself and remained stuck. By 3 p.m. no progress had been made. The situation was compounded by someone in Dando's party, now out the cave, reporting that Soffe was an epileptic. Howard Kenney contacted Dr. Davies at Midsomer Norton and found this was not so. The son Adrian was not able to help. About 3:30 p.m. Soffe was given Dexedrine and glucose to buck him up. Fred Davies and Ray Mansfield came out at 4 p.m. and gave a pessimistic report on the failure to move Soffe, although ropes had been attached to him fore and aft. John Bacon, Alan Green and Ian Jepson went down to replace early rescuers. Richard West followed with more glucose and chocolates. Hot soup was sent down. A full-scale call-out was made and a medical warden requested since Soffe was reported to be weakening. Brian Prewer laid a telephone from Fountain Cottage to the entrance. Pete Frankling handed over the surface control to Jim Hanwell and organised new shift at 4:45 p.m. They carried in

more hauling ropes, crow bars and stemples Howard Kenney arranged for the police to bring lights and stood by the Fire Service in view of a bad weather forecast. R.A.F., Lyneham advised hourly on the latter. The Wells Red Cross provided 10 hot water bottles which were filled, then insulated with fibreglass, and sent underground with gas cookers to heat replacement water. In the event they could not be got to the patient to good effect, though may have helped the rescuers. Bristol Waterworks started their pumps and reduced the water level. Later the Cheddar Brigade pumped the entrance virtually dry, which was a great help. Steve Wynne-Roberts advised the use of compressed air jack hammers to enlarge the passage. Luke Devenish arranged the supply of the equipment locally and from Bristol and supervised its installation. Ear protectors were provided from R.N. Yeovilton, who also brought inflatable jackets and dinghies in case required! Lilos and inner tubes were acquired on request from below to try and jack up Soffe.

Dr. Bob Everton went down at 5:45 p.m. followed by a new shift carrying in recently arrived equipment. Doctors Parker and Whitcher arrived later. Soffe was given 7 mg. Valium intramuscularly at 6:45 p.m. Bob Everton returned at 8:30 p.m. and was not hopeful. He was replaced by Dr. Parker. Willie Stanton plus a new shift went in to attempt enlarging the lower passage at 8 p.m. Whilst they operated from below various hauling techniques were tried from above. Howard Kenney was asked to standby further relief teams at 3-hourly intervals in case the cave needed to be enlarged more. By 10:30 p.m. Soffe had not budged. By 11 p.m. came the first reports that Soffe had been fractionally moved. Small pneumatic stemples provided by the Fire Service had enabled haulers to lift rather than pull the patient. Rapid progress followed. He was put into an exposure suit and was clear of the cave just after midnight in a distressed but remarkably good state in the circumstances. Dr. Parker accompanied the ambulance to Bristol Royal Infirmary. The cave was cleared by 1 a.m. All equipment not claimed was taken to Wells Police Station. Relief teams had been stood down by 11:30 p.m.

This rescue proved more difficult than could possibly have been envisaged. Had Soffe helped himself earlier it would have been simple to get him out. As it happened he would not budge, which must largely be attributed to his inexperience. He became a very serious exposure risk, being stuck fast for over 10 hours in light clothes already sodden. Pessimistic reports from experienced wardens and cavers made it essential to draw on all possible resources which those in charge underground felt might help. A relief party under Dr. Lloyd had been stood by to turn out at 11 p.m. and another under Alan Thomas was to be ready at 6 a.m. Most of the equipment provided was not vital as it happened, but may well have proved necessary had the rescue been even more protracted.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 13 (1971 to 1972), page 2

Call out 1:30 p.m. from Hunters' Lodge for victim stuck in Swildon's Oxbows. After much effort by many people a very lucky man was extracted about 11 p.m. and was out by 12 p.m.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 13 (1971 to 1972), page 3

A large party of cavers from several Mendip clubs entered the long muddy oxbow and after a long struggle managed to rescue a 16 stone long wedge shaped obstruction.

Source – Western Daily Press – 26 January 1971

CAVER TELLS OF HIS TEN-HOUR ORDEAL

Schoolteacher Mr. Dudley Soffe, rescued from a Mendip cave on Sunday night, told of his ten hour ordeal wedged in a 12 inch underground passage, with his head only inches above water.

Mr. Soffe, aged 38, was still recovering in Bristol Royal Infirmary last night. "I shan't be going again," he said. "It was my first experience of caving, and not the kind I want to repeat." Mr. Soffe of Midsomer Norton, was with a party of Guides and Scouts, including his eldest son, Adrian, aged 14. He said he was about sixth in line when the party entered Swildon's Hole, near Priddy on Sunday morning. "The tunnel got narrower and narrower. The others ahead of me all squeezed through, but I got stuck in a bottleneck," he said. "First my bottom stuck, then my shoulders. In the end I just could not move an inch, and the others could not move me either.



Mr. Soffe, a maths teacher at Norton Hill school, is six foot three inches tall, and weighs about 14 stones. "When the rescue team arrived they could not move me either, and by the time I was so exhausted that I couldn't do much to help them," he said. "wasn't ever actually frightened that I wouldn't be got out – I just felt desperately tired. It wasn't until I was out that I realised what a near thing I'd had. Last night I was so feeble and stiff I couldn't even turn over in bed. I'm covered in bruises. The rescue people were marvellous. They must have been exhausted themselves, but they were terribly careful with me," said Mr. Soffe.

Source – Somerset Guardian & Standard – 29 January 1971

FIRST TIME EVER AT POTHOLING SCHOOLMASTER IS TRAPPED 10 HOURS IN MENDIP CAVE

A Midsomer Norton schoolmaster, Mr. Dudley Soffe (38), went caving in the Mendips for the first time at the weekend and became trapped. He was rescued early on Monday after spending ten hours underground in a passage less than a foot wide.

Mr. Soffe, of 24, Somer Avenue, is married with five children. He became wedged in Swildon's Hole, the biggest cave in the Mendips.

Police and ambulance men were joined by cavers from all over the South West of England.

The Royal Naval air station at Yeovilton brought in inflatable dinghies and a chest harness as water began pouring in to the pothole.

Rescuers reached him by midnight, and on Monday he was suffering from exposure. Mr. Soffe left home on Sunday morning with his 14-year-old son, Adrian

The party was organised by the 1st Midsomer Norton Scout group, and two Ranger Guides were among the 12 who went underground. Mr. and Mrs. Soffe came to Midsomer Norton from Essex five years ago. Mr. Stoffe is head of the Maths department at Norton Hill comprehensive school, Midsomer Norton. Mrs. Soffe said on Monday, "Everyone has been wonderful, and I am only happy that my husband is safe. That is all I worry about. They kept me in touch with all that was happening." The Mendip rescue organisation under the leadership of Mr. Luke Devenish undertook the work of rescue, Mr. Soffe being stuck upside down on a sloping surface.



Rescuers had to enlarge the aperture in which Mr. Soffe had become stuck and to do this had to take a compressor underground. Mr. Soffe, who was injured, was eventually released shortly after midnight

Firemen from Wells, the Somerset County Ambulance and local building contractors all helped to play a part in the rescue.

The leader of the 1st Midsomer Norton Scout group Mr. David Wilshire, said, "We are regular cavers, and this was just another trip, one of many we do in the year.

"The party included an instructor and a very experienced caver, who could take over if necessary. There were also two venture scouts, who have done a lot of caving and all but two of the party had been down on quite a few occasions.

"The two girls had also been down before.

“The trip they were undertaking, was not at all an unreasonable one for a first trip for anyone, and they were only traversing the passages in the first section of the caves. “They went down about 11 am and Mr. Soffe became stuck about 1.30 pm in a narrow twisted section.

“At least three others of the party had already gone through. When he became stuck, the party managed to move him back a bit, but then it became apparent that further help was necessary. After leaving someone at Mr. Soffe’s head and feet, the instructor made his way out, going himself because he knew he could get out quicker than anybody else. He found another party on their way in, and a third party at the entrance preparing to descend.

“He asked one of these other cavers to go down and bring the rest of the Midsomer Norton party out, while another caver went to phone the police.

“The Midsomer Norton party was not trapped below by the fact that Mr. Soffe was stuck, for there are several alternative ways in and out.

“Once the Mendip Rescue Service had been alerted, they took over, and once they had the right equipment in position, it was not long before we heard he was on the way up. I was not in the party, but I went up there when this happened.”

Source – Unknown Newspaper – Unknown date

10-HOUR CAVE RESCUE ON MENDIPS

A ten-hour rescue operation on the Mendips ended when a potholer was brought to the surface after being trapped 400 feet underground.

Mr. Dudley Soffe (43), of Midsomer Norton, who was stuck in a passage only 12 inches wide, was taken to hospital suffering from exposure.

The Mendip Rescue Organisation, led by Mr. Jim Hanwell, were alerted at noon on Sunday, and soon more than 50 rescuers were on the spot.

They were assisted by the Royal Naval Air Stations at Yeovilton who brought an inflatable dinghy and harness. They also provided ear protectors to protect him from the vibrations of drilling equipment which had been rushed to the cave by the police.

The RAF at Lyneham helped by supplying special up-to-the-minute weather reports for the Priddy area, and Bristol Waterworks diverted water to reduce the flow into the cave. One of the rescuers, Dr. William Stanton, said of Mr. Soffe ‘He is a very lucky man. We first tried pulling him with ropes, but could not get the pull in the right direction.’

Mr. Soffe, who was given glucose and an injection to help him relax, was not released from the narrow passage until special hoist and levering equipment was brought by the County Fire Service.

He was with a party of Scouts from Midsomer Norton. His son was in the group.

Source – Willie Stanton’s Log Book Vol.12, page 53

At 5:30 p.m. I was called out to a Swildon's rescue. On The Green, Jim was in charge of a large crowd of cavers, police, ambulance etc. A large (six foot three inch, 14 stone) man was stuck head down in the tight bit of the lower Wet Way oxbow, since about 11 a.m. There was an undercurrent of urgency as he was said to be cooling down, and the Cowsh brigade (Fred, Ray, Steve W-R) had come out pessimistic as to his chances after failing to move him in three hours trying. I first arranged some hot water bottles from K.C. and sent them down full, wrapped in glass wool, then organised more, filled by old Mr. Maine, then changed and went down to examine the prospects for opening the lower way out of the squeeze, it being thought that this might be necessary. The stream was quite high and the weather forecast was bad, heavy rain soon.

The bottom end of the squeeze was just as small as I recalled it, but by prolonged hammering at all projections and ledges I widened it by an inch or two and lowered the pool by three inches or so. Even so it seemed too tight. There were fissures suitable for banging, and this seemed as though it might be a necessary last resort. About six inches in front of me was the victim's head and arms, fingers in the pool without feeling, groaning loudly and frequently but still perfectly coherent, chief cause of wedging a roof knob in the small of his back. Frequent attempts at pulling from above moved him not at all, but caused him a lot of pain and torn legs.

All sorts of aids came down including planks, inner tubes and foot pumps, pneumatic drills and air hose, but none were any use except the drill might have been only I was told weighed 60 lbs. (in fact 28 lbs.) so didn't have it passed down. Ray Bonnett (eight stone and very slim) went past me right up to him and did fine work psychologically chatting to Dudley as the victim was called and attached more ropes to him and finally by an acrobatic feat lay in the pool and pushed up on Dud's shoulders with his feet. Meanwhile a tiny expanding stemple had come down and was fixed in a roof rift above Dud's back and a rope passed over it and fixed to his shoulders by Ray.

At this point I had become very pessimistic, the one hope being that Dud seemed to have the constitution of an ox and also it evidently not occurred to him that he might not eventually get out alive. We had convinced him he had only been down three to four hours (actually nine), which helped. However, the shoulder rope proved the key, lifting him a bit, and all of a sudden he went up an inch. Instantly the atmosphere changed and amid great shouting and exhortation ("Wriggle, me old orange") prolonged over some 15 minutes, Dudley was hoisted to safety and a doctor's ministrations. Ray, Alan, Nick Maule and I retired from our side and lugged tackle towards or to the surface, in a much reduced stream (by fire brigade pump). Emerged amid police floodlights and crowds of onlookers, so home at 12:30a.m.

13 February 1971 – Porth yr Ogof

Search for Paul Esser, who died in a diving accident, was carried out by divers from Mendip as well as Wales.

Source – South & Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team web site

On the 13th February 1971 Paul Esser died in a tragic accident whilst diving in the submerged upper section of the Porth yr Ogof cave system near Ystradfellte. Attempts were made to recover the body over a number of weekends but these were hampered by the weather conditions and the equipment of the time. As a result, it was not possible to recover Paul. Since it was the request of his family that no further lives be put at risk to recover Paul, he has remained in the cave since that time. The family recently contacted the South and Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team with regards to the possibility of recovering Paul's remains for burial with

his parents. A highly experienced cave diver who is part of the Cave Diving Group visited the site where Paul lay and deduced it would now be possible to remove the remains from the cave. This decision reflects the advances made in cave diving equipment and techniques during the last four decades. In the early 1970's the core techniques and equipment were very much in development. In addition, the type and design of cylinders and regulators available seriously limited the time available for dives. Great progress has been made in the equipment, techniques and experience of cave divers since the time of the accident, although cave diving by its very nature remains a dangerous activity. On the 22nd April 2010, two highly experienced cave divers prepared Paul's remains for removal from the cave. Later in the evening, when the area was quiet, Paul's remains were discretely removed from the cave in the presence of a few members of the family. He will now lie in peace with his parents.

23 May 1971 – Priddy Green

At 12:30 p.m. Wells Police informed Howard Kenney that a party of one teacher and seven pupils from Kingswood School, Bath, had been reported as overdue. They had left school at 5:30 p.m. the previous day with the stated intention of exploring Lamb Leer first and Swildon's 2 afterwards. The School had expected them back fairly early on Sunday morning. A strong party was rapidly alerted, as a result of the courtesy of Hunters' Lodge, but within a few minutes the party's van was found on Priddy Green with the eight missing cavers sound asleep inside. The school telephoned later to apologise for the misunderstanding.

21 August 1971 – St. Cuthbert's Swallet

Whilst climbing a newly discovered aven in Disappointment Passage (on left of Gour Passage about 100 feet above the Drinking Fountain) a boulder was dislodged and descended about 20 feet striking the victim, Martin Mills, on the shoulder. Later inspection of the boulder showed it to be a "Mushroom" held by approximately 2 square inches. Since the climber, Ray Mansfield, was well above the original position of the boulder, no suggestion for the cause of the accident is offered. The victim descended 10 feet to the floor of the chamber from a ledge where he had been life-lining the climber. An inspection of the victim's head and trunk revealed no obvious broken bones. However, the loss of use of the right arm and the sloping of the shoulders indicated a possible broken collar bone or dislocated shoulder. One of the party was sent out via Mud Hall/Wire Rift to arrange the call out of M.R.O. and the laddering of Pulpit Pitch and Gour Passage Pitch, as these had been descended by abseiling.

The victim and the two remaining members then started out at about 5 p.m. A squeeze just below the aven was negotiated feet first, on his left side, right arm straight, with one person in front and one behind. Difficulty was encountered bringing the victim through the squeeze due to the razor rock snagging the victim and the pain experienced in manipulating his hips and behind. However fast progress was made down the passage. The 20-foot pitch which had been previously laddered, was descended by the victim using a lifeline for support. The descent of the rest of Disappointment Passage which, throughout is a steeply inclined rift passage, and up Gour Passage was made extremely fast, the victim setting the pace and as the party reached the bottom of Gour Passage pitch, the first of the rescuers arrived. The victim climbed the 20-foot ladder one handed, with help from the lifeline.

Pulpit Pitch was initially tried in a similar manner with hauling rope and lifeline. However, the climb up for the first 15 feet proved to be extremely awkward, so a rope boson's chair was constructed and the victim hauled up. Arete Pitch and Entrance Rift were easily negotiated and the victim surfaced at about 6:30 p.m. some two hours after the rescue.

The victim was taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary where they confirmed Dr. Pike's initial diagnosis of a punctured lung, although no bones were found to be broken.

Source – BEC St. Cuthbert's Log Book 1969, page 60

Milche, Ray Mansfield, Bob Mehew, Butch to carry on survey and exploration in Disappointment Passage. Accident to Milche by boulder dropping whilst climbing in new aven. Suspected fracture to collar bone. Sent Butch out to call M.R.O. and other three started out. Easy rescue as Milche did a hell of a lot to help himself. T/U four hours, taking two hours to get out. Large turnout from surface did a lot to help hauling up Pulpit and Entrance Rift.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 13 (1971 to 1972), page 36

A. Mills, P. Moody, A. Newport assisted one member of S.M.C.C. from St. Cuthbert's. The unfortunate Milche had stood under a climbing Mansfield. Only nominal assistance was required.

Source – Ray Mansfield's Caving Log Book Volume 6, page 2

MM, BM, RM and Butch to Disappointment Passage, Cuthbert's to find way and climb Aven, RM led climb and about 25 feet above Milche must have dislodged boulder which hit Milche. Butch to get M.R.O. team and BM and RM get Milche to small pitch below Pulpit where Alan Mills had rigged tackle. About 2 - 2½ hours on this rescue.

22 August 1971 - Went to see Milche in Bristol General Hospital he has a perforated lung but this does not seem too serious.

16 October 1971 – G.B. Cave

Ian Harrison, a novice caving with the Portsmouth College of Technology, got caught by some falling boulders some 60 feet from the entrance. These were floor-boulders that had become dislodged. They fell trapping him by the leg and causing bruising. He was freed by members of his own party but not before an M.R.O. call had been made by means of a 999 call to Axbridge Police. It seems possible that the Axbridge Police were not aware of the correct callout procedure and it is not clear whether they succeeded in contacting a Warden. The boulders are safe from further movement.

28 November 1971 – Eastwater Cavern

The day was one of steady drizzle and from about tea-time onwards the rain was, for a period of about two hours, very heavy on Mendip. The result was that the stream into Eastwater Cavern became much larger than usual. A party from Spelaeo Rhal were making their way out and met in the Traverse a party from the Portsmouth College of Technology who were very tired and very apprehensive as to the safety of making their way out through the boulder maze, which at that time was extremely wet. Mike Haselden, who was leading the Spelaeo Rhal party, advised them to remain where they were, and as Haselden's party was in much better shape they felt prepared to fight their way out against the rising stream. This they did successfully and alerted M.R.O. from the Belfry. The police alerted Howard Kenney who in turn arranged a party from Hunters' Lodge. Meanwhile the Spelaeo Rhal party also alerted cavers at Upper Pitts. At the same time the rain slackened with the result that the stream subsided and the rescue parties were without difficulty able to escort the Portsmouth party from the cave.

In conclusion it can fairly be said that the water conditions were exceptional and could not reasonably have been anticipated. It is also clear that the advice given by Haselden to the Portsmouth party to stay where they were was good sense. The only cause for anxiety is the fact that this is not the first time the Portsmouth College of Technology have been involved in rescue incidents and in view of the fact that they were already in an exhausted condition when they reached the boulder maze it does suggest that they are tackling trips which are really beyond the abilities of their members.

Time of alert; 7:55 p.m. Spelaeo Rhal: 5 in party. Portsmouth : 6 in party of whom 3 were very tired and 2 inexperienced. Out of cave at 8:25 p.m.

28 November 1971 – Swildon's Hole

7:30 p.m. Mr. Philip Jardine rang Oliver Lloyd to say that his son, caving with a school party down Swildon's, was overdue. As it was very wet he was anxious. O.C.L. rang C.H.K. and ascertained that no rescue was in progress. 8.0 p.m. Mrs. Jardine rang to say her boy was back home.

At 8:05 p.m. C.H.K. rang O.C.L. about the Eastwater trouble, just described.

1972

15 January 1972 – Ogof Fach (Penderyn)

A party from the Westminster Spelaeological Group was down the cave; Roger Solari and Tony Giles were diving and there was a support party, two of which went as far as Sump 2. On the return of these two they found that the duck in the by-pass to Sump 1 had sumped. One of them free dived it, but the second, Simon Mead King, was unable to do so. The first therefore came out of the cave for help.

7:35 p.m. Oliver Lloyd received a telephone call from Penderyn to stand him by for sump rescue apparatus. He was informed that Bob Churcher and Julian Walford (both qualified divers) had gone down the cave with a spare diving set, and that they ought to be able to manage.

8:20 p.m. O.C.L. rang C.H.K. to contact divers at the Hunters or Shepton.

8:40 p.m. C.H.K. replied that he had stood Brian Woodward and Phil Collett by. Martin Webster called at Withey and was also stood by.

9:10 O.C.L. rang Robin Williams, who runs the South Wales C.R.O. to find out if the rescue had been made official by calling the police. R.W. was out, but it was clear that this step had not been taken.

9:20 O.C.L. rang the Bridgend Police and told them what was afoot.

10:00 O.C.L. given stand down from Penderyn. He asked them to stand down the Bridgend Police and stood C.H.K. down.

When the two divers already down Ogof Fach returned a few hours later, they found King at the sump and gave him the requisite encouragement to get through.

Two points emerge from this rescue. One is that, although it may seem superfluous to stand by so many people for what turned out to be a simple operation, it is essential to make sure that you have an adequate team if the crunch comes, particularly for sump rescue. The second point is that it is absolutely necessary to contact the police in every case of cave rescue. They are always a help, however little they need to do; moreover, insurance cover only operates through the police, and such cover is essential for diving rescues, as they are always dangerous.

4 February 1972 – Search at Priddy

The police contacted Howard Kenney and requested assistance to search for Mrs. Hillard of Priddy who had been missing for a day. Jim Hanwell and Brian Prewer organised a search of cave entrances in the area and other cavers helped search fields. The subject was found drowned in a water tank on her husband's farm.

27 February 1972 – Swildon's Hole

Wells Police contacted Howard Kenney to say that a worried parent from Weston-super-Mare had reported her son overdue from a trip down the cave with a local scout group. The party appear to have misjudged their time underground for they got out rather late but unharmed. No general callout was necessary.

7 March 1972 – Goatchurch Cavern

A party of naval cadets from H.M.S. Daedalus, Lee-on-Solent, led by a Chief Petty Officer descended the cave during the afternoon. On arrival at the Drainpipe, one of the party, 17-year-old Paul Edwards, complained of headaches. On experiencing difficulty in negotiating the Drainpipe, he became unconscious and remained so after being extricated. Jim Hanwell, Brian Prewer, Phil Romford and B. Milner went to the cave at 5:30 p.m., closely followed by Dr. Donald Thomson.

By improvising a polythene sheet as a stretcher, the C.P.O. had got Edwards to the Boulder Chamber by the time the rescuers had arrived, but he was still unconscious. He was examined but had no apparent injuries or history of such illness. M.R.O. equipment was used for the remainder of the journey to the surface during which the patient became fitfully conscious. On reaching the entrance at about 7 p.m. Edwards regained consciousness and was able to walk with assistance to the waiting ambulance.

After an overnight examination in hospital, Edwards was released the following day. It would appear that he collapsed for no apparent reason, except perhaps fear!

Note – The chief nuisances following the rescue were the press and T.V. who worried the C.P.O. in charge for a "story". It is clear that the M.R.O. must be prepared to make their own reasoned press statements in future, otherwise inaccurate versions will be published and broadcast.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 8 March 1972

Paul Edwards (17), the boy seaman rescued from a Mendip pothole last night, was fairly comfortable in Bristol Royal Infirmary today. A rescue team took 3½ hours to bring him to the surface near Burrington Combe.

4 April 1972 – Swildon's Hole

The police alerted Howard Kenney at 7:30 p.m. regarding a message from a relative of Michael Cowlshaw, from Bath, that he and his friend William Collis were overdue from a Double

Trouble round trip. They had left a message at Upper Pitts anticipating being out by 6:30 p.m. Both were well equipped and active members of university clubs.

Jim Hanwell organised search parties to go down the Streamway and Paradise Regained. Others stood by on the surface and at Bristol in case needed with rescue equipment. Cowlshaw and Collis were found unharmed at the bottom of the Twenty Foot Pot at about 9 p.m. Their ladders had not been rehung by the previous party to leave the cave, despite being left in a very conspicuous place at the head of the pitch. All were out of the cave by 9:30 p.m. Many cavers seem unaware that, on seeing unused tackle at the top of a pitch, it is vital to substitute it when they remove their own ladders. This is an elementary piece of common sense which would save needless callouts such as this one.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 14 (1972 to 1973), page 9

Party (unknown) overdue from Swildon's round trip. Minor call out initiated by police. About 8 p.m. Party located about 9 p.m. stranded below 20 with their ladder still rolled at top. Both up on a tight line with no trouble, and carried their own tackle; out by 10 p.m.

Source – Ray Mansfield's Caving Log Book Volume 6, page 9

M.R.O. call out to Swildon's – party overdue on trip to 4. 10 p.m. Ian Jepson and Bob Cross found them waiting at the bottom of the Twenty as their ladder had been pulled up.

10 April 1972 – Stoke Lane Slocker

Frome Police were alerted by two young schoolboys phoning from Stoke Lane Quarry that someone was "trapped" in the cave. Howard Kenney received this information from Wells Police at 5 p.m. By then, however, the informants had left the phone and no further details were available. A full callout was initiated to be on the safe side.

Mike Thompson, Marcus Barton and Fred Davies got to the cave by 5:25 p.m. to find that youngsters Roger Crowden, Andrew Mostyn and Ed Tobin had got out of the cave and raised the alarm because their leader, 52-year old Reverend John Bridger, had been forced back by rising water at the entrance. He had retired to the Muddy Oxbow. Meanwhile, Jim Hanwell, Brian Prewer and Dr. Stanley Cannicott had been stood-by, but they were not required as Bridger was soon rescued with a bit of verbal encouragement.

In a subsequent letter, the Reverend Bridger explained that he knew the cave well and that he was taking three novices from an adventure camp in Dorset on "a quick in-and-out lasting 30 minutes". He had found difficulty in getting out the entrance against the water and so requested the three who had managed to reach safety to call the M.R.O.

The incident from the M.R.O. standpoint emphasises that it is essential that all informants remain at the telephone so that the first warden contacted can get full details of the incident from them direct. Had this been possible on this occasion, it would have been un-necessary to trouble so many rescuers.

28 April 1972 – Rod's Pot

Howard Kenney received a message from Wells Police that Peter Marshall, aged 26 from Frome, had been reported overdue by his wife. Dave Irwin went to Burrington at 7:15 p.m. to find that another party had contacted Marshall and brought him out. He had been lost and his light had failed.

28 June 1972 – Goatchurch Cavern

An alert was received at 6 p.m. that a party of "special care" children led by Christopher Watson from Cheltenham were in trouble. Howard Kenney contacted William Stanton and Tom Elkin, who was already in the area, went to the cave. By the time he had arrived the party had surfaced. It appears that one of the pupils had got into a "bit of a state" and delayed the party's exit.

23 July 1972 – Swildon's Hole

Source – Ray Mansfield's Caving Log Book Volume 6, page 11

FJD, ???, Dave? Of SRCC to Cowsh for a radio location, which needless to say did not work. A little trouble when Dave? Pulled a fairly large boulder onto himself. We later heard that he had a broken kneecap.

Source – Wessex Cave Club Journal No. 154 – August 1974, pages 80 and 81

Not Now And Again, But Again And Again And Again Part III by Fred Davies

Unfortunately the date chosen, the 13th August, was the day after the King's School Summer Ball. A bottle of whisky, bed - in the van - at 2.30 a.m. and up again at 7.00 a.m. to help clear up the debris of the ball is not a good prelude to a stiffish caving trip. Yet Ray and I made good time through P.R, and down Blue Pencil Passage carrying the usual load of chemical hammer. As we got to the bottom end of Blue Pencil we heard the Speleo Rhal boys just ahead of us dropping out into IV. There were only two of them, so even with the weighty packs of their radio location gear we made good time up Cowsh and Boss and Bladder Pots.

It was at Krapitan that the previous night's exertions made themselves felt. Shivering violently, yet sweating profusely, I was forced to empty my bowel. Hence the name Krapitan. Rather more slowly, and now at the rear end of the party, I staggered on and up. As my head came up to the top of the aven below Mansfield's Hole I heard a slight rumble, a yell, "Look out!", and a yelp of pain. I did not really believe that anything serious could have happened and I started making a few terse comments about "Getting out of the bloody way!"

As I wriggled more fully up into the small space available I found the low crawl into the Top Avens blocked by a rock about 12." by 12" leaving a 6" gap over the top through which Ray's anxious face was looking at me. Rather more thought provoking was the pair of feet poking out from under the rock. Dave, Mike Haselden's companion, taking the crawl on his back had pulled on a roof projection to ease his weight, and a block about 4' by 12" by 12" had started to drop. He had held the end nearer his head up from himself but the other end was on his knees, rather painfully so.

Some frantic work with pinch bar, hammer, rocks and slings finally got the boulder supported and Dave a little more comfortable, but he could not crawl from under it as his feet were jammed. It became very clear that if further help was needed I was the only bloke able to fetch

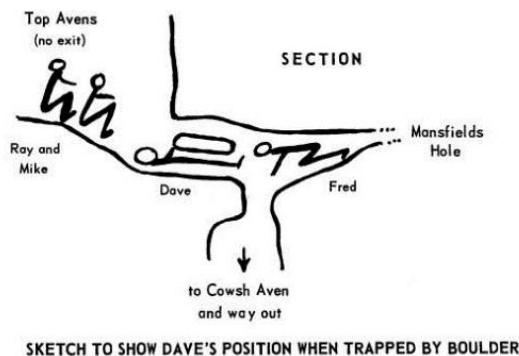
it, and further, with Brian Woodward and Tim Reynolds in Canada, I would equally certain have to return with that help and act as guide up the Cowsh climbs.

We frantically tried every possibility. After cracking some corners off other rocks with the hammer I managed to remove Dave's boots - that gave him space to manoeuvre his legs. Several times I raised the boulder a couple of inches and jammed chockstones under it, only to see them slip out as Dave tried to edge out. When this happened the boulder landed back on Dave's knee - usually painfully.

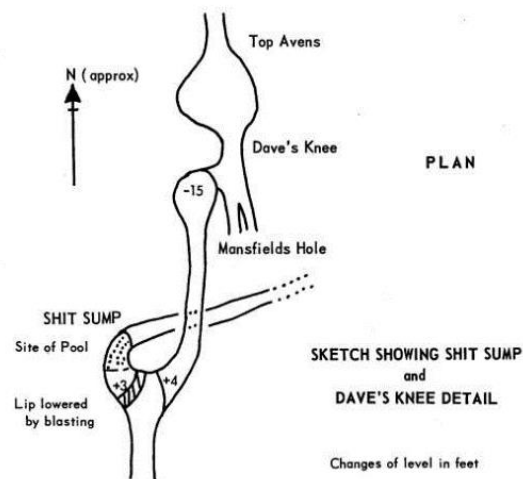
Then Mike had the brilliant idea of excavating some of the loose gravel from under Dave. This soon gave him that extra inch of space needed to carefully wriggle out and join Ray and Mike in the Top Avens. With Dave clear, we allowed the boulder to fall to the floor, where it still rests, leaving ample space for a body to pass over the top.

The radio location gear was rapidly assembled but did not provide the expected communication with the surface, and the morale of the party was by now very low. After less than half an hour of transmission we packed up the gear and left the cave. As we departed I fired a charge on the lip of Shit Sump merely to obviate the need to carry the stuff out of the cave.

Though suffering considerable pain Dave made his way out of the cave entirely without help. A letter from Mike Haselden a few days later informed us that he had in fact suffered a broken knee-cap - a great performance by Dave and Cowsh's first accident had been dealt with in the correct manner. The party involved had extricated themselves, and I had found an effective way to dispose of a hang-over!



SKETCH TO SHOW DAVE'S POSITION WHEN TRAPPED BY BOULDER



24 July 1972 – General alert

Mrs. Edith Kenney was contacted direct by the aunt of Mark Regan, aged 15 from Bedford. Regan had not kept an appointment with his aunt in Bristol following a weekend's caving with a party of bell-ringers. Frank Jones was contacted at the Belfry about 1 p.m. and agreed to look around Priddy. Regan was found in residence at Upper Pitts having failed to let his aunt know that he had decided to stay another night on Mendip. The police were told later about the incident.

It is vital that all rescue call-outs go to the police at Wells first and not to wardens. Also it shows that last-minute changes of plan can cause un-necessary problems.

22 August 1972 – Brockley Combe

Clevedon Police requested the help of M.R.O. via Wells Police to search local mine shafts for a mentally retarded patient missing from Cleeve. Howard Kenney was alerted in Bristol and Tim Reynolds went to Brockley Combe whilst Jock Orr ferried necessary equipment from the Belfry.

The search was called off when the patient was discovered sitting on the verge outside Howard Kenney's home at Chewton Mendip!

3 October 1972 – Swildon's Hole

William Stanton was contacted by Wells Police at 12:15 a.m. concerning a report from the Priddy Green call box that three were lost in Swildon's Hole. After difficulty in obtaining the call box for direct information, a further message was received from Wells at 12:30 a.m. that the missing three had surfaced unharmed.

Alan Foxwell, Catherine Koit and Sue Burrows had left a main party of Dreadnought Caving Club members to return to the surface as they were cold and dispirited. They got lost in the Upper Series and so were overtaken by the others. On reaching the green and not finding the three, the alarm was raised. No sooner had this been done than the delayed three arrived! Clearly, it is best to make a full assessment of the situation before deciding to call M.R.O.

8 October 1972 – Swildon's Hole

Five cavers in a Surrey Venture Scout group were on a private Double Troubles round trip when one of them, 19-year old Phillip Scott from Mitcham, became exhausted. He was wearing an over-sized wet suit that had been borrowed and plimsoles. It was his seventh caving trip and fourth one to the cave. He was poorly clad for his first trip through a sump!

A B.E.C. party chanced across the scouts in Swildon's II and assisted Scott through the sump. Here they met another B.E.C. party and, in view of Scott's weak state, M. Bishop left the cave to raise the alarm with the police and M.R.O. wardens. A rescue party organised by Ron Bennett went down the cave at 5:15 p.m. and gave "comforts" to Scott who had, by then, reached the Double Pots with much assistance. Other parties were stood-by at local huts, including Dr. Bob Pyke. By 7:50 p.m. everyone had surfaced and Dr. Pyke examined Scott. He was found to be in a very cold and exhausted condition and so was advised to rest overnight at the Belfry.

It was very fortunate that the scouts met up with competent cavers able to give help at the right time. Otherwise, with the inevitable delays in getting help from the surface, Scott would have been in a serious state.

25 October 1972 – Swildon's Hole

Howard Kenney received a call from Wells Police at Bristol about 3:35 p.m. On contacting the informant at Priddy, he was told that a caver had fallen somewhere in the streamway and sustained severe leg injuries, possibly fractures. Brian Prewer and Jim Hanwell were called out from Wells to organise the rescue and Jock Orr brought kit from the Belfry. Dr. Bob Pyke was called from hospital in Bristol and Wessex rescuers alerted.

On preparing to go underground at 4:30 p.m. the rescuers were amazed to see the subject walking back from the cave unaided! It was too late to stop others en route to Priddy. They arrived from far and wide by 5 p.m.

A party of Ilfracombe Youth Club members directed by John Stops, aged 25, had gone down the cave at 11:30 a.m. for a routine Sump I trip. They had caved the previous day in the Burrington area for the first time and were staying at the Mendip Caving Group hut. Having chanced across Frederick Leonard Burnham, aged 37 from Portslade, Sussex, it had been agreed that Burnham should lead the party since he had caved with the Unit 2 Cave Research, Exploration and Survey Group for 18 months. Burnham's 12 year old son joined the trip.

In attempting to climb the 8 foot drop (old 40 Foot) alongside another caver, Burnham fell off awkwardly and damaged his right knee. A subsequent examination in hospital revealed a torn cartilage and ligaments. However, at the time the injuries were thought to be more serious and youth club members had found their own way out to raise the alarm. Had the situation been assessed more carefully, a full callout could have been prevented. As it was, Burnham managed to get out virtually unaided, though a little shocked and shamed.

26 October 1972 – Stoke Lane Slocker

A four-man party of Venture Unit Scouts from Winscombe made their first trip to the cave and misjudged the time of their trip by about 2 hours. The alarm was raised by a contact in Oakhill at 7:25 p.m. and William Stanton and wardens attending the M.R.O. First Aid course at Wells stood by in case needed. The party surfaced at 8 p.m.

25 November 1972 – Sidcot Swallet

At about 2:30 p.m. Howard Kenney telephoned the Belfry and reported an incident at Sidcot. Dave Irwin took the message and proceeded with two others to the cave. Brian Prewer collected a second set of telephones (the first set had been used for the practice in St. Cuthbert's Swallet that was coming to a close when the Sidcot incident arose) and organised a number of cavers on standby at the Belfry and then continued to the cave entrance.

The victim Stewart Pancer, aged 27, from Southsea, was a member of the Portsmouth Polytechnic and had entered the cave at about 12:30 p.m. with one other companion. Pancer descended the Lobster Pot with difficulty and on his return from Paradise found that he was unable to re-ascend the upper part of the shaft back into the Water Chamber. After approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour a party of Sea Scouts left the cave to call out the M.R.O.

Dave Irwin descended the cave with Jim Dobson and Pete Marshall who found the victim below the Lobster Pot entrance. A ladder had been placed down the hole and Prancer was stripping off his boiler suit and surplus sweaters. First Prancer began re-ascending on the ladder but found that his shoulder jammed against a flake at the mouth of the hole, back down he was asked how he got down in the first place. He replied that he had forced his way down (he was 46 inches around the chest!) and had had difficulty with his Nife Cell. His arms were held above his head. So, he was told to re-ascend in the same position as he had when descending. With some help he was soon out of the hole. It was all over in 10 minutes and we all headed for the entrance. In the Boulder Chamber we met two B.E.C. manning the telephone.

Source – Unknown Newspaper – Unknown Date

RESCUE FROM A CAVE

Mendip Caves Rescue Organisation were called to Burrington Coombe on Saturday following a report that two cavers were stuck in a pot hole.

Eight members of the team dealt with the alert and they brought out Ralph Appleby of Dibben Close Lodge, Hythe, Southampton and Stuart Pancer of The Thornbury Hotel, Southsea. A police spokesman at Wells said that neither man suffered ill effects from the ordeal.

17 December 1972 – Read's Cavern

Jim Hanwell was contacted by Wells Police at 5:10 p.m. regarding a report from the Mendip Gate Cafe that three were missing from a party of nine "somewhere off the Main Chamber". Alan Thomas went to Burrington soon afterwards with a party of ten from the Belfry and Brian Prewer was stood-by at home.

A party of BS 14 Youth Club members from Bristol Youth Service had been led into the cave at about 3 p.m. by D. James. Subsequently, P. Francomb and M. Willcox, both novices, went missing. James set out to search for them and, when none had returned after about an hour, 17-year old Paul Connell, also a novice, raised the alarm. However, by the time the rescuers had arrived at 5:45 p.m. the whole party had surfaced. It transpired that Francomb and Willcox had lost their way somewhere in Zed Alley.

21 December 1972 – Eastwater Cavern

Five well-equipped cavers from Beechen Cliff Speleological Society, Bath, descended the cave at 3 p.m. They intended to explore the Beechen Series and Mud Escalator via the Walkinshaw Link. The first two, G. Veale and M. McCombe, descended the Escalator hoping to return to Jack Brownsey's Passage up the steep mud slide. After unsuccessful attempts to climb this without tackle (as recommended) two members of the party went for assistance leaving D. Reese at the top of the slide to keep Veal and McCombe company.

Whilst Howard Kenney called out Dave Irwin and Brian Prewer, Pete Moody and Greg Pickford went down the cave at 9 p.m. followed by R. Laws. They met the Beechen party at the bottom of the Dolphin Pitch, a little the worse for wear but unharmed. By using a waist sling they had got themselves up the bedding plane. All were out of the cave by 11 p.m.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 14 (1972 to 1973), page 69

Having returned from Sidcot Dig, got changed and had a meal. Two gentlemen arrived from Eastwater to say that three of their party were stuck at the bottom of the Mud Escalator. Greg and I went off down while the others went to alert the M.R.O. We met the missing three at Dolphin Pitch, they having extricated themselves from the Escalator. Greg went out to stand down the rescue while we marched slowly to surface, all alright but tired. Met Rich Law who helped with tackle near Baker's Chimney.

29 December 1972 – Porth–yr–Ogof alert

At about 6:45 p.m. Dave Irwin was informed by Wells Police of a request for assistance from the South Wales Caving Club H.Q. regarding three overdue divers. He telephoned through to Penwyllt and spoke to Sue O'Reilly who told him that they were short of both air and divers for any rescue. She requested a standby with M.R.O. apparatus.

Whilst getting Alan Thomas to alert local divers via Roy Bennett, Dave Irwin contacted Tim Reynolds at Wells. In the meantime, the Wells Police had been informed that the three divers had surfaced.

The M.R.O. Sump Rescue Apparatus is held by Dr. Oliver C. Lloyd and stored at the University of Bristol Medical School in Room G. 52. Dr. Lloyd also has an up-to-date list of cave divers.

31 December 1972 – East Twin Valley alert

Dave Irwin and team were surveying and inspecting sites of interest for the B.E.C. publication Burrington Atlas. A wet sink at the top of the valley was being inspected with a view of obtaining permission to dig. A tight 8-foot-deep rift was encountered and one of the party, all members of the B.E.C., descended "to have a look". On his return, a 40-lb. boulder dislodges itself and jammed his leg. John Reece, the victim, reported quite calmly that his leg was jammed and that the rock was exerting quite a pressure on it. At this point in time Reece was fairly comfortable and could lie in the low bedding approach to the rift. However, without clearing the site no one could get alongside to remove the boulder and the situation took a serious turn. It was decided to clear the floor under him and to the side of him and that M.R.O. should be alerted. Dave Turner and others continued digging and D.I. passed the alarm by phoning Howard K to put a Doctor on standby and also obtain more help from the Belfry and S.M.C.C.

In the meantime, the workers at the site were able to get alongside and see the boulder. With use of an ex W.D. tripod the boulder was prised off the leg and thus releasing it allowed Reece to crawl to safety. The rift is now blocked!

A basic mistake was made by not calling out by the Wells police - for this I apologise thinking that H.K. would have done so.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 2, page 167

I prepared to walk around Ebbor. As I left news came in of a rescue in Burrington. Rushed over and found a large amount of B.E.C. and tackle on the road by East Twin Brook Valley. A caver climbing in East Twin had a large boulder fall and trapped him by the leg.

The B.E.C. were there in an hour, and quickly talked him out. As I arrived, they were packing up, so I left.

1973

There have been 15 rescues including alerts during the year. Four of the six major callouts have resulted from bad falls, and 1973-74 might be dubbed the "Year of the Fracture". Two notable and ominous "firsts" have occurred; namely, the first abseiling accident in a Mendip cave and, recently, the first badly injured patient requiring rescue through a sump. These reflect the respective increases in abseiling and prussicking pitches and the trend for longer trips in Swildon's Hole by parties containing relatively inexperienced cavers.

J. D. Hanwell Hon. Secretary Mendip Rescue Organisation

21 January 1973 – Swildon's Hole

The M.R.O., in the person of Fred Davies, assisted me from Swildon's Hole after an accident on Sunday, January 21st.

I was leading a party of four, the others being George Milne, Tony Ashcroft and a prospective member. As this was the latter's first weekend's caving, the trip was intended to be an easy-going introduction to Swildon's Hole for him.

The stream was running fairly high, and just past the Double Pots, my foot slipped on a submerged rock, twisting my ankle slightly. I accepted it as one of the normal, run-of-the-mill knocks which would soon right itself if I kept moving, but just before Sump 1, my ankle became painful. After diving the Sump, I therefore told George to lead the others down-stream while I rested my ankle on the mud bank. When we returned to the near-side of the sump, however, my ankle had worsened. I was unable to place my foot on the ground, and moving my leg was painful.

I reviewed the route out of the cave, and decided that while I could hop and crawl much of the way, the Pots would be difficult to pass without the use of both legs, and the Inclined Rift, the Twenty, the Forty by-pass and the Well by-pass could be positively hazardous. I therefore sent Tony and the newcomer to summon assistance, while I started crawling, accompanied by George. Having struggled up the second pot, I managed to get up the second my bouncing up and down on my good leg until I had enough spring to hop to a ledge. I had intended to stop at the Inclined Rift, but eventually decided to have a go. It took time, but back and knee work got me to the top, leaving me with a fairly easy crawl to the Twenty. The pitch was obviously impassable without assistance, as I had the use of only one leg and the water was running fairly high.

After three passing cavers had agreed to hold me on a firm life-line, I decided to try the ladder. Fred Davies then arrived, with Tony Ashcroft in tow, and he took charge of operations. On a very tight line, I climbed the ladder. I found that my good leg was of very little use to me, as without two legs, it is not possible to make the ladder hold a firm line to enable my good foot to find a rung. I therefore had to climb the ladder using only my hands for most of the way. At the Forty, Tony and George knelt at the foot of the by-pass to enable me to crawl over them while Fred held me on a line.

More crawling led me to the well by-pass. Climbing the wall with one leg is very tricky, and I would have had great difficulty in managing it if Fred had not assisted me. Even so, I had a slip, causing further damage to my ankle.

Fred, Tony and two volunteers took turns to carry me across the fields, and Fred drove me to Wells Cottage Hospital, where my ankle was X-rayed. Damaged tendons were diagnosed, and I hopped out swathed in bandages.

As this was the first time a club member has required M.R.O. assistance, I wish I could say a valuable lesson had been learnt from the accident. Unfortunately, all I can say is that it was just one of those things - no amount of care could possibly have prevented it.

I feel I should end with a word of thanks to Fred. His expertise and quick grasp of the individual and collective difficulties which faced me ensured my speedy, safe exit from the cave.

Harry Whitehouse

28 January 1973 – Rod's Pot

About noon, Linda Cooke, of Keighley, Yorks, aged about 20 and a novice caver with a party from Portsmouth College of Education Outdoor Pursuits Society, fell some 10 feet down a rift just inside the entrance. Her ankle was twisted, and she suffered a slight concussion which soon appeared to wear off. Wells Police informed William Stanton of the situation and a party left the Belfry with M.R.O. equipment.

The rescuers arrived at 1:35 p.m. to find the Police and ambulance men already by Bath Swallet. The latter provided an inflatable splint which was put over the damaged ankle by the B.E.C. party. A qualified nurse happened to be a member of the college party and was able to give expert help with bandaging Linda's wounds. She was brought to the surface at 2:40 p.m. The college party comprised of 2 experienced cavers and five novices doing their second day's caving.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – undated clipping

GIRL IN COMA SAVED 70 FEET DOWN

The Mendip cave rescue team yesterday saved 18-year-old Linda Cooke, trapped injured and unconscious 70 feet underground in Burrington Combe. Miss Cooke, of Keighley, Yorkshire was potholing with students from the Portsmouth college of education and two nurses. She fell 12 feet, breaking an ankle and suffering head injuries. The rescue team spent three hours trying to get her out, hampered by the narrow tunnel. Police said the nurses tended the girl while the team tried to reach them. They came out through Rod's Pot. Miss Cooke regained consciousness later in Weston general hospital.

28 January 1973 – Box Mines alert

Jim Hanwell was contacted by Wells Police at 11 p.m. concerning information from Corsham Police in Wiltshire that some local children were lost in the mines. He contacted Wiltshire Police from the Wells Station and found that 8 local lads, not cavers, had gone down the mines about 3p.m. Two had returned after a dispute with their friends but the others failed to appear and so the police were notified. A search was made by two cavers from nearby, and at 12:30 a.m. Hanwell was informed that the missing six had been found unharmed. No official callout was required.

Source – Bath Evening Chronicle – 29 January 1973

PHEW, WE'RE RESCUED

A horse painted on a tunnel wall helped rescue six Wiltshire youths lost in a huge network of tunnels and caves near Bath.

The painting was a vital clue for two youths who found a way out.

Their four friends were lost in the caves at Box for nine hours yesterday. The last was brought out at midnight.

The rescue story was told by Andrew Morgan, 18, of Greenhill Gardens, Hilperton, Trowbridge. He and David Miles, 19, of Short Street, Melksham were first out.

They had gone into the old Bath Stone workings with Christopher Rowland, of Whitley, Melksham; Basil Drakeland (?), of Church Lane, Melksham; John Jenner, of Ivyfields, Corsham; Leslie Jefferies, of Tupman Road, Melksham, and Graham Lye of Neston Crescent, Neston, Corsham.

The drama which was played out virtually unknown by people living in the area, started at 3 p.m. when the youths descended into one of the disused quarries about half way up Quarry Hill, Box.

There are an estimated six miles of passages and caves and a complete search could take a week. Andrew Morgan said : "I had been down before on a number of occasions and knew my way around fairly well. I certainly never expected to get lost.

He explained that for the lighting they used strips of asbestos Perspex. These burn with a naked flame, and each stick, nine by two inches, lasts for up to 45 minutes.

"When we first got down I knew where we were, but the others kept wandering about, chasing bats, and getting deeper into the quarries," said Andrew, "I tried to tell them they were going the wrong way, but they ignored me.

"After about three hours we began to get worried. Many of the tunnels led to dead ends and some of the lads were dizzy and tired."

His friend David Miles, suggested they should try and find the way out, leaving the others at a point which marked as "fourways" on the wall.

"We told them to stay there and not move, for we were sure that someone would know how to get back to Fourways. We left them nine of the asbestos sticks, which was sufficient for about six hours light.

Andrew said they followed marks on the tunnel walls but some had been altered and were confusing.

"Suddenly my foot scuffed against a piece of polythene which I remember having passed on the way in. I looked around and saw the drawing of the horse on the wall and then I knew where I was" he said.

"After that it was a simple matter to get out. We told the police and a search party went in to find my mates.

A police spokesman said today. "We had the help of a number of young men who know the caves well, and we received particularly valuable assistance from two brothers named Hall. There was never any question of the men being in any real danger. It just took a long time to find them."

Mrs. R. Handcock, wife of the licensee of the Quarryman's Arms, on Quarry Hill, said. "I did not know anyone lost in the quarry. Usually they use the inn as a rescue headquarters, but this time we saw no one."

The last survey of the quarries was done in 1965 by the Cosham Caving Group. They mapped 23,000 feet of workings. The longest "route" extending for nearly threequarters of a mile and the small side tunnels went about 100 feet long.

The last major alert was about four years ago when some schoolchildren were lost in the Quarry Hill area. They were found shortly after the alarm had been given.

The quarries, which are believed to have been worked since Saxon times, form a vast complex extending deep under Box Hill with tunnels extending in all directions.

At present stone is quarried at Monks Park and there is also an industry in reclaiming the spoil dumped during earlier mining activities to make reclaimed Box stone.

The disused part of the quarries were extensively used during the war, when they accommodated the No. 1 Central Ammunition Depot at Thingley. In addition there were a number of underground factories including one operated by the old Bristol Aircraft Company. Today extensive parts of the mines at Copenacre are used as a Royal Navy stores depot.

15 April 1973 – Swildon's Hole

Victim Mr. David Dryden, from Oxford, with two other persons was returning from a trip beyond Sump I in Swildon's via the Wet Way. On reaching the "well" or 12 foot pot (between the Lavatory Pan and the junction to Kenny's Dig) he attempted to climb up at the point where the waterfalls, rather than the normal position approximately 15 feet back, and fell. The party split into two, one person going out with a report of a broken ankle, and the third person staying down to shelter and comfort the victim. M.R.O. was alerted and I appeared on The Green with the first two cars. Initially the M.R.O. comforts box and three persons were dispatched down the cave at 6:10 p.m. A runner was dispatched to the top of Swildon's Hole. At 6:28 p.m. on hearing no further advise from underground, a party of eight were dispatched with goon suit, carrying sheet, first aid kit and plaster kit. At 6:37 p.m. a further two ropes were dispatched to aid hauling up the well. At 6:40 p.m. the first message arrived saying that an R.A.F. medic had appeared in the cave on another trip and had diagnosed a broken left shin bone which appeared to be uncomplicated. At 6:50 p.m. Dr. D. Thompson and one other were dispatched with medical kit. At 6:51 p.m. another message was received from the cave giving further details of the victim and a request for pulley and belays plus soup for the victim. At 7 p.m. a further party of six were dispatched with belays and pulley, to stop on the surface by the entrance. At 7:18 p.m. soup was dispatched in a thermos flask. At 7:50 p.m. received information that the victim was by Kenny's Dig and that the ambulance should be called for; this was done. At 7:55 pm. The R.A.F. medic appeared with one other carrying some equipment. At 7:57 p.m. Dr. Thompson appeared. He had diagnosed a simple fracture to the left tibia in the mid shaft area, and had plastered the left leg. The victim was being carried out on the carrying sheet and was approaching the entrance. At 8:20 p.m. received information that the victim was out of the cave and a request for a rigid stretcher. At 8:24 p.m. a further request for a rigid stretcher. At 8:29

p.m. the ambulance arrived and the rigid stretcher taken across the first field. The victim was dispatched in the ambulance at 8:43 p.m. with one friend and Dr, Thompson's notes on treatment. The M.R.O. gear was temporarily stored in the police van and taken to Brian Prewer's house for drying. Mr. Maine was informed of the rescue's completion.

The police were informed of 15 people plus Dr. Thompsan who went underground and 8 people involved in surface work. The warden in charge underground was given as Brian Prewer and Surface co-ordinator Robert Mehew.

Supplementary - In a subsequent "thank you" letter David Dryden writes, "The accident was caused mainly through exhaustion...brought about by not eating a substantial meal beforehand. I had eaten something that didn't agree with me the day before and was feeling the after effects that day. Perhaps I'll know next time to abandon the trip if I'm not in A1 condition".

24 April 1973 – Swildon's Hole

Keith Derrick, aged 23 his brother Stephen, 20 and Allan Sutton, 19, from Lawrence Weston, Bristol, were reported overdue from an early afternoon trip down the cave. They were not members of a club. The police located their car on Priddy Green about 9:30 p.m. and informed M.R.O. via Howard Kenney. Brian Prewer and Dave Irwin were alerted to organise the search.

Ian Jepson, Doug Stuckey and Jim Durston, formed a party to search Swildon's 4 and the Trouble Series whilst a second party comprising Graham Wilton-Jones, Pete Littlewood and M. Rees went to Swildon's 2 and Vicarage Pot. Dave Irwin organised the surface arrangements and Brian Prewer's party took a telephone as far as Tratman's Temple.

The missing trio were found unharmed but shamed having abseiled down Vicarage Pot and pulling down the rope before realising their mistake. This was an exact repeat of the callout on 2nd November 1969. We hope the message has now been learnt!

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 14 (1972 to 1973), page 87

D. Gordon, I. Jepson, S. Wynne-Roberts, M. M. Thompson, C. Pickstone + others + numerous assorted B.E.C. to Swildon's at midnight to look for overdue party. Located by B.E.C. in Vicarage Pot, having abseiled in and pulled their rope down. Hope this isn't going to become a habit with Troubles parties. All out by 3 a.m.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 25 April 1973

A HUNCH SAVES THREE TRAPPED CAVERS

A rescue warden's hunch led to three cavers, trapped under the Mendips, being located early today. The three, from Lawrence Weston, Bristol, spent more than seven hours underground before members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation helped them to safety. Brothers Keith Derrick (23) and Stephen Derrick (20) and Alan Sutton (19), went down notorious Swildon's Hole in the village of Priddy, near Wells yesterday afternoon. Fortunately they left a message – a message that may have saved their lives – with friends on the surface. They said they would be out at 8 p.m. last night. But at 9:20 p.m. when there was no sign of the three cavers a rescue operation went into action. It was directed by the man who had a hunch about their position - Mr. Howard Kenny, warden (for the rescue organisation). Mr. Kenny has been a rescue warden for 25 years. He said today "There are many miles of passage, on the face of it, a search of the cave is a formidable task. But on past experience we had a fairly shrewd idea of where they

might be and we were right. They were in a very good shape when they came out.” The trapped men were 400 ft. below the surface and a mile from the entrance along a maze of passages. They had descended into a deep hole called Vicar’s Pot. The rope became detached at the top once the three had reached the bottom, and they were left with no means of return. Chief Insp. Denis Parkinson today praised the three men - because they left the message on the surface with their anticipated time of return. “This is something called for in all cases of potholing. It is a great help if cavers comply with this procedure,” he added.

24 June 1973 – Stoke Lane Slocker

A Wessex Cave Club party going down the cave was passed by a Cotham Caving Group party on its way out. The latter surfaced to be greeted by a heavy thunderstorm and the stream responded very rapidly. Fearing for the safety of the Wessex party, G. Marshall went to the Belfry for support whilst P. Cronin and one other returned to the cave to warn those still underground. The police were advised of the standby at 3 p.m.

The Wessex party were found making a rapid and safe exit before the stream rose to dangerous levels at the entrance. Stoke Lane Slocker is not a natural swallet, of course, and quickly floods following storms. There are plenty of places in Stoke 2 to sit out floods if the constricted entrance passages become impassable. Fortunately, water levels drop quickly after storms.

Supplementary – Dave Irwin unfortunately had a minor car accident near the Mendip Inn on the way over, but C. Kenney had to inform him that the police insurance policy does not cover motor accidents.

Source – Pat Cronin’s Log Book

Paul Hadfield, Geoff Marshall

Returning from Stoke II met with some Wessex boys before the Nutmeg Grater. Exiting found getting up the entrance tube heavy going as the stream volume had significantly increased. Outside a biblical rain storm was flooding the area, the stream rapidly rising. PH and PC suggested going back in to alert the others, while sending GM to alert the M.R.O. : their plan, to inform the Wessex boys of the state of the weather and to offer assistance to get to high ground in Stoke II and sit out this temporary flood rather than become caught in the low sections.

Re-entry was swift washed along by the increasing stream; several places were all but ducks. Found the Wessex had just returned through the grater and moving well; concerned, but without any panic. With the entrance some seventy metres away, the Wessex considered this was closer than running for Stoke II, collectively deciding to aim for the entrance; PH and PC followed behind the group. Most low parts of the streamway were now formidable ducks, at the entrance PH and PC managed to shove the others up against the torrent of an almost sumped entrance tube, PC was last to exit the cave assisted by a rope deployed from the surface team. As the team congratulated itself the entrance filled and disappeared.

30 June 1973 – Goatchurch Cavern

Michael Yeadon, aged 22, was on his first caving trip with four others from the 8th Pinner Scout Group, Middlesex, when he fell and dislocated a shoulder in the Water Chamber. He became immobilised by the pain. The alarm was raised by M. R. Hickman who was leading the party. Wells Police contacted William Stanton at 12:25 p.m. and he requested Dave Irwin to organise

those already in the cave to help. Dr. Stanley Cannicott was also alerted, and both were down the cave by 1 p.m.

The patient was injected with morphine, but attempts to return the shoulder failed. Thus, the arm was strapped and Yeadon encouraged to get out under his own steam by 2 p.m.

Source – Pat Cronin's Log Book

Called to assist a casualty with a suspected dislocated arm, not really needed many had already arrived; waiting at entrance.

Source – Bath Evening Chronicle – 2 July 1973

TWO MENDIP CAVERS RESCUED

Two cavers were trapped in different caves on the Mendips at the weekend.

The first report received by the Mendip Rescue Organisation at 12:15 p.m. on Saturday, was of a man trapped in Goatchurch Cavern, Burrington Combe. Two members of the rescue organisation went underground and rescued Michael John Yeadon, 22 of Ruslip, Middlesex.

30 June 1973 – Longwood Swallet

Christopher Tress, aged 27, from Kingston-on-Thames, was on the way out following a visit to the August Hole Series with three others from the Mendip Caving Group when he fell off the 10-foot climb into the entrance passages. He badly damaged his jaw and right cheek. Brian Prewer received the call from Wells Police at 3:10 p.m. A rescue party from the Belfry comprising of Bob Craig, Mike Palmer, I. R. Jones, Paul Radford and K. J. Malloy got to the cave with the necessary equipment at 4:30 p.m. They were met by Dave Irwin hotfoot from the earlier Goatchurch rescue.

The patient was given First Aid and persuaded to move out largely on his own. A sit harness was found to be very useful in helping him up the narrow entrance shaft. He was examined by Dr. Stanley Cannicott when he surfaced at 6 p.m. and then taken by ambulance to Weston-super-Mare hospital for treatment.

Source – Pat Cronin's Log Book

Called to assist a casualty apparently suffering from facial injuries; lot of people about waiting at entrance for deployment; used as support/hauling party.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 14 (1972 to 1973), page 102

Steve & Alison. Having conned Alison to come down Swillys in her new homemade wetsuit “without jock strap” had a good three hour trip in which she went through her first Sump 1. When we got to Eastwater Lane on the way to Upper Pitts we met Phil H. who invited us to go swimming as we were not due back for quite some time we proceeded to the B.E.C., who told us there was a rescue in Longwood. So we dashed over at such a speed that Steve McQueen would envy. We got to the ten foot to find out that the person had a crushed cheekbone and suffering from shock and slight exposure. The M.R.O. arrived on the scene, he was out without difficulty with us lot bring up the rear.

Steve (?) and Alison Hooper shot over to the Belfry, to find a call-out in progress. Bob Craig had heard of a solo caver who had fallen off the 10 foot drop in Longwood and broke his jaw. So we set off, dropping off the gear at the end of Eastwater Lane, and drove like the clappers to Longwood. While I changed Steve and Alison set off to the cave. When I got there, oppressed by horseflies attacking flesh uncovered by neoprene, and boiling in those parts that were. I met another caver, and two lads from S.S.S.S. Steve and Alison had gone down the cave; the caver was a guest of M.C.G. He was bleeding, but comfortable, although those with him were worried about exposure.

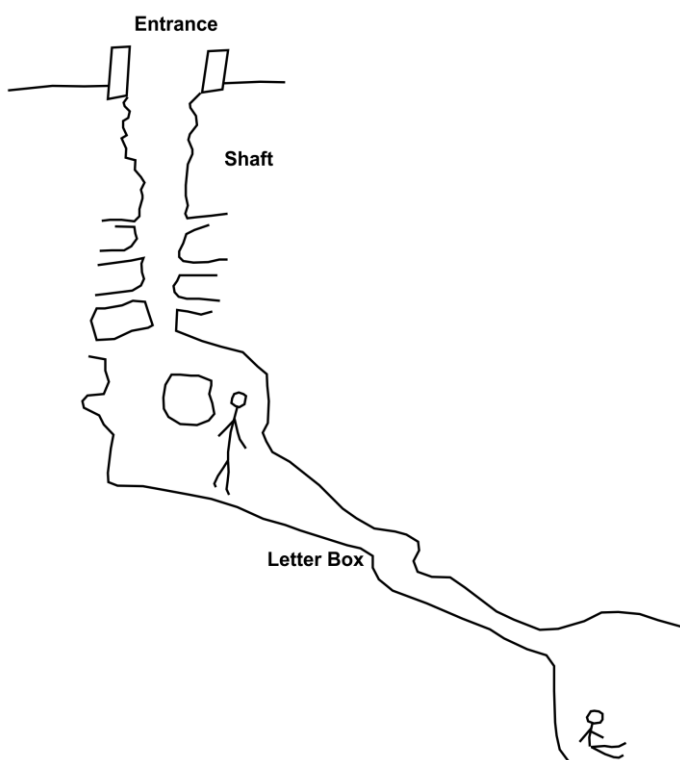
After what seemed an age Bob Craig and some others arrived, with a bloke called Dave (?), Wig was also there. Dave went down and I followed with a first aid case.

A steep shaft/rift with footholds between the beds went about 30 feet down then down another 10 feet either side of a boulder. A small rift, high enough to stand in, led down to a steep tight bedding plane. To the left the Letter Box led to a short (2 foot) drop to a small chamber then a very tight low rift led to the drop where Chris, as his name turned out to be, had fallen.

I passed down the ammo can, and learned that Alison had had to cuddle Chris to keep him warm. He had lost a fair bit of blood, his right eye was black and all the right side of his face was swollen. Dave started cleaning up the blood, and applied a bandage. I meanwhile passed a rope through the squeeze and bedding planes to help the bloke up. It was decided to get him to help himself as much as possible.

Bob Craig overtook me and I passed a Comforts tin through followed by a few jumpers as Chris was cold in his wet suit and they were removing the top.

I had no effective wet suit top, as my zip had thoroughly disintegrated on the surface!



At last Chris was mobile. A ladder had been rigged on the pitch (there had only been a rope at the time of the accident) and Bob moved it back about 10 feet. Chris on a very tight line got up the pitch in good time. I was first on the line and there were people behind (all the way to the entrance, I found out later). We had a good surface link all the way and messages for equipment and reports were passed in record time.

Bob was coming out backwards with Dave behind Chris. Chris informed us that he had injured his right leg which slowed him down a bit. The exertion started bleeding from his nose, he was a pretty sight!

It took a rope to manoeuvre him through the W bend and I had to talk

Bob through – this was a really difficult job, moving backwards as he was.

Eventually he got to the small chamber and everyone moved back one station. I then talked Bob through the Letter Box, and he did the same for Chris.

At the rift Chamber I moved into the roof, Bob called for a William's Harness and then they strapped Chris in. He was in pretty good shape considering. He was able to mumble pretty coherently through his smashed face. A point of detail I'd have forgotten was recovering his Nife cell to prevent its obstruction.

With Chris in the William's Harness the surface team started heaving. I exited, to find a policeman, two ambulance men with stretcher and a remarkably fresh Alan Thomas. The guy I'd dropped off at the Wessex had brought a bottle of lemonade, but the surface team had drunk most of it – swines!

In no time at all, Chris emerged, less than two hours from the time I went down. A scruffy looking individual turned out to be a Doctor, just come from attending a dislocated shoulder in Goatchurch. Chris was put on a stretcher and after a quick examination was taken to Weston-super-Mare Hospital. They couldn't deal with him there, so he was taken to Bristol. We later learned that he'd broken his cheek bone and had hairline cracks in his jaw.

No one appeared to be descending the cave so I went back to find Alison in the Letter Box trying to get the tackle out. I helped it all to the rift chamber and Alison went out, and Steve, another guy and myself started getting the tackle up the entrance shaft. Allison had to come back to help as all the other people clad for caving had pissed off.

We got away by 7 p.m. and sped back to Priddy for a shower and meal. Apparently the rear party found it unpleasant crawling over the blood in the bedding planes!

Source – Salisbury Caving Club Log Book Volume, page 10 (1 July 1973)

A. Sparrow, A Sole, C. Sage. Quick trip down via wet way to main August stream. Bottomed cave and returned via Christmas Crawl. Trail of blood from rescue the day before found on entrance squeezes. A bit sweaty in the dry passages – otherwise a good trip. Time : 2½ hours.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 2 July 1973

POTHOLER IS HURT IN FALL

Mr. Christopher Tress (24) suffered facial injuries after a fall while potholing in Longwood and August Hole in Charterhouse at the weekend.

Members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation helped Mr. Tress, of Iden Green, Kent, to the surface. He was today said to be "fairly satisfactory" in Bristol Royal Infirmary.

Source – Bath Evening Chronicle – 2 July 1973 – page 10

TWO MENDIP CAVERS RESCUED

Two cavers were trapped in different caves on the Mendips at the weekend.

A similar incident at Longwood Swallet, Charterhouse was reported some two hours later.

Eight members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation went underground and ten remained on the surface.

At 6 p.m. Christopher Tress, aged 27, of Kingston, Surry, was brought out with head injuries.

15 July 1973 – St. Swithin's Day alert

The Meteorological Office issued a general warning that up to 2 inches of rain could fall in the Mendip area during the afternoon. Wells Police notified Dave Irwin of this at 12:30 p.m., requesting that steps be taken to deter people going down caves liable to flooding. After consultations with Howard Kenney, the information was posted in local caving club headquarters and parties intending to visit Swildon's Hole were warned. In the event, the local falls were not as prolonged as first feared.

22 July 1973 – Swildon's Hole

Howard Kenney received a telephone call direct from Mike Collins, Caving Secretary of the M.N.R.C., at 7:20 p.m. informing him that his friend Douglas Stephens was stuck on the far side of the Little Waterfall just inside the entrance at the beginning of the Dry Ways. In a subsequent letter, Mike Collins explains, "I was asked by a party coming from Swildon's Four to show them the short way out so they could get out before their lights faded. This I did, but Doug Stephens who is rather stocky got stuck, but adequately protected and would not suffer from exposure. I left the cave to summon assistance on Priddy Green. The chaps I helped went back down the cave to the rear of him via the Old Grotto, and one directly to him so he wouldn't be alone too long...".

To bring the saga to a happy conclusion, the three rescuers from the St. Alban's Caving Club quickly extricated Stephens.

Conkwell Cave No. 1 (near Bradford on Avon) - 22 August 1973

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 23 August 1973

PUPIL TRAPPED FOR TWO HOURS UNDER ROCK

A West schoolboy was recovering today from a two hour ordeal in a disused quarry trapped beneath a huge rock the size of a wardrobe.

Anthony Comer (18), of Dane Rise, Winsley, near Bradford-on Avon, had to be freed by firemen from a shaft in the disused Conkwell quarry at Winsley.

He was attended by Bath casualty officer Dr. Roger Snook and taken to the Royal United Hospital, Bath for observation on a sprained ankle. He was allowed home today.

The incident happened last night as Anthony, an experienced caver, and his friend John Gibbs (17) of St. Nicholas Close, Winsley, decided to explore the old shafts.

The two boys clambered through the maze of tunnels separately. As Anthony went to search for a rock for a schoolmaster friend he was trapped by a rockfall.

His father Mr. Allan Comer said today: "He was properly dressed and they alerted people outside the quarry that they were going in.

“The two boys were separated in case anything happened.

“A large piece of stone came out of the roof, but Anthony was aware of it and jumped out of the way.

“But it trapped his boot and he fell over, spraining his ankle.

The rock was too big to move, so John, a young soldier home on leave from the Army, went to get help from people living nearby. Mr. Comer was alerted.

He went into the cave to talk to his son. They were planning to lever the rock away when police and firemen arrived.

After a long battle, Anthony was freed by firemen using hydraulic jacks and levers.

Anthony a sixth former at Fitzmaurice Grammar School, Bradford-on-Avon has been caving for four years.

But Mr. Comer today warned inexperienced people against exploring the old quarry, which supplied the limestone for the Limpley Stoke viaduct over the River Avon.

“Anyone venturing into any quarry who is not experienced should only go in with experienced people,” he said.

27 October 1973 – Sidcot Swallet

Wells Police telephoned Howard Kenney at 4:30 p.m. requesting him to contact a Mr. Greenway at Burrington. It transpired that a party of five from Wolverhampton were in the cave when one of their carbide lamps came to pieces. Fearing that they might be gassed, three of them fled to raise the alarm supposing that their two companions might have been overcome. During the telephone conversation, the other two appeared. The small quantities of acetylene gas from a carbide lamp are unlikely to be harmful in roomy caves, though quite low concentrations are combustible, of course. Do not attempt to seal the gas in since it detonates on compression to about two atmospheres.

12 November 1973 – Swildon's Hole

Graham Price went down the cave about 7 p.m. with the intention of abseiling down the old 40 ft. Pot on a double line. They looped their rope around two small stalagmites on the right side of the former landing. Both the Townhills made successful descents; however, when Graham Price began his abseil, the loop flicked off the belay and he fell about 30 feet with the loose rope. Fortunately, he did not crash on those below, but landed on his left hip sustaining a multiple fracture of the pelvis and a not too serious internal rupture.

Telephoned Dave Townhill who had raised the alarm from Priddy 385 who said that Graham Price had fallen down the Old Forty Foot in Swildon's Hole while abseiling. Graham is the Cerberus Hut Warden and he was taking him down the cave with his brothers Dave and Robin Townhill. Dave said that Graham was in some pain and refused to move but had no information as to the area of pain or nature of injuries. Told Dave to remain at barn until rescue teams arrived.

Telephoned Jock Orr at the Belfry who said no-one resident at the Belfry or Upper Pitts but that Bob Meyhew was about. Asked Jock to instruct Bob to go down the cave immediately to ascertain the situation, with instructions to pressurise Graham Price to come out under his own steam if injuries slight, or to return to the surface immediately with as much information as possible if it was clearly a stretcher case.

Telephoned Roger Dors at Hunters' Lodge to see if any cavers there. Wally Willcox was the only person there so C.H.K. gave him the combination number of the Store and instructed him to take all the rescue equipment needed for a stretcher case including hauling ropes and medical kit and one dry suit to Priddy Green and wait there for a rescue warden to arrive. Telephoned Tim Reynolds who by chance was meeting Fred Davies at Hunters' Lodge in ten minutes time. Asked Tim to call out Jim Hanwell and get Fred to go home for him kit. Telephoned Brian Prewer and in discussion with him decided that he should take telephone but not immediately install them in the cave as communication from the Forty Foot to the surface was not a very great problem.

Brian Prewer agreed to call out a medical warden and managed to get hold of Stanley Cannicott. At request of Brian Prewer C.H.K. stood by Brian Milner for telephone duties. C.H.K. telephoned Will Edwards of the Wessex Rescue team and asked him to organise a party of six to go to Priddy immediately.

C.H.K. contacted Nigel Taylor and Steve Tuck and asked them to go to Priddy immediately. C.H.K. contacted Dave Turner of the B.E.C. rescue team and asked him to stand by six competent cavers but to remain home until they were called out.

Contacted Alan Thomas and asked him to stir up Dave Irwin who was not replying to his telephone.

Alerted Oliver Lloyd and pointed out to him that he was on store duty and would he contact Brian Prewer the next day in order to assist with tidying up the equipment and store. Dealt with calls from Radio Bristol which started at 9.15 and broadcast live over the telephone at 10:45 to give them a factual account of the situation.

At the request of the wardens on the site, called out Dave Turner's party numbering seven at 11:20 as report received that the carry out was proving difficult and exhausting. Took immediate steps to organise another stand-to party and contacted Bob Craig for this purpose who organised a party of four; only this number because he had difficulty in waking people up at this hour. Report received from Priddy Green at 12:25 that the carry out was now going well and that I could, therefore, stand down Bob Craig's party.

Dealt with calls from the police concerning ambulance, kept Wells police informed as to what was going on and also dealt with telephone calls from the B.B.C.

Sid Hobbs informed CHK at 1:30 a.m. that Graham Price had just come out of the cave. Informed Wells police who did not know at this stage.

Some difficulty was caused by the fact that the Priddy Green call box was out of order. Spoke to a Mr. Feltham at the Bristol headquarters for telephone maintenance and expressed M.R.O.'s concern that such an important call box should be out of order. Mr. Feitham explained that call box repairs always received priority but the problem was that often no-one took the trouble to report that the box was out of order. He fully appreciated the need for this particular box to be kept in good order.

Reported to Wells police that the numbers involved were 26 underground and 6 on the surface which substantially agreed with figures already given to the police.

Stephen James Dinham Tuck telephoned CHK at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, November 14, that he had broken his glasses during the course of the rescue and wondered whether this was covered by the insurance. C.H.K. advised him that he thought it was and suggested that he obtain as quickly as possible an estimate for their repair or replacement and to send this to the M.R.O. secretary, Jim Hanwell, for submission to the police. Informed police at 7:15 immediately following Stephen Tuck's call of the possible claim and particularly asked that the information be recorded.

Telephoned Stanley Cannicott on the 14th to thank him for his help with the rescue.

Supplementary - Graham Price went down the cave about 7 p.m. with the intention of abseiling down the old 40 ft. Pot on a double line. They looped their rope around two small stalagmites on the right side of the former landing. Both the Townhills made successful descents; however, when Graham Price began his abseil, the loop flicked off the belay and he fell about 30 feet with the loose rope. Fortunately, he did not crash on those below, but landed on his left hip sustaining a multiple fracture of the pelvis and a not too serious internal rupture. It is believed that the fall occurred because the rope was dry and stiff so "stood up" off the belay when the abseiler briefly supported his own weight on the ledge below the lip of the pitch.

1 December 1973 – Eastwater Cavern

Howard Kenney received a call from Wells Police at 7 p.m. to say that a Mr. Edwards from Byfleet, Surrey, was anxious about his friends, overdue from a trip down the Twin Verticals route. They had gone down at about mid-day and had hoped to be out by 5:30 p.m. at the latest. They were adequately equipped. Edwards was advised to return to the entrance and await a rescue party. If the cavers surfaced in the meantime, he was to go to the Belfry and stand down any rescuers there. Alan Thomas was contacted at home but, by the time he arrived at the Belfry, Edwards had turned up with news that his party had got out having misjudged the time.

1974

Cave Rescues and Incidents for the year ending 31st January 1974

There have been 15 rescues including alerts during the year. Four of the six major call-outs have resulted from bad falls, and 1973-74 might be dubbed the "Year of the Fracture". Two notable and ominous "firsts" have occurred; namely, the first abseiling accident in a Mendip cave and, recently, the first badly injured patient requiring rescue through a sump. These reflect the respective increases in abseiling and prussicking pitches and the trend for longer trips in Swildon's Hole by parties containing relatively inexperienced cavers. Whilst M.R.O. is strictly concerned with cave rescue matters, we feel obliged to urge more thought in using these new climbing aids and greater care regarding the composition of parties, especially on long trip.

By now, most cavers will know that Mr. Albert Main died early this year. His active life in Priddy spanned the entire history of exploration in Swildon's Hole and no farmer has been so involved in caver rescue work. Even on the last Swildon's rescue in November he was as helpful and anxious as ever for the person concerned. This organisation has no better example of tolerance and service and Mr. Main is sadly missed by us all.

J. D. Hanwell, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer

10 January 1974 – Sludge Pit Hole

Wells Police contacted Jim Hanwell at 2:40 a.m. reporting that a worried wife from Bristol had phoned in regarding an overdue party that had gone down the cave the previous evening. A patrol car was looking for the cars described by the informant. Whilst explaining that these would most likely be in Eastwater Lane if the party was still underground, a further message was received from Bristol reporting the safe return of the cavers. They had been delayed by a puncture. Surely, it would have been better had those involved troubled to contact their homes to announce the delay to avert needless worry and a rescue alert.

19 January 1974 – Swildon's Hole

Lindsay Smith, a 22-year old student with a Bath University C.C. party visiting Swildon's 2, fell at the 11ft drop in the Old Approach Passage. It was suspected that he had fractured an ankle, though he was found to have both tibia and fibia broken. Two of the university party coming out to raise the alarm were met by Nigel Taylor. Howard Kenney received the callout via the police at 8:40 p.m. and requested Nigel to form an advance party. He then proceeded to make a general stand-by of wardens and local rescue teams.

Dave Irwin organised the various teams on the surface and the residents of Fountain Cottage kindly allowed the use of their facilities as a base.

Oliver Lloyd brought out the Mark 2 Sump Rescue Apparatus and stood by on Priddy Green in case it was needed at Sump 1. Fred Davies took charge of the underground operations. After a rapid assessment of the situation, he resurfaced at 10 p.m. to report and collect hauling gear with additional ropes and sit harnesses to lower the patient down the 40 ft. drop out of the Old Approach. Meanwhile, Dr. Don Thomson and Chris Foster set out with medical kit. Brian Prewer and party laid a telephone line through the sump, it being agreed that sufficient fast-moving cavers were available to render a surface link-up unnecessary.

Whilst the leg was being plastered, Fred Davies' party arranged tackle for the lowering operation making two dummy runs. Using sit harnesses; Paul Hadfield "piggy-backed" the patient and both were played-out by Fred Davies through a belayed figure-of-eight descendeur. This proved very successful. Smith was in good spirits and able to help himself a lot. He had been given tablet pain-killers rather than injections because of the long journey ahead.

Sump 1 was the next obstacle overcome without difficulty. The telephone greatly enhanced the towing technique used. It was only his second time through a sump. Dry clothes and a goon suit were made available on the upstream side of the sump; but, the additional plaster supplied from Wells in case replastering was necessary following immersion was not required. Fresh teams took over the carrying at strategic points and useful progress was made upstream.

Another useful technique was pioneered at the 20 foot drop to keep the patient clear of the waterfall. A line was threaded through the belay halfway up the climb out on the left, taken to the belay over the boss at the top and then stretched taut. Thus, after a short haul up the left side, the patient was then suspended by karabiners and cradled across the head of the pitch on the traversing line. A short-knotted rope with karabiner was found very helpful when easing the weight from above in narrow passages.

Smith was out of the cave by 5 o'clock on the Sunday morning and taken to hospital in Bath in remarkably good spirits. Forty-nine rescuers had been underground, a further 30 were on local stand-by and another 19 awaited instructions at their homes. This was the longest distance haul

yet made on Mendip and the first serious injury in Swildon's 2. It is probably not without significance that Lindsay Smith was the only member of the Bath party without a wet suit as well as being the least experienced caver. He had been caving five times previously, including one much shorter trip in Swildon's.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 15 (1973 to 1975), page 24

Ken James entered the hut at about 8:15 p.m. and took about five minutes to persuade us that he wasn't joking about a rescue in the Black Hole Series. So most of Mendip went down, and over the next nine hours pulled a lad with a broken leg out from Old Approach Passage (He'd fallen down the 11 foot climb). Such fun! All out about half five a.m.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 3, pages 252 to 253

Back at Wessex, showered, changed and cooked a meal. Then cadged a lift to the Hunters' with Fred Davies; halfway through my first pint Roger said that there was an M.R.O. call out. Within a few minutes, Ken James arrived and confirmed this. Over to the B.E.C., where we learnt that a student from Bath University had fallen in the Black Hole Series, and had broken an ankle. I packed up my gear at the Wessex (no wet suit) and drove over to Priddy Green.

There were about 40 cavers there, Fred had appeared from nowhere and a party had already gone down the cave.

It later turned out that the caver, whose wife had not wanted him to go caving, had fallen off the 12 foot drop in old Approach Passage, and had broken his right tibia. He had no wet suit, but was in good spirits. Much gear started arriving, most of it brought by Wal, who later ferried soup from the Wessex kitchen.

Don Thompson arrived, and Brian Prewer was trying to dissuade the rescuers from insisting on his laying a phone line through the cave (I think he later laid a line through the sump). Lloyd was sent for in Bristol, to bring the sump rescue outfit.

It was very cold, and until the soup arrived, we drank from bottles which Ken James brought up from the Hunters'.

Pat Cronin managed to shunt Paul Hadfield's van rather spectacularly.

Rumours eventually informed us that once Don had a plaster on the leg, the injured party made pretty good progress, and there was no problem through the sump. He had been given pain killers, and was helping himself as much as possible.

The police were hanging around by now, but were not looking for drunken cavers driving. Just as well!

I wandered over to the New Inn, and met Pauline, out looking for me. At shut tap, I wandered back to the Green, and later drove Alison and Pete Moody back to the Wessex. Here I sat drinking Scotch with Annie West.

At about 6, Paul Hadfield and Al Mills turned up to say that the caver emerged at 5:30 and was on his way to hospital. They kindly helped me finish the Scotch.

FIRST MENDIP SUMP RESCUE

January 19th. was something of an historical date for the Mendip Rescue Organisation, for it was then that the first rescue through a sump was carried out in that region, if not the whole of Britain.

Linsey Smith, of Bath University, fell and broke a leg in the Approach Passage of the Black Hole series of Swildon's Hole. The rescue took about nine hours and involved about fifty cavers working underground at one stage or another.

Rescue leaders commented that Smith was a 'perfect' victim, giving assistance whenever and wherever possible. It was due to his courage and level-headedness that the passage through Sump One went so smoothly. A telephone link was laid through the sump, and rope assistance was thus co-ordinated from both sides, but he was able to pass the sump virtually unaided, and without the necessity for breathing apparatus.

The 50ft descent encountered on the way out of the Black Hole series was surmounted by one of the rescuers abseiling down with the victim strapped to his back. A preliminary test using one of the rescuers as a guinea pig was carried out to test the feasibility of the idea.

The accident itself underlines the need for extreme caution on all cave climbs, regardless of depth, for, it is understood, Linsey Smith fell only some five or six feet.

Source – Western Daily Press – 21 January 1974

CAVE RESCUE ORDEAL IN THE BLACK HOLE

STUDENT TRAPPED BY INJURED LEG

Student Lindsay Smith was trapped in a pothole for ten hours at the weekend after he slipped and fractured a leg. It was not until 5 a.m. yesterday that he reached the surface. Lindsay, aged 22, a student at Bath University went on an expedition with six friends from the university's caving club. They were making the return trip when he fell, still two thirds of a mile from the surface at Swildon's Hole, near Priddy, Somerset. The accident spot is known to cavers as The Black Hole. Friends went for help, and shortly after nine o'clock a rescue team arrived with a doctor. The doctor plastered Lindsay's leg and helped by rescuers, he managed to make his own way to the surface. Mr. David Irwin managed the rescue team with 30 cavers in four teams. Mr. Irwin, a warden of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, said: "Normally we would have strapped him up and brought him out like that but in this case he effectively helped himself. Since he was able to move we felt it would be easier to do it like that. It was one of the longest operations we have ever had." Mr. Irwin said Lindsay was an experienced caver. It was not his first time in Swildon's Hole. Last night he was still in hospital.

19 January 1974 – Eastwater Cavern

Whilst engaged on the Swildon's rescue, it was reported that a party of three had not confirmed their return from a trip to the Primrose Pot. Details on the Shepton Mallet G.C. noticeboard indicated that they should have been out by 6:30 p.m. Dave Irwin requested Dave Turner and Jim Durston to reconnoitre the cave whilst the police tried to locate those involved at their homes. The presence of a rope at the pot gave cause for alarm, but this was short-lived since

one of the trio, J. Bunn, was found at home. Why make needless work by leaving ropes underground or failing to remove outdated information on noticeboards?

20 January 1974 – General Alert

The worried father of P. Sprules contacted Frome Police when his son failed to turn up after a day's caving at 2 a.m. A check of the list of those helping on the Swildon's rescue showed that he was underground with the hauling parties. This incident underlines the need for accurate records during all rescue operations.

27 January 1974 – Eastwater Cavern

A party from the Harrow Moles club were reported about 2½ hours overdue during the evening. No official callout was received and so it appears that they under-estimated the duration of their trip. This is proving to be a common occurrence with parties unfamiliar with the cave.

3 February 1974 – Eastwater Cavern

The police called Howard Kenney at 8:20 p.m. to inform him that a party of eight cavers from Culham College Mountaineering and Caving Club were overdue having been down the cave since 1 p.m. Kenney alerted local wardens and Wessex rescuers in Bristol. Dave Irwin went to Eastwater to rendezvous with the police patrol at the scene.

At 8:50 p.m. Kenney was contacted from Priddy with a message that the party had surfaced. The watch they were carrying had broken and the party had taken longer than expected in getting up the Second Vertical.

24 February 1974 – Upper Flood Swallet

Source – MCG Log Book Volume 4, page 63

Moved 14 buckets from face, but large boulder in the floor still remains.

Had an unusual experience on the way out; Had to grope our way through dense smoke for the 1st chamber onwards. Nearly choked to death and Dave got lost because he couldn't see. Thought the cave was on fire!

However it seems that some bastard Sunday afternoon tourist had poked dry grass through the entrance lid and set fire to it.

15 June 1974 – Agen Allwedd

Dr. Oliver Lloyd was rung up at about mid-night by the Crickhowell Police and cave rescuers at Llangatock to say that Roger Solari had been lost in Downstream Sump 4. He was asked to take diving tackle and as many cylinders of air as possible to the scene. He decided to take the Mark 2 Sump Rescue Apparatus and, since this meant that there was a possibility of its being not available for Mendip, he contacted Howard Kenney to tell him what he was doing.

Lloyd reached Whitewalls at about 2 a.m. on the Sunday and reports that the position was regarded as hopeless by this time and that urgency was evaporating. He left six 40 c.u.f.t. cylinders and some diving equipment and returned to Bristol with the Sump Rescue Apparatus. Howard Kenney was contacted and informed of the situation.

The full report of this rescue has been published by the Gwent Cave Rescue Team.

Source – Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelaeol. Soc., 1980.15(3). 161-182

Solari was very experienced both at caving and cave diving. The diving party consisted of Farr and Solari. Its object was to dive down-stream Sump Four in the Mainstream. The support party went as far as Sump 1. Farr dived first closely followed by Solari. Each carried three cylinders, a line reel and a pair of boots. In the air bell between Sumps 2 and 3 they deposited their 'tadpoles', to be used on the dive out, and continued into Sump 3 on full bottles. This went uneventfully and after putting on their boots they made their way down the extension to Sump 4.

The going was hard and the 610m. took half an hour. It was decided to dive together, yet independently, if at any point either diver felt uncertain or wished to turn back. They swapped main valves onto the full bottles retaining the others in reserve. Solari had two positively buoyant bottles and was underweight, while Farr's were both negative.

Solari led from base into Sump 4 laying line from a 122m. line reel. While Farr followed with another of 305m. The dip in the sump was of more than 5° and several times Solari had difficulty in clearing. This was not unusual with him. At 122m. from base and at -15m. the empty line reel was cut off and dumped, and Farr tied on his new line reel and took the lead. After about 30m. he came to a steeply ascending gravel bank. He went up this for about 12m. but found no air space. On consulting his pressure gauge, he found that he had reached his safe margin. so that it was time to return.

He turned and saw Solari in the distance, reached him and signalled that they had to get out. Solari comprehended but did not actually give a signal to that effect. He looked worried and Farr assumed that this was because of his two difficulties, clearing and excessive buoyancy.

Farr then dropped his reel on the gravel bank to one side and led for base. A little beyond the junction of lines (122m. from base) he swapped valves, waited two minutes and then continued out. Solari never returned. After a considerable time, during which he went back to Sump 3 for the Mars bars, carrying his empty cylinder, Farr considered using his air reserve for a dive back into Sump 4. He pulled on the line, found it slack and then pulled in altogether 131m. of it and found that it had been cut at a point 9m. beyond the knot joining the two lines. low on air, with 131m. of loose line and no reel, there was nothing further that he could do about it and so he returned. The body of Solari was never found. What happened to him remains a mystery. It is reasonable to suppose that, if he cut the line, it was because he had got tangled. To do so at 131m. from base he must have got 21m, of the way back.

29 June 1974 – Lamb Leer Cavern

Wells Police contacted Jim Hanwell at 5:30 p.m. to inform him of an accident in Lamb Leer which had been reported via the Police Headquarters in Bath. Howard Kenney's telephone was out of order. Hanwell was asked to phone Bath for details. On doing so, he learnt that an emergency call had come from the Wells Way Inn, Harptree, reporting that "two cavers had fallen down a pitch and were badly injured". An ambulance and patrol car had been sent to the cave but details of the party, exact location and extent of injuries were unknown. The informant had returned to the cave to give assistance. Hanwell was obliged to assume the worst since, if those involved had fallen at the Main (65 ft.) Pitch, then severe injuries to both were indicated. He alerted Tim Reynolds immediately and they jointly mounted a full callout from Wookey Hole.

Nigel Taylor was contacted at the Belfry at 5:40 p.m. and requested to raise an advance B.E.C. party with full rescue kit and to scramble Wessex cavers from nearby Upper Pitts. Dave Irwin was phoned at Priddy by 5:45 p.m. and asked to go to the cave immediately to co-ordinate with ambulance, police and rescue parties. He would organise and control the operation from the surface and report details of the incident as soon as possible. Irwin reached the cave at 5:55 p.m. and sent three from the Belfry party underground at 6:05 p.m. with instructions for Graham Wilton-Jones to assess the situation and report back.

Dr. Donald Thomson was known to be away on holiday and, as medical help was clearly essential with two possible patients, Hanwell and Reynolds rang for other Medical Wardens. Regretfully, Dr. Stanley Canicott at Cheddar was otherwise engaged and Dr. Michael Glanvill at Chard was unwell. Eventually, Dr. Bob Everton was alerted at Lawrence Weston at 5:50 p.m. and agreed to leave immediately; he reached Lamb Leer by 6:45 p.m. Attempts for back-up assistance from non-caving doctors in the Wells area proved unsuccessful. After alerting other wardens available, Hanwell and Reynolds went to the cave together arriving there at 6:15 p.m. By this time, many cavers had assembled and were being detailed into rescue teams.

At 6:25 p.m., Wilton-Jones surfaced with the main details. A party comprising Phil Hendy, Wally Willcocks, Richard Bainbridge, Alison Hooper and Pete Moody, all members of the Wessex Cave Club, had been coming out of the cave late in the afternoon. Hendy climbed the Main Pitch first and awaited Willcocks' arrival. Near the over-hang, however, Willcocks fell from the ladder, landing on the steep boulder slope below and sustaining severe bruising which immobilised him for a long time. At the same time, Bainbridge had fallen headlong down the boulder slope at the foot of the pitch. He was reported to be unconscious with critical head injuries and breathing difficulties. These incidents occurred at about 4:50 p.m. Immediately, Hendy left the cave to raise the alarm. Being without transport, he ran in full kit to the nearest telephone at the Wells Way Inn; a distance of a mile. In doing this, he crossed into the new County of Avon and his call went to Bath.

Aubrey Newport led a party of three into the cave at 6:25 p.m. with hauling ropes and carrying sheet. Brian Prewer followed with telephones at 6:30 p.m. Irwin advised the Bath ambulance crew and police of the situation and, since Dr. Everton had not yet arrived, Michael Chivers commendably volunteered his services. It was his first time underground. He descended the cave with Tim Reynolds at 6:45 p.m. to render First Aid and to assist in recovering both patients from the bottom of the pitch. Dr. Everton arrived and followed them underground five minutes later. Other parties ferried medical supplies and treatments commenced about 7 p.m. Tony Knibbs drove to the Belfry Depot for additional equipment.

Willcocks was assisted, shaken but unharmed, from the cave at 7:20 p.m. Meanwhile, Bainbridge was fitted into a spinal splint and wrapped in blankets by Everton and Chivers. Reynolds secured the carrying sheet. Oxygen equipment was requested at 7:35 p.m. to assist the patient's breathing - in preparation for his journey up the pitch and out of the cave. This was supplied by Dr. Roger Snook of Accident and Ambulance Research. Having heard of the incident over his radio, he stood by maintaining a doctor-to-doctor link by telephone from patient to surface. Hanwell and Woodward went underground at 7:50 p.m. to organise the hauling from the top of the Main Pitch. Since it was thought prudent to have medical assistance to hand immediately Bainbridge arrived at the head of the pitch, Dr. Snook agreed to undertake this although he had not been caving before.

Hauling on the Main Pitch commenced at 8:35 p.m. when the patient had been treated and was considered to be capable of coping with the journey. He arrived at the top of the pitch at 8:45 p.m. and was immediately attended by Dr. Snook who fitted an endotracheal tube to assist the

patient's breathing on the remainder of trip out. Apart from the awkward angles of the fixed ladders in the Entrance Shaft, this proved straightforward. Bainbridge was out of the cave by 9:10 p.m. and left by ambulance for Frenchay Hospital at 9:15 p.m.

The cave was cleared and the farmer thanked for permitting vehicles to use his field. During the rescue, invaluable and speedy assistance was willingly volunteered by over fifty cavers. Michael Chivers of the ambulance service and Dr. Snook could not have had a more timely and effective introduction to caving.

Source – Wells & Mendip Museum Archives – Letter from Phil Hendy to Jim Hanwell

Dear Jim,

I have just been proof-reading the next [W.C.C.] Journal, and have found an error in the report of the M.R.O. on the Lamb Leer rescue. Although in full caving kit, I did not run to the Wellsway inn to make the callout – this sounds very heroic, but I think that this would have killed me. What happened, in fact, is that while Pete was assessing Richard's injuries, Alison tied my ammo can onto the rope so that I was able to haul it up and get my car keys. I was then able to drive down to the pub. I have not corrected the Journal (such a large alteration is not popular with typists), but M.R.O. might care to have the correct facts.

Another detail which irks me is that a party of (M.N.R.C.?) cavers, who refused at first to believe that there had been an accident; even when I had convinced them, no-one offered to drive to the phone and make the callout, they only suggested that I sit down and get my breath back!

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 4, pages 323 to 325

Rain, later turned hot. By 12:15 we had changed and entered Lamb Leer – self, Alison, Pete Moody, Black Wal and Richard Bainbridge. Cave more friendly than last time. All abseiled the pitch and explored December Chamber, then back quite quickly to the Main Chamber.

I got my jumars on, then set off up the rope. I had just got to the top, and put my gear to one side, when I heard Wal's voice below me, in difficulty. I looked down, and found him just under the overhang, on the ladder. He couldn't get past the overhang with only one arm, and wanted me to go down the ladder and help him. Instead I climbed as far down the scaffolding as I could, to try to turn the ladder, but he was too heavy. After a while he made a grab upwards and fell!

I scrambled back to the platform and shouted to Alison to tie my ammo box on the rope so that I could get my car keys and help. As the can came up, Alison shouted up that Richard was badly hurt, unconscious, and bleeding badly from the head. I made as fast a way out as I could, but had to stop twice before emerging. A gawking lad didn't believe my story at first, and while he was strolling back to his mates (M.N.R.C. they had been as far as the Windlass) I crawled to the car, then set off hell for leather to the Wellsway. Luckily I got on the phone at once and dialled 999. The call took a long time, but eventually things got moving. The girl at the pub gave me a cup of tea and some cigarettes, the police phoned back to tell me police and ambulance were on their way and I told them to raise the B.E.C.

After a while the M.N.R.C. came over, and told me that the police wanted me at the cave. Back I went, and gave a statement. Then Gerry Bryce arrived closely followed by the B.B.C. Then the M.R.O. started to arrive, and things began to move. In no time they had a party down the

cave, followed by Prew and the phone link, then the cave medic. They hauled Wally out (bruised and shaken but walking!) and eventually a B.R.I. Doctor and an ambulanceman went down; the medical gear was serious – oxygen, intratracheal tubes, suction gear etc.

At about 9:30 to 10 p.m. Richard was hauled up, still unconscious, but moving. He was quickly off to the Hospital and then the rest of the rescuers emerged.

Cave entered : 12:15
Accident : 16:45
999 Call : 17:00
End of Rescue 22:00

Source – Western Daily Press – 1 July 1974

INJURED CAVE BOY IS SAVED AFTER FALL

Schoolboy Richard Bainbridge was seriously ill in hospital last night, after being rescued from a cave 250 feet below the Mendip Hills. Richard, aged 15, from Bristol, was one of a party of five Wessex Caving Club, who set out on Saturday to explore the Lamb's Leer cave, in West Harptree, near Bath. The party were climbing a 60 feet vertical cliff near the bottom of the cave when one of the leaders Mr. Wallace Willcox, slipped and fell. Richard was trying to get out of the way when he too slipped, and fell about ten feet. Mr. Willcox, aged 43, survived the 50 foot fall unhurt. But Richard suffered serious head and back injuries. It took more than three hours to bring the unconscious boy to the surface. The rescue operation involved 55 men from the Mendip Rescue Organisation. A doctor went down the cave to give medical attention before Richard was lifted to the surface. The injured boy was taken by ambulance to Frenchay Hospital, Bristol, where his condition last night was serious. Richard, who attends Bristol Grammar School, has been caving for about three years. Mr. David Irwin who was in charge of the rescue operation said last night that all members of the party were experienced cavers. He said that Lamb's Leer was not a difficult or particularly dangerous cave.

21 September 1974 – Mangle Hole

Cavers attending the dinner following the Cave Rescue Conference at Wells were contacted by Wells Police concerning a call for help regarding four youths two hours overdue on an evening trip down Mangle Hole. Jim Hanwell phoned Weston-super-Mare Police and was given full details of the alert. He then contacted the informant, Mr. Peter Best, at Lyncombe Lodge, Churchill, who confirmed that Dean Maggs, Mark Smith, Ian Tadd and Alan Taylor from Bristol should have been out of the cave at 8 p.m. Not being a caver, he was worried about their lamps failing and the effects of a recent rainstorm.

Hanwell requested Brian Prewer, Nigel Taylor, Bob Frost, John Ham and John Westlake to go to the cave and organise a search. They left Wells at 10:40 p.m. and were backed up by a Border Caving Group party led by Eric Catherine. On arriving, Prewer found that the overdue party had surfaced. This information was passed to the Weston-super-Mare Police and a stand-down completed by 11 p.m.

Source – Western Mercury – 27 September 1974

POT-HOLERS WERE OVERDUE

Four young potholers, reported overdue on an expedition at Mangle Pot cave, Sandford, on Saturday evening, reached the surface safely,

About half-an-hour after the overdue call was made, one of them reached the surface. He reported his three colleagues were 40 feet underground, their lights having failed.

The Mendip Rescue Organisation and the police quickly went to the scene, but the remaining three men had reached the surface of their own accord. They were found to be tired but unhurt.

The first potholer to reach the surface and raise the alarm was 19 year Dean Maggs, of Jubilee Road, Kingswood, Bristol.

The other three all from Bristol and aged 18, were Ian Tadd, Mark Smith and Alan Taylor.

13 October 1974 – Box Stone Mines

Howard Kenney was telephoned by Frome Police about 7:30 p.m. and informed that they had been advised by Michael Collins, Bristol, that a rescue was being conducted for school children lost in the mines. A master and four lads from Eagle House School, Bath, had gone into the system about 3:30 p.m. via the Back Door entrance and Cathedral section. When the party had failed to turn up for tea by 6 p.m., the school had contacted Collins who had helped them in the past on several trips to the mines. Corsham Police, Wiltshire, were alerted and took charge of the search with local cavers. Kenney conferred with Jim Hanwell and they agreed that the Wiltshire Police should be contacted and asked whether M.R.O. help and equipment was required. The police thanked Kenney when he rang them but said that the matter was being handled locally and that they would contact him further if help was necessary. Thus, M.R.O. was not officially called though Collins kept Kenney informed of progress from time to time.

At 10 p.m. it is understood that only a small group of cavers were involved in the search and half an hour later Devizes Division Police contacted Kenney requesting that M.R.O. provide lights. On contacting Collins at the scene he was told that ten people were searching various parts of the system in pairs but that their lights were running down. Kenney agreed to provide fresh lights as soon as possible and contacted Hanwell and Prewer who went to the Belfry Depot immediately. Twelve lamps, carbide, comforts box and First Aid equipment were taken by Kenney directly to Wiltshire and he reached Box just before midnight. Hanwell and Prewer remained by the Belfry telephone. During Kenney's journey the missing school party were located unharmed in a side passage off the Cathedral section. It is reported that their lights had failed.

The departure from the well-rehearsed channels of requesting wardens to organise rescues in this area caused confusion. If M.R.O. is merely told to stand by, then that is all it can do officially.

26 October 1974 – Goatchurch Cavern

Howard Kenney was telephoned by Frome Police at 6 p.m. and told that a Mr. Butterfield from Filton Technical College had contacted them to say that he had been on a trip down the cave and could not get in touch with his friend in Bristol to report that his party had surfaced. He was concerned should this person call out M.R.O. owing to the breakdown of his arrangements to report back.

This incident highlights the need to make careful arrangements in recording all trips. The Emergency Call system must not be used for general information.

16 November 1974 – Swildon's Hole

Jim Hanwell received a call from the police at 5:30 p.m. informing him that a girl was trapped on the far side of Sump I and unwilling to dive out. On telephoning the informant at Priddy, he was told that a Chelsea Speleological Society party had gone down the cave at 11 a.m., splitting up into teams doing a Round Trip and to the Black Hole. The latter party returned to the Sump about 3 p.m. but Helen Heath-Coleman declined to go through. It was her first caving trip involving sumps and, probably because her newish wet suit made her very buoyant, she hit the roof on her first dive and then decided to sit tight unable to rationalise the predicament. As others in the party became tired, they left Helen with a companion and came out to raise the alarm.

Hanwell contacted Tim Reynolds who went to Priddy to organise an advance party of rescuers. Hanwell fetched Fred Davies and they discussed tactics en route to Priddy. If Helen was unwilling to free-dive out with Davies present, breathing apparatus would be offered and, failing this, she would be brought out via Double Troubles. Only if she was physically exhausted would the Sump Rescue Apparatus be called for.

A Wessex C.C. party went down the cave with comforts boxes at 5:45 p.m. followed by a second pair carrying demand valve and air bottle on loan from Martin Bishop. Meanwhile, Mike O'Connor and a Dorset Caving Group party chanced across Helen and her companion at Sump I. Davies went down the cave at 6:20 p.m. Derek Stead went to Wookey Hole and alerted Oliver Lloyd in case the Sump Rescue Apparatus was required. Other Wessex cavers were told to stand by in Bristol.

After being dressed in a dry wet suit and warmed with hot water bottles and soups, Helen was given a quick diving lesson by Fred Davies. Weights were fetched from Sump II. After a practice immersion using Bishop's B.A., Helen was towed through the sump. By 8:30 p.m. she was out of the cave and everyone was stood down. A welcome hot shower was taken at Fountain Cottage and the residents there kindly gave the rescuers hospitality.

Source – MCG. Journal 109 – November 1974

The weekend 16/17th November was to be the practice rescue but owing to circumstances this was put off. However, some members found themselves involved in the real thing.

The incident occurred in Swildon's on the Saturday, when our party of M.C.G. and some guest N.P.C. members were doing the round trip. Although the streamway was about normal there was an unusual amount of water in the static sections and sumps.

At about the halfway stage we ran into a party travelling quite slowly. They held us up until we reached Sump 1. At this point they were joined by other members of their party, including a girl who had been to the Black Hole Series. We noticed for the first time that two blokes who had been in front of us on the round trip did not have wet-suits and were shivering violently. (some of the M.C.G. party, despite wet-suits were also quite cold, owing to the slowness of pace and the unusual conditions we encountered).

All the cold people dived the sump then pushed on to the entrance. This left five M.C.G. members and two from the other party including the girl. At this point the girl refused to re-

dive the sump to get out. After about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour of fruitless persuasion and once even contemplating physically manhandling her through, we retreated to the other side of the sump to decide what to do.

Even an attempt at putting a separate lifeline on her failed. The other chap in her party had even sat in the sump with his feet through the other side, but although the girl could hold them she still would not come through. She was taken back to dry land and Neil stayed with her for company.

We decided to call the M.R.O. out, but that left us with the problem of leaving someone with her because everyone was getting very cold, having been splashing about in the sump all this time. This problem was soon solved as another party arrived at the sump still fairly warm. We explained the situation and they agreed to stay with her until help arrived. One member of this party dived the sump to relieve Neil and took some boiled sweets and glucose tablets.

We had arranged that the remaining member of the other party left for the entrance with Steve Conquest and Pete Lingwood to raise the alarm. This left Neil Brooker, Peter Spain and myself [Bryan Terry] to have another last attempt at getting her through. This failed and we decided to push on out going quite slowly, because Pete was quite tired and it was Neil's first trip in Swildon's and he didn't know the way on.

We met another party below the "Twenty" and explained the situation and suggested tactfully that they might leave the cave and allow the M.R.O. some elbow room. Their leader decided to push on down to the sump.

Arriving at the Water Chamber, Neil turned to me and said there was a bloke in front with exposure. It was one of the un-wet-suited blokes in the other party. When we reached him, it was obvious that he was in a bad way. He was incoherent and swaying, completely unable to help himself. The remainder of his party had gone on and Neil went after them to bring them back. Pete was unable to help much as he was tired and had just wrenched his leg out of and back into joint. Neil and I with the help of the others soon pulled him to the surface. Two slings under the victim's arms aided his ascent. After being carried across the fields to the bottom of The Green he was virtually unconscious. He was bundled into a station wagon and whisked away to the Shepton Cottage where he received attention for exposure. Some hot soup, a warm shower and stuffed into a sleeping bag. He revived quickly enough to purchase us a pint in the Hunters' later that evening. His only comment seemed to be about rope burns under his arms.

Meanwhile the M.R.O. had entered the cave with two comfort boxes, some hot soup and diving tanks. After warming the girl up and giving her a few instant diving lessons, she dived the sump and proceeded out under her own steam. The wet suit had saved her from any serious exposure and apart from being emotionally upset she seemed none the worse for her experience.

Thanks, must go the M.R.O. who were very quick off the mark with the diving tanks and to the police for their liaison.

Despite the help that some M.C.G. members were able to give, in an incident which could have been a whole lot worse than it was, a sad note struck next morning. It wasn't until then that we discovered we had lost a ladder. John Miriam returned to the cave to retrieve it and found it had gone. After making enquiries at the Shepton and elsewhere it was not forthcoming.

Whether the ladder was picked up by mistake or stolen remains to be seen, but to date it has not been returned.

Now nobody asks for thanks when they go to somebody's assistance but the loss of a ladder seems a poor reward for helping a fellow caver in difficulty.

Source – BEC Log Book 1973-7, page 115

At about 5 p.m. we received a message from Frome Police, we changed and waited by the green, while an advance party went down the cave. Jim Hanwell, Tim Reynolds and Fred Davis arrived and so did some air which was taken down the cave. The victim was refusing to go back through the sump after being on a Black Hole trip with Chelsea.

Fred persuaded her to use the air and we towed her through to I she was in good spirits and needed little help out of the cave.

23 November 1974 – Sludge Pit

Frome Police rang Howard Kenney at 3:45p.m. to report that a Mr. Sylvester had informed them of a vehicle parked in Eastwater Lane with a note on it which read "Into Sludge Pit hole at 11:35 a.m. due out at 1:35 p.m. Five members in party". He had felt that two hours overdue on such a trip was ominous and so contacted the police.

Kenney experienced delays in alerting cavers at this time of day and, before his callout was under way, a police patrol car at the scene reported that the party had surfaced. A Portsmouth Polytechnic Caving Club party led by William G. Haynes had found that there was a queue at the Entrance Pitch on arriving at Sludge Pit and so had gone down Nine Barrows Swallet instead. They forgot to alter the notice left on their car. Kenney went to Eastwater Lane and pointed out to those concerned that such thoughtlessness had caused a needless fuss. Indeed, had a rescue been necessary, the information left on the car would have been dangerously misleading!

8 December 1974 – Sidcot Swallet

A party from Culham College Caving and Mountaineering Club entered the cave at 1:30 p.m. led by Bruce Fraser. One of their members became stuck in the Boot Hole and, after trying for about an hour and a half to free him, Fraser came out and raised the alarm. Later, the rest of the party surfaced leaving a girl with the stuck caver. Frome Police telephoned Howard Kenney at 6:45 p.m. and Kenney was able to contact Fraser at Burrington for full details. He then alerted Martin Bishop, Philip Davies, Mike Palmer, Richard Stephenson, Brian Milton and Brian Prewer and requested them to go to the cave. Davies was the first to arrive and found that the person concerned had just managed to get through the squeeze on his own. He was assisted out of the cave by 7:40 p.m. and Kenney stood down everyone soon afterwards.

Source – Unknown newspaper report – 8 December 1974

POTHOLER IS TRAPPED

The Mendip Cave Rescue Team brought a 23-year-old potholer to safety after he had been trapped for two hours at Sidcot Swallet, Burrington Combe.

The potholer, Mr. David Mitchell, from Uffington, Oxford, had been exploring the hole with a friend when he became trapped.

The friend managed to get to the surface to raise the alarm.

1975

Cave Rescues and Incidents for the year ending 31st January 1975

Recent surveys estimate that about 600 people go down Mendip caves during the average week. If so, then the eight calls for help to M.R.O. this year shows that only a minute fraction of the local caving community gets into trouble. Indeed, alerts owing to a lack of information about trips being undertaken account for five of these calls. Only one incident has involved injuries. In addition to the eight local callouts, M.R.O. has been stood by twice in case rescuers in neighbouring caving areas needed assistance on long searches for missing cavers in lengthy systems.

J. D. Hanwell, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer

1 January 1975 – General Alert

At 11:20 p.m., Wells Police received a call from a Mr. Hellyer, Bristol, to the effect that his son had left home at 10 a.m. that day to go down Swildon's Hole with friends. He was worried because he had not returned. Just as Frome Police were about to alert M.R.O., the informant contacted Wells again to say that his son had returned home having got out of the cave at 9:30 p.m.

The caver concerned had been underground with a party led by Roger Tucker and it appears that the parents were given no details of the proposed trip or expected time of returning home.

10 May 1973 – Swildon's Hole

Frome Police informed William Stanton at 1525 hrs that a naval party from H.M.S. Mercury were overdue from a Round Trip. The informant reported that Petty Officer Casemore's party of five should have been out at 1300 hrs. Stanton alerted cavers at the Belfry, some of whom thought that they had overtaken such a group in Swildon's 2 at about 1430 hrs. Dave Irwin and Bob Craig stood by. The party surfaced safely at 1640 hrs, well over three hours later than predicted.

26 May 1975 – Burrington Combe

Sgt. Spence telephoned C.H. Kenney from Frome Police Station to inform him that a Mr. Andrews was standing by at the Mendip Field Centre at Charterhouse. C.H.K. telephoned Mr. Andrews who explained that he had left his son aged 14 together with three other members of the Calverhay School Caving Club, Bath at the Lower Twin Brook Valley in Burrington Combe at 8:45 a.m. Father understood that they were entering a cave in Burrington Combe and were coming out in Velvet Bottom and he arranged to meet them on the road in Velvet Bottom at 6:30 p.m. C.H.K. pointed out that this was not possible and he thought that their intention was probably to walk over the top of Blackdown to Velvet Bottom. He also expressed a view that it was unlikely that they were trapped in a cave in Burrington. C.H.K. suggested that they may have gone down Longwood Valley to get to Velvet Bottom then mistaken their geography and ended up at Black Rock Gate in Cheddar Gorge. C.H.K. suggested that Mr. Andrews should drive round there to check whether this was so and then come back to Velvet Bottom to check again and then ring C.H.K. if still no sign of the missing boys. At 8:45 p.m. Frome Police telephoned that the boys had been found at Shipham and it would appear that their map reading was not too good.

Later Mr. Andrews telephoned to both apologise and thank M.R.O.

29 June 1975 – Blacknor Hole, Portland

Report 1

Dave Irwin was informed by Frome Police about 1725 hrs that Mike O'Connor, Dorset Caving Group, had reported an accident in a cave on Portland. Irwin contacted Tim Reynolds and Jim Hanwell and the latter phoned O'Connor in Weymouth for details. They were told that Dave Hunter had broken his right leg following a boulder fall in a narrow rift in Blacknor Hole. Local police, coastguards and a doctor were at the scene with Dorset cavers but it was felt that M.R.O. assistance would be appreciated. Reynolds and Hanwell agreed to leave immediately with Martin Bishop and Tim Large. Just before leaving Wells, however, the police rang to stand them down. Inspector Borris at Dorchester informed Hanwell at 1800 hrs that the injured caver was only 40 feet from the entrance and that the rescue was going smoothly. A comprehensive report received from O'Connor later reveals that this was misleading and the distance was actually 400 feet underground, the entrance being about 40 feet below the cliff top. In fact, Hunter was not safely on the cliff top until 2100 hrs. Dorset cavers did a good job, many being underground for over nine hours.

Report 2

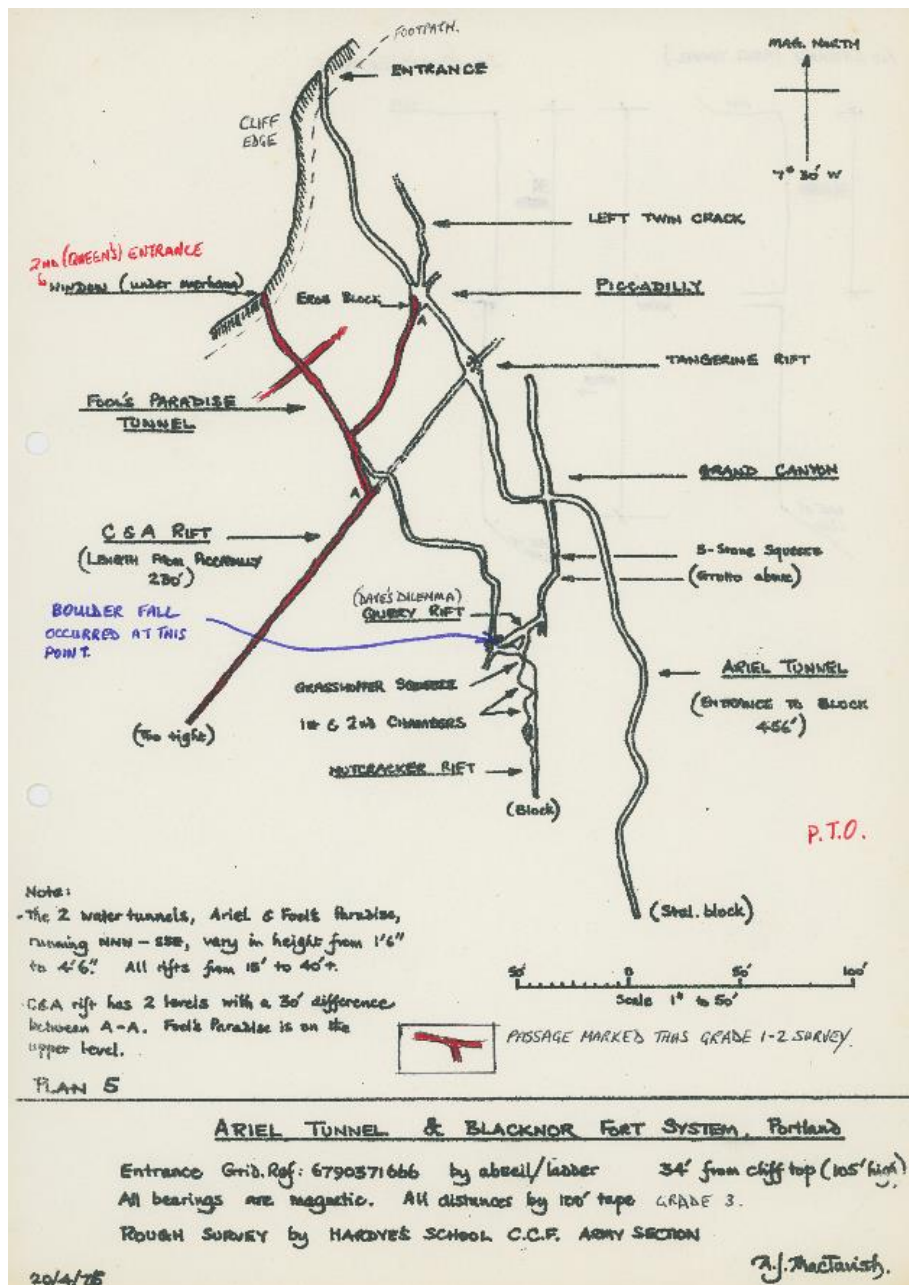
1:30 p.m. A party of seven from the Dorset Caving Group tackled up and descended intending to push left Twin Crack and Nutcracker Rift. Melanie Glover stayed at the rift, in the entrance series to dig.

2-3:45 p.m. Ian Wolfe and Dave Hunter glanced at Right Twin Crack, then Ian and Mike O'Connor with Nigel Graham standing by, pushed Left Twin Crack.

3:50 p.m. Alan Cousins and John Hulse returned to Piccadilly Circus. Dave joined Nigel, Ian and Mike to go and push Nutcracker. Arriving at Query Rift (Dave's Dilemma) Mike, Ian and Nigel carried on through the crawl continuation.

4:15 p.m. Dave about to follow the others, touched the wall of the rift to the left of the crawl in trying to cross the rift. Part of this wall collapsed from about five feet above him (though it had looked perfectly safe) in falling it pinned him down hanging upside down in the rift his right leg. This collapse also mostly blocked the exit from the crawl beyond which were Mike, Ian and Nigel (at that time under the impression that there was only one way out of the crawl) Turning back rapidly, because of the crash of falling boulders and Dave's cries for help, there was a delay whilst Ian dug out the rubble, Mike followed and helped him to lift off the boulder whilst Dave crawled out into the chamber from underneath. Nigel then came out of the crawl.

4:20 p.m. In the chamber, it was found that Dave had a fractured/broken right leg, abrasions and bruising, which meant he could not get out under his own steam. Ian gave Dave a ciggie, Dave at this point whilst suffering from shock and some pain was reasonably comfortable. It was obvious that since 85% of the way out would normally involve crawling, Dave would need help to get through the cave itself, never mind getting out of the entrance. Since things were quite likely to become more difficult (increased pain, collapse, etc.) Mike decided that Ian was well able to cope underground initially and would himself be more effective exiting and calling out the police, Coastguard, M.R.O. and all the club members available.



4:25 p.m. On route out Mike sent Alan and John to help Ian and Nigel, found Melanie near the entrance and took her out to wait at the top of the cliff, for the Coastguard. Arriving at the top of the cliff they found another club member walking at the top with his children, this was Norman Bowley.

Norman and Mike went to use Neil Pritchard's phone as he lived close by. He was out but a message was left for him. Norman left to get his own kit a first aid pack and comforts and to contact a Doctor. He got through to Dr. Keith Barnard-Jones (not a caver) who bravely volunteered to go down to Dave. Meantime Mike went to his wife's shop as he had no change and a lot of calls were necessary.

4:45 p.m. Mike dialled. 999 Police, which caused some surprise, two more senior officers later they called out the Coastguard (they were in the midst of a meeting, so the director for the Portsmouth to Exeter area was present at the rescue). Then when the police found they could not easily contact Frome police they told Mike the number and left him to contact them. Frome police contacted. Dave Irwin, Duty Warden, who contacted Jim Hanwell after having a

quick talk to Mike. Mike then contacted Andrew MacTavish asking him to call out anyone he had available from Hardye's and to bring spare lights comforts and also the drag stretcher (carrying sheet) lights and first aid ammo tin from Mike's garage. Mike next contacted as many Dorset Caving Group members as possible and they turned out with commendable speed. The police having contacted the Coastguard, alerted the SAR (Search and Rescue) Naval Helicopter unit at Portland Naval Base.

Jim phoned from Tim Reynolds house, to clarify the situation, Mike explained, Jim said, he felt we could manage, but did we require M.R.O. help YES or NO? After thinking for a moment Mike said YES, we may need an expert in case the situation and victim deteriorates. Jim said, we're on our way and that Mike could now return to the cave, but would be arranged to keep Rachel Reynolds informed every half hour at Tim's number.

5:30 p.m. Norman went down with Dr. Barnard-Jones (local G.P.). The drag stretcher supplied from the Naval Base via the Coastguard was taken down.

5:45 Steve Westlake arrived, the Coastguard wouldn't let him down. Steve (rightly) ignored them having gathered the situation and in the absence of surface control went down.

6:00 p.m. Mike returned to Blacknor Fort and talked to the police. Gordon Peters arrived and went to the cliff top. The police offered to help re phoning Rachel every half hour, when Mike explained, THIS WAS NOT DONE!

6:05 p.m. Doctor with Dave.

6:15 p.m. Steve arrived with Dave, Ian having gone to reconnoitre the route out and clear the second entrance (this involved in the end three cavers clearing about 60 feet of half tube crawling passage, by making the floor about a foot deeper), Steve took over the party with the victim. A message was sent out to say that, for a little while they had enough people but for the rest to standby. This was translated somehow, apparently by the Coastguards to, call off the M.R.O., which was done via the radio telephone (luckily this was OK, had things become worse however it could have been serious!) sometime around this point the Naval Chopper command had volunteered to pick up the M.R.O, if necessary! (or so rumour has it).

6:25 p.m. Mike arrived at the top of the cliff and established a surface control for the cavers only, subject of course to the Coastguard as one system was better than mayhem. One half of the Coastguard immediately recognised this and accepted odd bits of comment or advice on caving matters (mostly this was the radio man). Another element including apparently the director tried for a while to pretend Mike didn't exist, why unknown. Gordon sent down a mask as soon as possible to go over the victim's eyes.

6:35 p.m. Andrew arrived on site with Mike Hodder and a few Hardye's lads. At this point, there were 9 people in the cave including the Dr. and one coastguard at the entrance ledge, operating a radio.

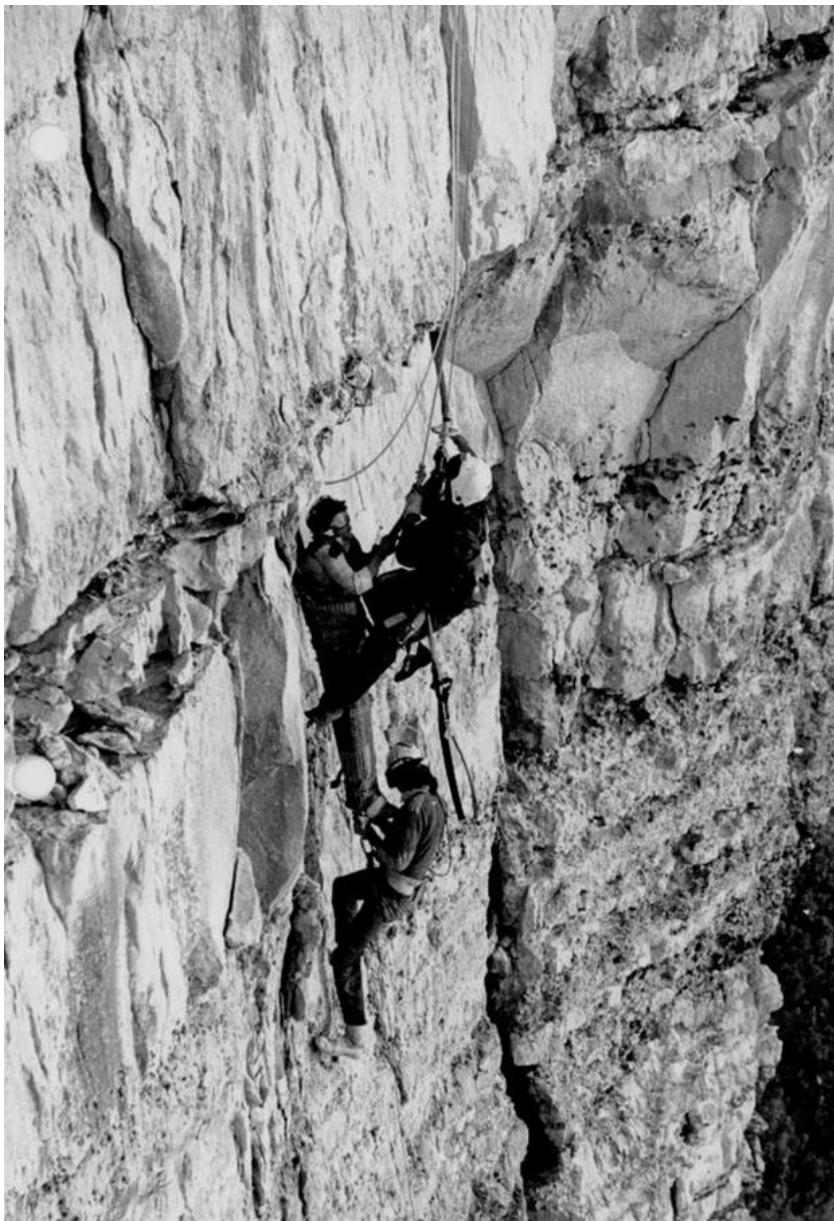
6:49 p.m. Suggestion from inside the cave that second (Queen's) entrance be used to take out the victim, this was argued about at first, because of the amount of rubble that would need to be cleared, but was accepted despite its overhang as it was a straighter carry see map.

7:00 p.m. Four down at request from below when Norman came up, including Mike who handed surface control to Mike Hodder before going down followed by: two club members Neil and

Gordon and one Hardy's lad who knew the system well. Andrew and Norman also followed down.

7:26 p.m. Coastguard radio communicator Vernon Bedford (who got on well with everyone and did a great job) travelled from one entrance to the other with a little guiding.

7:30 p.m. Mike Hodder left cavers surface control to someone else, whilst he took some action about aligning the stakes for the second cliff entrance and lowering the victim. Unfortunately, this leaving of the surface control, apparently due to lack of movement on the part of the coastguard (?), caused problems, as whoever took over did not do an effective job of controlling the cavers. This caused some confusion with the coastguard and this must be accepted as being our fault!! By this time Dave had been given two shots of morphine and was being dragged in a Neil Robertson stretcher towards the second entrance. The only problems arising were the inevitable ones with crossing the rifts.



View along Cliff face, as Dave is pulled clear of the Entrance. Entrance indicated by rope above Dave's head, disappearing into the cliff under the overhang. Photo 1 or 3 used by "Echo"

8:30 p.m. The helicopter arrived, causing loose gear to be blown over the cliff and radio communications to become non-existent. A line was rigged from top to bottom of the cliff and together with a header rope, as a safety line back into the entrance, it was attached to the stretcher. Ian went out first attached to the clip on the bottom of the stretcher to his sit harness. With the assistance of the rope man from the chopper, Dave was pulled out of the entrance and clear of the overhang and was then lowered to the base of the cliff.

8:45 p.m. The stretcher was down and ready to be lifted into the chopper for

the flight to the hospital.

9:00 p.m. Dave flown off by chopper.

9:55 p.m. All rescue team on cliff top.

Comments - Considering this was the first-time real thing, the carry out went very smoothly and better than we had dared to hope when considering the possibility of such an occurrence. All the cavers involved did a great job, especially those in the original party who were down for over 9 hours. I still feel we were right to call for the M.R.O. as this is easily the worst cave on Portland in which to suffer an accident, mainly because of its entrance.

This accident has now forcibly demonstrated to the police (they still do not wish to know) and Coastguard that such accidents can occur and that if they do, one really needs cavers to get to the victim and get him out. The Coastguard it would appear want our help regardless of police involvement. Hence a meeting has been mooted with representatives present from the police, Coastguard, SAR Navy, Hardy's, the M.R.O. and our club, with a view to setting up some form of rescue team.

As to other points of view on the rescue, the surface arrangement did not go as well as that underground. From our own point of view were insufficient continuity of surface control, added to which there was no one doing Press Contact. The surface work needs more organising. Liaison with the Coastguard was not all it might have been, but could have been worse. The Coastguards themselves appeared to have too many chiefs present and were slow to acknowledge any need for guidance from the cavers. This lack of liaison was only to be expected, considering this was our first meeting and was the real thing, but it still needs sorting out. The Coastguards rope-work whilst very safe in many ways, was not suitable when applied to ladder climbing (in fact it was awful, anyone of our cavers could have belayed better than the six men it took them) or to SRT abseil, but this is understandable in view of their lack of experience in this direction.

Radio communication was impossible due to interference when the chopper was present. I would have thought a simple army telephone would have been better, though Hardy's one only got in the way and should never have been put into use by whoever got it going, culprit unknown. We were lucky to have a doctor available, he may not be so keen again, but would willingly direct from the surface. All in all, the victim was extracted moderately quickly without too much discomfort (5 hours from the time of dialling 999 roughly), which must have been the final measure of its success. As to the problems well to some extent it is easy to pontificate upon past events. Let us hope another rescue is not called for a long time but let us at least be prepared for one should it happens!

NOTE!! The Doctor commented on several occasions that the Neil Robertson stretcher should have had a headrest as this caused some pain to the neck muscles without one. Further it would be useful if we had supplies of the alternative pain killer to Morphine (the one which requires no prescription) in our first aid packs.

Michael R O'Connor - Dorset Caving Group.

30 June 1975 – Ubley Warren Swallet

A party from Bournemouth School descended Nettle Hole at 2:30 p.m. intending to link through to Ubley Warren Pot. One of the party beginner Martin Trott, aged 16, became stuck within the sight of daylight at the bottom of Ubley Warren Pot shaft, at about 3:30 p.m. His companions tried unsuccessfully to free him. The school master with them decided to call the M.R.O. Jim Hanwell alerted Frome police at 3:50 p.m. and called various wardens from Wells and Bristol.

Brian Prewer collected two thin cavers from E.M.I. and located M. Bishop on route to the M.R.O. store. They arrived at the cave at about 4:20 p.m. The two thin cavers and a couple of the original school party went down Nettle while B.P. & M.B. went down Ubley Warren Pot and located the victim.

With the aid of a length of nylon tape passed through the squeeze, the victim was lifted enough to allow his boiler suit to be released. By 5:00 p.m. the victim was out of the cave none the worse for his experience except perhaps a large bruise.

Source – Western Daily Press – 1 July 1975

TRAPPED CAVER RESCUED

Schoolboy Martin Trott, aged 16, was trapped for several hours yesterday in a cave in Charterhouse on Mendip near Blagdon. Martin who was caving with a party of nine boys and a teacher from Bournemouth became firmly stuck in a narrow crevice in Ubley Warren Swallet. The party had been caving in the Mendips for several days and were climbing from the bottom of a 60 ft. Nettlehole cave [*Nettle Pot*] when Martin became trapped 20 ft. from the top. The volunteer Mendip Rescue Organisation was called out by the police and rescued Martin using a special tape rope. The boy suffered bruising to his hips. Later the party returned to Bournemouth. Last night Mr. Jim Hanwell, secretary of the organisation, who led the rescue, described the cave with their 500 ft. of passages as narrow and tortuous. "This is the first time in seven years the caves have been accessible to the public that anyone has become trapped in them," he said. "The party were well equipped and it was only through bad luck and not inexperience that the boy became trapped."

31 August 1975 – Stoke Lane Slocker

Howard Kenney received telephone call from P. C. Jenkins at Frome Police Station at 8 p.m. Mr. Marks of Stoke Bottom Farm had reported to the police that two men had gone down the cave at 1 p.m. and he was now somewhat concerned that they had not returned. Their motorcycle was still at the top gate above Hole and the gate of the cave unlocked.

Kenney was able to contact cavers at the Belfry and Hunters Lodge and a forward party of Chris Batstone and Chris Hanham set out to make an immediate search of the cave. Kenney arranged that 2 Goon Suits, 2 Nife cells and the first aid kit should be sent along to Stoke Lane. Dave Irwin was alerted to take charge on the surface and the availability of the sump rescue kit at Richard Stephenson's home was confirmed. It was also ascertained that Oliver Lloyd was at home and was available if necessary.

Kenney checked that Mr. Marks was satisfied that the two fellows were not in the West London Hut.

Kenney got a Wessex Cave Club team standing by in case further help was necessary. The advance rescue party found the two men trying to find their way, through the muddy Oxbow. Julian Tovey and Richard Klemperer, both from Bristol, were inexperienced non-club cavers and thought that they had been underground for about three hours instead of over seven. Dave Irwin talked to them on the wisdom of joining a club.

During the course of the rescue Kenney kept Mr. Marks informed by telephone as to the steps which were being taken and also told him when the incident was over. This seemed to be much appreciated by Mr. Marks.

13 September 1975 – Stoke Lane Slocker

Howard Kenney received telephone call from P. C. Sebrery at Frome Police Station at 4:30 p.m. A Mr. O'Neil of London had telephoned the police expressing anxiety that a party of six which he had left at the cave to do a trip would be trapped by rising water in view of the Notice at the entrance and the fact that it had begun to rain. Mr. O'Neil said that the party was not expected out before 6 o'clock. Kenney assured him that the amount of rain that had fallen so far could not possibly cause the flooding he feared, but advised him to watch the level of the stream and to telephone immediately if the stream began to flow in by the entrance. Kenney informed the police that he regarded the matter closed in the absence of any further telephone call from Mr. O'Neil.

2 November 1975 – Eastwater Cavern

Howard Kenney received a telephone call from P. C. Healey at Frome Police Station at 7:45 p.m. A Mr. Ware had telephoned from Eastwater Farm to raise an alarm concerning a party overdue in Eastwater Cavern.

A party of eight from the Exeter University Speleological Society had entered the cave at 2:30 p.m. with the object of going down Dolphin Pot. Three were experienced and at least two knew the cave well. Colin Hooper was in charge of the party.

Mr. Ware together with two companions entered the cave a little later and went down the twin vertical route. The object was that if the two parties happened to meet then they would exchange routes. Mr. Ware and his companions did not meet the Dolphin Pot party and therefore returned by the Twin Verticals. By 7:30 p.m. Mr. Ware became concerned that the Dolphin Pot party had not come out of the cave and therefore rang the police.

Kenney contacted Richard Witcombe Hunters' Lodge who in turn contacted Chris Hanham at Upper Pitts. There were a number of other cavers at Upper Pitts and also at the Belfry. Arrangements were made for a quick search party to go down Eastwater while the rest stood by in the event of the incident being serious. Kenney stood Brian Prewer by and Brian warned Don Thomson that there could possibly be trouble.

The reconnaissance party found the missing party who were on their way out and everyone was stood down at 8:30 p.m.

This year seems to be one of rescue alerts involving parties who have underestimated the time necessary for a particular trip. No doubt in this case the ladder climb with a party of eight took longer than anticipated.

9 November 1975 – Swildon's Hole

Howard Kenney received a call from P. C. Healey, Frome Police station at 6 p.m. to the effect that a Mr. Higgins had called from the Priddy call box to say that a party was overdue from Swildon's. Kenney telephoned Priddy 320 but no reply to instead he called Alan Thomas and asked him to go down to the Green to find Mr. Higgins. Alan found Mr. Higgins and he was in the call box but for some reason the telephone was not ringing and this we subsequently proved to be so when I tried to ring back again.

Mr. Higgins, from Bristol, is a teacher at Hengrove School and had been partly responsible for organising a party which had gone down Swildon's Hole at 11 a.m. that day. The party had

been a large one at first including a number of young people, but at the 20 foot drop a party of 5 went ahead with the intention of going via mud sump to Vicarage passage and back via Sump 1. Four of the five were sixth formers and the fifth was a man in his twenties. Three had Nife lamps and two carbide but none were wearing wet suits apart from one with a wet suit vest. One had done this trip before. One of the party were quite experienced, one moderately experienced and two not very experienced.

In view of our past experience of parties failing to find the link with Swildon's 2, Kenney assumed that this was the trouble and was about to initiate a search when the five emerged from the cave.

Kenney stood down the police and reported to the G.P.O. that the Priddy call box was not ringing. The conversation with the operator went as follows: - "The call box is not in our area, I cannot do anything about it", Kenney "Why then is the number I have dialled in my dialling instructions" Operator "Because you are in Chewton Mendip which is controlled by Bristol but Priddy is controlled by Shepton Mallet", Kenney "Can you give me the number to ring at Shepton Mallet". Operator "No and: in any case it is not of any concern to the Post Office because call boxes are designed to make calls not receive them". Kenny explodes and then a little more calmly explains why he is concerned that the call box is not ringing. Operator promises to telephone Shepton Mallet control to report the matter.

It still seems that the Post Office have no appreciation that cave rescue is an emergency service if one is to judge by this incident. Can the police. do anything to remind the post office that it is of some importance that call boxes in caving areas should be kept in good order.

6 December 1975 – Swildon's Hole

Geoffrey Reynolds, from Hertford, twisted his knee; but, when M.R.O. and Alan Thomas were alerted, the message was that he had broken a leg below the Twenty Foot Drop. Thus, a full-scale rescue was mounted only to find the victim making painful progress out of the Wet Way. He was out of the cave by 1825 hrs, just over an hour after the call-out.

1976

Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the year ending 31st. January 1976

As the log of call-outs which accompanies this report shows, this has been a quiet year for rescues on Mendip. However, M.R.O. is not lulled by the record and the year has seen careful preparations for the rainy day. With the purchase of a new Paraguard Stretcher, we have improved our capability of helping seriously injured cavers with greater comfort and speed; whilst, through the great kindness of benefactors, plans for acquiring portable hydraulic rescue gear and, perhaps, warm air breathing apparatus are underway for the coming year.

Without good cavers and helpers, of course, even the best equipment is wasted. Thus, I am pleased that ten Mendip clubs have organised practices in caves during the past year. Also, we welcome Dr. Andrew Hicks to the list of Wardens and appreciate the active interest of other local caving doctors; a particularly happy tradition which goes back to those who pioneered rescue work on Mendip. Support and help from the police are integral parts of M.R.O. and we continue to enjoy the personal interest of officers in the local Frome Division and the Avon and Somerset Constabulary throughout the region. We are pleased that our Chief Constable, Mr. K.W.L. Steele, has been appointed as one of the two representatives of the Association of Chief

Police Officers to liaise with the Cave Rescue Council nationally. Mr. Kenneth Steele, as former chief of the old Somerset Police, did a great deal to foster an effective cave rescue service on Mendip. It is a great pleasure to recall the evening on which we entertained officers from the Frome Division at Priddy last December even if, somewhat reluctantly, I must record their convincing superiority at skittles!

Dr. Oliver Lloyd checked our stores of essential rescue gear in County Clare, Eire, last summer and we continue to be well looked after by the Bristol Exploration Club at our local Belfry Depot. We are grateful to Glyn Bolt for his help in securing the depot with a metal door. Regular checks of equipment have been made.

The accounts which follow have a straightforward message in relation to the above report. Quite simply, M.R.O. pays about £50 a year to keep clubs and all interested parties informed of its activities and receives about twice as much by way of donations, its only regular source of income. Any major items of equipment purchased, therefore, is bound to eat into accumulated funds.

That is how it should be, of course, and so we continue to rely upon the generosity of Mendip cavers to support rescue works. Regrettably there is always the threat of that rainy day!

J.D. Hanwell, Hon. Sec & Treasurer,

19 February 1976 – Sludge Pit Hole

The police advised Howard Kenney at 12.40 a.m. that a worried parent had expected her son to contact her over an hour before that he had completed a trip down the cave with a party of cavers from Yeovil. Residents at the Belfry were stood by; but, before they were needed, the overdue party surfaced and were contacted by a police patrol in Eastwater Lane. Their only watch had gone wrong.

21 February 1976 – G.B. Cave

Graham Chandler, of Cheam, aged 26, was one of a party of six from Sutton Caving Club and Bristol Polytechnic, when he fell about 8 feet near the Great Chamber and broke his scapula. Two of his companions left the cave and alerted M.R.O. As there was some question of bleeding from the mouth one of them was told to return to him and if the bleeding did not appear to be of internal origin get him moving. This he did with the result that by the time the first rescuers arrived he was already near the entrance to the Ladder Dig.

Alan Thomas was telephoned by Howard Kenney and told to take the necessary equipment from the Store direct to the cave.

The first party entered the cave at 6:20 p.m., taking the Paraguard Stretcher and closely followed by a second party including Don Thomson. As it was a foggy night a series of police cones was laid across the field. At 7:15 p.m. the runner reported that no chest or head injuries were apparent, that the diagnosis was a broken scapula and that the stretcher was being used.

Chandler was taken all the way by stretcher except for the squeeze where he was transferred to the carrying sheet which had gone in subsequently with Dave Irwin. He was out of the cave by 8:35 p.m. and the ambulance arrived at that precise moment having been guided up from Shipham by police car. He was taken to Weston-super-Mare General Hospital.

Altogether 18 cavers were involved underground in addition to the original party. A police car was on hand all the time apart from meeting the ambulance. Mr. Jeffries of Manor Farm was very cooperative providing coffee and sandwiches for the victim's party who had been in the cave for rather a long time.

Source – Shepton Mallet Journal – 26 February 1976

CAVE RESCUE ON MENDIPS

The Mendip Caving Rescue Organisation went into action at the weekend when a caver fell in G.B. Cave at Charterhouse and broke his collar bone.

He was Mr. Graham Chandler, aged 26, of Cheam, Surrey, who was with a party of members of the Bristol Polytechnic Caving Club and the Sutton (Surrey) Caving Club.

The rescue team, led by Mr. Thomas, and accompanied by Dr. Thompson, was helped by 26 cavers, and after he had been taken from the cave, Mr. Chandler was taken to Weston-super-Mare Hospital for treatment.

27 March 1976 – Swildon's Hole

Howard Kenney received call from Frome Police at 3.45 p.m. to say that a caver had come out of Swildon's to say that an injured lad was being brought up the Wet Way with damaged shoulder. Three experienced cavers were with him and help was probably not needed.

On enquiry, it seemed that P.C. Baymahn had failed to ask the informant to remain at the phone so Kenney telephoned the Belfry at 3:55 p.m. and arranged for someone to stand by at the Swildon's entrance in order to relay promptly a stand down or request for further help.

On trying to contact other wardens everyone seemed to be out, but in due course Kenney discovered the Southern Council of Caving Clubs was holding a meeting at Priddy Village Hall, so sent someone there to request the cavers present not to disappear after the meeting until there had been a stand down.

The police and Alan Thomas reported to Kenney at 4:45 p.m. that the lad was out of the cave and was being taken to hospital with a suspected dislocated shoulder.

His name was Simon Talbot of Dormston. He was a member of the Headless Cross Venture Unit who were doing a combined trip of Swildon's with a Nottingham University Party.

Apparently, the injury was caused by slipping in the Water Chamber.

5 July 1976 – Swildon's Hole

Enthused by the prospect of discovering the famed river from Swildon's to Wookey Hole after a tourist trip to the latter, Monsieur Delagausie decided to find out for himself from first principles. Now resident in London with his family, he had caved in France several times. A fortnight after a brief look around the Upper Series, he entered for the main "push" with his 17-year old son and 12-year old daughter suitably equipped with lamps and ladders. Madame Delagausie remained on Priddy Green expecting them back at 4 p.m. When they had failed to return by 4 p.m., she contacted the police who alerted William Stanton in Bath. Stanton stood by Dr. Andrew Hicks and requested Brian Prewer to organise a search party; however, before

they went underground, the intrepid trio surfaced unharmed at 5:20 p.m. Vive la speleologie authentique!

Source – Unnamed and undated Newspaper

FRENCHMAN WENT THE WRONG WAY

A French caving enthusiast who took his two children, a son of 14 and a daughter of 12 down a Mendip cave, caused a rescue alert on Monday.

Mr. Jean Franciaz Elaeausie went down Swildon's Hole, Priddy, during a day visit to Wells from his London home.

Telling his wife to raise the alarm if they were not out of the cave within four hours, he took his children into the cave complex that is regarded as quite difficult.

At three o'clock in the afternoon the time was up and the waiting wife became anxious. She went to the New Inn and the landlord alerted Wells police and the Mendip Rescue organisation.

But as the rescue operation got underway, Mr. Elaeausie emerged with his children.

"We took the wrong turning down there," he explained. "It took us longer than expected."

4 September 1976 – Rhino Rift

A worried wife contacted Bridgwater Police regarding a Toby C.C. party she thought overdue. Dave Irwin received the call, stood by Tim Reynolds and Chris Batstone and went to Lower Farm with Tim Large. Meanwhile the party had returned.

15 September 1976 – Box Mines

Paul Gould (aged 17), Kevin Pritchard (16), Nigel Rogers (15) and Roger Coulson (15) from Corsham village near the freestone mines left their homes during the morning but failed to return at night. The Wiltshire police were contacted by parents. Investigations indicated that the youths had gone down the mines about lunch time; but, this was by no means certain. The Devizes Divisional H.Q. contacted the Wells Police for M.R.O. Jim Hanwell was alerted about 11:50 p.m. and, after confirming the details with Devizes, arranged for search parties to go to the scene. Meanwhile, Inspector Roberts from Corsham set up a mobile incident unit there and local Fire Service teams stood by.

Dave Irwin made a rendezvous with Tim and Margaret Large whom had already raised Tony Tucker, Chris Batstone and Keith Newberry. They reached Corsham about 2:0 a.m. Monday. Three search parties were organised carrying tapes for route marking and radio transmitters for surface communication from the widespread entrances to mobile control centre. Fire Service volunteers joined the parties led respectively by Tim and Tony, Chris and Keith. Each set out to search a different network armed with photocopies of the survey. Brian Prewer and Jim Hanwell arrived with full M.R.O. equipment at 2:30 a.m. and had alerted Dr. Don Thomson in case medical help was necessary. Bob Scammell was called out from Bath to lead a backup party should this prove necessary. If the missing youths were not discovered by daybreak it was decided with Inspector Roberts that a full scale call out would be required. Accordingly, other known cavers with knowledge of the mines were contacted to standby.

The lost party was found by Chis Batstone's group about 500 yards into Jack's Workings on a side passage. They were brought out unharmed by about 4 a.m. and taken home by the police. They had entered the mines about 1:30 p.m. the previous day with a torch and box of matches. After dropping and breaking the torch, they became lost. Their last matches were used to burn items of their clothes to try and keep warm. This thoughtless action left some a long wait with little protection and there seems little doubt that exposure was a probability had they not been found until later. Over twelve hours in total darkness like this clearly exhausted the party both mentally and physically, despite the comparative comfort of the mines.

A stand down was radioed from the mobile patrol unit at 4 a.m. The callout system with Wilshire Police worked well in view of the distance involved and infrequency of incidents in the area.

Source – Western Daily Press – 7 September 1976

TRAPPED BOYS IN CAVE ORDEAL



Four teenagers were rescued early yesterday morning, after being lost all night in a maze of underground caves and tunnels in Box, near Bath.

Last night they were recovering at home from their 15-hour ordeal. While rescuers had searched for them, the four kept warm by burning some of their clothes.

The four, Nigel Rogers, aged 15, Roger Coulston 15, Christopher Pritchard 16, and Paul Gould 16, live in Corsham, Wiltshire.

They were discovered only 200 yards from the cave's entrance, after an all-night search by firemen, police and 11 members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation led by Wells school teacher, Mr. Jim Hanwell.

Their nightmare adventure began on Sunday when they decided to explore the 60-mile labyrinth of caves and tunnels known locally as Jack's Workings.

They told their friend Glen Dick, 15, where they were going before they set out. He raised the alarm when they failed to return by 10 p.m.

Nigel, a pupil at Corsham Comprehensive School, said, "It was really frightening. We used matches until there were only a few left.

"Then I lit my T-shirt, so we had a little more light. Kevin lit his shirt as well, and then Roger had to light his socks.

"We were just walking around in circles, and we just sat down and waited."

4 October 1976 – Swildon's Hole

Adrian Pavey, aged 15, went down the cave with two teachers and another pupil from Priory Secondary School, Taunton. Following one of the teachers, Pavey jumped into the Double Pots and hurt his leg. He became very hysterical and it was thought that he had broken something so M.R.O. was called via the police at 7 p.m. Brian Prewer and William Stanton sent a party of six into the cave with full equipment soon afterwards and stood by others. They found Pavey not physically damaged so "talked" him out by 8:45 p.m.

Source – Willie Stanton's Log Book Vol.14, page 14

M.R.O. callout at 7:15 p.m. for a lad hurt in Swildon's. I organised things on The Green. No trouble, six local rescuers from Fred D to Dave I brought him out from the Double Pots with an alleged broken ankle, though apparently it was quite better next day, according to Tom Elkin (Lad was staying at Charterhouse). Curious, and an evening largely wasted. Home after putting away all the M.R.O. tackle at 10 p.m.

1977

Report by the Hon, Secretary & Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year ending 31st January 1977

In a year of generally good news, there is one specific piece of bad news I must start with. Howard Kenney, who has taken the brunt of rescue calls for many years, had to resign last summer following an unexpected illness. Howard was among the group of local cavers who revived M.R.O. after the last war in 1948. Since then, he has been directly involved in the vast majority of callouts, often underground and always closely in touch with progress if not. Few, if any, have more experience in actual rescue operations on Mendip and this is what counts most to the success of a call-out.

I must also record that Dr. Andrew Hicks has left the area for a post in Lancashire. We thank him for his interest in caving and for being available if needed.

The good news is varied. Most importantly, the number of call-outs is low and none have proved very serious. A dozen practices have been held and M.R.O. was host to the Cave Rescue Council in the summer when an Open Day was held for all to see our equipment. Three new items are now available; pride of place must go to the Blackhawk Hydraulics so generously donated by Mick and Honor Taylor, Dr. Donald Thomson has ensured that Mendip is to the forefront in helping us purchase a Reviva breathing apparatus and, recently, James Cobbett has helped us to acquire a handy one-man rope puller already proven in the oil drilling industry. In addition, we are most grateful for the gift of smaller though nonetheless valuable items such as waist belts. The willing support of both individual cavers and clubs is the best news of all, of course.

The search of Box Mines mentioned in the accompanying log of call-outs has led to closer contacts with both Wiltshire Constabulary and Fire Service. Several Wardens and local cavers met their officers at Corsham before Christmas to establish that the same well-tryed call-out procedure enjoyed with the Avon and Somerset Constabulary will apply in Wiltshire too. Special arrangements to collect information that will assist future calls to the mines are being made by Dave Irwin and those with the essential local knowledge. It is gratifying to record once again the excellent and effective liaison we have with the Police, particularly in the Mendip Division which receives all the calls and contacts wardens. In the field to the tradition that cave rescues are always joint operations with the Police remains as it was envisaged back in 1948 and even before then in the pre-War years.

It seems fitting to close this report with a reminder of two other key principles to which M.R.O. has adhered strongly; namely, that it is strictly a rescue organisation which leaves all other aspects of caving to individuals and the clubs to which they belong and, also, that it relies upon the goodwill and initiative of cavers alone for both financial and practical support. In short, local cavers have a tradition of self-service in rescue work. We do not seek other ways.

J. D. Hanwell, Hon. Sec. & Treasurer

16 January 1977 – Stoke Lane Slocker

Cars in the lay-by on the lane were reported by a patrol at 1:30 a.m. but found to belong to West London cavers in their hut.

5 February 1977 – Wookey Hole

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 2, page 45

Martin, Jane, OCL, Adrian VDP, Barry Wilkinson, Richard, Dan Hanall, (Andy Ward), Tony Boycott, Tony Jarratt.

Called out at Rich Stevenson's to take bottles and gear to Wookey as a trainee diver (Andy Ward) had failed to return from a "loop" trip on time. Despite being pined, Richard dived to 20 where he found the lost diver sitting on a rock looking lonely. He escorted him back out to 9. Very worrying waiting to find out what happened!

6 February 1977 – Swildon's Hole

A party of twelve including eight novices were led down the cave by S.P. Tarran from St. Edmund Hall, Oxford University, and Hilary Worth from University College Buckland, Farringdon. On the way back from Sump I, Liz Ellis, who was one of the novices, lost both Wellington boots between the Double Pots and Twenty Foot Pot owing to the strong streamflow. She sustained several cuts to her feet, legs and hands and was clearly suffering from exposure on reaching the Upper Series. The party was met by Martin Bishop, Pete Moody, Pete McNab and Tony Jarratt at the Well and the victim was carried out and given a hot bath at Priddy. Rich Websell assisted two other novices. In a subsequent letter of thanks, Steve Tarran writes, "A number of recent novice trips down Swildon's had gone so well that I had become a little over-optimistic. Obviously in those water conditions I should not have taken them down". The party was not an official Oxford University one and the rescue did not involve the police.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 2, page 45

Snab, Marin, Pete Moody, Julian Peage, Rich S, Jane Wilson, Tony Jarratt loads of tossers

After digging trip, in Sidcot Passage, came out via the very wet "Troubles". Entertainment being provide by Snab who had no zip in his wet suit and insisted on free-diving everything! Met loads of idiots in plimsoles, T-shirts and jeans at the 20 foot. Pined past them but met another load at The Well. Assisted an Indian and a Chinaman up a few climbs then went out. Remembering that we had passed a rather ill looking girl wearing no boots we decided to go back and assist. She was found above The Well and was in an advance stated of exposure with badly cut feet. We carried her out and she was "fireman's lifted" across the fields and taken to M.B.'S house for a scalding hot bath. Luckily, she recovered. A Wessex party went down to assist the group at the 20 foot who were also in great difficulty and had at least one partly exposed member. These were Oxford students on their first trip apart from so called "experienced" bastards in wet suits. Nearly all these wore flimsy clothing and plimsoles or wellies. The stream was extremely high. If our party had not assisted the girl she would probably have died.

3 April 1977 – Manor Farm Swallet

Martin Bishop received a call from the Belfry at 8 p.m. regarding a party from Bath 18 Plus group two hours overdue. He went to Charterhouse with Andy Sparrow and found a very tired and lightless party at the foot of the entrance shaft. They were life-lined to the surface and it was not necessary to inform the police.

4 June 1977 – Buddle's Wood Chewton Mendip

Mervyn Speed called Howard Kenney late afternoon, Saturday 4 June, to say that at 8 a.m. that morning a low flying balloon had passed over his farm, Grove Farm, Chewton Mendip and had terrified his Golden Retriever dog, and the dog did a bolt in the direction of Buddles Wood where there are a number of open but fenced off shafts. Mr. Speed's wife became convinced that the dog had fallen down one of the shafts although there was no sign of fur on the barbed wire which was quite closely spaced

I decided to seek voluntary assistance from cavers rather than create an M.R.O. call out on such uncertain information. I contacted Paul Christie at the Belfry and Richard Stevenson at home who brought along two others, B.E.C. ladder and lifeline. We looked at four open shafts in the wood with no success – the other shafts although open were so overgrown that a dog falling in would have disturbed the vegetation. I looked at a newly open shaft in Tor Hole. Mr. Speed did not think the dog would go as far as the shafts above Eaker Hill farm. So, we gave up the search.

The dog returned home in an exhausted condition at 8 p.m.

11 June 1977 – Stoke Lane Slocker

Report 1

A party of eight from the Cambridge Climbing and Caving Club entered the cave at 12.30 p.m. On reaching Sump I, all but one went through, the remaining caver staying in Cairn Chamber to await the return of the main party from Stoke II. During the time, they were visiting the upper chambers, the stream rose so that it was impossible to get within a safe diving distance on the downstream approach to the sump when they returned. They remained on the far side for about four hours until the water level had dropped sufficiently. By 6:30 p.m. the farmer became anxious and contacted Frome Police who checked the cave entrance and then called M.R.O. at

7:25 p.m. William Stanton alerted Brian Prewer who went to the cave. Richard Stevenson and Alan Mills led a small rescue party into the cave at about 8:30 p.m. and met the trapped cavers safely negotiating the dive as the water had fallen. All were out of the cave by 9:50 p.m. All cavers are urged to note that the quarries upstream of the village have installed automatic pumps which now exaggerate the effects of local floods in the system. The water level was significantly reduced after the quarry company had been requested to switch off their pumps during the alert. A helpful resume of the situation appears in the Cave Diving Group Newsletter No. 46, January 1978, pages 3–4.

Source – Cave Diving Group Newsletter No. 46, January 1978, pages 3 to 4 by O.C.L.

In June of 1977 I heard that there had been a sump rescue in Stoke Lane Slocker, for which the use of divers had been necessary, so I wrote for details. Quite soon afterwards it transpired that divers had not been needed, so I forgot about it. Five months later however I got a detailed account of the incident from Jim Hanwell which showed some interesting points relevant to the problems of sump rescue. Combining two accounts I give you the details.

The incident took place on Saturday 11th June 1977. A party of eight cavers went down the Slocker when it really was a bit wet; I of course would be the last person to criticise anyone who does this. [See 28 January 1967 Oliver got stuck in Stoke Lane Slocker] The leader of the party took as his indicator of safety the water level in relation to the cattle grid near the entrance. This to me is a new parameter and I would be interested to hear other people's views. The water level was still rising at 1 p.m. when they descended. On passing Sump 1 they found nine inches of air space on the far side. It was 3 p.m. when they reached the dry chambers of Stoke 2, which they explored for two hours.

Those of you who know this sump will remember that the easiest way of returning, without diving too far, is to put your hand through the sump and grasp a knob of rock on the upstream side, then dive without letting go of the knob. When the party returned to the sump they found that the water level had risen so high, that it was impossible to get near enough to the sump to put an arm through and grab the rock. In these circumstances the only safe way to get a party through is for someone who knows the sump well to go through with a hand-line, which the others can use as a guide, instead of the knob of rock. The party leader took the wise course of returning to the dry chambers in Stoke 2 and waiting for the water level to fall.

The effects of Quarry Pumps

This is where the story gets interesting, for the water level rose dramatically between 5 and 6 p.m., apparently due to a flood pulse caused, not by a downpour, but by the fact that the pumps at Wainwright's Moon's Hill Quarry get switched on automatically when the water level reaches a certain height.

After half past six Mr. Marks called the Police and Mendip Rescue. The Police visited the cave entrance, noted the flooding and got the quarry manager to switch off the pumps. The water level then fell at a rate of four inches and hour. M.R.O. was called out at 7:25 p.m. and a small party went down at about 8:30 p.m. By 9:30 p.m. (probably earlier) the stranded party found that the water had fallen sufficiently for them to pass the sump and the party leader took the wise precaution of making sure that each caver had his hand on the knob before coming through. They met the rescue party on the way out and all had reached the surface by 9:50 p.m.

And so to the natural hazards of heavy rainfall aggravated by forestry trenching we now have to add another flood hazard, namely the use of quarry pumps.

Report 2 – *Source - Cambridge Climbing and Caving Club Report by Bill Key*

The trip took place on Saturday 11th June at the end of a week of pretty poor weather. There had been quite a bit of rain and although the particular day was a little damp the forecast was for brighter weather. I decided that we should take a look at the system and if it proved to be too wet then we would abandon the trip. Having all changed into our wet suits we drove to Stoke Bottom Farm at Stoke St Michael to borrow the key. We had to wait about an hour for the farmer and during this time I went to look at the cave entrance. It was indeed taking a fair amount of water but the level of the stream was well below the cattle grid near the entrance which indicated that the cave would be negotiable.

The farmer arrived soon after I returned to the farm. Having told him of my intention to descend the system we were given the key and paid our fees.

We were a fairly large party but all experienced potholers. We all knew each other well and most of us had been underground together on many occasions. I had been in the system many times although it was new to everyone else on the trip.

We entered the cave at 1 p.m. The stream was a little higher than I had seen it before but we soon made our way along a variety of wet and dry passages to the crux of the system, a duck followed by a short but restricted sump (a very wet bit followed by an underwater bit). Although the sump is only a few feet long you have to squeeze into a very small chamber big enough to take one person, take a deep breath, push yourself under the rather murky water, pass through a hole in the rock and up into a small lake the other side. Owing to the water being slightly higher than usual the surface of the lake at the point of surfacing was only about 9 inches from the roof. However, we all passed safely through with the exception of Ian who decided to remain the other side. I returned through the sump to check that he was O.K. He said he would be quite happy to wait there until we returned. I then passed back to join the others. We waded away from the sump and along the streamway to the dry chambers. The time was 3 p.m. and we spent the next two hours exploring the very large and well decorated caverns before returning to the streamway.

Here I explained the return procedure. We would follow the streamway back to the sump in a known order. The way to pass through is to get as near to the sump wall as possible, pass your arm under the water and grasp an obvious flake of rock the other side. Having taken a deep breath push your head under water and resurface beside the flake of rock. These instructions must be followed, to avoid diving too far and missing the air space.

We made our way to the sump. I had of course been back through it earlier in the afternoon but this time it was obvious that the water level had risen making it difficult to near enough to the sump wall to feel the flake the other side. The water was very turbulent and I decided, reluctantly, not to split the party in rising flood water. We therefore returned to the dry caverns having first of laid marker rocks by the stream to check the change in level. We returned to the stream an hour later to find, the water had indeed risen dramatically. We therefore sat by the stream, lit a candle to save our lamps and ate some of our emergency rations. My main concern was that Ian was O.K. and that people on the surface were not worrying unduly. It wasn't until 9:30 p.m. that the water had dropped to a safe level.

Having waited so long we were all somewhat apprehensive about the sump but we made our way once again upstream. I had soon passed safely through and then stationed myself so that I could ensure that each person had his hand on the flake rock before passing through. Ian was found to be in good spirits and the first three through the sump set off with him to the

surface. The rest of us soon followed meeting members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation on the way.

By 10:30 p.m. we had all reached the surface where we were met by the police who gave us mugs of hot soup - a most welcomed gesture. We were told that had been a good deal of rain during the day and that the nearby quarry had pumped its flood water into the cave. Once the pumps were switched off the level had dropped sufficiently for our return.

I would like to apologise to anyone who was inconvenienced, unduly worried or upset by this incident. I would like to thank very much the farmer who informed the police, the police themselves and of course the members of the M.R.O. whose Saturday night drinking session was so suddenly curtailed.

This was the first time in twelve years and hopefully the last that the club has been involved in a rescue. It is a good reflection on the club the way everyone, cooperated fully with my decision and remained in such good spirits during an uncomfortable time.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 17 (1977 to 1978), page 10

Party from Cambridge. Eight novices.

D. Mills, R. Stevenson, P. Hatfield. Party located at Nutmeg Grater. Three leaders were met at duck told to f*** off out. A.M. to find five others of party, met at Nutmeg lost; guided out. 3½ hours.

Source – Bath Chronicle – 13 June 1977

RAIN TRAPS POTHLES

Eight potholers were trapped for four hours in a cave at Stoke St. Michael on Saturday. An underground stream, swelled by the day's heavy rain, cut off the potholers only exit in Stoke Slocker cave. An alert went out, when the party failed to report back on time and a seven-man team of the Mendip Rescue Organisation started down the cave. After an hour the search team, led by Mr. Brian Prewer, met the potholers who had fought their way through the water. No one was injured and the potholers from Cambridge returned home later in the evening.

11 July 1977 – Swildon's Hole

Christopher Bowden, an 18-year old student from Plymouth, accompanied three friends on a Round Trip starting about 3 p.m. He had not dived a sump before but was well equipped with a 6 m.m. wet suit. The party was led by Alan Travarthen. Bowden declined to dive the sump and became frightened. Another party led by Bob Lewis chanced across the scene and Lewis remained to give help whilst others left the cave to alert M.R.O. Alan Thomas was appraised of the situation and informed Frome Police. Martin Bishop, Ross White and Dave Irwin went down the cave about 9:30 p.m. and the latter returned after an hour requesting diving gear since Bowden would not go back through the Troubles either. Chris Hannam took diving gear into the cave at 11 p.m. and Thomas alerted other wardens and informed Don Thomson. Between midnight and 1 a.m., a strong support team went underground with further equipment and medical supplies. Final efforts to bully Bowden to make the dive succeeded shortly afterwards and the cave was cleared rapidly by about 1:30 a.m. It seems more logical for first-time sump dives to be undertaken the right way around rather than committing such cavers to a Round Trip and obligatory reverse dive.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 17 (1977 to 1978), page 17

Late night call out for Plymouth Caving Group – one member refusing to return via Sump I. By the time we reached the 40, Chris (angel of mercy) Hannan – others had dealt with the problem.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 12 July 1977

YOUNG CAVER RESCUED

Cave rescuers took part in an underground drama deep inside the Mendips early today. A young Plymouth caver had to be rescued from the notorious Swildon's Hole - said to be one of the most dangerous of a dozen caves in the area. Christopher Bowden (18), a member of the Plymouth Caving Group, entered the cave with three friends at Priddy, near Wells, at 3 p.m. yesterday. After several hours exploring the narrow twisting passages the four-man group came to a spot known as "The Sump" hundreds of feet underground. To carry on their roundabout journey out of the cave meant an underwater dive of about six feet. But despite two hours of coaxing by his friends and several unsuccessful attempts, Christopher was unable to make the dive. Mr. Alan Trevarthen, leader of the group, took up the story: "One of us stayed with him while the other two dived through The Sump and out of the cave to call for help. Assisted by the Mendip Rescue Organisation they eventually persuaded him to make the dive and got him out of the cave soon after 1 a.m. I must accept responsibility, I suppose. I should have taken Christopher on a sump dive before to get him used to it."

6 August 1977 – Swildon's Hole

A party of four descended the cave at about 3 p.m. They did not have wet suits and were using carbide lamps without spares. Only two had any previous experience and had travelled to the area from Crawley with their parents. Arrangements had been made to meet at Rickford about 5 p.m. otherwise the parents had no knowledge of the party's whereabouts. Before reaching Sump I, the lamps began to dim and so the party started to come out. They took a turning unknown to them in the Water Chamber and then their lights failed. Before the Rickford rendezvous passed, the parents happened to notice their son's car on Priddy Green whilst on a tour of Mendip, so when they had not turned up by 8 p.m. they returned to Priddy.

Finding the car still there, they made local enquiries and alerted M.R.O. Brian Prewer informed the Frome Police whilst Ian Jepson, Phil Hendy, Paul Hadfield and Barry Wilkinson searched the cave. The missing four were found in the Old Grotto, dispirited, cold and hungry. Had the parents not spotted the car, this callout would have been difficult. It is most important to leave exact details of which cave is being visited.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 7, pages 863 to 865

Before long, a rumour went around that a party was overdue from Swildon's, and we hurriedly drank until one of the lad's parents came back into the pub to confirm that the car was still on the Green, and the cavers, all aged about 20, from Surrey, were not in the New Inn or the Vic. At approximately 10:45 Ian, Paul, Barry and I returned to Upper Pitts, clambered into wet suits, picked up rope and ladder, and drove to Priddy, meeting Brain Prewer on the Green. It was warm, but misty.

Strapping an extra M.R.O. cell on each we set off across the fields. Ian was to take the Wet Way to the Water Chamber. Barry was to look in the Oxbows, Paul took the Short Dry Way and I went down the Pretty Way.

Although the first squeeze gave me some difficulty I kept up with Paul to the head of Jacob's Ladder and then made fairly good time, even though I was sweating profusely. As I was climbing down the boulders from the rift just before the Old Grotto, I heard voices and a whistle. Giving a series of long blasts on the whistle, I'd borrowed from Beth, I hurried on to find them sitting on the boulder pile, chewing the contents of the Comforts Box, carried by Paul, who had just found them. They had a rope and a ladder, and were approaching the Sump when their lights began to fail. On returning they missed their way at the Water Chamber not finding the way up the Well. They tried to return via the Old Grotto, but by then they only had one light left – the caver with it tried to get out, but missed the way again at Jacob's Ladder, and returned to sit it out. When we found them they had been underground for eight hours, four of them without lights.

When they were foaming well at the mouth and feeling sick (nasty stuff, M.R.O. glucose) Paul went off down to the Water Chamber to pick up Ian and Barry, the latter not yet having returned from the Oxbows.

When they were ready to move and had sorted out the cells, I prepared to move off just as Ian and the others arrived. So I carried on with one of the four, up the Short Dry Way, and Kenny's Dig.

Only incident was when the chap fell off the first drop, but no harm done, and we were soon out and at the Green.

27 August 1977 – Lamb Leer Cavern

David Getterling and Paul Lydon from London went down the cave in the afternoon; the former claimed to be experienced but the other was not. A lifeline was used on the fixed entrance ladder; however, it was not thought necessary to use one on the Main Chamber pitch! On returning, Lydon was unable to climb the ladder and so his friend alerted M.R.O. through Bath Police. Brian Prewer was contacted at 5:20 p.m. but could not reach Getterling for further details as the informant had left the phone. Prewer alerted William Stanton and a party of four from the Belfry led by Graham Wilton-Jones went to the cave finding Getterling at the entrance They hauled Lydon up on the winch and the cave was cleared by about 7 p.m. Quite apart from the conduct of the trip, it is very important that informants remain at the phone until contacted by an M.R.O. warden for further details; otherwise, it is very difficult to initiate an effective callout.

11 September 1977 – Read's Cavern

A party of four youths went down the cave during the afternoon. After leaving one of the party in the Main Chamber, the rest found their way into the Browne-Stewart Series. The lad left behind panicked when the others did not return so he left the cave and asked a passer-by to contact M.R.O. Frome Police received the call and alerted Brian Prewer at 5:40 p.m. reporting that two cavers were stuck. Dave Irwin, John Dukes and Chris Batstone went to Burrington to assess the situation followed by four cavers from the Belfry. Alan Thomas was stood by. The rescuers met a Police Patrol there and reported that the overdue party had surfaced. A brief chat ensued about under-estimating the times for trips and about not leaving novices alone in caves! All were stood down at 6:30 p.m.

24 September 1977 – Ilam Rising, Derbyshire

Martin Bishop called from Derbyshire to stand-by a diving team to help retrieve a body from Ilam Rising if required. Richard Stevenson was contacted to alert local divers. In the event, Derbyshire rescuers recovered the body. (See Cave Diving Group Newsletter No. 46, January 1978, pages 17-18).

28 September 1977 – Swildon's Hole

Frome Police contacted M.R.O. and reported that a Mr. Trig from Bristol had seen the same ladder hanging at the Twenty Foot Pot during a trip that day as on the previous Sunday. A quick check of car parks and camp sites in Priddy indicated no one missing nor any parties that had not returned from the cave. No further action was taken.

29 October 1977 – Eastwater Cavern

A call was received from Bridgwater Police by Brian Prewer at 10 p.m. They were concerned about a call from a woman in Cheddar who said that she had arranged to meet her husband there at 6 p.m. after a caving trip somewhere on Mendip. She thought that they might be using a blue 1100 estate car but was not certain about that either. Prewer contacted Chris Hannam at Priddy and the latter met a local police patrol. They made a tour of the more obvious sites but could not find the car. Meanwhile, Andy Sparrow checked at Eastwater Farm and was informed that a party of four were still in the cave and now overdue. The blue car was parked in the farmyard. Sparrow and another caver went down Eastwater Cavern straight away and located the missing party at the bottom of Baker's Chimney. They had taken a long time to reach the bottom of the cave and had lost their way on coming out. Otherwise, they were all right and were brought out of the cave by about midnight. It transpired that Corporals Keith Lott and Brian Rawcliffe of the R.A.F. had gone down the cave with Mrs. Barbara Rawcliffe and Alan Whitehead from Hendon at about 3 p.m. Two of the party were complete novices. The incident highlighted yet again the problems faced by both police and M.R.O. when insufficient information is left about the exact location and duration of a trip. It is important that accurate details are given to people, preferably cavers, who know the area and its caves. This saves much time and frustration should an emergency arise.

Source – Wells Journal – 3 November 1977

WIFE STARTS SEARCH FOR LOST CAVERS

The wife of one of four potholers from London raised the alarm when the group did not return at the expected time from a potholing expedition in the Mendips. Members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation and the police spent over three hours searching for the men before they were found in a cave near Priddy early on Monday morning. When the rescuers found them, they explained that they had lost their way in the giant Eastwater Cavern.

20 November 1977 – Cuckoo Cleaves

Brian Prewer was contacted by a Mr. G. Samways of Yeovil Caving Club at 3:15 p.m. who reported that two of his party were stuck in the narrow tube approach to Lake Chamber. One of those stuck was said to be rather distressed. Prewer informed Frome Police then alerted Martin Bishop to contact Pete Moody and Alison Hooper who were thought to be in Rocket Drop Cave. Fred Davies, Dave Turner, Alan Mills and Colin Williams were called and Don Thomson asked to stand-by. By the time Alison Hooper arrived, the pair had succeeded in reaching Lake

Chamber where she joined them with Moody. With Pete backing along the tube and Alison following, each of the cavers was coaxed out. Alan Thomas and Martin Bishop organised other parties if required. In the event, these were not needed and the cave was cleared by 6:15 p.m.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – November 1977

RESCUED PAIR PLAN THANK YOU

Teenage cavers Time Coote and John Nedes are giving Mendip Rescue Organisation a big thank you. The two members of Yeovil Caving Club, were rescued when they got stuck in Cuckoo Cleeve, near Priddy, on Sunday. Now they will donate part of the proceeds of a sponsored cave in to the team which pulled them to safety. They hope it will be about £20.

“We were with a group looking for an underground cave when we got stuck in a nine-inch passage.

We struggled through but couldn’t get back,” said Tim (15), schoolboy from Yeovil.

“I had organised a sponsored cave in over half term and we hadn’t decided what to do with all the money so it seemed a good idea to donate some to the team.”

Tim spent 96 hours underground in the cave in with other pupils from Westfield School, Yeovil.

20 November 1977 – Swildon's Hole

After the Cuckoo Cleeves call-out, Brian Prewer received a message from Frome Police at 8:30 p.m. reporting that a girl was unable to climb up the Twenty Foot Pot. The informant had left the Priddy Green call box when Prewer tried to get further details, so he contacted Martin Bishop there and asked him to locate the caller. Meanwhile, a party consisting of John Dukes, Chris Batstone, Andy Sparrow, J. Kirby and N. Weston joined Bishop with hauling ropes and the Reviva equipment. On reaching the Twenty, they pulled the girl up and assisted her out by about 10 p.m. She was given a hot bath. The girl, Sharon Gorman aged 21 from Yeovil, was on her first caving trip and only had light clothing.

Source – Wells Journal – 1 December 1977

CAVE RESCUE TEAM TWICE IN ACTION

A woman on her first caving trip suffered exhaustion and was stuck 200 feet down in Swildon’s Hole, Priddy, on Saturday. Twenty-year-old Mrs. Sharon Gorman, from Yeovil, couldn’t move and said later: “I thought I was going to die.” Two companions, experienced potholers Mr. Julian Axe and Mr. Garry Phillips both of Yeovil, found it was beyond their own efforts to move her. One of them climbed out and called the Mendip Rescue Organisation. Rescuers tugged and pushed and eventually got Mrs. Gorman to safety. “They were fantastic,” she said. “I was in a state but they comforted and encouraged me and I owe them everything.” She added that the 400-foot climb down the cave had gone with little trouble, but climbing out had been exhausting and at the halfway point she had collapsed. On the same day, the Rescue Organisation were called out to help two members of the Yeovil Caving Club who had become stuck in Cuckoo Cleeves Cave, near Wells.

3 December 1977 – Boho Caves, County Farmanagh

Dr. Oliver Lloyd received a call from the Belfast Police requesting him to stand-by a team of divers for a rescue in progress there being organised by Dave Drew and Jeff Phillips. Two cavers had been trapped by floods. The local Fire Service were pumping out the entrance series, the Army were building a dam and Dave and Jeff were the divers. Lloyd consulted with William Stanton straight away at 10:30 p.m. and proceeded to raise local divers whilst Stanton contacted Frome Police. It was agreed that, if a diving team was required, the police would call on the R.A.F. to fly them to Northern Ireland. In the end, those of the spot successfully rescued the trapped pair in the early hours on Sunday. A full report on the incident by the divers appears in the Cave Diving Group Newsletter No. 46, January 1978, pages 23-24.

11 December 1977 – Burrington Combe

Brian Prewer was contacted by Weston-super-Mare Police the previous evening regarding the whereabouts of unknown youths missing from an abandoned tent on Burrington Ham. It was agreed that the area would be searched on the Sunday during daylight. Several cavers gave the police assistance in combing the surface throughout the day and parties visited the caves. Nothing was found except a set of drums! The police informed M.R.O. later that they were concentrating future enquiries elsewhere.

18 December 1977 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 17 (1977 to 1978), page 61

W.C.C. rescue team reached the 20 foot less than an hour after accident (peel off ladder) and effected rescue. Sprained ankle, casualty walked out with assistance on climbs. M.R.O. plain cooking chocolate is vile. (Delay in call out due to call out being made by knackered bodd).

24 December 1977 – Multiple Hoax Calls

A call was received at the Belfry at 11.30 p.m. from an unknown person giving a bogus name who reported a party overdue from a Primrose Path trip in Eastwater Cavern. Cave checked by Ian Jepson, no sign of any party in the cave. A second call received at the Belfry and a third call received at the Hunters' Lodge stated that the original call was a false alarm.

Those concerned should know that they have alienated themselves from all who have the best interests of the caving community at heart. It is hoped that this is the first and last of such occurrences. M.R.O. is now forced to authenticate all calls for help.

Traditionally, M.R.O. has willingly responded to two types of callout; official ones through the police and occasional requests which come direct to wardens. The latter, of course, are unofficial if they are not serious enough to merit troubling the police; quite simply, cavers are helping fellow cavers in such circumstances. Over the Christmas period, however, events showed that the direct request is open to abuse. In future, therefore, M.R.O. is obliged to treat all calls officially which means that informants must give details which the police can verify as authentic.

1978

**Report by the Hon. Secretary & Treasurer of the M.R.O.
for the Year ending the 31st January 1978**

The year has brought several changes worth noting. Martin Bishop and Tim Large have been added to the Wardens' List and it is pleasing to record that the happy tradition of local caving doctors taking an active interest in rescue work continues. A revised call-out sheet was issued at the start of the new year. Identical copies are held by the Police at their Division Headquarters to which emergency calls are directed. The Mendip Division based at Frome continues to co-ordinate and support rescue operations locally and cavers have much to thank Superintendent John Lee for ensuring that the system works so smoothly. Chief Supt. R. Udall and Chief Inspector Dennis Parkinson both retired during the year and also deserve our gratitude for their interest and help particularly when local government reorganisation required us to adopt the present call-out system.

During the post-congress camp on Mendip following the Seventh International Congress of Speleology last September, M.R.O. gave demonstrations of its equipment to overseas delegates staying at the Belfry. Many new friends and helpful contacts were made and we note that Eric Catherine has been appointed Secretary of the Cave Rescue Commission of the International Union of Speleology for the 1981 Congress in Kentucky, U.S.A.

There have been fewer but probably more specific and effective rescue practices since last February. Various seasoned teams have tested new equipment and techniques which would be invaluable if needed for real one day. For example, we now know that a full Rhino Rift rescue requires more low stretch ropes than previously held and the additional length has been purchased. A new drag sheet in modern materials and redesigned to handle better on pitches is being developed and, following useful information from Dr. Ric Halliwell at Hull University, a device for direct cave to surface speech has been built and tested by Brian Prewer. The Shepton Mallet C.C. have come up with good proven ideas should there be a rescue from Thrupe Lane Swallet. Such purposeful exercises are welcome and M.R.O., is willing to offer and receive any suggestions on other problems which might be tackled.

Cavers have shown a welcome and characteristic disregard of the ten percent ceiling for inflation by boosting donations to a record level. For its part, M.R.O. has correspondingly reduced expenditure over the year despite the equipment purchases mentioned above. This is because Dr. Oliver Lloyd kindly donated much needed carrying sheets at the start of the year and copies of M.R.O. reports last year were circulated with the new Council of Southern Caving Clubs Newsletter. Thus, whilst our own postages are saved, the reports are more widely circulated among cavers. The surplus of funds shown over page is timely since proposed modifications to the Belfry Depot have been approved by our hosts, the B.E.C. Furthermore, we must reckon on several items of equipment going well beyond their shelf life in the coming year and, obviously, M.R.O. cannot hold any suspect gear.

It is hoped that this report along with the statement of the accounts over page and the accompanying log of incidents shows that M.R.O. does the job that the caving community requires and shares with them.

J. D. Hanwell, Hon. Sec. & Treasurer

5 March 1978 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer received a call from the police at Frome ten minutes after midnight. A Mr. Cooper from Bristol had raised the alarm from Priddy Green about two friends still in the cave. All three had entered the cave about 5 p.m. the previous day for a trip to Swildon's Four. Cooper had intended going via the streamway to rendezvous with his friends in Four; however, he turned back on reaching Sump Three and had lost contact with the others. Whilst Prewer was

in conversation with Cooper over the phone, the overdue pair arrived. They had lost their way on the return journey and had been delayed.

29 August 1978 – Swildon's Hole

Call received at 3 p.m. from Bruce Bedford by Brian Prewer. B.B had been contacted by P. Eckersley who was worried that part of his party, consisting of one eleven-year-old, one twelve-year-old and another fourteen-year-old, had not emerged from Swildon's. He had left them at the bottom of the old 40 foot and they had not appeared. He returned to Jacob's Ladder and had shouted but got no reply. He was too tired to search any further. Whilst on the phone to Brian the residue of his party appeared. The police were not informed.

8 September 1978 – G.B. Cave

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 7, pages 975 to 976

7:40 p.m. just finished milking and Prew rang up to say that a missing cow was presumed to be down the G.B shakehole. By 7:55, self, Lynne, Colin and Claire were at the cave and looking down the hole. One place where a cow could have gone, but no marks in the mud. Back at the road, met the farmer's wife (Mrs. Small), her daughter, and Rob Harper. Prew arrived shortly after.

Bob went down Mud Passage to The Gorge, down the waterfall, then up to the top of the Gorge. Colin went down the shakehole saying a cow could have gone down, but he met up with Rob and they both entered via the shakehole. Lynne and I looked at Great Swallet and Read's Grotto – but no trace of the animal. The search underground was called off.

Cow was later found near Longbottom – it was adept at escaping from secure fields, we learned later.

14 September 1978 – Wells in Glastonbury

Fred Davies, Brian Prewer, Martin Bishop, Rich West and Jim Hanwell assisted the police in a search of old wells in and around Glastonbury for a body reported missing. They were joined by Chris Bradshaw and Bruce Bradford on the second day. Nothing was found and the search was called off by the police when no positive clues could be found.

Source – Western Daily Press – 15 September 1978

THE SEARCHERS HUNT FOR THE WELL OF DEATH

Police investigating a body in the well mystery, appealed last night to an anonymous woman to telephone them again. She started a massive hunt yesterday with a tip off call to Glastonbury police station. The woman said someone had been murdered and dumped in a deep well in the town. Police frogman and members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation searched six wells and two reservoirs in Glastonbury. But last night Superintendent John Lee, of Frome, who is leading the search, said last night: "We didn't find anything during our search and we must now start thinking that there's a strong possibility that the call was a hoax. There are certain aspects of the call which police have not released because they would like the woman to telephone us again and give us more details of exactly where the well is to be found. We would ask her to call us this morning on Glastonbury 32112." The call, from a woman with a Birmingham accent was taken by Sergeant Robin Jones. Sergeant Jones said: "It was a hell of



Jim Hanwell centre, Brian Prewer right

a long conversation but the only information she could give was that there is a deep well which is hard to find and hidden by bushes. The woman was well spoken and she sounded worried. I think she was genuine.” The search for the well began on Glastonbury Tor. There the police discovered the grating on the shaft leading to a 55,000 gallon reservoir was insecure. They had to drain the two tanks because Wessex Water Authority officials said frogmen could contaminate the water. The water board supplied a list of seven possible places. Many more are known to exist. The search was called off last night with only a few inspected.

17 September 1978 – Read's Cavern

Tim Large received a call from the police in Wells at 2:55 p.m. A Mr. R. S. Liddiard from Shipham had informed them of a party of Scouts overdue from Read's Cavern, Browne-Stewart Series. The troop had gone down the cave at 10:30am led by Chris Liddiard aged 19, the others being Steve Mansford (17), Pete Cornish (13), John Benson (13) and Gavin Munnery (12). All lived in the Shipham area.

A strong party comprising Tim Large, Chris Batstone, Martin Bishop, Nigel Taylor, Tony Jarratt, Stewart MacManus, Trevor Hughes and J. Crick went from the Belfry to conduct a search of the cave. Richard Gough remained at the Belfry phone and Dave Irwin stood by at Priddy in case others were needed. The search party was joined by Rich Websall, Pete Moody and Alison Hooper at Burrington. Nigel Taylor and six others went underground at 3:30 p.m. and soon made contact with the scouts. Apparently, they had lost their way and lights, on returning through the boulders in the Browne-Stewart Series. Their shouts had been heard by another party who had been unable to direct them out of the predicament other than to surface and warn M.R.O. Nor did they use the call-out procedure posted outside the entrance!

The lost party was brought out of the cave by 5:30 p.m. and everyone stood down. This was the only occasion during the year that M.R.O. had to go underground on a rescue call!

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 2, page 81

Pete & Alison, Rich Websall, Sparrow, Tony Jarratt Etc.

Call out direct from police to Belfry. Five boy Scouts lost in Browne-Stewart Series of the cave, with little light. Able to speak to others but not get through. After quite a long search in this evil boulder maze Sparrow located the lads and Rich and I joined him. We were then able to take some spare lights from Pete, but not get out through the tiny hole. Sparrow search around

and we eventually found the correct way back to re-join the others in the entrance chamber. A nice little rescue which in the afternoon sobered up the participants in time for more ale!

1 October 1978 – Mangle Hole

A call was received by Brian Prewer at 8 p.m. from Chris Bradshaw who had heard that a party was overdue, probably from Mangle Hole but not definitely so. Bradshaw offered to go and look for the car belonging to the cavers concerned and to report back. Meanwhile, Prewer notified the police that the search was being made. Soon afterwards, he received a call that the party had been found.

2 October 1978 – Lamb Leer Cavern

Frome Police contacted Brian Prewer at 4:30pm with information that a Mr. Rolands had reported a party of seven from the Royal Army Pay Corps overdue from Lamb Leer. He had expected them thirty minutes earlier! Whilst explaining that this was not unusual to Rolands over the phone, Prewer was told that the party had emerged.

29 October 1978 – North Hill Swallet

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 17 (1977 to 1978), page 149

Fred Felstead and Barry Davies rescued a twit who'd got himself stuck in North Hill – he'd tried to turn round in the crawl above Rumble Plonk. Firm application of a boot solved the problem in about 15 minutes.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 7, page 980

Got up by 11:30. By 12:15, a caver had come in to ask for assistance for a lad stuck in the crawl above Rumble Plonk in North Hill Swallet. Apparently he'd been advised to go feet first instead of head first and chose one of the narrowest places to try and turn around in.

Barry and Fred went down and had him out in half an hour. With a tight lifeline, supplied by Quackers, the pitch was no trouble. Not an official M.R.O. call out.

13 November 1978 – Cave on Brean Down

Source – The Story of Weston-super-Mare Lifeboats by Jeff Morris – pages 18 and 19

Late on the afternoon of November 12th. 1978, the Coastguard at Barry telephoned the Weston Honorary Secretary, Mr. Terry Green, to report that 2 boys were trapped in a cave on the north side of Brean Down. The maroons were fired at 4:32 p.m. and the crews and helpers quickly assembled at the boathouse. Mr. Green decided that the inflatable lifeboat, D-170, would be the most suitable of the two lifeboats to enter the cave, should that prove to be necessary. There was a very strong southerly wind blowing, gusting up to gale force, with very rough seas and so, in view of the conditions, he also decided to send the larger lifeboat as well, to act as safety-boat for the inflatable. D-170 and A-507R (a relief 'McLachlan' boat, on temporary duty at Weston), were launched just 5 minutes after the maroons had been fired, the crew of A-507R comprising of Helmsman Julian Morris and lifeboat-men Michael Hawkins and Richard Spindler, with D-170 being manned by Helmsman Nicholas White and lifeboat-man Anthony Blizzard.

Five minutes after the two lifeboats set out, it began to rain very heavily. High water that afternoon was due at 5:15 p.m. and, as they set out, it was already getting dark, sunset being at 4:10 p.m.

Weston Bay was reasonably sheltered from the southerly gale and both lifeboats were able to proceed at full speed for most of the time. While they were crossing the bay, the Coastguard radioed that the boys were in fact trapped in a cave on the southern side of Brean Down, not the north and so the two Helmsmen altered course, to pass close by the end of the Down. On rounding the headland, the lifeboat-men ran into the full force of the gale and both lifeboats then had a very rough passage, having to keep close to the cliffs, to avoid fishing nets which were in the area.

On arriving at the scene, the lifeboat-men found that the position of the cave was being indicated by the Coastguard's 'Land Rover', which was parked on top of the cliffs directly above the cave, with its' blue light flashing. D-170 went alongside A-507R and the two crews consulted as to the best method of effecting a rescue, having been told by radio that two Coastguards were also in the cave with the boys. It was agreed that a swimmer would be needed and so Operational Swimmer Richard Spindler was transferred from A-507R to D-170. By that time, a full southerly gale was blowing, causing very heavy seas to smash against the face of the cliffs. It was almost by then, pitch dark and still pouring with rain.

While A-507R remained a short distance out to sea, illuminating the scene with her Aldis Lamp, Helmsman White cautiously took D-170 in towards the cave and, when about 20 yards out, Richard Spindler entered the water, to check if there were any rocks obstructing the entrance to the cave. Because of the heavy backwash from the cliffs, he had a very difficult task, but he was able to confirm that there were no major obstacles in the way. He signalled for D-170 to make her approach and Helmsman White drove the inflatable lifeboat into the mouth of the cave, Richard Spindler positioning himself on the right hand side of the entrance, so as to be able to push the bows of the lifeboat round to port, swinging her right round, so that her bows were then pointing back out to sea. Lifeboat-man Anthony Blizzard jumped overboard and helped to hold the lifeboat steady, head-to-sea. There was between 4 and 7 feet of water in the cave and the two lifeboat-men found themselves repeatedly under water, their foothold being very precarious, as the floor of the cave was covered with boulders and loose stones. It was only then that they discovered that there were 3 boys, not 2, trapped in the cave and they were quickly taken aboard the lifeboat. Anthony Blizzard climbed aboard and Helmsman White took D-170 out of the cave. After transferring the boys to A-507R, D-170 returned to the cave, repeatedly striking the walls as she was buffeted by the heavy seas. The inflatable lifeboat was almost constantly full of water, as the waves broke over her, but the two Coastguards and Richard Spindler were taken aboard and Helmsman White brought the lifeboat safely out of the cave.

The 2 Coastguards were landed on Brean Beach by D-170 and they then helped to re-launch the boat through the heavy surf. D-170 took the 3 boys off A-507R and also landed them on the beach. By that time, the inflatable lifeboat was full of water and so she was hauled out onto the beach and bailed out. She was re-launched, but by the time she had cleared the heavy surf, she was once again full of water. Both lifeboats then headed back towards the boathouse and they were rehoused by 6:30 p.m.

For this very fine service, carried out under extremely difficult conditions, the R.N.L.I.'s Thanks on Vellum were awarded to Helmsman Nicholas White and lifeboat-men Richard Spindler and Anthony Blizzard. Vellum Service Certificates were later presented to Helmsman Julian Morris and lifeboat-man Michael Hawkins.

The R.N.L.I.'s 'Ralph Glister Award', for the most meritorious service of 1978 carried out by the crew of a lifeboat under 10 metres in length, was later presented to Helmsman Nicholas White and lifeboat-men Richard Spindler and Anthony Blizzard. The Royal Humane Society awarded its 'Testimonial on Parchment' to Richard Spindler and Anthony Blizzard and its 'Certificate of Commendation' to Helmsman Nicholas White for this rescue.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 13 November 1978

CAVE RESCUE AS BOYS TRAPPED

Two Burnham-on-Sea coastguards were being recommended for awards today after dramatically rescuing three school boys from a sea swept cave.

Mr. John Lowe and Mr. John Meader swam through 300 yards through storm tossed seas to rescue David and Tony Buxton (12 and 13) and Desmond Embleton (14) cut off by the tide at Brean Down, near Weston-super-Mare.

David and Tony, of The Esplanade and Desmond, of Oxford Street, Burnham were all back at school today – none the worse for their two hour ordeal. Mr. John Lowe said today "It was the hardest rescue we had done. The tide was rising, and it was getting dark."

Mr. Jim Trevis area coastguard at Weston-super-Mare praised Mr. John Wood of Stowey Road, Yatton and Mr. James Powell of Wakefield, who raised the alarm.

"They had been stranded themselves on the edge of Brean Down but managed to get ashore unaided.

We saw three little faces in the failing light looking out of this cave.

"Mr. Lowe, fully clothed and Mr. Meader, wearing a swimsuit, swam out to the cave. They were able to get to them although the tide was flooding and the wind was gusting at gale force."

Mr. Trevis added: "I shall certainly recommend their efforts should be recognised.

"I should also like to commend the lifeboat crews."

Weston's McLachlan lifeboat guided the in-shore boat to the mouth of the cave and the boys were lowered by ropes to the in-shore boat.

They were then transferred to the McLachlan boat and the in-shore boat returned to the cave and took both coastguards to Brean beach.

The boys were landed on Brean beach where blankets were wrapped around them before they returned home.

Mrs. Sandra Buxton, said today : "The boys had gone off exploring while I went off with the dog."

9 December 1978 – Swildon's Hole

Wells Police alerted Brian Prewer at 7:30 p.m. that a Mrs. Baggott in Bristol had informed them of a party overdue from Swildon's as she had expected one of them to phone her at 6 p.m.

Prewer contacted Alan Thomas at Priddy to check for cars on the Green. At 8 p.m. the informant rang to say that she had heard from the cavers concerned.

31 December 1978 – Evacuation of snowbound party at Charterhouse

A party of six 9-11 year old Red Cross Cadet girls with two adult instructors was reported as trapped by heavy snow in the Venture Hut at the head of the Velvet Bottom valley. The children had been holidaying in the area from Sussex but were not caving and did not know Mendip. Their leader Mr. P. Avery of Burgess Hill, Sussex, had alerted the police at Weston-super-Mare that they only had food and heating for another day.

The police requested M.R.O. to assist in evacuating the party since severe blizzards were forecasted. Brian Prewer received the call at 10:40 a.m. and alerted cavers at the Belfry. Whilst a party would set out for the hostel on foot from Priddy, it was understood that climbers from the Cheddar Gorge Cliff Rescue Team were approaching Charterhouse from Burrington with a police Land Rover. Nigel Taylor assembled a party comprising Chris Batstone, Alan Thomas, John Dukes, D. Bradshaw, Jane Kirby and Jess Carson, a medical student, for the 'overland' journey. With radioed permission from Somerset County Council, Taylor requested a snow plough which got to the Castle of Comfort before deep drifts prevented further progress. The rest of the journey was made on foot across the fields and the party reached the stranded cadets at 2:30 p.m. The Burrington rescuers arrived twenty minutes later having left the Land Rover only a mile away at Paywell Farm. Taylor decided that all should make for the Land Rover as the children were in good spirits. This was accomplished successfully by 3:40 p.m. and the Red Cross party was driven to Weston-super-Mare for the night. The Belfry party reached Priddy at 6:45 p.m. ready for New Year's Eve festivities.

1979

Report by the Hon. Secretary & Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year ending the 31st January 1979

Rescuers were called to just one incident underground during the year. As the log accompanying this report shows, the decade enters its final year averaging less than a call-out every month. Hardly one in six calls prove to be potentially serious on Mendip according to this record.

On the surface, however, M.R.O. preparations have been undiminished whilst events elsewhere in the country offer clear portents of the next decade. Firstly we may look back to review the effectiveness of the former and, secondly, glimpse beyond to preview what the latter holds for the future.

At the beginning of the year, Chris Batstone and Nigel Taylor became Wardens whilst Dr. Tim Lyons joined the team of Medical Wardens. Soon afterwards, however, Dr. Chris Hulbert had to resign on moving to another part of the country. In April, we were pleased to entertain Police officers from the Mendip Division of the Avon and Somerset Constabulary for a film kindly loaned by the Cave Rescue Organisation in Yorkshire. This successful occasion was arranged by Alan Thomas.

During the summer, Dr. Oliver Lloyd, checked our cache of rescue gear near Lisdoonvarna, County Clare, on his annual visit to Ireland. Mid-October saw what was probably the largest gathering ever of M.R.O. Wardens underground to assist the Avon Branch of the Red Cross on their yearly field exercise. Our part in the 'disaster' was to treat and rescue several victims from

the Boulder Chamber in Goatchurch. Since the third casualty was whisked out in half the time it took to move the first one, we must presume that practice pays. David Mager's purpose designed stretcher showed up well during the exercise. As more such equipment is acquired, we are grateful to the Bristol Exploration Club for allowing modifications to the Belfry Store. With help from local cavers familiar with the old freestone mines in Wiltshire, Dave Irwin prepared annotated maps of all the systems known. Copies deposited with the Police there should help considerably in the event of future searches and rescues in these complex workings.

On Mendip, we were pleased to be of some assistance to our climbing cousins in their founding of a cliff rescue team for Cheddar Gorge and local crags. It should be noted that M.R.O.'s Involvement is to handle the call-out of this team to avoid the likely confusion that the alternative of a dual emergency system would bring in the Cheddar area with all its caves and climbs. It is encouraging that climbers have followed the local cavers' tradition of helping themselves in the manner best suited to their sport.

Our glimpse into the future came as a revelation on attending the inaugural meeting of the South West England Rescue Association at Honiton, Devon, last October. The Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall addressed the various rescue bodies represented including the R.A.F., Coastguards, Mountain and Mine Rescue Teams. What emerged was the need for a common approach whilst maintaining the expertise and autonomy of each specialist unit with local knowledge. There are good technical reasons for this trend which we will have to consider carefully.

The audited annual accounts have been published with grateful thanks to all cavers and clubs who support rescue work on Mendip. Apart from increases in postages and stationary through buying in stocks that will last for a while, most items of income and expenditure are on par with those in recent years. Despite hardships apparent elsewhere, therefore, M.R.O. can be satisfied with the healthy state of its funds.

J. D. Hanwell, Hon. Sec. & Treasurer

8 March 1979 – Swildon's Hole

The rescue was initiated by Mrs. H. Main, at Solomon Combe Farm, who rang the police and then Alan Thomas at 9:05 p.m., Brian Prewer rung the police at 9:09 p.m.

Alan went to The Green and took details from members of the original party all of whom were extremely cold and inadequately dressed. He then rang Brian. The leaders of the party were Graham Burgess and Robert Morgan, the others were very inexperienced. Mrs. Penny Bailey, aged 30, of Chard, had fallen the full height of the 20 foot Pot. Lifelines were not used.

Bob Cork went down the cave closely followed by Dany Bradshaw. Alan meanwhile fetched lights, comforts box etc. and left the store open. On his return, he called Trevor Hughes and the Navy Caving Instructor from the New Inn. As soon as they were ready they, and Alan Thomas went to the entrance of the cave where they met Bob Cork who said the girl was very cold and tired but was willing to try the ladder with a lifeline. Accordingly, Trevor and friend were sent down with a rope to try and get her up.

A party of five with Martin Bishop were prepared to go down with more gear. Meanwhile Fred Davies took down dry grotts and a goon suit. He soon reported that the victim was nicely on her way out and there was no need of further assistance.

Mrs. Bailey reached the surface shortly after 10:30 p.m. She was examined by Dr. Thompson and found to be none the worse for her experience.

B. Prewer and A. Thomas later put the kit back in the store and were treated to excellent hospitality by the Naval party at the Belfry.

As some back injury was suspected, she was advised to seek attention as soon as possible once home. Later, it was diagnosed that she had sustained a crushed vertebra and needed hospital treatment. In the circumstances, therefore, Mrs. Bailey did particularly well to help herself once the rescuers had arrived.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 9 March 1979

CAVE MUM IS RESCUED

A woman caver was in hospital today after being rescued in a full-scale emergency operation launched when she fell 15 ft. down a rope ladder deep inside a cave in the Mendips. The woman was helped along 500 ft. of tortuously narrow passages out of Swildon's Hole at Priddy, near Wells. Mrs. Penny Bailey (30) of Chard, was one of a party of 10 from the Admiralty hydrographic department at Taunton. She emerged from the cave just before midnight, tired, shaken and wet but full of praise for her rescuers. "They were marvellous," she said. Mrs. Bailey, a policeman's wife, from Chard, had descended Mendip's longest known cave during the early evening with the nine other members of the caving group. Her problems began during the climb of a 30-foot cliff on their way back out of the cave. When she was halfway up her fingers became trapped between a rung of the rope ladder and the rock. To free herself, she stepped to one side on to a ledge. Then she slipped and crashed down to the bottom, landing in a foot-deep pool of water.

After her ordeal, she said: "I believe I passed out for a short time and when I came round my back was killing me. I was just unable to climb back up the ladder. But it was alright when the rescuers came. They pushed and pulled and let me walk all over them," said Mrs. Bailey who was making only her second caving trip.

Mrs. Bailey, mother of two girls, was taken to East Reach Hospital, Taunton, for a check up on the way home. It was decided to admit her for observation. Her husband Det-Con Alan Bailey, said today: "She had X-rays and there is some suggestion of a squashed vertebrae. But I don't know anything definite." He said he had spoken to his wife by phone at the hospital bedside and was visiting her later today. Among those with Mrs. Bailey in the cave at the time of the incident were Graham Burges and Rick Moon, of Taunton. They went for help. After the rescue Rick said: "I saw her fall - at least I saw the light on her helmet spinning away. When I got there, her head was resting against a rock and I thought she might have fractured her skull." Graham said: "We were also worried she would suffer from hypothermia."

Within minutes of the two men raising the alarm at a local farmhouse, the Mendip Rescue Organisation were in action, co-ordinated by Alan Thomas, of Priddy. A team of six stayed on the surface while four went down the cave. One of the underground team, Fred Davis, of Oakhill, Shepton Mallet said: "All we had to do really was to encourage her. She got out mostly under her own steam."

Source – Chard, Ilminster, Axminster News – 15 March 1979

CHARD WOMAN FALLS 20 FEET IN MENDIP CAVE

A Chard woman is recovering in East Reach Hospital, Taunton, from injuries received when she fell 20 feet down a cavern while on a potholing expedition in the Mendips.

Mrs. Penny Bailey, wife of Det. Constable Alan Bailey, who is stationed at Chard and whose home is at 180 Druid's Walk, Glynswood, Chard, sustained crushed and fractured vertebrae in the fall. She will have to remain in hospital for two to three weeks and will be immobilised for some time afterwards.

The accident occurred on Thursday when Mrs. Bailey, mother of two young daughters, went on a potholing outing with a number of her colleagues from the Admiralty Hydrographic Department at Taunton where she works.

Though Mrs. Bailey is interested in exploring underground caverns, she is still a novice in this activity and in fact this was only her second outing to the caves at Swildon's Hole, Priddy late on Thursday.

Her husband heard of the accident at 2 am on Friday his home in Chard, and he said this week: "Apparently this is a very wet and cold pothole which is under water for a fair amount of time. "From what I can gather, my wife's party were coming out of the pothole, having been to the bottom, when the accident occurred.

"Penny was climbing a rope ladder. It seems that, owing to the wet and the cold conditions, her hands became cold and he was unable to grip the ladder.

"She fell backwards off the ladder and plunged downwards about 20 feet, landing on her back in a stream of water about six inches deep."

The alarm was immediately raised by Penny's team-mates and the Mendip Rescue Organisation led by Mr. Alan Thomas of Priddy, made a prompt turnout.

They brought her safely through the labyrinth of narrow dark passage in the caverns and, on emerging from the pothole, she was taken to hospital at Taunton where she is now slowly recovering from her ordeal.

Commenting the prompt action by the rescue team, Det. Const. Bailey said: "From what I can gather, the rescue teams acted in a speedy and professional manner. In fact it took the team only 30 minutes to arrive at the position where the accident happened from the time the alarm was first raised. One man from the team got through from the surface within seven minutes."

22 April 1979 – Longwood Swallet

Miss Julie Smith, aged 18 from Keynsham, went down the cave with seven others and Alan Mills. On reaching the Great Chamber, she became faint and fitfully passed out. Alan Mills left the cave to summon help through the police.

William Stanton was alerted at 1605 hrs and advised Alan to return underground to keep the girl as warm as possible until others arrived. He then raised a party from the Belfry with comforts and hauling gear organised by Tim Large. Dr. Don Thomson was informed and he stood by the Reviva in case of hypothermia. Bristol Water Works Company was advised of the incident although there was no immediate danger from the stream. The police sent a patrol car to relay messages and Mr. and Mrs. R. S. Trim at Lower Farm kindly provided hospitality to everyone.

Tim Large's party was able to give Alan Mills assistance in helping the girl after she had been refreshed then with hot soup. It appears that she may have exhausted herself owing to lack of food before going underground. The rescue ended at about 1700 hrs.

2 July 1979 – Combe Down Stone Mines

Brian Prewer was contacted by Bath Police via Frome at 1015 hrs with news of a missing person down the mines. Mr. Barnard, landlord of the Hadley Arms, had raised the alarm. Apparently, he and five others had gone down the mines with hand torches about midnight starting Monday 2nd July. They had lost contact with one of the party, Nicholas Champion, aged 23. A search later in the morning had been fruitless.

Brian Prewer alerted a party comprising Bob Scammell, Keith Newbury, Alison Hooper, Dave Turner, Rex Emery and John Richardson. They went down the mine about 1115 hrs with Dave Walker standing-by at the surface. Meanwhile, Brian with Tim Large and Jim Hanwell made their way to Bath with full M.R.O. equipment. They alerted Don Thomson and Mike Palmer agreed to raise a party in Wells if needed later. Brian Woodward was contacted in Bath and all met at the site about 1230 hrs with the police.

Champion was fortuitously found and brought to the surface by 1310 hrs after some thirteen hours alone. He was cold, tired and only had a feeble glow of light left from his torch; otherwise he was in good shape. It is tempting to regard this as possibly a fair case of being stoned-out in the mine!



Members of Mendip Rescue Organisation pictured by the entrance to the cave at Combe Down, Bath (from left) Bob Scammell, Alison Hooper, Dave Turner and Keith Newbury.



Caver Nick Champion relaxing after his ordeal.

Source – Unknown newspaper report – Undated

MAN LOST IN CAVES IS RESCUED

A Bristol man who lost his way in Bath's Combe Down caves was rescued by caving experts. Mr. Nicholas Champion, of Kingswood, went into the caves with friends on Sunday night. Three hours later he started to make his own way back but became stranded. Rescuers alerted later by his companions found 23-year-old Mr. Champion sitting in a cave waiting for help.

The caving expedition had started from the Hadley Arms, where Mr. Champion used to work as a barman. He is now employed as a van driver.

16 September 1979 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer was contacted by Frome Police at 1600 hrs. A girl was reported stuck in the entrance series at the bottom of Kenneys' Dig with a dislocated knee. Martin Rowe, the informant at Priddy, could not give any further details so Brian alerted Tim Large at the Belfry to form a small rescue party. At 1638 hrs, the Frome Police reported that all were safely out of the cave and that the girl's injuries were minor. The rescuers had met the party concerned just inside the entrance. The cavers were given as members of Kingston Polytechnic Caving Club.

Source – MCG Newsletter Number 128 – November 1979

An Editor of a well-known Mendip club recently had to be rescued from Swildon's when a member of his party dislocated her lower leg in a fall just inside the entrance. However, by the time the rescue team arrived, the girl's leg had relocated itself and she was able to walk out unaided.

17 November 1979 – Thrupe Lane Swallet

Three friends, Colin Gibson, Kevin Senior and Nigel Kermode, who had graduated from Southampton University the previous summer and had been members of its caving club, met for a private trip down the cave. Fortunately, all three were well-equipped and fit. They entered the cave about 1320 hrs and took about two hours to reach Atlas Pot. Here, they tackled the longer wet pitch by mistake and, owing to the noise and some confusion over life-line signals Kermode, the first man down, fell the last 20 feet of the climb from the bottom of the ladder. Senior descended to find Kermode in great distress and Gibson left the cave to call M.R.O. The accident happened about 1530 hrs and it was subsequently found that Nigel Kermode had sustained a fractured skull and pelvis with a broken wrist and bone in the palm of one hand.

William Stanton was the first warden contacted by the police at 1610 hrs. He got in touch with Mr. and Mrs. Butt at Thrupe Farm and was told that Simon Meade-King who was digging nearby would go down to give assistance. By 1615 hrs, Brian Prewer had been alerted and a full-scale call-out was initiated. Dave Irwin and Chris Batstone organised the surface arrangements and equipment from the store. Alan Mills and Graham Nye hurried after Simon Meade-King as runners and were followed by Dr. Don Thomson, Fred Davies and Ray Mansfield with medical equipment. Meanwhile, calls were made to assemble three separate carrying parties with Martin Bishop, Tim Large and Brian Woodward respectively. These parties eventually included Ken James, Ian Caldwell, Graham Wilton-Jones Martin Grass, John Dukes, D. Horsewell, T. Mintram. Chris Bradshaw, Bruce Bedford, Steve Gough, Richard

West, Phil Romford and Steve Tuck. Brian Prewer and Robert Hill laid a telephone line from the farm as far as Marble Chamber.

Ray Mansfield soon came out to advise on the seriousness of the injuries and the need to enlarge the crawls if possible. He returned underground with Dave Turner and Brian Workman whilst Gary Cullen and Richard Witcombe went to dig open the crawls and Colin and Claire Williams cleared stones to stabilise the slopes of the entrance rifts. The Reviva was taken down by Chris Foster and John Kettle. Martin Bishop followed with a party of five to undertake the hauling on Atlas Pot. Jim Hanwell brought M.R.O. emergency foods from the Belfry which Mr. and Mrs. Butt and family kindly agreed to prepare. Indeed, their home had a most welcome and friendly open door throughout the night for which all concerned were very grateful. Hanwell returned to Priddy later to stand-by other cavers there as it seemed likely that the operation would continue well into Monday. Offers of help were kindly given by a number of local people who had done a little caving on Mendip.

At 2018 hrs, Martin Grass surfaced with Kevin Senior of the original Southampton trio who seemed to be in reasonable shape. The former then returned underground with Steve Woolven carrying comforts requested by the hauling parties. Reports came out that Nigel Kermode was being hauled up Atlas Pot at about 2220 hrs and a lengthy carry into Monday was confirmed. At this point Tim Large's party entered the cave to take over from Martin Bishop's team where appropriate. Brian Woodward's group followed about an hour later to do the hauling on Perseverance Pot. In view of the injuries and length of carry anticipated, it was agreed to request medical back-up from Doctors Michael Glanvill and Nigel Mizrahi. Both responded and arrived at 2343 hrs and 0135 hrs respectively.

Michael Glanvill was accompanied underground by Pauline Gough just after midnight. About then, it was reported that the patient had arrived in Marble Chamber and had been given warm air from the Reviva. Further soda lime was requested and taken down by Dave Walker. Nigel Taylor, who just joined the rescuers from work, agreed to drive to Priddy for a CO₂ adaptor. At 0200 hrs, Nigel Mizrahi went underground to relieve Don Thomson and Michael Glanvill when it was reported that the casualty was nearing the bottom of Perseverance Pot. When Dr. Thomson arrived at the surface at 0217 hrs he telephoned the hospital in Bath to advise them of the patient's injuries and condition. The local ambulance was then alerted. At 0415 hrs, Nigel Kermode was brought to the surface and left for hospital by about 0430 hrs, some thirteen hours after the accident happened.

This was the most serious and prolonged rescue dealt with by M.R.O. for many years. It was made all the more difficult because it was the first incident in the awkward Thrupe Lane system. It is, therefore, worth recording the carry times for the various stages once hauling started from the bottom of Atlas Pot. To Marble Chamber: about 3 hours; then to the top of Perseverance Pot: about 2 hours; and, lastly, to the entrance: another ½ an hour. In addition to a carry lasting over six hours, another problem in such a constricted system is to plan the exchange of essential relief parties when it is difficult for one to pass the other. As hauling up Perseverance Pot is best done from the bottom of the pitch, for example, unless an exchange occurs below, the relieved party is effectively blocked from overtaking and unable to get out for another hour or so behind everyone else.

Apart from hearing that Nigel Kermode was making a good recovery from his injuries, perhaps the most rewarding feature for the many Mendip cavers wholeheartedly involved throughout the night was to be so warmly thanked by all concerned, particularly his parents and fellow cavers at Southampton University. Nigel himself has also written later to say that he is now

well enough to be back at work. He is full of praise for the efforts made on his behalf and wishes to thank all concerned.

Source – Ray Mansfield's Caving Log Book Volume 9, page 12

Chris Batstone called at 4:30 p.m. to say that there had been an accident in Thrupe Lane Swallet. Down cave by 5 p.m. but straight out again to organise digging out the crawl at the bottom of Perseverance Pot. Down again to Atlas Pot and out to surface to organise tackle, medical supplies and hot soup. Back to Atlas and helped rig pitches and haul out. Carried to Marble Chamber, then to surface with surplus bit by about 2 a.m., wash and bed by 3 a.m.

Source – Unknown newspaper report – 19 November 1979

STUDENT IN CAVE RESCUE DRAMA

Student Nigel Kermode was recovering in hospital today after a dramatic rescue 350 ft. below the Mendips. Nigel (21) was trapped for 13 hours after falling from a ladder in Thrupe Cave, Croscombe, near Wells. The Mendip Caves Rescue Operation carried out their longest operation in recent years to bring him to the surface. Three doctors took turns to go down and give him medical aid. Nigel, a Southampton University student, was with two friends, Kevin Senior and Colin Gibson when he fell 20 ft. while climbing to reach a long ladder out of Atlas Pot. At this point, he was 1,200 ft. from the cave entrance. Warden in charge of the rescue Mr. David Irwin, said one of Nigel's colleagues heard him cry out and realised he was badly injured. In fact, he had a fractured skull. One of Nigel's friends raised the alarm and 30 men were fetched to take part in the rescue. Three doctors - Dr. Donald Thompson, Dr. Michael Glanvill and Dr. Nigel Mizrahi took turns to go down the cave to attend to the injured man. Today, Nigel was being transferred from Bath Royal United Hospital to Frenchay Hospital. His condition was fairly satisfactory.

24 November 1979 – Manor Farm Swallet

A Cambridge University Caving Club party consisting of Jeremy Drummond, John Hibbert, David Flatt, Robert Kingston, Duncan Howsley and Heather Wall were on the way out from a trip to the bottom of the cave. Heather Wall was particularly tired and, on climbing the ladder up the entrance shaft, she fell off from about 25–30ft up. No life-line was available. Another member of the party standing at the bottom of the shaft was able to break her fall without further injuries occurring to either one. This was a rare case of two wrongs turning into a right! Apart from a cut chin and feeling very shaken, Heather was otherwise not badly hurt. Members of the party already up the pitch raised the alarm to Frome Police. Dave Irwin was alerted and contacted a rescue group from the Belfry about 1755 hrs led by Chris Batstone and Tim Large. This team included Trevor Hughes, Ross White, Tony Jarratt, Dave Glover, Simon Woodman and Garth Dell. The injured student was strapped into a Whillan's Sit Harness and hauled quickly up the shaft by 1840 hrs. A police patrol car then took her to the Cottage Hospital, Wells, for a check-up and stitches for the cut chin. After an overnight stay for observation, she was discharged on Sunday morning.

This incident could so easily have been prevented had a life-line been used. Those concerned admitted that they had not even bothered to take one along!

Source – Western Daily Press – 26 November 1979

POTHOLER IS HURT IN CAVE FALL NO 2

Potholer Heather Wall, aged 19, slipped and fell 40 feet from a ladder on Saturday in a second Mendip caving accident within a week. Heather a Cambridge University student, suffered shock and minor injuries after falling to the bottom of the entrance shaft at Manor Farm Cave, Charterhouse, near Cheddar. Two members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation spent half an hour hauling her to the surface in a harness on Saturday night. Heather, from South Yorkshire, lost her footing on a flexible wire ladder while returning up the shaft after a day's caving. She was detained overnight in Wells district hospital for shock, exposure, back and arm injuries, and was allowed home yesterday.

Seven days ago, student Nigel Kermode, aged 21, suffered a fractured skull after falling while trying to reach a ladder at Atlas Pot, near Shepton Mallet.

Mendip Rescue warden Mr. David Irwin said the caves were not in a dangerous condition and there were no plans to close them. "It was just a coincidence that two accidents happened in a week. Both falls were just bad luck," he said. "The caves would be closed immediately if we thought they were at all dangerous."

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 2, page 111

Early evening callout to Manor Farm Swallet where a girl from C.U.C.C. had fallen most of the way down the entrance shaft (and been caught by a bloke). She had a gash under her chin and was shocked and bruised. Tim, Trevor, Dave Glover, Chris Batstone, Ro, Garath, Woody and I rushed across, rigged a hauling line and lifeline and pulled her out. Back to the Belfry for grub, Hunters' and a good rowdy two barrelled piss-up.

9 December 1979 – Swildon's Hole

Oxford University Cave Club party with several beginners went down the cave about 14:30 hrs. One of the novices without good protective clothing for a very wet trip was 19-year old Martin John Vickers from Birkenhead. Although the stream was running quite high and the weather turned in rather wet later, the party went beyond the 20 foot Pot. When the water began to rise following heavy rain, they started to retreat but Vickers got into difficulty at the pitch as he was very wet and cold by then. Other members surfaced to call out M.R.O. via Frome Police. Dave Irwin was informed and organised a rescue team with hauling gear, hot soups and medical equipment if needed. As Dr. Don Thomson was unavailable, Dr. Michael Glanvill was contacted and he made his way to Priddy. Bristol Water Works Company was advised of the incident and the flooding risk in view of the continuing rain. They quickly responded by turning on their pumps upstream and the effect on the water going into the cave was soon noticed.

The rescue party led by Tim Large was able to assist Martin Vickers out of the cave by 20:45 hrs. He was examined by Dr. Glanvill and it was found that he was a known sufferer from asthma. However, this was not known to his fellow cavers beforehand and this may help to explain the distress he suffered when the conditions worsened underground.

Cavers with such disabilities that might flare up underground ought to let their colleagues, know, especially on the event of a rescue which may require the use of emergency medication.

Source – Wells Journal – 9 December 1979

CAVE RESCUE DRAMA

Mendip Rescue Organisation were called out on Sunday after an Oxford University student found he was too cold to climb out of Swildon's Hole cave, near Priddy. Martin Vickers, aged 19, one of 12 Oxford University cavers, went into the cave at 2:30 a.m., and was walked out by the rescue party at 8:45 a.m. "The whole thing was over in about an hour," said one of the wardens Mr. David Irwin, who was on surface control that night. Mr. Tim Large led the six-man underground rescue party. "In the afternoon there was a storm, and the water in the cave rose considerably," said Mr. Irwin, Bristol Water Works sent a man over to work pumps which reduced the water level. Mr. Vickers was given dry clothing and hot soup before he was coaxed out of the cave. He was making his first caving trip. "The whole operation went very smoothly, and he was never in any danger," said Mr. Irwin. Mr. Vickers had found himself too weak to climb when he reached the base of what is known as the 40 Foot.

27 December 1979 – Swildon's Hole

Four former pupils of St. Edward's School, Oxford, went down the cave about 1730 hrs intending to visit the Black Hole. They had travelled to Mendip earlier in the day, hoped to be out of the cave by about 2300 hrs and had arranged to stay with the Mendip Caving Group at Nordrach, afterwards. However, none of this was known to anyone on Mendip at the time for they had left word with someone in Oxford that they would telephone them on getting out of the cave. The party consisted of Edward Taylor aged 25 from Leicester, Adam and Ben Williams aged 19 and 18 from Oxford, and Phillip Cash aged 18 from Daventry. All were well-equipped and apparently experienced but they were not members of a caving club. Heavy rain followed by quickly melting snow set in during the evening. At about 2030 hrs, Tim Large and a group from the Belfry went to the entrance and found water flowing into the blockhouse. The stream was still rising. Noting a blue Ford Cortina parked at Manor Farm, they alerted Brian Prewer about ten minutes later. It was agreed that Tim would make a quick search of the stream way before the water became too high if no-one surfaced earlier. Brian Prewer informed the police then stood-by Jim Hanwell and Dave Irwin. Other local cavers were asked to be ready if called-out later. Bristol Water Works Company were contacted and Paul Hodge, Sources Engineer, came to Priddy. Unfortunately, however, their pump-house was flooded and the pumps were out of action. By this time, the worst of the storm had passed so Tim Large, Dany Bradshaw, Bob Cork and Mike Duck entered the cave about 2230 hrs with comforts and basic hauling gear.

The search party found the missing four making their way up the 8ft in good shape. All were safely out of the cave by 2230 hrs. Apparently, they had become aware of rising water beyond Sump I and so had turned back. On reaching the waterfall at the 8ft, they had found it impassable and so had waited about two hours below for the flood to pass. As it abated the search party arrived.

With the increase in the number of cavers making flying visits to Mendip from far afield, yet not making contact with locally based clubs, the problem of leaving information about trips with appropriate people becomes more acute. In this case, for instance, one wonders what the contact in Oxford would have done had the party not phoned by about midnight, one hour after the estimated time out. This is the worst time to raise a rescue party quickly, of course. Another problem of the flying visit is to get a picture of what the weather is and has been doing on Mendip compared with other areas of the country. By 27th December 1979, the ground was fully saturated and it had already been the wettest December since 1965 owing to very wet days on 5th, 9th, 13th, 14th and 18th. On 27th, in fact, a 100mm. storm caused serious floods in S.E. Somerset and 51mm fell at Priddy. Just as the party went underground, the rainfall became particularly intense. The storm has been claimed to be the heaviest of the decade over the area as a whole. Thus, it is of interest that cavers in Swildon's Hole were able to note rising water

beyond Sump I and were capable of sitting-out the event for the critical two hours that it took for the flood peak to pass.

1980's

Report by the Hon. Secretary & Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year ending the 31st January 1980

Last summer, Mr. Kenneth Steele, the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset, retired after many years in the region. We remember him in particular when he was in charge of the old Somerset Police force as the caving community owes him much for his personal interest and support of M.R.O. over the past twenty-five years. He was one of the three Chief Constables who met to further the links among Police, mountain and cave rescue groups throughout the country. M.R.O. was one of the first to receive insurance cover whilst underground on rescues as a result of his foresight. This model is now used by all search and rescue teams associated with the Mountain Rescue Committee. We thank Mr. Steele for all this and wish him well.

The new Chief Constable, Mr. Brian Weigh, has already been extremely helpful to us and so the welcome tradition of close support between Police and M.R.O. continues. On Mendip, this is reflected by the interest taken in cave rescue work by those at divisional control to the patrols on the scene. Superintendent John Lee at Frome has given us much advice and practical help over the years for which I am very grateful.

When the call-out system transfers to Yeovil shortly, we hope that his particular help over communications will continue. One of the last activities of the year was to show Inspector Rod Deane and five of his colleagues from Wells around top Swildon's. And they want to go again! Another stalwart to leave the area was Tim Reynolds. Apart from influencing the many sides of caving here and throughout the country, whilst a M.R.O. warden Tim did much where it matters at some very serious incidents. He was always a great help to me as a neighbour here in Wookey Hole. Dr. Tim Lyons also left the area to take a new hospital post and we thank him, too, for making himself available for calls whilst on Mendip.

New automatic pumps installed by Bristol Waterworks Company upstream of Longwood Swallet and Swildon's Hole led to most wardens being taken on a guided tour of the former by Paul Hodge, Sources Engineer. He has taken a keen interest in the work of local cavers and we thank him for the contingency plans to reduce stream flows at both sites when necessary. Another get together of wardens and other M.R.O. cavers was in Manor Farm Swallet when a useful practice with David Mager's improved stretcher was held hauling out Albert Francis from the bottom of the Curtain Chamber pitch to the surface. Albert has now been our standard patient on several practices. He tells us what to do.

The Mager stretcher, as we now call it, also impressed delegates at the Annual Conference of the South West England Rescue Association in November. This regional Mountain Rescue Committee body includes the R.A.F., Coastguards and Police as well as moor, mine, cliff and cave rescuers. So, it is a good one to exchange ideas, especially on equipment. It is fortunate to be informally organised with good sense and humour by Fred Barlow from Okehampton. Apart from seeming to be a chunk of Dartmoor, Fred is a Devon Speleo' and claims to have been won to caving from climbing by Oliver Lloyd here on Mendip!

We continue to be fortunate in supplies of equipment from interested cavers. These range from specially designed carrying bags made up by David Mager, a windfall of NiFe Cells from the Avon County Fire Service with help from Adrian Vanderplank, bronze descendeurs donated by Bob Drake and a couple of semi-waterproof polythene suits from Tim Large. Also, we are very fortunate in the generous and prompt help always given by Rocksport in supplying M.R.O. with a variety of equipment and ropes in particular.

Brian Prewer as Equipment Warden keeps all this up to scratch and has also worked hard to secure both the instruments and information for M.R.O. to operate a private radio service during rescues. A basic system has been installed and sanctioned by the Home Office. It will be available for use as soon as we receive the official licence from London. In developing and installing this equipment, we are most fortunate for practical encouragement by John Eley, local representative of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, and, especially, for the expert work and support given by Eric Dunford. He has acquired much of the equipment for us, installed it and advised us on the procedures to be followed. Alan Mills provided and helped to fix the base station mast from which M.R.O. will be able to go on the air.

All this has led to the greatest volume of correspondence ever. None would be possible without practical and financial support for M.R.O. is entirely a voluntary body which relies upon donations. On the practical side, we must thank Charles Bryant for his hard work and unique information about old mines in the Brendon Hills which was published in the last Wessex Journal. The record income from donations is shown in the accounts which accompany this report. It should be added that two-thirds of this handsome income has come through appropriate fund raising by Wardens including the raffling of a rucksack donated following a rescue. Also, the caving community through M.R.O. received a bequest which has both its poignant and propitious sides to us on Mendip.

This report should highlight the principle of voluntary self-help that is the tradition of cave rescue work on Mendip. Our preparations are best judged by the practice, of course, which was no better evident than at the difficult Thrupe Lane Swallet rescue in November. Perhaps Nigel Kermode who was so badly hurt there will allow me to end this report to fellow cavers on Mendip with his appreciation of their efforts.

"Since my life was dependent on the rescue operation, my thanks cannot express fully the gratitude I feel for those who saved me."

J. D. Hanwell, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer

3 February 1980 – Swildon's Hole

Dr. William Stanton was alerted by the police from Frome at 15:40 hours. He contacted the informants who had correctly remained at the Priddy Green telephone box and learnt that 19-years old Joan Cooper from Bracknell, Berks, was exhausted and unable to climb up the short pitch at the foot of the old Forty Foot Pot. William then telephoned the Belfry and Chris Batstone took charge of the call-out there. Dr. Don Thomson was told of the incident and he advised that the Reviva warm air breather should be used to prevent possible exposure problems.

Mike Duck, Jim Watson and Trefor Roberts were underground within twenty minutes of the call-out and were followed by a five-man party with the Reviva. Other parties were in the cave at the time and able to give assistance. Brian Prewer established a radio link with cavers stood-by at the Belfry from Priddy Green.

Miss Cooper was helped out of the cave by 16:30 hours and taken to the Belfry to change and warm up.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 18 (1978 to 1981), page 66

Groan. Went down Swildon's. Found girl falling off twenty. Offered to help her out. She gave up and wouldn't budge. Gave her my top and called the M.R.O. Large numbers of hairies bullied her out.

Source – Western Daily Press – 9 February 1980

GROOM RUSHES TO CAVE GIRL'S RESCUE

John Dukes interrupted his honeymoon yesterday to organise a cave rescue at Priddy, near Wells. Mr. Dukes married Miss Susan Yea at Shepton Mallet register office on Saturday. He is a member of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation and was called out when inexperienced caver Joan Cooper, aged 19, got into difficulties 500 ft. below the Mendips in Swildon's Hole. Miss Cooper, of Bracknell, was with a friend, experienced caver John Scott. An eight-man rescue team brought her to the surface exhausted and suffering from exposure. Mr. Brian Prewer, a member of the rescue team said last night: "It was absolutely straightforward. The girl was inexperienced and poorly dressed for caving." At the time he said, 150 cavers were underground. Miss Cooper was taken to the Cavers' hostel at The Belfry where she recovered.

22 February 1980 – Cuckoo Cleeves

David Irwin was contacted by Frome Police at 20:00 hours with news that a 14-year old boy in a party from Porchester School, Bournemouth, had fallen and broken a leg. It appears that Nicholas Amor got ahead of another party of local scouts who were also going down the cave. On descending the entrance pitch and hurrying through the ruckle, he is thought to have tried jumping the 13-foot pot! He sustained a bad fracture of the leg.

Cavers at the Hunters' Lodge Inn were alerted and Rod Harper quickly responded with a strong party and essential rescue equipment. Rod used his veterinary's skills to good effect and Amor was soon hauled out to have his injuries inspected by Dr. Don Thomson. He was then taken by ambulance to hospital where he remained for several weeks owing to the severity of the fractures.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 18 (1978 to 1981), page 69

Rescue at Cuckoo Cleves – one of Peter Gass's small boys broke right leg at 13 foot pot – extricated by B.E.C. + W.C.C. + odds and sods. 3½ hours damp.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 25 February 1980

CAVE BOY RESCUE ORDEAL

A schoolboy caver is today recovering in hospital after a two-hour cave rescue ordeal. Nicholas Amor (15) fell, broke his leg and had to wait two hours until rescuers carried him out of one of the most difficult caves on the Mendips. He was one of a party of eight Bournemouth schoolboys and a teacher who went down Cuckoo Cleeves pothole near Priddy, last night. About 50 ft. inside the cave Nicholas fell down a 13-foot drop. Mr. David Irwin, who led the Mendip Rescue Organisation team last night said: "We put him on a stretcher and used ropes to pull him up the 13-foot pitch, along a 40 foot low passage and up another pitch 20 foot high just inside the entrance. Nicholas had been down a cave before and was very game."

24 February 1980 – Swildon's Hole

Three climbers from Bristol were reported by local cavers to be doing a Long Round Trip earlier in the day. They had been seen underground using maps to find their way. When they had not surfaced by 2330 hours, cavers were stood by at Priddy and the police informed. The overdue trio surfaced shortly after midnight having under-estimated the difficulty of the trip. One was particularly tired as he had not done much caving before.

11 April 1980 – Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire

The police at Devizes contacted Brian Prewer and asked him to telephone Chief Inspector Cooper at Corsham regarding a possible incident in Box Stone Mines. Two girls exercising horses near the mines had heard voices that might have been cries for help. A check had showed that no one was thought to have gone down the various entrances; but, a bunch of freshly picked primroses was found near the railway tunnel. The police wanted a search of the mines to eliminate the possibility of any children being lost there.

Brian alerted Bob Scammell, Keith Newbery and Chris Batstone in the area and asked them to conduct a search of the main routes. Tim Large raised a standby party and David Irwin was advised of the incident. He then collected equipment from the Belfry and made his way to Corsham keeping in radio contact with Eric Dunford.

The search party spent from 1730 to 1915 hours looking around the main routes but found nothing. It was assumed that the children could have entered Box Tunnel and travelled through it so that the voices had been heard from one of the air shafts. The police called off the search at this point.

5 May 1980 – Brown's Folly Mine, Wiltshire

A call was received by Brian Prewer at 1945 hours from Devizes Police who reported that the parents of four teenagers had informed them of a party missing in the mines. Brian immediately contacted Bob Scammell at Bathford who went straight to the site and got on with the search single handed. Chris Batstone and Martin Bishop stood by.

Bob soon found the missing party of seven youths lightless at Clapham Junction. Apparently, ten had entered the mines earlier after a few had claimed to have been down them the previous week. Then, for some inexplicable and irresponsible reason, the three with good torches left the remainder (7) with failing lights and simply went off to a local public house to get food! It was left to the parents to raise the alarm. All were out of the mines by 2100 hours having been underground in light clothing for about six hours. No one took kindly to the youths regarding the incident as a huge joke and they got a well-deserved dressing down.

Chief Superintendent S. J. Ashley subsequently wrote to thank M.R.O. for helping and paid tribute to Bob Scammell in particular.

21 May 1980 – Cheddar Cliffs (Unofficial Call)

At about 4.15 p.m. on 21 May 1980, Chris Bradshaw and I were at Gough's Cave, Cheddar, talking to Mr. Bennett, the Cheddar Caves Manager. I saw a fire engine going up the gorge. One of the car park attendants came to tell Mr. Bennett that two people were stuck on a ledge just below the reservoir. I asked Mr. Bennett if we could be of any assistance. He suggested that we go and see if we could give any help.

Chris Bradshaw and I immediately went up the gorge and liaised with the police and Fire Brigade. From discussion with them we were told that the Fire Brigade were in charge of the rescue operation. Their Land Rover had already gone round to the top of the gorge with a view to lowering firemen down and search for the victims. I spoke to the policeman and told him that we were members of the M.R.O and would be willing to help if necessary. I also said that there is a special cliff rescue team for Cheddar - are they being called? I was told that the Burnham Fire Brigade Cliff Rescue Team were handling the rescue. I told the policemen that we knew of a quicker route up the ledges and he accepted our offer of help.

We then climbed the gully just below the reservoir and found the two victims on the 2nd tier. They were a husband and wife on holiday from Brighton, both in about their 50's. The husband being totally blind.

Chris and I escorted the couple to a safer position - I then climbed on up the gully and met the fire brigade team coming down from the top. I advised a fireman that we had located the victims, that they were uninjured, but that the husband was blind. These messages were relayed to police and Fire Brigade officials at the top. A discussion ensued whether it was best to haul them to the top or lower them to the road. I suggested that in the circumstances it appeared better to lower them down to the road as the ground was somewhat easier. Firemen then came down to the victims and the decision was made to lower them to the road. A Land Rover with a winch was at the top of the cliffs and this was used to lower the victims - escorted by Firemen. Chris Bradshaw and I assisted wherever we could and gardened the route cutting footholds to ease the operation.

On completion of the Rescue we were personally thanked by a Fire Chief and a policeman asked for our names and addresses.

Film units and reporters were at the scene and we were interviewed by various newspaper reporters and H.T.V. news unit. We made the point that we happened to be caving in the gorge and naturally offered our assistance. We emphasised that we were members of M.R.O. but not the special Cheddar Cliffs rescue team.

Tim Large

24 May 1980 – Longwood Swallet

At about 1415 hours, Andy Williams went to the Hunters' Lodge Inn and reported that a large man was stuck in Longwood with Geoff Price and another caver on the wrong side of him to give assistance. He was John Hopton, from Fishponds, Bristol.

The police and Bristol Water Works were advised of the situation and Alan Thomas went to the cave to assist, arriving at about 1430 hours. Meanwhile Brian Prewer and Bob Scammell went for hauling gear, whilst Stewart McManus and Tony Knibbs provided back-up. Dr. Peter Glanvill was alerted and Tim Large and Nigel Taylor set up radio contact from the cave to the Belfry. Mr. and Mrs. Trim kindly allowed access through the farm and were most helpful.

The victim was soon moved by help from the right direction and was out of the cave by 1600 hours none the worse for his experience.

7 June 1980 – Manor Farm Swallet

Howard Barker, aged 34 years from Targarth, Powys, and Miss Josephine Laver, aged 25 years, from Salisbury, Wiltshire, went down the cave at 1430 hours. Both had been caving together for several years. A ladder was used on the Entrance Pitch and ropes were carried for September

Rift and the pitch in Curtain Chamber. The trip went well until they returned to the pitches on the way out.

When Josephine became exhausted and unable to climb up the awkward September Rift, Barker had to leave the cave for assistance. He reached the Belfry at 1900 hours and explained the situation to Nigel Taylor who raised a party of seven to form a hauling party. Brian Prewer was alerted and the police informed of the incident.

The B.E.C. party reached the cave with Nigel at 1920 hours and were soon underground. By using a sit harness, it was a straightforward matter to assist Josephine Laver up the rift and then out of the cave. All had surfaced by 2000 hours and everyone stood down. Miss Laver was not hurt and so she returned to the Townsend Campsite, Priddy, with Mr. Barker.

16 August 1980 – G.B. Cave

Yeovil Police contacted Brian Prewer at 1753 hours to report that a caver in G.B. was having trouble with his breathing. The informant had wrongly left the telephone and so further information was unobtainable.

David Irwin was requested to go to the cave at 1755 hours for an on-the-spot assessment and, after experiencing difficulty in making a telephone connection to the Belfry, Brian alerted Marilyn McManus to establish an alternative radio contact there. She also raised Wessex Cave Club members. Fred Davis was called at 1810 hours and a party with Chris Batstone and Dany Bradshaw left the Belfry about the same time. Meanwhile, Dave Irwin reported that 33-year old Ian Miller from Bristol had suffered a heart attack at the foot of one of the climbs in Mud Passage. Dr. Don Thomson was called at 1825 hours and asked to attend. Jim Hanwell was then contacted and all went to the cave.

Fred Davies went underground at 1845 hours and found EAR and ECM being applied by the earlier arrivals. He continued with this until Dr. Don Thomson reached the scene at 1900 hours to report that the patient had died. The deceased was hauled to the surface by 1950 hours and the cave cleared by 2015 hours. Another party below completely missed the entire incident which had lasted only 2½ hours.

Apparently, Ian Miller had no previous caving experience but had requested joining a small well-equipped groups visiting the Ladder Dig Series. He appeared to be in some distress on the way out and then suddenly collapsed. At the Inquest, it was recorded that death had resulted from a heart attack probably brought about by unaccustomed exertion.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 18 (1978 to 1981), page 98

Jeff Price, Malcolm Foyle, Terry Earley, were alerted at rescue in G.B. by Mrs. Marilyn Mc Anus at approximately 6 p.m. We joined up with other M.R.O. members along with Police and Ambulance men.

After repeated revival attempts and the arrival of Dr. Don Thompson he was pronounced dead and eventually brought to the surface on a dragsheet at approximately 7:50 p.m.

Source – Western Daily Press – 19 August 1980

POTHOLER DIES ON HIS FIRST DESCENT

Mr. Ian Roberts-Miller of Bristol, who died in a Mendip cave at the weekend was on his first potholing expedition. But the rescue warden Mr. Brian Prewer, said yesterday this was unlikely to have helped cause his death. Mr. Roberts-Miller, aged 33, was caving with six friends when he collapsed on the way back, 300 yards from the surface. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation failed to revive him and he was brought out by the Mendip Cave Rescue Team. Mr. Roberts-Miller is thought to have died from natural causes, probably a heart attack. Mr. Prewer said: "By the sound of things this could have happened anywhere. I am certain it will be shown in due course that he had a medical condition. He had very little experience. But he was not in a difficult cave and the expedition he was on was not a particularly severe one."

1 October 1980 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer was contacted by Yeovil Police at about 22:30 hours concerning a 14-year old girl who was refusing to return through Sump I. Apparently, two teachers had taken ten girls from Merrywood School, Bristol down the cave at about 17:00 hours. The party was well-equipped with wet suits, boots and lamps to a standard beyond that expected for such a group on their third caving trip. Moreover, it was planned to visit Swildon's II via the stream way and sump. One teacher with nine of the girls was met on their way out at the Twenty Foot Pot by Greg Villis and Dave Gill. They learnt that the other teacher had remained, on the far side of Sump I with Rebecca Lane who was refusing to dive back after experiencing some difficulty in going through on the way in. Whilst Greg hurried to Sump I to help, Dave left the cave ahead of the school party to call M.R.O.

Brian Prewer happened to be in the company of several M.R.O. wardens and cavers on receiving the alert. He contacted David Irwin and Martin Bishop and the first rescue party was underground within 30 minutes of the callout. A substantial group followed with comforts, warm clothes, the Little Dragon warm air resuscitator and a small breathing apparatus in case Rebecca would prefer it to dive back. A telephone line was established through the sump and Dr. Don Thomson was present. In the event, Rebecca refused all encouragement to help herself. Eventually, with both parties on either side the sump in telephone communication, she was carefully lowered into the pool and hauled through none the worse for the experience. After some hot food and warm air, all made a rapid exit to be clear of the cave by 02:00 hours on the Thursday. It is vital to note that the telephone communication was essential to coordinate both parties when such a "pull through" technique is used.

8 November 1980 – Sludge Pit Hole

Anthony Dearling, a Scout Leader mainly involved in introducing novices and those of medium experience on occasional caving weekends to Mendip since 1974, took a party of seven down the cave just before mid-day. Two sixteen years old beginners were present, one being Robert Jackson. All were members of the 2nd Sydenham Scout Group.

After about 2¼ hours underground, the party started its return with the leader moving directly ahead of the two novices in front to speed up the journey out. At this point, Robert Jackson at the rear of the trio missed his footing to fall about 6.5 metres down the rift in the main passage beneath the upper series. He sustained facial injuries and was badly shaken. It appears that he may have fallen owing to the failure of his carbide lamp so that he was without a light when crossing the rift. The incident is thought to have occurred at about 1400 hours. After assessing the extent of Robert's injuries, the leader sent out Susan March and Alan Jackson to raise the alarm.

Brian Prewer was alerted by Yeovil Police at 15:30 hours, but was unable to gain more details other than that someone had fallen in the cave since the informants had left the telephone. Brian contacted David Irwin who went straight away to gather more information at the scene. He found Alan Keen, Adrian Vanderplank and Glyn Bolt from Upper Pitts already on their way to help with hauling gear, ladders and a carrying sheet, they entered the cave less than 30 minutes after the call-out. Meanwhile, Brian stood by a party of six and asked Dr. Don Thomson to attend. The injured boy was able to help himself quite well in the circumstances and was assisted out of the cave by about 1650 hours. Dr. Don Thomson examined his injuries and then he was taken by ambulance to hospital in Bath to have deep cuts stitched and an X-ray.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 7, page 1040

During this time there was a full call out – a Venture Scout had fallen 20 feet in Sludge Upper Series, hurting his head. He was got out without too much trouble, and taken to Hospital in Bath.

Lynne spent an exciting afternoon brewing tea for the cavers involved.

Source – Wells Journal – 13 November 1980

Mendip Rescue Services were called to Priddy on Saturday to bring a 16-year-old potholer to the surface after he had slipped and hurt himself. Robert Jackson, from London, tripped and fell injuring his face and losing some teeth while caving in Sludge Pit Cave. Mr. Jackson was taken to the Royal United Hospital, Bath, but was later released.

15 November 1980 (approximate date) – Banwell Stalactite Cave

Source – ACG Newsletter – November/December 1980, page 8

About a month ago at 1 p.m. Cindy found a very worried parent knocking on our door, apparently her two sons, John, aged 10, and Pete, aged 11, had gone down Banwell Stalactite Cave and had not yet returned.

They had gone with one of their friends but he had got scared when just inside the entrance and so he had waited for them outside. When they did not return, after some time, he had run home and told their mother where they were.

After phoning around some of our caving friends in the area and getting no reply, Cindy grabbed her caving gear and ran up to the cave. On reaching the cave firstly Cindy checked all the side passages near the entrance, and then worked her way further down into the system checking all side passages.

On reaching the squeeze down into the Main Chamber, she could hear the children crying. They were found at the bottom of the Main Chamber, the only lighting, one torch had long since failed.

After the children had been checked for injuries, luckily, they had none, Cindy started to take them back out towards the entrance, the outward trek taking one hour.

On reaching the entrance the children received a very severe ticking off from both Cindy and their mother, and were then taken home for a bath.

The parents would like to thank the A.C.G. for their help.

1981

Report by the Hon. Secretary & Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year ending the 31st January 1981

It will now be known widely that Howard Kenney died unexpectedly last summer. Whilst I have paid tribute to his work for caving in the pages of the Wessex Cave Club Journal, I am sure that the whole community of cavers on Mendip will also appreciate me recording here the significant contribution that Howard made as the first post-War secretary and treasurer of M.R.O. Our good relations with the Police, for whom we are really agents during incidents, and the interest of the active cavers upon whom successful rescues depend can be traced back to this re-forming of the M.R.O. As this took place exactly thirty years ago, it seems appropriate to look back over the record and so this report is followed by a diary of all post-War call-outs apart from my usual annual log of incidents. No doubt the statisticians will find much to do with the former and I have grouped call-outs into the categories used both nationally and by kindred cave rescue organisations to help them in this. My only observation here is the coincidence that M.R.O. began and ended this thirty-year period by helping friends in South Wales. Such mutual support is as strong as ever.

Another coincidence in our review of the years concerns the opening of a new museum at Wookey Hole Cave last Easter. The wide range of exhibits linked with caving is mainly the work of Dr. William Stanton and M.R.O. was pleased to donate some now historic pieces of rescue equipment for display. Appropriately Dr. Oliver Lloyd who followed Howard Kenney as secretary and treasurer of M.R.O. from 1956-72 officially opened this museum. Now, thousands of visitors to Mendip each year have an opportunity to see how cavers help themselves in rescue work. Moreover, from the generous donation given by Wookey Hole Caves for this gear we have been able to replace these old items with up-to-date equipment. The Little Dragon warm air breather, in particular, has already proved invaluable.

The transfer of the Police control for cave rescue alerts to Yeovil has proved a success. A small group of wardens were invited to visit the new Divisional Headquarters there and it was most helpful to talk to the officers who actually receive and relay the emergency calls so that we know each other and the best ways to work. Indeed, with our own radio communications, the effective response times on call-outs have noticeably speeded up as the log of last year's incidents shows. Improvements of this nature would not be possible without the support of so many cavers who willingly keep in touch with rescue matters. For them, we had a useful evening on radio communications around Mendip under Eric Dunford's direction and open days to handle special equipment in the comfort of the Belfry are always welcome. It is also good to record that some local cavers have joined in the Cheddar Gorge Cliff Rescue teams who were in action for the first time last autumn under the able leadership of Guy Summers.

Looking ahead and beyond Mendip, we maintain our links with other organisations in the South West England Rescue Association and, of course, are pleased to contribute to the current upsurge of interest in the Cave Rescue Council nationally. Further afield in Ireland, I am grateful to Dr. Oliver Lloyd in arranging for the M.R.O. gear traditionally held for Mendip cavers visiting County Clare to be housed about as centrally as it could be to the caves at Keane's Hotel, Lisdoonvama. Dr. Donald Thomson has brought the work of M.R.O. to the notice of the medical world through the pages of no less than the British Medical Journal (for 24th January 1981). It seems that "Fred's Boot" treatment may well become enshrined in clinical jargon of the future!

As usual, I close my report by presenting audited accounts for last year over page. Perhaps these are best summarised by noting that M.R.O.'s assets have nearly doubled during a period in which most other organisations have experienced hardships financially. To the many who help cave rescue work in this way, I am especially grateful, and particularly to all the individuals who give so generously to the collection box at Rocksport in Wells.

J.D. Hanwell, Hon Secretary & Treasurer

17 January 1981 – Agen Allwedd

Three dozen Mendip rescuers went to help cavers in South Wales who were bringing out a patient with a broken leg from Southern Stream Passage. Another two-dozen stood by. The full report of this mammoth operation belongs to the South Wales C.R.O., of course. However, we may record that the controller, Brian Joplin, found our radios a great help and the Little Dragon warm air breather proved invaluable. We are especially grateful to the Warden of Crickhowell Youth Hostel for his hospitality to all from Mendip.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 20 January 1981



Timothy Flanagan being stretchered to safety yesterday

Exhausted cavers were recovering today after a two-day underground rescue which proved the value of their self help rescue organisation. Cavers from the Mendips joined with others from Gloucestershire and the Midlands for a 300-strong rescue mission which pulled injured Surrey accountant Tim Flanagan, aged 28, along two miles of narrow caves near Crickhowell, South Wales. Many of the Somerset cavers spent 10 hours underground. One of them, Mr. Martin Bishop, of Priddy, Wells, said: "It was tough work. But everyone worked together well as a team." A Mendip Rescue Organisation warden Mr. Jim Hanwell, said: "This was a major rescue and a successful one. One of the highlights must have been how so many different rescue teams, many of whom had never met worked together so efficiently. All those involved were cavers, even the doctors gave their time free." Mr.

Flanagan broke his leg two miles inside the cave system when a boulder became dislodged, and he fell.

14 February 1981 – Longwood Swallet

M.R.O. was alerted to standby when an Oxford Polytechnic caver, Penny Williams, aged 22, in a Wessex party fell from an aven in the Upstream Galleries of the August Series. It appears that unsound rock gave way while she was climbing. In falling about six metres, she was lucky not to be badly hurt, and she was plucky to get out with assistance from the Wessex party. On being advised of the incident by Yeovil Police at 4:30 p.m., Brian Prewer stood by parties at the Belfry

and Upper Pitts by radio. Dr. Don Thomson was contacted and remained available until the underground party surfaced safely at 5:30 p.m. An examination at Wells Hospital revealed bruising to head, hip and foot.

Source – Wells Journal – 19 February 1981

CAVE RESCUE HEADACHE

Double trouble gave Mendip caving experts a headache at the weekend. First, they were called in to bring 22-year-old Penny Williams of Oxford to safety after she slipped and fell while caving in Longwood Swallet, Charterhouse. She was suffering from head and leg injuries and was taken by members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation to a waiting ambulance. [*Part 2 – see 15 February 1981 below*]

15 February 1981 – Swildon's Hole

Source – Wells Journal – 19 February 1981

A call was received concerning a party overdue. It was not necessary for a rescue party to go underground. No further details are available.

Source - Bristol Evening Post – 16 February 1981

RESCUERS BLAME CAVE CLUB

Cave rescuers criticised a Bristol caving club after a weekend rescue.

They should have not embarked on a long circular tour of Swildon's Hole – the largest cave on Mendip – that involved one of them having to dive under water for the first time.

The rescue party was called at teatime yesterday when Peter Evans, aged 22, of Quarry Barton, Hambrook, Bristol, got into trouble just before he was due to dive under six feet of water to pass below Sump One on his way out of the cave.

Rescue warden Tim Large said “It was the fault of the people he was with. He'd not done a dive before.”

The caver in trouble was a member of the White Rose Caving Club of Bristol. He was escorted back over the circular route by which his party had entered the cave. It was the second rescue of the weekend. Penny Williams, aged 22, of Bickerton Road, Oxford, slipped and fell 300 feet below the surface at Longwood Swallet, Charterhouse.

She had a bruised foot and slight hand injury.

Two hours later a team from Mendip Rescue Organisation helped her out to a waiting ambulance.

Source – Wells Journal – 19 February 1981

Next, they were sent to Swildon's Hole at Priddy - the largest pothole on the Mendips. Members of the Bristol Caving Club got into difficulties after negotiating the long circular pothole, a

route which involves some under water diving. Peter Evans, aged 22, of Bristol, got into trouble as he was about to dive under six feet of water at Sump One, on his way out of the cave. He was escorted back through the cave by the way his club had entered.

5 March 1981 – Swildon's Hole

A call was received from Yeovil Police just after midnight - 12:05 a.m. They had been contacted by a Mr. Pearse from the New Inn, Priddy, concerning a party of Venture Scouts who should have been out of the cave much earlier. Brian Prewer telephoned Mr. Pearse at the New Inn, Priddy and during the call, the scouts appeared. They had under-estimated the time that their trip would take. End of incident 12:08 a.m.

13 March 1981 – Read's Cavern

Alan Dougherty from Wrington and Alan Hutchinson from Southville, Bristol, went down the cave early in the evening and were expecting to return home by 8:30 p.m. Both were experienced cavers. They left their car off the track approaching the cave. When they had not returned by 9:05 p.m. Mrs. Dougherty informed the police at Weston-super-Mare, but their patrol was unable to locate the car in Burrington Combe. A neighbour drove her to the area and she found her husband's car near the U.B.S.S. Hut. She contacted the police again at 11:45 p.m. to alert the M.R.O. Brian Prewer received the call from Yeovil Police and raised search parties from the Belfry and Upper Pitts by radio. Read's and other nearby pots were checked out. The initial searches did not find anybody, and so specific routes were followed. Radio links were set up on the surface.

The missing pair were found at the lower end of Zed Alley and were brought safely to the surface at 2:45 a.m. on the Saturday. It appears that they had lost their way when their lights gave trouble and then failed. They huddled together in a polythene bag to keep warm and this appeared to be effective in the circumstances. All search parties returned by 3 a.m.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 7, page 1052

It had to happen! At just past 11 p.m. the phone rang at the Hunters' and a rescue began – party of two about 2½ hours overdue from Read's Cavern. The mother and wife of one had called Weston police via 999, and they, instead of calling M.R.O. via Yeovil direct, they sent a Panda up to Burrington. This got bogged down and so it was 1½ hours before the M.R.O. were alerted.

A party immediately went to Burrington. There was frantic radio communication relayed via Ellick Farm. Just after midnight Lynne went home and I took Ken Dawe and a load of NiFes to the track by the U.B.S.S. hut while Prew took the 30 foot portable radio mast. The police were there, together with the two women who were very upset. Fortunately the police took them away before long.

Tim Large and others searched Z Alley area, but found nothing. Another party went down into Browne-Stewart, and while this was going on Ken Dawe and Chris Batstone went down Rod's Pot while I waited on the surface. They were out in half an hour then we went to search Drunkard's Hole and Bos Swallet. As we searched the former, and found it already being searched the word came along that the missing two had been found 50 feet beyond the original search party. Apparently one had light failure so they both decided to sit it out. They heard the original search party, but tapped on the rock instead of shouting back!

Returned to the Belfry for tea, then back to bed by about 4 a.m.

Source – Western Daily Press – 16 March 1981

PRAISE FOR TWO COOL CAVERS

Two potholes stranded deep beneath the Mendips were rescued unharmed because they obeyed the caving code. Mr. Alan Docherty, aged 25, and Mr. Alan Hutchinson, 21, both from Bristol, sat tight until 15 members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation reached them. They were brought out of Read's Cavern, near Burrington Combe, early on Saturday after an eight-hour ordeal which followed the failure of their lights. Their rescuers praised them for the cool behaviour, by not moving from where they became stranded.

6 June 1981 – St. Cuthbert's Minery

Wells Police called Brian Prewer at 3:30 p.m., concerning a report of an abandoned tent and sleeping bag on Mr. Cotter's property bordering the Minery. Mr. Foxwell suggested that it had been there for about a week and so the police were concerned that the missing occupant may have gone caving and failed to return.

Tim Large was contacted at the Belfry. He inspected the site for signs of caving equipment and made further enquiries from local residents and cavers. Indications were that they were not cavers, and as no one had been reported overdue, the police were advised and no further action was taken.

11 July 1981 – Swildon's Hole

Phillip Casemore, aged 37 from Crawley, Surrey, was returning from Sump One on his first caving trip when, on approaching The Old Grotto, he stumbled and fell headlong. He sustained a fracture to his right leg below the knee and was in considerable pain.

Dave Irwin received the alarm via the police at 2:15 p.m. and alerted a group to organise rescuers from the Hunters' Lodge. The informant was not sure exactly where the incident had occurred, so Alan Thomas and Trevor Hughes searched the Dry Ways. Having found the site, a team of six rescuers were sent in. Martin Bishop plastered the leg and a routine haul out began.

Dr. Stewart Parker had been called from Bristol and arrived at 4:35 p.m. A relief team of Wessex cavers stood by.

The patient reached the surface at 4:35 p.m. and was met by an ambulance which had been driven across the fields. He was taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary for treatment.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 7, pages 1061 to 1063

Lynne and I went to the Hunters' at lunchtime in order to do a Club Trundle in Eastwater, but we were called out at 14:25 for a rescue in Swildon's Hole. Left the Hunters' in a hurry (leaving half a pint for Barry Williams to finish) and went with Mac to the Belfry. Luckily my caving kit was readily to hand.

Loaded the car with gear, and off to the Green. First reports were somewhat vague, and we thought the casualty was at Double Pots. A party had gone down searching, and eventually the

word came out that Phil, a chap about my age, coming out from Sump 1 on his first ever caving trip had stumbled below the false floor in the Old Grotto and had a suspected broken leg. Dave Irwin then set Martin Bishop down as the first team, and I went as part of this with Quackers, Trevor Hughes, Roger Gosling, Tony Jarratt and Ros White. Trevor was sent on ahead to get Alan Thomas out as he was required for the 2nd hauling party.

We carried the Reviva to the entrance in case it was needed and took down plaster bandages and the Mager stretcher. We went via Binnie's Link and the Short Dry Way, and found the casualty and the rest of the party where we expected. The latter were sent out via the Wet Way. After a short examination Martin decided to plaster the leg, suspecting a small bone of the lower right leg. Although we found a few dud rolls of plaster, we managed to slab up each side of the leg and then wrap around from boot to knee. While this was setting I returned to the surface to report via Al Keen and the Bantam, (a motorbike) to Wig at the Green. I called for coffee then went back down the cave. By now they were putting Phil in the stretcher and before long we started the haul out. It is a lot more difficult going up the Short Dry Way than I had imagined, but then so we made fairly good progress, with a few halts for rests and coffee which arrived via Alan Thomas.

Hauling up Jacob's Ladder was much easier than I expected and soon we were faced with the choice of Binnie's Link or Kenny's Dig. The latter was longer and we realised that Phil and the stretcher would just fit in the Link. All went through except Martin, Tony and I. We pushed Phil in head first on his left side. When he was well into the Link Tony was left with the feet while Martin and I went via the Dig to the front again. Glyn Bolt and the 2nd hauling party were by this time in the Showerbath and 1st chamber, getting in the way rather as they were not needed while we were getting the casualty out of the cave. Glyn's team went down to pick up the debris.

An ambulance and quack were waiting on the surface, and Phil was in the ambulance and away by 17:00.

Accident occurred 13:50
1st team arrived 15:00
Casualty out of the cave 17:00

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Volume 2, pages 135

M. Bishop, T. Hughes, Quackers, Ross, Roger Gosling, Al Thomas, P. Hendy, G. Bolt etc.
(Victim Phil)

Callout from the pub at 2:20 p.m. Man with broken lower leg in streamway below Old Grotto. Apart from this he was in good spirits and was put in the drag sheet and speedily removed from the cave via Binnie's Link. No problems.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 19 (1981 to 1983), page 31

Club Trundle down Eastwater cancelled due to Swildon's Hole accident. WCC/BEC in the main brought the casualty (with suspected fractured lower right leg) from below the Old Grotto false floor to the surface in 1¾ hours. No problems.

Source – Wells Journal – 16 July 1981

INJURED MAN RESCUED FROM CAVE

Cave rescuers struggled hundreds of feet underground to rescue a Sussex man who had slipped while exploring an underground cave system on the Mendips at the weekend and had broken his right leg. After nearly an hour the rescuers brought 37-year-old Mr. Phillip Casemore of Crawley, to the surface from Swildon's Hole cave at Priddy. A police spokesman praised the highly qualified group effort of the Mendip Rescue Organisation and a doctor who had gone to Mr. Casemore's assistance.

23 July 1981 – Devil's Cave, Bathampton

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 23 July 1981

BOYS TRAPPED 10 HOURS IN DEVIL'S CAVE

Frightened schoolboys David Matlock and Stephen Matthews were rescued early today after being trapped in caves for ten hours

They were found by police with tracker dogs after losing their way in a maze of passages and caverns known as Devil's Caves, near Bath.

First to reach them was police dog Ayshea who slipped through a narrow hole in the rockface. During their ordeal, the two 15 year old boys sat shivering in total darkness, with water dripping on their faces.

David, of Hansford Square, Combe Down, Bath and Stephen of Bloomfield Rise, Odd Down, Bath, had told their parents yesterday that they were going caving. But they did not say where. The boys' parents told the police last night that they were missing.

An immediate search was launched, led by former dog handler P. C. Keith Windsor, who is familiar with the caves at Hampton Rocks, Bathampton.

With him were dog handlers P. C. Paul Lowrie and P. C. Peter Richards and Cadet David Butler. When they were about a quarter of a mile into the caves Ayshea, an Alsatian, found the boys' torches and a rucksack.

The dog crawled into a hole 18 inches square and found the boys in a cavern.

They were taken to Royal United Hospital for a check up but were unharmed.

Stephen said today: "After going into the caves we got lost, and our torches were going out. We went through a small hole thinking it might be the way out. Inside a large cavern we lit paper torches. These went out and we were in complete darkness. We sat and talked for hours and tried to sleep, but we couldn't because of water dripping on our faces from the roof. It was a very frightening experience and we were shivering with cold but we never gave up hope of being found. We shouted and eventually heard voices, and we knew we had been found. It was a great relief."

David said: "I had been to the caves before, but I shall never go in there again. It was very frightening."

The boys are pupils at Beechen Cliff School, Bath.

28 July 1981 – Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire

Brian Prewer received a call from Yeovil Police at 6:20 p.m. They had had a request from Devizes Police for assistance in finding three boys missing down the mines. Apparently, the mother of a thirteen-year-old had reported that her son had gone with two friends, aged thirteen and eleven, to find The Cathedral via The Back Door. They failed to return, and had only one torch between them!

Bob Scammell and Chris Batstone were alerted to organise search parties. Several members of The Oolite Mines Exploration Group took part, and their knowledge of the area is invaluable. A radio link was set up between The Quarryman's Arms and The Belfry.

By 7:30 p.m. the search to The Cathedral proved negative so two parties were sent to cover the B12 and Jack's Workings. The missing boys were eventually discovered by Bob Scammell's party at Four Ways Junction. They were lost and their torch had almost faded. By 7:55 p.m. they were brought to the surface, unharmed, but, we hope, rather wiser.

Source – Western Daily Press – 30 July 1981

BOYS RESCUED AFTER ORDEAL LOST IN OLD MINES

Three young boys yesterday described their hours of terror lost in an underground labyrinth. Christopher Bean, aged 13, Simon Millard, 12, and his brother Timothy, aged 11, strayed into abandoned underground stone workings under Box Hill, near Corsham, Wiltshire, on Tuesday afternoon. They entered Box Mine, near Simon and Timothy's home, with only one torch between them. But once inside the mine, estimated to have more than 60 miles of passages and corridors, they became lost and their torches began to fail. Simon and Timothy's parents, raised the alarm after the boys had been in the mine for more than three hours.

Police called volunteer cavers from the Mendip Cave Rescue Team. The seven-man squad finally found the boys after a search lasting nearly three hours. They were brought to the surface shocked, tearful, plastered with clay, but otherwise unharmed. Christopher said: "We were too busy talking to look where we're going properly, and in half an hour we realised we were lost. We turned off our torch to save the batteries and sat down to work out what we should do. We kept looking for a way out, but we realised it was hopeless and sat down again to wait for somebody to find us. After six hours, we heard cars moving overhead and soon afterwards heard footsteps nearby in the mine. We shouted as loud as we could and soon a party of three cavers found us." Simon said: "It was a really scary experience. I wouldn't want to be lost down there again." One of the rescue party, Mr. Tony Comer, whose wife, Sue, also joined the team, said: "It was a very silly thing for the boys to do, but at least they had enough sense to wait in one of the main passages rather than keep moving around." And Mrs. Judy Millard said: "We were out of our minds with worry. We have told the boys they are never to go down again without somebody grown up with them."

1 September 1981 – G.B. Cave

At 2:30 p.m. Brian Prewer was informed by Weston-super-Mare Police that a party of four cavers had been reported overdue from a trip in G.B. Six members of the 1st Greenford Scout Troop, London, aged between fifteen and seventeen, had entered the cave at about 11:30 p.m. with two adult leaders. They split into two groups to follow the Mud Passage and Devil's Elbow Routes. When the Devil's Elbow party failed to make the rendezvous in the Gorge, the leader

left the cave, telephoned the police and returned underground. This meant that M.R.O. had no details to help in alerting rescuers, Tim Large, Brian Prewer and Jim Hanwell went to the cave. Apparently, The Devil's Elbow party had traversed across the top of the pitch because they thought the chain was too short and did not indicate the way on. They retreated and met the leader of the other party on his way back from raising the alarm. All were safely out of the cave at 5 p.m. and they explained what had happened. The trip had been arranged by The London Ambulance Service Caving Club.

13 September 1981 – Singing River Mine

Paul Sutton and Graham Sweeper collected the key to the mine from the Belfry at about 4 p.m. As they were camping in the area, they left details of their trip on the Belfry Board and estimated that they would be back by 7:30 p.m. When they had not returned by 10 p.m., Chris Batstone and Bob Hill went to Shipham and found that their car was still there and the entrance was still laddered. They alerted the Belfry and search parties set off with rescue equipment at about 10:30 p.m. Jim Hanwell informed the police of the incident and Dr. Don Thomson was asked to stand by.

The missing pair were found on the route to the Stinking Gulf and all were safely out of the mine by 11:10 p.m. It appears that they had not been down the system before and had failed to find their way back from the Gulf.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 8, pages 1085 to 1086

Tea with Barry and Mandy then to the Hunters'. At 10:20 however we were all called out to Singing River Mine to rescue two lads who had borrowed the B.E.C. key and left an E.T.A of 7:30.

Plenty of us turned up Barry Davies, Tim Large and I were just changing when we heard that they had been found, safe and well but completely lost.

Back to Upper Pitts for a beer and a coffee, then at about 01:15 to bed.

20 September 1981 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer received a call from Yeovil Police at about 2.45 p.m. that a Mr. Wick at Bath had reported his son overdue from a trip by about two hours. No further details were known. However, when Brian phoned Mr. Wick, the son had since rung home to say that they were out of the cave.

14 November 1981 – Goatchurch Cavern

Richard Wright, a scout aged 33, from Hove in Sussex, led a party of four novices and one caver with some experience down the cave at about 2:30 pm. On his way to the Boulder Chamber, the leader mistook the route avoiding the Coal Chute. Instead, he found it and fell off the climb into the Upper Chamber, sustaining a Potts fracture in his left ankle.

Dave Irwin was alerted of the call-out by Brenda Prewer at about 3:15 pm. He immediately contacted The Belfry and a party left there with medical and hauling equipment. A radio relay was set up from the cave entrance to the Belfry. The patient was strapped up and carried out to

the awaiting ambulance in about 45 minutes. He was taken to Weston-super-Mare General Hospital.

In a letter of thanks, Richard Wright compliments those who helped him, and recalls the morals: "Never treat familiar caves with the familiarity that breeds contempt; always look before you leap, and always obey the rules you teach others".

Source – Western Daily Press – 16 November 1981

Mr. Richard Wright was yesterday brought to the surface by members of the rescue team after he fell in Goatchurch Cavern in Burrington Combe. He was leading a group of Scouts and Guides from Hove when he slipped and fell. Mr. Wright was taken to Western-super-Mare General Hospital, where he underwent an operation on a broken leg, and he was last night said to be comfortable.

14 November 1981 – Wookey Hole Cave

Keith Potter, a medical student at Exeter College., Oxford, aged twenty-two, from nearby Wedmore, drowned when diving to Wookey Twenty that afternoon. He was a member of the Cave Diving Group and had apparently done the route once before.

Martyn Farr, Ray Stead and Keith arranged to dive to Wookey 24, while other divers were training in the show cave. Keith was given the benefit of the clear water and chose the Deep Route from Wookey 9 to 20. Martyn followed along the shallow route and found Keith without his gag about four metres below the sump pool entering the chamber. He brought him out and immediately started resuscitation. Ray then arrived to help but they were unable to revive Keith over a period of about two hours. Eventually, they returned to Wookey 9 with Keith and were assisted by Drs. Peter Glanvill and Tony Boycott in alerting those concerned. Peter Glanvill retrieved equipment left behind in Twenty the next day.

At the inquest, the Coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death, although exactly what went wrong remains a mystery. In giving his conclusions, the coroner noted that explorers throughout history had taken risks, and that the world would be a poorer place without them.

Source – Western Daily Press – 16 November 1981

MYSTERY OF CAVER'S DIVE TO DEATH

Mystery surrounds the unexplained death of medical student Keith Potter, aged 22, during a cave dive in Wookey, near Cheddar, at the weekend. His father, Mr. Roy Potter, of Wedmore, said yesterday: "Keith was found 15 feet below the surface in a stretch of the caves he had explored before. He went into the system first and was followed by the second member of the team who found him start in a diagonal shaft. He was taken up to an air pocket and for two hours they tried to revive him without success. All his bottles were all right and he had not panicked. I identified him and his face was peaceful", said Mr. Potter. Keith have travelled to Somerset from Exeter college, Oxford, especially for the dive. He was a member of Oxford university caving club and had also belonged to a club on the Mendips. He had been caving since the age of twelve. Last night and Mr. Brian Prewer, one of the Mendip Cave Rescue Team said: "Wookey was not a dangerous cave. This is only the second death in more than 30 years."

Source – Wells Journal – 14 January 1982

CAVE A MAN'S DEATH MYSTERY

How cave diver Keith Potter died was described as a mystery by East Somerset coroner Mr. Fenton Rutter at an inquest in Wells. At the resumed inquest on the 22-year-old university student from Wedmore, who died as the result of a caving accident at Wookey Hole Caves in November, the coroner said death was due to asphyxia caused by drowning.

At Thursday's hearing Mr. Ray Stead, from Southsea, who was part of the group with whom Mr. Potter was diving, said he had known Mr. Potter for about 15 months. Mr. Stead said he himself was a trained diver and had dived at Wookey Hole Caves before. On November 14, he, Mr. Potter and Mr. Martyn Farr, a highly experienced cave diver, met to discuss the dive. "We discussed the equipment as far as minor details. We were going as far as chamber 24 at Wookey Hole. I had three full cylinders of air with me, enough to go to chamber 24 and back again. As far as I am aware the equipment had been used before." Mr. Stead said they wore face masks, which cover the eyes and nose and was held up by a rubber retaining strap. Pressure from the water provided an extra seal. He said he and Mr. Potter decided to take a deep route from chamber 9 to chamber 20, adding that there were guidelines to help them find their way. Keith went first, I followed two or three minutes later. I realised something was wrong when I came across Keith's boots lying on the line. I left his boots there and came to the surface. Mr. Farr was already there. He had Keith with him and was trying to resuscitate him. He had just surfaced" said Mr. Stead. He said: "Mr. Potter still had plenty of air in his air cylinders. The only possible fault is that the face mask could be dislodged, but that is a million to one chance." Mr. Martyn John Farr, from Powys, said to be one of the most experienced cave divers in the country, told the coroner the face mask was perfectly adequate, but a piece of grit in the mouth piece could cause the breathing regulator to malfunction and the respirator to go into a spasm. "I would have thought it extremely unlikely for grit to get into the equipment. The most likely fall of malfunction is that the regulator would be inclined to blow off. It is a mystery to me what went wrong" he said. Mr. Farr said there were obstacles and boulders in the way in the caves and one particularly narrow part. Mr. Potter and Mr. Stead set off ahead of him, taking the deep route. He followed them taking a shallow route. "I was approaching chamber 20, where the lines converged, and I could see Keith's body in the water about 50 foot from the surface. He was unconscious, and had been for several minutes. I took him up to the surface, there was no pulse. I tried resuscitation, but it was no good." Mr. Farr said Mr. Potter had been well prepared for the dive. He knew what he was doing and had the best conditions. He was an obviously cautious but quietly confident individual.

Mr. John Fowler, from Bristol, who inspected the diving equipment, said one valve contained a considerable amount of grit and silt. The second valve was in good condition.

Recording a verdict of accidental death, Mr. Rutter said explorers throughout history have taken risks, and the world would be a poorer place without them. Mr. Rutter said the water in the caves was especially clear and Mr. Potter was equipped with underwater torches. "But something went wrong, and it went wrong very close to chamber 20. What went wrong has been described as a mystery. "There was evidence given about the faulty valve, but it doesn't seem to me the valve was the cause. It could be the mouth piece was knocked out by an obstruction, but I think we shall never know. I think that what went wrong was beyond his control and asphyxia this was a result of this adventure."

29 November 1981 – Swildon's Hole

At about 2:30 a.m. a police patrol car arrived at the Belfry. Someone in Bristol had reported that a Mr. R Lewis had gone caving on Mendip with three young ladies and had not returned

when expected. The police had apparently driven from Bristol to search for Mr. Lewis' car. Fiona Lewis (no relation) from the Belfry accompanied the patrol on a search of cave sites, visiting Eastwater and Upper Pitts before finding the car on Priddy Green.

Pete and Alison Moody were aroused to start a search of Swildon's for the overdue party. Before this got under way, however, Lewis' party returned safely having spent a lot of time lost in the Upper Series. It must be noted that the correct callout procedure, through Yeovil Police, was not used by those concerned, nor had Lewis left word of the cave being visited. Such time wasting could be serious in other circumstances.

1982

Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year Ended 31st December 1981

This is my tenth such report and I reverse the usual order by mentioning our finances first. A major part of our income arose following the tragic loss of Keith Potter in Wookey Hole Cave last November. His parents wish to recognise Keith's great love of caving and Mendip by such tributes from friends and colleagues. In his memory we have used these funds especially for new sump rescue apparatus and medical supplies. He would have approved of these, for even as an enthusiastic schoolboy at Cheddar he came to discuss with me his particular interests in diving and in becoming a doctor. Many have written to say that Keith was excelling at both at Oxford.

The new sump rescue apparatus was brought to our attention and promoted by Pat Cronin, Pete Eckford and others to whom we are grateful. It met with C.D.G. approval at trials and so we now have a Kirby Morgan Bandmask 10 ready for use. Steve Wynne-Roberts and Ray Stead were a great help in acquiring the equipment. Other purchases are: an ingenious exposure suit designed by Chris Hannam; another Little Dragon warm air breather following a raffle organised at Rocksport by Chris Bradshaw, and a stock of always useful karabiners snapped up for us by Martin Bishop. Many Cavers take a keen interest in our equipment and I must pay particular thanks to Brian Prewer who keeps all at the ready, and to Eric Dunford who keeps us on the air.

All this has meant that M.R.O. has spent over £1000 in the year for the first time. We have a lot to show for it, of course, but cannot ignore the consequent increase in our annual commitments to around £300 at present rates. This probably has to be the price of the rescue service cavers want on Mendip and so we must look forward to their continuing support in maintaining its effectiveness when people get into trouble underground.

There were fourteen cave rescue call-outs during the year and these are detailed later. Club practices have increased and Wardens were confronted with a near real drama in a staged incident at Cuckoo Cleaves, fiendishly contrived by Dave Irwin. We are most grateful for the roles played by the St. John's and Casualty Union participants from Wells. The Swanage Coastguards spent a pleasant day with us in Swildon's, demonstrating hauling techniques, and one of the nicest occasions was in being able to carry Lee Webber around the upper series. Lee has a great interest in caving but suffers from a severe physical disability. Another useful Warden's practice was recorded by Hugh Sykes for B.B.C. Radio's program "Today" and we now have an informative photograph display designed by Rich West and Phil Romford. This has been shown to the public at the Guildhall, Bath, and in Keynsham at exhibitions ran by the police there. Martin Bishop, Stewart McManus and Alan Thomas with Bob Cork, Dany Bradshaw and Chris Hannam went to the British Cave Rescue Council Conference at Buxton,

while Dr. Don Thomson carried the M.R.O. message to the International Speleological Congress in the U.S.A. We have also given talks to just about every Womens' Institute in the district!

Sadly, my report must end as it began. We lost our last connection with the pre-war M.R.O. when Frank Frost died last summer. He always attended Annual Meetings to 1980 and, although visits to Mendip latterly became rare treats, his facility to span the years gave him a canny understanding of what lures the young and not so young into its caves. More than most, he knew the dangers of organisations becoming more important than what they should be doing. He always warned against looking important, piling up paper empires and then spending money to support the edifice rather than its endeavours. As gatherings of kindred bodies presume that their common interests in rescuing have to be formally coordinated and then actively promoted, it would be wise to remember Frank's counsel. Maybe we cannot prevent quangos supposedly representing this and that in rescue work, but M.R.O. will continue to assert that cavers had best rely on themselves.

J.D. Hanwell

17 February 1982 – Manor Farm Swallet

A heavy snowstorm passed over Mendip around dusk. Later in the evening a report was received that a party of Adventure Scouts from Reading had not reported back from a trip down the cave. It was established that no one was still underground there and no further action was taken on the assumption that they had surfaced but were probably having some difficulty in getting back home because of the weather.

17 February 1982 – Eastwater Cavern

Phil Hendy called in at Upper Pitts about 8 p.m. and noticed that a party of 7 including Jim Fussell had gone down the cave at 2:30 p.m. and had expected to be out by 7 p.m. Their cars were still in the park and there was no evidence that they had surfaced. It was snowing hard. Glyn Bolt and Val arrived before Phil had taken any action to alert M.R.O. They changed and went into the cave at 8.30 p.m. whilst Phil stood by at Upper Pitts. The overdue party was soon found making its way out of the cave. There were five teenage girls in the party moving very slowly because of tiredness and at least three carbide lamps had failed, apparently from overfilling. All were back at Upper Pitts by 9:30 p.m. In the circumstances and in view of a possible callout to Manor Farm Swallet still outstanding, it was decided not to inform the police.

20 February 1982 – Sludge Pit Hole

Matthew Stalker of 7 Heath Close, Holmer Green, High Wycombe, aged 14 went down the cave with members of the Holmer Green 1st Boy Scouts about mid-day. He then became stuck and panicked in the Upper Series Maze and the Scout leader left the cave to summon help from Upper Pitts.

Glyn Bolt was approached at about 3:30 p.m. and went to the cave whilst advising the Leader to contact Wardens at the Belfry. Stewart McManus and Alan Thomas organised things there and Tony Jarrett, Mike Duck and John Watson took kit to Sludge Pit. The police arrived at Eastwater Lane about 3:55pm. During this time, the scouts underground had managed to free Matthew Stalker. He was brought out at 4:00 p.m. unharmed.

Source – Wells Journal – 25 February 1982

CAVE RESCUE

A 14-year-old boy was rescued from a cave at Priddy on Saturday suffering from claustrophobia. Matthew Stalker, of Buckinghamshire, was brought out unhurt from Sludgepit Cavern at 4:30 p.m.

14 April 1982 – Hunters' Hole

Roger Dors rang Alan Thomas at 4:45p.m. to say that a party of 3 had gone down the cave about noon and that one had surfaced to report the others having difficulty in climbing the pitch. They had abseiled down but Fiona Overlake, aged 22, from Bristol was unable to prussick out only using knots. Moreover, she had never climbed a ladder before.

Alan Thomas decided to handle the situation himself and rigged ladders borrowed from the Belfry to show how the pitch could be simplified into two climbs. They experienced little difficulty after being shown what to do. The trio said that they were experienced climbers who had only taken up caving a few weeks earlier. Meanwhile, Roger Dors had let Brian Prewer know what was happening,

28 April 1982 – G.B. Cave

Kevin Staddon, aged over thirty and from Portishead, Bristol, was coming out of the cave during the evening when he fell whilst free-climbing the Ten-Foot Pot in the Devil's Elbow route. This pitch formerly had a fixed chain which had been removed recently. He sustained a fracture to his upper left arm and was unable to use his right one too owing to a dislocated shoulder. He was reluctant to move.

The alarm was raised from a call box in Shipham and Yeovil Police then alerted Brenda Prewer at 9:30 p.m. They informed M.R.O. that the party contained experienced members of the Hades Caving Club, two of whom had remained with the patient. Staddon was not a member of the club, however. Brenda relayed the message through Mike Duck and Barrie Wilton to Wardens who had just finished digging with N.H.A.S.A. down Sludge Pit. All alerted went straight to G.B. with rescue and medical equipment.

Fred and Graham Davies entered the cave at 10:05 p.m. followed by Dr. Don Thomson, Barrie Wilton, Mike Duck and Brian Prewer. A member of the original party accompanied Jim Hanwell to clean out the damp squeeze into Mud Passage. They were then joined by Glyn Bolt, Pete Hann, Pete and Alison Moody who had been already caving in the vicinity, somewhere. This group stood-by as a possible stretcher hauling party, Albert Francis and Eric Dunford organised the surface with the police patrols.

The patient's fractured arm was plastered and both arms then immobilised. He was given a Fortral injection and kept warm in a Polar Suit. As he could then walk, it was decided to assist him out through the easier Mud Passage route. This worked well and, although the patient became very tired, all were out of the cave about half past midnight. An ambulance from Highbridge took the patient to Weston-super-Mare for hospital treatment. He was released later in the morning.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 19 (1981 to 1983), page 88

Pete Hann, Glyn Bolt, Pete and Alison – Charterhouse Cave. To gate the discovery for the Bristol Waterworks (and to protect the formations). Equipped with cement, rock drills, cables

and generator the gate was duly installed. Just as we were packing up to leave two police cars screeched up followed by what appeared to be half of Mendip. This was a bit disturbing as we wanted to keep the discovery quiet for the time being. We sneaked round the depression and pretended we had come out of G.B. It turned out that someone had broke an arm falling out of the climb into Devil's Elbow and that Fred and half a dozen others had just set off down to effect a rescue. Jim Hanwell, who was controller, looked a bit strange when we said we'd seen no sign of the rescuers or the rescue. It soon became obvious that our help was not required so while I chatted with Jim, Pete and Glyn sneaked all the equipment at Charterhouse back to the cars. After the rescue it became common knowledge that we had a secret dig in G.B.!

Source – Wells Journal – 6 May 1982

RESCUED AFTER FALL IN CAVERN

A rescue operation had to be mounted by the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation following a fall by caver Kevin Staddon in the massive G.B. Cave, Charterhouse. Mr. Staddon, from Portishead, aged 30, fell to the bottom of the climb on the Devil's Elbow route and broke his arm. When the rescue team found him, he had been there for one and a half hours. Team member, Mr. Fred Davies said the team dressed Mr. Staddon in a special suit to get his body heat up before they could take him out. Team doctor, Dr. Don Thompson, immobilised the arm in plaster before Mr. Staddon was brought to the surface. Mr. Staddon was taken to Weston-super-Mare General Hospital for treatment.

5 May 1982 – Longwood Swallet

A party of students from the Royal Agricultural College at Cirencester went down the cave during the afternoon. They left clear instructions with the telephone switchboard operator at the college to notify the police if they had not confirmed their safe return from the cave to him by 10 p.m. When they had not done so after this time, Mr. R. Waterhouse did the correct thing and contacted Yeovil Police. M.R.O. was alerted at 11 p.m.

Roger Dors was able to confirm that a group of R.A.C. students had been seen around 6 p.m., having completed their trip and there was further evidence that they left the cave about 5:30 p.m. No further action was taken and M.R.O. informed the police and College that no search of the cave was necessary.

The students eventually returned to Cirencester having forgotten the arrangement that they had made! All concerned were none too pleased and a letter of apology was eventually received via the police.

25 June 1982 – Alert

At 1:35 a.m. Yeovil Police phoned Brian Prewer with information that a wife had called them because her husband had not returned from a caving trip the previous evening. She had no further details of the party or the cave being visited. Brian contacted the Belfry and Martin Grass was alerted. Before a search was started, however, the police rang back to say that the woman had reported her husband's return. Apparently, the party comprised of teachers from Millfield School, Street.

15 August 1982 – Swildon's Hole

A Mr. Booth from Bristol rang the police to say that his son had not returned from a trip to the Black Hole when expected. The police alerted Brian Prewer at 6:20 p.m. Five minutes later Brian learnt from Mr. Booth that his son had surfaced having under-estimated the time for a trip to the Black Hole. Ian Jepson had spotted the party in the cave and noted that they were not using a ladder on the Twenty Foot Pot. Mr. Booth did exactly what he had been instructed to do by his son – "Call the Police at 6:00 p.m. if I am not home".

15 August 1982 – Sludge Pit and Underwood Quarry

Yeovil Police contacted Brian Prewer at 4:09 p.m. to say that a Mrs. G. Barlow had told them that her husband should have been home at 2:30 p.m. following a caving trip to Sludge Pit and then to the old quarry at Underwood known as "Split Rock" by cavers. He was with three others from Glastonbury and driving a white Ford Escort whilst the rest had a Vauxhall Avenger.

The Belfry was alerted and Dany Bradshaw set out to search for the cars described. The group was located at Underwood Quarry. Those involved were under the impression that they had until about 5 p.m. before thinking of returning to Glastonbury. They were given some useful words of advice by Dany about estimating the time of trips.

26 October 1982 – Eastwater Cavern

Wayne Dawes and Roger Batten from Bristol descended the cave at about 11 a.m. expecting to be out by 6 p.m. They had limited knowledge of the system although had the right amount of tackle. At 9:30 p.m. a relative in Bristol rang Stewart McManus to say that the pair had not returned and were three hours overdue. At this stage, there was some doubt about which cave was involved and Manor Farm Swallet was also mentioned, Stewart decided to check out Manor Farm whilst Tony Jarrett went to Eastwater. The car belonging to the overdue party was located in the park at Upper Pitts. Having established that they were still down the cave, Mike Duck then informed Brian Prewer who alerted the police that a search was being mounted at 10 p.m.

Martin Bishop, Bob Cork, Tony Jarrett, Mike Duck and J. Green entered the cave soon afterwards and a second party was stood by. At 10:25 p.m. a local electricity failure knocked out communications at the Belfry for a while to delay the organisation of kit there. At 11 p.m. Tony Jarrett surfaced to report that the two cavers had been found safe and well at the top of the Canyon. It appears that they had tried to descend the Twin Verticals route but had found the ladder too short. On their return up the Canyon they became lost and wandered into the Boulder Chamber by mistake. Before their lights finally failed they returned to the place where found by the rescuers. All were clear of the cave by 11:30 p.m. and those standing by were informed that the incident was over.

29 October 1982 – Sidcot Swallet

Weston-super-Mare Police called Brian Prewer at 1:25 p.m. to say that a Mr. Tinkler from Salisbury had reported a member of his party stuck beyond the final squeeze into the Lobster Pot. A strong contingent of thin rescuers went to Burrington Combe straightaway whilst Jim Hanwell and Richard West brought along hauling gear from the Belfry. All arrived at the West Twin Brook park around 2 p.m. to find that the stuck caver, Ian James, had been helped through the squeeze unharmed, by his own party. All were sixth formers from Bishop Wordsworth School, Salisbury. This incident coincided with a Cliff Rescue for an injured climber in Cheddar Gorge dealt with through Richard West.

21 November 1982 – G.B. Cave

Yeovil Police rang Brian Prewer at 4:31 p.m. A Mr. McDonald had been down the cave that afternoon and seen water flowing into the Ladder Dig because flood waters had backed-up in the Main Chamber. His party had got out just before the crawls to Helictite Grotto sumped. This must have occurred shortly after 3 p.m. since he telephoned the alert from Burrington Cafe. Other parties were said to be left in the Ladder Dig Series. As such flooding has occurred frequently in recent years, and the sumps can remain for several days after the weather clears, the outlook for trapped cavers was regarded as potentially very serious. The Bristol Weather Centre forecast further storms after a brief lull in the persistent rain raking Mendip. Fortunately, this did not happen.

On contacting the Belfry straight away, Brian Prewer learnt that a party of 7 Venture Scouts from Essex had left there about mid-day for a G.B. trip. Subsequently, it was discovered that another party of 4 students from Queen Mary College, London, had also gone down the cave from Upper Pitts. They must have been about 70 minutes or so behind the Scouts. With the prospect of 11 being trapped, a full alert went out from M.R.O.

Jim Hanwell and Chris Batstone established a Control on the roadside near the cave with the Cheddar Police at 5:15 p.m. Pete Macnab was there to give valuable early assistance. In future, it might be best to have the main Control for M.R.O. at the blockhouse with a secondary one on the roadside for lengthy incidents involving a lot of people. Phil Romford manned the Belfry Base Radio and Fiona Lewis recorded all messages there throughout the operation. Brenda Prewer dealt with many other outside calls from West Horrington and the Taunton Control room was a very busy place that night.

At 5:32 p.m., an hour after receiving the first call, Tim Large, Miles Barrington, Stewart McManus, Nick James and Adrian Burstow entered the cave with comforts and to assess the extent of flooding. Edric Hobbs maintained a vital radio link at the entrance blockhouse during the incident. A team of five divers assembled at the Belfry with Brian Prewer, Fred Davies and others. It was decided to try and establish contact with the trapped cavers by diving. Consequently, Trevor Hughes, Rob Harper and Chris Milne with Bob Cork and Dany Bradshaw set off to undertake this. Oliver Lloyd was requested to stand-by more air cylinders and kit in Bristol since it was possible that the Sump Rescue Apparatus might be needed for several people if conditions were bad.

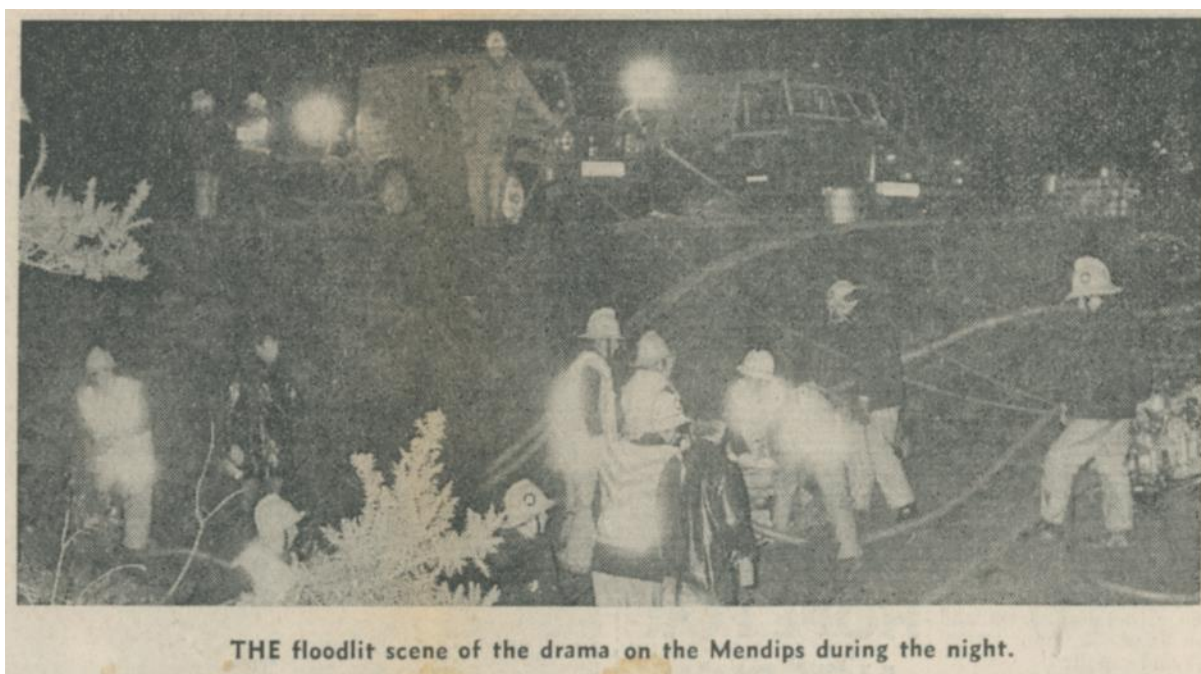
In view of the weather conditions and outlook, the Bristol Police offered to mobilise a W.V.R.S. canteen if needed. They also informed M.R.O. that the press, radio and T.V. knew of the incident and would undoubtedly arrive to get reports from the scene. Jim Hanwell and P.C. Clegg took advantage of the lull in activities to check out the vehicles belonging to the trapped parties. The scout's minibus was parked on the track to Piney Sleight.

At 6:24 p.m. Tim Large surfaced to confirm that the Main Chamber was still flooded with water flowing into the Ladder Dig. He swam in to observe that the sump levels appeared to be static rather than rising. A rope was laid as far as possible from a dry landing. It was agreed that contact by diving might work and so—the five divers entered the cave at 6:48 p.m. Tim Large returned underground with a Little Dragon resuscitator.

Jim Hanwell decided that, even if dives made contact with the trapped parties, it would still "be necessary to pump water away from the surface sink to abate the flood underground. Since the stream in nearby Charterhouse Cave had been shown to be independent of G.B. flows, it could be used to decant water away from the Tynning's stream. Paul Hodge from Bristol Waterworks was alerted and agreed with this scheme. He kindly came to the scene and remained throughout which was very much appreciated. Following a site survey with Chris Batstone, Paul estimated

that some 600 gallons per minute would need pumping at least 60 feet to Charterhouse Cave with a 12 foot lift between both valleys. This discharge estimate proved remarkably accurate in the circumstances. It continued to rain steadily with little respite. At 7:50 p.m. the Fire Service was requested by Jim Hanwell through Inspector D. Parr and they were given the pumping details. Meanwhile, cavers would prepare the dam site and establish a telephone line down the cave so that the effects of surface pumping on water levels underground could be closely monitored along with other messages.

Glyn Bolt and Paul Hodge drove across to organise and build the dam for the Fire Service with Brian Pitman, Kevin Clark, Brian Hansford, Jeff Price, Paul Weston, Nigel Graham, John Ham, Pete and Alison Moody. Brian Prewer, Fred Davies, Brian Workman and Ted Humphries laid the telephone line down the cave. The Fire Service arrived with their appliances and 23 firemen at 8:20 p.m. They were pumping only 15 minutes later and soon shifting 600 gallons per minute. Sergeant Thome and P.C. Heil joined their colleagues to give us valuable help. Eric Dunford came to maintain radio equipment and took advantage of the tender ladders to improvise a superb aerial affording much clearer communications across Mendip.



Bristol Evening Post photograph 22 November 1982

Four cavers who knew the younger scout party went underground at 8:57 p.m. with a request to take hot soups and tools to the Main Chamber. At 9 pm, the divers returned: Trevor Hughes and Rob Harper reported being able to pass two sumps but that fresh silting prevented further progress about 15 feet from Helictite Grotto. They had extended the rope laid by Tim Large to this point underwater. As the rescue now hinged upon the success of the surface pumping, the five divers returned to the Belfry and stood by. The police in Bristol were asked to ferry out air bottles from Oliver Lloyd in case they might be needed later on. Diving would have to be the last resort if water levels in Main Chamber could not be lowered sufficiently and long enough to bail out the sumps.

The well-being of the 11 trapped cavers, now underground for over 9 hours, remained unknown and worrying. Exposure or worse had to be allowed for and so a general alert for more cavers was raised from the Belfry and Upper Pitts. Bailing parties were requested at 9:15 p.m. and Fred Davies surfaced soon afterwards with Brian Workman to confirm what was required.

Miles Barrington, Nick James and Adrian Burstow also returned from the cave. Extra plastic bags were ferried in by Dave Turner to waterproof the dam and John Hildick remained on call at Priddy should sandbags available through the County Council prove necessary to hold the pressure.

The Chief Fire Officer for Somerset, Mr. Nigel Musselwhite, arrived and gave invaluable offers for any further help whenever required. This was welcome in addition to the good work being done by the local brigades. Indeed, Brian Prewer telephoned news that water levels had begun to fall significantly at 9:25 p.m. Fred Davies and Brian Workman returned underground with Dave Turner, Pete and Alison Moody all festooned with buckets for bailing. Shortly afterwards, Pete Meddy, Nigel Graham, Rich. Warmer, Pete Hann, Gordon Wright, Ian Jepson, Barry Badman and Barry Davies entered the cave to help bail out the sumps. A request was relayed for more manpower to extend the bailing chain into the Ladder Dig. Many more assembled at 9:45 p.m. along with the main wave of press, radio and T.V. reporters. An Ambulance Team arrived on their own initiative after hearing of the incident. The police did wonders with all the traffic and I can record that the media reporters on the night asked our permission to undertake their work and were fair and discrete in gathering details. Apparently, the incident had been mentioned on the national news earlier in the evening. This led to Brenda Prewer having to deal with over 40 phone calls from worried relatives and friends of uninvolved cavers yet to report home after trips down other Mendip caves during the day. At the Taunton Control Room, too, P.C. Beaman and Mrs. Serieux were required full-time handling similar calls. Their own three-page record of messages is a measure of the good work done by the police during such incidents.

The added burden of answering such queries during rescues is not often recorded or, perhaps, even appreciated. It also suggests that a surprising number do not leave clear details with people back home who worry about their activities. Maybe these worries never completely go away; but, on this occasion, it required those already hard pressed at G.B. to check out the entrances to other caves such as nearby Tynings Barrow, Longwood and Manor Farm swallets. Confirmation that parties who went down these caves had surfaced was gradually gathered. Graham Price arrived to report that Longwood was clear, for example. During floods, too, there is a greater chance that more than one cave will be affected. The simultaneous rescues when fire pumps were used last at Swildon's and St Cuthbert's on 27th August 1960 are vividly remembered by those of us involved. So, until an all-clear can be reasonably guaranteed, it is unwise to commit everyone and everything to one cave.

Among those who checked in at G.B. with kit to help were; Paul Allen and 7 members of the Severn Valley C.G., Robin Gray, Chris Bradshaw, Adrian Vanderplank, Pete Franklin, Jeremy Henley, Colin Houlden and Martin Winsbey. More soup was heated at the Belfry whilst Lil Romford gathered all remaining Nife cells holding charges. Medical supplies were prepared.

Dr. Tony Boycott arrived at 10:30 p.m. prepared to join the diving party if needed. Doctors Don Thomson and Peter Glanvill were asked to stand by since the condition of the trapped cavers was still unknown after being 10 hours underground. Then messages from the bailing party suddenly became optimistic and the first contact with the trapped cavers was reported at 10:40 p.m. Dr. Boycott entered the cave immediately. Underground, Brian Workman at the front of the bailing chain felt tugs on the rope laid by the divers. The trapped parties had noticed the drop in water levels and had sensibly begun digging from their end, Dave Turner followed through and the message that all were well and in good spirits was passed out.

At 10:50 p.m. the final unwinding of the operation began. Whilst pumping continued, Tony Jarrett, Martin Winsbey, Jane Clark, Graham Wilton-Jones, John Ham, Jeff Price, Tony Littler, Tony Mintram, Phil and Lynn Henty went down to help clear the cave. The divers returned

from the Belfry to retrieve their kit left in the Main Chamber. Fred Davies made a final search of the ladder Dig Series.

The first of the trapped cavers surfaced at 11:10 p.m. and the last at 11:30 p.m. Pumping ceased and it is of interest to note that the last rescuer to clear the cave witnessed the floods return moments later as a wall of water travelling down the Gorge. The final stand-down of the Belfry

radio was at 12:10 a.m. Monday morning and the last of the M.R.O. party left G.B. at 12:40 a.m. after thanking the Fire Service, police and local farmers who had turned up to give a helping hand.



Bristol Evening Post photograph

22 November 1982

The next phase of requests for news statements – started straightaway and continued more or less throughout the night and following day. Whatever was published from these reports, the facts as given to us then are as follows. The seven Essex Venture Scouts trapped were; Steven Turpin (28), Nicholas Gymer (21), Kevin Gumer (20), Richard Russell (18), Andrew Piggott (18), Edward Clay (18) and Tina Turpin. The Queen Mary College students, reported as Geography undergraduates, were; David Allen (from Long Ashton), Tony Owen (Torquay), Frances Dorkin (Waltham Cross), and Jenny Oakley (London).

Both parties were wet-suited, had good lights and did all the right things once their trips went wrong.

The scouts must have entered the Ladder Dig sometime before 1 p.m. and the students after 2 p.m. During that time, their observations suggest that water levels in the Main Chamber rose at least 3 feet up the ladder. Then, a rise of a foot every 4 minutes must have been noticed on making the climb. So, it could be envisaged that water might go over the top of the pitch within the hour. This was the case soon after 3 p.m. as discovered by Mr. McDonald. By all accounts, then, the already high streamflow sustained by persistent moderate rain must have almost doubled following a short-lived but very heavy shower in the area around lunch-time. We do not know how long both parties planned to spend beyond the climb into the Ladder Dig or whether they reviewed their trips on seeing the rising water in the Main Chamber. Stanton and Barrington state in their guide book (1977, p. 84) that the "Ladder Dig Series can flood in very wet weather". Given such warnings, it is clearly a mistake to spend long in this part of G.B. with water visibly rising. The conditions of the surface stream must be the best initial indication of likely flooding in the Ladder Dig. Since the valley lies east of the blockhouse and is not normally seen by parties visiting the cave, it would seem a wise precaution to make the effort to do so during wet weather and when showers are forecast before going underground. There is plenty to see in the dry parts of the system at such times. The tally of M.R.O. rescuers on record

is as follows: 37 cavers went underground, 8 of whom did two trips; 19 cavers worked on the surface either diverting the stream with the firemen or being concerned with equipment and coordinating the different organisations present. As 5 of the surface party at G.B. later joined those underground, 51 volunteers were actively involved throughout the 7 hours from the callout to when all had surfaced safely. Far more stood by should the trapped parties have been worse off or their recovery delayed. With at least 70 cavers plus over 30 from the police, Fire and Ambulance services, over a hundred people took some part in the rescue. To these must be added the press, radio and T.V. reporters present. An account of the dives attempted by Rob Harper and Trevor Hughes has since been published in the Cave Diving Group Newsletter, New Series No. 66, January 1983, page 26. Also, I have met Tony Owen who led the Q.M.C. party and made a special journey to thank us. Nothing has been heard from the Essex scouts to date. On Mendip, at least, the willingness and effectiveness of all who volunteered are typified by our local farming friends who came along to lend a hand. Among them were Mr. Mercan Jefferies from Manor Farm, Charterhouse, and Mr. Ivor Gibbons from Eastwater Farm, Friday. Roger Dors provided refreshments as ever. Thanks to a lot of people, then, the rescue went smoothly and ended successfully.

Source – CDG N/L No. 66 – January 1983, page 26

Divers – R. C. Harper and T. G. Hughes

After a considerable period of heavy rain, a very swollen Tynning's Stream was entering the cave. The choke at the lower end of the Gorge is unable to take a greatly increased flow and consequent backing up occurs, quite frequently in winter months.

The Ladder Dig is an abandoned high-level passage leading off the top of the Gorge to the impressive extension and is reached by a 6m climb some 20m before the terminal choke. The passage consists of a 5m dug section beneath a calcite floor and then a low crawl leading to Helictite Chamber. Another dug crawl leads from there to the Great Chamber Boulder ruckle. Eleven cavers were known to be trapped beyond the sumped Ladder Dig crawls. The divers and support party were able to swim to the Ladder Dig, aided by a rope rigged by the first of the rescue party. A heavy stream was flowing down Ladder Dig, such that the disused 0.4m gate frame was taking a 0.2m deep stream.

T.G.H. using a single 566 l. bottle was able to pass the initial 5m sump in zero visibility laying heavy line. A series of ducks led to a second sump just before Helictite Chamber. A return was made for more rope and, joined by R.C.H., the second sump (0.7m long) was passed. The third sump was carefully investigated by both divers but was found choked by debris carried downslope by the stream. At this point the divers were 3 to 4m from the trapped cavers.

The water level in the Gorge was lowered by the Fire Brigade, by pumping Tynning's Stream into the neighbouring stream, which leads to Read's Grotto and Charterhouse Cave. When there was no longer any water flowing down the Ladder Dig, the second and third sumps drained naturally. A trapped caver was able to dig his way through the choke, that had been the third sump, and established contact with the bailing party at the first sump by means of the guide line. The trapped party was released by bailing the first sump.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 8, pages 1177 to 1182

It was while we were warming up and the kettle was boiling that the M.R.O. radio started squawking. A call had been received from the cafe at Burrington that a party was trapped in

G.B. The caller said he had just got out of the Ladder Dig in the face of rapidly rising floodwater. A party had been immediately behind, but had not got out. An advance party went over to investigate (B.E.C.) as the report was that it was Venture Scouts using the B.E.C. key. In the meantime we noticed that a party of four Q.M.C. cavers staying at Upper Pitts, were also in G.B. – booked into Ladder Dig.

Things stayed fairly confused; B.E.C. and Wessex cavers plus C.D.G. and others went over to the cave. Ian Jepson and others went into Sludge Pit to get hose for a sludge gulper, and about eight of us stayed at Upper Pitts, monitoring progress on the radio, and getting gear up together in case we were needed. It was still raining.

A party of cavers tried to dam the stream going into G.B. until four fire brigade pumps arrived and sent 2,500 gallons per minute down Charterhouse Cave. Thanks to Pete and Alison's recent dye testing, we knew that water in Charterhouse did not reappear in G.B.

A call went out for buckets, then a call for more cavers. So we evacuated Upper Pitts and went over to G.B. Lynn and I stopped off at the Hunters' for cigarettes, whiskey and buckets and a shovel.

The line of parked cars along the side of the road was several hundred yards long. Fortunately by this time the rain had stopped. We unloaded our gear, and walked to the road gate. Where there was a large crowd of Police and Firemen. Seeing no one in charge we went over to the cave. The field was like a quagmire, and a large muddy pool lay in front of the blockhouse. Away on the left floodlights showed where the pumps were.

Approaching the blockhouse we were blinded by the lights of a T.V cameraman, and found Eric Hobbs as surface radio link. He said that shovels were needed so Lynne and I went on in making good progress via the Bridge and the Oxbow; since we were in dry grotts, we did however get fairly wet.

We met no one until the end of the Oxbow, where Brian Prewer was on the telephone, perched on the left looking down at a couple of rescuers standing at the edge of the lake. A line ran across to the Ladder Dig. The pumping had lowered the water level by about five feet, and splashing sounds meant that a bucket chain was baling out the sumped crawl into Ladder Dig. We could see the occasional reflection of light flashing on the wall opposite.

Lynne and I perched ourselves on the ledge near Brian, who sent Nigel Graham along the line. After a few minutes during which we could see the water level slowly falling Nigel returned to say that contact of some kind had been established. Almost before we knew it the trapped parties were out and hauling themselves along the line to dry land. Prew threw down mint cake and I started to heat a can of oxtail soup over a smelly hexamine stove.

Tony Owen the leader of the Q.M.C. party based at Upper Pitts, climbed up onto the ledge with us. Apparently when they went into the Ladder Dig, the water was ten feet below the ledge, but when they were first trapped it rose a foot every minute. They sat it out close to the water level, with the Venture Scouts higher up the choke. Divers had reached Helictite Grotto, but could not get through the squeeze with their bottles. As soon as the water level began to fall, the M.R.O. bailed from their end, and as Tony noticed the level going down, he was able to bale from his end using a helmet. Before long, one of the rescuers broke through, and supplied hot soup etc. All of the trapped cavers were in good condition and spirits, and it was not long before they were on their way out to where Prew, Lynne and I were.

As soon as they were OK for food etc. Prew got them moving, up the streamway and the waterfall. Lynne, Nigel and I picked up the Little Dragon and other rescue stores and made our way out via the oxbow. We were held up a little by some of the victims climbing up the rift leading into the side passage which opens into the Gorge. We also met Rob Harper, Biffo and other divers going down to retrieve their diving kit.

On emerging from the cave, we made our way back to the road. I went a purler down the slippery slope with a load of buckets, but no harm was done, and we were fortunate to get a lift back across the field in a Fire Brigade Land Rover. At the road things were pretty chaotic. We met Fred who had been running to and fro in his Land Rover, and Barry emerged from the cave, cursing because he had had to carry out two shovels, neither of which in fact used.

The Fire Brigade had some hot soup had some tea and soup. They did not recommend the tea, and all that could be said for the soup was that it was hot. I had a brief chat with Jim Hanwell, who said a soup kitchen was to arrive at 12:45 a.m. It was then 12:25, and Lynne was cold and wet, so we decided to return to Upper Pitts. Reporters were milling around everywhere, and I had to reverse the car back several hundred yards until I could turn in a gateway.

Back at Priddy, we rustled up a brew, then Lynne and I shared a shower. We then took the M.R.O gear back to the Belfry where we found that all the beer had gone.

Source – Alan Gray's Log Book

Bernie Danvers, Trevor Goddard, Alan Gray

We arrived at G.B. at 10:30am on the morning of the 21st, and after much struggling with wet suits, trekked across the sodden fields through the drizzle to the cave entrance. After examining the height of the stream entering the cave system, we decided to proceed because although the stream was fast-flowing we had all caved in G.B when the stream was higher.

Entering the blockhouse, and via the Mud Passage Route, we reached the Gorge and crossed the Bridge to view the White Passage. Returning to the Bridge we walked through the large chamber and lifelined the 40 foot pitch to reach the lake at the boulder and sand choke.

The ladder, attached by a group of cavers from Essex, was fixed; we waded 30 feet through waist deep water and clambered into the extension; Trevor's and my first visit.

Retracing our steps we noted the volume of water cascading over the 40 foot pitch had increased dramatically. We surfaced at 3:30pm and stripped off our wet suits to be joined by two cavers from Essex, who informed us that they would let the B.E.C. know of the group of cavers still underground and the rising water level.

[When exiting from the Ladder Dig Extension I remember that we had to swim, upstream, from the top of the ladder for about 50 feet before we could touch solid ground – the water had risen 5m in the few hours we had been in the extension.]

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 19 (1981 to 1983), pages 127 & 128

Page 127 – Eleven people trapped in Ladder Dig by flood water all 10 out after a well organised M.R.O. call out.

Page 128 – Mega rescue in G.B. in the evening after three parties were trapped by flood water in the Ladder Dig Extension.

Source – MCG Newsletter Number 162 – March 1983

On Sunday, 21st November 1982, eleven cavers were rescued from the G.B. Ladder Dig series. According to one party, the water in G.B. had risen by 12 feet in one hour, raising the level of the terminal lake in the Main Chamber from the base to the top of the pitch into the Ladder Dig. The lake was already high, following heavy rain during the preceding week and during the weekend. The ground was saturated, and a torrential downpour during Sunday was the final straw.

Trevor Hughes and Rob Harper from B.E.C. dived the tight entrance passage in zero visibility to establish contact with the cavers trapped beyond – the crawl was sumped in three places. It was only when water entering G.B. was diverted down Charterhouse Cave (thereby confirming the absence of significant drainage from Charterhouse to G.B.) that it proved possible to bail the first “sump” in the Ladder Dig, which was the major obstacle.

Source – The Guardian – 21 November 1982

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 twelve 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 advise before going down.

Source – Western Daily Press – 22 November 1982

TWO HAPPY ENDINGS – ORDEAL BY FLOOD

RESCUED! 11 SAFE IN CAVE DRAMA

Eleven potholers were rescued late last night after being trapped by flood water in a huge cave system in Charterhouse on the Mendip Hills near Cheddar. They had to make their way through a cascade blocking the passages after divers cleared mud and boulders which blocked one of the main passages. They were all unhurt although they were suffering from the cold after their 13- hour ordeal. Earlier firemen had battled to pump thousands of gallons of water from the cave system faster than rainwater was flowing in, as fears grew for the group's safety. Those trapped were experienced, well equipped cavers who climbed to a higher level to wait for the floods to subside.

The caves are 350 ft. below the ground. The drama began shortly after 4 p.m. yesterday, when the Mendip Rescue Organisation was called to G.B. Cave on Tynning's Farm, near Charterhouse, after one party of potholers, who narrowly escaped the flood, raised the alarm. The rescue ended at 11:20 p.m. when the first group of potholers, those from Queen Mary College, London, were led to safety. Mr. David Allen, aged 21, from Bristol, was in the college party with his girlfriend Frances Dorkin, 20, from Hertfordshire. David said they had not been frightened:

"We just headed for high ground and all of us cuddled up to keep warm. "The rescuers got soup to us very quickly." Frances who, like David, is a geography undergraduate, has been down the cave four times before. With them were Mr. Tony Owen, 21, of Torquay and Miss Jenny Oakley, 19, of London. The second group, two instructors and five less experienced cavers from the Essex County Scout caving team followed ten minutes after the college cavers. Mr. Andrew Piggott, 18, one of the scouts said morale underground had been good. Most of the time they had sung Scouting songs and even Christmas carols. Thirty-five firemen from Somerset stations were involved in the operation pumping water away from the stream which runs into the cave. Mr. Phil Romford, one of the rescue team, said the flooding was unprecedented and those trapped could not be blamed. "It's not stupidity. It's just bad luck," he said.

The entrance to the cave system, which goes hundreds of feet into the limestone, is covered by a concrete block house which is kept locked. Cavers who want to explore the system have to get the key from the Bristol University Caving Club. G.B. Cave has some spectacular formations of stalagmites and stalactites and is among the most popular in the Mendips. It is named after the potholers who discovered it, a Mr. Goddard and a Mr. Baker Bristol Weather Centre said rain had fallen steadily through the day from 8 a.m. About three-quarters of an inch had fallen.

Source – The Sun – 22 November 1982

11 TRAPPED IN CAVE FLOODS

Rescue services were racing against time last night to save 11 young potholers trapped in underground caves.

Seven Scouts and four students were cut off by raging underground rivers as they explored a limestone labyrinth deep below the Mendip Hills in Somerset.

The alarm was raised as floodwaters began to pour into the caves following a weekend of torrential rain.

A major rescue operation was immediately launched. Firemen used special pumping equipment capable of sucking 600 gallons of water a minute, and frogmen moved into the murky waters.

The cavers – seven Venture Scouts from Harlow, Essex, and four graduates from Queen Mary College, London – were thought to be trapped 350 feet down.

They entered the 450 foot deep Goddard-Baker cavern near Charterhouse in separate groups at lunchtime yesterday. But torrential rain throughout the afternoon turned the normally shallow streams into raging rivers.

A spokesman for the Bristol Exploration Club, which was co-ordinating the rescue, said they were all stuck in one of the cavern's many "pockets."

The divers from the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation, carried powerful lights to try and spot the potholers.

A rescue spokesman said: "The cavern is usually regarded as dead easy. But it's almost unprecedented for it to become flooded like this."

Source – Western Daily Press – 23 November 1982

TRAPPED CAVERS' RAINY WEATHER ERROR

Eleven potholers rescued from a cave system in the Mendips on Sunday could have avoided trouble. They were trapped 350 feet underground by floodwater for seven hours in G.B. Cave, near Charterhouse. Mr. Jim Hanwell, secretary of Mendip Rescue Organisation, said the cave was known to be liable to flooding. "To spend any length of time there with rising water conditions was possibly a mistake," he said. The trapped cavers consulted local experts before going down, Mr. Hanwell said. More than 60 local cavers, police and firemen were involved in the rescue. Firemen pumped half a million gallons of water in five hours to divert a stream which flows into the cave, one of the largest in the Mendips. The seven Venture Scouts from Essex and four students from Queen Mary College, London, found high ground inside the cave, and waited for the water to subside. Fire brigade and police would not comment last night on whether the party was wise to go into the cave after steady rain. But some officers involved in the rescue felt the potholers should have been more alert to the weather. Mr. David Allen, aged 21, of Raynes Close, Long Ashton, Bristol, one of the college party, derided that it was foolish to go caving in the conditions. No figures were available last night for the cost of the rescue.

Source – Wells Journal – undated

FIRE CHIEF'S RAP OVER CAVE FOLLY

Sharp criticism was levelled on Tuesday against irresponsible cavers who go underground despite adverse weather forecasts. The criticism was launched by Somerset's chief fire officer Nigel Musselwhite at the meeting of the county's Public Protection Committee. He also praised the work of Cheddar's volunteer firemen and the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation. His remarks stem from the cave rescue on November 21 when 11 cavers were trapped down G.B. Cave at Charterhouse.

He said it had caused many hours of unpleasant and arduous work for firemen from Cheddar. He said lives had been at risk and so he had made no charge for services of the firemen. The cost to the rate-payers for the rescue would be £1,000, said Mr. Musselwhite. "I must make you aware that I don't think the cavers should have been down there at a time when the water table was so high and when there had been sustained rain and a forecast of further rain," he added. "My firemen worked and waded up to their guts in mud pumping out in some of the most

atrocious conditions I have experienced.” Mr. Musellwhite said, with the support of committee chairman Major Roland Ingleby-Mackenzie, he was personally expressing appreciation to Cheddar firemen. Mrs. Jean Wootton said it had been folly for the cavers to be underground in such conditions. She felt a code of procedures should be introduced to restrict cavers’ activities. Her idea was supported by the chairman who said the idea had occurred to him when rescue services had been called out before. Mr. Musselwhite said advice was always available from Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation which was a very responsible body. Procedures had already been tightened up to restrict access to caves. Mr. Musselwhite did not wish to fault people who had undertook hazardous activities - his personal sport was racing motorcycles- only those who did so against experienced advice. “People are entitled to poke their heads down a hole in the ground if they wish to do so for sport but if there is a forecast of heavy rain I do not think it is reasonable to go down,” he said.

He added that the rescued cavers at Charterhouse had been well equipped and had done the right things when they ran into trouble.

Source – Wells Journal – 13 January 1983

POSTBAG – CAVERS HIT BACK

Dear Sir – It is unfortunate that cavers seem to be the only ones concerned not to have had an opportunity to take part in the recent publicity about cave rescues. Since the issue which provoked so much criticism from councillors is about charging for such services, maybe I can be allowed to give some simple views and facts for those holding these strong opinions. I will not repeat many of the useful points made by the Chief Fire Officer, Mr. N. Musselwhite that singling out cavers for paying charges would be illogical and untenable. Nor will I blame or defend cavers who need rescuing in public for several reasons. One good reason is that the situation that I might describe cannot be fully appreciated unless one has been caving and knows the area well. Another, and more important principle, however, is that the secretary of a voluntary organization dedicated to assisting those at risk would be morally wrong to create a climate where some might fear the consequences of a call for our help. I am deeply concerned that the publicity already given may make our work more difficult for such reasons. Do councillors who are reported as demanding a code of procedures to restrict caving activities really believe that none exist? Have they even taken the trouble to find out what happens?

Whilst all codes stand up to being closely re-scrutinised, they certainly do not prevent accidents occurring occasionally as must only be too evident on our roads, with team games, in field sports and most activities that are probably enjoyed by councillors themselves. Do they know the particular cave and local weather so well as to assert that it was folly to be underground in such circumstances? G.B. Cave boasts the largest chambers under the Mendips and there are plenty of dry places to go, given the worst weather on the surface. It will not be forgotten that people used to live underground to shelter from the elements! That those in responsible positions are prepared to judge things about which they have little knowledge and have given hardly any consideration is worrying. It would have been quite easy to find out the facts. The facts are that the Fire Service was last called to help at a cave rescue over 22 years ago and we sincerely hope they will not be troubled again to assist M.R.O. It should be emphasized that no fireman has ever gone underground on such an incident, indeed, only cavers go underground to help cavers and we are proud of this self-help tradition. During the past 22 years, M.R.O. has dealt with 194 rescue incidents, entirely with its own manpower and specialist equipment paid for solely by the efforts of cavers. On several occasions in fact, cavers have willingly searched the hills for missing members of the public with the police and undertaken hazardous recoveries of farm animals that have fallen into holes on Mendip. They have not sought any remuneration

or publicity for this and are unlikely to do so. Over 600 people descend Mendip caves every week of the year and so the tiny percentage who get into trouble compares more than favourably with most other pursuits, even those of a less adventurous nature. Moreover, I could explain at length how the knowledge freely given by cavers about Mendip underground has been crucial to the utilisation of the area's water supplies, the county's own plans concerning mineral resources, and to the realisation of much of the revenue at our two biggest attractions at Cheddar and Wookey Hole. Just once in over 20 years we asked for some help!

J. D. Hanwell

Secretary & Treasurer, Mendip Rescue Organisation

31 December 1982 – Rhino Rift

Alan Mills and Colin Houlden went down the cave the previous evening and hoped to be out at 10:30 p.m. By 1:30 a.m. when they were three hours overdue, Tim Large and Chris Batstone decided that something was wrong. Fiona Lewis alerted Brian Prewer that they were going over to the cave to investigate with Jim Smart and friend. Brian informed the police of the action being taken.

Jim Smart found the overdue pair just about to complete their ascent of the Main Pitch. Apparently, Colin Houlden encountered great difficulty with his Lewis ropewalkers and so both had to share Alan's S.R.T. gear to get out: a good case where experience and determination prevented a larger scale call-out.

1983

Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year ending 31st December 1982

As late as mid-November, it was possible that this would be my briefest report for a long time, I should know better by now! Many issues arose after the long rescue at G.B. Cavern and, although the actual operation went smoothly at the time, there are several lessons to learn from what has happened since. No sooner had the accompanying log of call-outs been prepared at the end of the year when both television channels and local newspapers carried news that some members of Somerset County Council's Public Protection Committee had argued that cavers should pay for rescue services. We have heard such rash views before, of course, but every publicised outburst has to be answered in kind. This report features some of the articles and one of my replies along with another by Tim Large. They cover most of the points at issue. Maybe, those who do not live near Mendip will be unaware that, whilst this was predictably an over-strong reaction to a much publicised incident, most rescues do not end once those involved have left safely for home, Not only has equipment to be cleared-up, tested and replaced if needs be, but there are usually pointed questions from the press to answer, letters to write and many people to thank.

M.R.O. only provides a rescue service for cavers with their help. It must not stray into areas concerning why, where and when people go caving. However, if those responsible for call-outs go away without an explanation or even a word of thanks, then their rescuers are left to justify what has happened. This forces us to take on jobs that we should not really have to do. The point being made is underlined by the low level of donations from rescued parties seen on the accompanying accounts for the year. Moreover, it should be noted that seven of the parties needing help belonged to either scout, school or student organisations. Many of such groups

have access to equipment and funds to subsidise their caving. Whilst there are notable exceptions to this situation because M.R.O. has been consistently supported over the years by established university and polytechnic clubs, it is evident that we still rely mainly upon Mendip based clubs for most of its money and all of its experienced manpower. New groups who cave on Mendip should not take the provision of a rescue service for granted and must take their share in ensuring that M.R.O. can respond effectively when things go wrong underground.

The purpose of stressing these points is not only to get cavers as a whole to support rescue work but also to answer the critics who propose the untenable extreme of making charges for any involvement by, say, the Police and Fire Services. We must be in a position to resist such trends in all respects. I am conscious that next year will be 1984!

J.D. Hanwell, Hon. Secretary & Treasurer

9 January 1983 – Lamb Leer Cavern

Fred Davies was contacted by Yeovil Police at 3:30 p.m. They reported that a caver had fallen from the Main Pitch and was injured. On reaching the informant at Beaconsfield Farm, it was found that Phillip Sutton and Malcolm Jackson of the Stroud Cave Rambling Club had entered the cave at about 11:30 a.m. but had been held up by a large party coming out. Their own descent of the Main Pitch was delayed until about 1:30 p.m. On returning, Phillip Sutton climbed first as the older and more experienced of the pair. He was life-lining Malcolm Jackson when the climber fell from the bulge about 20 feet from the top. In trying to lower him, Sutton sustained rope burns to his hands and was forced to leave his shaken colleague at the bottom of the Main Chamber whilst summoning help.

The Belfry was informed of the situation. Alan Butcher reached the cave by 3:45p.m. followed five minutes later by Tim Large, Martin Grass, Edric Hobbs, Robin Gray and Howard Price with hauling gear and First Aid. They entered the cave at 4 p.m. with Pete Hann in support. In just 36 minutes they had brought Jackson out unharmed. Meanwhile, an ambulance called by the police took Phillip Sutton to the Royal United Hospital, Bath, for treatment.

Source – Wells Journal – 13 January 1983

RESCUED AFTER CAVE FALL

Mendip Rescue Organisation were called out on Sunday afternoon when a caver fell down a cavern near West Harptree. Malcolm Jackson, aged 37, of London, was climbing in Lamb Leer Cavern and he slipped on a rope ladder. He was rescued by six members of the rescue group and suffered minor injuries, bruising and shock. His caving companion, Phillip Simon, aged 47, of Ashton-under-Lyne, and a member of the Strode Caving Club, raised the alarm. He was later treated at Bath Royal United Hospital for rope burns to his hands which he received when he grabbed the safety rope trying to save Mr. Jackson. He saw Jackson at the bottom of the ladder, climbed out of the cavern and walked to a farm where he telephoned for help. Just before 4 p.m. members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation went into the cave and found Mr. Jackson 80 feet below the surface.

21 February 1983 – Thrupe Lane Swallet

Yeovil Police informed Brian Prewer in the early hours at 1:30 a.m. about an overdue party. A wife from Salisbury had resorted that her husband should have been home by 11 p.m. on the Sunday following a trip with six other experienced cavers from Salisbury organised by Mr. and

Mrs. Goodhead. Brian went to the cave but could not find the car of the overdue cavers at the farm. As there was a chance that they might have gone to Stoke Lane Slocker instead, Bob Cork checked for vehicles in Bector Lane. His search also proved to be fruitless and so the police were requested for more details from the informant.

At 2:50 a.m., news came that the party had returned home safely having stopped for coffee on the way back to Wiltshire. Despite leaving late from Thrupe Farm well after midnight, they had thought it sufficient to "toot" their horn in the hope that Mrs. Butt would be aware of their departure. No one thought it necessary to contact anyone in Salisbury to prevent the callout.

13 March 1983 – Longwood Swallet

A party of six people, from Ealing College Adventure Unit (St. Mary's Underground Team), entered the cave at approximately 12 noon. Party members were - Mr. D. Higginson (Leader), Mr. A. Mellon, Mr. P. Dymont, Mr. P. Jochan, Miss D. Jackson, Mr. A. Barker

Mr. Higginson, Mr. Dymont and Mr. Mellon had considerable knowledge of the cave and had led parties in the cave on previous occasions. Miss Jackson had also visited the cave previously. Another party was in the cave at the same time consisting of Mr. Chester and Mr. Wigglesworth the incident occurred at about 1 p.m. at the bottom of what is known as the second pitch. This is half way into the cave. Mr. Barker descended the pitch, shortly afterwards a boulder fell and injured his right foot. It was clear that injuries sustained were serious, Assistance was offered from Mr. Chester and Mr. Wigglesworth who were nearby. At this point several options were available to get Mr. Barker out of the cave.

- a. Request and wait for a Cave Rescue team.
- b. Carry out a 'self-rescue' by persons present
- c. Move Mr. Barker out of cave on 'self-rescue' basis and if situation deteriorated request cave rescue.

Option c. was taken because -

- a. It was considered that the team was capable of self-rescue.
- b. A full cave Rescue team would take as long if not longer to take Mr. Barker to the surface.
- c. Mr. Barker preferred an immediate move out of the Cave.
- d. Cave Rescue would be called if necessary
- e. Mr. Higginson had cave rescue experience

A full 'self-rescue' was accomplished in 2 hours and Cave Rescue was not required. The party surfaced at approx. 2:30 p.m.

Mr. Barker was immediately taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary. Initial diagnosis indicated three broken bones, two crushed toes and a severe wound. He was detained in hospital for treatment on Sunday night.

Source – MCG Newsletter No. 163, pages 4 to 5

A about 1 p.m. on March 13th, a boulder fell from the roof of Fault Chamber in Longwood August. Andy Baker, a caver from Ealing College, happened to be sitting directly underneath, taking the full force of the 12" x 10" x 8" boulder on the toe of his boot. Being new to caving, he was not wearing steel toecaps, but a pair of good, heavy walking boots. His toes were badly crushed, and consequently he had to be assisted from the cave.

With a total of eight in the party, it was decided to assist Andy to hobble to the surface, and only send for outside assistance if his condition deteriorated. He was able to hobble with support, and climbed the ladder at Swing Pitch reasonably easily using toe and heel. For the traverse of Great Chamber, he was belayed from both ends while tied in the middle of the rope. For the awkward climb by the waterfall, an extra tape was rigged so he could be held from three directions.

Once over the waterfall, we noticed that blood as well as water was escaping from his boot. However it was less than it looked, and we pushed on to the foot of the entrance series. A rope was rigged in the entrance rift for assistance and haulage, Andy was able to climb out with little help except for support of the rope. He was back at the cottage by about 4:30 p.m., and was taken directly to the Bristol Royal Infirmary. It was found that he had two broken toes and crushed toes, and a nasty gash across the base of his toes. Later that week the surgeon removed the middle toe due to lack of blood supply.

The question of whether steel toe capped boots would have saved his toes is worthy of discussion. The site of the injury would have been right at the edge of the toe cap which therefore taken most of the impact. However, the incident does show that the footwear often seen underground (peep-toe boots, soft shoes, etc.) is perhaps a little foolhardy, and could lead to more serious injuries in this case.

7 May 1983 – Swildon's Hole

Source MCG Newsletter No. 164, page 6

During the recent M.C.G. trip to Damp Link Swildon's we encountered two scouts on the way out at the 20 foot ladder. One was OK, but the other was reluctant to attempt the pitch which was very, very wet. The third member of their team, an experienced caver of many years from the Shepton Mallet area, had gone for help. Rather than waste time waiting for the M.R.O., we offered to assist the lad, and began to rig a line and harness. Everything was under control when six cavers with M.R.O. lamps arrived and proceeded to take control of the situation.

However, if I had known they were not M.R.O., I would have told them to bugger off in view of the way they handled things. They treated the scouts like tackle-bags, manhandling them about, and "rescuing" the second scout who didn't even need help! None of the hauling party was lifelined, possibly putting the scouts in even greater danger. Once up the pitch, they insisted on continuing to manhandle the tackle-bags (sorry scouts) out of the cave. This was a blatant case of a group of cavers glory hunting and making a rescue out of nothing. All that was needed was an extra pull on the lifeline. We later found out they just happened to be in the cave and had hired M.R.O. lamps.

We were not the only ones peeved – the leader was upset, not to say angry about the whole incident. And the scouts probably won't want to caving for a while.

The point I want to make is this: if asked to help someone in difficulty don't go over the top. Give help when it's needed, but be prepared to let the caver make his own way out if he can.

Source MCG Log Book Volume 6, pages 120 to 122

[Returning from a Damp Link Trip]

At the 25 ft. ladder in Swildon's the party encountered two Scouts, about 14 years old, although experienced and well equipped, one of them "froze" when it came to climbing the 25 ft. ladder.

Despite having been down to Sump One on previous trips. Their leader had decided to seek help and had gone to the surface.

Steve Lane immediately set about fixing a sit harness while Deb climbed the 25 to rig extra belays, in order to help them up the pitch. However, before they could be hauled up, about six “cavers” from Sussex arrived wearing M.R.O. lamps and took over the situation. Had we known they were not M.R.O. we would have told them to piss off, as they weren’t needed, and the situation was fully under control. Anyway, they had M.R.O. gear and we didn’t know better.

They treated the Scouts like tackle bags, hauling them very fast up the pitch and dragging them over the lip. All this was done without the hauling party being belayed (putting the Scouts in greater danger) although Deb had rigged belays previously. Once up, they insisted in dragging the tackle bags (sorry Scouts) out of the cave despite the protests of the two Scouts (sorry, tackle bags) and their leader.

The Scouts were reasonably dry, were not tired and not in a state of shock and could easily have walked out unaided. Sussex were glory seeking and making a rescue out of nothing – all that was needed was for the scout to be helped up the pitch and left to exit unaided.

After being dragged out by Sussex, they were very wet and probably suffering from shock. Their leader, an experienced caver who belongs to a Mendip club and lives in Shepton Mallet was justifiably peeved by the whole incident.

We later found out that the leader had met the Sussex party at the entrance and told them about the Scouts in trouble. The M.R.O. lamps had been hired (from the Belfry?), and the M.R.O. had not been called.

28 May 1983 – Rhino Rift

A party of four from Abson failed to report home at 2 p.m. after a trip down the cave during the morning. One of the mothers alerted Yeovil Police at 5:50 p.m. and Brian Prewer was informed straightaway. Chris Batstone stood by with a possible rescue party at the Belfry. Shortly afterwards at 6 p.m. the party arrived home. They had not bothered to report having surfaced safely.

22 June 1983 – Swildon's Hole

Richard West was contacted by Yeovil Police at 9:50 p.m. with news that Gordon Lynch had phoned them from Priddy Green to say that someone could not climb the Twenty Foot pitch. The informant then left the call box and could not be reached there for further details. So, Jeff Price was alerted at the Hunters’ Lodge and asked to assess the situation at the cave. Meanwhile, Glyn Bolt had chanced across Lynch at Priddy and organised a small hauling party from the Wessex Cave Club to help.

It was found that Mrs. Karen Lynch, the wife of the informant, had become tired and intimidated by the waterfall on returning from a trip to Sump I. There were three in the party led by her husband, all were well-equipped and the stream was low. Inexplicably, a stronger party of five non-club cavers from Bath had passed by the incident at the Twenty but had merely put Karen in a poly bag to await other rescuers. The four Wessex cavers went down and simply hauled Karen Lynch up the short climb. She was then able to help herself and was out of the cave before 11 p.m.

CLIMBER RESCUED FROM A CAVE

A 20-year-old Wells woman climber was rescued from Swildon's Hole, Priddy, last week, after she became exhausted. Karen Lynch was too tired to climb a 20-foot pitch out of the cave. The three other members of the party called the Mendip Rescue Organisation. Karen was pulled out at 11 p.m. last Wednesday night after about two hours trapped in the cave. The other members of her party were her brother and his wife, Gordon and Hillary Lynch, of Wells, and a friend Pamela Cave-Aylan, also of Wells. Mr. Richard West, one of the four rescuers, said the cavers were well equipped and took all the right safety precautions.

9 October 1983 – Alert

A Mr. Drinkwater rang the police at Yeovil as he was worried that his son had not returned home. The son was on a caving trip with Long Levens Scout Group but the only other information was that the party was using a marked minibus. After the police had informed Brian Prewer at 8:33 p.m., John Turner went to look for the minibus around Priddy whilst Martin Bishop stood by to form a rescue team if required. Shortly afterwards at 8:46 p.m., Mr. Drinkwater phoned again to say that he had been called by his son with news that the minibus had broken down on the motorway after leaving Mendip.

17 October 1983 – Swildon's Hole

A party of eight girls with two teachers from Hayesfield School, Bath, was reported overdue by a Mr. Hughes at 9:20 p.m. After being contacted by Yeovil Police, Brian Prewer rang Mr. Hughes who told him that he had been called by the teachers concerned before they entered the cave at 6:20 p.m. and asked to raise the alarm if not contacted again by 9:00 p.m. when the party hoped to surface. He had done as he was told! Brian suggested that the cavers had not given themselves enough time for their trip.

Jane Thomas at Priddy was asked to check whether the school's minibus was still on Priddy Green. At 9:28 p.m., Mr. Pritchard, one of the teachers in the party, rang in to say that they had just surfaced having underestimated the length of time their trip would take and that the call box had been occupied earlier. He was advised to allow longer for such contingencies in future.

23 October 1983 – Storm Drain in Frome

Someone in Frome raised the alarm with Yeovil Police after seeing two young boys remove a drain cover and crawl into a three feet high culvert. The informant was sure that they were still inside and said that voices could be heard. After being contacted by the police for assistance, Brian Prewer alerted the Wessex Cave Club and a search party left the investigate comprising Glyn Bolt, Julie Wootton, Pete Hann, Al Keen and Rich Worman. Since there was a lot of water reported to be flowing into the culvert, Trevor Hughes was asked to stand by as a diver. Glyn Bolt's party searched the drain but found no one. It was concluded that the informant had failed to spot the boys leaving the site and no children had been reported as missing.

23 October 1983 – Sludge Pit Hole

A party of four cavers from Radstock went down the cave in the afternoon using their own tackle for the Twenty Foot pitch near the entrance. After life-lining the first three down the ladder, Frank Norton who was leading the trip started his descent without a line. Whilst still

some way above the floor, his homemade wire tether broke so he fell and it was first thought that he had fractured a leg. The alarm was raised through the police from Upper Pitts at 4 p.m. Dany Bradshaw, Bob Cork, Al Keen, Pete Hann, Mike Duck and Graham Bolt went down the cave with medical and hauling gear at 4:30 p.m. They found the patient able to sit up and move his legs despite complaints of pains in the back and chest. He was made comfortable and then hauled out within 45 minutes. A Range Rover ambulance took the patient to the Royal United Hospital, Bath, at 6:25 p.m. where it was reported later that, apart from bruises, he had only broken a toe.

The wire tether belonging to Norton had single U-clamps fastening both C-links. These had become loose but the danger had not been spotted because they had been covered by electrical tape. Mr. Norton was the heaviest member of his party!

Source – Bath & Wilts Evening Chronicle – 24 October 1983

PRAISE FOR CAVE RESCUERS

Potholer Mr. Frank Norton from Radstock, is full of praise for the Mendip Cave Rescue Team who hauled him to 100 feet to safety after he had fallen down a vertical shaft at Sludge Pit Cave, Priddy. “They did a fine job,” said Mr. Norton, a 46-year-old bus driver. Mr. Norton fell down a 20-foot shaft to the floor of the cave yesterday afternoon after a piece of climbing equipment snapped. He was taken to United Hospital Bath, but was discharged last night after being treated for a broken bone in his foot, and sprained wrist, shoulder and pelvis. Today, flat on his back, Mr. Norton said he had been caving for about 17 years and on this occasion, had been out with four friends from Radstock. “We had just bought a brand-new ladder, but used an old tether, a wire holder for the ladder. Two of my friends went down before me on lifelines. Being the experienced one, I was to be the last one down, and had to go without a lifeline. It was then that the tether snapped and I fell.” Mr. Brian Prewer, of the Mendip Cave Rescue Team said Mr. Norton was brought to the surface “without any problems. It was a simple accident which could have happened to anyone,” he said. “Conditions were not dangerous, as it was a dry as a bone.”

Source – Western Daily Press – 24 October 1983

CAVER HAULED 100ft TO SAFETY

Potholer Mr. Frank Norton was hauled 100 feet to safety after a caving accident near Wells yesterday.

Mr. Norton lost his footing on a ladder and fell 20 feet to the floor of Sludge Pit cave, in Priddy. He was caving with four friends from Radstock yesterday afternoon when he slipped and fell. None of the cavers are members of an established potholing club.

Mr. Norton, in his forties, was taken to Bath Royal United Hospital with a suspected broken leg and severe bruising.

Mr. Brian Prewer of the Mendip Cave Rescue team said last night: “He was lucky he was not at the top of the cave when he fell.

“We brought him to the surface with little problem. It was just one of those things — a simple accident which could happen to anyone.

“They were five people who just got together to go caving. Conditions were not dangerous, it was dry as a bone.”

Last night Mr. Norton was being treated in hospital.

31 October 1983 – Abandoned Car

Mr. Mercan Jefferies at Manor Farm, Charterhouse, reported to Wells Police that a mini car belonging to a caver had been parked in nearby Velvet Bottom since the weekend. He was concerned that the occupants might still be underground. Brian Prewer and Jim Hanwell set out to make a check of the car and possible caves around 4 p.m. They were stood down after the police contacted the car's owner in Wells. Apparently, the mini had broken down and was left to be picked up later.

12 November 1983 – St. Dunstan's Well Cave

Yeovil Police alerted Brian Prewer at 8:06 p.m. because a caver had been reported as stuck in the squeeze before the sump. He had been jammed for two hours by that time. Four well equipped and wet-suited cavers associated with Aberystwyth University went down the cave at about 5:45 p.m. In following the rest to the sump, 25-year-old Howard Davies inadvertently strayed off the main route and became firmly stuck by his hips in a bypass. He had attempted to descend a steeply inclined side rift head first. Fortunately, he could be approached from either end but there was little room to help. Mr. Roberts left the cave to raise the alarm.

Tim Large and Fiona Lewis were alerted and reached the Cerberus Cottage within ten minutes of the call out. Fred Davies arrived shortly afterwards. Other rescuers stood by at Priddy whilst Brian Prewer and Chris Batstone set out to establish a telephone line down the cave and a radio relay via Beacon Hill. Julie Wootton took messages near the entrance and Mike York was stationed on the road with a handset. Tim Large, Pete and Alison Moody, Tony Jarrett, Pete Hann, Dean Fenton, Catherine Howard and Bill Haynes carried in comforts and hauling gear.

They were unable to free Davies after assisting for over an hour. At 9:45 p.m. they requested hammers and chisels to open up the passage. As the patient was now delirious and complaining of going numb, it was decided to call in Dr. Peter Glanvill who knew the cave well. Dr. Don Thomson was also informed and stood by on the surface. Additional kit was taken underground by Glyn Bolt with Bob Lewis, Al Keen and Sarah Bishop. Fred Davies and others already underground set about clearing the gravel to enlarge the Domestos Bend squeeze.

At 11 p.m. after the patient had been firmly stuck for five hours and was distressed, a message came out that was interpreted as a warning that a carbon dioxide build-up could be a danger; also, that a rock drill would probably be necessary to open up the rift. Jim Hanwell and Rich West took along heavy hauling gear and further medical supplies and it was decided to request a compressor from the Fire Service to clear the air and provide drilling power. An appliance set out from Yeovil whilst Brian Workman and Dave Turner collected high pressure hose from N.H.A.S.A. The rescuers underground continued chiselling and reached a point where the patient's belt could be cut away.

Dr. Peter Glanvill entered the cave at 11:30 p.m. followed by Kevin Clarke and Edric Hobbs with more medical supplies. The persistence of those underground eventually paid off and Howard Davies was freed at 11:45 p.m. He was able to help himself even though being stuck fast for nearly six hours and despite getting into quite a state. All were out of the cave by 12:40

a.m. Apart from rather ugly "instant bedsores" around his hips, Howard Davies was in surprisingly good spirits and much appreciated the help he had received.

Source – Wells & Mendip Museum Archives – Letter of thanks from Howard Davies – 16 November 1983

Dear All,

On Saturday 12th November I stupidly got myself stuck near the terminal sump of St. Dunstan's Well Cave. After my three friends failed to pull me out, Patrick from Cerberus called out the M. R.O. The amazing short interval between call out (it even seemed quick to me stuck down there) and your arrival couldn't have been bettered by any one else and pays tribute to your degree of organisation.

By the time leading members of the M.R.O. reached me I was in considerable pain and showing it. However, everybody was calm and no effort was spared in reassuring me while you chiselled me free. I'd especially like to thank Alison Moody and Chris (Bill Haynes) who put up with my moaning and got rid of a hell of a lot of confining stal (sorry about the cave damage) from very confined positions. Of course I'd like to thank the Doc. and the Police and everyone else involved both underground and on the surface – as usual there was no shortage of volunteers. I'm really impressed that nobody showed they were pissed off with me even if they were – it's not much fun being dragged from the pub.

I'd like to donate what I've got left of my dole to the M.R.O. and in addition Aberystwyth Caving Club have had a whip-round. I'm sorry it couldn't have been more – it's definitely the best value for money I've ever had. In the future I'll think twice about going down a tight downhill squeeze head first.

I'll look forward to caving in the Mendips again and I'll be glad to buy anyone involved a pint. Thanks again.

Yours Sincerely, Howard Davies

P.S. Believe it or not Aberystwyth Caving Club is so obsessed with St. Dunstan's that it holds its A.G.M. on St. Dunstan's Day and one of us has a cat called Dunstan.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 9, pages 1259 to 1261

We arrived at Upper Pitts mid-morning to find a reasonable number of people beginning to paint the lounge. Mary Rands was up a tower scaffolding, working on the ceiling, while others were working on the walls and woodwork. After a brief discussion, I set off to Cornish's and bought some more paint, then returned, having a bit of car trouble on the return. We continued painting until lunchtime, when we had a good beery session with Mike York and Alfie at the Hunters'.

By about 5:30 most of the room had at least one coat paint. After a meal, we started the Committee Meeting. This went on until about 8:30 when Lynne took a phone call from Prew – a caver was stuck, head down, in a squeeze at the end of St. Dunstan's Well Cave.

The meeting was immediately adjourned. Glyn went to the Belfry to pick up gear, while the rest of us went to Fairy Cave Quarry, leaving Fred to get the Upper Pitts radio working (it had been taken off the wall during the decoration). Leaving Mike York at the road, Lynne, Ann and

I went to the cave to set up advance base with the Bantam radio. I crawled a distance into the cave, to meet Fred Davis emerging. In dry grotts I got as far as Domestos Bend. Pete and Alison quickly arrived and went on down; apparently Tim Large and a Cerberus member were already down, plus a female member of the original party.

Glyn arrived, ferrying gear in the Daihatsu before leaving it at the cave entrance with Julie in control of the radio. Later I abandoned the Bantam in view of its poor range.

As time went by (and we had a long wait) it transpired that, on getting stuck, the casualty's party had gone out of the cave for a hammer and chisel, spending two hours trying to chip him free before calling M.R.O. More cavers went in, to the end of the cave, while a telephone line was being laid. Another party went in to clear Demestos Bend and the entrance passage – as a result of which a large amount of spoil was deposited at the cave entrance.

Reports came through that the casualty was delirious, and going numb in the legs. Things started looking bad. A Doctor was sent for, and after a while Don Thompson arrived – but he was too large to get into the cave, so we had to wait for Pete Glanvill.

It looked like being a long job. Hammers and chisels were being used., but it was decided to arrange for a compressor and rock drills. N.H.A.S.A.'s compressor at Upper Pitts could not be towed as no-one had a suitable hitch. The Fire Brigade were called for, and eventually Dave Turner was located and the N.H.A.S.A. stock of compressor hose arrived. In the meantime, knives were going down the cave, to try and cut his clothing away.

All this while the surface party was standing around a slippery slope with a cold atmosphere and mild drizzle to cheer us up. We had run out of fags. A welcome arrival was a pot of tea from the Cerberus.

The arrival of the hoses was a welcome diversion, and we walked over to pick it up. On the way back, we were told that the casualty was out of the squeeze. They had cut his cell off, chipped a lot of rock away, and hauled him out by ropes tied to his legs. Once in a horizontal position, he was allowed to rest. We returned the hoses to the road, and went back to the cave to wait.

Before long, we were joined by the Hunters' Crowd (mainly B.E.C.) who had been standing by at John Hanwell's stag night barrel. Fortunately Edric Hobbs brought fags, and Jim Rands fags and beer. The phone report eventually came through that the casualty was on his way out. We loaded Glen's vehicle with the unwanted gear, until eventually, cavers started to come from the cave carrying gear. It seemed an age, but eventually the casualty himself emerged – a little shaky on the legs, and missing a gold crown. This was carried by one of the rescuers.

It did not take us long to get back to the road, and I hitched a life back to Upper Pitts with Jim Rands and two other cavers in Nigel Graham's ambulance.

We were welcomed at the H.Q. by hot soup, beer and fags. The place was a shambles, but we managed to find pews and natter about the events of the evening. Lyne and Fred, back at the hut had a trying time. With Barry's assistance, they only managed to re-wire the M.R.O. radio to let it receive, not send. Lyne also spent some time trying to keep guests at Upper Pitts on standby, and preventing them from parking in front of the compressor so it could be quickly removed, if necessary.

I was feeling a bit warmer by now, but pretty tired, so we drove back to Wells, and were in bed by 4 a.m.

13 November 1983 – Swildon's Hole

A party of Birmingham University Caving Club cavers used the Emergency Callout procedure to stop their friends staying at the M.C.G. Hut from calling out M.R.O. because they were overdue and had run out of petrol. In fact, it was 6:10 p.m. and they were supposed to be back by 7:00 p.m. All Brian Prewer had to do was to pass the message by telephoning the Stirrup Cup Cafe next door to the hut.

1984

Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year ending 31st December 1983

It is sad to start this report by recording the death of Dr. Bob Everton early in the year. He was mainly interested in cave archaeology and, although we did not see him much on Mendip in recent years, he willingly and immediately responded to any cave rescue when we needed him. His last two rescues were among the more noteworthy, being when Dudley Soffe was firmly stuck in Swildon's Hole in 1971 and when Richard Bainbridge was badly injured in Lamb Leer nearly ten years ago now.

Apart from the log of incidents that follows, there have been other events which seem to be a growing part of essential liaison work. Wardens have attended British Cave Rescue Council and South West of England Rescue Association meetings as far afield as Ripley, Derbyshire, and Exeter. More practically helpful was the successful B.C.R.C. weekend conference in Settle to which several wardens and our doctors went. On our own account, we ran a day conference of lectures, films and demonstrations for the Central Electricity Board at Exeter. Their emergency work on electricity supplies in open country during bad weather and in effluent pipes from power stations pose some common problems of interest.

Back on Mendip, we have given many illustrated lectures and demonstrations to groups such as the Mendip C.B. Club in Wells, the St. John's Ambulance members at Clutton and the District Fire Brigades at Glastonbury. These local links produce much good will and a modest revenue through donations. We were especially pleased to be invited to join the Police for their Weston-super-Mare Division Open Days in the summer. Hundreds of visitors and tourists saw our exhibition of photographs prepared by Rich West and Phil Romford and, so, were able to gain some insight into the self-help nature of cave rescue work. Further links with the Avon and Somerset Constabulary at their Bristol headquarters resulted in a visit to their Force Control and I am grateful for the active support of Chief Superintendent Wilson and Inspector H. Young there. Support Services keeps all divisions throughout both counties up-to-date with M.R.O. Callout details and this has proved to be very effective. All our rescue work these days relies upon such co-operation through understanding what each can do to help.

Audited annual accounts are given over page. They show a close balance of income against expenditure during a year in which we have deliberately kept equipment purchases to a minimum. The handsome surplus on hiring Nife cells through Brian Prewer deserves a special mention. It has become one way for newer and more distant groups to make contact with M.R.O. and so to fund cave rescue work through their own caving activities. There has been a much better response from rescued parties this year too. Established local clubs are the backbone of the Organisation, as ever. It is vital to have their support through rescue practices and pleasant fundraising occasions. Here I must pay particular thanks to the Bristol Exploration Club for waiving the former share of the Belfry telephone bill paid by M.R.O. since its

installation. Most of all, of course, we value the help of all experienced cavers on actual rescues. This report is written with them in mind.

J.D. Hanwell

10 January 1984 – Swildon's Hole

Pete Moody at Fountain Cottage reported that a car with caving kit had been parked on Priddy Green since the previous evening. He had seen the party going to Swildon's and clothes were still in the car. Brian requested the police to trace the owner's name and stood by Tim Large and Phil Romford at 8:10 a.m. to form search parties. Meanwhile, Martin Bishop reported overhearing a conversation in the Hunters' Lodge Inn the previous night that someone had inadvertently locked the keys of his car in prior to going down the cave and intended to return the following day with spare keys left at home. This person turned out to be the owner of the car. It is a pity that a clearer message had not been given.

The police, at Yeovil confirmed the above details five minutes later.

8 April 1984 – Cheddar Gorge

Source – MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – Incident Report

Brenda Prewer received an alert from Taunton Control for possible help for a young boy who had fallen and injured his head whilst scrambling with his father. Before she could pass the message to the Cliff Rescue Team, the police call was interrupted to say that the matter had been dealt with locally and that no further help would be necessary.

June 1984 – Lisdoonvarna

Source – U.B.S.S. Irish Diary 13 July 1984 (Entry by Oliver Lloyd)

News from Joe Keane. The M.R.O. rescue tackle was in use a few weeks ago. Big Momma, aged 12, the Keane's favourite cow, got stuck in a marsh, while trying to find water during the drought. The M.R.O. rope was used to pull her out – successfully. Another triumph for the M.R.O.

15 July 1984 – Swildon's Hole

Four Scouts from Hertfordshire entered the cave at 3 p.m. for a trip to Sump One. They hoped to be out by 6:45 p.m. and had left two people on the surface as a check. When they had not re-appeared by 8:30 p.m., one of the surface party raised the alarm. Brian Prewer got the call from Yeovil Police straight away. On reaching the informant at the Priddy Green call-box he discovered that the party only had a sketchy knowledge of the Upper Series. Soon afterwards, one of the cavers emerged to say that the remaining three were lost and lightless. He was now too tired to return and give assistance.

Tony Jarrett, Alison Moody and Dave Pike went down the cave at 8:55 p.m. and found the waiting trio in the Water Chamber without lights. They had been unable to find their way out because there was no stream to follow!

A delay in the callout occurred due to confusion over the telephone number (Priddy Call Box) - two digits had been reversed - by the police as it turned out.

19 July 1984 – Fairy Cave Quarry

An enquiry was received from Yeovil Police concerning a parked car containing caving equipment at the Cerberus Speleological Society cottage. It had been there over a week and they had been unable to locate the owner at his home. Police enquiries had established that the car belonged to a Mr. Hugh Mackay. They were unable to contact Mr. Mackay at home.

BEP contacted Liz Price. The problem was quickly resolved. Mr. Mackay had sustained a dislocated shoulder at recent festivities at the Wessex Cave Club. He had been unable to drive home or to collect his car from the cottage. Police informed, matter closed.

Summer 1984 – Goatchurch Cavern

Source – Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year ending 31st December 1984 (Jim Hanwell)

A novice caver did sustain a badly-broken ankle in Goatchurch Cavern last Summer, in fact, but experienced cavers on the spot helped him out and to hospital without calling out M.R.O.

19 August 1984 – Swildon's Hole

Miss J. Edwards in Evesham contacted the police at 11:10 a.m. because her brother, Paul, had not reported having completed a trip down a cave. She was under the impression that he had gone caving the previous evening and that she was to raise the alarm if he failed to phone back at 10 a.m. on the Sunday. Brian Prewer experienced frustrating delays in gaining more information about the party because Miss Edwards had gone to the local shop! It was eventually deduced that the cave was Swildon's because of notes left at home which mentioned Blue Pencil and Double Trouble. Although also uncertain of her facts, Miss Edwards thought that there were four in the party, that they could be using carbide lamps and that they had travelled by train.

On making enquiries, cavers at the Belfry reported passing a group at about 10 p.m. the previous evening who had asked them if Sumps 2 and 3 were ducks.

Searches of local barns and campsites were undertaken whilst Tim Large and Stewart McManus formed a party to check Blue Pencil and Double Trouble. They entered the cave at mid-day and caught up a group of divers including Chris Batstone so that a check of the streamway to Swildon's Six could be made.

Tony Jarrett and Brian Prewer established a surface control on Priddy Green. At about 1 p.m. Brian approached a group of cavers just out of the cave and asked them if they were from Evesham. They said not and had gone down the cave at 8:30 a.m. as far as Sump 2. After further questioning and an explanation of the incident, one of the party said that, just by coincidence, he lived in Evesham. His name was Paul Edwards and he had arranged to phone his sister at 10 p.m. on the Sunday! Moreover, they had passed Tim Large's search party and, when asked if they had been in the cave since the previous evening, they had replied that they had started their trip that morning. Tim learned about this after a fruitless Round Trip when he surfaced later in the afternoon. So, ended a hot summer afternoon's saga bordering on farce.

The serious side to this incident is the source of the misunderstanding. More precise information must be given to local cavers rather than distant relatives with no knowledge of caving.

25 October 1984 – Bleadon Hill Caves

Weston-super-Mare Police called Brian Prewer at 8:55 a.m. They had been looking for a missing person whom had probably attempted suicide after abandoning a car on Bleadon Hill the previous day. This person regularly walked the area and knew it well, but was not a caver.

A search of local caves and rock shelters was requested. Brian met Jim Hanwell and they called out a small search party with particular knowledge of the unfrequented caves on the hill. All met at the police control by mid-day.

Chris Richards led a party with Chris Bradshaw and Greg Villis to check nearby Bleadon and Hutton caves whilst Russell Clarke guided Brian Prewer and Jim Hanwell to Canada Combe Rock Shelter and Tinkler's Cave [*should read Tinker's Cave*]. Nothing was found at these sites. On reporting, back to the control at 1:30 p.m., news was received that a body had been located by search dogs in thickets across the hilltop from where the car had been abandoned.

3 November 1984 – Swildon's Hole

Alison Moody at Fountain Cottage reported that a car with clothes in had been on Priddy Green since about 1 a.m. so that those concerned must have been underground for at least ten hours. Brian went to check at about 11 a.m. and happened to meet P.C. Brice passing by. The car was quickly traced to an address in Brighton and the residents there were contacted by telephone. They explained that a Mr. Lush from a local Scout group was on a sponsored sit-in for 30 hours in the cave and was not expected out until mid-day on 4th November. No-one appears to have been told on Mendip. Two search parties raised were then stood down. This easily avoidable incident caused a great deal of trouble.

5 December 1984 – Swildon's Hole

Barry Warton took Karen Crouch to Sump 1 during the evening. She became tired on the return journey and could not climb the Twenty Foot ladder. Warton was unable to assist her on his own, so she was made comfortable in a poly bag whilst he left the cave to summon help. A party comprising Tim Large, Trevor Hughes, Jeff Price, Al Mills, Bob Drake and Kevin Gannon went down the cave at 11:15 p.m. with hauling gear. Another party was stood by and the police informed of the incident by Brian Prewer. A surface control was established with Dany Bradshaw on Priddy Green. All were safely out of the cave by 12:15 a.m., and Karen Crouch had been simply too exhausted by the relatively high-water conditions.

Source – BEC Log Book 1983, page 57

Tim Large, Trevor Hughes, Jeff Price, Bob Drake, Al Mills + one other. To haul young lady up 20 as unable to climb it. Was caving with Barry Wharton. Cave very wet. 1½ hours.

8 December 1984 – Manor Farm Swallet

Brian Prewer was called by Mr. Mercan Jefferies because of his concern for the safety of a party of three whom he thought to have been underground for over five hours. It was now 1:40 a.m. He had also reported details of the car used to the police at Yeovil. Brian requested the police to contact the owner's home to see if anyone could help with further details. The wife of the caver concerned was then telephoned and she explained that her husband was a 'potholing instructor' and was taking a few friends down for the first time. He had not left Bristol until after 11 p.m. and was not expected to report back until 3 a.m. with his friends. It was decided to wait until 3 a.m. before raising a search party, particularly in view of the uncertainty as to the time of decent. It appears that Mr. Jefferies mistook the time that the party went

underground because it was very late at night; in fact, they surfaced on time at 2:58 a.m. and no further action was taken.

17 December 1984 – Swildon's Hole

A party from Cheltenham led by D. Gluck went down the cave at 1 p.m. They chose to use a knotted rope on the Twenty Foot pitch in preference to a ladder! On the way back, Alan Pugh was unable to climb the rope and the rest of the party was too tired to haul him up. Gluck left the cave and called the police from Soloman Combe Farm. Brian Prewer received details with Fred Davies at 7:25 p.m. They alerted a party of Frome Caving Club members already at Priddy, and Dany Bradshaw took charge of the hauling party. Tim Large established a surface control with Pete and Alison Moody whilst Fred Davies, Brian Workman and Brian Prewer stayed in touch in case needed. Once a ladder had been hung on the pitch, Alan Pugh was able to climb on a tight line. He had been dressed in a sleeveless wetsuit and sweatshirts despite a planned trip to Sump 2 and a not-so-planned look around St. Paul's where he had tried to dive the first sump mistaking it for the Mud Sump. His arms had become very cold and tired as a result.

1985

Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year ending 31st December 1984

Despite obvious increases in the numbers caving on Mendip, it is good to record a decline in call-outs this year; even better, that we have not been asked to help anyone injured underground. A novice caver did sustain a badly-broken ankle in Goatchurch Cavern last Summer, in fact, but experienced cavers on the spot helped him out and to hospital without calling out M.R.O. My accompanying log of incidents shows that several of the calls attended were really unnecessary and more attributable to thoughtlessness than anything else. Failure to leave satisfactory messages about trips may cause us to stand-by cavers and equipment exactly as for genuine accidents. Being prepared and getting ready aptly sum up 1984.

Dr. Oliver Lloyd has reported that the recue gear set up by us for visitors to County Clare, Ireland, many years ago is in good order. A novel and useful practical session in dealing with patients with bad fractures and injuries was made uncannily real by members of the local Casualty Union. We thank John Hill for this experience. Another stimulating occasion on First-Aid was run by Dr. Andrew Nash, one of our Medical Wardens.

We are grateful to the Chief Fire Officer for Somerset, Mr. Nigel Musselwhite, and his colleagues for many valuable and reassuring meetings during the year. A tour of flood-prone swallets took place in January and was followed by a joint exercise in the Spring at St. Cuthbert's Swallet. A simulated flood rescue was set up with help from the B.E.C. and dealt with by fireman from Wells. In November we took several officers down Swildon's Hole under high water conditions to see the other end of the problem, and visited the Cheddar Station with friends there to look over the brigade's new rescue vehicle. This will travel overland and is fitted with outlets to which our compressed-air tools can be connected via standard hoses. We are pleased to have been consulted over the provision of this facility on the vehicle.

In September, we demonstrated hauling techniques using S.R.T. systems at public displays with the Police in Wells. The scaffolding erected by Fred Davies and several wardens was no less impressive. We also manned a pictorial display which describes what M.R.O. undertakes. This now has a professional impact as a result of much hard work by Jeni Sandercott with Helen Prewer and Philip Underwood. In fact, two versions were in use simultaneously at Wells and at

the Mountain Rescue Committee National Conference in Exeter. The latter was organised by Rich West and Phil Romford whilst Jeff Price and Bob Drake kindly displayed the Kirby Morgan sump rescue equipment to interested people at the Conference.

The following accounts show a close balance between income and essential expenditure yet again. The former owes much to Brian Prewer's hiring of Nife cells, to Tim Large's initiative in setting up collection boxes and to Nigel Taylor's Christmas raffles at the Hunters' Lodge Inn. In other words, M.R.O. is doing a lot to generate funds as well as organise rescues. We do not intend to seek grants or go outside the caving community for funds; nor can we imagine Mendip caving getting into the sad situation indicated by the following Press report in the Daily Mail. It must not happen here!

Jim Hanwell, Hon. Secretary & Treasurer

1 May 1985 – Gough's Cave

A boisterous party went into the main show-cave early in the afternoon. Unnoticed, one young man left and crawled into the low dig off the tourist route at Heartbreak Hill. The rest did not appreciate he was missing until they came out of the cave. They were challenged by the cave guides as to what had happened but they did not appear to know. The police were informed and a search of the system was undertaken. Eventually, the tourist was found lying apparently unconscious near the end of the dig.

He could not be moved or roused. It was thought that he might be suffering from a medical illness. Brian Prewer was contacted by the police at Taunton at 3:15 p.m. A hauling party comprising Brian Prewer, Greg Villis, Tim Large, Dany Bradshaw, Brian Workman, and Jim Hanwell was raised. By the time they arrived however, the cave staff had solved the problem. The drunk had collected enough of his wits to realise that helping himself out was preferable to being hauled. The police took him away for questioning. Afterwards, they contacted M.R.O. to enquire whether those alerted wished to recover any costs. We did not, of course, because cavers volunteer their services regardless of the nature of the call; even unconventional ones.

Source – Western Daily Press – 2 May 1985

SHEEPISH CAVE MAN SLEEPS IT OFF

A visitor with a king-sized hangover caused a major alert in Cheddar's famous show caves yesterday. Police and a cave rescue team were called to help extricate him from a tunnel which is not normally open to the public, but the operation was called off when he woke up and sheepishly crawled out unaided. Caves education officer, Chris Bradshaw said later the man in his twenties, told staff he had had a few pints too many to drink at lunch time, and wanted to sleep it off. The alarm was sounded after he was spotted in the blocked-out section of Gough's Cave and a guide failed to rouse him. Mr. Bradshaw said: "We decided to inform the police, and they called the cave's rescue team. The last we saw of him, he was staggering down the Gorge, with a large gentleman in blue on either side."

5 May 1985 – St. Cuthbert's Swallet

During the laying of fire hose down the cave for the B.C.R.C. Conference pumping-out of Sump Two, an experienced caver fell head-long from the Second Ledge Pitch. Although wearing a helmet with a chin-strap this was lost during the fall and the person concerned was lucky to escape with only facial injuries, a cut scalp and mild concussion. He was given First Aid by

M.R.O. Wardens already underground and helped to the surface. Brian Prewer stood-by other hauling parties at Upper Pitts and informed the police that the rescue was well in hand. The injured caver was out of the cave within about 80 minutes and taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary for treatment.

6 June 1985 – Eastwater Cavern

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Books – Volume 3, Page 102

Mark Lumley, Snablet, Bob Lewis, Mike York, Rosella, Pete Watts, Geoff Newton

Unofficially called out whilst practicing S.R.T. on a tree near the Belfry! Geoff Newton had entered the squeeze to Primrose Pot and got jammed solidly by his lamp. Mark, Snablet and I went down to assist but Bob Lewis and Co. were already there and Pete watts had succeeded in cutting Geoff's belt. With some concentrated heaving and a lot of struggling by Geoff he eventually managed to get out. We then helped detackle the cave.

9 June 1985 – Little Neath River Cave

A school party taken down the cave was endangered by floods. The South Wales Cave Rescue Organisation requested us to stand-by divers and our sump rescue apparatus. Bob Cork, Rob Harper and Bob Drake were contacted; but in the event, the problem was dealt with successfully by those on the spot.

4 August 1985 – Swildon's Hole

The late Oliver Lloyd's birthday celebrations planned to take place in the Old Grotto were cancelled since it was quite clear that the persistent heavy rain raking Mendip would lead to the entrance being flooded early in the afternoon. It did.



Swildon's Entrance in flood - Dave Irwin collection date unknown

This danger was not apparently noticed by other parties. Several members of the Gosport Caving Club went down the cave at about 11:15a.m. They split into two groups underground, with Dave and John Monk leading each party. The one going below the Twenty Foot Pot included Mrs. Toni New, aged 21, and her husband. Mrs. New was on her first caving trip and had borrowed a two-piece wet-suit. She became cold and exhausted. Attempts to haul her up the pitch some two hours later were abandoned because she kept being swept away off the landing by rising water. Some of the party left the cave to raise the alarm at about 3 p.m.

Fred Davies received the call from Yeovil Police and alerted Jim Hanwell at Upper Pitts with the Wessex Cave Club and several members of the U.B.S.S. Whilst Jim Hanwell collected comforts boxes, hot-air and hauling gear, Pete Hann, Richard Warman and other Wessex and U.B.S.S. cavers went underground to help. Toni New was reported to be “in a state” by her husband, so additional parties including Tony Jarrett, Pat Cronin, Martin Grass and Ray Mansfield entered the cave at 3:30 p.m. followed shortly afterwards by Fred Davies, Brian Workman, Ian Beal and Paul Baxter. Dave Turner maintained a watch on water levels at the cave entrance, and a radio contact was established to Priddy Green.

Toni New was hauled up the pitch at about 3:45 p.m. and encouraged to help herself out of the cave. Other parties were still underground and, with water levels still critical at 4 p.m., Richard West and Brian Prewer joined Jim Hanwell at Priddy, and Bristol Waterworks were requested to start their pumps upstream to stem the flow as much as possible. Other groups were advised not to go down the cave owing to the obvious flood risk. Fred Davies and Brian Workman scoured the cave to Sump One to tell those still underground. The cave was finally cleared by 6 p.m. and the entrance flooded once more later that evening.

Oliver seems to have had the last laugh on the day!

Source – The Guardian – 5 August 1985

DEEPEST RESPECTS FOR A POTHOLER

For a wake, the material of the mourners’ clothes was a little unconventional: clinging neoprene rubber, although its colour was the normal sombre black.

But then yesterday’s commemoration of the life of Oliver Lloyd, lately of the University of Bristol, was held in near flood conditions deep inside the Mendip cave of Swildon’s Hole. Wetsuits were *de rigueur*.

Dr. Lloyd, who died in May, was secretary of the Cave Diving Group and editor of its newsletter. He would have been 74 yesterday, and nearly 100 friends deprived of a religious funeral by his family’s atheistic principles gathered in the same spot where he had celebrated his 50th, 60th and 70th birthdays.

Before the descent alcohol was consumed in the Hunter’s Lodge at Priddy, along the favoured location for the planning of Mendip caving trips.

Some, alarmed at the high and rising water levels underground, withdrew at this point. The organiser, Mr. Chris Hawkins, said they would hold “a geriatric wake on the surface.”

The bolder spirits continued, dampened by the powerful stream, careful to avoid breaking bottles of wine in the steeply descending narrow passage between the old grotto and the

entrance, a concrete pillbox over a manhole cover.

They were not far inside when they came upon other friends, hurrying with the urgency that only an underground rescue operation can lend.

A young woman on her first caving trip had become cold and exhausted at the foot of a 20 foot drop negotiated by a flimsy steel wire ladder and was unable to climb out. She had not, it is understood, been impressed by her companions' attempts at encouragement when they reached the second verse of "Ilkley Moor Baht 'at." (The one that begins: "Thou's going to catch thy death of cold...")

As cave rescues go, it was a minor affair and the girl was soon brought to safety. But the underground wake was badly spoilt. Dr. Lloyd, for many years a mainstay of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, would have appreciated the irony.

The commemoration continued on the surface in the cosy recesses of the Wessex Cave Club cottage. "It hasn't been completely spoilt," Mr. Hawkes said, "We're all drunk and thought of Oliver quite happily. We're wet on the inside and that's the main thing at a wake, isn't it?"

Source – Wells Journal – 8 August 1985

A torrential downpour on Sunday washed out plans for a light-hearted tribute to caving enthusiast Dr. Oliver Lloyd, who died this year aged 73. Friends of pathology lecturer Dr. Lloyd planned a wake, 500 feet underground in Swildon's Hole near Priddy. More than 100 cavers had intended to descend into the cave with bottles of wine and an assortment of cakes to celebrate in a way Dr. Lloyd would undoubtedly appreciate. For he held parties in Swildon's Cave on his 50th and 60th birthdays and insisted his guests wore full caving gear, including wet suits and helmets, while tucking into the birthday cake. But the zany tribute had to be cancelled when the team of cavers, led by Chris Hawkes of Westbury-sub-Mendip, arrived at the Swildon's Hole to find a raging torrent. After sampling the cake and a few glasses of wine at the cave entrance they retreated to the Wessex Cave Club in Priddy to celebrate with some more of Dr. Lloyd's friends. It wasn't long though before their services were required in Swildon's Hole to rescue a misguided caver who had decided to brave the conditions. The Mendip Cave Rescue team were alerted when a group of potholers from Hampshire got into difficulties in the cave. The group were returning to the surface when they discovered the sudden heavy rain had turned a small stream into a swollen underground river. Mrs. Toni New, saturated, cold and exhausted was stranded at the base of a 20-foot rock face. She was hauled to safety by the rescue team led by Jim Hanwell with help from members of Priddy's Wessex Caving Club. The cavers who had organised the wake tribute to Dr. Lloyd, who was a member of the Cave Diving Club of Great Britain, were not too disappointed the underground tribute had to be cancelled. "He was an extraordinary man and would doubtless have appreciated the gesture of a memorial party, but we still had plenty of time to reminisce," said one of the organisers.

17 August 1985 – Cheddar Gorge



A young lad scrambling up the cliffs slipped and hurt his leg. He was on a track easily accessible from the road and was helped down by the police and an ambulance crew. We were asked to stand-by the Cheddar Gorge Cliff Rescue Team in case further help was needed.

September 1985 – Swildon’s Hole

Source – Ian Mildon’s Log Book

Five male cavers from a Bristol aircraft factory, four aged between 28 and 34 and an apprentice aged 19, newish although competent at caving.

The apprentice had a girlfriend called Lara, There, was also a system on the aircraft we all worked on called L.A.R.A (Low altitude radar altimeter). So, it was a joke that Lara was part of the aircraft.

In August that year the aircraft system was modified to C.A.R.A (Combined altitude radar altimeter) we started referring to the apprentice’s girlfriend as Cara to which he got annoyed. Here’s the moral, Do Not Wind People Up.

On our trip to sump one, we started winding the apprentice up, so every time we mentioned C.A.R.A he bit, this carried on down to the sump and back to the twenty. He was second up the ladder and just stormed off. (You cannot blame him).

We thought he would be waiting at the entrance. No!

Well he has gone bank to the barn. Not There!

Maybe he’s changed and gone to the pub, so we change and guess what he was not at the pub. Consensus was he is still in the cave, we change back into our caving kit and re-enter the cave, we knew he was above the ladder, so we started a search of the dry ways. There he was sitting patiently at the top corner of the Long Dry Way having followed the route into the dry ways from the Water Chamber, which is easily done. He got lost and decided to wait for our assistance. He trusted we would return.

Down side we missed our pint that night. Up Side we had many more leg pulls about getting lost.

19 October 1985 – Cheddar Gorge

A climber fell from a route on the Pinnacles. His fall was broken by trees but he broke an ankle and sustained slight head injuries. Several cavers went to assist the Avon Gorge Rescue Team in lowering the climber to safety. Others stood by at Priddy, but were not needed.

Source – Western Daily Press – 21 October 1985

A climber was recovering in hospital yesterday after plunging 60 feet onto a narrow ledge high up in Cheddar Gorge. Michael Pinney, aged 34, of Chestnut Drive, Yeovil, fell when the two metal spikes holding his safety rope came adrift. But his fall was broken by the branches of a tree and he crashed onto a ledge about 30 feet above the road running through the gorge. Last night police praised cliff rescue experts for saving his life in a four-hour operation. The accident happened at one of the most difficult sections of the gorge where limestone crags known as The Pinnacles soar 650 feet above Horseshoe Bend. Cheddar team leader Mr. Duncan Massey, from

Radstock, first climbed up the vertical face of the rocks to locate Mr. Pinney. After a long and dangerous climb, he discovered he could not reach the spot from below. Mr. Massey then decided to lead rescuers from the top of the gorge, but they had to make several attempts before being able to abseil down to the ledge. They found Mr. Pinney semiconscious. With the help of colleagues Dave Tranter and Peter Bees, Mr. Massey strapped him to a special rigid stretcher. The team then began the hazardous task of getting down. At one stage a doctor clambered up to meet them so that the victim's condition could be checked. Yesterday a spokesman at Weston- super-Mare General Hospital said Mr. Pinney was suffering from a broken ankle, slight head injuries and cuts.

20 October 1985 – Swildon's Hole

Christopher Downs, a student at Lanchester Polytechnic, Coventry, became firmly stuck by his clothing in the tight rift above the Showerbath in the Upper Series. He could not be budged by his friends and so M.R.O. was alerted through Brian Prewer at 4:34 p.m.

Tony Jarrett, Phil Romford, Richard West and Dany Bradshaw went to help, and the stuck caver was gradually freed by brute force and some juggling of the snagged clothes. All were out the cave within the hour.

29 October 1985 – Swildon's Hole

A party of three cavers from Nailsea, near Bristol, went to explore the Upper Series at about 8 p.m. on Sunday 28th. They left details of their trip with a friend with instructions to contact the police if they had not returned later that evening. When they had failed to do so by 2 a.m. the following morning, the friend did as he was told.

The car used by the cavers was not at Priddy and so Brian Prewer suggested that the local police went to the home of the leader in Nailsea to check. He was found safely in bed! The arrangement appears to have broken down owing to a misunderstanding and an incorrect telephone number.

8 November 1985 – Swildon's Hole

A party of cavers from Bristol had done a late-night trip down the cave, coming out at about 1 a.m. They were rightly concerned on finding an old broken ladder and doubled lifeline still belayed to the Twenty Foot Pitch, and M.R.O. was alerted for a presumed missing party. As it was known that this tackle had been there for some while, through other reports, no action was taken immediately.

That evening Brian Prewer and Jim Hanwell went down the cave to remove the abandoned ladder. They also recovered its tape belay, a double life-line and a handline that had been left on the eight-foot climb at the bottom of the old Forty-Foot. Why on earth should such tackle be left behind?

27 December 1985 – Rod's Pot

At 6:55 p.m. the police contacted Brian Prewer because the mother of a young caver on a trip down the cave that afternoon had expected him to be home by 6 p.m. Before a search could be started for the car being used, the son returned about an hour late, having been delayed. Search parties were stood down straight away.

1986

**Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O.
for the Year ending 31st December 1985**

It is always good to report few cave rescue incidents. Details of the ten call-outs follow this review of the year. In other respects the year was memorable for the British Cave Rescue Council Conference held on Mendip in May. A special report for the record is given separately.

Sadly it was Oliver Lloyd's last time with cavers and the rescue organisation he had nurtured throughout the fifties and sixties. He left us in style, having launched the Conference weekend at the Hunters' Lodge Inn. My own tribute to Oliver has already been published in a B.C.R.C. Newsletter. He would want us to look ahead and not dwell on the past; but, this has been rather difficult at a time when the Bristol Exploration Club celebrated its Fiftieth jubilee and there was a reunion of pioneer cave divers at Wookey Hole Cave to commemorate the first dives in 1935.

The support given to cave rescue work by Mendip cavers is as strong as ever. We also enjoy close links with the people who live and work on Mendip, which is particularly important to M.R.O. Without such a relationship there would be no access across fields to cave entrances and digs. Nor could we expect so much help during emergencies when land-owners are invariably put to a lot of trouble. What a shame it is when people don't bother to understand, or even disregard, the consequences of souring such relationships. M.R.O.'s voluntary work would be more difficult if caving became by contract rather than by courtesy.

One example of a common sense tradition that could be at risk if caving was to become more formalised is M.R.O.'s principle of cavers standing on their own feet both practically and financially. We do not go round, cap in hand, for grants and other forms of sponsorship. So, I am pleased to report that the B.C.R.C. Conference almost paid for itself thanks to everyone's support. Also that we have been able to keep equipment up-to-date and still have a healthy reserve of funds for future projects. Audited accounts follow, and I would like to thank Richard Chant who does this professional task for us each year particularly since he is not a caver.

We thank the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset, Mr. Ronald Broome, for his active support on the Association of Chief Police officers regarding Search and Rescue radios. Our own system is now covered without having to pay an annual licence fee. Through Bob Whitaker, a good friend and caver in the Wessex Water Authority, we have been able to update our radios, and the Mendip Citizens Band Radio Club donated us other sets after a special fund-raising effort on behalf of cave rescue work in the area. We thank all concerned and let them know that their help has meant significant improvements in our response to call-outs, and communications while incidents last. Our own wardens' technical expertise with such equipment explains why M.R.O. is so well ahead of many other rescue teams in this field; a further example of the self-help approach. Yet another is Barrie Wilton's kindness in providing M.R.O. with headed notepaper, which was a boon when writing to all concerned about the B.C.R.C. Conference, and so on.

Over the weekend of September 27 / 28th 1986, M.R.O. intends to celebrate its own Fiftieth Jubilee. There will be fun and games of course, and we hope to stage some purposeful activities in support of cave exploration and rescue work on Mendip. We hope to see you all there.

Jim Hanwell, Hon. Secretary and Treasurer

1 January 1986 – Thrupe Lane Swallet

Will Edwards contacted Brian Prewer direct from Butts Farm because he was concerned for the safety of an overdue party that had entered the cave at mid-day and should have been out at 4 p.m. It was 5:15 p.m. and very heavy rain had caused the main swallet to pond up. Some of the steeper banks had collapsed. Parties were alerted at Priddy and the police informed of the situation.

A party from the Wessex Cave Club led by Jeff Price arrived at Thrupe Lane within twenty minutes. At 5:45 p.m. the overdue party surfaced safely. They had not experienced any difficulties. Even Cowsh Crawl had not sumped or silted.

11 January 1986 – Longwood Swallet

Brian Prewer was contacted by Yeovil Police at 2 p.m. They had been informed by Kathy Bonnick, who had been with an Imperial College Caving Club party down Longwood Swallet, that her group had chanced across an incident underground within minutes of its occurrence. A 16-year old on a trip organised by Greater London South Caving Committee, had fallen when a boulder collapsed in the rift leaving the bottom of the Main Chamber. He had been pinned by the chest, and although extricated and resuscitated, had not regained consciousness. The worst was feared. Brian was unable to talk to the informant direct because she had been calling from another residence in the Charterhouse area rather than from Mr. Trim's at Longwood Grange. The people at this unknown place had not wanted to be bothered further!

John Dukes and Trevor Hughes were alerted at Priddy. Jim Hanwell was then called at 2:07 p.m. and set off to organise everything there. All three arrived at Longwood at 2:30 p.m. It was appreciated that a lot of cavers would still be underground and that it would be difficult to contact rescuers at that time of day. Mr. & Mrs. Trim kindly allowed the control to be set up in Longwood Grange yard. They also provided hospitality throughout and did much to comfort those directly concerned in the original parties. P.C. Terry Coopey was also on the scene at this stage, Inspector Milton from Taunton arrived a little later as the senior police Officer on site. Bristol Waterworks maintenance men were already at the pumping works. Although the stream was high, it presented no danger to those underground or to the rescue work; nevertheless, in view of the serious nature of the incident and the long time that the rescue was likely to take, Paul Hodge, BWW Sources Engineer, was advised. He came straightaway and remained for several hours, until all danger from higher stream flows had passed.

Greater London South Caving Committee had organised a weekend's caving activities on Mendip. Their County Advisor for caving, David Hatton, was with the group. They were staying at Wookey village Church Hall. All were well-equipped and suitably experienced for the trip planned. Cave keys and Charterhouse Caving Committee permits had been obtained in the approved way. Their plans were straightforward and sensible: Whilst one half of the party were led by Dave Hatton down Rhino Rift nearby to train with SRT methods, the remaining four were taken down Longwood Swallet by Paul Wootton at about mid-day. The latter were Sebastian Prince, Clive Jarvis, David Weaver and Attila Kurucz. Attila was keen on caving: he had been down the cave once before and was well equipped, having just acquired his own wet-suit. The party had decided to descend Longwood series only; a passage not much over 1000 feet long and no more than 200 feet deep. The series does not carry the main stream but is extremely constricted in places, notably the tight Bedding Plane squeeze and awkward Shunting Yard nearer the entrance shaft. Paul Wootton's party reached the Main Chamber at about 1 p.m., then set out to explore the Wet Way passages at the bottom of the Longwood series. Whilst climbing into this passage on his back and facing upwards, Atilla dislodged a large boulder and fell some 5 feet with it pinned to his chest. It took all the remaining four to lift the boulder off

the trapped caver, a difficult task which took several minutes. They assessed the injuries and began AR and ECM immediately. No pulse or breathing could be detected, however. At about that time, Malcolm Barr, Chris Birkhead and Kathy Bonnick in a separate Imperial College party arrived from the more distant August Hole series. Whilst Malcolm Barr, a graduate, stayed to assist Sebastian Prince and Clive Jarvis with Atilla, the others joined forces to surface and raise the alarm. This was done within the hour, following all the correct procedures.

Dr. Donald Thomson arrived at 3:30 p.m. and remained at the entrance throughout the rescue. Jim Hanwell, Richard West and John Dukes controlled and marshalled traffic at Longwood Grange - a task made more difficult by cars following the Mendip Hunt whilst they chased through part of the wood and nature reserve. Eric Dunford established radio contact by mast but experienced problems because of the deep valley until he took to the high ground. Trevor Hughes and Alan Taylor went down the cave with drag sheet and hauling gear. Trevor would assess and deal with Atilla whilst Alan would return with verbatim news. He would also persuade Sebastian Prince and Clive Jarvis, of the original party, to return with him. It was understood that Malcolm Barr was a First-Aider and was likely to stay to help. He did, splendidly. Further carrying parties were alerted and Brian Prewer arrived with Tony Church to lay a telephone line throughout the cave. Lucy Workman manned the surface link by radio to Jim Hanwell and Richard West.

At about 3:30 p.m. Jim Smart entered the cave with the Mager carrying-sheet, followed by Brian Workman, Aubrey Newport, Peter Watts and Mike McDonald. They would start the hauling. Relief teams were stood by at the Belfry and Upper Pitts by telephone from Longwood Grange to avoid radio "leaks" as to what had happened. Until more details were known, it was considered that the presence of the media would be unhelpful. Their time would come in due course.

Good progress was made hauling Atilla up the Main Chamber Pitch and the rifts above. Another party comprising Tony Jarratt, Fred Felstead, Tim Barnard John Chew, Howard Price, Jeff Price, Graham Price, Lawrence Smith and Jerry Breakspear left at 4:50 p.m. A complete changeover took place after the Showerbath Chamber below the short drops. The first party surfaced between 6:00 to 6:30 p.m.

Little difficulty was experienced in the hauling through the extremely tight passages at the head of the short drops. The Bedding Plane Squeeze, however, proved a severe problem as anticipated. Over two hours were spent in attempts to pass it. Another change-over of haulers took place at around 8:30 p.m. They were advised to cut away and remove excess covering and clothing if needs be. The party consisted of John Cooper, Richard Acton, Kevin Gannon, Peter Morgan, Martin Buckley and Andy Summerskill. As further hauling parties would be unable to pass each other in the constricted entrance passages, another relief team was called to take over when the squeeze had been passed. This party, comprising Tim Large, Phil Romford, Dave Gill and Des Marshall stood by at 9:15 p.m. Fred Davies arrived at this time. Threading Atilla through the Bedding Plane Squeeze and Shunting Yard took a full three hours and proved to be the crux of the haul out.

The hauling teams reached the bottom of the entrance shaft at 9:24 p.m. and surfaced with Atilla at 9:55 p.m. Dr. Donald Thomson confirmed that Atilla Kurucz was dead and, after formal identification, the incident concluded at 10:05 p.m.

Throughout most of the rescue, representatives of television and radio were present, and were advised by Inspector John Milton and Jim Hanwell of what was happening. Reports were confined to essential facts of course, but this aspect of long rescues is difficult enough on site

and out of control once on news editors' desks. We need time to get information together, whilst they are in a hurry to meet deadlines. Subsequent reports in the Press were factual and fair because of the trouble taken on the night. Detailed statements were taken from all directly concerned, especially from Trevor Hughes since he was the first rescuer to arrive and assess what had to be done. Richard West attended the Inquest at Taunton on Thursday 26th March and represented M.R.O. This was understandably both painstaking and painful to Atilla's parents who were present. The Post Mortem found that death had been the result of asphyxia caused by the boulder compressing the chest. No bones were broken. The conduct of the party was praised by the Coroner, and a verdict of Accidental Death recorded.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 3, page 112

Digging and the investigation of a discovery in Eastwater Cavern was interrupted when a shout from Howard, who had left the cave earlier, to say that a rescue was in operation and we were to come out and stand by at the Belfry.

It transpired that a 16-year-old lad had been hit by a boulder at the bottom of Longwood Main Chamber and was presumed dead. We stood by for an hour or so then were called out and entered the cave at 5 p.m. to relieve one of the hauling parties. On arrival at the 10 foot climbs we met the hauling teams and victim and were given the job of going on down to the Main Chamber to collect all the M.R.O. kit which was lying about. Conditions were very wet and sporting. Back at the top of the 10 foot climbs the lads were having great problems getting the body through the low squeezes. I assisted them for a short while before heading out as was beginning to feel the strain. I then acted as liaison man at the entrance rift. A fresh team of Wessex lads eventually got the body through the squeezes and out of the cave by around 9:30 p.m. A very sad episode.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 21 (1985 to 1986), page 82

Longwood rescue – Quote Fred Falsted “I wasn't too big for the squeeze – my wet suit was.”

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 13 January 1986

VENTURE SCOUT KILLED IN CAVE FALL

RESCUE TEAM TOILS IN VAIN

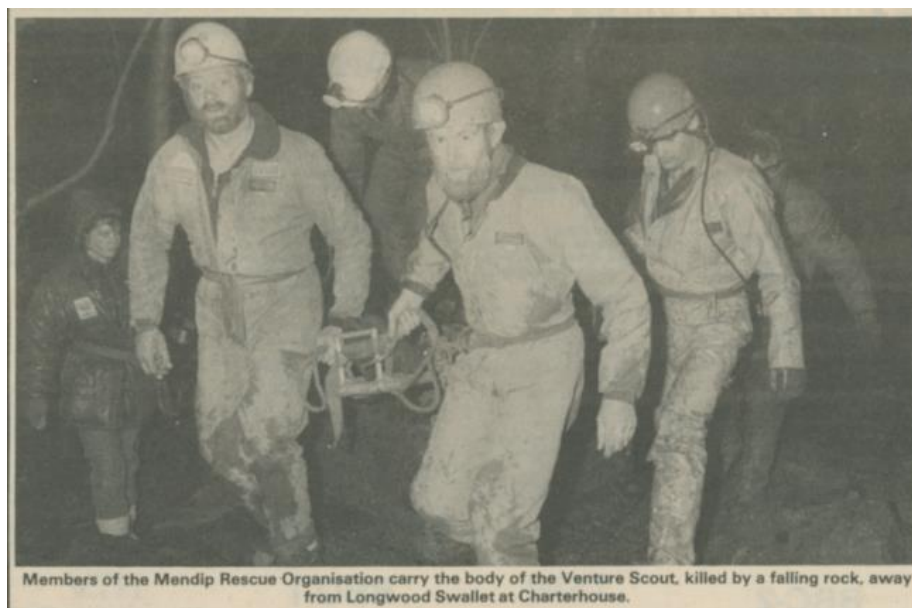
VENTURE Scout Attila Joseph Kurucz, aged 16, was killed in a rock fall deep under the Mendips at the weekend. He was with a group of experienced cavers from London, who went into Longwood Swallet, near Cheddar, on Saturday. The party entered the cave, at about 11:45 a.m. and the tragedy happened at 1 p.m. when a boulder crashed on to the boy when the group was about 2,500 feet from the entrance. It is understood he died almost immediately despite attempts by the others to save him. A student from London University, who was also exploring the tortuous cave system, returned the surface to raise the alarm. Members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation were on the scene within half-an-hour of being alerted, but it took them nearly eight hours to bring out the boy's body. Organisation secretary Mr. Jim Hanwell, from Wells said today: “It was rather a long process because the cave, is very constricted in certain places.” A doctor and 27 cavers were involved in the operation, and other cavers stood by in case they were needed. Mr. Hanwell said the London group had been very well equipped and done all the right things. “I'm afraid it was a genuine accident. Rocks do fall now and again,” he said. The boy's body was taken to the mortuary at Weston-super-Mare General Hospital, and his parents travelled from their home in Charlton Southeast London to identify him.

Source – Bristol Journal – 25 January 1986

RESCUE TEAMS PRAISE CAVE TRAGEDY SCOUTS

Venture Scouts involved in the weekend caving tragedy which killed one of their party have been praised by emergency rescue teams. The teams were called out to rescue a 16-year-old Venture Scout who was killed by a falling boulder deep inside Longwood Swallet

Charterhouse. Mendip Rescue Organisation secretary and treasurer Mr. Jim Hanwell co-ordinated rescue efforts from the cave entrance. He said: “The group were extremely well-equipped and knew precisely what they were doing.



They had taken a straightforward and sensible approach.” Emergency teams took eight hours to rescue the boy named as Joseph Kurucz from Chariton, South East London, from the cavern which is known as one of the most difficult to explore in the West Country. The tragedy happened about an hour after he and other Scouts had gone into the narrow and tortuous system of passages led by an expert caver. The group were about 1,000 feet in and no more than 200 feet underground when the boulder fell. A student from London University who was exploring the Swallet returned to the surface to raise the alarm. A doctor and nearly 30 members of the rescue group were called in who operated with the rest of the group and police. Mr. Hanwell said the Scouts had been in the dry part of the cave system and had taken the sensible precaution of not following the stream. Mr. Hanwell said: “I regret to say it was just one of those things. I am a geologist and I can think of no other reason than that for it.”

Source – Western Daily Press – 27 March 1986

A west coroner yesterday defended dangerous sports after a 16-year-old Scout died in a rockfall deep inside the Mendip Hills. Attila Kurucz, from London, was trying to qualify as a caving instructor when the accident happened, an inquest in Taunton heard yesterday. He died instantly when a boulder weighing half-a-ton fell on his chest in Longwood Swallet cave, Charterhouse, near Cheddar, on January

The Coroner Mr. Michael Rose described it as “a most sad and tragic accident. Some people go through life never trying anything and one wonders if they really live at all. People who try

adventure get some joy from attempting it. It is wrong for society to interfere too much in sports which carry with them some degree of danger provided the right precautions are taken," he said. Mr. Kurucz and four companions from the south London caving group were lowering themselves feet first through a passage less than three feet high. The group's leader Mr. Paul Wootton told how they battled in vain to resuscitate Attila after spotting him pinned down by a rock more than quarter-of-a-mile inside the cave. Mr. Wootton said: "With all four of us we were able to move the rock and slide it off his chest. We tried mouth to mouth resuscitation and pounded his chest to try to get his heart beating again." The three cavers who were ahead of Attila in the narrow tunnel got out by another route through the network of caves.

Verdict: Accidental death.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 27 March 1986

FREAK DEATH OF YOUNG POTHOLE NO ONE WAS TO BLAME

Teenage caver Attila Kurucz was killed in a freak accident deep beneath the Mendips, an inquest heard.

A half-ton boulder fell on his chest as Attila, aged 16, was wriggling feet-first into a narrow passage in Longwood Swallet, near Charterhouse.

Attila, from Charlton, London, died from suffocation despite desperate efforts by members of his party to revive him with mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and cardiac massage. Coroner Mr. Michael Rose recording a verdict of accident, said the group of scout leaders and venture scouts, training to be caving instructors, was well qualified and equipped to tackle this cave.

"No one was to blame whatsoever," Mr. Rose told the Taunton inquest.

He had heard that three other members of the party had already gone through the 2ft. 6in. wide passage when the accident happened.

Attila was just getting into the entrance of the passage when the 3ft-long rock fell on him. Mendip Rescue Organisations warden Richard West said: "This rock was obviously just waiting. This is not an infrequently used part of the cave. If anyone had touched it before it might have happened to them, or equally it might have stayed there for years." Mr. Janos Kurucz said his son lived for caving, which he had taken up four years earlier, and devoted most of his spare time to it.

"I had no fears as to his caving capabilities as he was becoming more experienced," he said. Coroner Mr. Rose said:

"Some people go through life never trying anything and one wonders if they really live at all. People who try adventure get some joy from attempting it,

"It is wrong for society to interfere too much in sports and pastimes which carry with them some degree of danger provided the right precautions are taken."

18 January 1986 – Swildon's Hole

Yeovil Police contacted Brian Prewer at about 8:10pm. A party of four had gone down the cave at 4:30 p.m. and, on returning from Barnes' Loop, Jane Orris-Bird, aged 23, was unable to climb the Twenty Foot Pot. The group was led by Tim Osborne, a non-club caver from Yeovil, with Steve Franklin from Meare, Chris Burgess and Jane, from Bath. The Bath couple were inexperienced with Chris Burgess on his first caving trip and both had borrowed wet-suits. None had experience of wet caves or climbing, but claimed to be involved in sky-diving! Maybe this is why they chose to try out single-rope techniques with one Jumar, sit harness and foot loops but no chest harness, all to be shared between them. They had little knowledge of S.R.T. and less about the cave.

A W.C.C. party comprising Duncan Frew, Pete Hann, Richard Warman and Geoff Newton went down the cave at 8:35 p.m. with a ladder. They were followed by Brian Prewer with basic hauling gear fifteen minutes later. Jim Hanwell and Alison Moody liaised with P.C. Gerry Brice on The Green. Pete Moody, Dave Walker and Bob Lawder stood by at Upper Pitts, and it was known that a strong Wessex party was returning up the streamway about the right time. At 9:16 p.m. Richard Warman surfaced to say that Jane Orris-Bird had been helped up the pitch and was on the way out unaided. All were out of the cave and on The Green by 9:32 p.m.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 21 (1985 to 1986), page 84

Pete Hann, Julian Taylor, Rich Warman, Geoff Newton, Duncan Frew on M.R.O. call out to the 20 foot to remove a cold, tired girl who couldn't climb the pitch (they were using S.R.T.). Met Prew at Water Chamber and all exited safely by 10 p.m.

23 March 1986 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 21 (1985 to 1986), page 99

G.N. and Alison. A trip to pirate (?) Nigel's and Alison's dig in Shatter Chamber had to be aborted at Barnes' Loop. Here we met a "rescue" in progress. The leader of a novice party had suffered a dislocated shoulder and was being helped out by Charlie Self of UBSS. We joined in to help the victim and his hordes of leaderless novices out of the cave and arranged for his despatch to Bristol Royal Infirmary.

13 April 1986 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer received a call from Yeovil Police at mid-day. The informant, Mr. Plant, reported that Jonathan Turnbull had suffered an epileptic fit at the Double Pots. He was a member of a well-equipped party of five from Bristol, had been caving for about four years, and although on tablets for this particular condition, had not experienced a fit for several years. The attack had been particularly severe, causing him to fall face down into the lower pool of the Double Pots. He had been fished out by Dan Plummer straight away and found not to be breathing. Mouth-to-mouth resuscitation had been given immediately and the patient started breathing shortly afterwards and began to regain consciousness.

Cavers at Upper Pitts and the Belfry were alerted and Tony Jarrett organised a rescue team comprising Tom Chapman, Pete McNab, Pete Hann, Richard Warman and Tim Gould. They entered the cave at 12:28 p.m. and were followed by Pete Moody and A. Lovell ten minutes later. Dr. Andrew Nash was alerted in case medical treatment was needed underground and Dr. Donald Thomson was contacted for advice. He suggested that, after the fit was over, Jonathan Turnbull ought to be able to help himself out of the cave. This proved to be the case. With a little assistance, he was out of the cave by 1 p.m. and then taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary for

a check-up. We received a letter of appreciation later with news that he was none the worse as a result of the attack.

13 April 1986 – Cheddar Cliffs

A party from Brighton went climbing at 3 p.m. in Cheddar Gorge and one of their party became stuck on Coronation Street Cliff 70 feet up at 7 p.m. The Cliff rescue, team assisted by cavers who helped as Sherpas, brought the cold and tired climber down just after midnight.

27 April 1986 – Goatchurch Cavern

Brenda Prewer was alerted by Weston-super-Mare Police at 11:30 p.m. that a woman had slipped and dislocated her shoulder down the cave. The informant was requested to remain by the telephone at Burrington Coombe Cafe. A lot of wardens and cavers were already underground and engaged upon a major sump rescue practice down Swildon's Hole. Brenda contacted Jim Hanwell, who was unable to reach the informant for further details since he was standing outside the cafe and could not hear the telephone ringing!

Glyn Bolt was requested to go to Burrington with Julie Bolt, Graham Johnson, Mary Rands and Nigel Graham, all of whom were already kitted up for their stint on the sump rescue. Nigel Taylor was then contacted and asked to take control and liaise with the police there. Jim Hanwell and Richard West followed to establish a radio link back to Tim Large at the Belfry. Janet Carey, aged 26, from Bristol had gone down the cave with Richard, Raymon and Robert Hall. She had slipped and fallen at the Coffin Lid, dislocating her shoulder badly. Fortunately, a strong party of four members of the Army Caving Association were also in the cave and able to assist. The shoulder was strapped securely with a belt and the A.C.A. helped Janet Carey to make her own way out without too much discomfort. They did a good job. All were stood down at 12:30 p.m.

3 September 1986 – Thrupe Lane Swallet

An over-anxious mother of a caver from Cheddar called the police because her son had not returned home from a trip to the cave by 5 p.m. as expected. He turned up only ten minutes late!

7 September 1986 – G.B. Cave

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 21 (1985 to 1986), page 139

Malc, Jim R. and Dunc's 3rd trip in 26 hours in the company of Bob Drake and Pete Watts to track own a gormless party overdue from G.B. Jim and Dunc met them 20 feet in, while Malc still had his shreddies at half mast. They "cheerfully" contributed their key deposit to the M.R.O.

22 October 1986 – G.B. Cave

A call was received from the police at 8:40 p.m. that a caver had fallen from a climb somewhere in the Main Chamber and injured his back. Richard West was alerted and Tony Jarrett contacted at the Hunters' Lodge Inn. Tony called out Brian Prewer, Brian Workman, Mike Cooper, John Ham and Jeremy Henly who were already changed for digging at Twin Titties, Priddy. This team was driven to Charterhouse in Fred Davie's van with the Mauger stretcher and medical kit. Dr. Tony Boycott was advised of the incident by Jim Hanwell and agreed to leave for the cave straightaway. P.C. Coopey was met on the roadside by G.B. by the first rescuers at 9:50

p.m. Fred Davies took charge at the surface. There were severe thunderstorms and hail throughout the incident and it was necessary for a radio relay to be set up via Jim Hanwell on high ground at Warren Farm to Richard West at the Belfry.

It was learnt that five Bristol University students had gone down the cave early in the evening. They were not U.B.S.S. members. On climbing down the wall below the Forty Foot Waterfall, Neil Cox had fallen the last ten feet, landed on his back and lay injured in the pool at the bottom. The fall had smashed his battery case; a lucky break since it probably took much of the impact and saved him from more severe back injuries. He was removed from the pool to await treatment by the rescuers.

Brian Prewer, Brian Workman, Mike Cooper and Jeremy reached the patient soon after 10 p.m. An examination revealed that he was able to move all limbs even if somewhat painfully. With more confidence and assistance, he was able to stand. At the top of the Gorge, the party met Dr. Tony Boycott. His examination confirmed that the patient had only severe bruising of the back. Support parties with tackle stood by further up the cave, comprising Tony Jarrett, John Ham, Kevin Rodgers and Tim Large. All were out of the cave by 10:50 p.m. emerging to a violent thunder and hail storm. Neil Cox was driven to Bristol Royal Infirmary for a complete check-up.

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 22 October 1986

Rescue callout. Caver from W.C.C. party had slipped and fallen from halfway up waterfall climb. By the time I got there (1-hour home to underground) he had started to move out - bad bruising only no break. Out in two hours. Slush and dry lightning storm on surface. In fact, he had a crushed first lumbar vertebra.

6 December 1986 – Eastwater Cavern

Brian Prewer was called by Dany Bradshaw to report a message from the farm that a caver was stuck somewhere in the system, maybe near Hallelujah Hole. A party had entered the cave at 1:30 p.m., led by Anthony Wright from Southgate, London. They had been stopped by Mrs. Gibbons at the time as they appeared unaware of the access arrangements. It transpired that they did not know much about the cave either! For some reason, the leader became separated from the rest of his party and got hopelessly lost in the Lower Traverse near Primrose Squeeze. He did not know the route to the Canyon. The others surfaced to raise the alarm at about 5 p.m.

Mrs. Gibbons informed the police that M.R.O. had already been mobilised. Fred Davies, Tony Jarrett, Pete Moody, Pete Hann, Mike Haseldon and Chris Harvey formed a search party from Upper Pitts and entered the cave at 5:45 p.m. They located the "stuck" caver and started to escort him out via the old Boulder Chamber route. Meanwhile, Geoff Newton and Alison Moody had set off to search other parts of the system. The successful search party surfaced at 7:05 p.m. The other team took rather longer and wondered where everyone had gone!

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 21 (1985 to 1986), pages 164 to 165

Drunkards – a second trip to look for missing car keys. They eventually turned up between the furry and oversuit at leg level. Car nearly got bogged down. Returned to find Eastwater Rescue in progress.

The rescue victim was suffering from failure of nerve and technique the wrong side of Hallelujah Hole. Was taken out through Lower Traverse and Boulder Chamber by J-Rat, Fred

Davies, P. Hann, P. Moody and others. N and Alison arrived in time to find an abandoned Zot at the end of usual traverse. Searched Primrose Path, Lower Traverse, head of Twin Verticals and Dolphin Chimney finding no rescuers or victim. We didn't think J-rat would use Boulder Chamber route as he had said it was unsafe. We were wrong. We sent Zot out and checked Dolphin Pitch. No ladder. Therefore the Boulder Chamber was the only route they could have taken.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Volume 3 (1982 to 1988), page 135

Fred Davis, Pete Hann, Zot, Pete Moody, victim. Call out to retrieve "stuck" caver in Primrose Path. No problems, the victim being brought out via Lower Traverse and "Woggle Press". Lost Zot, Jeff Newton and Alison Moody but all re-appeared later! Rescue hardly helped by Zot and I being full of whisky?

15 December 1986 – Rod's Pot

Someone in Bristol found a note to the effect that a party from Waldorf School might have gone down the cave. It requested that M.R.O. should be called if they had not returned by 7 p.m. The informant had allowed 25 minutes and done as requested. In fact, the party had not gone caving at all because of bad weather on Mendip!

1987

Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year ending 31st December 1986

The year will be mainly remembered for the tragic death of Dave Anderson of the C.R.O. who died whilst taking part in a cave rescue at Rowten Pot, Yorkshire on the morning of Sunday March 23rd, 1986. Dave was the first cave rescuer to be killed in action in this country. He was known to many of us on Mendip, and his loss cast a shadow over the Jubilee Celebrations. It was a bittersweet year for caving on Mendip itself as it began with the death of Attila Kurucz down Longwood Swallet yet ended with happy memories of the fun and festivities of our Fiftieth Birthday Party weekend at Priddy, held in September. It was good to have something to celebrate at the time since caving there was at a low ebb for almost eight months owing to the closure of the major cave systems in the village. The long dispute between local landowners and the Nature Conservancy Council was on the way to being resolved by December, and we were soon back in business.

Callouts were, unusually, bunched at the beginning and end of the year, with a Summer lull. The accompanying incident log gives the details. As traditional on Mendip, it includes the names of all taking part in rescues. There are two good reasons for this. First and most importantly, M.R.O. is not a separate rescue service but part of the local caving community, and relies on experienced cavers from the clubs. Secondly, all who go underground to help must be recorded for insurance purposes. It's the best way of thanking and recording the work of the many who willingly support fellow cavers in trouble.

We retain close links with other rescue teams through the British Cave Rescue Council and the South-West England Rescue Association. I am very grateful to the wardens who regularly attend the distant meetings of both bodies so that our voice is heard beyond Mendip. Our divers also went to a national symposium on the problems of rescuing cave divers, arranged by John Cordingley in Derbyshire. It was a useful weekend, and we look forward to the publication of the proceedings, particularly as M.R.O. was first in this field with the pioneer Normalair Sump

Rescue Apparatus in the late '50s. At that time, we were concerned about some of the problems of foul air, as well as the possibility of distant rescues beyond the far sumps in Swildon's. Now there are much longer and deeper sumps to contend with of course. The logistics alone of a rescue from the far reaches of Wookey Hole Caves would be formidable. And now there is the underground river at Cheddar to reckon with. A major exercise through the sumps in Swildon's was organised by the Wessex Cave Club on 27th April, whilst Bob Drake and Jeff Price arranged a very successful training session for the C.D.G. with the Kirby Morgan sump rescue apparatus in Wookey Hole over the Jubilee weekend in September. Bob's encouraging report of this practice is appended for the record.

Over the years, we have concentrated on getting our equipment right and ensuring that callouts are responded to quickly. Active cavers with professional skills applicable to the many facets of rescues make everything work effectively. We prefer this approach rather than one which sets up special rescue teams, for the next step in this direction is a service divorced from those who go caving. The threats in South Wales created by bids from Fire Brigades there to be called out for cave rescues are ominous even if ludicrously absurd in practical terms. We will support those resisting such changes because, unlike fire services, we have only the best interests of those going caving to consider. Both the Police and the Fire Brigade in Avon and Somerset recognise that cavers are the best people to rescue those in trouble underground. We have co-operated successfully over the years on Mendip and are particularly grateful to the Chief Constable, Mr. Ronald Broome, and the Chief Fire Officer of Somerset, Mr. Nigel Musselwhite, for their support in such matters. They regard continuity, consistence and commitment as crucial, and cave rescuers must safeguard these standards to remain indispensable.

A good example of co-operation with the Police has been the development of the Search and Rescue Radios now in use: we have provided and serviced the sets and they have covered the necessary licence fees. We must also thank Bob Whitaker and the Wessex Water Authority for great help in up-dating our radios this year, and to Eric Dunford for developing the system. Brian Prewer has improved our ability to communicate with rescuers underground by making "through the rock" cave-to-surface radio telephones from plans kindly provided by Bob Williams. Rescuers in Yorkshire have been using "Molephones"(reg.T.M.) for some while; in South Wales they have the "Ogofone"; and now MRO has the "Grunterphone"!

A big attraction of the Jubilee Celebrations was the opportunity for cavers to abseil off the High Rock in Cheddar Gorge. Sandra Lee and Chris Bradshaw of Cheddar Caves kindly made the arrangements, and over a hundred descents were logged throughout the day. Tim Large and Tony Jarrett provided the rope with welcome financial support from the Bristol Exploration Club. The Birthday Party at Priddy Village Hall was masterminded by Glyn Bolt and his helpers from the Wessex Cave Club. Alison Moody and her team of assistants provided a feast to remember. The whole occasion was well supported and enjoyed; every club took part and letter of thanks were sent to over fifty people who helped to make the weekend a success. The accounts that follow tell their own story.

But the passage of time has another side, of course, and I must record the resignations of three long-serving wardens: Philip Davies, Brian Woodward and Mike Palmer. Phil was a warden for over thirty years and was especially active as a cave diver during the '50s and early '60s. Brian succeeded him as one of the leading cavers and divers of the '70s on Mendip. We valued their involvement, and I personally have enjoyed their company on mountains and in caves around this country and abroad over the years. Their influence and friendship remain as strong as ever and they are still willing to help if needed. Recollections of Mike Palmer go back to school days almost shared together in Wells.

I will close with two examples of the support that M.R.O. receives from Mendip cavers. Over Christmas, Richard Stevenson and Rob Palmer gave illustrated talks about the "Cheddar River" and the "Blue Holes" in aid of MRO funds, and the evening was much enjoyed, particularly by Bill Bufton and family for Bill was one of the original hard-hat cave divers back in 1935. The years since then have been enlivened by characters such as Alfie Collins and his songs. He has retired but continues to turn up and give us the benefit of his lyrical talents. Such examples show how things can be done without the need for grants. Cave rescue is up to us.

Jim Hanwell, Honorary Secretary & Treasurer

1 January 1987 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer received a call after 8 p.m. from Robin Maine at Manor Farm, Priddy. He was concerned about a party reported to him as overdue from a "short round trip". Brian contacted Jeff Price at Upper Pitts and a Wessex team was put on standby. After several calls it was ascertained that the party concerned had been seen underground making slow progress. They had been in the cave for about 9 hours and as it was getting late, Jeff and a party of three set off to assist. The overdue cavers were met crossing the fields. They came from Wokingham and had been delayed by one of the larger members of the party at the squeezes. No information had been left on the surface about the trip nor an E.T.A. given.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 22 (1987), page 5

[*Date in WCC Log Book 10 January 1987*]. Start of silly season. Overdue party in Swildon's 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. to do short round. Jim Moon, Doug Adams, Jim Rands, Malc Fayle, Pete Watts and Jeff Price (Leader) had to go through the trouble of changing in the freezing cold only to meet the party at the gate – Thanks!

2 January 1987 – Swildon's Hole

Source – BEC Log Book 1983, page 142

Chris Castle, Martin Grass. A tourist trip to IV interrupted by a rescue at the 20 where a young girl was too tired to climb the ladder and had been left by her friends under the waterfall. Martin went down, stuck a sling on her, and we hauled her up. We carried on into St. Paul's, and after bailing the Mud Sump and taking various wrong turnings arrived at Blue Pencil, walked up and down 4. Returned the same way as we couldn't face bailing the Troubles. 3 hours 5 minutes.

18 January 1987 – Swildon's Hole

Yeovil Police contacted Fred Davies at 2:40 p.m. The informant at the New Inn, Priddy, reported that 18-year-old Robert Duffren from Bristol had dived through Sump One but had lost his nerve for the return trip. He was one of a party of three well equipped cavers, all wearing wet suits.

Fred alerted Pete Hann at Upper Pitts who organised a Wessex team to make contact with the stranded caver and give assistance. This group, comprising Pete Hann, Geoff Newton, Robin Taviner, Malcolm Foyle and Fiona Lewis went down the cave at about 3 p.m. A second party assembled at the Belfry with comforts and the sump rescue gear: this included Dany Bradshaw, Stuart McManus, Pete Macnab, Tim Gould and Edric Hobbs. Brian Prewer set up a radio link at Priddy Green and Tony Jarratt took control at the Belfry end. The second party went underground at 4:10 p.m., followed by Fred Davies and Brian Workman with the Hot Air kit

half-an-hour later. A member of the original party who had stayed with Robert Duffren in Swildon's Two surfaced at 5:15 p.m. and reported the reluctant caver to be "very cold and distressed".

The arrival of determined rescuers worked wonders for "morale", however, as it has often done in the past with people in the same predicament!

Despite the experience, Robert Duffren's sense of humour did not desert him. All were out of the cave by 5:35 p.m.

25 January 1987 – Eastwater Cavern

A Mrs. Stevens from Worcester rang Yeovil Police early in the evening expressing concern because her son Richard had not yet returned home from a trip down the cave with two friends. She thought that they had gone underground the previous day and had expected them home during Sunday morning. No other details were known, except that the party could have been travelling in a "C" registered Ford Escort. The police contacted Brian Prewer at 5:10 p.m. and enquiries for the missing party were made at Upper Pitts and the Belfry. These were hampered because of industrial action in British Telecom at the time.

Whilst the names Richard and Steven were found on separate information boards in the huts, the lack of surnames made this line of enquiry fruitless. A beige Ford Escort was located, at the Belfry, but did not belong to any of the missing cavers. After almost an hour chasing such slender leads, Richard Stevens rang in to say that the B.T. industrial action had prevented him contacting his mother to let her know that he and his friends were staying on Mendip during the Sunday to have another trip down Eastwater. It would have been more helpful if this party had used their full names on the noticeboards and Richard had not entered up the nickname "Fred"!

2 February 1987 – Cheddar Cliffs

At 11 a.m. Taunton Police were informed that a goat had fallen off the Pinnacles and was trapped on a ledge about 100 feet down, apparently unharmed. The owner, Mr. Thomas Cambridge, was unable to retrieve it and had contacted Chris Bradshaw and Tim Large at Cheddar Caves for help. It was agreed with Guy Summers of the Cheddar Gorge Cliff Rescue Team that the cavers on the spot would deal with the situation.

M.R.O. equipment was collected by Nigel Taylor, and Chris Castle with Phil and Lillian Romford joined the recovery party. After a quick course in S.R.T. and a bit of coaxing, the goat, "Gamma", was successfully returned to a grateful owner by 2:30 p.m. As the local press put it: "The nanny goat had her own nurse in attendance during the rescue. Chris Castle, who works at Cheddar Caves, was a dairy herdsman before joining the staff!"

Gamma was unharmed – although pregnant – nothing to do with the M.R.O.

Source – Cheddar Valley Gazette – 5 February 1987

When Gamma, the expectant goat, became stuck on a sheer cliff face 300 feet above Cheddar Gorge there was no kidding the Mendip Cliff Rescue experts were sent for. Goats are normally known for being nimble footed, but Gamma slipped on ice and found herself marooned on a narrow ledge high above the gorge on Sunday night. Worried owner Mr. Thomas Cambridge called in the rescue service when Gamma, who has four weeks to go to kidding, failed to make her own way back to the top. She spent a night on the ledge before help arrived in the form of

Mendip Rescue Organisation leader Tim Large, Phil Romford and Chris Castle. They abseiled down to her ledge and with the aid of a rein and ropes were able to lead the tired and weary animal back to safety. Mr. Large said: “She was frightened and tired and we had to coax her back. The ledge she was on was no wider than a foot and was covered in mud and ivy. If she had slipped she would have fallen to the road.” Gamma was the first animal they have rescued from the cliff face, but the organisation is often called out to rescue animals from strange places. The nanny goat had her own nurse in attendance during the rescue. Chris Castle, who works at Cheddar Caves, was a dairy herdsman before joining the staff!

8 February 1987 – Pen Park Hole

Source – Bristol Observer – 13 February 1987

CAVE DOGS SAVED

Two plucky dogs managed to struggle to safety after a six-hour ordeal underground in a disused mine.

Spark and Dodger, 18-month-old Border Lakelands, slipped through a half-sealed gap at the Pen Park Road Hole in Brentry.

Their owner, Keith Kent, aged 22, of Knowle Park had given up hope of saving his dogs after firemen failed to break through the concrete blocks used to seal the mine.

“I thought the dogs had had it. It was getting dark and one of them had stopped barking,” said Keith.

“The locals say it is about 200 feet deep down there and often flooded, so we were ready to give up.

Keith, a roofer, said he had only had the dogs for a couple of weeks.

He and his brother Peter stayed at the mine for more than six hours.

Eventually the adventurous dogs struggled free, unhurt, but tired and dazed.

“They won’t be going walking near the mine again until something is done about sealing it properly,” said Keith.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 9 February 1987



15 February 1987 – Blackmoor Swallet

A dog being walked at Charterhouse fell down the entrance shaft and the owner, Mrs. Gilraine, informed the police. P.C. Gerry Brice went to the incident and requested that M.R.O. assisted. A party of Wessex cavers from Upper Pitts recovered the dog unharmed, from the bottom of the 30-foot-deep entrance pitch, and were suitably rewarded with free beer.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 22 (1987), page 16

Blackmoor Swallet – Tav, Nigel, Jim & Dunc. To rescue a spaniel which had fallen down it. Turned out to be an official rescue, despite the fact that insurance doesn't cover animal rescues. Ten minute work for good PR and a happy family. Wish they were all this easy and had happy endings.

30 March 1987 – Gough's Cave

A case of "nurse" getting his own medicine! Though it was not so funny at the time. Not content with being accidentally locked in Cox's Cave during the day, Chris Castle became stuck in deep mud whilst digging in Far Rift after work. From past experience of this constricted site, it was realised that the stagnant air would soon become foul. Tom Chapman raised the alarm with Yeovil Police and Brian Prewer was informed at 9 p.m. of the problem. It was decided to mobilise as many air bottles as possible in case the sump rescue kit had to be used. Bob Drake and Richard Stevenson had a number of fully charged bottles and 30 were at the cave within 30 minutes of the callout. Bob Cork and Dany Bradshaw were asked to attend whilst Tim Large and Andy Sparrow attempted to haul the luckless Chris out of his predicament. Brian Prewer, Richard West and Jim Hanwell followed to sherpa equipment to the scene as necessary.

Just as the air started to become foul, Chris was extricated from the muddy squeeze. Everyone was stood down by 9:45 p.m., in good time for Chris to celebrate having been rescued twice in one day from two caves: something of a record in itself!

Earlier he had managed to get himself locked in Cox's Cave and was only released after waving a stick to attract attention!

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 31 March 1987

CAVER SAVED FROM MUD TRAP



Caver Chris Castle was rescued after being trapped in thick, liquid mud deep under the Mendips.

He was taking part in an exploratory dig in the famous Gough's Cave in Cheddar Gorge, where he works as a guide, when he became stuck more than 1,800 feet from the entrance.

There was a danger that the air supply in the chamber might run out, and the alarm was raised.

Members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation went into the cave with a supply of compressed air, but before it was needed they managed to pull 41-year-old Mr. Castle free with ropes. Team member Mr. Brian Prewer said today: "It was potentially dangerous, but we got him out before the air went bad on him."

Mr. Castle, who lives in Cheddar, was engaged in a weekly exploration in the cave. Mr. Prewer said:

"Sometimes you have to dig out mud to find new caves. It was the regular Monday evening dig time."

A police spokesman said Mr. Castle was trapped for about an hour.

"He was uninjured - apart from his pride," he added.

Source – Cheddar Valley Gazette – 2 April 1987

MUD TRAPS CAVES EXPLORER – RESCUERS FOUND HIM SUFFOCATING

Behind the scenes exploration to discover further chambers at Gough's Caves will continue despite a dramatic set back this week. Chris Castle, aged 40, of Cheddar, one of the team of expert cavers engaged on a regular Monday night dig became trapped in mud up to his knees. He had to be hauled out with ropes by Mendip Cave Rescue Service after all the efforts of his colleagues failed to release him from the glutinous mud in which he had sunk. The incident happened 1,800 feet from the entrance and Chris's air supply was running out when he was finally rescued after being trapped for an hour. He is none the worse for his ordeal and has not been put off caving. The rescue was led by Mendip Cave Rescue members Chris Bradshaw and Tim Large. Tim said: "As the space where Chris was stuck is very restricted, I am the only one who went in to him. Other members of his caving team were there with him. They had been trying unsuccessfully to get him out for nearly half an hour. The mud there was like thick porridge which sucks you down and Chris was well and truly stuck up to his knee on one leg. There was no danger of him sinking further because the mud is only two feet deep on top of solid rock. The problem was that the rope being used to try and haul him out was also slippery with mud. So, we rigged a sling for his foot and made loops in the rope as hand grips. By the time we got him out, Chris was getting a bit distressed because the air was getting bad. It made breathing laboured. Obviously, he was happier in than out. Once we had a secure grip on him he was able to help himself because fortunately, his hands were free." Manager of Cheddar Caves, Sandra Lee said: "Chris is one for a group of dedicated caving enthusiasts who volunteer their time every Monday night to search for further chambers in our caving complex. This has been going on for several years. We know there are more chambers to be discovered. Knowing Chris, I am sure he will be back again next Monday night. Cavers are always keen to find new caves. Discovery is part of the sport."

25 April 1987 – Rod's Pot

Jonathan Ardrey, a 15-year old Venture Scout from Wokingham, on his first caving trip, slipped just inside the entrance and broke his ankle. Brian Prewer was alerted by the police at 11:35 a.m. Tony Jarratt went straight to Burrington with the Mager stretcher, plaster and medication. He was accompanied by Jane Jarratt, Steve Milner, Mark Lumley, Tim Gould and Dave Shand. A party from Upper Pitts followed comprising: Duncan Frew, Pete Hann, Geoff Newton, Pete Hopkins, Richard Payne, Andy Middleton, Richard Neville-Dore, Pete and Alison Moody. Brian Prewer set up radio communications on the surface.

The rescue team went underground at 12:10 p.m. Duncan Frew and Pete Hann plastered the injured leg with the aid of a bottle of lemon squash and the patient was hauled out on a stretcher to the awaiting ambulance by 1:05 p.m. The upper passage was used to avoid the right-angled bends in the lower route.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 22 (1987), page 35

11:30 a.m. just finishing mornings ablutions, contemplating the coffee Alison had made. Call out for possible fractured ankle on a sprout. Down the cave from the Magic Bus at 12:10 with Geoff N. P & A Moody, P. Hann, J. Rat, Tim Gould and an assortment of B.E.C. bodies. Plastered the ankle and hiked him out in time for the Hunters'. (Same Scout group as Bakers Pit rescue).

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 3, page 141

Tim Gould, Wobbly, Rich Neville-Dove, Pete Hopkins, Dunc Frew, Pete Hann, P & A Moody, Scoff, Tony Jarratt.

Call out from Belfry. Entered the cave at 12:10 p.m. with Wessex team. Duncan plastered the victim's broken ankle – which had occurred when he fell down the first vertical bit some 60 feet from the entrance and he was then put in a drag sheet and taken out of the cave, via an upper level tube, to emerge at 1 p.m. A very useful exercise for all concerned.

17 May 1987 – North Hill Swallet

After seeking permission from the Gibbons family, a party of four from West London Caving Club descended the cave at about 1 p.m. A ladder and double life-line was used from an iron bar placed across the concrete pipes at the top of the entrance shaft, in the normal way. Brian Tidbury was first to ascend the pitch on the way out around 5 p.m. Within about 5 feet of the belay, the bar suddenly came loose and he fell to the bottom sustaining cuts, severe bruising and a fractured arm. The fall also brought down the ladder, belay and lifeline so the whole party was now marooned. Cries for help went unheard on the surface, and attempts to free climb from the rift into the smooth pipes had to be abandoned. It had not been a lucky day on the farm either as Mrs. Dorothy Gibbons was badly injured in an accident with a mower and had been taken for emergency treatment by the family to Bristol. No one was at hand to realise the predicament of the West London cavers. They had an enforced wait for an anxious seven hours. It was after returning from Bristol at about midnight that an alert Mr. Gibbons spotted their car in the yard, realised that something was untoward and had the good sense to cross the field and peer down the shaft. He raised the alarm from Upper Pitts 5 minutes later and the police alerted M.R.O. through Brian Prewer.

Parties from Wessex were there to assist within minutes. The pitch was re-rigged and Duncan Frew and Richard Websell went down to help Brian Tidbury who, although in great pain and very uncomfortable, was in remarkably good spirits. He was treated and hauled to the surface in a lifting harness by Dany Bradshaw, Tim Large, Brian Prewer, Geoff Newton, Malcolm Foyle and others standing by. All were out of the cave by 1:15 a.m. and the patient taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary by ambulance.

At first, it was thought that the iron bar had broken, but this proved not to be the case. Another theory was that it had rolled and screwed off the lip of the pipe, yet this seemed unlikely. The solution to the mystery became clear later when cows were seen leaning and rubbing against the upstanding pipes! Cavers should make sure that their belay cannot be dislodged in this way.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 22 (1987), page 41

North Hill rescue after pub, before bed. Stumpy, Dunc, Darny, Proug, Tav, Zippy. Some bright spark fell down the entrance shaft taking the scaffolding belay with him. He was 1st on the way out so they sat from 5 p.m. till midnight waiting. One broken arm and a lot of bruises.

17 May 1987 – Rod's Pot

Almost a carbon copy of the previous incident in April but with more serious injuries. Mrs. Jackie Allen sustained a nasty compression fracture requiring four hours surgery, three metal plates, a bag full of self-tapping screws and a bone graft from the hip according to her husband, Jon, Secretary of Mid-Glamorgan Schools Caving Association. She had fallen down the 10 foot drop near the entrance.

The call was received from the police at 10:50 a.m. Once again, the well-rehearsed partnership of Duncan Frew and Pete Hann went into action with Geoff Newton and Dave Morrison, Tony Jarratt and Brian Prewer gave support with hauling equipment and received help from several members of the Victoria Caving Club. Phil Romford and Robin Taviner assisted on the surface.

All were out of the cave within two hours of the accident; a speedy response for which Jackie and Jon Allen were extremely grateful.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 22 (1987), page 41

Rod's Pot revisited, re-run of the rescue on the 25th [April]. i.e. before breakfast Tav was still in his pit. Victim was 11 stone plus largish female. Same place but left leg this time.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 3, page 143

B. Prewer, D. Frew, Tusker, P. Hann, A. Middleton, Alan, S. Newton, Tony Jarratt + full supporting cast.

Call out at 11 a.m. to rescue a lady with broken leg in Rod's Pot. A carbon copy of the rescue of 25 April 1987! The Wessex team went down first to sort out the injury followed by a mixed bag of B.E.C./V.C.G. Brian and I spent some time "gardening" the upper level tube used on the last rescue. This ended up with the collapse of the rock bridge in the middle of the main route down the cave! Probably just as well. Victim plastered up and out of the cave in about one hour. A case of *deja vu*.

Source – Wells & Mendip Museum Archives – Letter of thanks from Jon' Allen – 21 May 1987

To all those involved in the rescue of Jackie Allen from Rod's Pot on Sunday 17th May 1987. Many thanks for an extremely speedy rescue very efficiently carried out. Neither of us expected to see daylight for quite a while – instead of which we were out within two hours of the accident.

Special thanks to Duncan and Pete for the plaster work – in fact it turned out to be a very nasty compression fracture requiring four hours surgery, three metal plates, a bag full of self-tapping screws and a bone graft from the hip!

Jackie is making an extremely rapid recovery in B.R.I. and wants to know when the next rescue practice is, so she can volunteer for the casualty and be man-handled again – I'm a bit worried about that.

Enclosed please find a cheque to M.R.O. to cover some of the costs, plus Roger Dors has another cheque to set up a kitty behind the bar at the Hunters' to buy all those involved in the rescue a pint to make up for lost drinking time – (very anti-social, these people who insist on being rescued during drinking hours).

Once again sincere thanks for everything done.

Yours Sincerely, Jon' Allen
Sec. Mid. Glam. Schools Association

P.S. If you know of anyone who wants a pair of thermal trousers split to the waist or a legless caver who wants a good over suit – let me know. B.R.I. were a lot less careful with kit than Pete and Duncan!

14 June 1987 – North Hill Swallet

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 22 (1987), page 50

Nearly another rescue from North Hill Swallet. Cattle in field knocked the belay bar right off the entrance tube while a party was below. Is this what happened on 17th May? “NO”

21 June 1987 – Rod's Pot

Brian Prewer received a call from Yeovil Police at 3:05 p.m. A Mr. K. Wheeler had reported that a person was injured in the cave, but no further details were available because he had left the telephone at the Burrington Cafe. Nigel Taylor was alerted and a Wessex party from Upper Pitts comprising Pete Hann, Malcolm Foyle and Nigel Graham quickly followed. Nigel went underground within 15 minutes of the callout and the Wessex trio another 13 minutes later. Brian Prewer and Fred Davies arrived with full rescue equipment at 3:45 p.m. Jim Hanwell was also alerted.

John Mabey, aged 20, from Bridgwater led a party of ten down the cave in the afternoon. This group of A.T.C. members from Exeter included seven novices. Several were wearing trainer shoes. Debbie Hucker, aged 18, who was on her second caving trip, slipped off the bold step above the 10 foot drop inside the entrance. It appeared that she, like the previous two, had broken an ankle. More ominous, however, were reports that she had lapsed into unconsciousness. Dr. Donald Thomson was called straightaway and an ambulance, now familiar with the situation, arrived at 4:30 p.m. After plastering the injured leg, the patient was brought to the surface a few minutes later and examined by Dr. Thomson. He sent a note to Weston-super-Mare hospital with the ambulance describing the condition that the patient had been in underground. In view of this, it was a surprise to learn that Debbie Hucker was not detained overnight for observation after being treated. The third identical accident in the cave in successive months had the luckiest outcome, although this certainly did not appear to be the case at the time.

22 June 1987 – Swildon's Hole

Yeovil Police contacted Brian Prewer at 11:55 p.m. after receiving a call from a Mr. Mulholland at Priddy. He had just come out of the cave and reported a ladder still in place on the Twenty Foot Pot. There were still two vehicles parked by Manor Farm. Brian Prewer contacted Alison Moody at Fountain Cottage across the road. She made a quick check shortly after midnight and reported that the owners of both cars had just emerged following a late evening trip.

5 July 1987 – Cheddar Cliffs

"Gamma" the ungainly goat with a short memory had to be rescued yet again! Yes, the same one in the same place - unfortunately not fatal. No longer pregnant - kid was waiting at the cliff top. At least we got a donation.

Source – Western Daily Press – 6 July 1987

DOGS CHASE GOAT ONTO GORGE LEDGE

Small holder Tom Cambridge was reunited with a goat called Gamma last night after a dramatic operation 350 feet up cliffs in Cheddar Gorge. The animal took refuge on a narrow ledge on the rock face at notorious Horseshoe Bend after being savaged by dog, and she was stranded for

nearly 48 hours. Members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation were called out and eventually managed to clamber down ropes to haul her to safety. It was the second time that the goat has had to be hauled to safety by the same team from the same spot on the cliff. Mr. Cambridge, of Cheddar, said Gamma and a small number of his 50 other goats were chased by dogs and she finally managed to reach a rock shelter after fleeing over the edge. He climbed down to her late on Saturday, and he found her udder had been ripped by the pack.

17 July 1987 – Swildon's Hole

Tim Newth from Woolwich went down the cave in a party of three during the evening. On climbing the ladder at the Twenty Foot Pot, he fell and injured his back. Although able to move, he could not climb back up the pitch without assistance. Fred Davies was alerted just before 11 p.m. and contacted the Hunters' Lodge Inn straightaway. Martin Bishop, Steve Gough, Tom Chapman, Pete Macnab, Tim Gould, Robin Brown and Richard Neville–Dore took down a hauling rope and "baby bouncer" whilst Nick Gymer and Kevin Gurner acted as runners underground. Brian and Brenda Prewer set up a control on Priddy Green with Duncan Frew and Mick Duck was posted at the entrance. The patient was quickly hauled up the pitch and assisted out of the cave in just over an hour. After a check-up in Wells Cottage Hospital, he was discharged.

It was subsequently learnt that the three cavers had entered the cave just after mid-day to do a "short round trip". All were wearing "furry suits", over suits and trainer shoes: the unsuitable footwear caused long delays at the slippery climbs in Paradise Regained, particularly the Greasy Chimney. Route finding was another problem. They had been down the cave nearly ten hours when the accident happened. No life-line was used on the pitch. When the rescuers reached the scene, the patient was very cold and showed early signs of hypothermia.

18 July 1987 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 22 (1987), page 65

Sarah Mitchell, Ros Hall, Pam Binnie, Nick Thompson, John Deal, Tony Bennett, Steph Gough. Swildon's 1 or 2 assisted (?) in incident, though less than last night's rescue.

6 August 1987 – Swildon's Hole

A Mr. Gill reported an overdue party at 11:50 p.m. Brian Prewer requested Duncan Frew to check Priddy Green for the car described by the informant, and a party from Upper Pitts was placed on standby. Fifteen minutes later Miss Gill rang in to apologise and explain that her party had been rather delayed underground.

17 September 1987 – Goatchurch Cavern

Peter Brooks from the Avon Youth Training Centre, Avon Quay, Bristol, led members of the Avon Fire Brigade on a Leadership Training Exercise during the afternoon. One of the firemen, Peter Davies, was on his first caving trip. He was wearing trainer shoes. In attempting to climb out of the Water Chamber, he twisted and tore muscles in his side and abdomen. A nerve was trapped causing considerable pain and he was unable to assist himself. The alarm was raised and Yeovil Police contacted Brian Prewer at 4:10 p.m.

A rescue party comprising Bob Cork, Brian Workman, Brian Prewer, Richard West, Mike Wigglesworth and Phil Hendy went down the cave via the Tradesman's Entrance at about 4:45

p.m. Shortly after Nigel Taylor, Dave Turner and Jim Hanwell arrived. The patient was located at the bottom of the Coal Chute, barely able to walk let alone climb. He was put in a "baby bouncer" and hauled out the cave by 5.25 p.m. An ambulance had been called by the leader of the party and the patient was taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary for treatment.

Avon Fire Brigade Divisional Superintendent, Bob Hatherley. visited the scene and thanked the cavers who carried out the rescue. Later, the Chief Fire Officer, Mr. Francis G. Wilton, wrote to express his personal thanks to M.R.O. for their prompt turnout and expertise.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 10, pages 1566 to 1577

What a way to make my first trip underground this year! I had just got home at 4:20 when the phone went. Brenda Prewer was trying to get a rescue team together for an incident involving a fireman down Goatchurch. So far, she had only been able to contact Rich West.

In ten minutes I had changed, found my kit, and was on the road. Traffic was reasonable, and in fifteen minutes I was past the Hunters'. Once past Cheddar crossroads I was motoring, in the 80's, then slower past the Stirrup Cup and a couple of cars, then open it right up, in the 90's. By this time Bob Cork was behind me, I left by the Blagdon turn, we had caught up with Prew, himself following a long line of slow moving grockles, with no hope of overtaking them.

There was little room left in the Goatchurch car park, what with two ambulances and a Police dog car. As well as Prew, Bob Cork and myself Rich West and Brian Woodman were there. We kitted up, with only the barest of information about the state of the injured party.

Prew, Rich and I, with Bob Cork and a couple of firemen, went up the Tradesman's Entrance carrying some kit, including a stretcher. Here we found a couple of cavers emerging to be told that they had got the casualty as far as the Coal Shute. We went down, and Prew and Bob found him there, with severe pain in his side, but otherwise mobile. They placed him in the "baby bouncer", a kind of body sized sit harness, and Rich, the two firemen and I hauled him slowly up the Coal Shute, with Bob following close behind.

After a breather, we transferred the rope to the entrance where we found Dave Turner, Jim Hanwell and Nigel Taylor. The latter had wrecked his trailer by driving his Landrover into it in the rush to get to the rescue.

The casualty then climbed out of the Tradesman's Entrance with the aid of a top rope and assistance from below. He insisted on walking down to the ambulance, from where he was taken to the B.R.I. for a check up. The pains had started whilst he was crawling, and another crawl made things worse. It was probably a pulled muscle.

The only other incident was when one of his colleagues had his fingers caught in a slammed van door – but no medical attention was required.

I was in about two hours after receiving the call out. The rescue made a brief mention in the following morning's B.B.C. Breakfast Time local news.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 18 September 1987

CAVE RESCUE OF FIREMAN

A Fireman was trapped 80 ft. underground in a cave for an hour during a training exercise near Bristol.

Acting leading fireman Peter Davies, aged 32, from Bristol, tore muscles in an arm and his chest and found himself unable to move. Seven colleagues with him decided that the rescue was best left to specialists and called the Mendip cave rescue team to Goatchurch cavern, Burrington Combe. The winch and harness were lowered down into the section of the cave known as Coffin's Lid, where Mr. Davies lay helpless and he was hauled to safety.

An ambulance took him to the Bristol Royal Infirmary for treatment. He was later discharged to recover at home. Avon fire brigade spokesman Bob Hatherley said: "Mr. Davies was in awful pain and couldn't move."

10 October 1987 – Singing River Mine

Three old boys and a pupil from Kemnal Manor School, Sidcup, Kent, went on their first trip down this mine at 2 p.m. They were with a school party that was staying at the Mendip Nature Research Committee hut. When they had not returned there by 10 p.m., the police were advised and M.R.O. alerted. Brian Prewer raised a search party from Upper Pitts comprising Jeff Price, Robin Taviner, Nigel Graham, Pete Hann, Malcolm Foyle and Duncan Frew. Brian followed to Shipham with Bob Drake and Dave Pike.

The lost party was quickly located within 50 feet of the entrance and none the worse for their predicament. Their lights had failed. All were out of the cave by 11 p.m. Mr. P. Mitchell, who lives in Folly Lane near the mine shaft, kindly provided hot drinks and changing facilities in his garage.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 22 (1987), page 91

Arrived at the Hunters' to be accosted by Brian Prewer. I want you, you, you and you. Party lost down Singing River Mine for eight hours. Leader answered to the name of Coo-Eee! Surfaced to find Beer and Fags which was a nice touch making up for the loss of drinking time. P.M., N.G., D.F., M.F., J.P., Tav underground + B.P., Bob Drake, Dave Pike (M.E.G.), Al Taylor + Mate, Mr. Mitchell + house owner making tea and receiving apologies. Party were found 30 feet from entrance.

17 October 1987 – Swildon's Hole

Fred Davies was called by Yeovil Police at 2:30 p.m. with information that a caver had dislocated a shoulder in Blue Pencil Passage. As the Wessex Cave Club Annual General Meeting was just about to start, he contacted the Hunters' Lodge Inn and Jim Hanwell was able to meet the informants on Priddy Green a few minutes later. Peter Idle, a very experienced and well equipped lone caver from Bedford, had asked to join a small group of equally experienced Imperial College cavers familiar with the "short round trip". In traversing across the top of Blue Pencil Passage to the Troubles, Idle slipped and wrenched his shoulder out of joint. Whilst this appears to have reduced on its own accord, he experienced great pain and had requested the Imperial College cavers to call for assistance. One of them remained behind for company whilst two made a rapid exit to alert M.R.O. In the circumstances, they did all the right things and both also returned underground with the rescue party.

Jeff Price, Duncan Frew, J. Scott, M. Ingram, Robert Chaddock and Robert Callcott entered the cave at 3:15 p.m. with first aid kit, hauling equipment and the Grunterphone. It was decided to

use a "baby bouncer" rather than a stretcher, and it was the first time that we had used the Grunterphone on an actual rescue. Jim Hanwell stayed on Priddy Green to keep control of the rescue and all the other college and university parties using the cave. Fred Davies organised the surface Grunterphone party. Dr. Tony Boycott was alerted and support teams awaited news at the Belfry. Contact was made at 4:30 p.m. and messages exchanged, but only briefly. Tony Boycott entered the cave at 5 p.m. with Bob Drake and Dave Pike. They carried further medical supplies. Jim Rands went underground at 6:20 p.m. as a runner in the absence of further communication from the rescue party.

As time was going on and the Wessex Annual Dinner was imminent, the support party went underground at 6:50 p.m. consisting of Tony Jarratt, Ted Humphries, Mike Duck, Andy Sparrow and John Chew. They met the first party making good progress with the patient at Tratman's Temple. All were out of the cave by 7:10 p.m. Peter Idle was re-joined by his wife, who had been walking on Mendip with ramblers from Cheddar, and welcome hot showers were taken at Upper Pitts. An examination by Dr. Boycott showed that the patient had badly torn shoulder muscles as a result of the dislocation.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 22 (1987), page 92

We saw the film, we read the book, we shit ourselves, we bought the T-shirt. And Malc didn't make it...Swildon's 9 – Rich Webster, Kev Gannon, Malc Foyle. Disgusting trip diving in liquid shit. Lost in sump 6. Sump 7 had crud on it with white mould. Out we were met by a rescue in Blue Pencil. Good fun 7 hours.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 3, page 159

Quackers, Andy, John Clew, Doc. P. Evans, Ted Humphries, Tony Jarratt + many W.C.C.

Call out at Hunters' mid-day. 47-year-old Scoutmaster with dislocated shoulder in Blue Pencil. A W.C.C. team were first down and got him as far as the top of the 20, where our team took over. No problems.

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 17 October 1987

Called out from Bat Products to rescue in Swildon's 49-year-old experienced caver had slipped off traverse over Blue Pencil and strained/dislocated right shoulder. Borrowed Bob Drake's wet suit and went down with him and Dave Pike. Lost them around Barnes' Loop. Joined rescue at Greasy Chimney - victim moving out fairly well but slow up the vertical and tight bits. Bad communications failure and no comforts box. Met relief party at top of the 20. In at 4:55 p.m. out at 7:15 p.m. Light failed at Mud Sump on the way out.

8 November 1987 – Longwood Swallet

Brian Prewer received a call from Yeovil Police at 2:35 p.m. The original informant, Charlie Self of the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society, had left the phone at Burrington Cafe in charge of a Mr. Creese and returned to the cave to help. Kathy Sykes was in an experienced U.B.S.S. party descending the August Hole series when she fell about 25 feet whilst attempting to climb the awkward Swing Pitch without a ladder or life-line being available. The extent of injuries were not known.

Bob Cork and Stuart McManus went straight to the cave followed by Nick Marachoff and two companions from Upper Pitts. Brian Prewer collected rescue kit and followed them after

alerting Richard West and Jim Hanwell. Nigel Taylor, Andy Sparrow and Bob Drake also stood by at the Grange. By about 3:30 p.m. Bob Cork's rescue party had reached the patient and assessed her injuries. Details were written down and sent by runner to the surface by 4 p.m. She had fractured her wrist, was clearly concussed and had facial bruises around one cheek. A pain in the ear and right hip suggested that she had fallen on her right side and it was fortunate that she was wearing a good helmet with a secure chinstrap. Despite the discomfort, she felt able to help herself with a little assistance and encouragement. Dr. Donald Thomson was advised and agreed to stand by. All were out of the cave by 4:30 p.m. and the patient taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary for examination and treatment.

In a subsequent thank you letter, Kathy Sykes reported had spent five days in hospital because of a skull fracture, an indented cheekbone and a paralysis of one side of the face owing to nerve damage. Her wrist was also broken. As the doctors told her, she was lucky to get away with a 25 foot fall so lightly.

Cavers are reminded that M.R.O. notices at major cave give details of the nearest telephone. At Longwood, for example, the nearest phone is with Mr. Ronald Trim at Longwood Grange nearby. He and his family are always extremely helpful during emergencies even if they do not want to be bothered with routine caving traffic.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 9 November 1987

CAVE PLUNGE RESCUE

Student Catherine Sykes was rescued after 'being injured in a cave fall 200 feet under the Mendips. She was among a party of about half a dozen cavers from the Bristol University's Speleological Society, which was exploring Longwood Swallet at Charterhouse yesterday. The group was making its way out of the cave system when Catherine, aged 21, from Bristol, slipped and fell about 12ft down a vertical rock face. One of the group left the cave and telephoned the police, who alerted the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation. Members found Catherine and her companions about 500ft inside the cave. Catherine, who had cuts and bruises, was able to make her own way out. Her friends later drove her to Bristol Royal Infirmary for a check-up.

18 November 1987 – Wookey Hole Cave

The Somerset Section of the Cave Diving Group staged a sump rescue practice demonstration using the Kirby Morgan Bandmask apparatus for observers from WESSFED. After some open water training in the First Chamber, Dave Pike agreed to be towed through to the Third Chamber by Malcolm Foyle and Kevin Gannon. A line was laid and the trio did a circuit of the lake to check the equipment and get the right buoyancy. This is now a well-rehearsed technique. They then headed for Three and their approaching lights could be seen by the reception party there. Vented air was visible and audible as normal. Then, suddenly, something clearly went wrong under water and the divers quickly headed back to One without surfacing. The helpers onshore raced back on foot.

The divers surfaced at speed with Dave Pike and it was immediately obvious that he was not breathing as the mask had flooded. Bob Drake stripped off the helmet whilst others cut off the weight and cylinder belts. Dave's face was grey and his lips blue (cyanosis). Richard West could not find a carotid pulse and the pupils were fully dilated and did not react to torch light. He immediately started E.A.R. whilst Bob carried out E.C.C. It was then about 9 p.m. and the patient had stopped breathing for several minutes. Someone left the cave to raise the alarm and call for an ambulance. Bill Lewis of WESSFED assisted with the E.C.C. A faint carotid pulse was detected after about two minutes. Richard West continued with E.A.R. with pauses to clear

blood and note the noisy exhalation cycles. After a tense eight minutes, the patient showed signs of recovery and pupil reaction occurred. With further assistance, regular breathing was restored after ten minutes and the patient placed in the coma position and covered with warm clothing. Dry retching did not interrupt the steady breathing and it was with considerable relief when he recognised his helpers after twenty minutes. Dr. Ashman from Wells arrived at that moment and ambulance men quickly followed. The patient was taken to the entrance in one of the cave's wheelchairs and thence to Bristol Royal Infirmary. He has since made a full and remarkable recovery. Equally remarkable must be the work of those who resuscitated Dave from this near drowning in fresh water, particularly Richard West. The prompt action of the two divers with him was clearly crucial.

Dave Pike was able to give full details of what had happened to an enquiry held with all concerned on Sunday 22nd November. By agreement with the Cave Diving Group, Steve Wynne-Roberts carried out tests on the equipment to simulate the reported malfunctions. Fred Davies assisted. Their report will be considered by the C.D.G. and M.R.O. would await their subsequent recommendations.

Source – MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – Incident Report

Objective – A sump rescue practice from 1 to 3 as a demonstration to members of Wessfed the C.D.G.'s role in recovering an injured diver.

Divers: Kevin Gannon, Malcolm Foyle, Alan Downton, Robin Brown.

Back-up Divers : Pete Brooke, Nick Geh, Clive Betts.

Controllers : Bob Drake, Rich West.

Victim : Dave Pike

The equipment was taken to Chamber 1 and spread out on the pathway on a polythene sheet and the various parts were explained to about 20 visitors how it went together and its uses in different types of sumps. Alan Downton then laid the line from 1 to 3 and then returned along it to check the route he had taken was clear and the line was taught. The far end of the line was secured around a boulder and finally to the steps leading to 9. The Kirby Morgan was then fitted together while Dave finished getting ready. There was a leak from the "o" ring seal on the pillar valve and first stage of the 60 cu. ft bottle we were using. Various other "o" rings were tried until we reduced the leak to a very small trickle which we considered acceptable. When Dave was ready the equipment was fitted on to him and tested again. Dave then got into the water and submerged himself with help of the two-leading divers Kevin Cannon and Malcolm Foyle to test for buoyancy. It was found that the mask was leaking in water, so the spider over the head was tightened. Another weight was added to the victim's belt to correct his buoyancy. Kevin, Malcolm and Dave had already sorted out signals to communicate with each other. Kevin took the head and Dave's arm while Malcolm kept an eye on contents gauge and negotiated the feet. He was then taken for a trial run around the sump pool to make sure everyone was happy with the equipment and conditions. All was working well, all the divers were ready and Dave was lowered into the sump pool. He was taken through on his back with his air bottle on his stomach and the contents gauge between his legs visible by Malcolm. Kevin led with his arm across Dave's chest and under his arm. Alan Downton followed one minute later then followed by Robin Brown.

All was going well for about three minutes, Dave said the vis. was good and cleared his face mask on the Kirby Morgan by using the valve on the side of the mask, this was observed by Malcolm behind. A few seconds later Malcolm noticed the contents gauge which had been reading 95 ats. suddenly flick back to 0. and then back to 95 again. Dave turned on the demist valve and was only given a small amount of air. He then shut off the de-mist and took a breath and again was only given a reduced amount. He again tried the de-mist which only gave a very small amount and then stopped. He tried to take a breath but was given no air at all and the mask tightened against his face. He then signalled to Kevin there was a problem. Malcolm who was in a better position came forward and looked in the face mask and saw water almost up to Dave's eyes. Kevin and Malcolm then decided to retreat to 1 as a quicker exit than trying to negotiate the rift up into 3. They turned Dave around in the sump and made a hasty retreat back where they met Alan and Robin following. Both divers moved over to let Malcolm, now leading pull Dave through. Alan waited after they had passed to follow them out while Robin went on to 3 to notify the surface team. Dave meanwhile had started convulsing as the mask filled with water. He said all he could remember was Oliver Lloyd's words about 'dry' and 'wet' drowning, so he held his breath until he blacked out.

The visitors and the rest of the party had gone into Chamber 3 to see the divers surface. Lights had been visible from 3 down the rift then suddenly lots of air came to the surface and a few seconds later Robin appeared and said, 'There's a problem, I think you should go back to 1'. We all rushed back to 1 where Pete and Nick were waiting in the sump pool. Then Malcolm appeared pulling Dave to the surface. Rich and I then pulled him on land and quickly began to remove the facemask.

I removed the mask, put it to one side and told everyone not to touch it. Dave's face was grey and his lips were blue, his pupils were dilated and did not respond to Rich's torch. Rich then looked for a carotid pulse but could find nothing, he then felt in his mouth for any debris and started to give E.A.R. while I undid his outer wetsuit and started E.C.C. this was exactly 21:00 hours. I sent two people to call for an ambulance. I called for assistance to help to try to find a pulse.

At 21:02 a faint pulse was detected.

I was then joined by Bill Lewis the B.S.A.C. area coach in the Wessfed party. He carried on giving E.C.C. while I tried to remove more of the equipment from around his chest and waist. His weight belt was cut off and bottle removed. Meanwhile Rich continued with E.A.R. His pulse got progressively stronger and blood started to come up into the mouth, which Rich cleared and continued E.A.R. The pupils were still dilated and did not respond to light. The exhalation cycles were very noisy but did not sound water logged. At 21:08 hours Dave started to react and take irregular breaths but Rich continued to assist him for a further two minutes. By about 21:10 hours Dave had established deep, regular breathing and he was then turned into a coma position and covered in jackets to keep him warm. His lips and face colour, though very pale, had improved and strong pupil reaction was noted. Small amounts of blood still appeared in Dave's mouth and he wretched several times but this did not interfere with his breathing. At about 21:15 he began to regain consciousness but at first did not indicate any recognition of anyone. After about five minutes he first recognised Rich then me and began to answer questions coherently.

Dr. Ashman then arrived and checked Dave's pulse while he was still in the recovery position. He said he had made a good recovery and was allowed to sit up. The ambulancemen brought the cave's wheelchair from the entrance and Dave was assisted to it. The ambulance left the cave at 21:28 where he was taken to the Bristol Royal Infirmary. I returned to Chamber 1 to

collect the equipment. I checked the airflow to the mask and the de-mist valve shortly after Dave had started to recover and found it all working normally. Our initial reaction was that he may have switched the air supply off at the side of the helmet but this proved not to be so. I removed the equipment still as it was removed, for further inspection.

I gave a report to the police and Mr. Haylings the Cave Manager and then left the caves at 22:00.

Dave was kept in hospital for four days then allowed home. He has suffered a slight lung infection but has now made a full recovery.

Bob Drake

Source – Wells Journal – 26 November 1987

PROBE FOLLOWS CAVE DIVING DRAMA

An investigation has been launched after a practice cave diving rescue at Wookey Hole went seriously wrong. Experienced cave diver Dave Pike lost consciousness when a fault developed in breathing equipment and he was left without air for several minutes. Dave, aged 24, was pulled from 15 feet of water by fellow cave divers and rushed to Bristol Royal Infirmary where he was detained for three nights. Rescuers gave mouth to mouth resuscitation after Dave, from Yarley, was rescued unconscious for the icy waters. Bob Drake, of Mendip Cave Rescue, which organised the practice, said Dave had now fully recovered from the ordeal and was released from hospital on Saturday morning. Now an internal inquiry is to be held by the cave rescue organisation to find out exactly what went wrong. Dave was one of a group of seven divers from the Somerset section of the Cave Diving Group who were practicing rescue procedures and demonstrating them to sub aqua club members. Mr. Drake, who was supervising the operation, said: "Dave indicated there was a problem with the air intake valve and was pulled out by the other divers. He has now totally recovered and has suffered no loss of memory. I will be submitting a report and we will be trying to find out what exactly went wrong with the equipment." The accident happened in a sump cave at about 9 p.m. on Wednesday. Mendip Cave Rescue organises regular practice sessions and demonstrations at Wookey Hole caves where cave diving was first pioneered.

1988

Report by the Hon. Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year ending 31st December 1987

December was the only month in which we did not receive a rescue call. As the accompanying log of incidents shows, we had the busiest year ever. It is hoped that these reports will be circulated and republished by clubs so that cavers may draw their own conclusions about the causes of accidents. It is vital that we all learn from mistakes to minimise call-outs in future.

Each new generation of cavers has a bigger fund of past information to help them. Books such as the Cave Rescue Organisation's *Race Against Time* by Jim Eyre and John Frankland (Lyon, 1988) are major contributions to the development and improvement of caving. Our own records on Mendip are now reaching a point where particular causes and effects can be identified, and

an unusual number of repeated incidents have occurred, even during the year. But almost anything can happen, of course, and completely new situations must be expected and dealt with.

The most unexpected event was the demolition of the Belfry Store roof during severe gales last March. By agreement with the Bristol Exploration Club, we were able to contribute to its repair and particular thanks is due to all who rallied to our own rescue, especially Dany Bradshaw and Fred Davies. We now have a more secure store with a better layout inside.

Expected events such as the meetings of the British Cave Rescue Council and South West England Rescue Association have all gone well. Even the weather turned up trumps for the splendid B.C.R.C. Conference organised by the South Wales C.R.O. Many will know that we demonstrated the Kirby Morgan Sump Rescue equipment and underwater recovery techniques on this occasion. Particular thanks should be given to those C.D.G. members who have troubled to take the lead in the practical aspects of such work. Talking about it and certainly pontificating are not substitutes for developing suitable equipment and training with it. We learn most from the latter and those prepared to take carefully calculated risks. So it was last November.

Dr. Peter Glanvill gave a very useful series of First Aid talks during the Spring but we could have done without the uncanny coincidence of actual rescues following each one. Not content with the real thing, some Wardens have taken part in B.B.C. T.V. productions; the one worth mentioning being Sid Perou's epics in reliving the diving epics of the past down Swildon's and in Wookey Hole Caves. These largely explain the very healthy state of M.R.O. funds as the accounts below show. Richard West should be nominated for special effects director of the year whilst Bob Cork and Dany Bradshaw must be high on the ratings for best actors! As they say at the awards: "Thanks to everyone for all their good work in keeping the show on the road".

Jim Hanwell, Honorary Secretary & Treasurer

4 January 1988 – Sandy Hole – Portland

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 23 (1988), page 3

Heard from Phil of rescue in Sandy Hole on Monday so – Nigel Graham visited Portland Coastguard Station to find out what happened and more importantly to see if any problems of call out procedures had occurred. Phil had been rung by Coast Guard asking where the cave is – apparently someone was “stuck” (trapped under rock) somewhere in the cave, but his mates managed to extricate him unhurt. So what is the call out procedure for Portland? If anyone should know it's me, but I'm as puzzled as anyone by things over the last six months or so.

23 January 1988 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer was called by Yeovil Police at 8:40 p.m. A Mr. Hawk had phoned from the New Inn, Priddy, to report a party of eight still underground. He was concerned because water levels were rising after heavy rain. No further information was available because the informant could not be located either at the New Inn or at the phone box (in fact he was at neither; however it was rather late in the day to find that B.T. have changed the call-box number yet again).

Tony Jarratt was alerted to find out further details first hand on Priddy Green and a party of Wessex cavers was raised from Upper Pitts. All met at Manor Farm shortly afterwards. Apparently, Elaine Cheng, aged 22, in a London University Caving Club, party of five (from Royal Holloway and Bedford New College) was exhausted and unable to climb the 8 Foot Pot at the bottom of the old Forty against the swollen waterfall. Her party had been to Shatter Pot

and water levels rose on the return journey. She had fallen into the Double Pots several times and, wearing a furry suit and over suit, became waterlogged, cold and very tired. The prospect of hypothermia was feared. Whilst having caved once in South Wales and in Yorkshire, this was her first trip to Mendip.

Brian Prewer took control on the Green, Tony Jarratt stayed at the cave entrance and Alison Moody laid out flashing beacons across the field owing to the thick fog. A combined Wessex and Cambridge University Caving Club team of eight went underground with hot air, food, heat packs and spare clothing. They were: Pete Hann, Nick Pollard, Graham Johnson, P. Metcalfe, D. Wright, A. Taylor, M. Richardson and Patrick Warren who is also a Craven Pothole Club member. Elaine Cheng was assisted out the cave by 10:30 p.m.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 3, page 169

Call out at 9:45 for one or two girls suffering from hypothermia. All over by 10:15. One girl came out with assistance from her party and the other was helped by an M.R.O. team of W.C.C., A.C.A. and Cambridge U.C.C. cavers. She was un-wetsuited and the cave was very wet. I stood by the entrance with portable radio.

14 February 1988 – Box Mines

Source – MRO Rescue Folder 1953 to 1993 (held by Wells & Mendip Museum) – Incident Report

Paul DeAth rang me on Monday evening 15 February 1988 and told me of an incident at Box Mines the day before (14 February 1988).

Apparently, a group of schoolboys had arranged with someone to take them in and show them the Cathedral. This someone was to supply them with lighting. The lads waited near the Backdoor entrance but the 'someone' did not appear.

They decided to go on in using only a candle and two boxes of matches.

Half way to the Cathedral two of the group became worried and wanted to go back out so they split the number of matches and the two found their way back out with only two matches left, the rest carried on with the candle and matches.

Paul DeAth and Anthony Wooster met them at the Backdoor entrance where the two had been waiting then for some considerable time, Paul estimated that the candle and matches would by then be used up and the lads should have been back out.

He went to the phone and rang Phil Wooster his companions father who knows the mines well and has assisted in the past with rescues in the mines, he then tried to ring me but could not remember my number, he then rang Derek Hawkins at Bathford and asked him to ring, me and if he did not hear back within ½ hour to make a call out.

By this time Phil Wooster had arrived with two others and spare lamps. They entered though Backdoor and within a short distance they heard the boys shouting and brought them out, frightened but o.k.

I have told Paul, Derek and others locally, in the case of this type of incident where the likelihood is of finding the missing party is fairly positive and in short time to ring either Brian or yourself in case a more serious call out via the police might become necessary.

Bob Scamell

16 February 1988 – Longwood Swallet

Yeovil Police contacted Brian Prewer at 3.30 a.m. and reported that a party was long overdue from a Mendip cave. The exact site was unknown since two calls had been received; one claiming that the party was down Hunters' Hole and another that it was Longwood. The police checked the Hunters' car park for vehicles and only the landlords was found! The former was ruled out when one informant from Bleadon was able to give details of the trip and vehicles used. A police patrol located the cars near Longwood Grange. It became apparent that six members of the West Mendip Caving Club, mainly from Weston-super-Mare, had failed to surface after an evening trip.

Brian Prewer contacted Nigel Taylor and both set out to locate the missing party. Pete and Alison Moody stood by at Priddy. Nigel soon contacted the missing cavers trapped beneath the entrance door. They had snapped the key off in the lock and so were stranded. Tools to chisel open the hasp were collected from John Beecham's house nearby. Also, Mercan Jefferies and a friend turned up from Manor Farm, Charterhouse, with more tools, many suggestions and lots of liquid refreshment!

After about 90 minutes, the substantial door was prised open and the captives released unharmed. The stand down was at 6:15 a.m.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 16 February 1988

WEST CAVERS "LOCKED IN" UNDERGROUND



Western Daily Press

Photograph 17 February 1988

Six cavers emerged sheepishly from beneath the Mendips early yesterday after being trapped underground. They were literally locked in Longwood Swallet, at Charterhouse, near Cheddar, when the key snapped. The group, all members of the West Mendip Caving Club, based at Weston-super-Mare, entered the cave at 8 p.m. yesterday, locking the metal hatch which keeps out unauthorised people behind them. But when they returned to the entrance nearly four hours later and inserted the key in the lock to get out – it broke. The six men were then stranded until the alarm was raised by Mrs. Lynne Thorne, whose husband, Trevor, was leading the party. She had been told the group was due to surface by about 2 a.m. at the latest. Mrs. Thorne waited until about

3a.m. before dialling 999 and the police alerted Mr. Brian Prewer of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation. He drove 12 miles from his home near Wells to the cave entrance and passed chisels and hammers through a gap in the two-foot square hatch.

The six chipped away at the lock and eventually got out shortly before 6 a.m. After sleeping of the effects of his enforced captivity, Mr. Thorne, aged 29, of Hutton, said: "The lock has been on for a long time and with the fatigue the key just snapped. The place is built like Fort Knox and we had to cut our way through the hasp on the lock. In the 15 years, I have been caving it's the first time it has happened, but in a way I am glad it did. I know that the emergency system works." Mr. Prewer said it was common for caves to have protective hatches to keep people out, and it was normal procedure for cavers to lock them behind them when they went in.

4 March 1988 – Swildon's Hole

A party of Plymouth Polytechnic cavers was on the way out the cave about 10:30 p.m. when one of them, Joan Edwards, fell backwards off the Showerbath climb just inside the entrance. Her helmet came off and she banged the back of her head sustaining slight concussion and a scalp cut that needed stitches.

After learning that most wardens were at the Hunters' Lodge Inn, a local police patrol arrived there to contact Jim Hanwell at 11 p.m. He experienced little difficulty in raising a strong rescue party, and the place emptied more rapidly than usual.

The patient was whisked out of the cave within 30 minutes, somewhat bewildered by the attention of so many. She was taken by ambulance to Wells Cottage Hospital for a check-up and treatment.

19 March 1988 – G.B. Cave

Brian Prewer was alerted by the police from Yeovil at 12:40 p.m. A caver had rung from Mendip Heights Camp Site, Priddy, to report that a girl in his party had fallen off the top of the Waterfall climb and sustained unspecified leg and back injuries.

Venessa Gouldsmith, aged 22, from Southend was a complete novice in a party of Thurrock Adventure Club cavers staying at the Scouts H.Q. in Wells over the weekend. She was wearing trainers. On descending the Waterfall climb on a handline, she slipped off the large ledge and fell about 20 feet. Compound fractures of both tibia and fibia resulted and her back was severely bruised. The accident happened at about 11:45 a.m. It took almost an hour for the caller to leave the cave and raise the alarm. Precious time was wasted in travelling to Priddy to do this.

The first rescue team went down the cave at 1 p.m. within twenty minutes of receiving the callout. This group comprised of Stuart McManus, Jim Smart, Nick Saunders, Tom Chapman, Sarah McDonald, Martin Potts and young Pete McNab. They carried First Aid kit, plaster, stretcher and comforts. Another team followed shortly afterwards with more medical supplies, hauling ropes and the Grunterphone. This group had two First Aiders, Dave Pike and Rob. Taviner, and included Tony Jarratt, Nigel Graham, Henry Bennett, Pete and Alison Moody. Phil Romford went down later. Richard West took over surface control whilst Brian Prewer and Bob Drake manned the Grunterphone to maintain contact with the underground parties. Brian Workman and Phil Hendy stood by. Dr. Tony Boycott was called and went down the cave at 2 p.m.

After making the patient comfortable, Dave Pike plastered the broken leg and Tony Boycott carried out a medical examination to assess the extent of injuries, especially to the back. Hauling started at about 2:34 p.m. and the patient reached the surface at 4:18 p.m. She was taken by ambulance shortly afterwards to Weston-super-Mare Hospital.

Notes from Incident Report –

On exiting from the cave, the informant locked the cave behind him! The first rescue team had to await his return to unlock the gate.

BEP could not raise the Wessex by telephone. The phone had been cut-off for non-payment of the Bill! The radio telephone was used.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 23 (1988), page 21

G.B. Rescue Call Out for Vanessa who fell off the climb near the bottom of the Gorge. Suspected fracture of shin and ankle. Dave Pike applied copious amounts of plaster on the victim and most of the rescue team as well. Waited for Tony Boycott to give OK for victims removal and she came out of the cave very smoothly. Good Turnout by the M.R.O. and good assistance from party in cave. Ironic to have a serious injury the day after a wardens A.G.M.

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 19 March 1988

Caver in gym shoes fell off waterfall broken right tibia and ankle(?)*. Painful back. Plastered up and taken out on Mager Stretcher. Alerted at 1 p.m., with victim 2:15 p.m. and out at 4:20 p.m.

* Compound fracture to right tibia and fibula; ankle and back OK.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 10, pages 1590 to 1591

Brenda Prewer phoned to put me on standby shortly after lunch, for a G.B. rescue. I was beginning to think I would not be needed, when she phoned again and asked me to pick up my gear and get over to the cave (apparently, at that time, she had only managed to contact five cavers, apart from those already on Mendip).

It took me just over half an hour to load up and drive to Mendip, eating some cheese sandwiches on the way that Lyne had cut for me.

I parked on the verge, and got the latest info from Rich West, who was surface control. A girl had fallen from the waterfall at the end of the Gorge, and broken a leg. However, she was complaining of back pains, and a doctor was on his way down. Soon Pete Glanvill arrived, and I joined him. The hot air kit and spinal stretcher had been requested and was on its way. When this arrived, Fred Davies and Prew among others, took it down. Prew was keen to see how the bottom part of the new Grunterphone, the cave – surface radio phone was behaving.

The weather, never very pleasant, turned to rain, and I was ensconced in Rich's car when the cave entrance radio operator asked for a set of waterproofs for Bob Drake, who was working the "Grunterphone" on the surface. We found him and old over suit, and I volunteered to take it over. By the time I had trudged across a very muddy field, Bob was quite wet, but grateful for the suit nevertheless.

Soon after, Prew announced that the casualty only had a broken tib/ankle, and was being moved out. As the lower Grunterphone station moved with the stretcher, Bob and his assistants slowly

moved, guessing the line of the cave towards the entrance. The gadget works very well – when in approximately a vertical position over the lower station, the square aerial is tilted and rotated to maximum reception. The only problem was a dodgy switch on the loudspeaker unit, but Bob changed to headphones.

Working the radio at the cave entrance was Jenny (Tav's girlfriend). She was schrammed, but tots from my hip flask warmed us all up a little. Jen was using a hand-held radio, smaller than the old Bantams, but far clearer, and easier to use.

Before long, voices from the depths of the cave heralded the arrival of a small party bringing out some unwanted gear. A couple of lads waiting at the entrance went down a little way and the gear was passed up hand to hand, though we had to send some ropes back down, so that those of us on the surface could help haul the stretcher up the last part of the cave.

The victim was brought out, in good condition though winging a bit. I helped carry her to the top of the depression then lent a hand carrying gear back to the road. When she had been within half an hour of the entrance, an ambulance had been called, and it was waiting. The victim was taken out of the drag sheet, quickly examined by the quack and then driven off to hospital. After sharing my flask of coffee with some of the coldest looking rescuers, I returned home.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 3, page 169

Jim Smart, Snablet, Tom, Dick Pike, Martin, Sarah, Nigel, Pete & Alison, Mac, Prew, Dave Turner, Tony Boycott, Pete Glanvill, Phil, Tony Jarratt + a cast of thousands.

Called out from the Belfry; a 19-year-old girl novice had fallen down the waterfall pitch and had a suspected broken ankle. After bump starting a police car at Mendip Heights (!) we headed for the cave with Jim and Co. going down to assess the damage. When I arrived the girl's leg and ankle were plastered (supported – broken shin and ankle) and then we waited for a doctor as it was possible she had back injuries. Unfortunately, I had made the mistake of taking down the Paraguard Stretcher which was unsuitable but by the time she was ready to move the Mager Stretcher had arrived. With over thirty cavers in situ the carry out went very smoothly and it was over in four hours. Despite being in a fair bit of pain the girl, Vanessa, was in good spirits throughout and did bloody well. The whole event was quite enjoyable and a very useful exercise for all involved - several of whom were on their first rescue. Surprisingly the press did not appear - maybe the atrocious weather put them off. Everyone in good spirits after the event.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 21 March 1988

WOMAN IS SAFE AFTER CAVE DRAMA

A woman was rescued from caves deep beneath the Mendips at the weekend after she fell 20 feet and broke her leg. The Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation was called to the cavern at Charterhouse and brought Venessa Goldsmith, aged 23, of Southend, to the surface after four hours. The rescue team put her leg in plaster before bringing her out. She was with a party of venture scouts 400 feet down inside a large cavern when she lost her footing. Richard West, of the rescue team, said: "We had to plaster the leg before bringing her up to prevent further injury.

"There's one small climb inside this cave and it seems she slipped and fell there. But she was very sensible and stayed cheerful throughout the rescue." She was taken to Weston-super-Mare General Hospital.

Source – The Sun – 21 March 1988

CAVER'S AGONY

Potholer Melissa Gouldsmith, 22, lay trapped for five hours with a broken leg yesterday after a 30 foot fall in the Mendip Hills, Somerset.

20 March 1988 – G.B. Cave

Nigel Graham alerted M.R.O. through Yeovil Police at 6 p.m. as he was concerned to hear of a party entering the Ladder Dig with water levels rising rapidly. There had been two days of prolonged rain and a heavy storm was crossing Mendip. Brian Prewer contacted Jim Hanwell who obtained an up-dated weather report from the Bristol Weather Centre. He was told that radar pictures showed the storm would not ease until about 8 p.m. when clear skies were forecast.

It was decided to send an experienced party underground to assess the flood risk. This group comprised of Pete McNab, Jim Smart and Tom Chapman. Others stood by with Brian Prewer and Richard West on the surface. By the time all arrived on the scene, the party concerned had safely surfaced. They reported that the water had only risen about 3 feet up the Ladder Dig pitch. In fact, Pete McNab's party found it to be only 3 feet from the top of the pitch and in danger of overflowing! The rapidity at which flooding occurs here must be taken into account by all visiting this part of the system. It appears that the streamway is now choked and unable to cope with high flows.

5 April 1988 – Swildon's Hole

Ric and Pat Halliwell were entertaining several wardens and friends at Upper Pitts when the police called them at 10:10 p.m. P.C. Gerry Brice on local patrol also heard the message and arrived to assist. A report had been given by some cavers from Aldershot, who had just come out of Swildon's Two, that a ladder was still hanging on the Twenty Foot Pot and a rope had been found somewhere else. As these had been there earlier according to another group encountered, they reasonably thought that yet another party might still be in the cave and now overdue. In fact, Ric. Halliwell had noted the same ladder on the pitch on a trip to Swildon's Four during the morning. It was decided to check other sources to confirm whether anyone was still in the cave. To be sure, Gerry took Jim Hanwell, Fred Davies, Brian Workman and Tony Jarratt to see for themselves and meet the informants for further questioning.

No cars were left on Priddy Green and there were no reports of any overdue parties. Yet again, it appears that someone had not bothered to remove their tackle on a trip sometime over the Easter Holiday weekend!

16 April 1988 – Eastwater Cavern

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 3, page 177 (Near Rescue)

Trevor Hughes, Nigel Gardener, Kev, Simon, Dick, Snablet, Tom Chapman, Nick Sprange, Geoff Newton, Graham Johnson, Nick Pollard, Tony Jarratt.

An epic trip! Nick Sprange couldn't pass the final squeeze before Lolly Pot and returned back to the surface. The rest of us pressed on through the almost dry Blackwall Tunnel into Charring Cross. From here I joined Snablett at his dig and laid ½ kilo "sausage" on the offending rock at the end. After warning the Wessex bolters at Cenotaph Aven we fired the charge from Charring Cross, hoping it didn't destroy the superb three-foot-long straws near the boulder. Just prior to

our bang we heard a sharp crack – this seems to have been caused by Pete & Alison Moody banging in Threadneedle Street. Snablet and I then joined the others who had been surveying and digging in Jubilee Line . I gave Tom a hand with the dig until we decided to head gently out. On reaching The Chamber of Horrors, which Trevor was surveying, we heard the roar of a large stream! This had suddenly erupted from the inlet about five minutes previously (about 4:30 p.m.). An equally loud roar was heard from Blackwall Tunnel so Tom went down for a look at the crawl while I went to Cenotaph Aven to warn the Wessex and cadge a cup of tea.

Graham returned with me to Charring Cross, though they were loath to leave the cave as they had to put in four more bolts to reach the apparently free climable 40-foot slope at the top of Cenotaph Aven. On reaching Charring Cross we found everyone gathered but no sight or sound of Tom. Nick G and I went to check Blackwall Tunnel which I found to be a swirling, froth covered pool with three inches of airspace. I waited for the water to very gradually drop for some time while Nick went back to inform the rest. On his return, I plucked up my courage and easily passed the Tunnel, though not without a few worries of it backing up as I got into the tighter section. Nick and Simon joined me and, leaving the others to sort themselves out we carried on up to Lolly Pot. This was the next shock – a thundering waterfall practically filled the base of the shaft (on the way in I had mentioned to Kevin that it was a much better pitch when it was wet!) A Simon obviously needed a lifeline I gathered my strength and started up, going very slowly and using a rock rib in the left-hand wall to pull myself out of the water for an occasional breather. Eventually I reached the top and life-lined Simon and Nick up, Nick in turn lining Kevin. The three of us carried on out with me using a Mighty Lite as both my FX2 cells had given up. From behind us we could hear Trevor hurling rocks down Lolly Pot and just hoped the others were okay. There was no point in our going back down and we had to liaise with the presumed rescue team called out by Tom.

The rest of the way out was the usual drag, enlivened by the occasional wetting from streams coming in where they don't normally exist, especially in Ifold's Series. On passing the "Woggle Press" into the Entrance Ruckle it was obvious that water levels had now dropped. We emerged to a misty night and no sign of life until we reached the road when Jeff Price and other Wessex members appeared, on their way to get diving bottles! At the Belfry there was a full (but unofficial) call out in progress and Wormhole was also on standby with diving gear. It seemed there had been a couple of tremendous down pours in the afternoon concentrated on the North Hill/Priddy area and we had got the flood pulse. At least two other parties had been trapped in the cave as the entrance had sumped. Three men had to sit in the stream and dam it up in order for Pete and Alison to get out. All the others, including the Wessex all made it out for the pub where we managed to dominate the conversation all evening! (The storms occurred at about 2 p.m. and 3 p.m.)

15 May 1988 – Eastwater Cavern

A party from Exeter University led by experienced cavers became between two to three hours overdue from a first trip to the bottom of the old cave via the Twin Verticals. The non-caving member of the group on the surface raised the alarm at 8:50 p.m. The cavers had been down for about eight hours.

Brian Prewer received the call and alerted Duncan Frew, Pete Hann, Nigel Graham, Jim Rands and two others from the Wessex Cave Club. This search party found the Exeter University speleos just inside the entrance on their way out. They were safe and well and had only underestimated the route-finding problems in the system.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 23 (1988), page 42

8:30 p.m. on a Sunday after a hard weekend festering just got into the shower, got water nice and hot only to be interrupted by Mr. Rand's dulcet tones.

"Is that you in the shower Dunc?"

"Yes"

"Is it good?"

"Yes"

"Are you enjoying it?"

"Yes"

"There's a party two hours overdue in Eastwater!"

"You ----!"

Suppose I had to go underground eventually. All three safe and sound blissfully unaware of the time.

26 June 1988 – Gough's Cave

Source – Western Daily Press – 27 June 1988

WEST PAIR PROBE SECRETS OF UNDERGROUND RIVER DIVER BATTLES FOR LIFE IN CAVE DRAMA

Cave divers Rob Palmer and Richard Stevenson sipped champagne in Cheddar Gorge yesterday as they celebrated the end of the most dangerous underground expedition ever attempted in this country.

At one stage, more than 2,000 feet into the hillside, Mr. Palmer, aged 36, had to fight for his life as he became entangled in a line.

He was alone and under enormous pressure in 140ft of water, with zero visibility.

"The line was wrapped round my leg, and it was several minutes before I could get my knife from my belt and cut it away," he said.

"I dropped hundreds of pounds-worth of equipment but I decided my life was worth more than that so I abandoned it and headed for the surface."

He had just turned back as he reached the limit of his air supplies having discovered another 300ft of the huge underground river passage.



Malcolm Foyle cooks breakfast for cave explorers Richard Stevenson and Rob Palmer



A welcome pint for cave divers Rob Palmer and Richard Stevenson after their weekend expedition

Earlier, chartered accountant Mr. Stevenson, aged 40, of Wells, had to abandon his dive at almost the same spot after suffering severe cramp.

He and Mr. Palmer, from St. Briavels in the Forest of Dean, were deep inside Gough's Cave for more than 24 hours and had to take a long rest on the return journey because of the need for decompression.

Mr. Palmer said: "It is quite incredible underwater system, and at the place where I turned round it was still 30 feet wide and six to eight feet high. "I have no doubt that there are still miles of passages to be discovered and it will provide work for generations of cave divers."

The flooded passages lead on from Lord Weymouth's famous show caves, and assistant manager Chris Bradshaw said that after assessing the results of the weekend operation, experts would begin planning for another series of dives.

"But everyone is now exhausted after this marathon and nothing is likely to be done until next year."

8 July 1988 – General Alert

Source – WCC Jnl. Vol. 20 No. 221 June 1989, page 73

One of the briefest calls on record when a worried wife contacted the police on 8th July only to have the slightly overdue party report surfacing safely just as details were being relayed to us.

17 July 1988 – Swildon's Hole

Richard West received a call from Yeovil Police at 3:50 p.m. He was told that a female caver in a party of seven from the London area had possibly broken her ankle just upstream of Sump One. Brian Prewer was contacted to meet the informant on the Green for further details and rescue teams were raised from the Belfry through Mark Lumley and from Upper Pitts by Jeff Price. Richard advised Jim Hanwell of the incident and left to take control at Manor Farm.

A strong rescue party entered the cave at 4:10 p.m. only 20 minutes after the initial call. The team comprised of Mark Lumley, Jeff Price, Robin Taviner, Jim Smart, Nick Pollard, Graham Johnson, Adrian Williams, Paul Lambert and Stuart Lain, the Essex caver who had surfaced to raise the alarm. They carried in First Aid kits, medical supplies, new neoprene splints, hot air and heat packs, the Mager stretcher and food. A second party followed with hauling ropes at 4:34 p.m. including Dany Bradshaw, Doug Adams, Jim Moon and Pete Moody who agreed to be "runner".

At 5:20 p.m. Pete Moody surfaced to say that the patient had been splinted and was attempting to help herself out with assistance. She was also being carried by Dany Bradshaw where possible to speed things up. Dr. Tony Boycott went down the cave at 5:33 p.m. with Tom Chapman, Dave and Alan Turner. They took in tackle to haul the patient up the Twenty Foot Pot, including the "baby bouncer". It was reported that this pitch had been passed at about 6 p.m. and good progress was being made. An ambulance was called from Shepton Mallet and arrived 16 minutes before the patient surfaced. She was stretchered across the fields and the neoprene splints exchanged for an inflatable one in the ambulance with assistance from Entonox.

The injured girl, Barbara Williams, aged 29, from Northwood in Middlesex, had gone down

the cave at about 1:10 p.m. She had slipped on the sloping boulder just before Sump One. Two tablets of Temgesic were taken to ease pain and the new neoprene splints proved to be excellent.

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 17 July 1988

Rescue callout. Lad trapped on boulder before sump. Broken right ankle?*. Met just below the 20 and escorted out the Dry Way mostly on Dany's back. Two hours.

* Severe ligament sprain.

28 December 1988 – Calf Puke Hole

Source – BEC Log Book 1983, page 9

Gonzo, Jim, Nick, Fish, Liz, Hank

Rescued a calf from a newly opened mineshaft in Velvet Bottom. Calf puked and pissed on Gonzo who was down clearing it of barbed wire and rubbish before tying it on. Forty foot of new passage! ½ hour.

Postscript from Gonzo (2108) – I've only vague recollections but there was a call out from the farmer who had lost a calf down a newly collapsed shaft on his land.

Needless to say there was a stampede to be first one down and I won.

It was an old mineshaft on the farmland to the Nordrach side of Velvet Bottom which we accessed from the farm using Fish's 4wd Fiat Panda.

Choked at the bottom.

Farmer was delighted and gave us a bottle of scotch for our efforts (which lasted about an hour as we had Hank from the Pegasus with us!).

29 December 1988 – Swildon's Hole

Tony and Denise Knibbs spent longer in the cave than had been planned through giving assistance to a party of scouts experiencing some difficulties (too many cold, wet and miserable novices with only one leader). For their pains, they themselves were then reported as an hour overdue! Brian Prewer was alerted by the police at 6 p.m. He could not locate Tony's distinctive French registered car on the Green but found that all had surfaced recently. Tony Knibbs rang shortly afterwards to confirm what had happened.

Earlier in the day, Robin Maine had expressed concern about a car that had been parked overnight outside Manor Farm, Priddy, that clearly belonged to a caver. After a Swildon's trip it turned out that the owner had gone for drinks in the New Inn. He had been given a lift back to where he was staying on Mendip and intended to retrieve his car after sobering up!

1989

**Report by the Hon Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O.
for the Year to 31st December 1988**

The log of incidents that follows this report shows that our response times to emergencies continues to improve because of better communications and, of course, the willingness of experienced cavers in Mendip based clubs to turn out and help. In this way, cavers on Mendip are seen to be helping themselves rather than relying on others, whoever these might be. M.R.O. provides the necessary organisation and equipment.

Our links with the Police are vital and their provision of new pagers provides us with a sure means of being alerted should established methods fail. We are fortunate that the Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset, Mr. Ronald Broome, serves as the A.C.P.O. representative on the Mountain Rescue Committee and has first hand knowledge of potholing. It was a pleasure to support his nomination as the current President of the South West England Rescue Association.

We gave a lecture and dry demonstration of Sump Rescue techniques to a S.W.E.R.A. Conference at the Devon and Cornwall Police Headquarters, Exeter, last summer. With great support from Fred Barlow and Pete Rees at Mountain Rescue Committee meetings, approval was given for the purchase of a K.M.B. set for M.R.O. We are most grateful for this as it will enable more training to be undertaken in sump rescue by cave divers.

At Easter, we had the unusual experience of meeting the general public at the Somerset Saves Exhibition held in Wells Cathedral. It was also useful to meet colleagues from other emergency services. Richard West manned our display for the three days and many contacts were made. Subsequently, we met with senior Fire Brigade officers and made a tour of cave sites with flood risks.

The equipment highlight of the year was our purchase of neoprene splints and a skid sheet-cum-stretcher through G. & W. Bonser in Gwent. These ingenious and functional items have already proved their worth on actual rescues. They were demonstrated at First Aid lectures held at Priddy during the summer for cavers. We are especially grateful to Paul Fry of the Wells St. John's Ambulance for giving such useful and well received lectures.

The accounts are better than ever thanks to generous donations, not least from wardens who also give time and effort to actual rescues. Our aim is to provide an up-to-date cave rescue service which commands the full respect of those involved professionally in emergency work. Times have changed considerably since I first became an M.R.O. warden over thirty years ago, but the commitment of cavers to help others is just the same.

Jim Hanwell, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer

29 January 1989 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer was alerted by Yeovil Police at 4.05 p.m. They reported that a 16-year-old caver, Lee Parker, had fallen down a 12 foot drop in the Wet Way and broken his leg. The injured caver's brother had left to raise the alarm whilst another brother had stayed to help. A Westminster Speleological Group party in the cave chanced across the incident and assisted. A rescue party comprising of Tony Jarratt, Geoff Price, Pete McNab, Mark Lumley, Duncan Frew, Pete Hann, Mike Duck, A. Taylor, Pete Moody and Babs Williams entered the cave at about 4:20 p.m. with First Aid and hauling equipment. The patient was given two Temgesic tablets and the broken leg immobilised in neoprene splints. He was then hauled up the pitch in a "baby bouncer" and brought out within the hour, including being carried across the muddy fields in the Paraguard stretcher. The ambulance left for Bristol Royal Infirmary at 5:45 p.m. The three Parker brothers had been caving before, but Lee wore trainers which probably explains why he

slipped. They also misinformed M.R.O. that they were members of a club in the Hampshire area, which was officially refuted shortly afterwards.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 24 (1989), page 6

Nick Pollard, Murry Knapp. An enjoyable trip to Sump 6 for Nick, and Murry through 6b to start of 7 then straight back. In 5 we both noticed breathing was difficult especially before Sump 5. On way out we bumped into a rescue, some lad with broken leg about one minute in from entrance.

Source – BEC Log Book 1983, page 17

Broken leg from wet way. One hour. (Swore a bit).

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 4, page 26

Sunday afternoon callout to rescue a trainer clad small boy who had broken his lower leg at the "Well". Duncan fitted a neoprene splint on his leg and he was fairly gently dragged out alternating between groaning and laughing! Cave quite wet but no great problems encountered.

Source – Western Daily Press – 31 January 1989

POTHOLER, 16 BREAKS LEG

Potholer Lee Parker, aged 16, was recovering in hospital yesterday after he fell and broke a leg while caving in the Mendips.

Police and ten members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation had to carry him 300ft to the surface at Swildon's Hole in Priddy, near Wells.

The alarm was raised when Lee, from Gosport, Hampshire, slipped on rocks while exploring with friends. His condition at the Bristol Royal Infirmary was said to be improving.

2 February 1989 – Swildon's Hole

Fred Davies was contacted at Bruton by Yeovil Police at 5:45 p.m. An army party had been reported as missing. He requested Stuart McManus, Dave Pike and Dave Turner to form a search party and obtain further details. Barely 15 minutes later, H.T.V. gave a news flash that a "major search" was under way on Mendip. How they came by this and who confirmed the story is a mystery!

Nineteen Junior Leaders from RCT/RAOC, Azimghur Barracks, Colerne, Wiltshire, were led down the cave at about mid-day by corporals Ward and Bruce; the former being the most experienced caver. A third staff member who would normally have been with such a large party was ill. They went as one group to Sump One without incident; but, on the return above the Twenty Foot Pot, Corporal Bruce and nine others strayed off ahead of the rest and became lost in the Dry Ways. Unaware of this, Corporal Ward's party surfaced at about 4:30 p.m. having come out via the Wet Way. After waiting an hour, he raised the alarm.

When Stuart McManus and Fred Davies arrived at about 6:10 p.m. there was some uncertainty as to how many were still underground. Meanwhile, the lost party was chanced upon in the Water Chamber by two other cavers from Dorset and escorted out safely. "Major Search"

McManus thus called a parade on the Green and carried out a complete count to find all present and correct!

Notes from Incident Report –

Nature of Injuries – None. Except for a sever bollocking from M.R.O. Warden.

Estimated extent of Experience – Probably wonderful at polishing boots.

Brief Description – Cpl. Ward managed to lose Cpl. Bruce and nine other ranks. He then left the cave – called M.R.O. and did nothing else!

26 March 1989 – Charterhouse–on–Mendip

A family from Caine was exercising their Labrador dog over the Mineries when it crawled under the grill protecting the entrance of Rakes Shaft No. 14 and fell about 20 feet. Mrs. Fry at Nordrach was alerted and she went to the Mendip Caving Group hut at Nordrach for assistance. Jonathan Roberts there contacted Martin Bishop and Chris Batstone, who were already changed for a trip, at the Belfry. Brian Prewer was also informed and all went to the site with ropes. The large dog was neatly trussed up, hauled out and returned uninjured to its grateful owners.

Notes from Incident Report –

Cause of Incident – Canine stupidity.

Information on Personal Equipment – Loss of hair.

Source MCG Log Book Volume 9, page 68

Arrived back at cottage 15:05 to find Mary Fry just behind: dog had fallen down a mineshaft on the Rakes. Phoned Belfry and Brian Prewer alerted. Rescue achieved from Shaft No. 14 (see M.C.G. Journal 1982) by B. Prewer, Martin Bishop, Chris Batstone and J.R. I Golden Retriever returned to worried owners. Drinks in the Hunters' tonight thanks to donation from owners.

28 March 1989 – Swildon's Hole

Ruth McBride suffered a bad asthma attack at the Double Pots whilst caving with Ravenskaff Venture Scouts from Clevedon. One of the scouts left the cave to raise the alarm and the police contacted M.R.O. through the Hunters' Lodge Inn at 9:57 p.m. A dinner party at Upper Pitts was informed and those not indisposed turned out to assist; namely, Fred Davies, Brian Prewer, Tony Jarratt, Steve Pickersgill, Malc. Foyle, M. Heard, Graham Johnson, Ric and Pat Halliwell. On arrival at Priddy Green, they found that the patient had surfaced safely with assistance from her own party. A convenient stand down at 10:20 p.m. followed.

Notes from Incident Report –

Any other relevant information – Nice change from usual “Sit-on-your-arse-and-wait-to-be-rescued” attitude!

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 4, page 26

Rescue callout for a girl with asthma attack in Swildon's Hole which was all over by the time we got to The Green, the girl having recovered. The noteworthiness of this callout is the fact we've had one two years running whilst dining at the Wessex Hut, midweek, courtesy of Ric and Pat Halliwell (C.P.C.)! A new Mendip tradition?

CAVE RESCUE

A 27-year-old Clevedon woman had to be rescued from Swildon's Hole, Priddy, on Tuesday, when she suffered an asthma attack while on a caving trip.

Although the Mendip Cave Rescue team were called, Ruth McBride, of Old Church Road, was helped to the surface by her party of Adventure Scouts, before they arrived.

8 April 1989 – G.B. Cave

Graham Heriot of the Victoria Caving Group fell about 25 feet from the top of the Ladder Dig pitch early in the afternoon and sustained a badly fractured jaw with lacerations and severe bruising to his head, legs and arms. He was wearing slip-on type Rigger Boots and the single band chin strap of his helmet broke at some stage during the fall. His own account of how the fall happened is appended to this report for the record. He was lucky to get away so lightly in the circumstances and to have the support of two nurses, Sue Grimstead and Nickie Trill, who happened to be in the cave. Another party in the cave was also able to assist for they raised the alarm when the Victoria Caving Group member hurrying from the cave for help slipped and badly twisted his own leg.

Brian Prewer received the call from Yeovil Police at 3:10 p.m. and was told that the fallen caver had "multiple injuries". A major callout followed. Rescuers were raised from Upper Pitts through Murray Knapp and Dave Pike, whilst Trevor Hughes and Dave Leonard were encountered en route for Swildon's in full kit and diverted to G.B. Dr. Tony Boycott was called from a meeting at the Hunters' Lodge Inn. The first M.R.O. party, Trevor Hughes and Dave Leonard, went underground at 3:28 p.m., just 18 minutes after receiving the callout. Stuart McManus organised the underground teams and Tim Large established the surface control.

Murray Knapp and Alison Hutchings took down medical supplies at 3:36 p.m. Others followed in succession with necessary kit: Nick Pollard, Rob Taviner and Dave Pike took down the Mager stretcher frame and hauling ropes at 3:39 p.m.; Tony Boycott and Stuart McManus ferried in the carrying sheet at 3:45 p.m.; Brian Prewer went in with a bag of splints at 4:03 p.m.; Pat Cronin and Ken James took down further medical supplies, and Nigel Edwards and Tim Hall of the Border Caving Group set up radio contact at the entrance. Communications with those underground were made when Stuart Lain and Jim Rands took down the Grunterphone at 4:40 p.m. Alan Butcher, Jeff Smith, Keith Capper, Linda Wilson and Graham Mullen entered the cave to support at 4:41 p.m. Heat packs and the hot air breather were taken down by Nick Sprang and Richard Payne just before 5 p.m.

Good progress was made underground and Tony Jarratt, John Beachamp, Barry Hanks, Mark Lumley with two others went down to give a hand on the final stretch of the haul out. The patient was safely out of the cave by 6 p.m. and taken to Weston-super-Mare General Hospital.

This incident involved over 25 people underground with additional cavers standing by on the surface.

G.B. The Painful Way – A Tribute to M.R.O. by Graham Heriot

I have vivid memories of what happened on the afternoon of Saturday 8th April 1889.

It was the weekend of our Victoria Caving Group AGM. As my wet suit and caving boots seemed to get smaller each time I dig them out and get increasingly more painful to get on or off, I decided on this occasion to go comfortable caving in a dry cave. I therefore went down G.B. as far as the Ladder Dig extension, comfortably dressed and wearing boots not designed for caving. Although they had steel toe protection, they had no ankle support and not much grip. "This was my second mistake". The first was in going caving on this lovely sunny day.

I think there were seven people in our party. After reaching the top of the Ladder Dig climb, four of us, Alan, Mark, "Baldrick" and myself decided to sit it out whilst the others continued on to Bat Passage. The way through was a wet crawl which we didn't fancy; my reason being that I wanted to stay dry.

As "Baldrick" has never been left in the dark before, we decided to do the traditional thing and turn our lamps out. Alan and Mark shuffled their feet as if to move. As I was already standing, I thought I would move behind the rock that I was leaning on. "Final and almost fatal mistake". I was much closer to the ledge than I realised, and my boots didn't help to save me from slipping.

It's amazing how much goes through one's mind when falling in total darkness! I thought of many things as I was descending. My first thoughts were that I was actually dreaming. I then realised that I wasn't dreaming, but actually falling. I then couldn't understand why I was falling as I couldn't remember a hole being nearby. I then realised where I was falling, but by this time it was too late to panic. I suppose this was fortunate as I didn't stiffen up.

The next thing I recall was Mark saying something alongside me. I partially opened my eyes and saw a great deal of blood. I wanted to tell Mark not to worry about me as I knew that I would be OK. I was unable to do this as I learned later that I had broken my jaw in two places. I could not help thinking how worried he and Alan must have been because I couldn't move, I couldn't speak and I was bleeding awful! I was fully conscious from then onwards. It didn't seem long before there were two nurses snuggling up to me to keep me warm. Alan had gone for help and caught up with a group which we passed earlier; but, in doing so, he unfortunately twisted his foot before getting back to me with the two nurses. (Thanks for your fast work Alan). I never got to see the nurses and, although they told me their names while lying next to me, I can't remember them. I would like to take this opportunity (in case they read this) to thank them very much. I understood later that they were with me for over an hour, talking to me and trying to keep me warm. By this time, I was shivering excessively.

The M.R.O. was soon on the scene with bandages, heat packs and eventually a stretcher. This letter is a tribute to all concerned for doing an excellent job by getting me out fast under very difficult circumstances. I would like to give a special thanks to Mac who not only spent much physical effort getting me out, but also for the way in which he co-ordinated the rescue and for his sense of humour. Thanks Mac.

I hope that you will all join me in the near future for some well-deserved liquid refreshment at the Belfry.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 24 (1989), page 17

A lovely sunny fester day, half dozen z's just got back from the pub to crash out on the lawn with bread and jam and natch but not for long – G.B. rescue – guy fallen of Ladder Dig, broken jaw, broken femur, head injuries. Good progress with about 35 people helping.

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 8 April 1989

Called out of a C.C.C. meeting to rescue someone who had fallen off Ladder Dig from top of ladder. Broken jaw, broken femur? + lacerations and concussion. Quick rescue 2 hours. He had been left by the rest of his party, Victoria Caving Group and was found by two nurses.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 4, page 35

Just after lunch there was a callout to the C.C.C. meeting (and barrel!) at the Hunters'. Graham, one of the Victoria C.C. lads, had fallen from the Ladder Dig climb in G.B. and had, amongst other things, a broken jaw. Tony Boycott rushed off to join the team already there and I followed on later. Most of the available Mendip regulars turned up and Graham was brought to the surface after three hours, a bloody god time considering his injuries. Graham waved to us as he was put in the ambulance and all then retired to the rest of the C.C.C. barrel which was by now back at the Belfry. The rest of the day involved two more barrels....

6 May 1989 – Drunkard's Hole

Yeovil Police called Brian Prewer at 7:15 p.m. with news that someone was stuck down the cave. No further details were available. It was subsequently found that Mr. G. Townsend from Bridgwater Y.M.C.A. had been leading a group of novices comprising of one other adult and four 12-year olds when it was decided to turn back. Being now in the rear, he experienced difficulty in keeping up with his retreating party and exhausted himself in a tight passage. The youngsters immediately ahead could not help. A rescue team consisting of Tony Jarratt and Andy Sparrow went to assist with Brian Prewer, Pete Hann, Nigel Graham, Dave Pike, Jim Rands, Pete and Alison Moody in support. Tony and Andy had the stuck caver out by 8 p.m. none the worse for his ordeal.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 24 (1989), page 17

Charterhouse – Jim Rands, Bev Autoft, Sue Bonar, Nigel Graham. Two tubs of cement taken in. Jim used a roll of film. Out, just changed, when Prew wanted us to go caving again – one of two leaders of a youth group had become exhausted and unable to climb out of Drunkards!

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 4, page 42

Andy Sparrow, Tony Jarratt

Call out for victim stuck in Drunkard's Hole. The professional cavers, Andy and I arrived first, both in Landrovers! The victim was a middle aged Y.M.C.A. caving instructor who had been jammed but was coming out slowly, getting stuck on the way. Andy and I talked him out with a modicum of pushing from Andy. We probably didn't get 50 feet into the cave.

18 May 1989 – General Search

Brian Prewer was contacted direct by a Mrs. Ferguson from Bath 30 minutes after midnight. She said that her husband had gone caving straight from work the previous evening and had not returned. He had been expected back at 11 p.m. The informant had no further details of the cave or the other members of the party, except that they could be driving a green and white Citroen 2CV.

Yeovil Police were contacted to formalise the incident and they offered help with a patrol car to search likely sites. Nigel Taylor was alerted to check the popular places in Burrington and John Beecham did likewise at Charterhouse. Brian himself did a tour of Priddy. Twenty minutes

later, Mrs. Ferguson rang again to say that her husband Toby had returned. He had been down Manor Farm Swallet and taken longer than expected because of another slow party in the cave. On surfacing late, he had tried to contact his wife but the pay phones he found only took 999 calls. Cavers relying upon remote telephones must beware of this situation.

2 June 1989 – Swildon's Hole

Roger Dors received a call from Yeovil Police at 9:20 p.m. with a report that a caver in another party had fallen somewhere beyond Sump One and sustained serious injuries. No further details were known. A major operation followed during which it became apparent that two experienced Bath University cavers had been on a trip to the bottom of the Black Hole but had belayed their ladder to an unsound boulder. Douglas Gauld, aged 23, was the first to descend, but tried this unprotected and so fell about 35 feet with all the tackle when the boulder pulled out. His distraught partner, Kevin Martin, was unable to go to his assistance and, whilst hearing moans from below and even seeing his friend crawling around, he clearly expected the worse. There was nothing for it but to leave the scene and call for help.

Upstream of Sump One, he met a party with two army instructors from Colerne. Arrangements were made to alert M.R.O. and Kevin was accompanied back to the Black Hole. To his relief, they discovered that the fallen caver appeared to be remarkably composed and able to assess his injuries coherently. For some reason, the long rope available to the cavers on the spot remained in its tackle bag in the streamway.

The university students had gone down the cave at 7:15 p.m. and the fall occurred at about 8:30 p.m. So, the injured caver was stranded and unattended for about 90 minutes until Jonathan Swift, who headed the first M.R.O. team, arrived at the Black Hole about 10:10 p.m. The rope was put to good use at last when Jonathan belayed it and did a classic abseil to reach Douglas Gauld. He was closely followed to the pitch by Graham Price, Mike Breakspeare, Keith Savory and Stuart McManus. By now, Richard West had set up a control on Priddy Green and many other teams were called and stood by. It promised to be an all-night job at least.

Graham Johnson acted as an effective runner until full communications were established. Tony Jarratt carried in the neoprene splints and Dany Bradshaw the hot air kit. Nick Pollard took down extra heat packs and Andy Sparrow hauling ropes and a harness.

At 10:26 p.m. Bob Cork and Dr. Tony Boycott went underground with the Mager stretcher. Shortly afterwards, Jonathan Swift surfaced with first hand news that the patient had wrist and back injuries, but seemed to have had a remarkable escape from such a fall. Dave Pike brought the Sump Rescue apparatus along and several cave divers were alerted. Although there was a possibility that Douglas Gauld might be willing and able to be pulled through whilst holding his breath, this could not be guaranteed, of course. So, the bulky equipment was taken underground to Sump One by Martin Bishop, Chris Batstone, Pat Cronin, Ian Brown, Ashley Houlton, Aubrey Newport, Robin Brown, Pete McNab, Max Milden and Steve Redwood.

More hauling and medical equipment was taken into the cave by Nigel Graham, Rob Taviner and Dave Grieves whilst the Grunterphone and sump telephone went down at 11:30 p.m. with Nigel Taylor, Phil Romford and Trevor Hughes. Ted Humphries followed in support. By midnight, a surface team comprising Brian Prewer, Brian Workman, Jim Hanwell and Nick Barrington were listening in above Sump One and Dave Pike maintained a radio link at the entrance. Good three-way communications with control were established at 1:14 a.m. The hauling party was reported as approaching the downstream side of Sump One. Hot air spares

and a dry furry suit were requested and taken down by Fred Davies and Alan Mills. The patient agreed to be towed through the sump without using breathing apparatus.

Throughout the night, the long haul continued: 1:22 a.m. through the Sump; 2:53 a.m. at Barnes' Loop; 4 a.m. at the Twenty Foot; 4:25 a.m. at the Eight Foot; 4:53 a.m. in the Water Chamber, and 5:23 a.m. at Jacob's Ladder. The patient was brought out of the cave to the awaiting ambulance and press at 6:03 a.m., over nine hours after falling so badly. He was taken to the Royal United Hospital in Bath.

This was the longest distance that M.R.O. has had to carry someone injured out of a Mendip cave. It is a tribute to all concerned that it ran so smoothly and relatively quickly in the event. The inevitable media reports were also reasonable and we are learning how to deal with this side of things too. Thirty cavers were involved underground and ten more directly on the surface. Many others stood by in case they were needed later in the day.

Notes from Incident Report –

An amusing aside – the two victims were J. Rat's last customers on Thursday evening. As well as caving kit, they purchased various neoprene off-cuts and on enquiring the price were told by Tony "Stick some money in the M.R.O. tin on the counter – you never know when you might need them!!

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 2 June 1989

Black Hole rescue. Called from home by Brian Prewer at 9:45 p.m. Douglas Gould (Bath University Caving Club) had fallen (belay broken) from top of Black Hole Pitch – 40 feet. Went down with Bob Cork. Broken wrist and possible pelvis, back and head injury. Moved out slowly, free-dived Sump I (one inch air space). Out by short Dry Way and exit at 6:15 a.m. to H.T.V. cameras.

Source – Keynsham & District Advertiser – 9 June 1989

THE GREAT ESCAPER POTHOLE DEFIES CAVE PLUNGE DEATH

A Bath student narrowly escaped death when he fell 40ft down a cave shaft beneath the Mendips – and lay trapped for nine hours. But amazingly this week 23-year-old Douglas Gauld was discharged from Bath's Royal United Hospital with only a fractured wrist. And the young engineering student from Trowbridge in Wiltshire, owes his life to two fast thinking soldiers who helped to keep him calm throughout his nightmare Douglas and his friend Kevin Martin, both experienced cavers, were pot holing at the entrance to Swildon's Hole in the Mendips when Douglas slipped and fell 40 feet down a pitch taking the equipment with him. Kevin went immediately to look for help but luckily, he came across two members of the Junior Leaders Regiment caving team from Colerne who were pot holing in the same area. And while Sergeant Graham Smith went to contact the Mendip Cave Rescue Team, Sergeant Peter Hamilton went with Kevin to find the injured student. After many attempts to rescue Douglas, Sgt. Hamilton realised that he was trapped on the far side of a water filled passage and they would have to wait for Cave Rescue Team to arrive. Sgt. Hamilton and Kevin Martin comforted Douglas telling him jokes and talking to him until the team arrived under the expert guidance of Sgt. Smith. Then using Sgt. Hamilton's caving equipment, the rescue team had to dive



Rescuers bring injured caver Douglas Gauld to the surface.

Western Daily Press photograph

3 June 1989

Source – Western Daily Press 8 June 1989

POTHOLER QUILTS FOR PARENT' SAKE

Rescued potholer Douglas Gauld is quitting the sport to save his parents from further anxiety after a night of terror in a Mendips cave. Mr. Gauld, aged 23, of Crawley Crescent, Trowbridge, was lucky to escape with a multiple break of the wrist and severe body bruising after a 30ft fall.

It took the Mendip Cave Rescue Team ten hours to bring him to the surface after fellow caver Kevin Martin raised the alarm at Swildon's Pot, near Wells.

During that agonising time he stopped rescuers from contacting his parents until he was safe at the surface.



In good spirits . . . cave fall casualty Douglas Gauld.

through the 6ft water-filled passage known as a sump to reach Douglas who was conscious throughout the nine hour rescue operation. And this week Captain Dane Pepperday, the Adjutant of Junior Leaders, praised the two soldiers for their quick action. "Obviously we are very proud of them and their achievement," he said.

"The whole event shows great fortitude and common sense on the part of the soldiers and both the students also kept calm which must have been very difficult."

It was his first scrape in four years of caving but he said: "I won't be caving again for a long time because I don't want to put my parents through it."

Mr. Gauld, a Bath University engineering student fell after a boulder came adrift as he was fixing a ladder to it.

He is still on crutches but his spirits are high and is hoping for doctor's clearance next month to go on a six week back-packing holiday in Canada.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 4, page 46

Mac, Bish, Biffo, Fred, Phil, Robin Brown, Ashley, Jake, Nigel T, Nigel G, John, two Army lads, 2 Bath U.C.C, G. Price, 2 others, Snab, Catspin, Pat, Andy Sparrow, Dany, Bob, Aubrey, Max, 1 M.C.G., Tony Boycott, Ted, Brian W., Tony Jarratt etc. (Surface – Jim, Brian, Bren, Rich etc.)

Call out about 9:15 p.m. for two Bath University C.C. members, one of whom had fallen down the Black Hole after a boulder had failed. (These two were my last customers of the day!) Dany and I arrived on the scene fairly early, following John (C.S.S.), an Army caver, Jake and Mac. Tony Boycott arrived soon after and the victim, who had a painful back and left hip and a presumed broken right wrist, was assisted up the Black Hole pitch in a harness. At the top, he was inserted into a drag sheet and taken slowly to the main streamway where he was put in the Mager Stretcher. Being in reasonably good form and tough, he decided that he would be pulled through Sump I without the sump rescue kit. This was quickly and surprisingly easily achieved and the long slog out of the cave began. There were no real problems and the Grunter phone worked perfectly. Everyone out at 6 a.m. Friday to be greeted by Nick Barrington, Clive North and the rest of the local press, frost and a gloriously sunny morning. A good rescue but a bit like being on the night shift. The victim did very well all the way out and despite great pain hardly moaned at all.

2 December 1989 – General alert

Fred Davies was called by the police at 50 minutes past midnight because someone from Bristol had been reported as overdue following a trip with a party of scouts to a Priddy cave the previous evening. He stood by Dave Turner and Brian Workman, then asked Brian Prewer to check both the Green and Eastwater Lane. Shortly afterwards, M.R.O. was contacted again to say that the caver concerned had just returned home at 1:35 a.m.

23 December 1989 – Goatchurch Cavern

The police called at 6:50 p.m. to report that a 15-year-old scout had slipped and dislocated his right knee (footwear – worn, tread-less trainers). Nigel Taylor was alerted and at the cave to help within ten minutes of the callout. He found that a party of four adults and nine teenagers, all members of the 21st Swindon Scouts, had been coming out of the cave when Paul Bannister slipped on the polished rock below the cut steps in the main entrance passage. His knee was badly dislocated and he was in great pain. The fall occurred at about 6:30 p.m. The scouts rigged a handline to the surface whilst waiting for M.R.O.

After assessing the injuries, Nigel called for a stretcher. This was brought to the cave by Tim Large, Fred Davies, Tony Jarratt and Dany Bradshaw at 7:25 p.m. The patient was soon evacuated and carried to the roadside to await the arrival of an ambulance. This was delayed until 8:15 p.m. owing to industrial action. A paramedic in the ambulance crew administered

Entonox and relocated the injured knee. The patient was then taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary for further treatment.

Source – Tony Jarratt’s Log Book – Vol. 4, page 83

Fred Davies, Nigel Taylor, Dany, Tim Large, Tony Jarratt.

Unsocial evening callout for 15-year-old Scout with dislocated knee at the bottom of the Giant’s Steps. The unfortunate one was placed on a drag sheet and quickly removed from the cave. An ambulance “para-medic” did an excellent job of re-locating the lad’s knee. It seems the Scouts were having some sort of “paper chase” in the cave and the victim, for one, had piss awful footwear on. Will they never learn!

Source – Western Daily Press 27 – December 1989

INJURED SCOUT IN CAVE DRAMA

A Scout, aged 16, had to be rescued from a cave at a Mendip beauty spot after falling and dislocating his right knee.

Paul Bannister of Glevun Road, Coleview, Swindon was one, of 13 venture scouts from the 21st Swindon Scout Troop who were exploring Goatchurch Cavern in Burrington Combe, near Weston-super-Mare last Saturday.

Six members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation went into the cavern and brought him out. Paul was taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary.

1990's

Report by the Hon Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 1989

Sadly, yet with many lively memories, we record the death of Dr. Stanley Cannicott during the summer. Stanley started caving on Mendip whilst a pupil at nearby Downside School before the last War. He was also a keen member of their cadet corps. When the war came, Stanley joined up from university and saw much front line action as a paratroop officer and field surgeon. Being fluent in both French and Spanish, he also worked with the Resistance. He was decorated for valour and severely wounded himself. On returning after the War to work as the senior psychiatric officer in local hospitals, he settled with his family in Cheddar and joined the Axbridge Caving Group.

It was always a comforting and invariably colourful moment when Stanley arrived on the scene at rescues to attend injured cavers. All his field surgeon's experience and psychiatric skills went to work and we learnt a lot from seeing him in action; often unorthodox but unfailingly practical and effective. His First Aid lectures for wardens at the Mendip Hospital in the early seventies were masterpieces of anecdote and demonstration; he did not just talk about injections, for instance, but pulled down his trousers, stuck the hypodermic needle into his thigh and invited us to inject him with water whilst calmly explaining the do's and don'ts of the process. At one meeting to consider how we might get a badly hurt caver back through Blue Pencil, soon after Swildon's Four was first discovered, Stanley seriously set out his requirements for performing an amputation in the cave. Needless to say, these were startlingly simple and made sense.

The last rescue Stanley attended was when Graham Price fell off the old Forty Foot Pot in Swildon's in November 1973 and fractured his pelvis. Tim Reynolds and I were patching him up for the carry-out when Stanley arrived. Barely glancing at the patient, he asked us if we were happy with the plastering we had applied around the waist, then joined the hauling party saying: "We'll soon find out if you've done the job properly". He was an immensely practical and reassuring person who gave everyone great confidence in themselves. That is why he responded well to cavers and us to him.

In all other respects, the year has been rewarding. Rescues have been few but occasionally challenging. Other meetings, such as the advanced First Aid ones organised by Bob Cork and Dany Bradshaw, have started successfully. We have also received great support from local cavers and the Mountain Rescue Committee nationally. The accounts that follow tell their own story.

Jim Hanwell, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer

13 January 1990 – Thrupe Lane Swallet

Martin Scott, aged 28, from Aylesbury descended to the bottom of the cave with a well-equipped and experienced party of six from a geophysical research firm in the London area. He had done the least caving before and it was his first time on long ladder pitches underground. On ascending Atlas Pot at about 2:30 p.m., he fell about twenty feet onto a fortuitous ledge and broke his leg. He also damaged a wrist. The life-line only slowed his fall because the incorrectly rigged Stitch Plate belay gave way under the strain.

One of the party left the cave to raise the alarm through Mrs. Butt. Yeovil Police alerted Brian Prewer at 3:30 p.m. Dany Bradshaw and rescuers from both the Belfry and Upper Pitts were called. All left for the cave with basic equipment. Richard West was contacted at 3:35 p.m. to

take over surface control and organise further rescuers and hauling gear. Dr. Tony Boycott was informed. Eric Dunford set up communications links between the surface and underground parties with Brian Prewer.

Rescuers entered the cave at 4:15 p.m. Dany Bradshaw, Nick Williams, Dave Hilder, Pete Evans, Mike Wilson, Jeremy Henly, Richard Blake, Richard Stevens, Chris Harvey, Nick Gymer and Sara McDonald carried in the First Aid and hauling equipment. Duncan Frew and Pete Hann went down with the Grunterphone.

The patient was reached by about 4:40 p.m. and communication established soon afterwards. Tony Boycott and Rob Harper were accompanied underground by Tony Jarratt at 4:50 p.m. The patient was found to be in fair condition and able to do a lot to help himself. However, he was large and so a long haul out was anticipated. A back-up team assembled outside the farm comprising Stewart McManus, Nigel Taylor, Tim Large, Trevor Hughes and Ian Caldwell. Richard Witcombe and Clive North turned up and opened their diggers' hut as a refuge. Soups were heated at the Belfry by Anne West, Hilary Wilson and Glenys Grass then ferried to the cave by Helen Harper and Joss Large. Further rescuers stood by at the Belfry and their homes.

The local police provided flood lights on the road. Nick Woolf of the Ambulance service attended so that his crews could be radioed when needed rather than waste valuable time hanging around. A freelance reporter turned up and was given the basic facts by Jim Hanwell. Martin Scott was reported as being at the top of Atlas Pot by 5:55 p.m. He reached the head of Perseverance Pot at 6:55 p.m. and was out of the cave by 7:40 p.m. The ambulance left for the Royal United Hospital, Bath, five minutes later. Those left to clear up managed to make the Hunters' just before closing time! When a lot of gear is used, it takes a long time to clear up. Many useful lessons were learnt from this incident and Martin's "thank you" letters soon afterwards were much appreciated.

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 13 January 1990

Martin Scott. Callout at 3 p.m. – fallen 30 feet off Atlas Pot, partially life-lined. Broken leg? Went down with J'Rat and got lost – tried to go down Bridge Rift without tackle. Got to top of Atlas Pot to meet victim and Dany coming up. Ankle injury only. Moved out rapidly with self help. Free climbed Perseverance Pot. Out by 8:30 p.m. Press and H.T.V. in attendance.

Source – Descent – April/May 1990, page 15

THRUPE LANE ACCIDENT

An accident in Thrupe Lane Swallet on the 13th January carries a warning for all users of Sticht plates. A group descended Atlas Pot by laddering the alternative dry shaft (reached by a traverse to the right). To lifeline the climb a Sticht plate was used, belayed to a bolt anchor 2m above the pitch head. On the return climb a caver (who lacked experience of ladders) became exhausted and fell near the top of this 20m pitch. The Sticht plate failed to lock off and the victim fell, fracturing his lower leg.

A rescue callout followed. The casualty's leg was splinted and he was able to evacuate himself from the cave. He was highly commended by the M.R.O. for his determination while exiting from the cave in considerable pain.

An important point emerges from this accident. It is sound practice to remove the lifeline from the rope system whenever possible, but this approach may create a hazard when using a Sticht plate.

To be used safely the lifeliner's end of the rope must emerge at 90 degrees from the Sticht plate. In Thrupe the plate was belayed in such a position that an angle of 45 degrees existed between the emerging ropes. Old, stiff or wet ropes may lock off effectively at this angle, but a newer rope will behave quite differently, running through the plate unimpeded. This was the case in Thrupe.

The most effective lifelining methods for the modern caver are a Sticht plate or an Italian hitch. It must be noted that while the latter works well rigged at head height, the Sticht plate is highly dangerous in that position. To operate a Sticht plate safely, always keep an angle of 90 degrees between the emerging ropes.

Andy Sparrow

Source – Bristol Sunday Independent – 14 January 1990

CAVE RESCUE DRAMA – RACE TO SAVE INJURED MAN

Cave rescue teams last night saved a trapped seriously-injured potholer 700ft underground in the Mendips. The 22-year-old caver, from London, who has not been named, was taken to Bath's Royal United Hospital after an ordeal lasting more than four hours. He fell more than 400ft during an expedition into a cave system at Thrupe Lane Swallet, near Wells. The other members of his party, all from London, managed to climb out and raise the alarm. Members of the Mendips Cave Rescue Team struggled through the system's notoriously difficult narrow pot-holes to reach the injured man, lying in a water-filled cavern more than 700ft underground. He was believed to be conscious but suffering from serious leg injuries following the fall yesterday afternoon. A doctor was with the cave rescue team so that the victim could be treated during the long process of getting him out of the cave system. Ambulancemen were standing by on the surface to rush him to hospital when he was brought out of the Thrupe system.

Source – Western Daily Press – 15 January 1990

CAVER IN 4 HOUR RESCUE

Rescue teams spent four hours freeing a potholer seriously injured 700 feet underground at the weekend.

They said only the experience of the caver stopped the rescue in the Mendips going on all night. Martin Scott, aged 28, of Aylesbury in Berkshire, fell in narrow Thrupe Swallet near Croscombe, Shepton Mallet on Saturday.

His friends returned to the surface to raise the alarm after Mr. Scott fell in a water-filled cavern. Mendip Cave Rescue team were called in and a doctor went underground to give first aid before Mr. Scott was slowly carried to the surface.

He was taken to Bath's Royal United Hospital with a broken leg and back injuries, but was allowed home yesterday.

Source – Tony Jarratt’s Log Book – Vol. 4, page 87

Tony B, Dany, Duncan, P. Hann, Carmen, Nick Symes, Zot, Mike Wilson, Mac, Rob Harper, Jeremy Healey, Nick Williams, Trev Hughes, Fred, Tony Jarratt plus many others!

Called out from the shop about 4 p.m. Blitz took over. Drove to Thrupe and went underground with Tony Boycott at 5 p.m. After getting lost at the bottom of Perseverance Pot we eventually reached the head of Atlas Pot where the victim was, by now, sitting. He had fallen, life-lined, on Atlas and the girl life-liner was unable to hold him; he was a very big lad. He had fractured his right leg above the ankle but after being put in a neoprene splint he was able to pluckily walk out most of the way, being hauled up the pitches in a “baby bouncer”. There were no problems on the way out and we emerged to the attentions of Harlech Television and welcome hot soup. One of the easier and more pleasant rescues which could have turned out to be an all-night epic!

4 February 1990 – Cheddar Cliffs

Two yearling cows belonging to Cheddar farmer Tom Cambridge slipped down the cliffs behind the Wishing Well Tea Rooms at the bottom of the Gorge and became trapped in the 15ft by 3ft slot between the buildings and bluff. Cheddar Fire Brigade were first alerted and suggested calling M.R.O. The farmer concerned lets his animals roam, much to the annoyance of some villagers. Cavers have helped before by recovering his goats off cliffs.

Taunton Police requested assistance from Brian Prewer at 9:30a.m. BEP assembled a “beefy” team comprising Fred Davies, Nigel Taylor, Dany Bradshaw, Chris Harvey, Graham Wilton-Jones, Chris Smart, Martin Grass and Stuart Lain went to the scene with hauling tackle. By cunning use of bales of straw and ropes, the reluctant yearlings were lifted onto the flat roof, tied to metal farm gates and lowered down a preconstructed ramp to the open road. The task was completed by 12:30p.m., and everyone seemed happy, save for one ungrateful beast who shat upon Nigel for his trouble! No “thank you” has been forthcoming from the farmer either.

Source – Western Daily Press – 5 February 1990

BANG, CRASH! IT’S BEEF DROPPING IN FOR LUNCH CLIFF FALL HEIFERS HOISTED TO SAFETY

Brawn and brains were needed to save smallholder Tom Cambridge’s beef yesterday. Two of his Hereford- cross heifers got in a right pickle in Cheddar Gorge - and became something of a tourist attraction as they were hoisted over the rooftops to safety. The operation proved a tough test for expert climbers and cavers from the Mendip Rescue Organisation who were called to case the joint. It began at breakfast time as Bryan Lewis and his wife Mary were preparing to open their Spinning Wheel restaurant. They were planning roast beef for lunch - and then had the shock of their lives when it arrived with a crash. The animals had plunged 30 feet down rocks and were firmly wedged in a narrow gap between the back of the building and the cliff face. The 12-man rescue team used lifelines and hoists, ladders, a load of straw, two five-barred gates, and planks and other materials borrowed from a nearby building site. They first had to lift the two quarter-ton animals 15ft on to the flat roof of an outhouse, where they were found to be completely unhurt. Then, firmly tied to the gates to stop them struggling, they were gently lowered into Mr. Lewis’s garden to be ushered to a waiting cattle truck. Mr. Cambridge, of Lynch Farm, Cheddar, said he thought the two six-month-old Hereford cross heifers had been driven into the undergrowth on the cliffs by bad weather.



Mission completed . . . the cows are led away

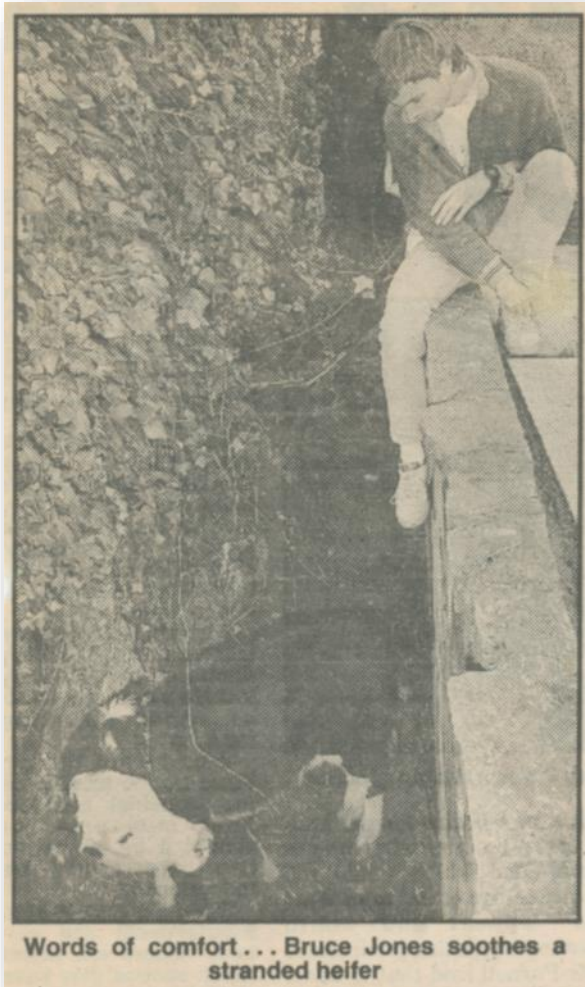


Members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation lower one of the heifers trapped in Cheddar Gorge to safety on Sunday.

Source – Cheddar Valley Gazette – 8 February 1990

COWS ARE RESCUED FROM CHEDDAR GORGE

Two cows had a moving experience in Cheddar Gorge at the weekend. The Mendip Cliff Rescue were called to the gorge to rescue the cows, which had fallen about



20 feet into a small space between the back of the Wishing Well Tea Shop and the rock face.

Bryan Lewis and his wife Mary, of the Wishing Well, were preparing to open their shop on Sunday morning when they had the shock of their lives – two quarter-ton cows as their first customers.

Mr. Lewis called the police who then contacted the cliff rescue organisation.

It took about an hour and a half to hoist the Hereford cross heifers, which belong to Tom Cambridge, of The Lippiat, Cheddar, across the rooftops to safety.

Brian Prewer, of the Mendip Rescue Team, said: “We were called out as the fire brigade couldn’t reach them being too far back from the road. “The poor animals were very frightened and we had to be very careful.

The 12-man team used life- lines, hoists, ladders, straw, two five-barred gates and planks for the operation.

Mr. Prewer said: “We had to tie them onto farm gates, to stop them struggling, and carry them across the store roof and then lowered them down a ramp made of ladders out to the front of the restaurant.”

However, he said that this was not that an usual rescue for the organisation and they had calls to rescue goats and other animals as well as people.

And despite their ordeal – apart from the odd scratch and graze – they are fit and well and will hopefully look before they leap in future.

11 March 1990 – Sally’s Rift, Warleigh Woods

The police at Bath were checking out the possibility that the body of the missing woman, Ruth Stevens, was somewhere in these woods near Bathford. Old stone mine workings associated with Sally Rift occur in the area and Bob Scammell volunteered to check the known sites. He was accompanied by Nick McCamley, Derek Hawkins and John Greenslade. A thorough two-hour search of every old shaft and rift was undertaken but nothing untoward found.

1 April 1990 – Read’s Cavern

Eleven members of the Golders Green venture scouts from London descended the cave at about mid-day. The suitably equipped party was led by Jim Rands and supported by Dave Morrison; both highly experienced members of the Wessex Cave Club. On reaching the Main Chamber,

several then decided to return to the surface and were escorted out. Whilst this was happening, Pete Wilkinson, Julia Waxman and Samira Abbas, aged seventeen, decided to explore Zed Alley without telling anyone. Wilkinson was unable to follow the two slim girls when they forced several squeezes beyond the boulder ruckle. He stayed to guide their return to the ruckle, but then left the cave ahead. For some reason, the girls did not follow. Once out of earshot, they became lost and scared.

The missing pair failed to surface behind Wilkinson and he was unable to describe where he had left them. Jim Rands made a rapid search of the regular routes in vain. He requested help and Brian Prewer received the call from Yeovil Police at 4:15 p.m. Nigel Taylor was contacted at Langford and reached the cave to establish surface control by 4:45 p.m. Rescuers from Priddy had to run the gauntlet of heavy holiday traffic in Burrington Combe.

Pete Hann, Ian Marchant, Tony Deacon and Jim Rands went into the cave at 4:48 p.m. to search Zed Alley as now the most likely location for the missing pair given the earlier search by Jim. Brian Prewer, Andy Sparrow and Martin White arrived shortly afterwards in support and communications were established with the Belfry through Stewart McManus and Chris Harvey should further rescuers and equipment prove necessary. Andy and Martin went down the cave at 5 p.m. to check out the less likely Browne-Stewart Series.

The missing girls were soon located at the bottom of the boulder ruckle and reported to be well but rather cold and frightened at 5:15 p.m. They were given food and drinks to boost their morale.

Alison Moody arrived at 5:25 p.m. and stood by. All were safely out of the cave by 6:12 p.m. Needless to say, those concerned showed their gratitude in many ways, not least back at the Hunters!

Source – Wells Journal – 5 April 1990

SLIM GIRLS HAVE NARROW ESCAPE IN CAVE RESCUE

A special “thin-team” was needed for a tricky rescue at caves in Burrington Combe on Saturday. The four-man slim squad was alerted when two teenage girls from a London Venture Scout group got lost in Read’s Cavern and were trapped in a narrow area called Z-Alley.

Mendip Cave Rescue spokesman Brian Prewer said both girls were slim and had worked their way into a very small area, and so the special thin man team was drafted in. The team is kept on stand-by for such emergencies.

Mr. Prewer said: “They were cold, frightened and rather hungry, but apart from that were none the worse for wear.” He said the girls had been underground for five hours and added: “It was a case of slight over-enthusiasm that got them trapped.”

28 April 1990 – Longwood Swallet

Yeovil Police contacted Fred Davies at 11:22 p.m. to say that a woman from Keynsham had reported an overdue party. She described the car being used as red and “G” registration! Brian Prewer was asked to drive to Longwood to check whether the cavers were still underground. Other rescuers, including Stewart McManus, were stood by at Priddy.

No car was found at Longwood. Meanwhile, the informant contacted the police again at 11:40 p.m. to say that all the party had returned home. After all, it takes about forty minutes to reach Keynsham from Mendip after closing time!

31 May 1990 Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer was contacted by Yeovil Police at 1:45 a.m. They reported that a party from Beaminster, Dorset, was overdue from a trip to Sump One as they had been expected home at 11:30 p.m. The girlfriend of one of the cavers had raised the alarm from a call box in Dorset but could provide no further information.

Leaving the police to try and obtain more details about any vehicles used, Brian went to check for any parked on the greens in Priddy. All likely places were empty. The police were told later that the caver concerned had got home at 2:36 a.m. It takes even longer to reach Beaminster from Mendip after closing time, of course!

16 July 1990 – Eastwater Cavern entrance

Mrs. Dorothy Gibbons rang Brian Prewer for assistance to retrieve a heifer stuck in narrow gully on the cliffs above the cave entrance. He requested help from Fred Davies, Andy Sparrow, Pete Moody and a party staying at the Belfry, including Ray Mansfield and Nick Williams with a visiting Czechoslovakian couple. By chance, the husband, Jan Sencer, was a vet!

Mr. Gibbons and his family had managed to get a heavy rope around the animal's neck to a JCB on the cliff top. The heifer did not like this. Being more familiar with such problems in Czechoslovakia, no doubt, Jan descended the cliff and succeeded in getting a tape halter over the head with help from Fred. Two more tape slings were passed around the front legs. Jan's wife acted as interpreter for the hauling instructions, given in Czechoslovakian, for which we do not have much call on Mendip.

The heifer was soon lifted about 10 feet to safety suffering from surprise, a few cuts and bruises, and a lame leg. But it did not shit on anyone, which is a great compliment to Jan's "bedside" manner and expertise. Mr. and Mrs. Gibbons were especially grateful and appreciative.

23 July 1990 – Shute Shelve Cutting

Brian Prewer received a call from Taunton Police at 5 p.m. requesting assistance to investigate a crashed motorcycle. It had been abandoned in the disused railway cutting on its approach to the old tunnel between Axbridge and Winscombe and was lodged in bushes about 30 feet above a sheer cliff. There was the possibility that an injured rider was in the vicinity below. Brian, Nigel Taylor, Rich West and Dany Bradshaw went to the scene with ropes. Nigel abseiled to the motorcycle and attached a hauling line for it to be pulled up by the others. No person was found and the incident was over by 7 p.m.

19 August 1990 – Swildon's Hole

Alan Butcher rang Brian Prewer at 1 a.m. to say that a party was overdue by about four hours according to the noticeboard in the Shepton Mallet Hut. A group from Guildford had not returned there. After making enquiries, it was discovered that the party had been based elsewhere on Mendip. They had only called in at the Shepton Hut on their way to the cave, but left directly for Guildford without cancelling their notice! The police were not informed of this incident.

31 August 1990 – Swildon’s Hole

Force Control in Bristol alerted Brian Prewer at 5:45 p.m. to an overdue party of Wiltshire Police from Swindon that should have returned there at 4:30 p.m. He checked out both village greens to see if the reported car being used by the cavers was still there. It was not. At 6:45 p.m., the police called again to say that they had got it wrong as the trip was to take place the next day!

2 September 1990 – Alert

A caver abseiling at Underwood (or “Split Rock”) Quarry near Wookey Hole was concussed and so admitted overnight to Wells and District Hospital. He was worried that other members of his group staying in the M.C.G. Cottage at Nordrach might call out M.R.O. when he failed to return there. The police were informed and they advised Brian Prewer of the situation. Brian then contacted the cottage to let those concerned know what had happened.

6 October 1990 – G.B. Cave

Yeovil Police contacted Brian Prewer just after midnight to report an overdue party expected out at least two hours earlier. Shortly afterwards, the informant reported that the four cavers concerned had turned up. They had been delayed on entering the cave and then could not find a telephone box on getting out late.

6 October 1990 – Swildon’s Hole

The police alerted Brian Prewer at 2:50 p.m. Miss Ceili Williams, aged 24, was caving with an Oxford University Caving Club party and dislocated her shoulder in Barnes’ Loop. Apparently, this had happened to her before, though not whilst caving. A strong B.E.C. contingent was called out from their AGM. Dany Bradshaw, Bob Cork and Stewart McManus organised the underground team, Nigel Taylor stood by at the Belfry and Tim Large took over surface control on Priddy Green. Dr. Tony Boycott was asked to attend.

Pete McNab, Kevin Garner and Nick Gymer formed the advance party with First Aid, comforts, the “baby-bouncer”, lifeline and ladder. They entered the cave at 3:10 p.m., only twenty minutes after receiving the call out. Tony Boycott and Graham Naylor closely followed them. Dany Bradshaw, Bob Cork and Stewart McManus left at 3:32 p.m. Wessex Cave Club diggers from Cow Hole arrived in support.

On Tony’s request an attempt was made to locate Entenox. Don Thompson was contacted but could not supply a full cylinder. Ambulance Control was asked, via the police, to provide a set. Some while later an ambulance arrived with spare cylinders but initially were not prepared to let the demand valve and mask go underground. After further discussions Ambulance Control agreed to let the kit go underground but the ambulance would have to stay until the kit was returned. Don Thomson provided a demand valve for use with the spare cylinders.

At 4:15 p.m. a message was received that Tony Boycott had succeeded in relocating the shoulder and the patient was on the way out, mainly helping herself. She surfaced at 4:51 p.m. and it was considered that no further treatment to her shoulder was required.

Source – Tony Boycott’s Log Book – 6 October 1990

Called out to a rescue in Swildon's – dislocated shoulder in Barnes' Loop. Two Temgesic and one Ativan and reduced. Out under own steam and "baby bouncer". Out to pouring rain and had to restrain the ambulance men from whisking her off.

24 October 1990 – Swildon's Hole

Yeovil Police informed Brian Prewer at 10:25 p.m. that a report of an injured caver had been received. They had no further details of the injuries or of the location in the cave; so, the informant herself was sought out on Priddy Green. She explained that John Swift from Weston-super-Mare had fallen at the Double Pots and injured his ankle. There was some concern because the person hurt had a pace-maker.

A rescue party was assembled from the Hunters, including Dr. Tony Boycott. Many stood by. On arriving at Priddy Green, they were confronted by the patient limping along the road. A rapid about turn ensued!

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 24 October 1990

At closing time at the Hunters' callout to Swildon's – Broken leg in two places. Clarified to a sprained ankle in Second Double Pot. Victim was out five minutes after I got changed!

24 October 1990 – Spar Pot, East Twin

Brian Prewer was alerted by Yeovil Police at 11:40 p.m. because a party of three from the Swindon area had not returned when expected. Nigel Taylor was raised to see if any car was still parked at East Twin in Burrington Combe. None was found in a likely place. At half-past midnight, the police rang again to say that the party had returned safely to Wiltshire. It appears that someone misunderstood the call out procedures.

31 October 1990 – Dallimore's Cave

The farmer at Ore's Close Farm became concerned because a car belonging to cavers he knew, who had gone underground the previous evening at 7 p.m., was still at the farm sixteen hours later. Yeovil Police informed Brenda Prewer just after 11 a.m. and she advised Brian at work in Wells. Tony Jarratt was contacted and able to provide a simple explanation, much to everyone's relief.

Oxford University cavers had been surveying the new extensions to the system the previous evening, had come out late then returned very early the following morning to continue the task. They had understandably not bothered the farmer in the small hours. No further action was taken.

3 November 1990 – Sidcot Swallet

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 25 (1990 to 1992), page 41

Jim, Aidan, Rozeth Scout Group. Two self rescues in one day one from the Lobster Pot where a novice freaked; five minutes to quieten him down then a quick pull – 10 minutes to surface.

3 November 1990 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 25 (1990 to 1992), page 41

The next was one from the bottom of the forty. A girl jumped the last three feet and turned her ankle. Escorted her to the surface but had no car keys, so had to walk back to the hut. Nearly froze on the way back, still a hot shower revived us enough to get as far as the Hunters'.

1991

Report by the Hon Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 1990

The year was overshadowed by Bob Drake's untimely death at Whitsun, and I have written tributes to him published elsewhere (*Descent* and the *Wessex Cave Club Journal*). The extent and depth of the regard cavers had for Bob, his close-knit family and professional colleagues are evident from the attendance at his funeral and the donations generously given later to M.R.O. in his memory. The latter takes pride of place in the annual accounts that follow. Additional contributions made since the end of the year bring the Bob Drake Memorial Fund to £1,076-28 at the time of writing. The Wardens and Committee are exploring ways of ensuring that such a sum gains lasting recognition for Bob's love of Mendip and services to caving.

Having mentioned money first, for once, I wish to draw attention to the main purchases and improvements to equipment lately. The telephone call out system through the Police is now backed up by a pager system activated from Force Control in Bristol. Detailed arrangements to transfer our radios to F.M. are virtually concluded. In both cases, we are very grateful for the encouragement and support given by Superintendent Rod Deane, now in charge of the Yeovil Division, and Chief Inspector Ray Shine in Bristol. Eric Dunford has also done sterling work by negotiating for the equipment and taking on the daunting task of getting the sets into working order.

Other priorities have been new Mager stretchers and better hauling gear. We are grateful for the grant received from the Mountain Rescue Committee towards the stretchers; a coup for which we must thank Fred Barlow of the South West England Rescue Association in particular. More has been spent on equipment than in any previous year. In fact, M.R.O.'s finances overall are considerably more complex nowadays, and I am very grateful for the help received from Richard Chant in checking my accounts as presented.

The accounts are followed by the log of call outs undertaken during the year. They, too, show an increase in variety, though not of the underground incidents. We try to prepare for every possible eventuality: First Aid lectures organised by Dany Bradshaw and Bob Cork are always useful and popular; rescue practices have been held, and Pat Cronin has developed the training programmes for local cave divers to include more Sump Rescue work with the Kirby Morgan equipment. A demonstration of the latter was given to a few delegates attending the Mountain Rescue Conference held at Bristol in September. We also joined a large scale search and rescue exercise in November involving different voluntary and military teams in S.W.E.R.A.. The hoped for evacuation of cave rescue patients in helicopters was prevented by bad weather on the day, but the search of Stock Hill for missing persons proved unexpectedly interesting and informative.

As we learn from each incident and exercise, so our attitudes and approaches evolve. We are now better equipped and hopefully able to respond effectively and flexibly to whatever situation arises. Above all, however, we still rely on support from local cavers and clubs. I thank everyone for their help when it matters.

Jim Hanwell, Honorary Secretary and Treasurer

6 January 1991 – Eastwater Cavern

Pete Hann called upon Brian Prewer for assistance to help two cavers out of the entrance climb following a heavy storm and flash flood during the late afternoon. It was then 6:30 p.m. The police were informed and a support party raised comprising Stewart McManus and Graham Johnson. In the event, Pete Hann and Max Midlen were able to assist the trapped pair out safely just before 7 p.m. Graham Davies and a friend had entered the cave before the storm but found the Boulder Ruckle in flood on returning. Graham's carbide lamp had failed and he could not negotiate the Entrance Squeeze without light. His friend managed to get out to raise the alarm at Upper Pitts.

3 February 1991 – Eastwater Cavern

Brian Prewer was alerted by Yeovil Police at 2:50 p.m. They had a message from a Mr. J. Eaton at Upper Pitts that a caver had reported that a girl had fallen down the Dolphin Pot and injured her lower back. She was unable to move and in pain. Whilst the informant who had first-hand knowledge of what had happened was being found and asked to return with further details, a strong rescue party was raised.

Tony Jarratt, Stewart McManus, Fred Davies, Bob Cork and Dany Bradshaw were contacted and several B.E.C. cavers located at the Wellsway Inn. Dr. Tony Boycott was requested: but, en route from Bristol, he was involved in a car crash, sustained cracked ribs and ended up in hospital himself! Dr. Peter Glanvill in Chard was also advised of the incident and stood by. Dany accompanied J. Eaton underground at 3:30 p.m. with first aid and comforts boxes. They would assess the patient's injuries and send back news of what needed to be done. Eaton returned to the surface at 4:20 p.m. and reported that the girl concerned was not seriously injured and could do a lot to help herself. A ladder would be needed on Baker's Chimney. Her name was Helen Pearce and she had been caving with a group of Venture Scouts from the Itchen South District Activity Team in Hampshire. They had intended going as far as the Dolphin Pot, but she had fallen about 10 feet down this pitch whilst being "held" on a top rope and stitch plate. It was her first trip down Eastwater, but she had caved before down Goatchurch Cavern and Swildon's Hole. All were reasonably dressed, shod and equipped.

Jim Hanwell happened to hear a Bristol Radio News Report at 4 p.m. which said that a girl had fallen at the Dolphin Pot who was a member of the Wessex Cave Club. Such imprecise and inaccurate news can mislead people and hinder us when released so early in a potentially lengthy rescue, but we do not know of its source on this occasion. In fact, Helen Pearce got away lightly with a severely bruised coccyx.

Bob Cork and Richard Neville Dove entered the cave at 4:25 p.m. and laddered Baker's Chimney. The patient did much to help herself and was brought out through the Boulder Chamber route rather than across the Traverse. She surfaced at 5:30 p.m. and felt able to return home before having her injuries checked out. In a letter of appreciation received soon afterwards, Helen ends with: "Thanks a Million".

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 3 February 1991

Wrote car off on the way to an Eastwater rescue.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 4, page 172

Dany, Fred Davies, Mac, Andy, James, Bob Cork, Mongo, Tony Jarratt

After lunch, a call out for a girl that had fallen, life-lined, halfway up Dolphin Pot. It seemed she was only bruised and needed a hand out. We soon reached her and she was put in a harness and hauled up the climb. From here she basically got herself out to the surface, only needing a helping hand on occasions. Entrance full of ice and very cold and slippery. No problems.

27 February 1991 – Longwood Swallet

Yeovil Police contacted Brenda Prewer at 9:05 p.m. with a message that someone had fallen in the cave and probably had a dislocated arm. The call had come from Fountain Cottage, Priddy, rather than Longwood Grange. It was subsequently found that Bruce Jones, aged 31, from Bristol had fallen on the Swing Pitch in the August Hole Series and dislocated a shoulder that had been previously weakened by torn muscles. Fortunately, the dislocation had reduced without too much trouble soon after the fall, and the patient had managed to help himself out as far as the squeezes below the Entrance Chimney. He could not manage the awkward climb out, however.

Meanwhile, the caver who had gone ahead to call M.R.O. saw no lights on at Longwood Grange and assumed (wrongly) that no one was in. He then hurried to nearby Manor Farm, Charterhouse. On failing to find anyone at home here, he drove all the way to Priddy and requested help from Pete and Alison Moody. They responded immediately, of course, by calling the police and going themselves to the cave with the informant.

Nigel Taylor and Dany Bradshaw were alerted and went straight to Longwood, whilst Richard West and Phil Romford gathered rescue equipment and located Dr. Tony Boycott. They were joined by John Beauchamp and his wife, Alison, who is a Casualty Nurse. Eric Dunford and Brian Prewer were diverted from digging at Priddy to man radio communications; always difficult from within the Longwood valley.

The patient was given Temgesic painkillers, put in the “baby bouncer” and then hauled up the Entrance Chimney. He was safely out of the cave by 10:48 p.m. What had all the ingredients for a long rescue operation turned into one less than two hours, in the event, because Bruce Jones had done so much to help himself and the callout quickly raised cavers in readiness.

Source – Wells Journal – 8 March 1991

INJURED CAVER IS RESCUED

Mendip Cave Rescue was called out last week to bring an injured man out of a cave in Charterhouse.

A spokesman for the rescue organisation said Mr. Bruce Jones from Bristol dislocated his shoulder when he fell ten feet from a ladder in Longwood Swallet.

He and his friend crawled almost 500 feet back towards the entrance. But Mr. Jones could not make it through a narrow passage known as Letterbox Squeeze.

Ten rescue members, including a Bristol cave doctor, turned out to help. Mr. Jones was given painkillers and taken back to Bristol by the doctor.

Source – Tony Boycott’s Log Book – 27 February 1991

After digging in Wigmore walked to the Hunters' and got called out to a rescue at Longwood. Dislocated arm and sprained back after fall off Swing Pitch, gave up at squeeze at the bottom of the entrance and called the rescue.

13 April 1991 – Wookey Hole Canal

Although an unofficial incident not involving the police, the following details received from those involved are worth recording for posterity. On this particular morning, Tony Jarratt was giving top Japanese cave diver, Shinji Sakurai, a lift to Wookey Hole Caves. Upon arrival, he was accosted by a sorely troubled farmer's wife who seemed desperate for a length of rope and a couple of strong men! It seemed that a heifer had leapt a fence and ended up in the canal leat taking water to the mill. Despite the colourful oaths of the farmer and his son, it could not be fished out.

Tony went to the nearby C.D.G. shed to find Mike McDonald and Robin Brown (he of the Milk Marketing Board). They returned with a rope to find the beast being dragged along the canal by its ear. It was kept afloat by a red and white life buoy around the neck as it could not touch bottom. At this point Robin donned his wetsuit and leapt into the, by now, cowsh-tainted water to nobly assist from behind! The animal then turned as if wanting to kiss its saviour in gratitude. Being thwarted, however, it became very upset and bellowed loudly several times in his face.

The decision was then taken to tow both heifer and rescuer back up the canal to a point where they might be lifted out with a tractor fork lift. Meanwhile, the assembled C.D.G. onlookers would snap incriminating photographs for a now scrutible and very bemused Japanese visitor to take home and show what Mendip cavers do at the Shrine of Cave Divers. The ceremony eventually concluded successfully; the heifer celebrating its freedom by performing a series of mighty bounds and dragging farmer and cave divers off through the woods. All were "over the moon".

Notes from Incident Report –

Name, Age – Female, young

Address – Local

Nature of Injuries – Near drowning and involuntary diarrhoea

Name of Club – One of heard

Extent of experience – Not C.D.G. member

Brief Description – Lifebuoy fitted round neck. C.D.G. member donned wet-suit and escorted animal to where it could be hauled out by tractor fork lift. Heifer now deeply in love with rescuer!

18 April 1991 – Eastwater Cavern

Brian Prewer received a call from Yeovil Police ten minutes after midnight. A Vanessa Gill had reported that Richard Whittington was stuck, head down, in the Upper Traverse. She was contacted at the Priddy Green call box for further details.

Tony Jarratt, Stewart McManus and Dany Bradshaw were alerted whilst Brian himself collected equipment from the Store. At the Belfry, he found Graham Johnson and Jim Smart; both of whom agreed to assist straight away. In view of the late hour, he also stood by Fred Davies, Tim Large, Rich West and Pete and Alison Moody in case they might have to be called to assist in the small hours.

Three M.C.G. cavers, Vanessa Gill, J. Crowsley and R. Whittington, went down the cave at 7:30 p.m. the previous day with the intention of exploring the Mud Escalator Series. They had turned round at the start of this series and come back via the Upper Traverse. On entering this head first at a higher level than is usual, Richard became firmly stuck almost upside down, and his companions could not free him. Fortunately, he kept calm and composed until further help arrived.

Tony Jarratt went underground at half-past midnight, followed by a hauling party. The stuck caver was pulled through the squeeze with the help of a single rope and was safely out of the cave by 1:30 a.m.

It is worth noting that, despite being so late and mid-week, from the time Vanessa made the 999-call M.R.O. was alerted within a minute and Tony Jarratt reached the patient to help only 25 minutes later.

Source – Wells Journal – 25 April 1991

LEG-PULL RESCUE FOR HEAD-FIRST CAVEMAN

A caver stuck head-down in a narrow cave passage was pulled out by his legs last week. Bristol man Richard Whittington was stuck in Upper Traverse – part of the Eastwater Cavern at Priddy for one-and-a-half hours before the Mendip Cave Rescue team was called out in the early hours of Thursday.

Mr. Whittington, an experienced caver, and his party had earlier explored the lower part of the cavern.

The five-man rescue team tied a rope to his legs and hauled him out to a wider section of the passageway from where he was able to make his own way to the entrance.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 4, page 189

John, Dany, Jim Smart, Graham Johnson, Rich West, Prew, Tony Jarratt.

Following the Wigmore trip I boozed, went home, showered and got into a warm bed. Then the phone went and within half an hour I was back underground. The victim, Richard, had entered the top eyehole at the far end of the traverse head first and become firmly wedged; unable to go forward or back. I went down with a Stanley knife to cut his belt but on arrival found that his mate, John had already removed the belt. I got behind him and, whilst talking to him into relaxing, pulled on the rope attached to his ankles while John pushed him up by the shoulders. In this way we moved him an inch or so. The others then arrived and using the same techniques he was moved sideways and downwards to be safely spat out onto the Traverse. After a short rest he exited under his own steam feeling a bit sore and lightheaded but extremely grateful. This was another lucky rescue which could so easily have ended up with a fatality.

31 August 1991 – Alert

Alert – Mrs. Woodford of Bournemouth contacted Yeovil Police because her 11-year old son, Justin was a day late in returning from a caving trip on Mendip. She thought that he was with a cave leader called Andy and was staying with the “South Mendip Caving Club”.

The police contacted Brian Prewer with this information just 44 minutes after midnight. On telephoning Mrs. Woodford for more details, Briar learnt that the Bournemouth party had travelled to Mendip in a yellow Transit and had been staying at a club hut currently being extended. He deduced that this was the Shepton Mallet Caving Club H.Q. at the St Cuthbert's Minery, so drove there to check with those in residence. He found that the group in question had been staying at the hut, but had left for Bournemouth some two hours earlier. They had decided to extend their stay in the area by a day; but, no one seems to have advised Mrs. Woodford who became naturally worried when her son was 24 hours overdue and another night had set in.

Mrs. Woodford and the police were told that the party was on its way home at 1:06 a.m. The expedition leader was Andy Taylor.

3 October 1991 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Williams from Radstock took his 17-year old daughter, Sarah, on her first caving trip down the streamway to Sump One during the evening. She was wearing boots with hook-fastened laces. They were accompanied by Sarah's girlfriend, who was also a novice, and two other cavers. On climbing the Twenty Foot ladder, Sarah understandably snagged her boot hooks in the wires, struggled and fell off when about 15 feet up. She was not being life-lined! Luckily, she escaped without severe injuries, but was badly bruised and shocked. Both girls became very upset and tearful.

One of the party left the cave to raise the alarm through the police. Richard West received the call at 11:40 p.m. On contacting the informant at the Priddy Green call box, no further details about the extent of the patient's injuries were available, so the worst had to be assumed. Tony Jarratt was dragged out of bed and Dany Bradshaw alerted straightaway. The latter had a couple of caving friends from Yorkshire staying with him, and they kindly assisted too.

Brian Johnson and Pete Mullholland were raised at the Belfry and Richard West arrived there to get rescue equipment and take over surface control. Brian Johnson and Pete Mullholland went down the cave at midnight, closely followed by Tony Jarratt, Dany Bradshaw and Mick Nunwick. The latter were accompanied by Simon Brown. Half-an-hour later, Pete Mullholland surfaced to report that the patient was able to stand with support, but had pain in the lower lumbar and aches higher in her back. She had responded well to the rescuers and all members of her original party were being sent on ahead to make their own way out.

After being hauled up the Twenty Foot, Sarah Williams bucked up and was brought out via the Wet Way. A close check was kept on her back injuries by Dany. She was safely out of the cave by 12:51 a.m. and found to be well enough to go home by waiting ambulance officers.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 4, page 240

Dany, Brian Johnson, Pete Mullholland, Mick, Simon Brown, Rich West, Paul Hodgson, Robin, Tony Jarratt etc.

I had just got to bed after an evening in the Hunters' when the phone rang. A 17-year-old girl had fallen off the 20-foot Pot and was possibly injured. I rendezvoused with the police on Priddy Green and waited for the lads to appear. Brian and Pete were first so were despatched to check on the situation. Dany, Mick and Simon then arrived so I joined them and we followed the others down. The girl was found to be shaken and bruised but otherwise okay. The cave was very dry. A piece of rope was found left as a sling on the 20-foot free climb. This was used to

haul her out and she made her own way to the surface encouraged by Dany (who took her out via the Wet Way for sport!) She had not been life-lined and her father, the trip leader, was suitably admonished.

2 November 1991 – Swildon’s Hole

A Mr. Price from Weymouth rang the police to say that a party led by Gaynum Locke was overdue from a trip to Sump One. Yeovil Police alerted Brian Prewer at 9:30 p.m. It appeared that they had gone down the cave earlier in the day and had been expected back in Weymouth at about 6 p.m. The car they were using was described.

Brian called the Hunters’ Lodge Inn and checked both village greens, but did not find the car concerned among all those parked in these areas. Fifteen minutes later, Mr. Price telephoned again to say that the party had arrived home safely having been delayed en route to Weymouth.

23 November 1991 – Eastwater Cavern

The police from Bristol contacted Brian Prewer at 6:20 p.m. and requested M.R.O. to ring Yeovil Control for details about overdue cavers they had been asked to find. Stewart McManus made the call and learnt that a Miss Nicola Hare from Bristol had informed the local police that her boyfriend and a companion had not returned from a trip to Eastwater a short while ago as arranged. Two officers had already gone in search and had found the van used by the cavers concerned still parked in the lane. This search may have delayed the call-out of M.R.O. had the van been in a less obvious place.

Stewart contacted Tony Jarratt, Dany Bradshaw and Phil Romford to form a search party. Others were stood by at the Belfry. Just as the first team was about to go underground, the overdue pair surfaced. It appears that they had gone as far as the First Vertical to undertake S.R.T. practice; but, they had not taken a watch with them and were unaware of being almost two hours late for their ETA in Bristol. Both were experienced cavers from the Bath area and in their mid-twenties.

Source – Tony Jarratt’s Log Book – Vol. 4, page 248

Callout from Mac on Saturday evening. Two lads from Midsomer Norton overdue from Twin Verticals in Eastwater. They had been in the shop earlier and were obviously clued up. Reached entrance and got changes only to find them emerging after a good trip but unaware of the time due to lack of watches. They were suitably embarrassed, especially by the police presence.

19 December 1991 – Sandy Hole, Portland

Dorset Police contacted Brian Prewer at 8 p.m. regarding a party presumed missing in this system on the cliff top at Portland. Their vehicle had been located nearby and H.M. Coastguard were at the scene. Whilst Brian was in the process of alerting experienced cave rescuers in the Weymouth area, the police phoned again, ten minutes later, to report that two cavers had been found and both were well.

Apparently, the two cavers went into Sandy Hole on Blacknor Point through an entrance known as Sharbutt’s Rift. They became lost below a squeeze in a series of low bedding plane crawls and sandy passages with some tiny chambers. The system is some 1,300 feet long. The pair were lost for several hours (reported as 9 hrs in the Dorset Evening Echo). Weymouth Outdoor

Education staff were alerted, including Wayne Brown, an experienced Mendip caver. The lost cavers were soon located and escorted out safely.

Rescue calls to sites in Dorset are rare, of course, despite the growing popularity of the many caves on Portland. There are also extensive old stone mines on Purbeck, near Swanage. The last official call-out to the area was on 29th June 1975 when a boulder fell and broke the leg of a caver in nearby Blacknor Hole. A few unrecorded incidents are known to have occurred more recently. M.R.O. provides a rescue cover for Dorset by arrangement with the Association of Chief Police Officers through the B.C.R.C. and Mountain Rescue Committee structure nationally.

The Blacknor system, for example, is over 2,600 feet long, with complex crawls along old stream ways encountering large cross rifts. Its entrance lies 35 feet down overhanging sea cliffs, and trips can last up to 6 hours. M.R.O. holds detailed descriptions of all caves on Portland, including information on possible rescue needs. Up-to-date lists of locally resident active cavers with rescue experience on Mendip are kept, and others with any necessary specialist equipment could be there in about an hour.

Source Dorset Evening Echo – 20 December 1991

CAVERS TRAPPED FOR NINE HOURS PAIR RESCUED IN FREEZING TEMPERATURES

A Christmas holiday caving expedition on Portland turned into a nightmare for two teachers last night. They were trapped for nine hours in freezing conditions deep in the cave at Sharbits Rift [*Sharbutt's*], on the windswept west of the island. A massive rescue operation was launched at 7:30 p.m. after the anxious wives of the two men alerted the coast guards.

The trapped men - Andy Harding (39) and Steve Hackett (42) are both teachers at the Young Offender Institution at Portland. Mr. Harding, said today: "We thought we knew the way out but I when it came to it the passage looked too small. In the end we became so cold and tired we felt it was safer to stay put and wait for help. If we had become wedged it would have become much more dangerous and caused more problems for our rescuers."

Mr. Hackett, said: "We followed all the safety rules so we knew that we could be located. The Weymouth Outdoor Activity Centre rescue team were marvellous. We are just so grateful for their expertise."

A spokesman for Portland Coastguard, who coordinated the rescue operation, said: "We were alerted by the men's wives just after 7 p.m. last night. We immediately contacted the Portland Bill rescue team, the Weymouth Outdoor Activity Centre squad and the Mendip Cave Rescue team."

1992

Report by the Hon Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 1991

May I start by personally thanking all caving friends for their unstinting support and understanding over the year, and since. When you fall into deep and unfathomable holes that you had not even looked for, helping hands and companionship become very special and irreplaceable. After thirty-three years as a M.R.O. Warden, perhaps I can be allowed to record

tributes to our nearest and dearest who condone and contribute to those who go caving and help at rescues. Being without them brings back all the memories. Past moments matter more than plans; principles and practices serve as better guides.

M.R.O.'s long established principle is that those who go caving must help themselves when in trouble. No one else can or should. So, we provide an organisation for cavers, not a club or team to join. Appropriate up-to-date equipment is obtained and its uses demonstrated. Practices are encouraged. Special training and exercises are run by those with the necessary experience and expertise. Everything is funded through donations, mainly from cavers themselves. We have only sought outside grants for particularly expensive and hopefully little used items of equipment. Each generation of cavers has provided for its own training and support, not least because rescue needs and the available technology are always advancing. The responsibility becomes theirs and not something for others to provide and, eventually, control. Sharing current good practice is the way to gain experience. Courses and certificates create a different climate, attractive mainly to those who wish to be in charge and, maybe, have their way. Our effectiveness is up to us.

During the year, Wardens have organised varied activities to meet the above objectives. They have also taken part in many meetings with other rescue bodies and those who work with us during actual incidents, especially the Police and Fire Service. We are particularly grateful to the Police for up-dating our radio communications and providing pagers to back-up the call-out system. The Fire Service has also been in close touch and a useful training video has been made to show how we work together when needs be. The B.B.C. has also been interested in documenting cave rescue work, and a reconstruction of an actual incident was staged and filmed at the end of the year. It will be screened on television sometime during the Summer of 1992 in a B.B.C. 1 series entitled "999".

The audited accounts which follow tell their own story and emphasise the need for continuing support. The log of actual incidents during 1991 has been compiled from reports prepared by those involved. They are the lessons from which we learn most.

Another relatively quiet year for call-outs on Mendip. The table above records nine official calls through the Police and includes one unofficial surface incident where cavers on the spot helped to recover a heifer in trouble. It is important to remind everyone that insurance cover only applies to such cavers on official call-outs, and so those concerned must be named at the time in our reports.

Eastwater incidents are prominent for once: the four calls concerned represent almost 17% of all on record to this cave in the past for years. Swildon's, on the other hand, adds little to its total over the same period, and to have a year's gap after the previous call-out there is something of a record in itself. The dry streamway and poor air quality in the cave over another long drought summer did not seem to deter visitors, but made trips less demanding.

Whilst actual rescues show what goes wrong, it also helps to consider good practice. Some challenging systems keep a clean sheet for long spells. In the year when the St Cuthbert's Swallet Report was published, for instance, it is worth noting its remarkable trouble-free record. Since being discovered in 1953, there have only been 7 rescue incidents there needing M.R.O.; the last one occurring on 5th May 1985.

A contingent of Mendip cavers went to assist Gwent C.R.O. in helping Sarah MacDonald out of Daren Cilau over the last weekend in the year after she had dislocated her shoulder whilst

climbing at the far end of the cave. It was good to see her safe and well in the Hunters' Lodge Inn on New Year's Eve.

Jim Hanwell, Hon Secretary & Treasurer

19 January 1992 – G.B. Cave

Brenda Prewer was contacted by the police from their Taunton Control at 3:50 p.m. It was reported that a party had been trapped by a boulder fall in the cave. Brian Prewer was alerted in Wells and rang the informant at Tynning's Farm for further details. It appeared that a party of four had been trapped behind in the Ladder Dig when a large boulder was dislodged by the fifth member in the lead on the way out. The boulder jammed in the chimney between Bat Passage and Helictite Chamber. Fortunately, it had not fallen onto the caver concerned, but he was unable to heave it out the way from below. No one was injured, but those left behind could not lift it up either, so he wisely left the cave to raise the alarm and get assistance.

The original party of five members of the Outcasts Caving Club had entered the cave at about 12:15 p.m. Luckily, they were on their way out when the incident happened, for there would clearly have been a much longer delay and search had all five been trapped on the wrong side of the boulder. They did all the right things in the circumstances.

Fred Davies went underground at 4:30 p.m. with a party comprising Pete Hann, Jim Rands, Carmen Smith, Colin Masters and Eddy Waters. They carried in suitable hauling tackle and the new Molefone. Brian Prewer, Phil Hendy and Max Midlen set up the surface receiver above the site. Richard West established a Control on the roadside. Tony Jarratt, Tim Large, Stewart McManus, Dany Bradshaw, Nigel Taylor, Graham Mullen, Linda Wilson and Dr. Tony Boycott were alerted at Priddy and went to the cave straight away in support. Ian Timney and Nigel Graham took food and heat packs underground at 5:35 p.m. Molefone communications were established soon afterwards. It appeared that a single boulder weighing about 50 kg had fallen down the chimney and lodged above the squeeze into Helictite Chamber. It was only possible to talk to the trapped foursome. They were rather cold and hungry, but otherwise in good spirits and unhurt.

After some skilful chiselling from below by Fred Davies, the lodged boulder was persuaded to fall through the squeeze into a roomier section out of the way. The grateful trapped party was escorted from the cave, reaching the entrance at 7 p.m. The stand down followed twenty minutes later after all rescuers and equipment had surfaced.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 25 (1990 to 1992), page 110

Cast of oodles to Ladder Dig, at invitation of M.R.O. on behalf of four cavers from Southampton who had been plugged in by a boulder down the crawl under the Great Chamber Choke. Rescue went well – a bit of digging by Fred Davis and Co., and the stuck four, and they were out. First use of the "Molephone" on a Mendip Rescue – its performance attracted a lot of very favourable comments. Underground team – Fred Davies, Pete Hann, Eddie Waters, Colin Masters, Jim Rands, Nigel Graham, Carmen Smith.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 10, page 1668

Then to the Hunters' for a quick pint and a half. Back at Upper Pitts, and eventually got a fire going to burn up the hedge trimmings.

Just about to pack up when a couple of cavers arrived, saying a party was trapped by a boulder fall in G.B. Following a phone call from Brenda, we went over to Priddy Green, and from there to the cave. The first wave was Wessex – no one else seemed to be around.

As we got to the cave, we heard that there was another call out from Box Mines.

At G.B., apparently a party of four (Outcasts (?) from Southampton) had just gone through the wet crawl and up into the boulders below Great Chamber, when a boulder fell, blocking the passage, narrowly missing the last man. They could move it, but not get out of the hole.

Pete Hann, Jim Rands and another took the Molephone down to assess the situation, while Lynne, Dan and I took the surface kit over towards the Great Swallet. Later, on Prew's advise, we took it farther into the field, where we got a better signal.

The trapped party were uninjured, but cold and hungry. Food and heat packs were sent down, together with hammer, chisel and slings. It was decided to try and raise the boulder, which weighed about one hundredweight, using the slings, and then chisel away a flake which was preventing its removal. As Fred Davis did this, the boulder fell from the slings, narrowly missing him. But by 6 p.m. the word was that the trapped party had been released and all were on their way out, so we closed down the surface station, and returned to the road. About half an hour later the first rescuers started coming out of the cave. I drove back to Upper Pitts, where Lyne brewed coffee for the returning party. We soon left for home, stopping in Wells to pick up a Chinese takeaway (from the Ho, formerly Happy Garden).

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 19 January 1992

After digging in Stock Hill Mineshaft called out to a rescue at G.B. – boulder fallen in breakthrough point to ladder dig blocking the way out for four people. – one on the right side of the blockage. Removed by Fred Davies very rapidly.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 4, page 259

Digging in Stock Hill Mine Cave; wet and sticky conditions made the digging and hauling miserable, so we were almost pleased when a shout came from the surface to get out of the mine as there was a rescue at G.B. Cave which probably needed experienced diggers due to boulder collapse. We all went across to G.B. but after waiting an hour or so were stood down as Fred Davies and team had managed to break up the single offending rock and release the four outcasts trapped behind.

19 January 1992 – Jack's Workings, Box

Whilst the G.B. rescue was underway, the police from Chippenham, Wiltshire, rang regarding a missing party in the old stone mine workings adjacent to the main system at Box. Jim Hanwell was contacted at 4:55 p.m. and asked to deal with it separately using other rescuers still available. On contacting the police, he learnt that the headteacher of Downlands School, Devizes, a residential special needs establishment, was concerned because one of his colleagues had allowed nine of its pupils on a day out to go into the workings unaccompanied and with a single candle! When the candle burnt out, the children were stranded and lost, of course. The teacher had left the scene to report the situation to his head by telephone.

Jim Hanwell concluded that the party could not have gone very far in the circumstances; but, as the children could have become split up and were well out of earshot, a search party would

be necessary. He failed to find Bob Scammell at home in Bath, but located Chris Batstone at Plummer's Farm, Priddy, and requested him to stand by. Derek Hawkins in the Bath area was also contacted and agreed to go straightaway to Box with Paul De'Ath and Mike Breakspear. They expected to be at the mine within twenty minutes. Meanwhile, as anticipated, a police team found the missing children not too far inside. One had tripped over in the darkness and was slightly hurt. All were understandably rather distressed at their predicament, which could have so easily have been avoided. The local police clearly thought so too!

Source – Western Daily Press – 21 January 1992

TEACHER UNDER FIRE AS PUPILS ARE RESCUED IN MAZE OF CAVES DRAMA

Caving experts have criticised teacher Peter Thurlestone for allowing children from a special school to get lost in old quarry workings.

Nine children, aged 12 to 16, wandered for more than an hour on Sunday afternoon in a labyrinth of underground passages at Box, near Bath, before being rescued. But yesterday they were back at their lessons in Downlands School, Devizes, none the worse for their experience, apart from one sprained ankle.

Secretary of the National Caving Association, Frank Baguley, said yesterday: "People who go caving should either join a club or go with experienced cavers. It was unwise to say the least to let a group of children wander into a cave system without an experienced instructor."

A leading West cave rescue organiser said: "If people go into caves without proper equipment their actions must be regarded as foolhardy."

The children from the boarding school, whose pupils have learning or behavioural problems, were taken to Box by Mr. Thurlestone for a walk. Police say the children became lost after Mr. Thurlestone said they could investigate a shallow cave for ten minutes while he stayed outside. He did not realise the shaft was one of many leading thousands of feet into the hillside from which stone was quarried to build Bath. Police say the children entered the extensive quarry system at Quarry Hill without torches or caving equipment of any sort.

When the children were reported missing, police mounted a huge rescue operation and called in the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation team. But officers with torches located the children after about an hour's search and led them to safety before the cave rescue group arrived. Yesterday the school said Mr. Thurlestone off sick and headmaster Desmond Walsh refused to comment.

30 May 1992 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 26 (1992 to 1994), page 27

Report 1 – Double Pots – Jim + four Scouts – rescued Army advanced training leader, up Short Dry route. Two hours overall to stretcher at the surface. Damn fine job. Scouts 1; Army 0.

Report 2 – Victim jumped off Double Pots, damaged right ankle. A rather large gent, but was well fit, he helped a lot but could not put any weight on it. A conscripted party helped us to haul him up the Twenty in Swiss seat. A Tenner was donated to us to buy a drink. (This could be a new way to finance our drinking). Jim update – Victim was found to have broken ankle in two places.

5 June 1992 – Stoke Lane Slocker

Taunton Police contacted Brian Prewer at thirty-five minutes past midnight to report that Ben Thorpe from Countryside Weekends, Cheddar, was concerned that a party of three had not returned from a trip to the cave as expected. He had been instructed to call out M.R.O. if they were not back by midnight.

On contacting the informant direct, it was learnt that those concerned were well equipped and experienced cavers on a diving trip to Sump Four. They had parked in Bector Lane near Stoke St Michael. Bob Cork was alerted in the village and went to check if the car used was still there. At fifty minutes past midnight, the overdue party arrived back in Cheddar having underestimated the duration of the trip. All were stood down just before 1 a.m.

26 June 1992 – Swildon's Hole

Force Control in Bristol rang Brian Prewer at twenty-eight minutes after midnight because they had been told by Taunton Police of reports that a girl was stuck in a cave at Cheddar, at the bottom of Jacob's Ladder. In fact, the call had been initiated from Priddy Green, within sight of Brian's bedroom, and turned out to be an exhausted caver unable to climb the rift in the Upper Series, also called Jacob's Ladder. This is a good example of why it is so important for informants to give clear messages and stay at the phone until contacted by the M.R.O. Warden who gets the call from the police.

In this case, the caver concerned did stay at the phone to clear up any confusion. So, instead of rushing off to Cheddar, Brian was able to decline the offer to turn out the local Fire Brigade for assistance on the cliffs (he was told that the Cliff Rescue always have the Fire Brigade), alert neighbours Alan Butcher, Pete and Alison Moody and then walk a few yards to get the full story direct from the informant on the Green within fifteen minutes of receiving the call. The person concerned was clearly impressed and relieved by such a rapid response in the small hours! By the time they had changed and reached the entrance to the cave some twenty minutes later, the exhausted caver had just surfaced having been hauled out by her own party; a good example of self-help by all at the end of a tiring five-hour trip.

The exhausted caver was Debbie Dinnige from Gloucester. She had been down the cave four times previously and had undertaken trips in South Wales on several occasions, but had not been underground for over a year. On the day, she had not eaten much and was far from being on top form. The party had planned a long trip but contented with a visit to Sump One when Debbie began to tire. On coming back up the streamway she needed much assistance and other members of the party tired too as progress out slowed down. John Steeson, the experienced leader of the party from Gwent, did much to assist everyone and keep up morale. He subsequently sent a helpful four-page report on every aspect of their trip, including the callout.

On returning to the Green quicker than expected, Brian Prewer was able to stand down three police patrol cars sent to the scene and forestall an ambulance which had been requested to Priddy as a result of the initial call going to Bristol. Busy emergency services do not need to be troubled until M.R.O. has made a clear assessment of an incident and requests them to attend.

Our communications are now such that we can time ambulances and other services to arrive within minutes of when their expertise is really needed. We take satisfaction from knowing that such costly provisions are not kept needlessly waiting for us to complete rescues and, so, are available elsewhere in the community meanwhile.

STRANDED CAVER HELPED HERSELF

Cave rescuers were called out to help an exhausted woman caver in Swildon's Hole, on Mendip. But when they arrived the 34-year-old, from North Nibley, in Gloucestershire, had climbed up the final 10-foot cliff, known as Jacob's Ladder, herself, and no longer needed help.

She was nearly at the end of a two-mile- plus expedition venturing 2,000 foot into the cave, when exhaustion set in and she felt unable to climb the cliff, said Mendip Cave Rescue warden Brian Prewer.

This was the first time the cave rescue team have been called out since Easter, and call-outs have been less than usual so far this year, possibly due to the recession leading to fewer people caving, said Mr. Prewer.

23 July 1992 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer received a call from Taunton Police that a Mr. Stevens in Swindon had rung the Yeovil Control to report an overdue party of ten who had been down the cave the previous evening. It was then forty-five minutes after midnight and the party had included five novices. Brian was unable to get further details from the informant since the number given to the police was incorrect. He then established that there was a car still parked on Priddy Green with a licence disc issued in the Swindon area. The police were asked to trace the owner, although this failed to produce someone with a telephone.

Jim Hanwell was contacted at 1:12 a.m. and it was agreed that no effective action was possible until positive information became available through the police. Twenty minutes later, Taunton Police rang to say that the party had returned to Swindon, safe and well. It appears that they numbered just four and had seriously under-estimated the duration of their trip. On getting home, one had the good sense to contact the police and so prevent a fruitless full-scale search of Swildon's. The car still on the Green belonged to someone else unconnected with the incident!

The details of this callout show how difficult it is to organise a response to situations with such minimal and even misleading information; especially during the early hours in mid-week!

28 July 1992 – Goatchurch Cavern

Richard West was contacted by the Force Control in Bristol at 2:44 p.m. with news that Yeovil Police had reported an accident in the cave. A male caver had fallen and sustained broken ribs and ankles somewhere in the system. The informant was not known but it was thought that the call had originated from the Burrington Combe Cafe. This number remained persistently engaged and so action had to be taken without further details.

After alerting Stewart McManus to get kit and go to the scene, Richard spent a further twenty minutes and twenty-five calls, many to answering machines, to muster a rescue party comprising Nigel Taylor, Pete McNab, Jim Smart, Graham Johnson and Andy Sparrow. Tony Jarratt happened to be with four members of the Manx Mines Rescue Team on a visit to Mendip, and Rachel Robertson, Pete Geddes, Dave Briggs and John Maddrell kindly offered to help. Shaun Shaffey and Claire Knifton of the Mendip Exploration Group happened to be in the Combe at the time and also lent a hand. Phil Romford was met en route and all went to the cave,

arriving there at 3:30 p.m. amid crowds of tourists and seemingly endless streams of little boys in trainers, cagoules and in various stages of collapse, made their way out..

The party concerned totalled seven and included experienced police Officers on a training course with young students at the Detective Training School, Kings Weston, Bristol. It was led by Martin Shotbolt. Steven Morton, the officer that fell, came from Bridgenorth and was on his first caving trip. He had broken ribs and sustained a badly sprained ankle, both of which were very painful; otherwise, he was in good spirits in the circumstances.

Richard West established a roadside Control and two policemen marshalled traffic throughout the incident. The patient was reached at about 3:45 p.m. His injuries were protected by Neoprene Splints and Entonox made available to him during the carry out in the Mager stretcher. He arrived at the surface at 4:30 p.m. to the awaiting ambulance and was taken to Weston-super-Mare General Hospital for treatment.

The organisers of the trip and the patient were extremely grateful and subsequently wrote to express their thanks.

Source – M.C.G. Log Book Volume 10, pages 108 to 109

At approximately 2:15 p.m. Bill Headington and a party of eight scouts emerged from the Water Chamber and onto the Coffin Lid to find the route was blocked by about seven other parties totalling about 50 persons sitting. On proceeding to the front, Bill found an injured caver surrounded by other novices including group leaders, none of which had a clue as to the procedure.

One person was sent to make a telephone call at 2:16 p.m. whilst Bill started to evacuate the cave and make sure the entrances were secure to further entry. The casualty had been made comfortable by this time. The instructor responsible for the injured man stayed, but was of no help.

Approximately an hour later Andy Sparrow (C.I.C.) arrived to take control followed shortly by six other M.R.O. members.

Casualty appeared to suffer from a broken ankle and possible rib fracture. After being fitted with a splint, the casualty was fed Entanox for the pain and secured to a stretcher. By this time four members of the Manx Rescue Team (staying at Nordrach) were on site after receiving a message from Bat Products. A basic hauling system was set up and the casualty was brought up the Coal Chute and to the surface to an awaiting ambulance. The whole operation lasted about 3½ hours.

Postscript – Spoke to Andy Sparrow in the Hunters' about Tuesday rescue. Bill Headington may not yet realise it, but he helped the police twice on two days – the Tuesday victim was a policeman from the Midlands, on an outdoor course run by a management training company called Impact! Three broken ribs and a compound fracture of the ankle caused by trying to traverse at the end of Bloody Tight. Caused by wearing silly footwear.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 29 July 1992

CAVERN PLUNGE MAN IS SAVED

An off-duty policeman had to be rescued after plunging 30 feet into a cavern in the Mendips. The accident happened yesterday at Burrington Coombe. CID Officer Steve Norton, aged 29, from Shropshire, was on a ten-week detachment in Somerset.

He was with a team of experienced cavers when he fell deep into Goat Church Cavern. Police and paramedics raced to the scene and joined forces with members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Service.

The Mendip team treated Mr. Norton with 'pain-killing gas during the rescue operation. The rescuers took 90 minutes to get Mr. Norton to safety before he was taken to Weston-super-Mare's General Hospital.

He has been treated for a suspected fractured ankle and bruised ribs.

Paramedic Bob Coles said: "He was a very lucky man, falling the distance he did only to receive these injuries."

Source – Western Daily Press – 29 July 1992

POLICEMAN RESCUED IN CAVE FALL DRAMA

Policeman Steve Norton had to be rescued yesterday, when he fell 30 feet and broke ankle on his first caving expedition. CID officer Mr. Norton, aged 29, from Bridgnorth in Shropshire, is on a ten-week detachment in Somerset, which includes three days of outdoor activities.

He was with a party of seven in Goat Church Cavern, at Burrington Combe, near Cheddar, when he missed his footing

He was in the East Boulder chamber, about 300 feet from the entrance to the cave and 100 feet down.

A 12-man team from Mendip cave rescue took two hours to bring him out.

23 August 1992 – Lionel's Hole

Yet another rescue in Burrington Combe on a very busy holiday afternoon! The area had experienced heavy and prolonged storms throughout the weekend, however. These had not deterred five members of Blackdown Venture Scouts from Wellington, Somerset, from descending the cave at 2:30 p.m. after visiting several others nearby earlier. Although well clad in 'dry grots', they passed the ducks along the very wet and tight streamway. Fortunately, two retreated and, on surfacing, became alarmed at the rapidly rising stream. Both deduced that the second duck would soon sump and trap those left beyond. They alerted the police at 7:22 p.m. and requested M.R.O.

The callout from the Taunton Control was received by Andy Davies shortly afterwards. She contacted Roger Dors at the Hunters' Lodge Inn, and he quickly organised a rescue team initially comprising of Stewart McManus, Alan Butcher, Dany Bradshaw and Bob Cork. Nigel Taylor was contacted at 7:45 p.m. and he went straight to Burrington Combe Cafe to meet both informants for precise details of the situation. He then established a Control at the cave entrance. It was clear that 'thin men' were needed and Nigel chanced upon Pete McNab and Tim Partridge at nearby East Twin. Both were joined by Andy Sparrow at 8 p.m. and all three descended the

cave shortly afterwards to assess the situation. Bob Scammell, Vince Simmonds, Robin Brown and Keith Savory arrived in support. Robin and Keith were prepared to dive if necessary. Pete and Alison Moody who had originally dug open and explored the flooded passage came to help and went underground at 8:15 p.m. Arrangements were made to improve communications in the cave and back to Priddy whilst the police were advised that the Fire Service might be needed and that traffic control would be desirable, especially if pumping was required later. P.C. Chris Hall subsequently arrived from Cheddar. No news of rescuers making any contact with the trapped scouts was received at the surface for over eighty minutes. The Molefone was taken underground at 9:40 p.m. to reduce the need for 'runners'. At 10:10 p.m. the underground team was reported to be on the way out and that those trapped were well and able to help themselves.

The rescue party had reached them by using an unfrequented bypass to the sumped second duck. All concerned returned to the surface safely at 10:30 p.m., about three hours after receiving the initial call from the police. The three scouts, Chris Cox, aged 30, and teenagers James and Edward Ellaway had been underground, wet and cold, for over eight hours, however. It was as well that their two friends Graham Bell and Mike Salter left the cave when they did to report the situation. They were unable to get out without a knowledge of escape routes when the Lower Streamway floods.

Source –Bristol Evening Post – 24 August 1992

DRAMA AS SCOUTS IN CAVE FLOOD ARE SAVED

Two Venture Scouts were trapped 100 feet underground in the Mendips when torrential rain flooded a pothole.

The teenagers huddled together for warmth three hours as a rescue team went into action.

The Scouts, aged 16 and 19, from Wellington, were led to safety by members of the Mendip Cave Rescue team.

Members of the Blackdown Venture Scouts were exploring a pothole known as Lionel's Hole, in Burrington Coombe, when it began to fill with water.

Group leader Graham Bell, aged 26, of Wellington, and one of the Scouts managed to get out and raise the alarm.

Meanwhile expedition leader Chris Cox stayed underground with two other members of the party.

Today Mr. Bell said: "We had inspected the cave beforehand and it was amazingly dry." He said the trapped teenagers had been very worried but were never in any real danger. All the safety procedures worked well and there were no problems."

The two Scouts, who have not been named, were not hurt in the incident which ended at teatime yesterday.

Rescue organiser Dany Bradshaw, of the Mendip Cave Rescue group, said: "The caves in the Mendip area don't normally get affected by water. But this was extraordinary downpour."

Source –Western Daily Press – 25 August 1992

SCOUTS RESCUED IN POT-HOLING ORDEAL

Scout leader Graham Bell last night told how two novice cavers were dramatically rescued as they lay underground trapped by water.

Mr. Bell, aged 26, was leading a team of five potholers in the Mendip hills on Sunday when disaster struck.

Their only exit, a low passageway with just enough room to squeeze through on your belly, filled with water.

Two of the team took the plunge and squeezed through to get help while the others huddled together for three hours in the tiny cave for warmth.

The two teenage novices, members of the Blackdown Venture Scouts, stayed calm until help arrived.

Mr. Bell, who led the expedition to Lionel's Cave, Burrington Combe, near Blagdon, said last night: "We did not panic. "We were exploring the cave when we noticed our way out was filling with water. "Three of us huddled together for warmth while the other two went for help.

Rescuer Mr. Dany Bradshaw, one of the Mendip Rescue Team, said last night: "We went down and talked with the lads to give them confidence."

12 October 1992 – Waterlip Quarry

Richard West was called by Yeovil Police at 1:38 p.m. They requested help because a liver and white spaniel was trapped on a ledge. It had been spotted by workmen on the far side of the lake and was at the bottom of almost vertical cliffs overhanging the east end of the deep quarry floor lake. They thought that it had been there for some time and that the ledge was inaccessible to the local Dog Warden and RSPCA, even by boat. They feared that it had been abandoned by its owner and could well be injured.

Richard informed Jim Hanwell who got in touch with Dave Turner as he lived near the quarry. Dave agreed to go the scene and abseil down to the dog on his own rope. Meanwhile, Richard and Jim collected hauling gear and a bag from the Belfry Store to assist Dave and the abandoned dog back up the 100 foot cliffs. The alternative of lowering both into a boat was dismissed as being too involved.

Dave reached the dog at about 2:15 p.m. and found it shaken but not too poorly in the circumstances. He comforted it until Richard and Jim arrived at 2:25 p.m. in the company of the police, the wife at the nearby farm and the local Dog Warden. A stake was secured as a second belay and Richard abseiled down to assist, carrying a suitable tackle bag for the dog. A lot of tricky gardening of loose rock was required. Dave tied on to the M.R.O. hauling rope, shouldered the surprisingly calm dog inside the bag and prussicked up his own rope with some hauling assistance over the awkward bulges by Jim from above. Richard found an alternative free climb out of line of fire from above.

All were safely on top of the cliffs by 3:15 p.m. The Dog Warden reported that this brave little animal had clearly been maltreated for some time. We hope that it has found a good home since.

Notes from Incident Report –

Cause of Incident – Mistreated dog thrown down cliff face

Name, Age – Mr. A. Springer Spaniel, Male, Old

Nature of Injuries – Cuts, bruises, shock, hunger, cold, pissed-off

Name of Club – “I hate uncaring owners club”

Extent of Experience – None at free falling 100 feet down cliff

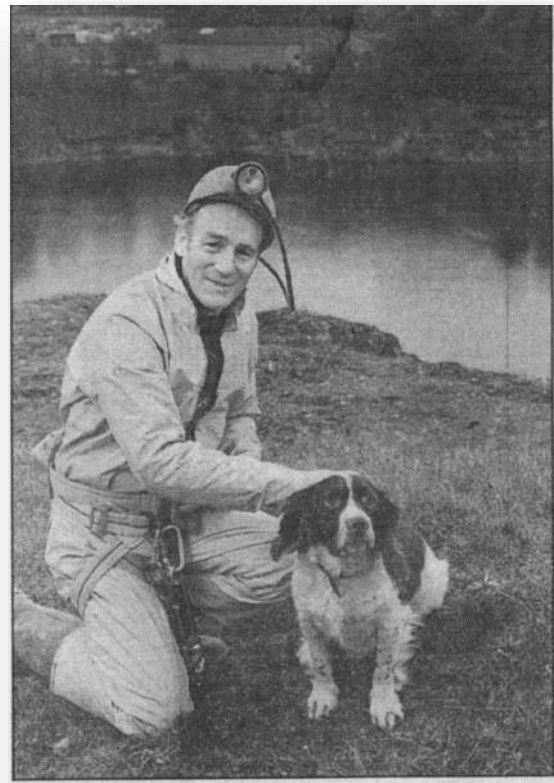
Personal Equipment – Tatty liver and white coat

Brief Description – M.R.O. abseiled to victim who was bagged and hauled up cliff. Our nice new spinal splint bag is now full of dog hairs and piss!

Source – *Bristol Evening Post* – 13 October 1992

STRANDED SPANIEL RESCUED – DOG’S 100 FOOT QUARRY PLUNGE

A team of expert potholers saved a spaniel which fell one hundred feet down a Somerset quarry face. A passer-by spotted the dog on a small ledge at the disused site at Waterlip, near Shepton Mallet, yesterday. Police tried to reach the dog but were eventually forced to call in Mendip cave rescue team. After a careful operation involving ropes and rigging, cave rescuers reached the liver-and-white spaniel. Rescuer PC Gareth Davies said: “It did not seem to be hurt and It was extremely happy to see us and was wagging its tail. We have no idea how it came to be here in the first place.” Vets checked the dog which escaped uninjured from its ordeal and it was later reunited with its owner



SAVED: Mendip cave rescue team member Dave Turner with the spaniel

14 November 1992 – Swildon's Hole

Adrian Kemp went directly to Brian Prewer's home at Prlddy at 2:50 p.m. to report that 14-year old David Love had tumbled off the Eight Foot climb at the bottom of the former Forty Foot Pot and sustained a severe knee injury. He was in considerable pain and, although placed into an exposure bag, had not been moved further. The party of sixteen belonged to an Outdoor Group from Brixham, Devon, and were on their way down the streamway early in the afternoon when the incident happened.

A Wessex Cave Club party including Maurice Hewins, John Thomas and his son Mike happened to be going down the cave when the incident was reported and went straight to the scene to assist within minutes. Brian Prewer informed Taunton Police that a rescue was formally in progress. Richard West and Dany Bradshaw were already at his house and went to collect M.R.O. kit from the Belfry Store. They encountered a number of cavers there and raised a strong party comprising Vince Simmonds, Trevor Hughes, Richard Blake, N. Gymer, K. Gurner and Sarah Bennett. This group went underground with Dany at 3:10 p.m. Dr. Andrew

Newton from the Royal Navy was also at the Belfry with Mike Hollingsworth, and they followed fifteen minutes later to assess the extent of the patient's injuries. Martin Grass and Andy Cave took the Mager stretcher into the cave at 3:30 p.m. Brian Prewer set up the surface Molefone with Rachel Gregory and Nikki Simmonds.

After examining and splinting the patient, Dr. Weston suggested that he could well do a lot to help himself out with the amount of assistance present and the sparing use of Entonox, when necessary. This would avoid a long stretcher carry. David Love was thus out of the cave by 4:30 p.m. and the cave cleared soon afterwards.

A surprising number of cavers do not know the commonly used names for parts of the streamway, nor even some of the Dry Ways in the Upper Series. Most of us refer to the short cascade at the bottom of the 'Old Forty Foot Pot', as the Eight Foot climb and the drop at the 'Old Well' in the Wet Way as the Twelve Foot one. It is even more surprising to hear reports that inexperienced cavers have been encouraged and allowed to Jump off the former by the leaders of some parties!

19 December 1992 – Box Mines

The Wiltshire Police were trying to find the body of a missing person, believed to have been murdered, somewhere in the locality. Several detailed searches had been conducted on the surface without success. There was a faint chance that it could have been disposed of in one of the old stone mines. M.R.O. was informally requested to ask cavers visiting the mines over Christmas to be aware of the possibility and to report anything unusual.

Bob Scammell at Bathampton acted as a clearing house for such information. The victim's body was found by the police in nearby woodlands soon after Christmas.

1993

Report by the Hon Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 1992

Although the number of actual cave rescue incidents have been in single figures again, the year has been a much busier one in every other respect. An effort has been made to involve clubs and cavers more in a variety of relevant training exercises and workshops organised by Wardens. These have covered specialist aspects of First Aid underground, greater familiarity with M.R.O. rescue equipment, such as the new Molefone and Entonox sets, and pitch hauling techniques. A session on incident management and control was also put on for the first time.

Three events are worth highlighting. In the Spring, B.B.C. TV screened their new "999" series nation-wide which, apparently, received much acclaim and large audiences. There were also favourable responses to the episode in which M.R.O. and those involved re-enacted the Black Hole rescue from Swildon's Hole in June 1989. During the Autumn, a highly successful and well attended underground workshop was staged in G.B. Cavern, with kind permission from the U.B.S.S., involving nearly one hundred cavers from ten clubs. A stomp at Priddy Village Hall in November attracted even more and raised substantial funds as the accompanying accounts show.

There seems to be much greater mobility in the caving community on Mendip; more cavers come and go with a wider variety of specialist gear. Do they care about rescue work or take it for granted? New exploration by a few dedicated locally resident cavers and divers opens up

fresh challenges, but the rest seem content with age-old favourites down Swildon's and the Burrington caves. Such systems bear the brunt of traffic but are rarely pushed further these days. M.R.O. tries to cover all needs by ensuring that as many as possible become and stay conversant with rescue equipment and techniques. Experience shows that it is not enough to practice just once or twice with both, and it is unwise to assume that someone else will have done so. One day, it may be you alone that another's life depends upon underground! Rescues rely entirely upon cavers with a knowledge of what to do in the circumstances; unlike most other pursuits, no one else can help. For these reasons, we were pleased to join Portland cavers and the Dorset Coastguards on a training exercise last summer from which all learnt a lot.

Wardens have held more meetings and their own workshops lately. Useful talks have taken place with the Cave Diving Group about incidents involving long and deep sump rescues, as might occur at Wookey Hole and Cheddar caves. It is very much hoped that these will be translated into effective practical exercises during 1993. Good practice can only come from doing things rather than just talking about them. The alternative is to chance that the worse might just not happen! The Rescon in South Wales in the Summer was by all accounts an excellently organised event on these lines; M.R.O. representatives seemingly left their own mark for good measure.

There were nine calls through the Police, exactly as in the previous year. At Christmas, we were also alerted to keep an eye open for a missing person believed to have been murdered in the Box and Corsham area, Wiltshire. The body was subsequently found on the surface.

Jim Hanwell, Hon Secretary & Treasurer

23 January 1993 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer was contacted by the police from their Taunton Control at 2:00 p.m. It was reported that a novice caver had fallen off the Twenty Foot Pot ladder and sustained bad back injuries. Further details were obtained from the informant at the nearby Priddy Green call box. Four members of the Bastard Squad Caving Club from Crawley, West Sussex, had descended the cave at about 8:00 a.m. Two were on their first caving trip. On reaching Sump One, three of the party went through leaving Peter Lofthouse behind. He was one of the beginners, in his late twenties, very tall and weighed over 18 stone. His solitary wait left him very cold. After reuniting, the party began their return up the streamway, reaching the Twenty Foot at about 1 p.m., some five hours after going down the cave. Peter Lofthouse was exhausted and failed to climb the pitch. On his second attempt, he fell off the ladder, and the life-liner who was using a 'shunt' failed to hold him. Although barely 2 to 3 metres off the ground, he hit the floor heavily on his back and seems to have been severely bruised by a belay belt attachment. Badly shaken, he was assisted upright, but further attempts to climb the pitch were abandoned. He became demoralised and runners were despatched to raise the callout.

A strong rescue party was assembled at the Belfry and diverted from a trip down St. Cuthbert's Swallet by Stewart McManus. Mike Wilson, Chris Harvey, Jeremy Henly, D. Herbert and K. Hissey went underground at about 2:10 p.m. with First Aid, Comforts and the Molefone. They were backed-up by Tim Large and Martin Grass ten minutes later with hauling ropes. Dr. Tony Boycott and Chris Smart followed with medical supplies at 2:30 p.m. Alan Butcher, Pete Burgess, Les Williams, M. Clark and G. Lyall went down the cave at 2:40 p.m. with the main hauling gear and Mager stretcher. The "baby bouncer" was requested and sent down the cave at 3:05 p.m. with Rob Harper and Dave Yeandle. By this time the size, weight and incapacity of the patient became known. There was great concern over the extent of his back injuries. A long and hard, but careful, haul seemed in prospect. Dave Morrison manned the cave entrance,

Brian Prewer set up surface communications with the underground party and Stewart McManus took over as Controller. Others were alerted.

To compound the situation, Laurie Kay, aged 28 and one of the two experienced cavers in the original party, fell off the Ten Foot climb near the entrance on her way out. She had been reluctant to leave her injured colleague, and had herself become very exhausted and demoralised. Her back was also hurt and she complained of considerable pain. She was immediately attended by Rob Harper and Dave Yeandle, secured into the Paraguard stretcher, then hauled out with help from Murray Knapp, Mike Thomas and Ian Caldwell to an awaiting ambulance. It left for Bristol Royal Infirmary at 3:30 p.m.

Meanwhile, the original patient had given up trying to help himself in any way. The physically demanding haul out thus required relief parties to take over at key points in the cave, especially the more constricted Upper Series. The Short Dry Way route is used on rescues. Fred Davies, Phil Romford, Alan Turner, John Attwood, Ian Caldwell, M. James, A. Smith, R. Humphrey, S. Rolls, S. Hooton, P. Weston and G. Garvosso went down the cave to assist at 4:50 p.m. Kirsty Turner and Jim Hanwell ferried additional kit to the cave, including digging gear to open-up Binnie's Link as much as possible.

After reaching the top of Jacob's Ladder, the first attempt to pass the bulky patient through the cleared-out Binnie's Link failed. The alternative possibility through the Kenneys' Dig had to be abandoned at the top of the tortuous Mud Slide. The only way out had to be forced through Binnie's Link. Fortuitously, the Mager stretcher is well designed to cope with such eventualities. Its toughest test yet was achieved at a cost of £40's worth of damage to the sheet but none to the patient, save indignity. He was out of the cave and off in the ambulance to B.R.I. at 7:30 p.m., after over eleven hours underground on an eventful first caving trip. It was almost certainly his last!

M.R.O. heard the following day that both patients had left the hospital for home a few hours later, and had not suffered serious injuries despite all the signs at the time. Indeed, a couple of rescuers appear to have sustained worse back strains as a result of their exertions, and had to take time off work. Since then, however, we have not heard a word from this club. One begins to wonder whether there really is more to names than meets the eye!

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 23 January 1993

Called out from Hunters' post C.S.C.C. meeting to rescue novice who had fallen off the 20 after five hours in the cave! Heavy carry out - out of cave at 7:30 p.m. Further rescue to same party – girl fell off entrance climb hurt back and possible ruptured kidney.

Source – Western Daily Press – 25 January 1993

CAVERS STRUGGLE TO SAVE 18-STONE PETER

Rescuers told yesterday how they struggled for six hours to pull an 18-stone man to safety after a caving accident. Members of the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation had to call for reinforcements after they discovered the size of injured caving novice Peter Loftouse. The afternoon rescue at Swildon's Cave in Priddy was forced to go on after dark as Mr. Loftouse, aged 27, had to be dragged 1,000 feet to safety. Another caver Laurie Kay, 28, was also hurt in a fall as the rescue was going on. Both were taken by ambulance to the Bristol Royal Infirmary suffering from back injuries. They were in a party of four from Crawley, Sussex, which visited the Mendips on Saturday. They successfully completed the downhill journey into the centre of

the cave but on the way out, Mr. Loftouse, who is well over 6 feet, became tired and slipped 20 feet down a waterfall. A friend climbed to the surface to raise the alarm after Mr. Loftouse complained that he could not walk. Mr. Brian Prewer, warden of the rescue team, said: "We originally went in with about ten people, including our doctor, but we had to double that number when we saw the size of the injured man. Apparently he had exerted himself too much on the inward journey and was too tired to carry on. That is when he slipped and fell." He added: "The rescue was a success but there is no doubt that it was delayed by the size of the injured man. We finally got him out at about 8 p.m." Swildon's Cave is visited by hundreds of caving enthusiasts from all over the country. A spokeswoman at the B.R.I. said Mr. Loftouse discharged himself on Saturday night and Ms. Kay went home yesterday after treatment to her back.

Source – Wells Journal – 28 January 1993

RESCUERS PULL OUT 18-STONE CAVER – CAVE TEAM CALLS IN THE HEAVIES

Mendip cavers pulled off the heaviest rescue of their careers on Saturday. They brought an 18-stone, first-time Sussex caver to the surface at Swildon's Hole near Priddy – the heaviest person they have ever carried out, said Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation warden Brian Prewer. And the five-and-a-half hour rescue was delayed when another member of his party fell, injured her back and had to be carried out too. Thirty-five people altogether were involved in the rescues, about 25 of them underground, said Mr. Prewer.

The size of the underground team had to be doubled once they realised the weight of 27-year-old Peter Loftouse, so the team holding the stretcher could be relieved.

"The sheer weight of the man meant we had to change rescue teams over. He is the heaviest person we have had to bring out of a cave," said Mr. Prewer.

The rescuers were called out at 1pm after 6ft 2ins Mr. Loftouse, one of a group of four from Crawley, Sussex, fell 20 feet off a caving ladder down a waterfall 1,000 feet in from the entrance.

Tired on the way out, he lost his grip on the ladder, fell, injured his back and couldn't walk. A high-speed six-man team arrived on the spot an hour later, followed by a cave rescue doctor and others.

During the rescue one of the experienced Crawley cavers, 28-year-old Laurie Kay, fell 10 feet near the entrance to the cave and injured her back.

She was brought out first, followed by Mr. Loftouse at 7.30pm. Both were sent by ambulance to the Bristol Royal Infirmary. Mr. Loftouse discharged himself on Saturday night and Ms. Kay went home on Sunday.

Swildon's Hole is popular with caving enthusiasts all over Britain.

14 February 1993 – Swildon's Hole

The police at Taunton Control called Brian Prewer at 7:30 p.m. to say that a caver had become exhausted and unable to get out the cave. They said that the informant, James Rumble, had reported the person concerned to be 'only twenty feet inside the cave': however, he had left the

phone and so it was not possible to confirm immediately what the problem was. On meeting the informant, a little later on the Green, it was learnt that the exhausted caver was at the bottom of the Twenty Foot Pot and unable to climb the ladder.

Six Scout Leaders from Reading entered the cave at about 3:30 p.m. and reached Sump One nearly two hours later. On returning to the Twenty Foot, Conrad Boyer had become exhausted and was unable to climb the ladder. The others seemed too tired to help him; so, three, including James Rumble, left the cave to call for assistance. They wasted time by going to Upper Pitts rather than using the Priddy Green call box. On finding no one there, they rang the police from the hut before returning to the Green; hence the confusing message could not be initially confirmed, which is always a frustrating start to a callout. As the previous incident showed, this can be turned into something much more serious.

Brian Prewer alerted Alan Butcher and Tony Jarratt in Priddy; the latter being with Chris Harvey and Marcel Dijkstra, a Dutch caver. All four went down the cave to assist straightaway and, using the tackle already available to the scouts, managed to haul Conrad Boyer up the pitch with little difficulty. Richard West established Surface Control Jim Hanwell, Phil Romford, Chris Hawkes and Tim and Jos Large stood-by in case needed. Brian Prewer and Dany Bradshaw, who had followed with full M.R.O. hauling gear met all concerned making their way out at the Eight Foot climb below the old Forty Foot Pot. Although very tired, the patient did not require any medical attention and, with appropriate moral support, was able to help himself out the cave by 8:40 p.m.

In the event, it must also be noted that three with cave rescue experience plus an overseas visitor achieved what five in the original party had been unable to do for themselves. This alone justifies M.R.O.'s longstanding offer to assist clubs who wish to undertake rescue practices and training in appropriate patient hauling techniques. The latter are very different to the usual methods used to climb pitches, and invariably much more basic; an approach which surprises many who are woefully out of touch by today's high technology 'fix' for most situations.

Source – Western Daily Press – 15 February 1993

CAVE RESCUE

A rescue operation was underway last night to help a 21-year-old man trapped in a cave system.

Mendip Cave rescue team was called in to help bring him to the surface after other members of his party exploring Swildon's Hole, near Priddy, Somerset, alerted police.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 5, page 81

After a three-hour digging trip in White Pit I showered and sat down with guests and coffee. This was the sign for a call out from Prew and we were soon moving a Scout leader(!) from the cave who couldn't climb the 20-foot pot. On the way out I went through the new wet entrance to the Dry Way.

21 March 1993 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer received a call from the Police Control at Taunton at 4:45 p.m. to report an overdue party. A Mr. Coobham from Crawley, near London, was concerned that five cavers from the Three Bridges Scout Group had not surfaced from a 'round trip' as expected. They

had gone down the cave at 9:30 a.m. and, so, had been underground for over seven hours. The informant himself had turned back at the entrance. He was met on Priddy Green for further details.

Alex Gee and Andrew Dennis were on the spot and offered to start a search; particularly all routes in the Upper Series first before going on to Tratman's Temple and Vicarage Landing. Dany Bradshaw, Bob Cork, Tony Jarratt, Stewart McManus, Richard West, and Tim and Jos Large were contacted to prepare for any rescue situation. Dany informed Martin Grass.

The initial search party met the overdue scouts at the entrance, just emerging after a trip of almost eight hours. They had been unable to bail out the final duck and, so, were forced to return via Paradise Regained. This inevitably delayed them, of course.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 5, page 88

After a two-hour digging trip in White Pit on arriving back at home I was accosted by Alex Gee and Andy Denis and informed of a potential rescue at Swildon's Hole. A group of Crawley Scouts were overdue from a Round Trip and had been down eight hours. As Andy and Alex walked across the fields they met the scouts just coming out after having failed to drain the last Trouble. They were all knackered but okay.

23 March 1993 – Eastwater Cavern

Mrs. Dorothy Gibbons took the trouble to visit Brian Prewer at his home in Priddy because she was concerned for the safety of two cavers who had entered the cave at 3 p.m., well over five hours earlier in the day. She did not know which routes they intended to follow but had been asked to raise the alarm if they had not reported back by about 8 p.m. Sometime later, the girlfriend of one of the cavers rang the farm because she was also concerned that they had exceeded their ETA. Both cavers were experienced, well equipped and knew the cave. Michael Quartermain and Tony Simmons were in their mid-forties and lived in Glastonbury. Brian alerted wardens and local cavers at the Hunters' Lodge by 8:40 p.m., and Tony Jarratt went to collect diggers from a nearby site. Jim Hanwell was contacted shortly afterwards. He was expecting a visit from Dany Bradshaw within a few minutes, and it was agreed that a search party ought to go down the cave as soon as possible. Rescuers would be stood-by and the police informed that an incident was underway.

Brian Prewer, Jim Hanwell, Dany Bradshaw and Tony Jarratt met in Eastwater Lane just before 9 p.m. Brian set up the surface Molefone, Jim established a Control by the gate into the field whilst Dany and Tony entered the cave at 9:38 p.m. with the underground Molefone and comforts. It was agreed that the 'Old Cave' would be searched before considering the possibility of an incident in the West End Series; Dany followed the popular Traverse route whilst Tony used the less frequented Boulder Chamber route. The missing cavers were not in either section, and this ominous news was reported to the surface from the bottom of Baker's Chimney at 9:55 p.m. Tony proceeded to check out the Twin Verticals and Dolphin Pot routes beyond whilst Dany manned the Molefone.

A message was radioed from underground at 10:05 p.m. that the missing cavers had been found. Tony Simmons had fallen about ten feet whilst climbing up the Dolphin Chimney on the way out from a trip to the bottom of the 'Old Cave'. He had badly broken the lower part of his left arm, sustaining a bad Colles fracture of the wrist and deeply lacerated fingers with exposed tendons as a result of the impact. This had happened about five hours earlier, and he had been in great pain ever since though in a remarkably confident state in the circumstances. Michael

Quartermain felt unable to leave his injured friend alone whilst going out to seek help; rather, he preferred to comfort him as best he could, so risking that help would come from the surface once their ETA had elapsed. This decision, made more with understandable emotion than reason, perhaps, undoubtedly prolonged the callout by at least four hours, however!

A full-scale callout of rescuers and equipment followed immediately through Brenda Prewer. It was felt that the patient would still be able to do much to help himself, once his injuries were immobilised and pain relief administered. Bob Cork and Stewart McManus entered the cave with full medical supplies and heat packs at 10:30 p.m. Meanwhile, Dany Bradshaw and Tony Jarratt gave the patient First Aid. Graham Johnson and Estelle Sanford arrived and offered to help if needed, but were suffering from 'flu' and had only just returned from a Darren Cilau epic. Andy Sparrow, Richard Blake and Steve Redwood went down the cave with hauling gear at 10:50 p.m.

Tim and Jos Large went underground with John Attwood and Phil Romford at 11 p.m. with Hot Air, more comforts and a canteen. Lil Romford took over providing hot drinks, making several trips to and from the Belfry until the Eastwater Hut was opened on site. This snug base proved to be an invaluable refuge and 'waiting room' for the girlfriend of the injured caver who turned up soon afterwards. The rest had to content themselves with bitterly freezing conditions outside, although at least it was a cloudless night.

Reports were received from underground that Dany Bradshaw and Bob Cork had attended to the patient's injuries, splinted the arm and given both Temgesic and Entonox. More of the latter would be needed and the Ambulance Service was requested to bring spare cylinders. Hauling began just before 11:30 p.m. Richard West and Chris Harvey arrived to assist in ferrying gear to the cave. Fred Davies took spare Entonox cylinders supplied by the ambulance down the cave at 11:45 p.m. The patient was reported as being at the top of the Dolphin Chimney by midnight, and that it would be at least another two hours before he was out the cave. He was bound to experience difficulties in the more constricted passages, and so the Mager stretcher was requested.

Dr. Tony Boycott and Rob Harper were asked to assist. They went down the cave at 1 a.m. with the Mager stretcher, assisted by Alan Butcher and Bob Lewis, a caver staying at the Shepton Mallet Caving Club Hut. By now, there were sixteen rescuers underground. The haul out proceeded well and the patient reached the awaiting ambulance at 2:20 a.m. Alan Quartermain stayed with his friend throughout the ordeal, and both were underground for almost ten hours. It appears that Tony Simmons fell whilst trying to readjust the position of his tackle bag on climbing up and bridging in the Dolphin Chimney. Such can be the price of a momentary lapse in concentration.

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 24 March 1993

Called out to a bloke fallen off Dolphin Pot Chimney, fractured are and more pain than expected. Met victim in the Boulder Chamber squeeze; going good self-help. Out by 4 p.m.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 5, page 89

Mike Quartermain, Dany Bradshaw, Mac, Tim Large, Joe Large, Rich Blake, Andy Sparrow, John Attwood, Steve Redwood, Bob Cork, Bob, Rob Harper, Fred Davies, Butch, Prew, Rich West, Jim Hanwell, Tony Jarratt.

I received a call from Prew around 9:15 p.m. and went on a brief search for rescuers finding some at the Hunters'. As the two cavers were reported about three hours overdue we assumed them to be lost and at 9:40 p.m. Dany and I went in for a quick search carrying the Molephone. I went via the Wiggle Press/Boulder Chamber and Dany via the Upper Traverse. We met up at the head of the Canyon and having found on one reported to surface. I then went on ahead to check the Twin Verticals (no ladder) and Dolphin Pot route where I heard them shouting at the bottom of the chimney (Dolphin Pot proper). Tony had fallen about ten feet off the climb up and badly broken his arm/wrist and bruised all his left side. Mike had stayed with him to check on his condition and mend his lamp, by which time he thought it too late to go out for help as at least two people on the surface should have reported them late. This was probably a mistake as they had a long, and for Tony, agonising wait. On hearing the damage, I shouted back to Dany to phone the surface with details and free climbed down to them (there was no handline).

Despite his injuries Tony was in good spirits. Meanwhile, on the surface there was a problem in getting sufficient rescuers due to it being a Tuesday night and a "flu epidemic." Eventually Mac and Bob arrived with splints, Entonox, First Aid etc. and after I had rigged the climb with Mike's antique ladder the kit was lowered. Bob and Dany then administered Temgesic and Entonox and pulled Tony's arm back into shape, putting a couple of neoprene splints (and one on his lower leg for good measure). He was put in the "Baby Bouncer" and the slow progress of evacuation started. He was hauled/pushed up the Pot and helped himself as well as he could all the way. With constant drags on Entonox he was hauled up the Canyon on an excellent running pulley system rigged by Andy. It was thought prudent to obtain the stretcher which Fred and Butch got down with difficulty – luckily it was not needed. Baker's Chimney (proper) was rigged but it was decided to try to get him through the Woggle Press as he was now doped-up enough to be making good progress. With a bit of hauling and some superb work on his own accord he luckily got through and was soon on his way through the Ruckle and out of the cave at 2:15 a.m. (4½ hours since Dany and I entered). Most of this rescue went well despite several delays for kit and personnel. I dread to think what would happen on a similar, or worse accident in the depths of the West End Series!

9 April 1993 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer received a call from the police at 1:30 a.m. that a party of cavers from Newport, in Gwent, had not returned home as expected following a visit to the cave the previous day. The informant's telephone number given was wrong and, so, it was impossible to obtain further details about the group and their trip.

Brian found no unknown vehicles parked on both village greens. Meanwhile, Gwent Police contacted Taunton to report that those concerned had returned home safely, at last. The incident was over by 1:45 a.m.

16 April 1993 – East Twin Swallet

Nineteen members of a Church Youth Group from Chesham, Bucks, visited Burrington Combe for the day in minibuses. They spilt up into various parties to explore different caves during their visit, going underground at about 11 a.m. The leader, Richard Luxton, arranged that all would meet up after about two hours, at 1 p.m. He was unsure whether those concerned had actually gone down the caves intended, however, since they had not been seen after dispersing in the combe.

When one of the parties, comprising of four teenagers, failed to make the ETA, they were uncertain as to whether they had gone down either Lionel's Hole or East Twin Swallet. Neither

cave was known well enough for those concerned on the surface to be convinced that the missing cavers were really still underground. M.R.O. was alerted through the police at 4:45 p.m. from the Burrington Combe Cafe.

Brian Prewer received the call and raised a search party comprising Dany Bradshaw, Tony Jarratt, Fred Davies, Andy Sparrow and Richard Blake. Jim Hanwell and Richard West were asked to organise the rescue whilst Brian ferried appropriate gear to the combe in case needed. All met at the East Twin lay-by just after 5 p.m. Andy Sparrow conducted an initial search of Lionel's 'Old Cave' to the First Duck. He entered the system at 5:20 p.m. and returned at 5:45 p.m. to report that no one was in the cave; also, that the water in the duck was clear, indicating that it had been undisturbed for several hours.

Andy Sparrow then set out to search East Twin Swallet at 5:50 p.m. whilst Fred Davies went to Spar Pot. Tony Jarratt and Richard Blake stood by with rescue equipment at the entrance. At 6 p.m., it was reported that the missing party had been found. Although having been down East Twin previously, Paul Reynolds (aged 19), Rachel Sanderson (aged 18), Jeanette Allen (aged 17) and James Howgego (aged 15) had become totally lost and unable to find the way back through the squeeze leading to the Boulder Chamber. They had decided to await rescue in the chamber, and stayed put for almost five hours. All were wearing dry grots and had good electric lights. Although dispirited, they remained in good shape, were extremely grateful to get out safely and very apologetic for the trouble caused.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 5, page 96

Andy Sparrow, Fred Davies, Rich Blake, Rich West, Dany, Prew, Jim Hanwell, Tony Jarratt.

Call out was at 5:10 p.m. at the shop, four youngsters 1½ hours overdue from a supposed Lionel's Hole trip. Andy checked it out but the duck had clean water so it was assumed they were lost in the Spar Pot section of East Twin. When Andy and Fred went to look this was indeed the case and the lost ones were found quickly and escorted to the surface. Rich and I giving them a hand up the entrance climbs.

1 May 1993 – Sidcot Swallet

At 12:25 p.m., Brian Prewer was contacted by the police and asked to ring a Mr. Robson at the Burrington Combe Cafe. He had reported that a caver was stuck and unable to get back through the squeeze at the Lobster Pot. The informant was a climber, but had been requested by Brian Smith, leader of a party of Owlsmoor Group Scouts, Berkshire, to raise the alarm on their behalf. Such relayed messages are invariably vague, of course. On being contacted by M.R.O., Mr. Robson thought that the stuck caver had injured his chest on trying to force the squeeze.

Brian Prewer immediately contacted the Belfry and asked 'Jingles' Williams and John King to go to the cave in order to help and get full details. They reached the cave just before 1 p.m. and were joined there by Andy Legg. Meanwhile, others were alerted of the situation and made their way to Burrington with rescue gear. Dany Bradshaw, Brian Prewer, Martin Grass, Richard West, Howard and Debbie Limbert formed a hauling party. On arrival at the cave, however, the stuck caver had been helped out of his predicament by those on the spot.

The patient, eleven-year old Brian Smith, was taken to Weston-super-Mare General Hospital, suffering from possible cracked ribs as a result of his exertions in the squeeze. No more has been heard from the party to confirm this, however.

22 June 1993 – Box Mines, Wiltshire

The Wiltshire Police at Chippenham called Brian Prewer at 8:48 p.m. An observant local resident walking his dog in Quarry Hill Woods had noted two motorbikes parked near entrances to the mines. They had been there since about mid-day on Monday 21st June. He wisely notified the police who checked ownership of the bikes and discovered from relatives in Calne that two men in their mid-twenties were missing. They were C. Delahunti and W. Woodman. On being contacted for further information by M.R.O., the wife of the latter had little idea where her husband was, but thought that he could have visited a bike breaker's yard in Marlborough. She was unconcerned since he often stayed away for several days at a time without telling her where he was! However, she was sure that he had never been underground, and that neither of the missing men had any knowledge of Box Mines.

Locally resident rescuers were alerted through Bob and Golly Scammell at Bathford. Both met the police at the top of Quarry Hill at 9:50 p.m. A police dog had picked up a tell-tale scent at the entrance to Jack's Workings, but not at nearby Lady Hamilton's Hole. Derek Hawkins, Nick McCamely, Mike Breakspear and Sam Catalarnie went to investigate the former whilst Bob Scammell, Garry Emery and John Greenslade set out to search the latter. Gary Ashton, Cliff Gardener and Paul De'ath stood-by in kit at the surface and Golly Scammell kept notes.

Both search parties entered the mines at 10:15 p.m. It was agreed that, after an initial investigation lasting one hour, all would return to the surface to report their findings and confer over the next phase of the search. This would enable the routes visited and eliminated to be accurately recorded; an effective way to cover such a maze of tunnels, without committing parties to exhaustive searches when one of them stood a fair chance of finding the missing pair quickly.

On Mendip, meanwhile, potential back-up teams were stood by comprising Stewart McManus, Tim Large, Chris Batstone, Martin Bishop, Alan Butcher, Richard West and Jim Hanwell. Dr. D. Greatorex at Bath was also informed. They awaited news from the police at the scene as to the outcome of the searches under way.

At about 10:45 p.m., Bob Scammell's party located the missing pair just off the main passage, near the old crane, and not very far from Lady Hamilton's Hole entrance. It appears that they had tried to do a 'through trip' using only a box of matches! When these ran out, they were stranded, of course, and had been trapped in the cave for over 30 hours with no protective clothes, food or drink. One had vainly tried to dig a way upwards through the roof with bare hands in total darkness, and is lucky not to have brought any of it down. Both were very distressed and, in fact, thought they were as good as dead. But, for the observant walker, this could well have been the case since most visits to the mines take place at weekends.

John Greenslade left the cave to inform those on the surface, and all concerned were safely outside just before 11 p.m. The police kindly made arrangements for the rescue volunteers to have refreshments in the nearby R.A.F. mess at Rudloe Manor. This was gratefully appreciated and the Commanding Officer thanked for his hospitality in the circumstances. Those standing by on Mendip, equally gratefully, went to bed in wonder of how some people behave. But, as Bob Scammell mentions in his report: 'Who are we to Judge'!

Source – Bath Evening Chronicle – 23 June 1993

ALERT OVER MINE MAZE

Police today warned people to stay away from the maze of mines beneath Corsham and Box after two men were lost underground for nearly 30 hours.

Christopher Delahunty and William Woodman, 23, both from Calne, entered the mines on Monday. They got lost, were wearing only light clothing and their torch batteries ran out. The alarm was raised by Mr. Michael Smith, of Pleasant View, at 6:15pm yesterday after he noticed two motorcycles had been parked in woods near his home since 11am on Monday. The men were eventually discovered at 11pm yesterday.

A police dog identified the entrance the two men used and the Mendip Cave Rescue team then found the men.

Chief Inspector Steve Coxhead at Chippenham police station said: "It was a very frightening experience – especially after the torch ran out when they became convinced there was a high chance they would not be found."

The mines were abandoned about 50 years ago and main entrances were boarded up.

Source – The Times – 24 June 1993

POLICE DOG SNIFFS OUT MEN LOST IN MINE

A police dog yesterday led rescuers to two men who had been lost for more than 30 hours in a labyrinth of disused mine workings.

Christopher Delahunty and William Woodman, both 22, lost their way after their torch batteries ran out as they explored tunnels in old quarry mines near Box, Wiltshire. According to police, they had given up all hope of finding their way out alive when Zak, a five-year-old alsatian serving with Chippenham police, who retires from the force today, found their scent and led rescuers to the spot where they huddled in the warren of tunnels.

The two men, who were recovering at their homes in Caine, Wiltshire, yesterday, had been without food or water since venturing into the sealed-off mine workings on Monday morning. Chief Insp Steve Coxhead, of Chippenham, said: "They were extremely relieved and very, very frightened when they were found." He added that the two men had been lucky to escape alive. The abandoned mine workings, originally used to quarry Bath stone, stretch for more than 30 miles underground and are littered with roof falls and narrow passages.

"They had gone down there out of curiosity without informing anyone of their plans," Mr. Coxhead said. "People should never go underground without suitable safety precautions and should always tell someone where they are going."

A search was launched after the men's motorcycles were seen by a local resident parked for some time in the surrounding woods. Eight police officers and 15 members of the Mendip cave rescue team helped in the search.

12 October 1993 – Swildon's Hole

The police at Weston-super-Mare contacted Brian Prewer at 11:30 p.m. They had been contacted by a Mrs. Cook to say that her son, Andrew, had not kept an earlier appointment at 6

p.m. with her. She thought that he had gone caving somewhere on Mendip with friends from Bristol University. Her description of the car being used was sketchy.

Brian checked Priddy Green, and the park at the New Inn, but found no cars that were not local. He then recalled being told by two cavers earlier in the evening that a party of U.B.S.S. had gone down Swildon's Hole at about 5:30 p.m. Playing this hunch, he telephoned Roger Dors at the Hunters' Lodge Inn who was able to confirm that three cavers with U.B.S.S. T-shirts had been there later in the evening, and had left at closing time. One answered the description of Andrew Cook given by his mother.

Mrs. Cook was contacted again and reassured that her son was alive and well. She rang back at midnight to say that Andrew had returned home safely. This is a good example of how local knowledge and a modicum of reasoned intuition can solve needless worries which, otherwise, could so easily have led to a general mobilisation of rescuers at a particularly difficult time of day.

23 October 1993 – G.B. Cave

A small group of experienced cavers from the Somerton area went down the cave during the afternoon. The party was led by Paul Curtis and included Damien Waller, Lynne Niland and Jeni Galligan, in her earlier thirties. Jeni experienced some difficulty in negotiating the awkward traverse and bold step near the top of the Forty Foot climb on the way down the Main Chamber. She decided to jump onto the ledge her leader had already reached. This is much higher than it looks, of course. On landing heavily, she broke her right leg in four places as a result of the impact. Needless to say, she could not be moved from this precarious shelf; but, although in great pain, was more anxious than distressed about her predicament.

The accident happened at about 3 p.m. Two of the party left the cave immediately to raise the alarm whilst Paul Curtis stayed to comfort the patient. Since her dry clothing had become damp from the spray of the nearby waterfall, she was covered with a polythene sheet to afford some protection. Later, a party of London University cavers already in the cave came to assist. On reaching the road, those sent to call M.R.O. chanced to meet a passer-by with a mobile telephone in his car. Because this was used to dial 999, the first notification of the emergency went to a Vodafone network control in Wiltshire, and then to the Southampton Coastguard for some reason. Some fifty minutes elapsed before the police in Bristol got the message. They immediately called Brian Prewer at 5:05 p.m. Delays of this sort defeat the main advantage of using mobile phones, unless those making the call know exactly where they are and, ideally, in which Police Force Area the incident has occurred. Surprisingly, neither piece of information seems to have been known to informant with the phone! Furthermore, it was not possible for Brian Prewer to contact him for further details. This makes an effective response much more difficult, of course. The only recourse is to assume the worse and get an advance party to the cave as soon as possible with as much kit as they can carry.

Alan Butcher, Alex Gee and Dudley Herbert from the Belfry got to G.B. at 5:45 p.m. They immediately went underground with medical supplies, including neoprene splints, Temgesic and Entonox pain relief, and were with the patient shortly after 6 p.m. Meanwhile, Richard West established the surface control at the roadside. Andy Sparrow went down the cave at 5:50 p.m. with the Molefone whilst John Beauchamp and Anthony Butcher set up on the surface above the Main Chamber. Paul Curtin carried in the Hot Air kit Just before 6 p.m., Vince Simmonds the Mager drag sheet and Brian Prewer comforts and a Flectalon blanket. Joel Corregan followed with hauling ropes and Tim Francis took the Mager stretcher carrying frame.

At 6:10 p.m., a message was received from underground that the patient was being attended to and given pain relief. She thought that she could do much to help herself once her leg was splinted, and that a full stretcher carry would only slow things down. Given the strong rescue party and the other cavers already in the cave to help out, others on call were stood by at the Belfry. These included Stewart McManus, Martin Grass and Graham Wilton-Jones. Doctors Tony Boycott and Don Thomson were kept informed.

Discussions with Jeni Galligan's friends who had surfaced to make the callout, indicated that she suffered from asthma, and her inhaler was found in their car. This did not present a problem, however, and the situation was explained to the ambulance crew that arrived at 6:52 p.m. They had been requested to come early in order to have additional Entonox available, if needed. Meanwhile, those underground found that the patient was unable to assist as much as her initial optimism had led everyone to believe. After about ten minutes of bravely trying, she was put into the drag sheet. Rapid progress was then made up the Main Chamber, under the Bridge and into the lower end of the Gorge by 6:55 p.m.

At this point, the patient became unreasonably distressed and then suddenly quiet with her eyes staring. Alan Butcher and Vince Simmonds who were closely observing her during the carry spotted that she had stopped breathing; not an easy diagnosis in any circumstances underground, and totally unexpected in view of her injuries and earlier determination. A pulse could not be found. Vince immediately administered mouth-to-mouth resuscitation and the patient's own breathing was restored after five exhalations. She also responded to questioning, much to the relief of everyone. This dramatic turn for the worse was instantly radioed to the surface at 6:55 p.m., and medical help requested.

After appraising the situation with the ambulance crew, Leading Ambulanceman Roger Tomlinson volunteered to go underground and attend the patient since he had done some caving in the past. He went down the cave with additional medical equipment at 7:05 p.m., escorted and helped by Joel Corregan. Further rescuers were called to the cave to assist. Jonathan Roberts, Richard Blake, Phil Romford, Graham Prole and Julie Hesketh arrived and went underground shortly afterwards. Lil Romford looked after the two members from the original party who are naturally concerned to hear of the patient's setback.

On arrival at the Ten Foot drop in Mud Passage at 7:25 p.m., Roger Tomlinson examined the patient, administered injections and prepared her in case a saline drip proved necessary. Her blood pressure was found to be very low. Stewart McManus, Martin Grass, Graham Wilton-Jones, Chris Smart, Mike McDonald, Bill Tolfree and others helped to ferry further kit across the fields to the cave. They also prepared to be stretcher bearers once the patient reached the entrance. In view of Roger Tomlinson's involvement down the cave, a second ambulance was requested to take Jeni Galligan to Yeovil Hospital without delay, for Roger needed a change of clothes and well-deserved respite after such unaccustomed exertions underground. His assistance was much appreciated and saved valuable time.

After this hiatus, the final phase of the haul out proceeded smoothly and the patient was brought to the surface at 8:40 p.m. Since she had been first reached and attended by M.R.O., her safe recovery had taken only two and a half hours; but, it was clearly a lifetime for the plucky patient! Jeni has subsequently written-up her own story for the record, and also expressed much gratitude to all who came to her rescue.

That everything ended so well and a life was saved justifies all the training and practising organised by M.R.O. wardens for local cavers. The M.C.G. members, for example, had recently held a rescue hauling practice in G.B. and knew what to do. It is worth reemphasising that the

majority of people on a cave rescue are effectively much needed porters and bearers. A knowledge of how to keep such 'trains' of people on the move smoothly can only be gained from actually practising how this is done down caves. Progress and communications in normal caving are quite different and no real substitute what happens on rescues. Although somewhat hesitant to repeat a now much maligned principle, it is truly 'back to basics'!

Source – M.C.G. Log Book Volume 11, pages 54 to 57

M.C.G. members involved – John Roberts, Joan Goddard, Tim Frances, Julie Hesketh, Joel Corrigan, Joe Frampton, Rob Whalley, Shane Cowman, John Beauchamp.

Joe's Bit – I was happily washing ropes when the call came through at approximately 4:45 p.m. A girl was trapped with a broken ankle just below the waterfall; Julie, Tim, Joel and I jumped into my van and with lights blazing and sirens wailing we went to G.B. I spent the next hour or so hanging about the lay-by waiting for the M.R.O. to give me a job.

A call came though that hushed the anxious crowd. The girl had stopped breathing. Gloomy minutes later a sole light came bobbing from the cave entrance. A shout from Joel for more people was all I needed and sprinted across the field, scrambling along I reached the rescue party just above The Gorge. The girl, Jenny, was conscious once again, from there it was brute strength and determination, and about 1½ hours later I reached the cool night air once more, thoroughly elated at a job well done.

Tim's Bit – Oh well, it's the rescue practice all over again. Not wanting to stand around useless I volunteered to carry the stretcher in. Initially Jenny had tried to hobble but this proved to slow. Once in the stretcher progress was quick, the only delay was when the patient had gulped down a little too much Entinox. She started breathing again without needing mouth to mouth from Vince. I spent the rest of the trip administering hot air and lugging tackle out. More excitement was had when Roger [brought] the ambulance pack. Basically he needed help in holding various medical odds and ends including a blood sample – yummy. The carry was then essentially straightforward with Sparrow doing honours on the rigging side. Outside we rescued the M.C.G. rescue key from some spotty novice and gulped warm coffee that Joan had brought along. More bullshit down the Hunters!

Joel's bit – Why didn't I have any breakfast? I was first changed from our lunch. So Butch (Alan Butcher M.R.O.) wanted me to go down the cave with him. We got to the top of the 40 foot pitch to find the casualty lying in a survival bag, shaking badly. I was then sent out to get a hot air unit. I shot out of the cave straight past someone with the hot air unit! I went back down again to assist. We then spent the next 45 minutes dragging her up the boulders. (Initially she was helping herself by reversing on her arse, using her good leg, but this was very slow. She then tried hopping (!) but this proved too painful. We finally put her in the drag sheet). I went off with Sparrow to rig the first "pitch", but after about five minutes I was sent out again, this time to get more people as she had stopped breathing. I sprinted out, and the backup party went down. After a few minutes rest, I took Roger the ambulance man down the cave. He hadn't been underground for decades and finished his dinner off in no time at all.

Apart from the regular sweating sessions the rescue proceeded as a more or less straight forward haul out. Roger pumped her up with all sorts of wonderful drugs, and an hour or so later we were all talking big in the pub.

Very glad we had the practice down there last year, and Martin Grass was chuffed to bits that so many M.C.G. were involved.

Julie's bit – We were wondering how we were going to kill a couple of hours before the pubs opened when a call from JR told us about a G.B. rescue. Why didn't I charge my light? Joel went down 1st followed by Tim whilst Joe and myself pottered about at the surface trying to keep warm. We dashed down when Joel ran out for more help as Jenny was now having breathing problems. Began ferrying gear out and assisted with stretcher carrying. Also happened to be in the wrong place when the paramedic gave Jenny a shot of pain killer. "Hold her arm would you ...". Couldn't really say no but they nearly had another casualty on their hands.

A fairly straightforward rescue with just the right number of people – and everyone there did their bit. Rescue practice down G.B. last year was a great help. Out on surface by 8:45 p.m.

Jrat's bit – At Bat Products late Saturday afternoon where else!) after a day's seminar about destroying Mendip – at least the Eastern bit – by quarrying it away (or not, if plans and costs of limestone change). Phone call at Bat Products from Brenda, "girl with broken ankle at G.B. Waterfall."



Knew there would be some M.C.G. types, so rang up the cottage, Joan answered, and the rest has been written up above. My main role was to hang around on the surface, then down with the emergency wave of helpers when the casualty's breathing difficulty was known, and help handle the stretcher/drag sheet through the cave. A successful four hour rescue from call-out, satisfying outcome, and a lot of beer money saved. And the M.C.G. help was much appreciated.

P.S. The M.R.O. debrief at the Hunters' on Sunday evening 24 October revealed a number of weaknesses in the rescue process, including the fact that this was the first M.R.O. call-out initiated by a car phone – the call had been routed via a radio mast at Salisbury Plain to the Southampton Coastguard! But the underlying fact remains – it was a successful four hour rescue (and was nearly a 2¼ hour failure if artificial respiration hadn't been given by one of the rescue team). So chalk another one up for M.R.O. – a broken ankle with unexpected complications.

P.P.S. 29 October – The casualty was finally operated on, on Tuesday. It was her leg that was broken, not her ankle, in four places. Two of these were apparently shear fractures, associated with her walking boots having totally protected her ankle from damage but transferring the stress to the leg (i.e. a similar type of injury to some skiing fractures).

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 23 October 1993

Back home from an O.F.D I trip and called out to a rescue, fractured ankle and patient's arm set in G.B. – didn't go.

Source – Wells Journal – 11 November 1993

WOMAN STOPPED BREATHING AFTER BREAKING A LEG

CAVER SAVED IN RESCUE DRAMA

A woman from Somerton was out of hospital this week and full of praise for cave rescue teams who saved her life during an ordeal deep under the Mendips.

Mrs. Jeni Galligan broke her leg in four places after a fall inside the G.B. Cave, at Charterhouse. During a three-hour rescue operation on October 23, she lost consciousness and stopped breathing. It was only after artificial resuscitation that the three-hour rescue operation could continue. Mrs. Galligan has had a metal plate inserted into her leg and expects to be off work for nearly four years. She will require another operation in 18 months' time to remove the plate. What started out as a Saturday afternoon adventure turned to disaster when Mrs. Galligan was attempting to cross a six-foot gap between two ledges, through a waterfall. There was also a sheer 40-foot drop to one side. She said: "When I landed on the ledge I heard a big crack. It was only later I discovered I'd broken my leg," said Mrs. Galligan. Mrs. Galligan says she owes her life to the rescue teams who took part, and in particular to Vince Simmons of Wells, who is a member of the Mendip Rescue Organisation.

It was Mr. Simmons who performed the artificial resuscitation. She said: "But for him I wouldn't be here to-day." As well as the Mendip Rescue Organisation and the Mendip Caving Club, cavers from the Bristol Exploration Club, Wessex CC and Imperial College of London CC took part in the rescue. Mrs. Galligan says she will return to caving if her leg permits it, and the first place on her list will be Charterhouse.



27 November 1993 – Goatchurch Cavern

Roger Dors received a call from Taunton Police at 8:45 p.m. to enquire on the whereabouts of a party reported to them as being overdue from a trip to the cave. After making all the checks possible in the circumstances, the police called again soon afterwards to report that the incident was over as the party had been safely located. No further details were known.

1994

**Report by the Hon Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O.
for the Year to 31st December 1993**

Thanks to the efforts of wardens and the support of Mendip cavers, a lot was achieved in 1993. The record is now best seen by referring to the occasional Newsletters produced by M.R.O. Number 5 (November 1993) also looks ahead with events up to the summer of 1994 and the British Cave Rescue Council Conference on Mendip on 8-10th July. Dany Bradshaw is the B.C.R.C. Conference Secretary responsible for organising the event.

Something to improve our performances on rescues has been organised for clubs and cavers almost monthly; First Aid sessions, hauling practices, equipment demonstrations and so on. And they pay off! A life was certainly saved last November by Vince Simmonds's prompt action to resuscitate a patient who suddenly stopped breathing during the haul out. Vince, like many of us, had attended First Aid lectures with hands-on demonstrations kindly organised for us by Paul Fry of the St. John's Ambulance Service in Wells and M.R.O.'s own resuscitation sessions with dummies at the Hunters' Lodge Inn. He knew what to do. It is not a matter of once learnt never forgotten either; for these procedures need regular practise. Much the same applies to the use of rescue equipment, of course.

M.R.O. posts details of training and events in the Hunters' and circulates Newsletters to current club rescue team contacts, where known. Then it's up to cavers and their clubs, for costs alone clearly prohibit M.R.O. giving a personal service. On Mendip, the organisation of cave rescue relies solely upon donations for income, and M.R.O. is not a club of paid up members. And donations have dwindled during the recession as the accompanying accounts show. The dissemination of information initiated by M.R.O. effectively parallels that used on actual call-outs. It is passed down the line to those who matter. Each step in the chain, or cascade, depends upon every person concerned taking responsibility to inform the next one.

Breakdowns in flows of vital information occur when people become out-of-touch with M.R.O. Obviously, only enough of those interested and readily available will be called upon at any time. During emergencies, especially, valuable time clearly cannot be wasted chasing-up cavers who we rarely see or are unavailable anyway. Whilst call-outs and information start with wardens, therefore, they only work well if clubs keep up the good work by maintaining a rescue service among the currently active caving community.

On Mendip, we are reassured that so many willing and able volunteers can be called upon whenever necessary. Indeed, count up the number of separate individuals who helped out on rescues locally during the year from the following incident reports. Over eighty names appear, to say nothing of those on call in case needed. Rescue practices were also well attended. In March, a pioneer, even historic, deep sump rescue simulation was undertaken from Wookey Twenty. This involved a large and welcome gathering of Somerset Section Cave Diving Group members working together, and a separate report on the exercise prepared by Dany Bradshaw has been submitted to the C.D.G. During the summer, a day's hauling practice was held at Split Rock Quarry. This attracted many clubs, and the follow-up at St. Cuthbert's Swallet in the Autumn had over fifty participants underground. M.R.O. is grateful to the B.E.C. for agreeing to this useful event. Attendance at indoor training meets has also been rewarding, which makes all the organisational effort worthwhile. And the now annual Stomp was, again, literally a roaring success!

The following accounts reflect a priority to improve rescuers' First Aid capability and medical care of patients, using existing equipment. There is, however, a continuing need to keep communications systems working effectively and, so, it has already been agreed that surplus funds in our general Deposit Account should be dedicated to a new Molefone, when available. The special account in memory of Bob Drake helps to fund a major event for Mendip cavers, such as Dr. John Frankland's address.

Whilst the more historic than practical links of C.R.O.'s with the old Mountain Rescue Committee (now Council) still works well in some regions, their close tie-up nationally with the British Cave Rescue Council seems to be less advantageous to caving nowadays than it was formerly. Shared problems are not necessarily halved in these days of increased administration and legislation, to say nothing of more meetings to discuss the same issues. Because mountain rescuers deal with a diverse and growing range of out door activities and sports in uplands, they are faced more with the general public and all that this entails. As cave rescuers, however, we focus upon more specialist enthusiasts, in the main. Save for Pete Hann, perhaps, M.R.O. does not have a problem with bikers in caves. Nor, I suspect, has paragliding down pitches much of a future underground.

My predecessor, Dr. Oliver Lloyd, once argued that the then new 'death cult' of abseiling and prussicking would never catch on in caving! So, although more of a mind to believe anything these days, I foresee a time when it would be wise for B.C.R.C. to stand more alone on behalf of cavers than be unnecessarily overextended with problems unlikely to concern us in particular. Quite apart from cavers alone helping fellow cavers in rescue work, C.R.O.'s have different operational needs: our equipment, stretchers in particular, must often be made-to-measure; its portage underground relies upon basic manpower, and hauling patients to safety uses much the same skills. The way in is invariably the way out, too, with few if any short cuts to take. I reflect, too, that little has really changed in cave rescue work over the years, save for the availability of better designed and made caving gear, medical aids and communications in particular.

Without tempting providence, it is also worth noting that, unlike the mountain world, the annual frequency of cave rescue incidents has stayed remarkably consistent for a long time. The facts speak for themselves. We must beware of being misled into thinking otherwise because of new glossies such as Rescue, the so-called Technical Rescue Magazine first launched In October-November 1993, good though it appears to be. Vested interests often light and fuel unnecessary fires. The carefully researched Cave Rescue report following the study of both Mountain and Cave rescue in England and Wales for the Sports Council, by Judith Annett of Kit Campbell Associates (December 1993), seems likely to have a bigger impact upon the future rescue scene: hopefully for the better. Time will tell.

Eleven call-outs took place during the year, and seven of them necessitated rescuers going underground. Four of these were as serious as any on record, of which three were the result of injuries sustained from falls. It has come to M.R.O.'s attention that some cavers are risking to jump down short climbs, and even encouraging inexperienced people to follow suit! Neither practise is safe, and certainly not the latter.

Apart from a rash piece of mid-summer madness in the Box Mines, Wiltshire, which nearly caused the deaths of two youths with fewer brain cells than matches, all other calls took place within the first and final thirds of the year. There is really no annually recurring pattern of incidents as some have claimed, however. Rather, the seasonal totals over the years tend to show that late autumn is the highest risk period whilst summer is the least accident prone time. No doubt the theorists can advance reasons.

For people unfamiliar with cave rescues, it is worth emphasising that those actually going underground to assist must be backed up by at least as many on the surface in support roles and on stand-by in case needed. It is also important to realise that various skills and jobs are needed since only a few deal directly with the patient. First Aid, therefore, is obviously vital yet only one of many crucial attributes needed by cave rescuers. Each person plays a part and, so, it is

important that any training undertaken is appropriately flexible. It follows that no one is expected to be competent to carry out every task. Volunteers do best in what they are good at and want to do. Those available at the time matter most during emergencies, and the composition of rescue parties is always different. Being able to work with others is especially important.

Well run rescues use the available people to the best advantage. Whilst there is no substitute for actual experience over the years, the current generation of cavers must be suitably involved in rescue work. It is hoped that the lessons provided in the following incident reports will be of some help to all concerned. M.R.O. believes that full and factual accounts are a good way to inform and influence cavers about what happens to cause accidents. They also enable them to appreciate the many jobs that need doing on rescues.

Jim Hanwell, Hon Secretary and Treasurer

30 January 1994 – Attborough Swallet, Red Quar

P.C. Martin Bellamy rang Brian Prewer from the Chewton Mendip Police Station at 6:45 p.m. to report concern for a caver who had left the dig earlier in the afternoon because he felt unwell. Instead, he went alone for a walk around Stock Hill Forest. It was agreed that the rest would carry on working and that he would meet them back at their cars later. When he failed to turn up at the car park, his home was contacted in Bristol to see whether he had been in touch or even returned there. As no one in Bristol knew of his whereabouts and it was now dark, the situation was reported to the local police.

Brian Prewer arranged for Tony Jarratt and Dany Bradshaw to check out caving huts whilst Dave Shipley did a quick search of the forest tracks. After 35 minutes, P.C. Bellamy rang back to report that the missing digger had been located. Other search parties alerted were stood down.

26 March 1994 – Swildon's Hole

Three very experienced cavers from Cornwall took a friend from Gloucester who had done little caving on a trip to Swildon's Four. After travelling to Mendip from Bodmin earlier in the day, they entered the cave about noon. The stream was above average and the inexperienced member slowed the party somewhat. On returning up the streamway, he was too exhausted and cold to climb the Twenty Foot ladder and the others were unable to haul him up without assistance. The leader left the cave and went to the Belfry for help. The exhausted caver, meanwhile, was kept company and remained in good spirits otherwise.

A hauling party including Estelle Sandford and Pete McNab accompanied the leader back to the pitch whilst 'Jingles' Williams stood by at the Belfry. He alerted Jim Hanwell who went to Priddy Green to assist at 7 p.m. It was decided that those underground would be able to deal with the situation without troubling others. All concerned surfaced soon after 8 p.m., eager to make a delayed return to Cornwall the same day and, so, avert too many questions and drinks later!

29 March 1994 – Longwood Swallet

Taunton Police rang Brian Prewer at 9:45 p.m. regarding a party overdue from a trip down the August Hole series. He contacted the informant, John Haynes, at Yatton who explained that his brother, Tim Haynes, and two other local cavers had descended the cave at mid-day. They had been expected home about 9 p.m. at the latest. He described the van being used.

John Beauchamp was immediately contacted and asked to check the Longwood car park nearby for the vehicle concerned. At 10:10 p.m., John telephoned back to report that he had found the overdue party. Their trip had been delayed by spending a long time to retrieve a dropped tackle bag.

6 April 1994 – Swiss Valley Cave, Clevedon

Weston-super-Mare Police rang Brian Prewer at 6:30 p.m. to say that children exploring a cave at Clevedon had reported finding a body amongst boulders in the fourth chamber. A local constable had been part way into the cave and requested that a more thorough search was made. He was contacted at the scene for more details and the location of the cave. The alarmed children insisted that they had seen and touched the hair on the head of a body.

Brian Murliss, Andy Sparrow, Steve Redwood and Chris Tozer formed an initial search party and met at Clevedon Police Station. They went to the end of the cave and found an old anorak with a fur-lined hood discarded among the boulders. The police reported this outcome to Jim Hanwell at 7:40 p.m. and others waiting to help on Mendip were stood down. This little cave is some 300 feet long with two side passages which have been partly mined. It is frequented by local youngsters and located on the hillside overlooking All Saints Church on the outskirts of the town.

5 June 1994 – Swildon's Hole

A party of three led by Debbie Walsh entered the cave at about 2:30 p.m., intending to visit Blue Pencil and the Troubles Series. After reaching the Mud Sump, they revised their plans and returned to explore other parts of Swildon's One. On their way back upstream, 27-year-old Mark Willmott from Swindon, was second to climb the Twenty Foot Pot. When at the top, he failed to grip the strop left to assist the stretch over the stal boss and slipped off the pitch. The life-liner failed to hold him and he fell to the bottom, landing heavily on one leg. His other leg buckled with the impact, causing a painful knee injury.

Attempts to haul the injured caver up the pitch on a tight line failed, so Debbie Walsh left the cave for assistance, surfacing at about 5:45 p.m. Hoping to speed up the call-out, she went to Brian Prewer's home. On finding him out, she then went to Homefield Cottage to raise the alarm with the Mains. This led to the ambulance being called via their new Control Room at Tiverton in Devon. They were given to understand that the injured caver was only seven minutes into the cave. This Ambulance Service Control now handles all emergency calls throughout the South West, making it even more vital to use the established procedures to alert M.R.O. These are well known and clearly posted at the cave entrance.

During the inevitable delay, further assistance was sought by telephoning the Belfry, sometime before 7 p.m. Trevor Hughes responded, going underground at about 7:20 p.m. to help as best he could. Meanwhile, the ambulance had duly arrived on the Green accompanied by a police patrol. There was nothing either could do since no one had alerted M.R.O. as yet! The Police Control at Taunton was contacted by the Ambulance counterpart in Tiverton at 6:58 p.m. to report the situation.

M.R.O. was finally alerted at 7:15 p.m. through Fred Davies. He was told that an injured caver, seven minutes into Swildon's Hole could not be reached by the ambulance crew! Some 90 minutes had now elapsed since the leader of the party had surfaced to seek help. By 7:30 p.m. all the rescuers necessary arrived on the Green. They could have been there at least an hour earlier had the correct callout procedure been used, to say nothing of two hours ambulance time

wasted.

Stewart McManus took control on the Green, Richard West manned the radio there and Alan Butcher went to the cave entrance to relay messages from underground. Tony Jarratt, Nigel Taylor, Pete Bolt, Tim Fowks and Richard Blake entered the cave at 7:50 p.m. with hauling gear and splints. Richard acted as ‘runner. On reaching the pitch, they found that the injured caver only had dry clothes with a short wet-suit top. As he had fallen some three hours earlier and barely moved since, he was understandably very cold. At 8 p.m., Dany Bradshaw, Vince Simmonds, Martin Grass and ‘Jingles’ Williams went underground with the Hot Air kit and Entonox set. A further fifteen cavers were stood by on the Green in case the patient needed to be carried out by stretcher. Fred Davies arrived to assist at the surface.

The casualty’s knee was splinted and he was then hauled up the pitch in a sit harness. After checks, he was assisted out the cave and reached the surface at 9:15 p.m. The ambulance, which had remained on the Green throughout, took Mark Willmott to Weston-super-Mare General Hospital. It appears that he had torn knee ligaments, and was very fortunate not to have been more seriously injured by such a fall.

Source – Tony Jarratt’s Log Book – Vol. 6, page 21

Rich Blake, Trevor Hughes, Nigel Taylor, Tim Fowler, Martin Grass, Dany, Vince, Jingles, Pete Bolt, Iain Williams, Butch, Fred Davies, Rich West, Tony Jarratt etc.

Evening call out to recover a 13+ stone caver who had fallen off the Twenty and damaged his knee. The call out was unfortunately delayed due to the ambulance being called before the M.R.O. and the apparent lack of available wardens when Fred tried phoning around. I collected Rich Blake while Jane phoned Vince and Jake. Trev had gone down the cave with Tim (M.E.G.) and others were with the victim who couldn’t move his leg but was otherwise okay and had been placed in a survival bag and wet suit vest.

I went down with Pete Bolt, Nigel, Trev, Rich Blake etc. and on arrival I splinted Mark’s leg with a neoprene splint before Pete and I put him in the new “baby bouncer style” body harness. The others had rigged the pitch and he was soon hauled up to the top – not without some difficulty due to the harness hauling point being at the back. From thereon out Mark hobbled along as best he could with hauling assistance on all the vertical bits. He was out around 9:15 p.m. after a rescue of just over one hour. All went smoothly with a good turnout and pleasant debrief in the Hunters’ afterwards!

18 June 1994 – Goatchurch Cavern

An Essex County Scout Caving Team party led by two instructors, one being David Pettet, went down the cave in the afternoon. The well-equipped group of five scouts being introduced to caving included 14-year-old Luke Clow on his first trip. On reaching the Boulder Chamber, Luke fell awkwardly sustaining bad bruising to his pelvis. At the time, it was thought that he might also have broken bones. The incident happened some time before 3 p.m.

A larger party of youngsters from the Charterhouse Activities Centre was also in the chamber. The leader of this group agreed to take his party out the cave straightaway and return to help. Meanwhile, David Pettet examined the injured scout and comforted him for about fifteen minutes. It was then decided to call M.R.O. for assistance. The other instructor stayed with the patient whilst the leader took the rest out the cave via the Tradesman’s Entrance to make the

callout.

Two of the scouts were sent directly to the Burrington Combe Cafe to make the emergency call. The pair met another Essex Scout team en route and told its instructor, Paul Wise, what had happened. Paul made the emergency call from the cafe somewhere between 4:45 p.m. to 5 p.m., using the correct procedure. Meanwhile, it appears that the other party from Charterhouse had returned to the Centre and also called the police; the call being made by Terry Matthews just before the one from Burrington. Thus, the Taunton Control took two calls for the same incident! This explains why Brian Prewer was told that the informant had rang from Charterhouse rather than Burrington Combe. He was unaware of the second call made by the scouts actually involved, and so did not have a first-hand account of how seriously hurt the casualty was. Brian used the public-address system at the Priddy Folk Fayre in progress on the upper Green to raise an initial rescue party from the crowd, comprising Chris Smart, Trevor Hughes, Dave Lennard and 'Jingles' Williams. All left the fayre straightaway, Brian calling at the Belfry Store to collect essential kit. Anne West was asked to alert Richard West and raise a support party. This consisted of Nigel Taylor, Andy Cave, Angela Garwood, Antony Butcher and D. Cunningham. All reached Burrington at 5:30 p.m., quickly followed by Richard West, Martin Grass and Stewart McManus.

Within an hour of receiving the callout, the first rescuers were at the scene to assist the patient. Luke Clow was found not to be too badly injured and in good spirits. The emergency services, meanwhile, thought it to be a good opportunity to scramble their newly acquired helicopter which was on trial for such accident work in Avon and Somerset. This set off from Bristol and was soon hovering overhead, much to the amazement of all on the ground who were unaware of its deployment let alone its availability.

Nigel Taylor in control of the rescue contacted the Police Control and advised them that it was not needed since a conventional ambulance had already arrived at the roadside by the West Twin Brook track as requested. No doubt Luke would have preferred a helicopter ride to Weston-super-Mare General Hospital. On examination there, he was found not to have broken any bones. In a subsequent letter of thanks, David Pettet confirmed how both callouts had happened and said that the young scout concerned had not been put off caving by the experience.

3 September 1994 – Swildon's Hole

David Braidley from Winford arrived at Brian Prewer's home in Priddy requesting assistance for his friend who was trapped beyond a tight squeeze in the New Renascence Series. It was explained that Bob Norcross had gone through this unfrequented and remote squeeze but had been unable to return. David Braidley had left to request help, calling first at Alan Butcher's house on Priddy Green. Alan accompanied him the short distance to Brian's to organise the call-out. The police were informed that a rescue was in progress at 5:30 p.m.

The first experienced rescuers entered the cave at 6 p.m. complete with hauling gear, Molefone, Hot Air, Comforts and hammers and chisels to enlarge the squeeze. This party comprised of Vince Simmonds, Roz Bateman, Pete Hann, Julian Stone, Antony Butcher, Vern Freeman, Mark Simms and Buddy Williams. They were accompanied by David Braidley who knew the exact location of the incident. Pete Hann set up the underground Molefone near the scene and was in contact with Struan MacDonald on the surface at 6:55 p.m. The trapped caver was reached and reported to be in good spirits. He was a seasoned caver.

A back-up party of cavers with special knowledge of this part of the cave was stood by. This included; Tim Large, Pete Moody, Andy Sparrow, Mark Helmore, Andy Cave and Robin Taviner. A further group was alerted comprising Graham Johnson, Ivan Sanford and Trevor Hughes. Alan Butcher and Brian Pever provided surface control, Mike Thomas and R. Freeman manned the entrance radios, Struan Robertson was assisted by Graham Johnson and 'Tav' on the surface Molefone whilst A. Liddell and Brenda Prewer kept in contact from St. John's Cottage.

It was reported that the squeeze was being chiselled open at 7:20 p.m. Meanwhile, others investigated the possibility that a sump beneath might be bailed out as an alternative escape route. A syphon tube was installed but it became evident that at least three or four would be necessary to lower the water level effectively. Nigel Taylor was asked to advise on ways to enlarge the squeeze with explosives if necessary.

Several nodules of rock were chiselled away from the walls of the constriction. Vern Freeman squeezed through to assist Bob Norcross from below. By using rope loops on both feet to gain extra purchase and with a good heave from Vern, the hauling party was able to assist him back to more open passage and safety at 10 p.m. It was detected that the air had become bad during the rescue attempt, and the rapid build-up of potentially lethal carbon dioxide is always something to be aware of with this sort of incident in particular.

All were out of the cave by 10:30 p.m. in remarkably good time given the events which began almost six hours earlier.

16 October 1994 – Cuckoo Cleaves

Brian Prewer was called by Taunton Police at 6 p.m. to report that someone was trapped deep in the cave. The informant, Mr. Chris Johnson, was contacted at the Hunters' Lodge Inn. His fellow caver, Tony O' Reily, had attempted to find the Lake, but became stuck, head first, on taking the wrong route along the approach rift. The party consisted of three members of the Axbridge Caving Group. All were experienced and well equipped.

Tony Jarratt, Graham Bromley and Dominic Sealy were contacted to form the first rescue party whilst Bob Cork was asked to control on the surface. Brian Prewer picked up kit en route to the cave. He also enlisted support from Andy Sparrow, 'Jingles' Williams and Robin Gray whom he encountered on Priddy Green. Ian Caldwell was already kitted up at the Belfry and joined Tony Jarratt's party. Four rescuers descended the cave at 6:15 p.m., only fifteen minutes after receiving the initial callout. Andy Sparrow followed with the underground Molefone whilst Robin Gray and 'Jingles' manned the entrance communications.

Good contact from the rescuers at the scene to the surface were established at 6:45 p.m. Various bits of kit were requested to help free the stuck caver. These were taken underground by Bob Cork. Others stood by in case further measures were necessary included Alan and Antony Butcher, and Andy and Angie Cave.

At 7:05 p.m., it was reported that the stuck caver had been extricated and moved a few feet to safety. However, it was necessary to find him a pair of size ten boots before he could make his way out! He had lost his own down an inaccessible crevice in the rift whilst struggling to free himself. The divested boots were accompanied by his glasses and a wrist watch; all of which could not be recovered. Andy Sparrow was able to provide the necessary footwear. All reached the surface at 7:50 p.m., less than two hours after the call-out was made.

Apart from minor cuts, a few bruises and the loss of personal property, Tony O'Reily was unharmed and in good form. What a good job it is that the Hunters' is so close to the action.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 6, page 44

Liz, Chris, Wormhole, Dominic, Graham Bromley, Bob Cork, Andy Sparrow, Prew, Robin Gray, Jingles, Milch, Trebor, Anthony Butcher, Tony Jarratt

Call out at 5:54 p.m. An A.C.G. member was stuck head down in a steep dipping rift near the passage to the Lake. He seems to have been there about half an hour. I picked up Wormhole at the Belfry the met Chris (A.C.G.) on the road. We took down a 15-foot length of rope and went down to assess the situation, Dominic and Graham (Wessex Dwarves!) following. On arrival, we found Tony in an unpleasant position and minus both wellies, watch, spectacles and one sock! It was obvious that he would have to be extracted as soon as possible or we would have big problems. Being a bit too tall to reach him easily I got Graham to reverse in and put a sling around his ankles to which we clipped on the rope using a krab. We then tried to haul him out while Graham lifted; to no avail as his arse wouldn't go through a tight bit at floor level. Graham came out and Dominic went in to try and lift him while I squeezed under him at floor level so that he could be pulled at an angle up my body to the wider section. With much heaving, swearing and grunting this proved a success and he was gradually worked backwards until he could sit up and recover his senses. Luckily, he was a fairly self-controlled character, though he had panicked a bit earlier on before M.R.O. arrival. After donning Andy Sparrow's boots, he was assisted to the surface and eventually the Hunters' where booze was kindly provided by the Axbridge for those involved.

This event may not have turned out so well if the personnel or time factors had been different. We had just the right sized, tough people at the right time. Everything else seemed to go smoothly though we must never get complacent.

Source – Descent No. 121 December/January 1994/5, page 41 (Letters)

Rescue thanks

Dear Sir,

On Sunday 16 October, I went to Cuckoo Cleaves on Mendip with two other cavers. I looked into a rift about 1m down from the lake entrance; while the other two waited I went in but found it tight. Finding nowhere to turn round, I soon hit the bottom of the rift, had a panic attack and told the others to stay out.

After about 10 minutes I calmed down and started to try to get out. After an hour I had managed to get as far as a tight squeeze, but could get no further and asked for the M.R.O. to be called out. I owe thanks to my colleagues and the M.R.O., who eventually got me out. I learned a few things from the incident: don't panic, don't be embarrassed to call out the rescue, go feet first into squeezes and, if you are with someone who is stuck, keep talking to them. I lost a pair of glasses, a pair of gloves, one wellington boot and a Timex Indiglo watch, which will bleep every hour until the battery runs out. Please do not try to recover these items!

Once again, I cannot express enough thanks to the M.R.O.

Tony O'Reilly, Bristol

13 November 1994 – Box Stone Mines, Wiltshire

Pete Rose of the Cerberus Spelaeological Society rang Brian Prewer from Tiverton at 9 p.m. to report that he had been in Box Stone Mines during the afternoon. A new mountain bike was parked inside the entrance to Jack's Workings when he entered the system, and was still there four hours later when he surfaced. There was the possibility that its owner had gone exploring the mines and become lost. It is also known that some people have taken to riding such bikes around suitable mine tunnels.

Brian contacted Bob Scammell in Bathford and it was agreed that a quick search of the main routes in the mine was indicated in case a full-scale callout proved necessary later that night. The police at Corsham were informed of the situation. Bob and Kevin Gumm entered the mines at 11 p.m., located the bike and made a quick search of the Jack's Workings network. This proved to be negative and it appeared that the bike had been stolen and disposed of for some reason. The police removed it as stolen property and no further searches were undertaken.

After the due amount of time had elapsed for the owner to reclaim the bike, Wilshire Police offered it to the original finder, Pete Rose. Subject to the usual safeguards in such situations, Pete has kindly donated the bike to M.R.O. It will probably be auctioned some time once the necessary formalities have been cleared.

14 November 1994 – Swildon's Hole

Taunton Police contacted Brian Prewer at 3:25 p.m. with a report from a Barry Walters that his friend, Julian Collinson, had fallen and was injured. The informant was contacted at the nearby Priddy Green call box. It was learnt that the fall had occurred at the Twenty Foot Pot and that the casualty had injured his ankle.

Both cavers were from the Camborne School of Mines, Cornwall. They had descended the cave at 1 p.m. and gone as far as Sump Two. The accident occurred on the way out as Julian Collinson failed to free climb the pitch. He fell off the traverse across the top of the pot. No ladder or lifeline was used, otherwise they were well equipped and experienced. Water levels in the streamway were particularly high following heavy rains during the autumn. Brian Walters had no option but to leave the casualty at the bottom of the pitch whilst he summoned help.

A rescue party comprising Dany Bradshaw, Richard Blake and Andy and Angie Cave went down the cave at 3:45 p.m. with Molefone, splints and First Aid, ladder and lines. Richard West and Nigel Taylor took control at the surface. Brian Prewer manned the surface Molefone and Les Williams stood by at St. John's Cottage to alert others if necessary later.

Good communications were established with those underground at 4:25 p.m. On examination, it was found that the casualty was not seriously injured and able to do much to help himself. He was assisted up the pitch by climbing the ladder taken down by the rescuers. All were out of the cave at 4:52 p.m.

This was the third incident to take place at the Twenty Foot Pot during the year. To have had lucky escapes despite falling from the head of the pitch into the streamway below.

30 December 1994 – Eastwater Cavern

Nigel Taylor was contacted by Taunton Police to report that two cavers from Patchway, Bristol, were overdue from a trip down Swildon's Hole. The mother of one of the cavers had expected them home at 6 p.m. It was now 9 p.m. and she was concerned. Their car was described.

Cavers at the Hunters' Lodge Inn were sent to search Eastwater Lane, the usual cave car parks in the area and other local pubs. The missing pair were found in the New Inn, Priddy. They seemed unaware and unconcerned about the trouble they had caused, to say nothing of changing their original plans and going down Eastwater without informing anyone. They were suitably admonished by PC Martin Bellamy.

1995

Report by the Hon Secretary and Treasurer of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 1994

The majority of our work in the previous twelve months has revolved around actual call-outs which is exactly as it should be. The number of incidents that we successfully deal with is something of which we should be proud and places us very much in the '*doer*' rather than '*pontificator*' class of organisation. We have also made our presence known within the political/administrative arena being represented at B.C.R.C. and, more locally, S.W.E.R.A. meetings where we have insisted on retaining our autonomy as a cave rescue organisation; this has given us the reputation of being somewhat different to other members in our approach.

Times, however, are changing and the perception of being a volunteer is not considered any excuse for not providing a professional service. The M.R.O. philosophy, based on '*cavers rescue other cavers*' and that the M.R.O. is not a club for those who wish to make rescue their hobby, will enable us to provide the required service now and into their future. We must not, however, rest on our laurels, the provision of training - such as the explosives/rock breaking workshop organised by Nigel Taylor at Westbury Quarry and the informative lecture season championed by Dany - is invaluable. The mainstay of cave rescue training lies with individual caving clubs and it is encouraging that the majority of the Mendip based clubs have carried out practice rescues during the year and have reported upon them. These activities, I believe, must be encouraged and supported in the future.

Insurance is an emotive issue which is being discussed within both mountain and caver rescue teams throughout the country. Our first priority must be to ensure that we provide our services to such a standard that they are never called into question and the risk to our own personnel and customers is minimised during live rescue incidents. Training is a different matter, and I believe that this is best undertaken as being part of normal caving activity within the club environment and thus insured accordingly.

Three warden's meetings have been held during the year to conduct the business of the M.R.O. Brian Workman, who has been a warden for a number of years, resigned his position earlier in the year. Three local cavers were invited on to the list of wardens: Mark Lumley, Keith Savory and Rob Taviner, all accepted.

Finally, I would like to say that disregarding some of the frustrations caused by the bureaucracy involved I have enjoyed my first year as Secretary of the M.R.O. I take this opportunity to thank Sue Brown, a long suffering work colleague, who did not realise the amount of extra typing she was going to incur on behalf of the organisation.

R. J. Cork

Twelve incidents were recorded during the above year five of which could be considered to be of a serious nature. Overdue and parties showing poor communication again took the lions share accounting for half of the call-outs. The high volume of traffic through Swildon's Hole is

reflected in the call-out statistics with six of twelve incidents occurring in this location. Mid-week incidents are increasing and now equal those received for weekends.

A dozen call-outs in one year places us well into the category of a busy team in comparison with other cave rescue providers, although our entire workload occurred in the first six months of the year leaving us a surprisingly quiet period during the latter winter months.

7 January 1995 – Bathampton Stone Mines

Brian Prewer was contacted by Staple Hill police regarding two Swindon based cavers overdue from a trip to the Bathampton Stone Mines. The father of one of the cavers had been instructed to call the M.R.O. at 19:00 hours. He had also been given a list of possible mines that they were intending to visit. These were Singleway Mine, Seven Sisters Mine and Devils Cave. Grid references were also given.

Bob Scammell was asked to stand by a search party. At 20:10 hours, the police informed the M.R.O. that the missing cavers had returned, having underestimated the time of their trip. Bob Scammell and team were stood down.

27 January 1995 – Burrington Combe Area

The M.R.O. were contacted via Taunton police. A member of the public – a Mr. John Tucker – had reported a large party (20 plus) of children accompanied by three adults all wearing caving kit and intending to visit the caves in Burrington Combe. His concern was the abnormal water levels through the Mendips due to the exceptional rain fall. Mr. Tucker was unable to give precise details regarding the location in the Combe but from information given Brian Prewer deduced that they were probably going to Goatchurch or Sidcot Swallet and therefore would not be in any danger. As a precautionary measure Nigel Taylor was contacted and it was suggested that he keep a watch for the caving party. At 21:00 hours Nigel and Viv Taylor located an orange minibus at the Burrington Inn car park and at 22:00 hours the party were located after they exited from Lionel's Hole.

11 February 1995 – Eastwater Cavern

Cavers from the Axbridge Caving Club whilst on a trip down Eastwater encountered a party of young people near to the top of Dolphin Pot at approximately 21:00 hours. They were somewhat concerned for their wellbeing in view of the age of some of the party, and water levels in the Boulder Ruckle. On exiting the cave, the members of the Axbridge C. G. informed Mrs. Gibbons of Eastwater Farm of their concern.

At midnight Dorothy Gibbons rang Brian Prewer direct to say that a party of young cavers had not yet returned to their minibus at the farm. Dany Bradshaw, Graham Johnson and Alex Gee were contacted and in view of the late hour, the length of time the party had been underground (6 hours plus) and the fact that the Gibbons family wanted to go to bed a quick search of Upper Eastwater was mounted. Graham Johnson and Alex Gee went underground at 00:30 hours taking with them a comforts box and Molephone. Force control at Taunton were informed and Brian Prewer with Dany Bradshaw set up the surface Molephone.

The missing party were located at 01:04 hours in the upper traverse area and found to be safe and well. All exited the cave by 01:15 hours. Tony Jarratt, Stewart McManus and Bob Cork were put on standby at 00:30 hours.

11 February 1995 – Swildon's Hole

Call received from Taunton police at 14:22 hours connecting with Martin Payne at Priddy Green callbox, who reported that one of his party (of 4) had his knee jammed in a crack at the start of the Upper Oxbow. The victim was Peter Hurcombe aged 19 years from Aston University.

Alan Butcher, Stewart McManus, Tim Large and Rich West were contacted to open the store and set up surface control. Vince Simmonds, Graham Johnson and Trevor Hughes entered the cave with comfort box, hot air and rope. They were joined by Anthony Butcher who acted as runner, Martin Payne and Tristram Caper from the original party. At 15:50 hours a request for hammer and chisels was made and at 15:54 Steve Redwood entered with Molephone. Longer chisels and a hammer were requested – these were taken into the cave by Paul Fogen and Clive Silveson. At 16:16 hours problems were encountered with communications by radio due to heavy rain and also the store radio which in Eric's opinion had failed due to a lightning strike.

At 16:37 a request was made for a drill and 'plug and feathers'. Although some difficulties were encountered locating a drill, this was achieved and both the drill and plug and feathers were taken into the cave by Trevor Hughes at 17:03 hours. Doctor Tony Boycott examined the victim and declared that there was nothing physically wrong with him at 17:51 hours. Dany Bradshaw entered the cave whilst further attempts were made to free the victim. This was successfully achieved and confirmed by the message 'victim free' at 18:30 hours. The victim exited the cave 18:53.

This rescue highlighted a need for the M.R.O. to have constant access to a battery powered drill. This was discussed at the debrief and at a later meeting a suitable drill was sourced and purchased.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 21 (1995 to 1996), page 6

Swildon's Lower Oxbow rescue. "James Knee In Crack." Removed by feathers and wedges. Victim walked out of cave. "Had God on his side." Water Level quite high. It is believed that "Cave Psycho", Dr. Bradshaw was on hand.

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 11 February 1995

Caver stuck by knee In Upper Oxbow for six hours. Eventually removed by Bosh drill and Plug & Feathers by Biffo. Cold and wet.

11 February 1995 – St. Cuthbert's Swallet

Source – BEC St. Cuthbert's Log Book 1993, page 31

Pete (?), Roy (?) and assorted members (5) of D.S.S. Two were flagging badly on the way out (one is asthmatic and puffing away on his inhaler!) so were hauled up entrance shaft by Harper, Grass and Co.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 21 (1995 to 1996), page 6

Two cavers knackered, assisted from Cave. Wessex managed to stay out of this by not having any kit, being too fat, or manning the phone. (Cunning "F****" they were!)

22 February 1995 – Swildon's Hole

The M.R.O. received a call from Bristol police reporting an injured caver on Priddy Green and a second in Swildon's Hole at Tratman's Temple (this later proved to be Barnes' Loop). The police and ambulance were already on route and no further details were available. Brian Prewer went immediately to the Green and found James Shepherd slumped against the wall by the New Inn, a preliminary examination indicated a possible dislocation of the shoulder. Details of the other casualty and his correct location was obtained. Malcolm and Aaran Davies and Derek Sanderson were already on The Green and changed into caving kit. They were asked to go to the casualty, assess the situation and report back as soon as possible. Stewart McManus, Andy and Angie Cave, Les Williams and Rich West were contacted and whilst on route to the M.R.O. depot to collect kit Brian Prewer located Tim and Jos Large. Stewart McManus entered the cave at 14:45 hours with Andy and Angie Cave and Anthony Butcher taking with them the baby bouncer, ropes and comforts box. The Molephone was taken in by Alan Butcher at 15:10 whilst Tim Large and Rich West took surface control. Derek Sanderson reported back at 15:23 to confirm that the second casualty had also suffered a dislocated shoulder but felt that he would be able to get out with assistance if his shoulder could be put back in place. Molephone communications were established in spite of the appalling surface weather conditions. Entonox was taken into the cave by Doug Mills and C. Vincent and a medic was requested. Dr. Andrew Newton and Les Williams entered the cave at 16:35 with the medical and hot air kit. Adrian Hall took in heat packs and extra harnesses as the casualty had proven to be 16 stone in weight and thus required a larger than normal lifting harness. Andy Sparrow rigged the 20-foot pitch for dry hauling and by 18:10 the casualty arrived at the top of the 20 foot pitch and was moving well with assistance. The victim exited the cave at 19:13 and the cave was cleared of equipment and personnel by 19:20.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 6, page 78

Call out to shop at about 2:45 p.m. from Brenda Prewer who was looking for rescuers to assist a Surrey caver, Jeremy, who had a dislocated shoulder and was in or near Barnes' Loop, Swildon's. His mate, rushing out to call the M.R.O., had also dislocated his shoulder (!!) but was apparently out. I couldn't leave the shop but arranged to send Adrian Hall and a couple of Hampshire cavers to help out.

At 4:50 p.m. I left the shop and joined the small throng on Priddy Green. The first victim had gone to hospital but there was some delay with Jeremy. Dr. Andy Newton and a team of about ten were underground. John Beauchamp and I took over Molephone entrance control from a cold and wet Brian Prewer who had been standing in a field during a major lightening and snow storm. About 7:10 p.m. the second victim was extracted from the cave having had his arm relocated and walked out with assistance. Though extremely wet it was apparently warmer and more pleasant underground. Than on the surface!

20 March 1995 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer received a direct call from Les Williams requesting help for an injured caver located in Barnes' Loop. Rob Delacour reported that his friend, Bruce Frazer, had sustained a dislocated shoulder after a slight fall. Taunton police were contacted as were the following local cavers; Andy Cave, Stewart McManus and Tony Jarratt. Les Williams and Mark Helmore were also on hand. Rob Delacour was asked if he would cautiously return to his friend Bruce Frazer who was in the cave alone to reassure him that help was on its way. Brian Prewer collected kit from the Store and at 17:45 an underground team entered the cave with Molephones and hauling equipment. Martin Grass and Mark Graham were asked to stand by. Dr. Andrew Newton and Dr. Tony Boycott were paged, Jim Hanwell and Richard West were asked to attend and set up

a control on Priddy Green. Andy Sparrow joined the underground party. Prewer and Andy Cave set up a surface Molephone and established communications underground by 18:10. An initial examination of the casualty suggested a posterior dislocation and that onsite reduction would be unwise. Temgesic was administered to the casualty and a shoulder strap applied prior to him walking out of the cave. By 18:50 the casualty had reached the Double Pots where a second Temgesic was given, then he carried on to the top of the 20-foot pot where he was administered with Entonox and waited the arrival of Dr. Tony Boycott. Dr. Boycott confirmed a posterior dislocation and administered an intermuscular injection of voltarol. The haul up the 20-foot pot was assisted by Yeovilton Caving Club. The casualty reached the surface without further major problems at 20:30 hours.

It had been previously agreed that an ambulance was not required and Mr. Frazer was taken to Bristol Royal Infirmary by Dr. Tony Boycott.

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 20 March 1995

Another dislocated shoulder below Tratman's Temple. Wet and cold casualty at the bottom of the 20-foot Pot. 1 m.g. Voltarol after two Temgesic tablets. Out by 9 p.m. and took him at B.R.I. by car, then back to work!

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 6, page 84

Bruce, Rob Delacour, Mac, Andy Sparrow, Mark, Les Williams, Andy Cave, Tony Boycott, Several Fleet Air Arm, Peter, Angie Cave, Tony Jarratt.

Rob and his friend Bruce were returning from a short round trip and were just below Barnes' Loop when Bruce stumbled and dislocated his shoulder. I got called out about 5:30 p.m. and joined the others at Prew's house before going underground with the Entonox, comforts box, ropes etc. Les operated the Molephone. The victim's arm was found to be dislocated backwards and as there was due to be a long wait for the doctor we decided to strap him up as best as possible and start on out. Bruce, an ambulanceman, was in great pain but with the aid of a couple of Temgesics and a few gulps of Entonox he got himself to the Twenty Foot Pot where Tony Boycott met him and gave him an injection. This was enough to enable him to get out to the surface with little difficulty. This is the second rescue from the same injury in the same part of the caves within a few weeks.

23 March 1995 – Eastwater Cavern

Dorothy Gibbons contacted Brian Prewer direct to say that concern had been raised for an overdue party by their driver, a Mr. Kai Afflerbach who was supposed to meet them at 20:30 hours and that they were now 2½ hours late. Tony Jarratt, Dany Bradshaw, Martin Grass, Mike Duck and Ivan Sandford were contacted at the Hunters' Lodge Inn, whilst Andy Cave and Andy Sparrow were phoned at home. Further investigation indicated that the party had not descended the cave at 15:00 hours as planned but had probably entered at between 17:00 to 17:30 hours. In the light of this it was felt that the search party should not enter the cave until midnight. At five minutes to midnight a party of three from Leicester University returned to the surface safely. Discussion with the party leader Tim Haynes highlighted that some communication problems existed between their driver and themselves and that they had in fact written up their trip to the West End Series at the M.C.G. H.Q. with an ETO of midnight. There was no police involvement and the M.R.O. did not go underground.

5 April 1995 – Redcliffe Caves, Bristol

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 6 April 1995

MYSTERY AS TWO MEN RESCUED FROM OLD MINES TRAPPED IN CITY CAVES

Two men had to be rescued by firefighters last night after spending several hours wandering in the chilling darkness of Bristol's historic Redcliffe Caves.

It remains a mystery how the men, both aged 22, got into the labyrinth of gloomy caverns. They were only rescued after a passer-by heard echoing cries for help coming from a grille covering a hole in the ground near Redcliffe Wharf.

The old stone mines stretch for 20 acres below St Mary Redcliffe Church. Both the official entrances were locked last night. Police arrived at the scene just after midnight after being alerted to the cries by the passer-by.

They passed a torch, down to the men and tried to direct them back to an entrance at Redcliffe roundabout. But the batteries on the torch ran out before the men could find their way out. Firefighters were then called. They removed the grille on the small hole and pull the men to safety.

A city council spokesman said they were today investigating how the two men got into the caves, which are old sandstone mines.

Avon Fire brigade spokesman Geoff Cater said: "It is like Swiss cheese down there. There are so many passages and holes it is easy to get lost. "It is very damp and dingy, there are even manacles on the walls left over from the slave trade." The main entrance to the caves is on Redcliffe Wharf, near where the replica ship The Matthew is being built. The caves are closed to the public except for prearranged guided tours organised through the city council.

15 April 1995 – Swildon's Hole

The M.R.O. were contacted by Taunton police at 16:50 hours. Richard West then contacted Maurice Hewins at the Wessex Cave Club hut regarding an overdue party. Maurice had become concerned by a message on the W.C.C. blackboard which had been put there by Les Mottram. Maurice had previously spoken informally to Tony Jarratt at his shop who had advised him to check the other main huts to see who was around; this he did with no success and therefore made a 999 call. Tony Jarratt was contacted and asked to send people to Priddy Green, Dany Bradshaw joined Rich West on a frustrating trip to Mains' Barn due to the holiday weekend traffic on Deer Leap. They were met by Tom Chapman, Keith Savory and Carole Tapley who had been dispatched by Jarratt. A number of people were questioned who had just left the cave and it emerged that the party had been seen at the 20 around 12 noon on their way out. Maurice arrived shortly after to say that Mottram had turned up at the hut and all was well.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 28 (1995 to 1996), page 16

I arrived to find the hut locked and a party of two L.C.C.C. members down Swildon's with an E.T.O. "out by 2." By four they hadn't shown. Another party, exiting at three, thought they had seen them above the 20, possibly on the way out. This party was however of three members. By 4:15 when they were still missing, I checked the Belfry and Shepton but found no one at all. Eventually I made a call out. No car number was given but it was either red or green. A search

party had assembled on the Green when the missing group returned – from Wells. No names, no pack drill but their initials were Mr. and Mrs. Les Mottram.

Lessons 1. Please give exact details. 2. Cross of names on return.

28 June 1995 – Swildon's Hole

Call received from Taunton police at 23:57 hours connecting a Tony Beardsly who requested M.R.O. help to assist a female member of his party who was unable to make a return dive through Sump One in Swildon's. The young lady in question, on her first caving trip, had passed through Sump One successfully, however, on her return she had refused to attempt the sump.

One of her two companions had re-dressed her in a wet suit, the other had exited for help. Tony Jarratt, Stewart McManus, Andy and Angie Cave, Richard Blake and Graham Johnson were contacted. Brian Prewer collected the Molephone, hot air kit, ropes and comforts box from the depot. McManus set up surface control. The first M.R.O. team went underground at 00:25 hours followed 10 minutes later by Molephone party. Six cavers were located at the Shepton Mallet Cave Club hut and asked to stand by; these included Alex Gee and Mike Willett. Martin Grass was contacted and confirmed that he had a light weight diving kit in working order.

The reluctant diver, Becky Battles, was refusing in a very positive manner to dive back through despite there being a two-inch air gap through the sump. After further refusals, it became clear that more kit and manpower may be needed in the cave. The following were asked to attend; Richard West, Nigel Taylor, Tim Large, Phil Romford, Andy Sparrow, Alan Butcher, Adrian Hole and Shaun Howe.

Diving equipment, a hot air kit, heat packs and comforts box was taken into the cave at 02:10 hours these were shortly followed by Dr. Andrew Newton whose presence was considered necessary as the casualty had now become hysterical and was probably hypothermic. The Doctor reached the sump at 03:14 hours but before he was able to give any assistance the casualty came through the sump of her own accord assisted by Martin Grass and Mike Willett. Becky walked her way out of the cave with help from the M.R.O. party reaching surface at 04:38 hours.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 6, page 105

Rich Blake, Jake, Adrian, Sean, Andy Sparrow, Mac, Martin Grass, Butch, Mike Willet, Alex, Andy & Angie Cave, Andy Newton, Tony Beezly, Brian Prewer, Rich West, Nigel Taylor, Tony Jarratt etc.

Call out at 11:45 a.m. for girl on far side of Sump I who refused to return through the sump. Jake, Rich and I entered the cave at 12:25 p.m. with a diving mask and rapidly reached the sump. I went through to find the girl, Becky, sheltering in an alcove with a friend, Peter. She had gone through in a furry suit but this had been exchanged for a wet suit. She was very cold and dispirited and refused point blank to go back through the sump. My persuasions failed so I called Rich through and he tried to talk her through – very professionally! This also failed and so her cold and wet friend, Peter, was sent out with Jake, who had spent a lot of time lying in the upstream sump pool with his hand through the two-inch airspace. By now Andy and Angie Cave had arrived so Andy took Jake's place while Angie did a sterling job on the Molephone.

Despite having a mask and the cajoling/threatening of Rich and myself, Becky would not attempt the duck out and, in floods or tears was likely to have a fit or pass out at any time. I got word back to the surface and later Mac, Mike Willet and Martin Grass arrived with a single set

of diving gear, Mac and Martin went through and succeeded in persuading her to attempt the sump with the kit on, after reviving her with hot air and coffee. With Mac doing a sterling job lying in the upstream sump pool she eventually came through - to a round of applause. Andy Newton, etc. had come down to administer sedatives, gave her a quick check over and then she rapidly made her way to the surface with no problems. This was a very frustrating and worrying rescue which wasted a lot of the rescuers sleep, time and probably money. Tony Beezley, the leader of the victim's party is apparently a caving adviser for Technical Rescue magazine! Once again, all the M.R.O. personnel did as best they could, luckily with a happy outcome.

Source – Descent No. 127 October/November 1995, page 15 by John “Jingles” Williams

Recently, an incident in Swildon's Hole involved a party with a novice caver. Due to the low water levels, there was an airspace through what is usually Sump 1. The party successfully negotiated the 'sump' but on their return the female novice refused to go through. Some time was spent trying to persuade her, but she became increasingly frightened and the M.R.O. was called out.

Upon arrival, the hysterical girl became completely unapproachable, and took a long time to calm down. Eventually, the hot air kit was used to warm her and build confidence, and diving apparatus used to help her pass the sump.

There is an object lesson here. To say that caves are dangerous places may seem to be stating the obvious; indeed, many of us who have been caving for some time may even take this for granted and fail to appreciate how someone else feels on their first trip. Swildon's Hole is not a novice trip, particularly on the other side of the sump, so perhaps a little more caution would be a good thing.

19 August 1995 – G.B. Cave

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 28 (1995 to 1996), page 37

Overdue by one and a half hours. Visit to site to find party of four outside the cave. Lost track of time.

24 August 1995 – Redcliffe Caves, Bristol

The M.R.O. were contacted by Bristol police re: a missing person in Redcliff Caves. Nigel Taylor was informed and he joined Martin Grass and Richard West to travel to Bristol. Dave Price was contacted (Bristol person with local knowledge) and they arranged to meet him at the cave. All rendezvoused with the police and were informed that the missing person was a Jonathan Eden and his companion had become frightened and left him. Further interrogation ascertained that they were not particularly well equipped having only candles for illumination. A quick search by the above four revealed a still burning candle on the floor near an unlisted entrance. The remains of home-made cigarettes and empty cider bottles were found also. In view of Eden's lack of light or knowledge of the system, a search was conducted of the obvious areas without success. It was assumed and reported to the police that he had most probably exited the cave after his mate had left him.

Second part – 11:00 hours the same day

Richard West was contacted by Inspector John Hook who firstly enquired as to the cost of our services. Richard informed him of the voluntary nature of our work. The Inspector then asked

if we would conduct a further search as Eden is well known in the area and had not turned up to any of his usual haunts or collected his Thursday morning giro which was uncharacteristic and they were now becoming concerned for his safety. Arrangements were made to meet the police at Redcliffe Cliff Quay at 14:00 hours. Richard West, Martin Grass, Nigel Taylor, Stewart McManus, Tony Jarratt, Geoff Price and Mr. Hewins of the City Engineers Department carried out a much more systematic search which proved without doubt that Eden had exited the cave in the afore mentioned manner. A quick search of a derelict building near the presumed entrance did not reveal anything.

Source – Tony Jarratt’s Log Book – Vol. 6, page 114

Nigel Taylor, Rich West, Stu McManus, Martin Grass, Jeff Price, Hamish Orr-Ewing (Bristol City Council), 4 policemen, Tony Jarratt.

Martin appeared in the shop at about 11:45 a.m. with news that he, Rich and Nigel had spent much of the night in a search of Redcliffe caves for a dope/cider head who had been reported lost. One (slightly off-white) had called 999 to say that his mate was still inside, having gone through a small hole which the escaped one was disinclined to go through himself. The lost one had used a very thin “Ariadne’s Thread” wrapped around a cider bottle and had a candle for lighting. They had entered the system via a hole behind a ruinous building unknown to the local experts. To cut a long story short a search had been conducted and Mr. Johnathan Eden had not been found. To cover their backs the Bristol police wanted M.R.O. to conduct a full search in company with their officers and Hamish Orr-Ewing of the local council - an “authority” on underground Bristol and surveyor of this particular system.

In the afternoon Mac, Nigel, Rich, Martin and I met Jeff and Hamish at Redcliffe Wharf and together with two shifts of policemen explored the caves and adjacent ruined building to our satisfaction that Mr. Eden was not underground, having presumably bugged off soon after his colleague or after the previous rescue attempt. Evidence for the latter scenario was provided by a sheet of asbestos propped up against the entrance which these two had used and left open by Martin and Co. in the early hours of the morning.

Anyway, a good time was had by all searching this fascinating system of ancient sand mines and re-hydrating afterwards in the conveniently placed Ostrich Inn. I wouldn’t have missed it for the world! The local coppers had a pleasant afternoon diversion also.

16 September 1995 – St. Cuthbert's Swallet

Brian Prewer was contacted direct by Estelle Sandford to say that a Peter Smith had sustained an injured foot caused by a falling bolder and was at present in the Mudhall area of St Cuthbert’s Swallet. His condition was good and he was helping himself out. As he was now approaching the ladder section of the cave she felt that ropes and harnesses would be necessary. Brian Prewer went to the depot and the appropriate kit was taken down the cave by Estelle, Mike Willett, F. Howe and P. Hartley. Taunton police were informed of the incident at 14:35 and Dr. Tony Boycott was asked to stand by. Glynn Roberts, a member of the casualty’s party, surfaced at 14:30 to request that splints be sent down the cave. This was done and the casualty made his egress from the cave at 15:20 hours. He was taken to Weston General Hospital and put into the capable hands of Mrs. Jane Jarratt.

Source – BEC St. Cuthbert’s Log Book 1993, page 38

Estelle + Five TSG – Cuthbert’s fights back

Old route in to Pillar Chamber, Boulder Chamber, Everest Passage, Cerberus Series, streamway to Gour Hall, back via Plantation towards Rabbit Warren when a boulder peeled off the roof by the right angled groove in the floor and dropped onto P. Smith's foot. So from there to Upper Traverse Chamber. We self rescued and assisted, then at Mud Hall I went out to get some kit to assist up pitches and called rescue, through Brian Prewer, took ropes, harness and comforts down. Amazingly when I got back down Peter was at the ledge pitches, life lined up Arete and Entrance. A brilliant self rescue with minimal assistance.

17 September 1995 – Swildon's Hole

At 14:15 hours Carmen Smith of the Wessex Caving Club contacted Brian Prewer at his house to say that there was a partially unconscious girl at the bottom of the entrance climb in Swildon's. An M.R.O. party was raised from the Hunters' Lodge and asked to attend immediately while stretchers and other kit were fetched from the M.R.O. store. Dany Bradshaw, Vince Simmonds, Graham Johnson and Richard Blake entered the cave at 14:30 hours with the stretcher. Colin Masters and two other cavers from 'Upper Pitts' were in attendance. Further information gained from the casualty's party suggested that part of the problem might be due to an asthma attack and possible diabetes. On this basis, medical help was sought and Dr. Andrew Newton was contacted at 14:35 hours. An ambulance was also asked to attend. The casualty was located in the Showerbath Chamber where she was put into the Mager stretcher and hauled to the surface by 14:50 hours and examined by Dr. Newton. She was subsequently taken to the Bristol Royal Infirmary with suspected hypothermia, low blood sugar level and a respiratory problem, a minor knee injury was also noted.

1996

14 January 1996 – Swildon's Hole

A call was received by BEP from Taunton police control. A female diabetic caver was reported to have become completely exhausted whilst returning from a trip to Sump 1. An M.R.O. party; Tony Jarratt, Alan & Anthony Butcher, Ivan Sandford, Adrian Hole and Guy Munnings went underground at 18:50, 20 minutes after the initial call out. Peter Hobson from the casualty's party returned underground with the M.R.O. team. Bob Cork & Dany Bradshaw were asked to stand by.

Dr. Andy Newton was contacted and entered the cave at 19:00. After examining the casualty, it was agreed that she could make her own way out with assistance. This proved to be correct and she exited the cave at 19:35 albeit somewhat exhausted. The casualty was carried across the fields and provided with a hot shower. A final check up by Dr. Newton suggested that there was not a need for any further medical attention.

Observations:

Clearly the prime concern was the casualty's diabetic condition, however on examination her blood sugar level was found to be normal although her temperature was low at 35°C. She suggested that the main problem was in fact a tight-fitting heavy wet suit that restricted movement causing her to become very tired.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 6, page 146

Ade, Ivan, Guy, Butch, Anthony Butcher, Andy Newton, several E.U.S.S., Tony Jarratt.

Being freshly bathed and in readiness for Sunday tea it was not unexpected to get a phone call from Brenda Prewer to report an exhausted diabetic girl in Swildon's Water Chamber. The troops swung into action and assisted her to the surface - a job which could have been easily done by her Exeter University colleagues, especially if they had accepted the offer of help by Roger Marsh and his passing Cotham C.G. team. Still it was something to talk about in the Pub.

3 March 1996 – Rhino Rift

Details of an overdue party visiting Rhino Rift were received via Taunton Police Control. The informant reported a party of three cavers undertaking an SRT trip were 2 hours late for the planned rendezvous at Burrington cafe. at 16:00.

BEP requested an M.R.O. party of 5 to stand by before driving to Longwood to join the informant. The overdue party was located near Lower Farm, safe and well.

Police and M.R.O. stood down at 19:00

7 April 1996 – Box Stone Mines

Call received by Richard West from Wiltshire police reporting a party of four youths who were presumed to be lost in the mine.

Chris Batstone, Martin Bishop, Nick McCamley and Derek Hawkins were asked to attend at the scene, Alan Butcher, Barry Wilton, John Thomas and Maurice Hewins were requested to stand by.

A gentleman living locally and having knowledge of the mine entered the workings before the M.R.O. arrived and located the four lads with their single torch near to the Cathedral.

M.R.O. stood down by Wiltshire Constabulary at 20:10.

Observations:

Some difficulty was experienced contacting people due to this being a bank holiday.

21 September 1996 – Swildon's Hole

Three cavers arrived at Pete McNabs (Snablet) wedding party at 23:40 to report that the remainder of their party had failed to return from a trip to Watergate series. They had left them earlier in Swildon's four and were expecting them to have surfaced between 20:00 to 22:00.

The three explained that they were well rested and offered to return and search for their colleagues. This was agreed and they entered the cave at approx. midnight. Bob Cork went to Priddy Green to await their return whilst Stuart McManus & Martin Grass returned to Plummers Farm to inform the police that an incident was in progress.

The whole party returned to the surface by 01:00 Sunday safe and well, having underestimated the time for the trip.

20 October 1996 – Swildon's Hole

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 7, page 33

Estelle, Tony Jarratt.

After examining the effects of a recent bang in White Pit it was observed that a healthy stream was flowing into the first part of Waist of Thyme and another flowing from St. Alactite's Hall into the dig. This gave us cause for concern as to the state of Swildon's which was packed with novices at the time. We walked across to the cave with the intention of going as far as the 20 Foot Pot to wash off.

On arrival at the pitch we found a large group of London novices desperately struggling up the ladder. Estell assisted some girls towards the entrance while I went down to aid those below. Eventually all were rescued, as were a dozen Oxford students who arrived next. The cold, wet and tearful girls were helped out of the cave in very high-water conditions. There would almost certainly have been a proper call out if we hadn't gone down the cave.

1997

20 April 1997 – Box Stone Mines

Alan Butcher was contacted by Wiltshire police HQ and advised of the possibility that a number of children were lost in Box Mine. Two children's coats had been found near an entrance to Box Stone Mines (no exact location given) and subsequently handed into the police. M.R.O. were requested to search the mines to ascertain if the children were lost or whether the coats had just been left behind.

Bob Scammell was contact at approximately 18:00 hours and asked to assemble a local search team Derek Hawkins, Mark Wade, Mike Brakspear, Graham Parnell and Mick McCamley were contacted and asked to standby

A short time later the police rang back to say they had located the owners of the coats and all was well. Bob Scammell and the team were stood down at 18:15.

27 April 1997 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer was informed that a white van that had been parked on Priddy Green for about 6 hours The two owners had stated an intention to do a short photographic trip in the upper series.

At 18:45 a decision was made to inform the police and search the upper series. This was carried out by E. Sandford and J. Dickson-Wright who entered the cave at 19:15.

The overdue cavers were located in the Water Chamber safe and well.

22 June 1997 – Search and Rescue Incident, Blackdown.

Further to a 999 call to the police; the Mendip Rescue Organization and Avon and Somerset Cliff Rescue Team along with numerous personnel who were attending the S.W.E.R.A. communications seminar at the Charterhouse Centre were requested to join a search for 40 Air Cadets. The teenagers had become lost on Blackdown in poor weather conditions whilst carrying out a night exercise from Burrington to Wookey Hole.

All the youngsters were located and evacuated off the hill. Three cadets were treated for hypothermia at the site using the little dragon resuscitation equipment one of whom required hospital treatment.

A search and rescue helicopter was deployed from R.A.F. Chivenour to assist but was not used. The whole operation was completed in approximately 4 hours.

Source – Western Daily Press – 23 June 1997

STORM ORDEAL OF LOST CADET SQUAD

A full-scale search and rescue operation was launched yesterday after 40 teenage air cadets were lost in atrocious weather on the top of the Mendip hills.

About 30 mountain rescue team members – who coincidentally had been on a training exercise a mile away – were scrambled to find the stranded youngsters, who were at risk from hypothermia.

They managed to locate the cadets in two hours despite the pouring rain, high winds and extreme cold and helped one 13-year-old girl to an ambulance so she could have hospital treatment for asthma.

The cadets, from Bristol, were on an exercise walking ten miles from Burrington Combe to Wookey Hole, near Wells.

They had become separated from the supervising adults at Beacon Batch and were struggling in the bad weather.

Four of the youngsters broke off from the main group and went to telephone for help. Members of mountain rescue teams from all over the country were staying at the nearby Charterhouse Outdoor Education Centre. They had been on an exercise all day and had gone to bed when the emergency call came in at 3am yesterday morning.

Doug Massey, chairman of the Avon and Somerset Cliff Rescue Team, said: “We took about two hours to find them and another two to evacuate them safely. We found them huddled together, very cold and very wet.”

One girl was taken to Weston general hospital and three others were treated for minor problems at the Charterhouse centre. A helicopter was scrambled from R.A.F. Chivenor in Devon, but the rescue teams reached the children before it was needed.

Mr. Massey said: “Our members had been on exercise all day and had gone to bed, only to be called out again for real.”

Rescuer Bob Cork, of the Mendip Rescue Organisation, said the cadets – some as young as 13 – did the correct thing by staying still and sending a smaller group off to get help. He said: “The cadets took the appropriate action. That is probably why they survived. “Like anybody caught out in the hills at night people with initial cases of hypothermia would have been in danger.”

He said as far as the rescuers were aware the cadets were properly equipped and supervised.

31 August 1997 – Swildon’s Hole

M.R.O. wardens including Alan Butcher, Tony Jarrett and Martin Grass were contacted at the Hunters’ Lodge at about 13:00 by Martin Torbett who informed them that there were parties of

young cavers in difficulty below the “20” due to rising water conditions. This report had been relayed via Robin Brown and Chris Castle who had recently surfaced from the cave. Andy Sparrow who was met walking to the cave entrance was requested to raise the alarm. The call out was resourced by those available at Hunters’ Lodge and equipment collected from the store.

Brian Prewer who happened to be passing by, came upon a party of Scouts just leaving the entrance to the cave. Included in their number was a 15-year-old girl showing signs of suffering from moderate hypothermia. Dr. Andy Newton attended to treat her.

At 13:00 a party comprising of Anthony Butcher, Nigel Hellier, Vince Simmons, Andy Sparrow and Richard Black entered the cave to locate the other trapped party. Martin Butcher set up a radio control point at the entrance whilst Martin Grass took control on the surface. Rebecca Campbell, Robin Brown, Chris Castle, Martin Torbett stood by on the green.

The party of cavers were located near the “40” and were on their way out of the cave. They were not in any obvious difficulty although they were unsure of their way to the dry ways. All were stood down at 14:10.

Source – ACG Log Book Vol. 8, page 92

Chris Castle, Robin Brown

Went down the cave to have a look at the Black Hole and see some water as thunderstorms were forecast. In the event, on our return we met with a dramatic increase in flow and met loads of kids in a bad state. Many were inadequately clothed. We helped one lot out, with Andy Sparrow and others at the surface who had come across to see what was a series of spectacular thunderstorms.

Knowing there were others in the cave Andy initiated an M.R.O. callout, while we helped more kids out. The other party turned out to be adult cavers.

Two girls were taken to hospital with hypothermia. People forget what Swildon’s can be like in severe flood.

17 October 1997 – Dallimore’s Cave

Brian Prewer received a call from Taunton police at 23:40 reporting that a caver was stuck in Dallimore’s Cave and required assistance. Bob Cork was contacted and took control at the cave. Jim Smart and Mike MacDonald were contacted at the Belfry and asked to attend. A team of thin cavers were sourced from the Wessex Cave Club. Alan Butcher was tasked with collecting the M.R.O. kit.

Taunton police were contacted and a request made for a police presence at the site to help with traffic control on the main A39. Dr. Anthony Boycott was asked to standby. A party consisting of Tav, Simon Richardson, Jim Rands and Dave Cook entered the cave at 00:14. Mike MacDonald set up a radio link at the cave entrance and second party consisting of Rob Smith, Vern Freeman and Ben Hogborn entered at 00:20 taking in First Aid and The Hot Air equipment.

Verbal contact with the victim was established at 00:27 as was a Molefone link to the surface. The wedged caver was released after approximately 20 minutes and returned to the surface at 01:48, shortly followed by the rescue teams.

The cave was clear and all stood down by 01:50 Special thankyou to Mrs. Matthews of Ore's Close Farm for providing coffee and sandwiches for the surface and underground teams.

Note on call out:

The M.R.O. received a call at 23:40, although it would appear that the initial 999 call was made from Ore's Close Farm sometime earlier. Investigations suggest that the initial call was incorrectly routed to the coastguard who on realising the mistake then routed it to Bill Whitehouse of Derbyshire C.R.O. The M.R.O. were finally contacted after 30 to 50 minutes delay.

16 November 1997 – Swildon's Hole

Richard West was advised by Taunton control at 14:23 that a 14-year-old girl was reported to be suffering from exposure. A duplicate set of information was received from Avon and Somerset Police HQ at Portishead at 14:29. Alan Butcher and Stuart McManus took control at the surface and Dr. Andy Newton was contacted.

A large M.R.O. team was assembled and entered the cave with the Molefone, hot air kit, comforts box, heat packs and the major drag sheet.

The victim who was a member of an Air Training Corp party was located and evacuated within 90 minutes. An ambulance was requested to attend and arrived within 16 minutes. On reaching the surface and being reheated in the ambulance followed by a hot bath, the young lady made a full recovery.

30 November 1997 – Eastwater Cavern

Brian Prewer received a call from mid-Wales C.R.O. giving details of an overdue party in Eastwater. The party of three were 5 hours overdue and the father of one of the cavers had raised the alarm from Southampton. The party were driving a Land Rover Discovery which was located in Eastwater Lane.

A search party was raised from the Hunters' Lodge that included R. Cork, Jake Johnson, Alex Gee and Vince Simmonds. The party went to the store to collect Molefones and other kit. Meanwhile the informant was contacted in order to obtain further trip details. Unfortunately, he was unable to provide any significant details of the party's planned trip or the equipment they were carrying.

At 23:00 two search parties entered the cave, one consisting of Bob Cork, Jake and Nick Mitchell were to search via the Woggle Press and a second party consisting of Tony Jarratt and Andy Sparrow would go via the Upper Traverse. John Attwood and Steve King (S.B.S.S.) manned the entrance. Richard West and Alan Butcher were asked to provide back up. S. McManus and Dr. A. Newton were asked to standby. Vince, Roz Bateman and Alex Gee stood by at the Belfry.

At 23:28 a message was received to say that the missing party had been located in the Upper Traverse and were making their way out unassisted. They reached the surface at 23:40.

Note:

An unusual callout! It came from Hazel Forbes of the mid-Wales C.R.O. The father of one of the overdue cavers had rung Southampton police informing them of the overdue cavers at Easter Cavern near Wells. The police then rang mid-Wales C.R.O. giving Hazel Forbes the phone number of the informant. When contacted he then gave details to Hazel who rang Brian Joplin who in turn advised M.R.O. The confusion is probably due to the similarity between 'Near Wells' and 'mid-Wales'.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Book – Vol. 7, page 133

A Sparrow, T-O'Neil, Jake, Martin T, Butch, Tony Jarratt and at least 27 others.

Call out from the Pub at about 2:30 p.m. A 14-year-old girl, Kim, in a party of fourteen led by Clive Strickland, was suffering from hypothermia below the Water Chamber. Martin Torbett and I took in the hot air kit, heavy duty survival bag and furry suit. On arrival, we found that Andy Sparrow and a group of R.N. Yeovilton cavers had the situation under control with the girl in a plastic bivvy bag which had candles under it to provide some warmth. Once she was in the heavy-duty bag and had been given [hot air] we started carrying her out. Unfortunately, communications problems led to the delayed arrival of the drag sheet and a certain amount of post pub loudness and chaos didn't help matters. Lots of local and visiting cavers assisted in the carry out and hopefully all learned something useful - as I am sure Clive did!

1998

16 January 1998 – Gurney Slade Quarry

M.R.O. were asked to assist in a search of Gurney Slade Quarry for a missing person. The alarm had been raised by a local resident who had thought they had heard cries for help. The police requested that cave sites within the quarry be checked as well as a ground and air search.

Ivan Sandford, Jake and Brian Prewer carried out the search but like the ground searchers and police helicopter found nothing. The search was called off at 23:30 hrs. Police activity was resumed the following morning but did not involve the M.R.O.

21 March 1998 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer received a call from Taunton control to say that a caver had suffered an asthma attack near the Double Pots in Swildon's. He was also told that the informant was waiting on Priddy Green.

Further information from the informant indicated that the only problem was that an inhaler being used by the asthmatic caver was not working. Bob Cork was despatched from the surface with a replacement inhaler closely followed by Dany Bradshaw carrying the Molefone.

The caver in question was located below Barnes' Loop not the DP's as originally reported. When questioned it became apparent that the message that the inhaler was not working was not correct. What was really meant was that the medication was not having any effect on the casualty. There was no defect with the actual inhaler. The caver then suggested that it may not be a normal attack and that there was some history of cardiac problems.

The new information indicated a more serious situation than originally anticipated. The surface was contacted and oxygen plus a medic urgently requested.

Richard West took charge on the surface and Dr. Andy Newton was asked to attend. Oxygen was taken into the cave by Andrew Manners & Bob Smith.

A stretcher party was assembled from the Wessex hut. Les Williams, Andy Morse, Simon Richardson, Dave Cooke Mel Barge and Mark Helmore ferried the following equipment into the cave: First Aid Kit, Hot Air Kit, Furry Suit, Stretcher and Heat Packs.

Richard Blake and Mike Willet responded to a request for further supplies of oxygen. Dr. Andy Newton accompanied by Tony Jarratt took in more oxygen supplies and medical kit. On arrival with the casualty A.N. administered further medication and confirmed that the chest pains etc. were more likely to be the result of asthmatic condition rather than a heart problem. When stable the victim was slowly moved towards the entrance under his own steam. Bob Smith & Nick Mitchell brought in additional soda lime and CO₂ for use with the Hot Air kit during the evacuation.

The “baby bouncer” was requested for protection whilst the casualty climbed the 20, This arrived with Mark Hollomby & Anthony Butcher and was used to haul the casualty. Ed Waters & Alex Moore took in hot drinks as requested.

The casualty arrived at The Old Grotto at 21:48 moved to Binney’s Link by 22:02 and exited the cave at 22:09. Safely in an ambulance by 22:15 when all remaining personnel and equipment had cleared the cave.

Source – Tony Jarratt’s Log Book – Vol. 7, page 154

Bob Cork, Dany Bradshaw, Rich Blake, Mike Willet, Andy, Simon, Les Williams, Nick Mitchall, Dave Cooke, Anthony Butcher, Andy Newton, Mark Helmore, Brian Prewer, Butch, Rich West, Tony Jarratt, etc.

Due to looking at a dig site at Cheddar Head Cottage I missed the call out but caught up with it on Priddy Green! Apparently, Clive Strickland (A.T.C.) was suffering from an asthma attack below the climb down from Barnes’ Loop. It just happens that our last decent rescue, some six months previously, was also due to Clive!

Bob and Dany were underground and there seemed to be no problems so I went home for some food and returned within the hour to find things had developed. Clive was now suspected of having heart problems and a full scale call out was in operation. I unearthed Rich and Mike who went down with a W.C.C. team while a S.M.C.C. team also joined in. When Dr. Andy Newton arrived, I accompanied him to Barnes’ Loop with medical and oxygen kit. He checked

Clive out who, after a while, was able to slowly walk out of the cave with rope assistance in places. The success of the rescue was shown by the fact that everyone made it to the Pub before last orders! Clive once again owes us lots of beer....

24 March 1998 – Eastwater Cavern

Request for cave rescue for a party who were one hour overdue from a trip into Eastwater. When informant was contacted the party had surfaced unharmed.

25 April 1998 – Swildon’s Hole

Party of three cavers doing a Priddy Green Sink through trip were reported overdue by two hours. They were located on Priddy Green safe and well having underestimated the time for the trip

10 May 1998 – Swildon’s Hole

Alan Butcher was contacted by Avon & Somerset Police regarding a report that a young girl had fallen somewhere in Swildon’s.

The informant was contacted but could give no further information regarding location. Two cavers who were with the party returned to the surface and gave the location as being the Water Chamber.

Martin Grass, Dany Bradshaw and Mel Barge were sent to the cave. Dave Cooke, Mike Mitchell, Ivan Sandford, Mac and Andy Morse were stood by on the green. The casualty exited the cave assisted by members of her party They were met by the M.R.O. team at the cave entrance. The casualty was assisted back to the ambulance were a minor headwound was treated by Andy Newton.

12 August 1998 – Lyncombe Lodge Mineshaft

Richard West was informed of an incident by Portishead control. He then contacted Taunton control. Two men plus two dogs were reported to have fallen down a shaft. Before action could be taken Richard was informed that the problem had been dealt with by Somerset Fire Brigade. (Rope Rescue Team).

Police reported that the whole incident had lasted approx. 13 minutes.

7 November 1998 – G.B. Cave

Source – MCG Newsletter Number 274 – December 1998

Brian Snell, David Snell, Keith Knight, Darren Gamblin, Cara Allison and Simon Goddard.

The trip had started as an ordinary visit to G.B. Cave. Everything was fine until we reached the Ladder Dig. The ladder was fixed, and the party was soon gathered above the pitch.

Unfortunately, the crawl was sumped, but I had a cunning plan to use the tackle sack to bail it. A human chain was set up to pass the sack through to the pitch, but the idea was short lived however, when bailing started. As the sack was passed down the chain, the drain holes and a split seam emptied it before the end of the line, resulting in all the water running back into the crawl. It was like a sketch from a Laurel and Hardy film. The plan was abandoned, and everyone gathered at the top of the pitch to continue with the rest of the cave via White Passage etc. It was then that someone noticed a casualty lying against the wall. A full-grown toad that was immediately nicknamed Toady. I’ve seen bats quite deep in caves before and wondered how even with their Sonar, that they navigated down small passages to get there. I also once came face to face with a small frog in the connecting wet crawl between the Ifold and West End Series of Eastwater Cavern. But really I find it difficult to understand how a toad could end up at the top of the Ladder Dig other than if the terminal sump had raised up enough to overflow into the Ladder Dig. Even then how did this toad get down the 40 foot drop in the Main Chamber. From Bat Passage direction it would have had to climb overhangs out of the crawl section to get there. Although toads are usually finding somewhere underground to hibernate at

this time of year it was unanimously agreed to take it back to the surface to give it a chance to find another hole to crawl down which wasn't quite so deep. It was duly placed into a foam lined ammo box and we set off. After sampling the delights of the Devil's Elbow it wasn't long before we were back at the entrance. However, when the key was placed in the padlock it would only turn through 90°. I had already experienced an aborted trip to G.B. earlier in the year when we couldn't unlock the lock to get in but now we were unable to get out. We persevered and struggled on. It was pat on, blown into, clean water collected and poured onto and slammed against the metal door in frustration but it would not let go. I think it was the presence of a woman that stopped us peeing into it. We knew that there were at least two other parties in the cave so sooner or later they would turn up and we could try their key. We struggled on with it and after an hour two parties turned up outside. Their keys were handed through but neither worked. At this point the guy outside felt that we must be doing something wrong and that he could do better from outside. What is it about human nature that makes someone think that if you can't turn a key in a padlock that is easily accessible in front of you, you must be doing something wrong and they can do better reaching through a six inch hole. He soon discovered that the lock was stuffed. Not long after one of the other parties in the cave returned to the entrance and thought that we were doing something wrong, (human nature bit again) got their key out and took their turn in struggling but again to no avail. One of the party was announced as the Engineer by Profession who obviously felt we weren't working this problem out scientifically (human nature bit again) and came forward to save the day. He tried the key wiggling it, withdrawing it, gently teasing it and licking the key. Then someone told him what we had already done to the lock and to be aware that it was warm for a reason. Someone remembered Toady who was ceremoniously handed through the hole and set free.

Around this time a woman on the outside asked if there were any tight bits in the cave as she was concerned because she suffered from claustrophobia! She later said she had never been caving before! Clearly, some leaders are ignoring the "No Novices" bit clearly marked inside the entrance. Actually, it could be that they are confused, because it actually reads "No Carbide Novices." They are probably the same people I've seen down Swildon's all togged up in their wetsuits leading a party of children in ordinary clothes and trainers down to and through Sump One only to return cold, tired and never to go caving again. After one hour someone eventually turned up with a hacksaw and hammer. The padlock, which the Bank of England would be happy to use, being made of case hardened steel and a multiple barrel, high security lock, was ignored. Instead, the thin mild steel U bracket around which the lock is secured was quickly cut off. Cold, but free at last and overdue by one hour we made our way back to Nordrach for a welcome cup of tea. We missed the half-yearly meeting but it's got to be one of the best excuses so far.

14 November 1998 – Eastwater Cavern

A call from Dorothy Gibbons to say she was concerned that a car had been parked at the farm for 9 hours. The police were contacted to check the car. Simultaneously the police received a call reporting an overdue party of two down Eastwater.

Meanwhile back at the farm the two cavers had emerged from the cave having severely underestimated their trip.

17 November 1998 – Blackdown/ Rowberrow

M.R.O. were requested to join a search for a missing person in the Burrington area. A team including Bob Cork, Dany Bradshaw, Rich Blake, Rich West, Tony Jarratt, Ivan Sandford, Alan Butcher and Brian Prewer assembled at the Charterhouse Centre. A person in a distressed state

due to lack of medication and possibly suicidal had been reported missing. It was known that Blackdown was a favourite walk for this person who visited the area number of times per week. No confirmed sightings had been made and the police helicopter had failed to detect anything during the day search.

M.R.O. were asked by the police to conduct a surface search between cave entrances and to check a short way into each cave. It was known that the person had no previous caving experience or equipment.

The M.R.O. team searched all entrances and traversed from Burrington to Rowberrow but in common with the police and the Avon & Somerset Cliff Rescue Team found no trace of the missing person.

Source – Tony Jarratt’s Log Books Vol 8, page 45

Alan & Martin Butcher, Tony Jarratt

The M.R.O. were called out this evening to assist the Cliff Rescue Team and Mendip Rangers with a large surface search in the Burrington/Rowberrow area. A 26-year-old mental patient had gone missing and had been reported possibly seen in the area by two, scared, girls. He was known to like walking here. As he was due to be “sectioned” the following day there was a possibility of his being in hiding, haven fallen down a cave entrance or even committed suicide. Our job was to check obvious footpaths and cave entrances between the U.B.S.S. Hut and Rowberrow Cavern. Present were me, Prew, Butch, Martin, Rich West, Bob Cork, Dany, Ivan, Rich Blake and Kate Lawrence. Many others over dressed and badge bedecked rescuers were also roaming the hills!

After one failed attempt the Butchers and I eventually found the Cavern where a brief look revealed it to be empty. We then rapidly joined the rest of the M.R.O. team who had finished their allotted tasks and were gathered for a last couple of pints in the Swan Inn at Rowberrow. We seem to be the only team to have taken beer money with us. By midnight there was still no sign of the lost one.

1999

21 February 1999– Rod’s Pot

Brian Prewer received a call from Taunton police at 17:00 regarding an overdue party. The informant was contacted at the Burrington Inn. He reported that his three colleagues had been down Rod’s Pot for 2 to 3 hours and he was concerned, as they had not previously been down this cave.

Martin Grass and Chris Smart were asked to check the cave. Dany, Tav, Les Williams & Dave Cook were requested to stand by.

The cave was searched but nothing found. It later came to light that the missing party had exited the cave and must have missed the M.R.O. team going in by returning to the car park via the East Twin valley.

M.R.O. and the three police officers in attendance were stood by 18:30.

24 & 25 April 1999– Surface Search at Long Sutton Somerset

This incident was not in a cave and somewhat removed from our normal patch. Nigel Taylor took a call from Taunton Police requesting assistance with a search for an 85-year-old gentleman who had failed to return from a walk earlier that day. Bob Cork and Brian Prewer were consulted and it was agreed that M.R.O. would respond. A team of 14 volunteers were raised at the Hunters' Lodge and later rendezvoused with police at the elderly gentleman's son's home in Long Sutton. The M.R.O. team searched through the night (the police consider teams like the M.R.O. to be competent and safe to carry out night searches. They do not allow their own officers or members of the general public to search past dusk.) The immediate area around the missing person's home was thoroughly searched but nothing found. This area of the moors is flooded at this time of the year and is criss-crossed by deep drainage channels. A helicopter search earlier in the day using a heat-seeking camera had also drawn a blank. It was agreed to stop the search at 05:00 and meet again at 11:00 when the search would be scaled up.

A larger M.R.O. team was assembled and travelled to Long Sutton in the morning. The gentleman in question was located five minutes before the teams arrival by the first helicopter sweep of the day. He located no more than 200 yards from the area searched.

The 85-year-old had become lost, wandered into a flooded area, fallen and become wedged in a gate without the strength to free himself. He had spent the night trapped and sat in cold water but survived.

9 May 1999 – G.B. Cave

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 31, page 18

Lock Jammed. UKC asked to call M.R.O. by groups inside. B.E.C. member leading the trapped Essex Cavers. Lock cut off to free them.

13 July 1999 – Swildon's Hole

Call received by BEP at 20:35. Message was by a somewhat tortuous route coming from a member of Avon & Somerset Cliff Rescue who had taken a call from West Country Ambulance Service.

A caver had sustained head and leg injuries owing to a fall somewhere in the Upper Series. He had exited the cave under his own steam and phoned for an ambulance from the Wessex H.Q. A commendable act of self-rescue and an explanation for the strange call out route. BEP drove to the Wessex to question the lad and was informed that the rest of the party with whom the injured party was caving were probably unaware of his fall.

At 20:45 Mark Helmore returned from a Mud Sump trip. He was requested to return to the cave and advise the party of the incident. This he did and they arrived at the surface in time to wave the ambulance goodbye.

The victim had suffered head injuries to the extent that he could not remember the trip out or exiting the cave.

27 July 1999– Stock's House Shaft – Digger Trapped

It is M.R.O. policy not to name victims in this report we make no exception on this occasion. The name of the local caving shop owner involved in this incident has is not mentioned to maintain confidentiality.

This incident was the most serious of the year and had the potential to be one of the worst scenarios that has presented to the M.R.O.

Roger Dors took a call for assistance at 21:00. A digger was reported trapped by a rock fall in his dig at Stockhill. Wardens and helpers were immediately stood by and equipment collected from the depot. Molefones, Blackhawk, telephones, lights etc. were transported to the site. Nigel Taylor attended with various rock drilling kit from his personal collection and also set up floodlights using a portable generator. The police attended and controlled traffic. The digger had managed to free himself from the collapse but was still trapped beyond it. Assisted by Vince Simmonds he dug out and walled up the choke and was able to escape without injury at 22:45.

Some of the others involved were: J Williams, J Walsh, M Duck, S McManus, D Bradshaw, M Grass, N Mitchell, L Williams, B Prewer, A Sparrow, P Hendy, B Pitman, A Newton, S House, B Holden, and several more.

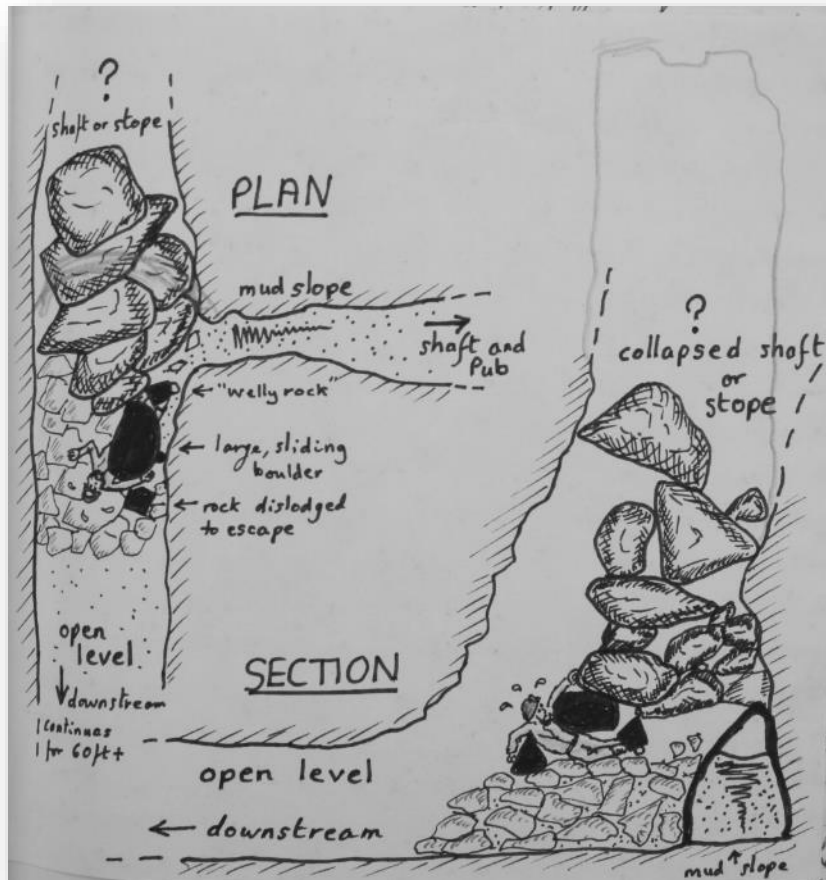
Source – Tony Jarratt’s Log Books Vol 8, pages 121 to 124.

In the evening, the four of us descended the shaft to push the downstream dig and assess the exploration possibilities, (if any) ready for Wednesday night. After about half an hours digging I was able to enter the about 10 feet of passage turning at right angles to the left and with a solid left hand wall but a boulder choke above and to the right.

I gradually moved forwards into the choke, chocking up loose rocks on the right-hand side as I went, for about six feet to where I could see forwards into a large, open passage. Stones thrown ahead rolled down into the void. With the short bar, it was possible to push larger rocks ahead but to do this properly I had to bring both legs around the right-angled bend. Once in I found that I couldn't reverse (a dose of “dancers’ knee” didn't help). Upon turning on my back I could see up into a large void with just a few rocks in the way. I shouted back to John not to worry about rumbling noises and shifted these before gently squeezing upwards. Suddenly and silently the fridge size boulder at my side dropped onto my left hip, quickly followed by a foot cubed boulder which landed on my right ankle.

There was no physical damage but the great weight of a large boulder was gradually increasing and pushing me down into the floor, constricted my movements more and more. Even worse, on looking up above me I was horrified to see a tottery pile of even bigger borders stretching vertically upwards for at least 20 feet - probably the results of a collapsed shaft or stope. At this point I shouted back to John “to worry”(!) and to call out the M.R.O. with lengths of scaffold, tools etc. As small bits of rock and mud began to fall on me from above I was convinced that I'd had it. It was only a matter of time before I was either crushed by the lowest boulder or completely buried by those above. As I tried to hide my upper body I contemplated the prospects of rescuers digging in behind me and was not optimistic. Having no choice at all but to keep calm I managed to wedge a few rocks between the still descending bolder and the once solid rock wall to try and stop it exerting any more pressure. At the same time, I noticed that there was one large boulder below me which gave me one chance of a “shit or bust” escape attempt better than being slowly squashed!

By pushing with my shoulder, I toppled the rock into the passage below and tugged desperately at my pinned foot. Luckily the inside my welly was well lubricated with mud and I just managed to get my foot out and throw myself forwards - fully expecting a major collapse before I reached the sanctuary ahead.



Luckily most of the choke stayed in place and, having found myself in a comfortable, standing height mine level I shouted back for the message to be passed out that I was safe and an uninjured - the only casualty being my pinned welly. I considered that a call out was still needed as I had somehow to get back or survive for some time in the level. John went to the Hunters' to raise a team while Ben and Simon continued clearing the approaches.

After exploring 60 feet of new passage I started work on delicately re arranging the boulder choke while first Quackers, and then later Vince, worked from the other side while everyone else moved full bags back to the shaft and continued clearing the passage. This is obviously the best way to get a strong digging team who also provide lots of it shoring, in the way of timber and scaffold poles - delivered to the shaft bottom!

After building a dry-stone wall to support the offending boulder I was able to get to the smaller rock and bar it up to free my welly. By now the pub was almost closed, though the Landlord was on the surface, and I decided to "go for it". I tentatively crawled out, got temporarily stuck in the claggy mud beyond, then was strongly life-lined (hauled!) to the surface and the crowds of rescuers and onlookers - much relieved. Roger kindly let us all get a couple of pints down to relieve the stress. My thanks to all those concerned in what could so easily have been a major epic!

Mendip Underground is published tomorrow but seems that I have already made it out of date!

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 13, pages 3076 to 3077

I went to Upper Pitts to meet Brian and Sheila, and then on the Hunters'. I was just halfway down my last drink at 9:25 (I had to leave, as I had an early start for work the next morning)

when a muddy caver burst into the pub to say Tony Jarratt was trapped by a rockfall in Stock House Shaft.

Tony, who has previous for this sort of thing, was in a narrow mined tunnel when the roof fell in, trapping him by the legs. It was about 50 feet from the 45 foot shaft, and on the surface, another blocked shaft can be seen. It appears he had gone in under that.

The pub emptied, Brian took Sheila to Upper Pitts to man the radio while he picked up caving kit., I took Quackers to the Shepton to pick his kit up, and by 9:35 he was descending the shaft. By 10:00 a large number of cavers had turned up, though in the event only a small number of thin men were required. Tony had managed to crawl through beyond the fall and was unharmed. The air was good, though a compressor, hose and oxygen were put on standby.

I kept note off who was down the hole until Mac took over surface control. Shoring was called for – Les Williams got some fencing stakes and a saw from the Belfry and these were sent down. Short lengths of scaffolding and a hacksaw were called for, but refused initially on the grounds that cutting them would take too long.

The Police arrived, had an argument with Nigel Taylor, put up hazard signs, and left. Prew and Nigel set up radio communications and floodlights. Most of us stood around being eaten by midges, and passing down odd items of kit, such as a 100 watt battery light, and wrecking bars. By 10:30 cavers started emerging from the shaft, and one large boulder had been levered to one side. Martin Grass tried to insist that everyone was lifelined up the shaft – Andy Sparrow came in for a lot of helpful advice on ladder climbing technique. Eric Dunford was videoing the event, and I took a few photos.

Once Tony had emerged, Brian, Quackers and I returned to the Hunters' and retrieved our pints. All were back there by 10:55 – amazing how the imminence of closing time spurs things on. It could have been nasty, but luckily it wasn't. M.R.O. turned out quickly and efficiently, and it was good to see how many cavers can be mustered on a Tuesday evening.

Source – WCC Journal Volume 25 No. 266 – August 1999

MINOR INCIDENT AT PRIDDY - NO-ONE INJURED

The Hunters' Lodge was just beginning to fill at 9.25 p.m. on Tuesday July 27th when a muddy caver came in to announce that a certain local caving shop proprietor was trapped by a rock fall in Stock House Shaft. The M.R.O. rolled into action, and within ten minutes, the first rescuer, Quackers? was descending the shaft. By 10 p.m., a large number of cavers had gathered. Les Williams was sent off to the Belfry for shoring materials, and Stuart Macmanus had taken over surface control.

It was reported that Mr. J... was pushing through a mined tunnel some 50 feet from the bottom of the 45 foot entrance shaft when the roof caved in, trapping him by the legs. However, by the time the rescuers arrived, he had managed to crawl on through to a safe place. He was uninjured, but the nature of the fall meant that the roof would need shoring.

Fencing stakes and a saw, and crowbars were sent down. In the meantime, Brian Prewer and Nigel Taylor established radio communication, and floodlights were set up. The Police set up hazard signs before finding better things to do, and leaving.

The constricted nature of the dig meant that only a few thin cavers were able to approach the collapse. The air was reported to be good, though a compressor and hose, and oxygen were placed on standby.

By 10.30, rescuers started leaving the mine, and it was reported that one large boulder had been levered to one side, and T..y had been able to wriggle out. Wardens insisted that all rescuers were lifelined up the entrance shaft, and of course, much helpful advice on ladder-climbing was given to Andy Sparrow.

Most of the rescuers, and a highly-embarrassed victim, made it to the Hunters' by 10.55; it is amazing how the imminence of closing time gets things moving. On a serious note, what could have been a major incident ended happily. It was good to see how quickly M.R.O. can turn out on a Tuesday evening, and how many cavers can be mustered at such short notice. It appears that the diggers have tunnelled under another blocked mineshaft, which can be located on the surface. Progress in the dig will be slowed until the area can be stabilised, which will no doubt hinder the B.E.C. in the race for the digging barrel.

Phil Hendy

2000's

3 January 2000 – Thrupe Lane Swallet

At 13:00 Brian Prewer received a call from Taunton Police, reporting one person trapped by flood waters at Thrupe Lane. Brian contacted Richard Witcombe, who had become concerned after finding a foot deep stream entering the cave, as Simon Meade-King was known to be on a solo digging trip in the Railway series.

Whilst Richard, Dave Speed and Clive North set about clearing a blocked road drain in an attempt to lessen the flow, Brian contacted Tony Jarratt, Robin Taviner and Andy Sparrow and asked them to attend.

At 13:15, Richard phoned to say that Simon had surfaced, having sat out the worst of the flood and made his exit as soon as the route was practical. The M.R.O. were stood down and the police informed.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Books Vol 8, page 161

The first M.R.O. call out of the century involved Simon Meade-King who had been trapped by flood water in his dig in Railway Series, Thrupe Lane Swallet. I was contacted at the Hunters' but on returning home was stood down by Prew who reported that he was fortunately out and safe. Looks like this is digger's season to be rescued!

Thrupe Lane Swallet – Bleak Hall Dig – Log Book, page 11, by Simon Meade-King

An overcast drizzly day. Down in morning. More spoil removed from floor and began using new dumping space. During the session, conditions became steadily wetter, and on exiting [the dig] discovered that the depression was overflowing down the entrance shaft. The noise below ground was impressive. Decided to sit it out until water level dropped as climbing the ladder would have been tricky if not impossible.

Unfortunately, an M.R.O. call out was initiated, but a strong A.T.L.A.S. advance guard managed to divert the stream under the road. Apologised to police who soon left the scene. A salutary lesson in how easily the cave is flooding especially when the surface is already saturated.

20 January 2000 – Swildon's Hole

Brian Prewer was contacted by Robin Maine from Manor Farm to say that he had a Mr. Ian Rostron with him, who was concerned for the safety of his party of school children. Brian spoke to Rostron and was informed that he was leading his party of five pupils, from Shapwick School, out of the cave, when he had become separated from them in the region of Jacob's Ladder. He had last seen them heading towards Baptistery Crawl and into Showerbath Chamber. He had been unable to follow them and expected to meet them above Jacob's Ladder. When he failed to make contact with them, he did a quick unsuccessful search down the Wet Way. Mr. Maine had already rung 999 requesting M.R.O. assistance.

Brian contacted Alan Butcher and Tony Jarratt, suggesting that they search the three main Upper Series Routes. Information from Rostron revealed that the five "lost" pupils were thought to have some knowledge of the cave and were well equipped. As the M.R.O. party was en route

to the entrance, the missing party appeared. They were safe and well. Apparently, they had misunderstood their leader as to the exact route and had carried on into Kenney's Dig and down the Long Dry Way before returning to the surface. The police were informed of the outcome at 20:00.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Books Vol 8, page 163

Brian Prewer phoned to report five Shapwick School cavers "lost in upper Swildon's" - actually mislaid by their teacher Ian. Halfway across the first field I met them returning from the cave having found their own way out. Once again, I didn't even get underground! Everyone was suitably apologetic about this minor balls-up.

8 May 2000 – Rhino Rift

Vince Simmonds rang Brian Prewer to say that he had found a Rhino Rift trip still on the board at the Belfry. He was concerned, as he believed the party of four had gone down the cave the day before (Sunday) and it was now some way past their E.T.O. of 22:00 (21 hours). He had also noticed that their kit was still in the Belfry. Brian drove to Lower Farm and found the missing party's car. A check with Mr. Trim at the farm revealed that the car had only been there since mid-morning that day. Clearly, there was some confusion over the date of the trip. Further enquiries showed that the group had gone down digging and expected to be a long time. It later transpired that no date had been given on the trip board. No further action was thought necessary at this stage, but as there was no one at the Belfry during the evening, further events would be monitored.

At 22:00, Mr. Trim rang to say that the cavers had still not returned to their car. At 23:00 Brian Prewer contacted Tony Jarratt and it was decided to give the party until midnight before taking further action. At 00:30, Brian checked the Belfry and put Martin Grass, Dany Bradshaw and Vince Simmonds on standby. At 01:00, Brian went to Lower Farm and found the car gone. The group had missed him by moments and had returned to the Belfry, from where they telephoned him to say that they had had trouble getting one of their party out of the cave.

Two lessons to be learnt:–

1. Always leave a date with your E.T.O. on the trip board.
2. If you cave mid-week, do not assume that your trip details will be seen on club Boards. Make alternative arrangements.

23 June 2000 – Stoke St. Michael Area

Brian Prewer received a call at 18:15 from Taunton Police, requesting the help of M.R.O. to search for a missing person in the Stoke St. Michael Area. A 67 year old female holiday maker had gone missing and had not been seen since leaving the local store at 11:00. She was thought to be on medication. In view of the number of slockers in the area, M.R.O. was asked to attend. Brian contacted Martin Grass, Robin Taviner, Mark Lumley and Dany Bradshaw. Nick Mitchell was asked to standby. A rendezvous with Inspector Roe at the Knatchbull Arms was arranged for 19:00. At 18:40 the police rang to say that the missing person had been located in Leigh on Mendip and the M.R.O. stood down.

7 August 2000 – Wookey Hole

At 20:15, Brian Prewer was contacted by Portishead Police Headquarters to say that they had received a call about a serious rock fall at Wookey Hole, trapping 9 cavers. It was not possible

to contact the informant. The police were asked to obtain more details as to the precise location, in view of the other caves in the vicinity.

Information from Taunton Police suggested that the call from a Mr. Mike Richards might be a hoax, however, they would send a patrol car to the show cave to check. Brian contacted Dany Bradshaw and Bob Cork, who left for the cave. They met the police at the scene and decided that no further action was required and that, in fact, the call was a hoax. The police subsequently investigated the matter and had a “meaningful” discussion with Mr. Richards.

1 October 2000 – St. Cuthbert's Swallet

Brian Prewer received a call from the Belfry to say that a large person was stuck in the Entrance Rift and could not move. The “baby bouncer”, hauling ropes and the rope puller were requested. These items were sent underground with Chris Harvey, but were not used, as the casualty had been freed by Chris, Mike Wilson and other members of the party.

A group of cavers, from the Brighton area had been to Gour Hall on a tourist trip. On their return, Sean Lee–Francis had become firmly stuck in the Entrance Rift. In view of previous similar incidents and the possible increase in water flow, some degree of urgency was felt, so M.R.O. were requested and Taunton Police informed of the incident.

2 December 2000 – Swildon's Hole

At 18:30, a 40-year-old female caver was stuck at the bottom of the 20 ft. pitch. She was unable to climb the ladder and was very tired. The informant, Ian Bush, was contacted on Priddy Green and gave full details of the situation. The casualty, Julie Capel, was in a party of four scouts, from the first Hurstpierpoint Scout Group, Brighton. They had been to Sump 1, but on their return Julie had become very tired and unable to make the climb. The water level that day was very high making the pitch more difficult than usual. Her own party were unable to get Julie up the pitch, so Steve Taylor came out to raise the alarm. He left Ian Bush, one of the scout leaders on the surface, to liaise with M.R.O. and returned to the 20ft. Brian Prewer contacted the following M.R.O. personnel - Bob Cork, Alan Butcher, Dany Bradshaw, Rich Blake and Rich West. A group of 5 cavers from the Wessex were asked to attend. Brian collected equipment from the M.R.O. store and stood by another party at the Belfry.

At 18:50, Alan Butcher and Bob Cork entered the cave, followed at 19:00 by Dany Bradshaw and Rich Blake. The Wessex party comprising Martin Civerton, Gordon Lloyd, Malcolm Loveday, Duncan Price and Tim Morgan then followed. The baby bouncer, hauling ropes and a first aid kit were taken. Dr. Andrew Newton was asked to stand by. At 19:50, Tim Morgan returned to the surface to say that the casualty was in good spirits and had now been hauled to the top of the pitch. She was making her way out of the cave with assistance. By 20:30, the casualty was back on Priddy Green, tired but otherwise in reasonable good shape.

Source – Tony Jarratt’s Log Books Vol 9, page 57

Still suffering from flu, I assisted on the surface with the rescue of an exhausted 40-year-old woman from below the Twenty Foot Pot, Swildon’s Hole. Bob, Butch, Duncan Price and other Chelsea members fished her out. This was the first proper rescue of 2000!

Source – Phil Hendy’s Log Book – Volume 14, page 3215

Went to Upper Pitts in the late afternoon. Did some work in the attic, cooked a meal and walked to the Hunters'. A lovely cold clear starry night. Not many in the pub, though I learned from Prew that somehow I had missed a Swildon's Hole rescue. Some girl needed help up the 20 and back to the entrance. There seems to be enough heroes without needing me (not that I had any kit).

2001

Thrupe Swallet – 2001

Source – Is That So? By Rob "Tav" Taviner

INVISIBLE COW

To become an award winning cameraman of not inconsiderable international standing, requires several notable attributes, including the need for a steady hand, considerable reserves of patience, the artistic ability to frame the desired shot and presumably last but by no means least excellent eyesight. Clive North of ATLAS fame, whose numerous productions have included Horizon, Time Team and the multiple award-winning Ron Howard film 'In The Shadow Of The Moon' is just such a man, which makes the following story all the more inexplicable!

Following the appalling Foot & Mouth outbreak of 2001, many of Britain's caving clubs, including the well-known ATLAS digging team, voluntarily ceased all activities in the hope of preventing the spread of the contamination. ATLAS had just started digging at Thrupe Swallet and the dig, at that time, consisted of little more than a seven metre vertical shaft, below which a small boulder chamber and a narrow rift led on to a tiny chamber with a choked bedding-plane. Sadly, the measures put in place to prevent the spread of the infection failed and the disease migrated nationwide with alarming speed and tragic consequences. As a result, this self-imposed short-term 'mothballing', turned into weeks and then months of inactivity.

We'd long since given up any hope of a quick return to the dig when suddenly, out of the blue, team member Dave Speed received a frantic phone call from the tenant farmer, who was missing a prize 'Belgian Blue' calf, and had discovered its mother mooing for it in the vicinity of the entrance. He was certain that it must have fallen down the shaft. With long-term access to the dig seemingly in peril, Dave sprang swiftly into action, alerting several nearby team members to carry out an immediate investigation.

Although the dig had been left covered over with sturdy timbers, over the course of the six month hiatus, nature had conspired to dislodge some key elements and by the time Clive North arrived at the scene he was greeted by the sight of an ominously open hole. Descending the shaft with no little trepidation, Clive was fully expecting to find the missing beast lying dead at the base of the shaft. However, to his great surprise, he was relieved to find no sign of the calf either at the base of the shaft or the in the small, adjacent boulder chamber. Just to be absolutely sure, he even went along the narrow rift and mooed through the squeeze into the final tiny chamber. Satisfied that the cave was indeed empty of cow, Clive returned to the surface to inform the nonplussed farmer that the missing animal must be elsewhere before he headed off home, content in the knowledge that disaster had been averted and good caver-landowner relations had been maintained. Finally he telephoned Dave Speed to pass on the good news.

Imagine his surprise then when he later discovered that his findings had proved to be somewhat wide of the mark, for on receiving a second panicky phone call from the farmer, Dave Speed had gone to the cave himself, arriving just in time to see the farmer and his son winching the missing calf out of the shaft! Remarkably, on close examination, the calf was miraculously

found to have suffered nothing more than a few superficial injuries and was soon bounding off across the field to be reunited with his relieved mother.

Faced with the impending loss of all future access, Dave played one last desperate card and, taking advantage of the fact that the farmer now clearly considered all cavers to be complete lunatics, he asked permission for the team to recommence digging operations. Amazingly the farmer was so pleased with himself for successfully retrieving his calf that he said yes – which was fortunate indeed – for over the next few years a reasonably significant swallet and shaft system, that was very nearly lost forever, was gradually excavated and explored.

To this day, Clive has never been able to entirely explain how he failed to spot a rather large calf in a rather small cave, which is even more surprising given the amount of rubbed-off cow hair and smell of cowsh which permeated the dig for several weeks afterwards.

4 February 2001 – Corsham Stone Mines

M.R.O. received a call from Wiltshire police at 14:45. Concern had been raised regarding the safety of three people who had been down a mine at Neston, near Corsham. Derek Hawkins, Nick McCamely and Bob Scammell were contacted and asked to liaise with the police at the scene. A search of Ridge and Park Lane Mines was suggested and progressed. A backup team from Mendip was put on standby and to ensure insurance cover was in place the incident was logged with Avon and Somerset Constabulary. Wiltshire Police do not provide personal accident cover for voluntary personnel.

The missing party was located approx. 200m inside Ridge Mine. They had decided to camp in the mine for the night and were unwilling to come out. The local police inspector however insisted that they exit immediately. All stood down at 16:00.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 14, page 3240

A wet day. After the Committee meeting most of us were preparing to leave, when Prew rang. A party were reported as going down a mine in the Neston/Corsham area at 9 a.m. yesterday. They had not been seen since then. We went on standby, but an hour later the first search party found them – they had been camping in the cave. All stood down but we were not told which mine it was. (Ridge Mine)

Source – Western Daily Press – 7 February 2001

ALL-NIGHT POTHOLE TRIO SPARK ALERT

A HUGE emergency operation was sparked after three friends decided to spend the night in a disused mine in Wiltshire.

Police, Ministry of Defence officers, tracker dogs, a crew of paramedics, the force helicopter and cave rescuers were all called out to the site in Corsham after concerns the group had got into danger underground.

The alarm was raised after a nearby resident had spotted a car parked near one of the cave entrance on Saturday night and was concerned to see it still there at about 11 a.m. on Sunday. After several hours of searching the area, cave rescuers eventually found them inside a cave eating their dinner by a camp fire, oblivious to the fuss they had caused.

The trio, from the Wimborne area of Dorset, were seen walking towards the main entrance on Saturday evening but when they didn't re-emerge it was feared they might have got stuck and were in trouble.

Police traced the owner of the car and were told the friends, all in their mid 20's, were potholing enthusiasts but that they were not very experienced and had been expected home ages ago. They were finally located when smoke from their fire was spotted coming out of one of the underground holes. Members of a Bathampton rescue team found them about 10 minutes into the cave.

14 May 2001 – Blackmoor Swallet

This relatively simple rescue from Stainsby's Shaft created great media interest owing to the nature of the incident and was reported worldwide. A party of school children from Charterhouse Centre were on a night walk in the vicinity of Blackmoor Swallet when they heard shouts. The whole area was at that time closed to the public owing to foot and mouth and in theory no one should have been there. Further investigation indicated that somebody was shouting for help from down the shaft.

M.R.O. was called out at 23:15 and Alan Butcher raised a team that included Tony Jarratt, Ivan Sandford, Dany Bradshaw, Roger Haskett, Mark Easterling, Vern Freeman, Kevin Hilton, Emma Heron and Martin Butcher.

Dr. Andy Newton was also asked to attend, as it was not known what injuries the trapped person may have had. During the previous week concern had been raised for the safety of a man who had been missing for some time. It was thought likely that the casualty could be that missing person, which indicated that he might have been down the shaft for many days. The M.R.O. team located the casualty and Dr. A Newton examined and stabilised him at the scene. Owing to possible complications that may arise from the extended period underground, combined with hypothermia and dehydration it was decided to lift him from the shaft in a horizontal position on a stretcher. A helicopter was requested from R.A.F. Chivenor for rapid evacuation. Unfortunately, deteriorating weather conditions stopped the Sea King landing and the casualty went by ambulance to hospital.

Source – WCC Log Book – Volume 33, page 14

M.R.O. call out at 10:30 p.m. to rescue a person from the bottom of Blackmoor Swallet (Shaft). Despite having been drinking for most of the evening things happened very quickly. A lot of people piled into a very small number of cars and before I knew it were all down at Velvet Bottom (or did it take longer bit it was seen through the hazy glow of beer?) The casualty was located and brought out quickly – he had to wait for ages before the helicopter landed (a big field with two police cars lighting it up was apparently not enough!) Finally got back to the hut at 2:30 a.m.

Em, Kev, Nik-Nak, Vern.

Source – WCC Journal Volume No. 26 No 276 – September 2001 – pages 86 to 87.

RESCUE FROM BLACKMOOR SWALLET

Some time before the 3rd May a young man left his home in Radstock without, according to the press, any belongings.

A week and a half later he turned up down the bottom of a mineshaft on Mendip with a harness and ropes! The story of the intervening days is not without interest. Where was he during those days, down the shaft or was he living rough somewhere on Mendip in spite of foot and mouth restrictions? Only he will know the answers.

M.R.O.'s involvement began on Monday night, May 14th and carried on over into most of Tuesday. It included the rescue of the man from the shaft and the plaguing by the media circus right through until Tuesday evening. There were press interviews with the doctor, the children who found him, parents of the children, rescuers, staff at the Charterhouse Outdoor Centre etc. Then there was T.V. coverage and more interviews with all concerned.

If you don't know what happened, you must have been in the upper reaches of the Amazon, up Everest, or on another planet. The story made places like France, Cyprus, Canada, Japan and even Cambodia. Just in case you were on another planet here is the gist of it.

Needless to say most of Mendip had been off limits during the foot & mouth crisis. Charterhouse and the surrounding area had been particularly quiet. On the evening of May 14th Charterhouse Outdoor Centre had been given permission to take a party of school children from Trowbridge on a night hike to listen for owls etc. John Baker, along with several parents, was in charge of the group. On passing close to the old mineshaft/cave known as Stainsby Shaft/Blackmoor Swallet the children heard shouting rather than the hooting of owls. The shouting appeared to come from the shaft. The children thought this was part of their test or even a joke by the adults. On investigation by John Baker the shouting was found to be real and in fact was coming from the bottom of the shaft. A person was seen at the bottom and was asking for a drink. He claimed to have been down the shaft for some time. John thought a drink could be arranged and promptly left to raise the alarm and get help. One parent remained at the shaft while another parent took the children back to the Centre. John contacted the police indicating that he thought that the person down the shaft could be the missing person from eleven days previous. John also contacted the M.R.O. via Alan Butcher. A rescue party, including Andrew Newton the M.R.O. doctor and Wessex members from Upper Pitts (see Log entry, page 95) was rapidly raised and after picking up equipment rendezvoused at the shaft with John. First indications were that the man had serious injuries with possible spinal problems, dehydration and hypothermia. An intra-venous fluid drip was set up at the bottom of the shaft. Due to the suspected serious nature of his injuries combined with his hypothermia and dehydration it was felt necessary to haul the man up the shaft in a horizontal position. Also due to the length of time that he was thought to have been in the shaft a helicopter evacuation would be desirable to expedite hospitalisation.

Using some cunning rigging and the Paraguard stretcher a fairly straightforward haul to the surface was achieved. Further medical checks were carried out on the surface before he was taken by ambulance to the Centre to await the helicopter. Unfortunately, during the early hours of the morning Mendip weather played its part; from a clear starlight night the scene was transformed with a typical Mendip mist. When the helicopter arrived from R.A.F. Chivenor the mist had done its work – the helicopter couldn't land. The journey to Weston hospital had to be completed by road. With that most people, including the children, retired to bed at about 3.30 a.m., only to be awoken by the Press at 6.00am! The injured man has since spent several weeks in hospital for treatment of problems arising from dehydration, circulatory problems and hypothermia.

Brian Prewer

Source – The Times – 16 May 2001

ABSEILER SURVIVES ELEVEN DAYS IN MINE

A geology student who had been missing for 11 days was rescued from a disused mineshaft yesterday after his cries for help were answered by children listening for owls. Matthew Head, 26, had become confused, dehydrated and was suffering from hypothermia when he was found 40 feet down the mineshaft in the Mendip Hills near Cheddar, Somerset, late on Sunday night. Rescuers, among them a doctor, were lowered on to a ledge where, they believe, Mr. Head had survived by drinking rainwater and sucking lichen. The 200-year-old former lead mine is believed to be some 200 feet deep. Mr. Head, from Midsomer Norton, near Bath, was last seen on May 3 when he left his parents' home without saying where he was going. Police, who had put out an appeal for information, said that he had been suffering from depression. Last night he was recovering in hospital in Bristol where his condition was being monitored. Mr. Head, who is 6ft 3in, is believed to have abseiled down the Stainsbury Shaft at Charterhouse using a rope and harness but had been unable to get out again. The area of the Mendip Hills where he was found had been reopened to walkers this week after two months' closure because of the foot-and-mouth epidemic.

He was found when a party of 32 schoolchildren on a night hike stopped to listen for owls. Peter Ford, 42, an officer with Wiltshire Constabulary, who was accompanying the children, said: "We were all gathered in a circle around the 6ft square hole when we heard a faint voice say: 'Can you get me some help down here?' "It startled everybody and I thought it was someone doing a ventriloquist act. He said: 'My favourite drink is squash. I'm very dehydrated and I'll pay you for it.' "He said he didn't know how he had fallen in there. If he had been asleep at the time we passed it might have been a week before anyone else had gone up again because of foot- and-mouth restrictions. He is incredibly lucky to be alive." John Baker, the manager of the Charterhouse outdoor activity centre which had organised the night-time hike, was with the group and ran to alert the Mendip Cave Rescue Team. Mr. Baker said: "It was the children that heard him shout first. We just could not believe what we were hearing. He was pretty coherent as he came out and we were able to have a pretty clear conversation with him. The children were excellent. They soon grasped what was going on and behaved really well." Kezia Gorman, 10, said: "We were being quite quiet, listening for owls, and we were looking at the Stainsbury Shaft and we heard a voice coming out of it. It was all very scary but also very exciting." Mr. Baker's son, Daniel, 10, added: "We all got sent back while my Dad stayed with the man in the hole. I was very worried about that man all night. I kept wondering whether he would ever get out of the hole. I was so happy when I found out he was safe." The shaft is about a quarter of a mile from the outdoor centre where the children were staying, next to a mine manager's old, ruined home called Bleak House.

The shaft is surrounded by 4ft-high green wire-link fencing with a locked gate at one end. Eight members of the Mendip Rescue Team, led by Brian Prewer, went into the 20-foot-wide shaft to help Mr. Head. Andrew Newton, the doctor in the team, said: "When I got to him he was in quite a bad way. He was wet through and in considerable pain from his constant crouched position between a group of sharp rocks. "At the bottom was a small horizontal landing covered with boulders. He was lying on his side, folded in against some rocks under an overhang. He was able to speak and to give us some information about himself. "He was able to tell us he had fallen and that he had been there for a significant period of time, but he was a bit unclear how long he had been there. He thanked us for coming to his aid and he complained of pain, particularly in the neck, back and legs. He had a lot of pain around his lower legs and feet, which had got very cold. He was also slightly confused. Being all alone down the bottom of a shaft is a confusing sensory experience." Dr. Newton said that Mr. Head might not have survived another night or two. "It's very fortuitous that a school happened to be using the centre and walking in that area at night. "There is no way he could have got out of there on his own. However long he was down there it was long enough for him to be very poorly. It's early days to say whether he is going to have permanent problems as a result of his ordeal." Dr. Newton

gave the man intravenous injections in the cave to maintain his blood pressure and sugar level. A spinal collar was fitted and he was raised to the surface using a rigid stretcher kept horizontal to maintain blood flow. Mr. Head's parents, Jackie and Michael, who were at his bedside, declined to comment.

A hospital spokesman said: "He was treated for hypothermia, dehydration and leg injuries, but has suffered no other obvious injuries. Although he was conscious it would be true to say that he is obviously confused"



Hole drama: Cave rescue co-ordinator Brian Prewer investigates the disused mineshaft in the Mendip hills, Somerset, where a man trapped for days was rescued after children from an activity centre heard his cries for help. Picture: Barry Batchelor/PA

Yorkshire Post photograph 16 May 2001

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Books Vol 9, page 109

Andy Newton, Dany, Simon (Nik Nak), Emma, Kevin, Prew, Butch, Roger H, Ivan, Bean, John Baker, Tony Jarratt etc.

Call out from the Pub at about 11 p.m. – just before the last game of shove ha'penny this season! Mat Head (a onetime Stock's House digger!) is a manic-depressive geology student who had been reported mining for some eleven days. By an incredible stroke of luck John Barker and others at the Charterhouse Centre were conducting a party of school kids on a night walk in the supposedly "out of bounds" area of Velvet Bottom in order to listen for owls. Having got the kids to actually shut up for a few seconds they were amazed to hear weak cries of help emanating from the depths of Stainsby's Shaft – which was not rigged with rope or ladder! The rescue then swung into action.

Our motley, beer filled team laddered the 10m shaft to find Matt curled up on a ledge with a fleece hat pulled over his head – dehydrated, disoriented and not a happy chappy! I suspect he had been underground for at least a day and a half during which time he had apparently fallen – his urine soaked climbing rope laying beneath him. He also had a Troll harness, a shunt and was wearing good climbing boots. He apparently had no helmet and was using a fag lighter sized torch for light. I have most of these items at home soaking in the bath. Dany and Andy checked him for injuries and he may have had broken ribs, ankle and possible back damage. Andy therefore put him in a neck splint and he was gently rolled on to a rigid Paraguard stretcher for a horizontal haul to the surface. My job was to keep talking to him about anything that came to mind – mines, bats, geology, his friend Jake Baynes, etc. His identification cards and empty "sleeping pill" packets were strewn about giving cause for concern as to what really happened.

After being hauled out he was taken to the Centre by ambulance and a rescue helicopter from Chivenor R.A.F. called in. This was unable to land due to misty conditions so the ambulance took him to Weston Hospital. He was transferred to Frenchay next day. It will be of great interest to find out what really happened! He is reported to be suffering from gangrene in his feet so may very well have been underground longer than we thought.

The following day rescuers were continuously pestered by the press and several of us appeared on the B.B.C. Points West news program. I gave a few short comments on “why we do it” and old Mendip mining history and the shop got a surprising and excellent free T.V. advert! The rescue made national news coverage.

In “The Sun” (17 May 2001) Matt states in an interview that he had been underground 11 days after having snagged, then cut, his abseil rope. He apparently had a knife (where is it now?), food, and drunk drip water. (I have his rope – it is not cut!). He is now being a very stropky patient.

3 August 2001 – G.B. Cave

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 33, page 27

Phil and Christine drove to G.B. on a fruitless trip looking for a well overdue Weston party. Eventually found them in the Grotte Roger [*The Hunters*'], where they paid a beer fine for being irresponsible.

12 September 2001 – Goatchurch Cavern

At 12:20 Brian Prewer was contacted by Les Davis, the Mendip Warden, with a request for assistance for a party of trapped cavers. Simultaneously Rich West received a call from the police reporting the incident. A caver had approached Sir David Wills in the Burrington Inn asking for a rope to assist his trapped friends in Goatchurch. Sir David contacted Les Davis for assistance, who in turn decided it should be passed to M.R.O.

The stereo callout raised Martin Grass, Tony Jarratt, Stuart McManus, John Williams, Dany Bradshaw, Mike Duck, Rich Long, Phil Rowsell and Rob Delacourt. The three cavers were located at the bottom of the Coal Chute. They had been unable to climb out and had become disorientated.

They were assisted out of the cave. All out and stood down by 13:10.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Books Vol 9, page 148

Lunchtime call out for some young lads lost/stuck in Goatchurch Cavern. By the time Tangent, Phil, Rob Delacourt + 2, Rich West and I got there Martin Grass, Dany etc. had got them out. Retired to the pub for a “de-brief”.

27 December 2001 – Goatchurch Cavern (surface)

Source – WCC Journal Volume 26 No. 278 – February 2002, page 138

Caver Dies at Burrington. Mid Somerset Newspapers of Dec 27, 2001 reported “Man dies in pot holing tragedy. A 56 year old man was retrieved by cliff rescuers (paramedics and 13

volunteers from Avon and Somerset Cliff Rescue) after he collapsed and died (at Goatchurch entrance) at 7p.m. last Thursday. Two experienced cavers (B.E.C. members) tried to resuscitate.

2002

Report by the Hon Secretary of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 2001

The foot and mouth crisis that threw a shadow over 2001 had a major impact on British caving. The M.R.O. probably suffered least: no caving equals no rescues. The only impact on us was that we could not fully carry out our training program. The incident list reflects the lack of activity, a good year with no injuries sustained as a direct result of caving. However I do not feel it is appropriate to over praise this year's achievement given the circumstances. A "nil" result for 2002 is the target to aim for.

The administration tasks of M.R.O. carried on as normal during the year. Wardens meetings have taken place and representatives attended the B.C.R.C. A.G.M. The only exception has been the S.W.E.RA meetings, the majority of which were cancelled due to foot and mouth.

The accounts show a healthy surplus of income over expenditure. Equipment insurance is still our main outgoing expense, approx. two thirds of this year's turnover. We have spent relatively little this year on equipment. This is just as well, as we have some large invoices projected in 2002 budget for replacement radios. Our main source of income for the year has been the stomp and donations from the clubs. So a big thank- you to those clubs who have donated.

Two new wardens have been appointed this year, Ivan Sandford and Vern Freeman. The list of wardens is constantly reviewed and it is particularly pleasing to welcome new blood into the organisation. Although it must be remembered that rescue is the responsibility of all who cave on Mendip, our self help philosophy is not well understood by those outside of caving, particularly the professional agencies. It is important that we remain voluntary, self-reliant and self-funded if we wish to avoid adverse publicity and over regulation/legislation.

Bob Cork

26 January 2002 – Manor Farm

Call received from Taunton police by Brian Prewer requesting assistance for a female stuck in Manor Farm at Charterhouse. Ivan Sandford, Bob Cork, Vince Simmons, & Dany Bradshaw attended whilst a support team including Ian Tooth, Pete Stacy and Rich West were contacted. Cork & Simmonds made contact with the casualty and her colleague who had raised the alarm at September rift. The party had been returning from a trip that was abandoned at Albert's Eye due to high water conditions. The casualty was unable to climb the rift using the single rope in place and had requested that assistance be summoned.

The casualty was rapidly hauled up the rift and assisted in climbing the entrance ladder. Both members of the party were then evacuated to the Charterhouse Centre for hot drinks, no further medical attention was required.

Radio communications as usual were difficult from this area, the Charterhouse Centre radio was again used as a relay for messages to Priddy. Our thanks to Les Davies and the centre for use of the facilities.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 15, pages 3364 to 3365

To the Hunters' late lunchtime, met Pauline. 24 hours of heavy rain, floods reported on Hursley Hill and Chew Magna/Chew Stoke, landslip on the narrow part of the Chew Magna road just off the A37, and running rivers of mud on Deer Leap and Cheddar Gorge.

Over to Prews when the phone rang. Taunton Police, rescue in Manor Farm Swallet. A woman could not climb up September Rift (just below the entrance). Within five minutes of call out, Prew was talking to a Dr. Mager, who made the call, and about 15 minutes later the first rescuers went down. Prew and I picked some kit up from the M.R.O. store, and followed on. Ivan and Vince (plus two bods from the B.E.C.) went down, with Prew, me, Darny and Rich West on the surface. The road was taking a lot of water (flowing down the drive and into the farm kitchen) and the field was a swamp.

The two odd bods came up. A ladder was rigged in the rift and the woman lined up. After a rest she came up on a tight line. All over by 5:45. A Scout party at the Charterhouse Centre provided tea and coffee. Back to Upper Pitts, showered and ate. Damp and misty. Good crack at the Hunters', left at 12:30.

13 November 2002 – St Cuthbert's Swallet

The initial call out for this rescue was convoluted owing to an initial short circuiting of the procedure and bypassing the 999 call. This however did not create any time delay in the response to the incident which proved to be one of the most serious the M.R.O. has dealt with in many years. At 10:15 Tony Jarratt who in turn recruited Richard West to help with the call out received the first call. Cork, Sandford, Savory, Bradshaw, McManus, & Andy Carruthers were contacted a requested to go to the cave. Rob & Helen Harper plus Rich Blake were also advised.

Initial report indicated that an experienced caver had fallen from above the first pitch in Maypole series and was now lying at the bottom with suspected leg and back injuries being attended by two of the cavers who were in the original party of four. The informant had also returned to the scene.

First team entered the cave at 10:50 carrying first aid, hot air kit, communications and hauling equipment. A second team was also despatched comprising of Chris Hayward, Gwilym Evans and Tyrone Bevan carrying more ropes and rigging kit.

Alan Butcher received the official call from the police and to control at the belfry also in attendance on the surface were three members of A.S.C.R.T., Karen Lumley, Rosie Freeman and Les Davies who manned the radio at the cave entrance. West endeavoured to contact a doctor and finally managed to contact Dr. Peter Glanville and request his attendance. Dr. Donald Thompson stood by to offer advice if required from the surface. Blake, Sparrow, Long entered the cave at 11:10 with S.R.T. and rigging kit.

Surface Heyphone was and attended by Joe Diamond, Surface to underground comm's were established at 11:49. Initial report as follows.

- Casualty fully conscious with sensation in all limbs,
- Spinal and internal injuries suspected.
- Need to prepare for a major incident
- Urgent request for a medic.
- Requirement immediately for Oxygen, Entonox, Spinal collars & splint, Pain relief medication, Full stretcher & hauling rigs, Food & hot drinks
- Water levels in the cave are high, a weather report is required and relayed to underground control.
- Rescuers must be briefed before entering the cave to expect a long arduous trip in wet conditions and they must be suitably equipped.

Rob Harper, Andy Carruthers, James Wier, Rosie Freeman, Chris Harvey & Kate Lawrence entered cave with extra kit.

Underground - decision by Cork, Harper & Bradshaw agreed by the casualty to start evacuation A.S.A.P. and to do it as rapidly as possible. Risk assessed against the suspected injuries, water levels in the cave, predicted weather, risk of hypothermia and risk to rescue personnel. Casualty collared and stretchered, administered with pain relief. Evacuation started at approx. 13:15. Lowered down from bottom of first pitch by conventional handling methods. Onward lowered into main stream from Maypole Aven using mechanical breaking techniques. Route was rigged in advance via the streamway to The Water Shute to the bottom of Pulpit pitch. Chris Hayward & Paul Brook accompanied Dr. Peter Glanville into the cave and reached the casualty at 14:25. Glanville examined the casualty and attended to him during remainder of the rescue.

A succession of long hauls followed to extradite the casualty up Pulpit, Arete pitches and the entrance rift to finally land him on the surface at 18:05.

On the surface, the decision was taken that given the present and forecasted weather conditions the watercourse should be over-pumped to reduce water levels underground. Attendance of the Fire Service was requested and appliances from Wells were rapidly tasked to the site supported by an Officer from Bridgwater. They very quickly set their kit and efficiently dispersed the water to the ground to the rear of the Belfry. Their support was invaluable and our sincere thanks for their help especially as the national strike was due to start at 18:00 which they totally ignored.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to Community Paramedic Mike Gray, Richard Marlow and the Ambulance Service who supported the incident. The arrival of the emergency services also brought the incident catering unit. Thank you for the added bonus of Sausage Egg & Chips served in the Belfry carpark,

The scale of this incident created an amount of disruption to the local area. We thank the local landowners for their tolerance and support with extra car parking etc. and apologise for any inconvenience caused in particular the Belfry's neighbours the Selway and Foxwell families. Surface support afforded by Helen, Fiona, Karen & Lesley was also much appreciated. This rescue involved many people not all mentioned above. I apologise to those who have been missed but rest assured your contribution is appreciated.

Source – Mid Somerset Newspapers – 21 November 2002

DRAMATIC RESCUE UNDERGROUND

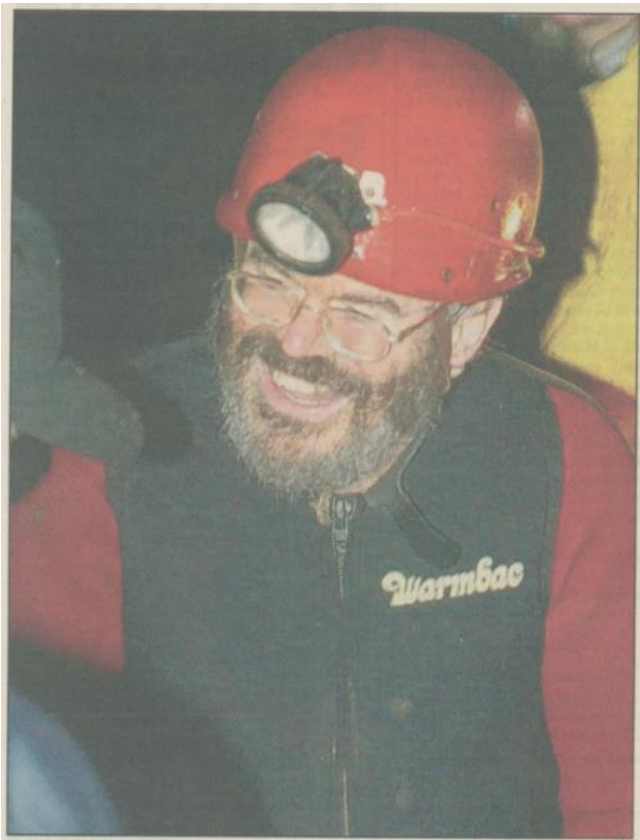
Mendip Caves Rescue Organisation spent eight hours battling in flooded conditions to bring an injured potholer out of St. Cuthbert's Swallet, Priddy.

The experienced caver, a member of the Wessex Caving Club, slipped when he was 350 feet down the cave, which is described as one of the largest of the Mendip complex. An alert was raised at 10 a.m. last Wednesday and the emergency organisations were immediately called along with the rescue organisation.

It was 6 p.m. that night before the caver, believed to be a local man, was brought to the surface and taken to Bath Royal United Hospital.

Rescue warden Richard West, of Easton, near Wells, said the man sustained back and minor internal injuries. He was detained in hospital overnight.

Floodlights were set up at the cave's entrance with the help of the police and fire brigade. Paramedics were also called in advance of the ambulance.



Mr. West said: "In view of the fire brigade's dispute, which was due to start very shortly, we were pleased that the firefighters stayed on and were very helpful."

Firefighters attended from Wells and from Somerset's headquarters.

"We need to treat back injuries carefully and we used a special spinal board to bring the man out. He was well cared for," said Mr. West.



The injured caver receives oxygen following his rescue from St Cuthbert's Swallet at Priddy

prcave003

Although the caver was 350 feet down in the cave, he was several thousand feet from the entrance along narrow passages.



Somerset Fire Brigade's Station Officer Steve Brown, who was in charge of the incident for the fire service, briefs volunteers at the cave entrance

prcave010

7 December 2002 – Swildon's Hole

15:02 call received by Richard West reporting a trapped caver with a suspected leg injury at the Double Pots.

Sandford, Johnson & Bob Smith collected kit and attended at the cave. Phil Hendy, Verne Freeman, Jarratt, Butcher, Simmonds & Savory also tasked to the incident. Contact was made with injured party who was on his first caving trip. Although physically fit a pre-existing condition was presenting him with a problem. The chap was escorted/assisted by the team to the surface. The operation was concluded by 18:00.

Also in attendance underground were Domonic Gane, Mark Helmore & Jim Phillips. Richard Marlow from the Ambulance Service attended on the surface and took charge of the casualty post rescue.

2003

2 May 2003 – Wookey Hole Area

M.R.O. requested to assist in search of Wookey Hole and surrounding area for a missing person who was considered to be at risk. M.R.O. joined with teams from Exmoor and Avon & Somerset in the search. The missing person was seen during the search period and although teams were concentrated on the area of the sighting the person was not found. The search was called off when it became apparent that it was more appropriate for the hunt for the person to be continued by the police. Police at a location over 15 miles away from the search area detained the missing person the following day.

3 May 2003 – Swildon's Hole

Source – WCC Journal Volume 27 No. 285 – June 2003, page 68

A VERY NEAR MISS IN SWILDONS (FROM THE UPPER PITTS LOG.)

Phil Short, Greg Brock and Andy Stewart

A member of the Eldon, staying at the Belfry was extremely fortunate that a party of divers was in the cave at the time.

Went to continue looking at Paschendale but met 3 distraught cavers exiting at the Mud Sump. (They had been a group of four attempting the Round Trip but had reached Blue Pencil, descended it, gone upstream in Swildon's 4, thinking it was 2 and the first of them free dived Sump 3 in a neofleece, no mask and no hood thinking it was Sump 1. When he didn't return a 2nd member followed, to realise it was too long and turned back. After waiting for some time they realised he wasn't coming back and they retraced their steps to the Mud Sump. Andy Stewart then escorted the three cavers down to Sump 2 via 1, to see if the missing caver had managed to free dive 3 and 2 (not expecting he would have). Whilst Phil and Greg ran (with dive gear) from the Mud Sump to Blue Pencil and on to Swildon's 4 and Sump 3, where Phil kitted up and dived through to Great Air Bell. (Andy had free dived through Sump 2) and they both found the missing caver very cold and not very happy in the air bell.

Phil said "Hello, have you ever scuba dived?" to which he said "No" and a crash course in diving was administered and he dived out, followed by Phil and Andy free diving 2 to meet his team members, who escorted a very cold caver out. Phil then dived back to Swildon's 4 and gave Greg his gear and free dived back to 2, followed by Greg and all exited the cave, saving Paschendale for another day!

9 November 2003 – Kilmersdon & Radstock Area

M.R.O. requested to help with search by Avon & Somerset Cliff Rescue Team. M.R.O. team rendezvous with police and A.S.C.R.T. at Radstock police station for briefing. Missing person was said to have been last seen a few days earlier and his car had been found abandoned near a disused railway line close to Kilmersdon. Evidence suggested that the missing person may pose a risk to himself and early detection was desirable

An extensive search of the area was carried throughout the day but without success. The search was called off at 1600 hrs with the view that the police would progress inquiries elsewhere.

A corpse retrieved from a flooded quarry some miles away a week later was identified as being the missing person who was the subject of the above search.

9 November 2003 – Shepton Mallet

Still warm from the Radstock incident the M.R.O. were requested at around 20:00 to carry out an urgent search of the Shepton area. A person who was known to be a risk to themselves had been recently reported missing in circumstances that gave immediate concern for their safety M.R.O. rapidly responded and were on site at S.M. police station within 20 minutes of the original call. Being the first team to arrive a search was planned and executed focusing on the areas of highest probability. M.R.O. were joined later in the evening by A.S.C.R.T. The search was terminated at 22:40 when information was received that police had located the person concerned in a Public House some miles outside of Shepton Mallet.

27 November 2003 – Crewkerne Area

M.R.O. were called late afternoon to help with the search for a man who had gone missing after a road traffic accident on the A30 at 1:30 that morning. His wife had reported him missing when police went to his house to report the finding of his abandoned car post the road traffic accident. Concern was raised owing to the presence of bloodstains in the vehicle that had turned over. M.R.O. proceeded to search the more obvious cross-country routes between the accident site and the person's home. The search was called off when the police received information suggesting that the missing person had been seen during the day at a local racecourse, with his wife.

Police apologised to the team for the waste of their time and suggested they would be following up the incident with the person concerned.

2004

Report by the Hon Secretary of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 2003

A landmark year for Mendip caving, for the first time in the history of M.R.O. there have been no underground incidents to report. Although the sceptics amongst us would say this is due to less folk actually caving, I believe this to be an achievement of note.

Congratulations are due to the caving clubs and all who cave on Mendip. We must not forget that Mendip caving has enjoyed an improved safety record over a number of years and this has

been achieved without legislation. However it is somewhat ironic in a year when insurers would appear to perceive increased risk within the sport.

We have supplemented our activities this year by assisting the police with a number of surface searches. The details of these are summarised in our rather thin incident report. Whilst M.R.O. has no objection to being involved in surface activities as long as there is genuine risk to life or limb ; our primary objective is underground rescue. The lack of cave incidents and therefore real rescues must be compensated for by increased training and practices. The M.R.O. training officer has put considerable effort into ensuring M.R.O. practices and lectures are organised and we thank all of you who have attended. Increased support for these activities is always welcome as would be more club organised rescue practices.

Two new wardens have been appointed during the year, Steve Marsh and Alison Moody.

In celebration of the Queens Jubilee a medal was commissioned for presentation to Military and Emergency personnel. Wardens with 5 years service at 1/2/02 were deemed eligible and received this award. Although cavers do not usually associate themselves with badges, medals and the like!

It is good to see cave rescue acknowledged as a true emergency service.

The M.R.O. has also enjoyed a good year financially. Fund raising income from two events this year brought in over £921. The main event was the stomp at B.C.R.A. Mendip. The proceeds of the overall event were also kindly donated to the M.R.O. A big thank you is due to the C.S.C.C., the B.C.R.A. and the organisers of the Mendip 2003 regional meet.

Club and general donations have also been healthy again. Our specific thanks go to Frome Caving Club and Gorge Outdoors for their generosity. It is good to see the level of financial support coming from within the caving community; this allows us to continue the policy of being a self-funding organisation and proud of it. Income from rescued parties is not surprisingly down this year with lack of cave rescues, no donations were received from surface searches.

Investment on equipment for this year is in the order of £800 pounds, These costs were entirely offset by a rebate from the B.C.R.A. cave radio project. The true cost of the new Heyphones purchased the previous year was therefore reduced from £1600 to £800, congratulations to B.C.R.A. team on the success of the project.

One large item of expenditure we have not incurred in 2003 is the equipment insurance premium. Our insurers declined to renew the existing policy and wanted to combine it with an employer liability package. An expensive option because the M.R.O. already has employer cover via the Mountain Rescue Council. We are at present looking for an alternative provider for the equipment cover. Increased expenditure on equipment is forecast for 2004 with the possible purchase of a new stretcher/s.

Bob Cork

28 February 2004 – Swildon's Hole

Alan Butcher received a call via Brian Prewer at 19:00. The 999 caller, Duncan Butler (Reading University C.C.) was contacted; he reported that his party had come across a female casualty with a suspected knee injury, below the 20 ft. ladder pitch. Dany Bradshaw and Mad Phil

entered the cave at 19:25. Richard West arrived on the Green shortly after and Alison Moody followed down the cave at 19:35 with the Molefone and Entonox. Matthew Butcher and Andy Rummung took in a first aid and hot air kit. Bob Cork and Mark Helmore entered the cave at 19:45 with hauling kit and splints. Brian Prewer and Phil Hendy set up a surface Heyfone. Further cavers were stood by at the Belfry & Wessex.

Surface contact with underground team was established at 19:55. The casualty was reported to be at the water chamber and making progress under her own steam. At 20:20 the casualty was at Jacob's ladder and finally arrived at the entrance at 20:50.

The casualty was transferred to an ambulance on the green at 21:00 and operations were stood down.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 35, page 17

It must be recorded that at 1900 we received notice that a female Kent student was stuck below the 20' with a dislocated knee. M.R.O. was called via the Police and usual channels (Prew at the top of the list!) and a rescue team, mainly B.E.C./W.C.C. was underground by 19:30. The casualty's knee had gone back, though painful. She made her way out with assistance.

4 September 2004 – Wookey Hole

Tony Jarratt received a call from the police at 16:30. He was informed that a member of the public had slipped and fallen in the show cave and was suffering from a suspected broken leg. The ambulance service had been called and after initially treating the casualty and accessing the situation had requested the assistance of the M.R.O. The main driver for this was concern regarding health and safety problems in transporting a standard stretcher chair on the slippery metal steps. Tony Jarratt, Rich West, Bob Cork, Dany Bradshaw and Graham Johnson attended and were supported on surface by Fiona Crozier, Bob Lovington and Lee Stackett. The patient was transferred from a wheelchair to a Paraguard stretcher and rapidly evacuated from the cave. The rescue was completed in less than 15 minutes and must qualify as the M.R.O.'s quickest underground rescue ever.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Books Vol 12, page 53

Bob Cork, Rich West, Dany Bradshaw, Jake Johnson, Richard (paramedic), Tracy (patient), assorted show cave staff, ambulance team, tourists, Fiona Crozier, Lee Stockett, Rob Larrington, Tony Jarratt.

A quick rescue on the way home from work! I received a police call about 4:30 p.m. informing me that a young, but heavily built lady tourist had fallen in the cave and suffered a broken leg. The paramedic, Richard, had requested an M.R.O. team and stretcher because of the slippery steps in the cave and the uncertainty of her exact whereabouts. I contacted Dany, Jake and resident Belfyites, Bob and Rich – the latter going directly to the cave to organise things. Jake arrived with a selection of stretchers, Entonox and lamps. The Paraguard was selected and we entered the cave via the blasted tunnel entrance to find the patient fully splinted and sorted out by the ambulance team and sitting in a wheelchair in the underground "office". She was transferred to the stretcher and rapidly carried out of the cave with no problem whatsoever. She was transferred to an ambulance and we all went home after the fastest and cleanest cave rescue I have ever attended!

24/25 October 2004 – Surface Search

Sunday– Call received at 19:55 from inspector Peter Rowe requesting assistance with a search for a missing person. Dany Bradshaw, Vern & Rosie Freeman, Nigel Taylor, Tony Jarratt, Keith Fielder, Ivan Sandford and Rich West were called and proceeded to Hapsford Quarry social club to meet with the police.

A 52-year-old male had been reported missing; last seen 23:30 Saturday 23rd October outside the social club but had failed to return home in the interim period. Under the direction of search manager, the M.R.O. searched the Mells footpath upstream from the quarry towards Great Elm but no trace of the missing person was found. Search adjourned at 00:30.

Monday – At the request of inspector Kevin Instance the M.R.O. attended to resume searching. Bob Cork, Dany Bradshaw, Vern Freeman, Nigel Taylor, Graham & Christine Price and Rich West attended. A second more detailed search of the Mells River upstream of Hapsford was undertaken but nothing found. The M.R.O. team suggested that a river level search by canoeists would be advantageous. Chris Harvey was contacted who in turn contacted Neil and Pam Dickson. The canoeists arrived at 14:30 and commenced a search downstream from Great Elm. M.R.O. team continued to search area immediately downstream of Hapsford Road Bridge and Fordbury Bottom.

16:15 walking team and canoeists regroup at Hapsford social club and start second search downstream towards confluence of the rivers Mells and Frome. 17:00 Christine Price located a body suspended by its clothing from a branch of a tree in mid-stream, she was immediately joined by GP, NT and the three canoeists. The unfortunate individual was obviously deceased and the scene was secured and police informed via M.R.O. radio. 18:00 police request M.R.O. to secure the body to prevent possible falling and being lost in the river. Dany Bradshaw assisted by Vern Freeman and Rich West attached a line and lashed the body to the tree. 19:30 Search closed down.

Source – Tony Jarratt’s Log Books Vol 12, page 65

A Sunday evening phone call from Rich West saw me, Tim, Nigel Taylor, Keith Fielder, Dany Bradshaw, Ivan Sandford, and Vern & Rosie Freeman gathering at Hapsford Quarry Social Club, Great Elm, East Mendip. 24 hours previously a drunken 52-year-old local, Roger Foster, had vanished instead of getting a lift home to Mells, some 3.5km upstream along the footpaths bordering the fast flowing Mells River. Our job was, along with four local lads, to search along these paths as far as Great Elm. After 2½km nothing was found and it seem likely that he has either fallen in the swollen river and drowned or been hit by a stone laden quarry train on the possible trackway short cut above the valley. (This sadly proved to be the case).

2005

Report by the Hon Secretary of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 2004

Following the landmark year of 2003 when zero underground incidents occurred, this low level trend has continued into 2004. Only one event involving cavers was attended, although the call to a Show Cave for a member of the public was a first.

Our activities above ground on a surface search in the Great Elm area were commended by the Police and much appreciated by the family of the victim. The end result, the finding of a dead body, was however sad for all concerned. In memory of the deceased donations of £1200 plus

were made to the M.R.O. funds. Our sincere gratitude and condolences are extended to the family and friends of Roger Foster who lost his life by drowning in the Mells River. Members of the search team attended the funeral representing the M.R.O.

Mendip will be the venue for the forthcoming 2005 British Cave Rescue Council Conference. The last event held at Eastwater Farm 10 years ago was a great success and it is intended to follow a similar format. The conference will be centred in a tented village with various training events and workshops arranged over the whole of the weekend. The 2005 Conference will be an event not to be missed all will have the opportunity to practice their rescue techniques, have a great social gathering and for the competitive the rescue stretcher race.

The financial position of the Organization is stable. Richard Chant has again given his time to inspect the accounts and I personally thank him for his contribution. General admin expenses are high this year relative to the previous, this is due to the production of the M.R.O. leaflets. Equipment expenditure is the largest expenditure, as it should be. A new Short Slix stretcher has been purchased at a cost of £635. Looking forward, I am aware of a number of receipts to the accounts that will occur in early 2005, which will add to an already healthy balance.

We should now consider further new/replacement equipment purchases to generally upgrade the M.R.O. resources.

R. J. Cork

24 February 2005 – Rhino Rift

Overdue party reported by Graham Mullins of the U.B.S.S. Some difficulty was experienced with the callout owing to an anomaly in the published callout instructions. Overdue party called in safe and well before M.R.O. contacted by police.

3 March 2005 – Goatchurch Cavern

Personnel involved: Alan Butcher, Richard West, Dany Bradshaw, Vince Simmons, Roz Bateman.

AB received call from Brian Prewer at 1:45pm to say that it was reported that there was a male caver trapped in Goatchurch. He said that the call out had come an unusual way and advised that an M.R.O. warden should go directly to Burrington. On arrival at 2:10 p.m. AB made contact with ADO Hutchings from Avon Fire and Rescue who was in charge of five fire engines, three having arrived from Bedminster. In addition, there were two ambulances on site.

AB advised that the road, which was blocked by the engines, should be left clear for M.R.O. personnel to arrive and at 2:20 p.m. RW and DB arrived followed by RB and VS. RW collected kit from the store and DB and VS entered cave at 2:50 p.m. with lump hammer, chisel, Bosch drill, etc. RW remained with the Fire Brigade whilst AB and RB took station at the entrance.

The casualty, R Millier who was with a party from Avon Banks OEC from Exeter had been wedged by his leg in one of the small passages at the bottom of the Coal Chute. After breaking away surrounding rock the casualty was released and all were out of the cave by 4:40 p.m. It was noted that the Bosch drill batteries were not charged and the drill unusable.

The call out had been complicated at the 999 call centre because the casualty had been said to be trapped and so the Fire Brigade was called, it was after this initial call that the that the M.R.O. were contacted.

14 May 2005 – Priddy Green Sink– Swildon's Hole

At about 13:30, while abseiling on the through trip from Priddy Green Sink to Swildon's, 19 year old Cardiff University student Paul James took a 20-foot fall which ended with a pendulum into the pitch wall shattering his kneecap.

Richard West was contacted by Taunton Police Control at 14:45 and so started what could have been a very protracted operation. Greg Brock, who was with Paul, had the foresight to lower him down another pitch so that he would be accessible from the Four streamway. Once rescuers had reached Paul and lowered him down Cowsh Aven into the Four streamway and splinted the injury the choice presented was stark - the extremely tight Blue Pencil Passage and back through Paradise Regained or a trip through sumps III, II and I. Whilst Paul was not a cave diver he did have some open water experience so the choice was obvious and after a crash course and with the close attentions of 4 cave divers he was safely on the upstream side of Swildon's I by 18:45 and back into "normal" rescue territory. Progress was extremely fast mainly due to the fortitude shown by Paul and the hard work and efforts of the many underground and he exited the cave at 20:40. He was despatched to the Royal United Hospital in Bath where it was discovered that his kneecap was in 5 pieces. Despite initial fears that he would have to have the patella removed he underwent an operation the next day which successfully wired the jigsaw back together.

What could have been a very complicated and protracted rescue came to a satisfactory conclusion after the efforts of 30 cavers underground and 10 people on the surface with many more standing by in case the nightmare "Blue Pencil" option had to be taken. The speed of the rescue is a testament to lots of hard work underground and by Paul's determination.

Those involved underground were Greg Brock, Simon Richards, Phil Rowsell, Joel Corrigan, Adrian Vanderplank, Ed Waters, Neil Walmsley, Laura Walmsley, Hayley Clark, John Moore, Robin Brown, Keith Savory, Carol Tapley, Martin Grass, Tav, Andy, Steve Marsh, Mark Kellaway, Mike Addinall, Crispin Lloyd, Reece Davis, Richard Carey, Phil Hendy, Gordon Kaye, Judith Vanderplank, Anne Vanderplank, Mark Helmore, and Geoff Ballard.

On the surface were Vern Freeman, Alan Butcher, Ivan Sandford, Tony Jarratt, Nigel Taylor, Dany Bradshaw and Richard West whilst Martin Ellis arranged the Shepton Mallet CC to stand by in case their annual dinner was going to be left to go cold.

Paul has since made a good recovery and visited Mendip with his father during the Cave Rescue Conference when was able to express his thanks via a generous donation to the M.R.O. funds and copious amounts of Butcombe.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 36, page 32

2:45 p.m. call out for a Cardiff student who fell 20' in Priddy Green Sink. Good turn out, with a splint the man was able to get out via the sumps. S.M.C.C. party bailed the Mud Sump dry. Good progress was made – the rescue party overtook a novice group in the streamway. Stretcher not needed. Heyphone working at Sump 1 but not at Barnes' Loop. All out by about 8 p.m. Student taken to Hospital with broken kneecap.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 17, pages 3828 to 3829

A good lunchtime session, until at 2:45 the phone went, and Roger asked for an M.R.O. warden. Vern took the call.

A party of Cardiff students had gone down Priddy Green Sink, and one of the party; a 19 year old student, fell 20m in Bladder Pot when his Petzl Stop went wrong. He cracked his left knee cap.

Leaving the younger cavers to organise the rescue, Brian and I went back to Upper Pitts, chatting to various people, until at about 4:30 the phone went – would four of us help Mark Helmore take tackle down to rig the Twenty, and the bottom of Barnes' Loop.

So with Judith Vanderplank, Richard Covey (with a bad shoulder) and Gordon Kaye I changed. Pauline took some of us to the Green, Brian took the rest. We picked up a single kitbag with two ropes, and set off, moving quite quickly down the Short Dry Way.

On the way we met Ed Walters and a S.M.C.C. party on their way back from bailing Mud Sump. At Barnes' Loop I stayed on top, the others went to Sump 1. When they returned, they said that the casualty was moving under his own steam, having had his leg splinted, and with the loan of Adrian Vanderplank's wet suit top. (Adrian, Nik Nak and Geoff Ballard had been digging Tumbledown dig in Five). He dived through III and II.

The Heyphone set up at Sump I had been taken down, and brought back. I set it up in Barn's Loop (the White Way) but could not get any joy from it. So I packed it up again and in view of the speed the casualty was making, we did not bother with it again. I went up the 20 with the others (on a lifeline, though I went down without) and we set up another line and pulley.

Other cavers came back, and soon there were 12 of us. Some of us decided we were superfluous, so we went out, with the Heyphone and the stretcher. It was hard going in places, but we soon exited, followed by Mark, who was sent out to call for an ambulance.

On the Green, I met up again with Brian Prewer who took me back to Upper Pitts where I showered and changed. Brian and I then went down to Wells to order an Indian takeaway from the Rajah. We tried for a drink at the Globe but it was too crowded, so we went over to the City Arms. This was equally crowded, but we got a Butcombe (£2.20) though we had to drink it in the courtyard. It was quite chilly, so we were glad when it was time to pick up the curry. We ate this at Upper Pitts – very good it was, but we were too tired to go to the Hunters' afterwards.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Books Vol 12, page 112

Rich West, Nigel Taylor, Brian Prewer, Vern Freeman, Dany Bradshaw, Ian Sandford, Butch, Jake J., Christine Brown, Phil Hendy, Gordon Kaye, Ed Waten, Martin Grass, Steve Marsh, Nik Nak, Crispin Lloyd, Greg Brock, Madphil, several C.U.C.C., S.M.C.C., W.C.C., B.E.C., Reg Haskett, Robin Brown, Ade & Jude Vanderplank, Jeff Ballard, Joel Coregan, Tony Jarratt.

Greg Brock was leading a party of Cardiff University C.C. on a Priddy Green Sink - Swildon's Hole through trip when a 19-year-old lad, on his fourth caving trip, had severe problems with his Stop descender on Bladder Pot. His abseil suddenly got out of control and he shot down the pitch bashing his knee on a ledge but luckily regaining control just before hitting the deck. Barely able to walk he was lowered by his team down to the streamway and Greg left the cave to alert the M.R.O. Divers were summoned to assist him (an open water diver luckily) through Sumps 3, 2 and 1. The rescue commenced at 3 p.m. and was over by 9 p.m. after a fantastic effort by all concerned for which he was very grateful. The Hey phones were magnificent – apart from Barnes' Loop location. I got a lift up from Wells with Roger Haskett then sat in Ivan's Land Rover as he manned the mobile radio station on Priddy Green. We later drove across to the entrance via the top fields to transport the victim back to the ambulance. He was

taken to Bath hospital where a badly smashed kneecap was diagnosed. He was lucky to get away with only that. Luckily, he was very young and fit.

29 May 2005 – Rescue from the Smithy (OFD)

Bob Cork received a call from Martin Grass at approx.. 4:30 a.m. requesting assistance from the M.R.O. for a rescue in O.F.D. Teams were raised from the Wessex Cave Club, the Shepton Mallet Cave Club (camping on the Gower coast) and the Bristol Exploration Club.

In summary, a young lady had fallen 6m down the Smithy at approx. 14:30 p.m. on 29th May, a callout was instigated at 15:15. Potential pelvic injuries were diagnosed and a full stretcher rescue decided upon via the O.F.D. Two streamway, stretcher haul pitch at Maypole Inlet and then out of the Top Entrance.

M.R.O. teams entered the cave late morning on 30th May and the casualty was brought to the surface and evacuated by air ambulance by 18:00, approximately 28 hours after the initial accident. A full report of the incident has been published by the West Brecon Cave Rescue Team.

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 36, page 37

5a.m. The call out you don't want! From Bob Cork. O.F.D. rescue two teams of ten.

Everyone woken up by a semi naked Phil Hendy! Many bleary eyed and still drunk rescuers assembled and set off to South Wales by 6 a.m.

Phil, Pauline, Mel, Lou and Fiona stay behind and go back to bed.

Source – British Cave Rescue Council Summary of Incidents for 2005

Saturday 28 May by West Brecon Cave Rescue Team at 15:15 (for 24¾ hours) (170 rescue team members) Cwm Dwr/OFD II, fall.

Caver (f,19) suffered a fall of some 6 metres down one of the holes in the Smithy in Cwm Dwr at about 14:30. The first rescue party established the extent of the injuries precluded an evacuation through Cwm Dwr, meaning a full stretcher carry up the OFD II streamway was the only choice. It was clear a lengthy rescue would require further personnel and an extended callout was made.

The casualty was packaged in the stretcher, hauled up out of the hole and carried to the Confluence where the O.F.D. streamway is gained. Here a W.B.C.R.T. doctor joined the team. The suspected injuries meant that the carry out of the cave would require great care and to reduce the threat of hypothermia required that the casualty be kept as dry as possible. Thus, the carry up the streamway was very difficult and was not helped by the low water conditions which reduced the effectiveness of the floating stretcher. Further moving the bulky stretcher through the constricted sections of the cave was very difficult.

Problems with communications were inevitable on a rescue of this extent and difficulty. Reports at 00:45 indicated the rescue party had progressed further than expected. When comms was re-established the casualty was at the First River Chamber and was thus further from the entrance than anticipated. Further calls for manpower were made.

The casualty arrived at the Stretcher Haul near the Maypole Inlet and a horizontal haul up the pitch required a change to vertical to transfer the casualty into the passage at the head of the pitch. This went smoothly. During the carry through to the Top Entrance, there was a deterioration in the casualty's condition; medical intervention succeeded in stabilising her condition. On arrival at the surface at 18:00 29 May, she was airlifted to hospital by Air Ambulance.

Assisted by Gloucester Cave Rescue Group, Gwent Cave Rescue Team, Mendip Rescue Organisation, Midlands Cave Rescue Organisation, and individuals of local caving clubs.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 17, page 3833

Woken at 5:10 a.m. by the phone ringing. Bob Cork – can I muster a team for a rescue in O.F.D.?

It was a bright sunny morning, but still cold, I woke everybody, and within half an hour we had mustered six from the hut, plus Geoff Ballard, Adrian Vanderplank and Nik Nak. As I felt I could not really be of use myself, I went back to bed.

A Kent University party (including Nigel Jackson) had gone into Cwn Dwr. One of the female students (the one who had developed hypothermia on the recent Swildon's rescue) had fallen down a slope, and had a suspected broken pelvis. She was placed in a stretcher, and brought out via top entrance and air lifted to hospital. I do not have all the details but it appears that there was a lot of self important cavers running around like headless chickens, and a testosterone moment when Dany confronted the S.W.C.R.O. when he thought the rescue was too slow. It appears a Mendip team would have brought her out via Cwm Dwr as being awkward but a shorter route to the surface. It was all over by 5 p.m.

16 October 2005 – General Alert

Richard West was contacted at 19:27 by Avon & Somerset Police who had received a call from the Hampshire constabulary re. a caver exceeding their ETA. Brian Prewer checked the cars on Priddy Green and various phone calls were made to club huts.

Eventually the miscreant was located at the M.C.G. Hut and "advised" about estimating over-due times and proper procedure.

2006

Report by the Hon Secretary of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 2005

2005 has been a busy year for the M.R.O. although thankfully not on the rescue front.

The highlight of the year was the hosting of the B.C.R.C. Conference on Mendip. The event was based on a similar format to the previous conference held a decade ago. A tented village was erected at Eastwater Farm and over 100 cavers attended the weekend. The mixture of workshops, training above and below ground combined with a balance of socialising worked well. Many people helped to make the whole event a great success. We owe a particular thank

you to Dorothy and Ivor Gibbons who made the whole location available to the M.R.O. without charge.

The Wardens have also been active looking at the future needs and structure of the organisation. A framework document detailing the operating principles of the M.R.O. has been drafted. Primary changes include increasing the numbers of wardens meetings, the implementation of monthly training meets for club teams and wardens and as you will see from the annual meeting agenda an increased number of officers. This document is designed to be the platform for the way forward and will be built upon as we progress.

On a more sombre note; the M.R.O. lost one of its supporters during the year, Martin Bishop who was a warden for many years and brought to the M.R.O. his skills and knowledge of in particular the stone mines, sadly died at an early age.

Monies collected in his memory were kindly donated to the funds of the M.R.O. The finances of the organization are in good shape. The conference did threaten to make a loss but when the bar takings were added up we managed to show circa £500 income over expenditure. This included a £250 "pump priming" grant from the South Wales Rescon fund. I suggest that the meeting votes to pass a sum of £250 onto the next conference organisers. This will leave us with a surplus of approximately £250 from the conference. A very healthy result: it is not intended to be a profit making exercise.

Income from rescued parties is much increased this year. This is primarily down to donations to the M.R.O. on behalf of the late Darren Foster. Darren was not a caver but sadly died due to an unfortunate accident. He fell into the turbulent waters of the River Mells whilst it was in flood. The M.R.O. were called to assist with the search for him and located his body a distance downstream from where he was last seen. His family and friends requested that all donations were to be in favour of the M.R.O. The Talbot Inn at Mells also held a fundraising event in Darren's memory which raised £600 for the M.R.O. This brought the total amount donated to £1865.

M.R.O. funds also benefited from donations made in the memory of Joan Bennett and Colin Pryer. Joan, wife of Roy Bennett and a long standing B.E.C. member and Mendip Caver was well known by the majority of the caving community and will be much missed. Colin Pryer lost his life to a cave diving accident; it was his partner's wish that the M.R.O. received a proportion of the money donated in his memory. Colin caved in all regions of the country but he had a special affection for the caves on Mendip. A substantial donation and a presentation tankard was received from Mr. and Mrs. James in gratitude for the rescue of their son from Priddy Green Sink.

The above donations and increased cash flow owing to the conference have substantially increased the turnover this year, £8k in comparison to the £1k norm. Operating costs are also up in part due to the conference but also owing to increased equipment purchase. The enhanced spend on kit will also project forward into future years as we replace end of shelf life items.

Finally I apologise for not attending the meeting this year. A feeble excuse; but my work commitments have been such that the only slot for a winter holiday has clashed with the meeting date. I am prepared, if elected, to continue in the role of both Secretary and Treasurer for 2006/07. However, I have been in this role now for ten years and I give notice that I wish to stand down from the position of Treasurer next year. The M.R.O. fiscal year is Jan to Dec

therefore I suggest a handover should take place on 1st January 2007. This does mean that you should consider a replacement at this the 2006 annual meeting.

R. J. Cork

17 January 2006 – Swildon's Hole

M.R.O. were requested to attend an incident at Swildon's Hole by Taunton Police. This followed a local M.P. receiving an e-mail from a person wishing to protest regarding certain matters. The protestor had indicated that they would enter Swildon's Hole with a minimum of food and protective clothing. They would stay there until such time that they became incapable of refusing assistance, unless their demands were met. Rich West, Bob Cork, Tony Jarratt and Dany Bradshaw met with local police on Priddy Green. Alison Moody and Brian Prewer also attended. BC adjourned the initial M.R.O. response and requested a private meeting with the police. At this meeting, the M.R.O. team explained that under these circumstances the M.R.O. position was that they would not be prepared to be involved in any forced extradition of the person from the cave. The M.R.O. was prepared to assist the police with this matter by setting up a communications link should it be required and advising names of medical personnel who may be able to assist. The M.R.O. also stated that in the eventuality there was danger to the person's life or they sustained an injury, they would effect a rescue under these circumstances, subject to validation by appropriate medical personnel. The officer in charge fully understood the M.R.O. position and agreed with the proposals. In the interim period a caving party undertaking a trip in Swildon's Hole made contact with the protestor and informed them that the police and the M.R.O. were involved and had been on the surface when they descended. On hearing this information, the protestor exited the cave and said that they had made it clear in the original e-mail that there should be no inconvenience caused to any rescue team by their action. This was the primary reason why they had decided to abandon their protest. An M.R.O. medical warden who had been requested to attend arrived on the Green at the time the person exited the cave. The police officer in charge decided to take no further action and abdicated care to the M.R.O. warden.

Source – Tony Boycott's Log Book – 17 January 2006

Swildon's callout for Sarah Walker's Home Office Protest. Came out with another party who found her. Two hours counselling!

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 18 January 2006

WIDOW HIDES IN CAVE AS PROTEST

A Cadbury Heath widow barricaded herself deep inside caves below the Mendips in protest at the Home Office refusing to allow her Zimbabwean husband to stay in the UK. Sarah Mawadzure has been at loggerheads with immigration officials for more than two years after they blocked an application for her husband, Simon, to live permanently in the U.K. Mr. Mawadzure, who was HIV positive, died in March last year before the visa dispute was ever resolved. And yesterday his 40-year-old widow went into Swildon's Hole at Priddy, Somerset, in a last-ditch attempt to get government officials to apologise for the way they handled his case. She sent a timed email to her M.P., Roger Berry, which arrived at his Westminster office hours after she went into the caves. He immediately raised the alarm and police sent in cave rescuers to find Mrs. Mawadzure. It took them 40 minutes to find her and she eventually agreed to come out yesterday afternoon -14 hours after first entering the cave system. She has since returned home and is being looked after by her family GP. The Home Office wanted Mr. Mawadzure, aged 33, to return to Africa to apply for a visa to live permanently in the U.K. and

refused his application to live with his wife and her two children. He appealed against the decision, but that was also turned down.

The Evening Post has been shown a copy of Mrs. Mawadzure's email, which goes into detail about the complex case. In it, she said: "My greatest sadness is that Simon never saw justice in his lifetime and that every single day of our marriage has been clouded and ruined by the stress caused by the Home Office. "I would wish for just one day more with Simon where we felt safe. It breaks my heart that it will never be able to happen.

"I call for an overhaul of a system which gives no credence to family life, family values, the terminally ill and those who so desperately want to do things the right way, but can't for very valid reasons. Simon should never have been punished the way he was." Before arriving in the UK, Mr. Mawadzure was a safari guide in Hwange National Park. The couple met in 1998 and got engaged in 1999. Mr. Mawadzure arrived in the U.K. in March 2003 on a visitor's visa. He applied to remain in the U.K. later that year, but was told he would have to return to Zimbabwe to make the application, a trip which was very difficult because of his worsening health. Mr. Berry, Labour MP for Kingswood, said: "The Home Office did not give Mr. and Mrs. Mawadzure the respect and consideration they should have done. I personally believe that it was absolutely pointless for Mr. Mawadzure to return to Zimbabwe as there were compelling health grounds. I share Sarah's belief that the Home Office did not handle this well. I have made numerous representations to the Home Office about this case and I am just thankful that Sarah has been found safe and well. Luckily I was in my office when the email arrived or else Sarah might still have been in the caves now"

A Home Office spokeswoman said: "We don't discuss individual cases. All decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. All known medical issues, where appropriate, are addressed and assessed according to individual circumstances and, if necessary, advice is taken from health care professionals."

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Books Vol 13, page 53

In the early evening I received a phone call from Rich West to say that a woman had purposely "trapped" herself below the 20 foot Pot in Swildon's Hole. I immediately realized that this was Sarah Mawadzure, nee Walker, an ex U.B.S.S. and M.E.G. member who had governmental problems relating to her late Zimbabwean husband and was making a particularly unsuitable protest in the hope of getting some attention. She had recently been in the shop and purchased a great deal of caving and underground camping equipment and had hinted strongly of her intentions. Apparently, she had gone down the cave about 5 p.m. and pulled the 20-foot Pot ladder down so she could not get out. She installed herself in Barnes' Loop and tucked down for the foreseeable future with lots of candles and Mars Bars. An e-mail was sent to the relevant authorities which soon got into the hands of the police and M.R.O. Half a dozen wardens gathered on Priddy Green to assess the situation and discuss it with the local police – Inspector Richards from Wells turning up later to add the weight of authority. A police negotiator and Dr. Tony Boycott (who knew Sarah over ten years ago) were called for. In the meantime, Rich West, Dany Bradshaw, Bob Cork and I retired to the Hunters' with the police to plan out our response. With the foreseen difficulties of the situation it was decided not to rush down the cave but to carefully and considerately follow police guidelines. Suddenly all changed when Butch and Alison Moody, who were waiting on Priddy Green reported that Sarah was back on the surface having been "talked out" by a tourist party consisting of Andrew Moon, Steve Turner and two others. They were en-route to Sump 1 but finding her in Barnes' Loop, listened to her problems and persuaded her to leave the cave. We are all very grateful to them. On the surface

Alison and Dr. B. gave her tea and sympathy and the police let her go home. A rather bizarre evening's entertainment!

2 April 2006 – Hunter's Hole

Richard West received a call from Taunton control at 19:26 reporting two people had gone to Hunter's Hole and had left instructions for a callout to be instigated if they had not come out by 19:00. R. West advised that they were not excessively overdue at that time but would initiate appropriate action. He contacted Roger Dors who confirmed that the cavers' car was still in the car park containing clothes and a dog. R. Dors confirmed that he had seen them changing at 16:30 and had left a note for them to see him before they left. Ivan Sandford was requested to go to the cave and shout down the entrance. Ivan reported a few minutes later that the cavers were exiting the cave as he arrived. Two police cars also attended from Frome Station.

30 April 2006 – Box Mines

Bob Cork was contacted by Wiltshire Police and Fire service at 17:23. Two females plus three dogs were reported lost in Quarry Hill Mine, Box, Corsham. They had entered at approximately 16:30 and had been missing for 75 minutes. Their children, who had been left on the surface, contacted their father who then raised the alarm.

Bob Scammell was contacted at 18:15 and asked to assemble a search team; he in turn called in Derek Hawkins, Chris Batstone and Nick McCamely. Bob Cork contacted Chris Smart and requested that he also attend. The team were obstructed on the way to Quarry Hill by Road Closed and Police Accident signs. On approaching via a different route, they found similar signs at the other end of the road, this time they ignored them. The team made contact with the husband of one of the missing women and after a short discussion it became clear that the missing ladies had no knowledge of the mines. Given this information they decided to commence the search from the entrance to Jack's workings, assuming that the womens' and dogs' footprints would be easy to follow. The ladies were known to be carrying hand torches and also a number of candles. At this point Bob Scammell was advised by Richard West that M.R.O. had also been tasked to a second incident at Charterhouse on Mendip. CH and DH made contact with the Fire Service and police at the entrance. Fire crews had laid a line along one main passage before the arrival of M.R.O. and had found one tea-light and a few unlit ones. CB and DH made a circular route search around the general workings area and came back to the entrance to report nothing found further than the single tea-light, already found. CB and DH then commenced a search of the straight route as far as Black Horse junction. Two Fire Service specialists in line searching arrived at the entrance and suggested that R.A.F. Rudlow Manor, which was close to the site, had a very large reel of line should the M.R.O. require it. The Fire crew then decided to lay lights through the woods to act as a guide for when it became dark. At this point Chris Smart arrived at the entrance. A short time later CB and DH arrived with the missing party; they had found both women and their dogs at Black Horse junction just beyond the roof fall. The ladies reported that they had taken a pack of ten tea-light candles with them which they lit and left to mark their return route. Unfortunately, most of them had gone out. They also used paper markers but these only served to confirm they were going round in circles and for this reason they became lost. Total search time 15-20 minutes; the team retired to the Quarrymans' Arms for a de-brief.

30 April 2006 – Upper Flood Swallet

Whilst in the process of organizing the callout to Box Stone Mines, Bob Cork received a second call from Avon and Somerset Police asking if the M.R.O. were able to attend another incident.

The police officer was aware of the Box incident and wanted to know if the M.R.O. had the resources to attend a second shout. The officer informed BC that a suspected fatality had been reported in Upper Flood Swallet. The victim was believed to be a 72-year-old male and it was suggested that he had suffered a heart attack. The officer relayed that the informant was Tim Francis and he was contacted direct. TF confirmed the nature of the incident and BC contacted Richard West to take over the callout whilst he went to Charterhouse.

Martin Grass, Richard Marlow, Ivan Sandford, Phil Rowsell, Graham Johnson, Roz Bateman, Nigel Taylor, Mark Helmore and Adrian Vanderplank were requested to attend. They were later joined by Mark Ward, John Dewbury, Mark Lumley, Tom Chapman, Sarah Payne and Andy Sewell. Dany Bradshaw and Darrel Instell also attended. BC arrived and made contact with the police officer in charge and the senior fire officer. Two fire appliances plus a support vehicle were already on site as were a number of police vehicles. Richard Marlow was also in attendance having been called in his professional capacity by the ambulance service. Martin Grass and Richard Marlow entered the cave at 19:40. BC agreed with the fire officer that the support of the fire vehicles was not required and they could be stood down. On reaching the casualty RM informed the police 'life extinct' at 20:17. Phil Rowsell and a team entered the cave at 20:20 taking in spare batteries and a drag sheet. BC requested permission from the police to move the body, this was agreed after some discussion. The police asked if there was anybody under 18 involved or if this was a professionally-led party, and did we consider any requirement for the H.S.E. to be involved. BC replied that he could see no reason why this should be necessary as this was a sport caving incident. The body was prepared for the outward trip and placed in the 'Major' drag sheet at 21:20. Members of the deceased's family attended the scene on the surface whilst the underground carry was being progressed. They were accompanied and guided by M.R.O. surface wardens. The casualty was brought to the surface at 23:15 and after a short period with the family was passed over to the senior police officer on site. All M.R.O. personnel had exited the cave by 23:20 and police control informed that all had been stood down.

Source – MCG Log Book Volume 14, pages 42 and 43

30 April 2006 – Upper Flood Digs – Tim, Malcolm, Doug, Sonya, Chris Seal, Bill, Mick (a bit) More at the Golden Chamber extensions. High hopes as Tim was armed with his new 36v Bosh monster drill, but taking no chances we headed in with all the drills, loads of hiltis and the Axbridge firing pin c/o Doug. Mick fell down the entrance pipe and busted his back upon landing so headed out to recuperate.

Lowish Water, Air 10.5°C. Storming progress at the dig with the new drill doing the job. Bill particularly loved popping hiltis, or "two black cap Bill" as he is now known. Widened out the rift as far as the cross rift widening. Also put one cap in the top of the lump of bedrock straight ahead. I reckon we'll be through in three or four more bangs. On exit tried to put a snapper in but the old battery and drill blew a fuse. It seems it can't cope with large drill bits. 20 + hiltis in one day.

After leading two visitors Mike also came for a look just in case we had headed off into the black without him. See you next week.

Postscript – Malcolm dies in Upper Flood

As is the case on most digging trips the "tigers" head out first with Malcolm and the odd person for company keeping up the rear. This time that was Sonya and Chris Seal. We'd all washed our kit and downed mugs of tea, when Chris came bursting into the cottage to tell us that

Malcolm had been taken ill in the Canal. He thought he'd had a heart attack and that things didn't look good. A quick phone call to 999 and the M.R.O. and J.P. whizzed me back over to the cave entrance. At the same time a number of M.C.G. members were called to raise the alert.

Blasted down the cave with a flask of tea and a spare balaclava to go and see if anything could be done. I found Sonya next to Malcolm's body just after Sludge Duck Junction. Sonya and Chris had found him lying face down in the Canal. They had dragged him several metres to get him out of the deep water, but had been unable to resuscitate him. After a few minutes talking to Sonya she headed out of the cave, having been with him for perhaps an hour or so.

I collected all the bits and pieces together (note that the drill battery is back down the Canal where the streamway re-enters) and waited for the M.R.O. to arrive. After a while I decided that the best thing I could do was bail the Lavatory Trap to help with the rescue. After perhaps an hour or so the M.R.O. arrived – Martin Grass, Richard Norton, (M.R.O. Doctor) and Mark ward from the M.C.G. Set up a Molephone Station just before the Lavatory Trap in Hannah's Grotto. Richard and I headed back to Malcolm and he was declared dead at 20:17. Mark continued to bail the Lavatory Trap and I headed out.

The M.R.O. were extremely efficient and everything went really smoothly. Malcolm was finally brought to the surface at 11:15 p.m. Thank you everyone involved and especially Mark who was one of the carriers all the way from the start. So finally, farewell Malcolm, we'll all really miss you.

Source – Wells Journal – 11 May 2006

CAVER DIES IN POTHOLE

A 72-year-old caver died while on an expedition near Priddy last week.

The body of the man was recovered from a cave at Charter- house in a four-hour operation on Sunday last week.

He has been identified as Malcolm Cotter from Middlesex.

Mendip Cave Rescue (M.C.R.) were called to the scene at 6:30 p.m. by cavers who had gone into Upper Flood Swallet with the man and they brought the body to the surface. M.C.R. spokesman Bob Cork said:

“It was reported that a man required assistance.

“Our medical officer and a team went down the cave and the man was pronounced dead at the scene.

“The matter is now in the hands of the coroner.”

Mr. Cork said that the man's death was not believed to be the result of a fall or other kind of caving accident.

He said: “He had been in there with three other cavers from the Mendip Caving Group. “The recovery operation took about four hours. The system there is quite small and tight.” The man's body was 350 metres into the cave system, at a depth of about 35 metres. An Avon and Somerset Police spokesman said: “We were called to the scene because an elderly man had suffered a suspected heart attack.”

“Mendip Cave Rescue had been called, but unfortunately the gentleman was pronounced dead. “This is not being treated as suspicious, but post mortem results are not yet available and it is not clear if there will be an inquest.”

Source – Descent No. 190 – June/July 2006

VALE: MALCOLM COTTER

ON 30 April Mendip lost one of its oldest active cavers when 72-year-old Malcolm Cotter suffered a heart attack and died while returning from a digging trip at the far end of Upper Flood Swallet. His body was recovered from Puddle Lake near the Red Room by members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation.

Malcolm was a founder member of the Mendip C.G. and had been involved with cave exploration and digging for over fifty years. He was particularly interested in the caves and swallets of the Blackmoor valley at Charterhouse, and it is a sad irony that he died just as the MCG seem poised to make another breakthrough at Upper Flood Swallet, a site he had been working on since it was first revealed by the Great Flood of 1968.

An obituary appears in *Descent* (191) Page 26.

30 May 2006 – Fairy Cave Quarry

Source – Wells Journal – 8 June 2006

MEN LUCKY TO BE ALIVE LOST AFTER GOING UNDERGROUND

Two young men are lucky to be alive after becoming lost in underground caves. And if they had not taken the sensible precaution of leaving a friend at the cave entrance, they could still be underground.

Christopher Pollard from, Croscombe and his friend, Darren Maychin from Shepton Mallet, spent five hours in a cave system after becoming lost underground at a disused quarry near Oakhill on the evening of May 30.

Christopher, 22, spoke to the Journal this week about his terrifying experience and has warned others about going on reckless adventures.

“Don’t do it,” he said.

“We certainly won’t be doing it again.”

Christopher and Darren had decided to fill an otherwise empty evening with a bit of adventure and after wisely leaving a third friend, 20-year-old Alex Bonnmgton from Binegar at the cave entrance, they headed underground at just after 7 p.m., telling Alex they would be gone for an hour at the most.

“We must have been down there a couple of hours” said Christopher. “And we hadn’t realised how quickly time had passed, so we decided to head back.

“But when we turned around it was so confusing, we couldn’t tell which way we had come. “We tried finding this tight tunnel that we had squeezed through but everything looked the same and we couldn’t find it,” he said.

The friends then sat in an open cave debating what to do. They realised that they were in trouble and decided to stay put and await their rescue, not knowing how long Alex would wait before calling for help.

“We were soaking wet from all the water down there and freezing cold,” Christopher said.

“We only had a couple of battery torches and we didn’t know how long they would last so we sat in the dark. We couldn’t see a thing without the torches, it was totally pitch black.” He said that on several occasions they thought they may not be found and thought they might die.

“The worse thing was not knowing if Alex had called for help, or if anyone was going to come.”

“We were so, so cold,” he said.

The pair waited and waited - in the dark and then reviewed the situation. Christopher and Darren, who were dressed in lightweight, summer clothing, decided to continue trying to find their way out, spending more than three hours looking for an exit.

Meanwhile, on the surface, friend Alex had driven his car a mile or so up the road to get a network signal on his mobile telephone and had sounded the alarm by calling Christopher’s father.

Mr. Pollard had in turn called the police for help at just after 11 p.m. Police arrived at the scene and as officers were trying to radio for help from the Mendip Cave Rescue team, Christopher and Darren appeared from the cave at 12.15 a.m., very tired and freezing cold.

The pair were welcomed by friend Alex, Mr. Pollard and Christopher’s girlfriend Solange, as well as four local police officers.

They were given foil blankets to preserve any warmth left in their cold, wet bodies and gratefully driven home.

“I have never been in a situation like that before,” said Christopher.

“When I got home, I had a hot bath to warm up again, and it all felt surreal afterwards.

“It was one of those experiences, and could have been a lot worse.”

9 December 2006 – Wookey Village

Rich West received a call at 21:25 with a request for assistance from Taunton Police. They reported a 70-year-old naked male missing on a farm. No other details available. M.R.O. agreed to respond and liaise with Inspector Paul Richards. Bob Cork, Dany Bradshaw, Richard West, Ivan Sandford and Darrel Instrell congregated at Wells Police Station, taking with them radios, first aid kit, Little Dragon and various forms of lighting. They received a revised brief saying that a 60-year-old male of mixed nationality was the missing person. He was known to the police having been arrested the previous day for minor offences in Wells and Glastonbury.

They had received a call from a local farm saying that a semi-naked man had been found in an out-building interfering with a boiler. From the description, they were assuming that this was the same individual. In view of the winter conditions, the suspected mental health of the person and his state of undress the M.R.O. were requested to carry out a local search. A team of police officers was bussed in from Bristol to assist.

The police helicopter and a dog handler had carried out searches earlier in the day and suggested that the search area should be centred around Burcott Mill. Farm buildings, slurry pits and grain stores were searched in this area by combined M.R.O. and police search teams.

Whilst the search was in progress, a second sighting was phoned in by a resident from a nearby residential development. M.R.O. and the police team went directly to the scene and the missing person was located after about 10 minutes hiding in the boot of a resident's car. The missing person was taken in to custody by the police and the M.R.O. stood down.

2007

Report by the Hon Secretary of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 2006

This has been an evolutionary year for the organization. The introduction of the Casualty Care Course into the M.R.O. training programme has brought a new dimension into the theatre of underground rescue on Mendip.

The M.R.O. focus is and always will be on the rapid and safe extraction of those who have the misfortune to require our services. The clue is in the title; the majority of wardens have completed or are booked on to courses in the near future. Understanding the principles of Casualty Care means that surface and underground controllers are able to work more closely with those administering it and vice versa. This synergistic approach will I am sure be of great benefit to our future customers. Do not think that the M.R.O. are going soft, they are still impervious to the screams of pain, but now they know why you are screaming and may give you something better than a dirty look to relieve it. I must also add that being rescued is still an unpleasant experience and should be avoided. Personal Care is much to be preferred than Casualty Care.

The second initiative impacts the way that the M.R.O. interrelates with the Emergency services. Following the introduction of the Fire & Rescue Services Act, the Fire Service has requested that we agree a Memorandum of Understanding (M.O.U.) with them detailing our working relationship. A small working group has been set up within M.R.O. to develop this and good progress is being made. We have now been requested by the Police to work on a similar document with them. The working group are now proposing to extend the scope of the M.O.U. and make this a joint agreement between Police, Fire, Ambulance and the M.R.O. Our primary objectives are to agree better and simpler Call Out procedures, ensure the other agencies have a good understanding of the M.R.O. and cave rescue, and set up a platform for better communication and liaison for the future.

The Wardens list is looking healthy; the influx of new wardens has revitalized training sessions and increased the activity within the M.R.O. A number of wardens have also stood down or announced that they are standing down during the year. Some have very long service, particularly Tony Jarratt and Alan Butcher, veterans of many rescues and M.R.O. meetings. Our best wishes and sincere gratitude go to all our ex wardens.

The only thing healthier than our Wardens is our bank balance. A more stable year this than last as we do not have the conference monies flowing through the accounts. Our running costs were slightly elevated from the norm at around £1200. Income v expenditure for 2006 indicated circa £374 deficit, but we have purchased over £800 worth of new equipment and invested over £300 on training. Our income - £1015, has mainly come from general donations within the caving community. there are some outstanding invoices to be paid from 2006 not shown in these accounts. The traction splint is one of these. We have received specific donations in the memory of Malcolm Cotter, some shown in the 2006 accounts and a sum from the M.C.G. which will be shown in 2007. The combined total of these donations will cover the cost of the splint and it is intended to dedicate this piece of equipment to Malcolm's memory.

I announced last year that I wished to stand down from the role of Treasurer this year and asked you to consider a replacement. Ivan Sandford has offered to take on the role and I believe this would be an excellent appointment and I commend him to you for election. I am prepared to stand as Secretary for the forthcoming year.

R. J. Cork

18 March 2007 – Box Stone Mine

Richard West was contacted by Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service at 01:15 am. An occupant living near Clift entrance had been awakened by people banging on the mine door and calling for help. He spoke to them through the grill and they asked him to open the door. He informed them that it was padlocked and they went back into the system. He then called the police who alerted the Fire Service and two Fire & Rescue appliances were tasked to the incident. They chopped the lock and searched inside for a short distance before they decided they needed the assistance of the M.R.O.

RW informed Avon & Somerset Police of the incident, Nick McCamley & Derek Hawkins from the mines list were contacted and agreed to respond. Dany Bradshaw was asked to attend and take kit from the M.R.O. Store to the Box Mine site.

Bob Scammell was tasked to respond at Clift Entrance via a "drive by" of the other entrances. Chris Batstone was stood by at the Belfry.

Derek Hawkins at 02:30 requested that and M.R.O. support team attend at the mine to assist with the search. Rich West plus a team of nine responded. Contact was made with the Wiltshire Police patrol car onsite; the Fire & Rescue had left after their mini search.

RW, DB & Bob Smith set up control. DH explained that BS & NM were searching Back Door to Jack's via Cathedral. CB took Rees Davies & Andy Kay to search Clift Entrance to Jacks. Fay Litherland took Phil Rowsell & Emma Heron to search Clift Entrance to Back Door via Delta-Rectangle. These Two teams left control at 04:15.

By 05:40 all teams had exited & were satisfied persons were not left on main routes. Consensus was to assume that the party had exited by another route. M.R.O. team agreed with the police to stand down and await an overdue call should it occur.

2 May 2007 – North Hill Swallet

Richard West received a call from Richard Marlow at 20:51 asking if he had been informed by the police of a callout. Richard West had not. RM told RW he was en route to North Hill where someone had taken a fall & injured his ankle. RW agreed to stand by await police contact. RW decided to check other "Police Callout Wardens" all of whom knew nothing. Bob Cork left for

the W.C.C. Hut to gain an update on the situation. RW was later contacted at 21:17 by Pat Cork who had finally taken a call from Avon & Somerset Police to request assistance from the M.R.O. Compiled from the surface log notes: At approximately 8:30 p.m. an alarm was raised direct to the W.C.C. hut reporting a casualty who had fallen approx. 6 metres and sustained substantial injury to the lower leg. Richard Marlow was contacted direct and went underground at 9 p.m. to join Carmen Haskell at the scene. Richard gave medical assistance to the casualty and started preparations to enable the casualty to be evacuated from the cave. Splints/Slings/Pulley/Krabs/First Aid/Morphine/ Entonox/Rope Pack C were procured from the M.R.O. Store and preparations made in readiness to haul the casualty to the surface.

9:10 p.m. Bob Cork arrived and assumed control on the surface, Avon & Somerset constabulary were updated on the incident and that the M.R.O. were in attendance.

Dany Bradshaw, Henry Dawson, Henry Bennett, Mark Helmore, Bob Smith, Hannah Bell, Anne Vanderplank responded and formed the surface hauling party

9:25 p.m. Jude Vanderplank exited the cave leaving Jeff Ballard Carmen Rich Marlow & Mark Kellaway underground with the casualty.

9:30 p.m. Adrian Vanderplank joined the surface party. Mark Easterling & Mark Helmore went underground to assist with the lower pitch hauling.

10 p.m. second Entonox set requested by Richard Marlow and sent into the cave.

10:30 p.m. SRT & lifeline sent down shaft.

10:32 p.m. Request for ambulance actioned by Rich West via 999 call.

10:50 p.m. Full body harness lowered down shaft and attached to casualty.

10:55 p.m. Hauling begins by Bennett, Cork, West, Smith, Steve. Life-lines by Henry Dawson Bradshaw co-ordinating.

11:00 p.m. Casualty exited the cave and carried to awaiting ambulance

11:30 p.m. Incident stood down and police informed.

24 May 2007 – Goatchurch Cavern

A party of young people from Charterhouse Outdoor Centre were exploring Goatchurch Cavern when one of their number, aged 11 years became trapped when his knee wedged in a crack. Despite the efforts of the instructors he could not be freed and became increasingly distressed. One of the Instructors exited the cave and dialled 999. Unfortunately, due to some confusion at the Control Centre he was not convinced that the M.R.O. would be called. He then telephoned Mendip Hills chief warden Les Davies at 16:09 for advice. Les Davies reported the incident to Tony Jarratt and also rang his local beat officer P.C. Ray Bradley who is based in Blagdon. Fortunately, P.C. Bradley managed to get the Callout formalised and the M.R.O. were contacted by Avon & Somerset Police at 16:17. After obtaining details Richard West called Martin Grass at 16:19 and asked him to attend as soon as possible. In view of the victims age Medical Warden Richard Marlow was also requested to attend. At 16:23 Alison Moody was asked to respond via the M.R.O. Store with First Aid / Entonox / Stretcher & Splints. At 16:25 Bob Cork was informed and left for the cave. Tony Jarratt travelled via the M.R.O. store and transported Heyphones / Radios / Surface Control Box / Rope Pack and Medical Supplies to site.

On scene were two Community Beat Officers, P.C. Bradley and a frontline Avon Ambulance accompanied by an Avon Ambulance Divisional Officer. Martin Grass entered the cave at 16:40 and found the youth had his patella firmly wedged. After work with a chisel & small hammer what was assumed to be solid rock turned out to be flowstone on a mud base and was freed by 17:05. He was escorted to the surface and given a thorough check up in the ambulance. Apart from being bruised & shaken by the incident he was cleared to resume his stay at Charterhouse.

Police Control informed incident closed via police radio.

4 October 2007 – Fairy Cave Quarry

Richard West received call from Taunton Police at 22:55. Two cavers were reported overdue from a trip into one of the Fairy Cave Quarry Caves. Two Constables had responded and confirmed that a car as described by the informant was parked at the site. Dany Bradshaw & Mark Lumley were requested to attend and report back. Martin Grass was asked to confirm which caves were open and to stand by. At 23:13 a call was received from the police confirming that the party had exited and returned to their car. Incident stood down at 23:15, M.R.O. team recalled en route.

11 October 2007 – Swildon's Hole

Source – ukcaving.com Forum – Report by Darkplaces

Having arrived late I decided to have a solo trip down to 20 and back. I went for the dry way, I dunno which it's the crawly one straight ahead from Jacob's Ladder. This time poking about a few more holes and finding the dry way though the dry way and not having to crawl in the wet! Down to 20 met a group coming up, I returned back to the chamber where the pipes have been laid to provide water for old 40. The Group arrived after me and we walked round to look at the pipe where we found lying on the sandbags a dazed adult without light. The adult was responsive but clearly out of its natural environment and a bit stunned. We would have to carry the adult out, initially we tried a flask but was worried the adult would not want to come out. So, the leader of the group carried the adult up back via the wet way while I meandered back up the usual route via the old grotto, back up to Jacob's ladder etc and I popped out. A little later the leader popped out and handed me the adult to move safely away from the cave entrance, I placed the adult the other side of the wall to ensure no further injury could happen and left. M.R.O. were not required as we could attend to the rescue ourselves.

25 October 2007 – Swildon's Hole

The initial callout to this incident is rather complex; at 22:16 Dany Bradshaw & Rich West were contacted by Brian Prewer. Brian had been contacted by Graham Mullen re a party of U.B.S.S. who were reported having a problem on the Twenty ladder pitch. One of the party had called Graham to confirm the correct callout procedure. Graham confirmed "999" call then "Police" then "Cave Rescue". It is assumed that this procedure was then actioned by the caller. Having received the call from Graham, Brian asked Pete & Alison Moody to respond and then contacted DB & RW. At 22:22, DB & RW were contacted by Mark Lumley who, to his surprise, had been contacted by Portishead at 22:18 re the above incident. Confusion at Portishead control had led police to look up M.R.O. on the Internet where they had found Mark's number. DB went directly to Priddy Green whilst RW travelled via the store to pick up kit. On Priddy Green were Brian Prewer, Duncan Massey who had been called as a First Responder and four W.C.C. members guests. Ben Morley the original informant reported the casualty was an inexperienced caver, in a borrowed wet suit. Whilst exiting from a Sump I trip he became exhausted after 7 attempts to get off the ladder at the top of the Twenty. He had been left in a survival bag in the care of two of the party, one of whom is a second-year medical student.

Pete & Alison Moody entered the cave at 22:30 followed by Dany with a rope pack. Matt Budgen & Craig Olive entered the cave with full body harness & First Aid kit. at 23:05, Sean Howe transported the Hot Air Kit.

The casualty was assisted to the surface by the M.R.O. team and all were clear of the cave by 23:26.

23:35 Informed Police Control – Log closed – incident successfully completed.

2008

Report by the Hon Secretary of the M.R.O. for the Year to 31st December 2007

The year of 2007 has seen the M.R.O. continue to major on developing its skills and expertise. Thankfully we are not gaining our knowledge from real rescues, safety standards in caving remain high and we have again been blessed with a year when serious injuries have been few and far between. The real casualties to practise is more than compensated for by the enhanced level of training and practise rescues. This ever increasing level of activity has been spurred on with great enthusiasm over the years by our Training Officer, Mark Lumley. Mark has now decided to step down from this role due to time pressures. We owe Mark a great debt of gratitude for the work he has done for the M.R.O. in championing and developing the bench mark for training within the organization. Mark Kellaway has stepped up to the plate to replace Mark and has already made a considerable impact to our training programme.

The working group set up to progress the Memorandum of Understanding with the Fire and Rescue service had a very quiet first ten months of the year. This was due to the restructuring exercise combining the Somerset & Devon. Fire and Rescue Services. The process was brought back on track thanks to the persistence of Phil Rowsell. The M.O.U. has now been progressed to a stage that it is nearing final draft and will be presented to the annual meeting for approval. Phil & Richard West have put a considerable amount of effort into this document and it has been the subject of much debate at local and national level. Feedback from the B.C.R.C. is very positive and the M.R.O./D.S.F.R. format is seen as the template for this type of agreement. The M.R.O. has experienced a number of problems related to call out procedures throughout the year. The problem appears to be that owing to the low level of incidents control room staff are unlikely to have any experience of requests for cave rescue. This subject has been brought to the attention of the police and they are working with the M.R.O. to improve the situation.

The name of the Mendip Rescue Organization has been known to cause confusion. The fact that Cave Rescue is not mentioned specifically can be said to pose a barrier to ease of communication. We have proudly carried out our duties under the banner of the M.R.O. for many years, but times change. Modern methods of communications rely heavily on keywords to work efficiently and it is probably time to modernise and change our name to better reflect our function. A debate on a change of name has been placed on the agenda of the annual meeting. My personal view is that "Mendip Cave Rescue" would be the most descriptive and simple name to adopt going forward. There are issues regarding the fact that Mendip is not our only operational area and we do undertake search as well as rescue, this must be considered at the debate stage.

Finally I wish to apologise for the fact I will not be able to attend the Annual Meeting this year. I am willing, as I declared at the last meeting of the Wardens, to stand for Secretary for the forthcoming year.

R. J. Cork

12 March 2008 – Swildon's Hole

A caver returning from a trip to sump one found he was unable to ascend the Twenty in Swildon's. His two companions surfaced and went to Brian Prewer's house. Brian made a 999 call and passed on the details at about 15:40. He then rang Alison Moody who set off at approx. 16:00 to make contact with the stranded caver. BP then rang Rich West and agreed to make calls for more people. RW contacted Dany Bradshaw who went straight to the Green to follow Alison. Ivan Sandford collected immediate kit and also went to the Green. RW arrived at Priddy Green at 16:04 16:06 Dany went underground without kit for a high-speed trip to support Alison. At 16:27 Pete Moody & Mark Lumley followed with First Aid & Hot Air. At 16:35 Tony Jarratt & Jake Baines followed with the Heyphone. Surface Heyphone set up on Priddy Green. 2 Community Police officers also attended. Henry Bennett, Dave King, Eddie Waters + 1 were available on the surface. Mark Kellaway, Keith Savory & Greg Brock all arrived as the incident ended. Dany & Alison pulled the chap up the pitch and walked him out fairly slowly - they got the impression he that he had over-exerted himself before reaching the ladder and was too exhausted to climb up unaided. This was his first ladder trip. Mark Lumley exited the cave at 17:05 to report the caver was walking out. At 17:22 the caver arrived on the Green. He got changed and went for a hot drink at Brian Prewer's house. Police informed 17:25.

Source – Tony Jarratt's Log Books Vol 14, page 132

At 4 p.m. I got a phone call from Brian Prewer and Rich West asking for assistance with the rescue of a hefty lad who was exhausted at the bottom of the Twenty Foot Pot. Many of the local wardens were away at this time so I grabbed Jake on the way through Priddy and at The Green were Henry Bennett, Ivan Sandford and Dave King, plus the victim's mates and other surface personnel. As Jake and I reached the Water Rift our man was being assisted out. A short, wet and pleasant trip with a happy ending! His mates were both grateful and somewhat embarrassed for the trouble caused.

9 May 2008 – Swildon's Hole

During an evening trip in Swildon's two (unrelated) parties managed to misunderstand leaving a ladder down the Twenty. On reaching home one of the party members had doubts if he had done the right thing and rang Brian Prewer for advice. Brian suggested we wait for an "overdue" call but that if he was in anyway concerned he should ring 999 in the usual way. At 00:25 hrs the informant made the call to the police and passed details.

At 07:45 hrs Brian Prewer received a call from the police requesting M.C.R. take action. Brian called Rich West at 07:47 and passed on the details and Log number.

Richard rang the police and asked for more details. He came up against some resistance to give these details allegedly due to the Data Protection Act. He advised the police he was instigating an underground search and rang off to save time.

Dany Bradshaw was contacted and asked to start a search as was Phil Rowsell. At this point the police contacted Richard and gave the informant's name and number. He was also informed that a patrol car had been sent when the call was first initiated at 00:25 to check the Green. No cars had been seen therefore no further action had been taken until the call to Brian at 07:45.

The informant was then contacted he explained the circumstances of the callout & was very surprised that M.C.R. had only just been informed. After making the 999 call he had gone to bed only to be woken by two policemen banging on his door at 04:14 hrs. He could not add to the information they already had but was told that Cave Rescue were involved.

At 09:16 hrs Phil Rowsell rang to say that he had shouted up every junction on his trip to the Twenty where he found – no people – and no tackle. It decided that unless an "Overdue" call was received later in the day that was then end of the incident. The Control Room was contacted, informed of the actions taken and asked to close the Log.

M.C.R. was contacted later in the day by a senior officer within the communications room. A formal review has taken place and corrective actions to prevent a reoccurrence have been implemented.

30 June 2008 – Priddy Green Sink

B. Prewer received a call at 21.00hrs from Taunton Police requesting M.C.R. to attend Swildon's Hole. A party of two was overdue from a Priddy Green Sink trip. The informant was contacted. The party had entered Priddy Green Sink, Saturday midday and were now overdue. Their car should be parked on Priddy Green. It was also established that they were experienced cavers but had not undertaken the PGS trip before.

Alison Moody was asked to stand by. BEP ascertained that the car was in fact on the Green before checking across the field towards Swildon's main entrance. One of the party was then seen walking across the field. It appeared that the other party member, who was slowly following behind, had been stuck in Clitoris Crawl for about 2 hours but was now OK but very tired. No further action was necessary. Sgt. Denton, Taunton Police, was informed at 21.15 hrs. as well as the informant.

1 November 2008 - Cain Hill Shaft

M.C.R. were contacted by Taunton police at 16:51 hrs to say they had been called by a concerned mother. She reported that her son had gone to Cain Hill Shaft at 12:00 for a solo digging session and had left an overdue time of 16:30. Whilst taking the details from the police at 16:52 a call was received in the Control room from the caver to say that all was well, although he had been sent to bed without any tea.

1 November 2008 – Swildon's Hole

Richard West was contacted by Taunton Police control at 18:37 hours. A 999 call had been received from a female informant regarding a member of her party who was injured in the upper series of Swildon's Hole. The informant was contacted and asked to wait at Solomon Combe until contacted by an M.C.R. warden.

At 18:40 Rich Marlow was requested to attend along with other wardens who were already on Priddy Green providing First Aid cover for the village Fireworks Display.

Mark Kellaway set up surface control in the First Aid tent on the green and M.C.R. embarked on the dual operation of providing First Aid cover and running a simultaneous underground incident. Paul Wakeling & Bob Cork set up surface control at the cave entrance whilst Rich Marlow, Ali Moody, Dany Bradshaw, Darrell Instrell, Adrian and Jude Vanderplank proceeded underground with kit to deal with the suspected injury.

A suspected leg fracture was diagnosed. The patient was stabilised, given pain relief and splinted ready for an assisted extraction from the cave. A courtesy call was made to the police and Fire service to update them and confirm that no assistance was required at this stage of the

operation. Ambulance was requested to attend and was chaperoned to the nearest field gate by Les Williams

The patient was delivered to the surface at 21:16 hours and carried across the fields to the awaiting ambulance. Incident closed at 21:21.

16 November 2008 – Swildon's Hole

Details of a minor call-out for Swildon's at 17.00 hours. An informant called Brian Prewer at his home saying that a female from a local caving group had fallen near the Lavatory Basin in the Wet Way & banged her head. She was conscious but cold & exhausted. The remaining party of four were trying to move her out of the cave. BEP called Martin Grass & Dany Bradshaw asking that they attend. BEP then started to call the police, before the 999 call had been completed the informant returned to say that they were all out & the casualty was being taken to hospital for a check-up. No 999 call was registered with the police. No M.C.R. personnel went underground.

2009

Report by the Hon Secretary of the M.C.R. for the Year to 31st December 2008

Thirteen years ago when I wrote my first report as Secretary of the then Mendip Rescue Organisation. I commented that improved safety standards in caving were driving a reduction in the number of call outs on Mendip. I am pleased to say that trend has continued and although we see one more incident in this years report than last. The seriousness of the incidents is less. Long may this continue the best years for both the caving community and M.C.R, are those when we achieve a target of zero incidents.

The above said, it is vitally important that the M.C.R. maintain their high standard of service and continually improve and modernise. In a world were the words Health & Safety are used in proliferation and usually to refer to legislation. We must not forget safety is a way of life for those involved in adventurous activity. We all continuously assess risk, failure to do so is quickly rewarded with embarrassment, pain or worse. Those who suggest that H&S is ignored could not be further from the truth and statistics within caving over the past decade further prove this not to be the case.

Mendip Cave Rescue has on occasions been labelled as being adverse to change. I agree we have never been in favour of change for change's sake or moving from our guiding principle - Cavers Rescue Cavers. Over the last ten years we have seen many of our long standing wardens retire or stand down due to work or personal commitments and although we have retained a consistent core we now have many new faces. Training has increased incrementally in both volume and quality . New equipment has been purchased to support new techniques and best practise in both operational and our enhanced medical capabilities. The M.C.R. equipment store now has an array of kit that would not have even been thought about ten years ago. We have one of the highest ratios of Casualty Care Certificate holders of any team in the country. The name has changed from M.R.O., very emotive at the time, and now we are about to order Hi Viz tabards to identify rescue personnel. If I look back I cannot think what has not changed in the thirteen years other than the secretary. Looking forward I am sure M.C.R. will continue to introduce positive change and further develop its resources beyond recognition.

I cannot write this report without paying tribute to one of our most charismatic wardens, Tony Jarratt. Although Tony retired from being a Warden before he died, he spent many years in support of Cave Rescue. He was outspoken on how it should work, he always gave his time freely to train others, he was a vital link in the call out procedure, he played a major role in many rescues. over the years, he was a personal friend to us all, he was an exceptionally nice guy and we will miss him in the extreme.

I have held the position of secretary now for thirteen years during which time I was also treasurer for nine years. I have decided to step down from the role this year. This is partly owing to other commitments but mainly I feel that although we need consistency, officers should not hold a post for too long. Five years is probably good, ten years is a long time, 14 years would be too long, in my opinion. I have enjoyed my time in the role and will be continuing with M.C.R. as a warden. I would like to thank all my fellow Wardens past and present for their support through the years.

R. J. Cork

16 August 2009 – Rhino Rift

An overdue party of two persons was reported, however they returned safely before any action was taken. Overall incident time 10 minutes involving one member of M.C.R. attending.

2010's

29 May 2010 – Hullavington, Wilts

Wilts Police requested assistance in searching a small cave near Hullavington, Wiltshire to look for a possible missing person. This was carried out and no one was found.

5 August 2010 – Swildon's Hole

The police were called by the overdue person's wife after she had not heard from him past his call out time. M. Grass was contacted who was out of the area at the time. He gave D. Bradshaw's number to the officer. D. Bradshaw was contacted who then tried to raise a team to search the cave. S. Payne and A. Moody eventually went underground and located the person close to the entrance. It transpired that the person had exited the cave earlier and left a revised call out time on his mother's answer phone but this message had not been picked up and forwarded to his wife. D. Bradshaw then advised police that the rescue team was out of the cave and the event was closed.

2011

12 February 2011 – Sidcot Swallet

Request to attend a rescue at Sidcot Swallet with a casualty with a dislocated knee. The casualty, a 17-year-old scout managed to relocate his knee (he had done this before) and was aided out of the cave to the waiting ambulance.

5 March 2011 – Swildon's Hole

Request by Avon & Somerset Police due to a report of an overdue group in Swildon's Hole on a through trip from Priddy Green Sink. After searching as far as the 4 streamway to Cowsh Aven the group were found near to "Short Round Trip" end of Blue Pencil where they stopped due to route finding difficulties. The group were then escorted through the cave and exited without further problems.

17 March 2011 – Goatchurch Cavern

Request by A&S Police to attend an incident at Goatchurch Cavern where a female caver had fallen and had suffered a dislocated knee. Her knee was reset under Entonox pain relief before she was stretchered out of the cave with no further problems.

Source – Descent No. 226 – June/July 2012

A caver,(female, aged 18) suffered a minor fall resulting in a dislocated knee. Police callout procedures for cave rescue were not followed, resulting in a delay of about one hour before M.C.R. participation took place. Once initiated, the rescue went well and the casualty was soon extricated.

Source – Chew Valley Gazette – April 2011

YOUNG CAVER RESCUED AFTER FALL

A young woman was rescued from a cave after dislocating her knee underground and being trapped for three hours, on March 17.

However, Great Western Ambulance Service (G.W.A.S.) paramedics, members of the rescue services and a cave guide were with her throughout much of her ordeal in Goatchurch Cavern at Burrington Combe.

G.W.A.S. received a 999 call just after 2 p.m. reporting the 18-year-old was still in the cave after injuring her knee. The cave entrance is a five-minute walk up a steep slope from the nearest parking area.

An ambulance crew from Bristol were first on scene, backed up by members of G.W.A.S.'s Hazardous Area Response Team (H.A.R.T.) - clinicians with additional, specialist skills and training to access and treat patients in difficult or dangerous locations.

Two H.A.R.T. paramedics went into the cave and administered pain relief to the patient as well as relocating her dislocated knee. They stayed with her while the local cave rescue service and a specialist team from Avon Fire and Rescue arranged to lift her out.

Her journey to the surface on a stretcher took around 15 minutes and she emerged shortly after 5 p.m. She was then carried by stretcher to an ambulance, which took her to Weston General Hospital for further assessment and treatment.

The fact that the paramedic had managed to relocate her knee considerably reduced the pain she was in, so making it a more comfortable trip out.

The teenager was part of a group from Dorset and was on her first caving trip, as Goatchurch Cavern is a popular location for novice cavers. It is believed she slipped while climbing down a short section of the cave and, despite only falling a short distance, dislocated her knee.

5 May 2011 – Swildon's Hole

Source – Descent No. 226 – June/July 2012

A party of five (3 male, 2 female) entered Priddy Green Sink at midday to carry out a traverse to the main Swildon's entrance, having left a callout time of 7 p.m., on the board at Wessex C.C. A quick check of the Twenty confirmed that they were not stuck at the pitch, which was rigged with no sign of the group, and the callout ensued at 9 p.m.

Two search teams entered the cave via the main entrance, to check on probable areas that they could be in, and a team was placed on standby to check the Priddy Green Sink connection. The missing cavers were eventually located in the Blue Pencil area, where they had become disorientated and sat down to await assistance. All were guided out under their own steam and the event was closed just after midnight.

13 May 2011 – Sidcot Swallet

Request by A&S Police to attend an incident at Sidcot Swallet when a male caver became stuck in the 'Lobster Pot' and required assistance in being extricated. This was quickly done and he exited the cave with no further problems.

Source – Descent No. 226 – June/July 2012

A caver (male, aged 20) trapped in a vertical constriction known as the Lobster Pot required assistance to get out. This was soon accomplished by pushing a sling past the trapped caver for use as a foot loop; he then freed himself.

25 May 2011 – Swildon’s Hole

Request by A&S Police to attend a rescue at Swildon’s Hole where a male caver (from the B.E.C.) had fallen approx. 6m whilst attempting to climb down from the rift route in Vicarage passage to the landing in Swildon’s 2, and had sustained a fractured collarbone and severe bruising. He made his way, with assistance from cavers already in the cave, to Barnes’ Loop to await assistance from M.C.R. He was diagnosed, treated, given pain relief and assisted out of the cave with no further problems.

14 September 2011 – Hillier’s Cave

Request by A&S Police to attend a rescue at Hillier’s Cave, in Fairy Cave Quarry, when a male caver had fallen and had suffered a suspected fractured rib and required assistance in being extricated. The casualty had been assisted by fellow cavers to the base of the entrance climb to await assistance from M.C.R. He was assessed and then quickly assisted out of the entrance climb with no further problems.

Source – Descent No. 226 – June/July 2012

A caver (male, aged 40) was suffering from mild pain from a suspected broken rib following a minor slip close to the cave entrance. As he was in view of daylight and in good spirits, he was simply assisted on the 3 m entrance climb with medical support to hand. The casualty exited the cave quickly and was attended to by the ambulance team.

10 December 2011 – Unknown Mine near Bridewell Lane, Banwell

Source – Avon Fire & Rescue website – 10 December 2011

Firefighters have rescued a dog after it fell around 15 metres down a disused mine shaft. The owner had been walking the animal when it became stuck.

Crews from Weston-super-Mare and Temple’s rope rescue team were called to the scene. Using Safe Working at Height (SHACS) equipment and lines, crews assisted the animal, called Reggie, to safety. He was then taken to a vet to be checked over.

2012

2 January 2012 – Swildon’s Hole

A call was received at 21:25 on 2 January 2012 via the new Sarcall Communications System from Avon & Somerset Police advising of an overdue party in Swildon’s Hole. The group of three males had entered the cave via Priddy Green Sink entrance at approx. 12.30 and had been due out by 19:30. Priddy Green was checked to see if their car was there - which it was - and then M.C.R. was immediately joined by a police patrol. Within a couple of minutes a caver appeared and advised that the remaining two were OK but tired and were above the Twenty and making their way out. They exited the cave approx. 21:55 and the incident was closed. The reason they gave for being overdue was that the Priddy Green Sink entrance had tired them out (one of them was over 60) and they had then struggled through Blue Pencil Passage and the Mud Sump area which had slowed them further. Feedback from the Avon & Somerset Police

was that M.C.R. responded extremely quickly and that the new Sarcall communications system worked very well.

Source – Descent No. 232 – June/July 2013

A party of three had entered Priddy Green Sink about noon to traverse to Swildon's Hole, expecting to exit at 7:30 p.m. but were overdue. The first team member arrived at Priddy Green at 9:30 p.m., shortly followed by a police officer; the missing party's car was on the green. Just before a search team was organised, one of the missing cavers arrived and said that the others were fine and making their way out; they arrived at about 10:15 p.m., having misjudged the effort and time required for the through-trip.

5 March 2012 - Banwell Wood Mine Shaft

Source – BBC News website – 14 March 2012

DOG RESCUED FROM BANWELL WOOD MINE SHAFT AFTER NINE DAYS

Peppa the dog who went missing while out for a walk in Somerset has been pulled from a disused mine shaft nine days after she disappeared. A search was organised near Banwell Wood by the Four Paws Animal Rescue charity which had rehomed Peppa.

Simon Wall, from the charity, said: "I heard a dog barking and headed to what appeared to be a pile of boulders. "There was a large sink hole about 30ft deep and there to my utter surprise, on a ledge about 8ft down was Peppa."

Mr. Wall attached two dog leads together to form a make-shift rope and attached one end to himself and the other to a tree. He then lowered himself over the edge of the hole in Sunday's rescue.

"I didn't want to grab her or frighten her so I had to go carefully," he said.

"She leant towards me and I got hold of her to bring her out."

"It was like a lottery win, a £1m win," he said.

"It made my year."

The collie-cross had lost 2kg in body weight but other than being thirsty appeared to be in good spirits. Peppa's owner Audrey Binding said while the search was on she had waited at home.

"There had been no sightings for nine days so it was tough to keep my hopes up. I honestly thought the search party would find her dead," she said.

Then came the phone call to say Peppa had been rescued. "When I stopped crying I was just so so pleased to see her I couldn't stop hugging her," she said. "It's more than a miracle in my books."

Source – Mail Online – 14 March 2012

PEPPA THE DOG PULLED FROM MINE SHAFT ALIVE AFTER BEING STUCK ON LEDGE FOR NINE DAYS

COLLIE-CROSS SURVIVED BY DRINKING FILTHY WATER AT THE BOTTOM OF
HOLE
OWNER: 'I HONESTLY THOUGHT THE SEARCH PARTY WOULD FIND HER DEAD'

A dog which fell down a 30ft mine shaft was pulled out uninjured by rescuers - after being stuck there for nine days.

Collie-cross Peppa slipped down the hole while chasing a scent during a morning walk with owner Audrey Binding. She returned to the spot every day for a week to look for Peppa and eventually called in a search team from the Four Paws Animal Rescue charity as a 'last-ditch attempt'.

Amazingly, rescuer Simon Wall, 47, managed to find Peppa on a ledge 8ft down the shaft after just two hours of searching - and pulled her out. It is believed that Peppa - who lost almost 5lbs during her ordeal - survived by drinking water at the bottom of the mine shaft.

Delighted Audrey, of Winscombe, Somerset, said she was 'over the moon' Peppa was found. She said: 'There had been no sightings for nine days so it was tough to keep my hopes up. I honestly thought the search party would find her dead.'

'When I stopped crying, I was just so so pleased to see her I couldn't stop hugging her. It's more than a miracle in my books.'

Simon, of Blackwood, Wales, said: 'It looks like Peppa fell right to the bottom of the shaft, but then managed to scramble her way up.'

'She was hungry and thirsty, but must have found subterranean water at the bottom, otherwise she would have been dead after nine days.'

Peppa first went missing on the morning of March 2 as she was walked on the Strawberry Line disused train route in North Somerset. Audrey combed the woods with locals and other dog owners for a week before enlisting the help of Four Paws Animal Rescue. A group of 13 dog owners and their pets arrived at Banwell Woods, near Sandford, on March 11, splitting off into groups to cover the area. Property manager Simon, 47, began calling out to his four border collies as he walked them around the woods - and was stunned to hear another dog barking back.

He followed the noise to a 30ft deep and 25ft wide disused mine shaft and spotted Peppa balancing on a ledge 8ft below the surface. Simon said: 'I tried to reach her, but couldn't so I tied three dog leads together and secured them to a strong root before lowering myself down. I was able to lean out to her and she reached towards me and I pulled her out by her harness. She was wagging her tail like mad.' Simon called other rescuers with the happy news and walked to Audrey with Peppa and his own dogs, Milo, Ben, Chico and Chipp.

Peppa - who was completely uninjured by her ordeal - wolfed down a meal and water before being reunited with the rest of the search party. Simon added: 'It was like a lottery win, a £1 million win. Everyone was crying with joy because it was so unexpected.'

Rhino Rift – 21 April 2012

Source – WCC Newsletter June/July 2012, page 1

Kev and Charlotte had a short wait (8 hrs) in Rhino Rift when the key broke in the lock

9 June 2012 – Gough’s Cave

Source – Descent No. 232 – June/July 2013

A member of the public (female, aged 20) fell while on an adventure caving trip just off the main tourist route and suffered a suspected fractured tibia and a severely bruised knee. She was treated at the scene by paramedics and stretchered out by MCR personnel. Avon & Somerset Cliff Rescue Team and HART assisted.

Source – Phil Hendy’s Log Book – Volume 23, pages 4770 to 4771

I was cashier at Collector’s, and nearing the end of my lunchbreak at 1:10 when Kay radioed asking for first aiders to assist a large lady that had fallen and hurt her leg in Goughs! As no one seemed to be available, I volunteered, and went up the road. Kay then told me that a woman had fallen on an Adventure Caving trip, led by Chris Castle.

I eventually located the spare caving hut key (mine were at Collector’s) and kitted up. On my way into the cave, I met Kay escorting two cavers out. The casualty had slipped on the slope down from Mushroom Chamber, and hurt her leg. She had got as far as the Black Cat before collapsing.

Once there, I found Chris Castle, Trevor, and the lady’s husband (Mark). The lady fairly well built about 38 (Sharon with five kids – a trainee nurse) was lying between boulders, and in some pain. I got the campamat from Sand Chamber to act as a pillow, then on the phone asked Kay to get an ambulance (paramedics) and cave rescue – via 999. Not Duncan Massey and Cliff Rescue.

Later I heard the Police were playing their usual game of silly buggers, not knowing about cave rescue, so I told Kay to phone the Hunters’, B.E.C. and W.C.C.

After about 20 minutes two female paramedics arrived, very competent. They diagnosed a fracture L. tibia, and administered Entonox and morphine, before putting on a vacuum splint. Duncan Massey and cliff rescue arrived – summoned by the paramedics. They had a two part ridged stretcher. At least Duncan was able to prevent the full rescue roadshow (Police, Fire Brigade, helicopter) from turning up. M.C.R.O. arrived shortly after, mainly wardens, plus odd bods and the Spider Hole diggers.

Cliff Rescue quickly transferred Sharon to the stretcher, then M.C.R.O. took over for the haul out. I went down to Diamond Chamber – I got a Cliff Rescue lad to divert people through the gate up to Diamond Chamber, while Andy stopped any more from coming up the Grand Staircase – the route out through St. Paul’s was easiest.

Receiving the stretcher at the bottom of the little ladder. I then helped with the carry out. Several tourist ghouls took photos.

With Cliff Rescue clearing the way, we were soon out of the cave – I ordered a high lift out past the entrance barrier, and we dropped Sharon on the pavement by the ambulance.

All kit was removed from the cave – we lost a bit, pair of overalls (cut off Sharon's leg) and possibly a belt.

I changed, had a cup of tea in Maintenance, then went back to Collector's.

Paul bought drinks for the Cheddar people involved (those who turned up) at Riverside. After fish and chips, I drove to the Hunters' meeting Paul again. He had ordered a barrel of Butcombe (which I organised and hopefully Hugh will later pay for - £95) for cave and cliff rescue personnel.

14 August 2012 – Cheddar Gorge

A Glastonbury woman was taken to hospital with serious injuries after falling around 80ft from a cliff at Cheddar Gorge. The 42-year-old woman was airlifted to Bristol's Frenchay Hospital in the early hours of Wednesday 15th August by an R.A.F. Search and Rescue helicopter. Mendip Cave Rescue received an emergency call through the SARCALL system concerning a missing woman at 8.20 p.m. on Tuesday 14th August. The casualty was found after a two-hour search operation that included Avon and Somerset Cliff Rescue and ambulance crews. An Avon and Somerset Search and Rescue spokesman said: "The injured female was treated by the rescue team's doctor and paramedic for her injuries. Alan George, from the rescue team, said: "One of the cave rescue team actually heard somebody - we managed to narrow it down and located her." The casualty was moved to a safe location at the top of Cheddar Gorge where she was winched to an R.A.F. Search and Rescue Helicopter at 00:30 a.m. for immediate transfer to Frenchay Hospital.

Source – WCC Newsletter August/September 2012, page 3

M.C.R. (Mendip Cave Rescue) had a joint call out with Avon and Somerset Cliff Rescue on the 14th August concerning a missing woman. The casualty was found after a two hour search. Alan George, from the joint rescue team, said: "One of the cave rescue team actually heard somebody - we managed to narrow it down and located her." She was then air lifted to hospital for further checks.

25 August 2012 – Upper Canada Cave, Well Shaft entrance

Source – Alan Gray's Log Book

After Doug and Nick had finished their digging session in Well Shaft session Biff Frith and I entered. The cave is about 15 feet long narrow to start off with but you can stand upright at the end. Looking past the three feet high clay bank close to the end you can see down 10 feet through a mass of small rocks down what looks like a vertical phreatic tube which is draughting. The plan was to remove the pile of rocks sitting above the clay bank, remove the bank and then excavate the tube. Alan, sitting on the clay bank, cleared all the rocks above the bank and then moved to a stooping position in front of the clay wall and started dismantling it from the left. Five buckets were removed then Alan noticed small lumps of gravel and clay slowly trickling from the far right of the bank. He said to Biff something is wrong get the buckets out, and you get out quickly. He held the area around where the trickle came from to support the mass of clay. The two buckets were removed, and Biff was just leaving when it was raining rocks from above and the wall I was holding on the right also collapsed. I quickly spun around and ducked through the entrance but was grazed, on the shoulder blade, by a rectangular boulder, 4 feet long, and two feet square. This was close it was a good job that it was not still in the sitting

position as the boulder would have landed on my lap! My fault I should have checked out the roof more carefully before starting to dig.

The whole area is quite dangerous with the rock shattered by permafrost from the glaciation period. This coupled with the usual Mendip dip of the bedding planes means that the roof could be supported in some places by a thin sliver of rock.

The size of the boulder that grazed me, last week, was measured and it was five feet long by three feet square – I must have escaped by about half a second! However, for the next week I had various pains and aches all over my body – it must have been the shock impact of the boulder hitting me.

Biff Frith's Report -

I tried to move "Alan's" large slab with the five foot crow bar and could only move it a quarter of an inch, this slab or block appears more stable (caution) than we thought it must be well over a ton in weight, and it's sat on the infill we need to remove.

14 October 2012 – Swildon's Hole

On 14th October 2012 Mendip Cave Rescue were alerted by Avon and Somerset Police after a group of cavers became trapped after their ladder had been accidentally removed from the well-known 20' pitch in Swildon's Hole. Two cavers (part of a group of cavers, the rest of whom had left the cave taking their ladder with them) were trapped below the 20' pitch without a ladder or life-line and were unable to climb out. The police were contacted by one of the group that had exited the cave but felt too tired to re-enter with a ladder. Mendip Cave Rescue deployed a small team with a ladder and lifeline to assist the stranded cavers out of the cave.

Source – ukcaving.com Forum – Report by Andy Sparrow

This report details the incident at Swildon's Hole, Priddy where it was reported that two cavers (part of a group of cavers, the rest of whom had left the cave taking their ladder with them) were trapped below the 20' pitch without a ladder or rope and unable to climb out. The police were contacted by one of the group that had exited the cave but felt too tired to re-enter with a ladder.

This report has been compiled to record the main points of the rescue.

Call out Log

18:37 Phone call received by Mark Helmore direct from Avon and Somerset Police asking for assistance in dealing with two cavers who had been reported as being trapped below the 20' pitch without a ladder or rope.

18:39 MH contacts the informant to confirm the situation and following confirmation that both cavers were fine and dressed suitably it was decided to quickly take a ladder and lifeline in and assist them out.

18:45 MH arrives at the W.C.C. headquarters, enlists Les William's assistance and both make their way to the cave entrance

19:00 MH and LW arrive at the entrance and, following a quick briefing with the awaiting informant, enter the cave.

19:05 MH and LW meet one of the two cavers in the entrance series – he had managed to climb the 20' with the use of some rope left hanging down the far side of the pitch by an unknown group. His colleague was unable to do this and remained by the Pitch.

19:10 MH and LW arrive at the 20' pitch and assist the caver to the top of the pitch from his rather precarious position hanging on the rope half way up the pitch! The caver is then escorted from the cave.

19:35 MH, LW and the caver exit the cave and incident closed.

Source – Descent No. 232 – June/July 2013

Two cavers were stranded at the bottom of the Twenty (a 7m pitch) when their companions took the ladder away as they left the cave, mistakenly assuming the remainder of the group had already exited. When their mistake became apparent, their colleagues felt too tired to return with the ladder and called out M.C.R. On entering the cave, the rescue team encountered one of the two cavers, who had managed to climb the pitch with the aid of an in-situ rope, leaving his colleague alone. The rescue team reached the pitch shortly after and assisted the cold but otherwise unhurt caver up the pitch.

2013

7 April 2013 – Swildon's Hole

A male climber was rescued from Swildon's Hole on Sunday 7th April 2013 following a trip with friends, the male slipped trying to negotiate a climb after becoming separated from his group and sustained substantial leg injuries as a result. Mendip Cave Rescue were called out by Avon & Somerset police after a member of the injured man's party raised the alarm. Members of the team were quickly on scene along with the team doctor. Due to the nature of the injuries the male was extracted from the cave using a stretcher and promptly taken to the waiting ambulance. This was a successful rescue with an estimated 20+ cavers involved.

Source – Descent No. 238 – June/July 2014

A caver (male, aged 48) on his first trip became separated from his party and tried to exit on his own. He became disorientated in the Wet Way and, while trying to reverse a climb out of the streamway, fell and sustained a serious multiple fracture of his ankle. The problem was worsened by the fact that the party he was caving with assumed he had made an exit and did not take the same route out. Eventually, he was missed by his colleagues who quickly searched the entrance series and located him in the Wet Way within five minutes of the entrance. The rescue team aligned and splinted the casualty's ankle and foot. He was then placed in a Blizzard survival bag before being secured in the drag sheet/stretcher and carried out to the waiting ambulance.

5 May 2013 – Reservoir Hole

Source – Descent 233 – August/September 2013

The digging and exploration team in Reservoir Hole has not remained idle since the discoveries of 2012, resulting in some recent developments – and a serious incident in the cave illustrating the unstable nature of the extensions.

On Sunday 5 May a large team entered the cave to make another attempt at diving the sump in Dingley Dell, a muddy chamber off The Frozen Deep for which the approach via Pickwick Passage involves some convoluted squeezing through boulders abutting the wall of The Frozen Deep. Duncan Price successfully dived the sump and confirmed Rob Harper's findings that the rift entered via a sloping tube becomes too constricted after 20m. He also confirmed that water is flowing at depth, emerging forcefully from the east and flowing westwards, although the inlet and outlet are too restricted to make progress in either direction.

On the return up through the choke one of the party dislodged a large boulder at the head of a short climb. It fell, causing minor facial injuries to her, but more problematically it landed on Nick Chipchase's hand. Ironically, Nick was the only member of the party not actively involved in the diving and was only present as the obligatory leader.

The caver on the right side of the choke was despatched to contact M.C.R. as a potential '127 hours' incident loomed. In the event and within a short time, Duncan managed to free the boulder and Nick made his own, single-handed way out of the cave. He was lucky to escape with 'only' a tendon injury to one of his fingers. Communication problems resulted in something of a rescue services scrum at the entrance, with two fire engines, ambulances and a Hazardous Area Response Team, all of which would have been quite useless underground. After inspection, Nick was taken to hospital by car. The overkill by the rescue services was the subject of some debate locally – certainly, in the past far more serious underground episodes have been resolved without rescue services other than M.C.R. being involved.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Book – Volume 24, pages 4868 to 4869

I got back from Gough's after a bus tour, to find that there was a shout in Reservoir Hole. Nick Chipchase, Duncan Price, Rob Harper, Claire Cohen, Naomi Sharp and ? were in Dingley Dell, presumably having a crack at the sump. A large rock fell, trapping Nick, and Naomi was struck in the face. She and ? made their way out to raise the alarm – the usual convoy of ambulances, paramedics, police and Fire Brigade turned up – not the helicopter, they must be losing interest. Also Duncan Massey. Luckily, Dany Bradshaw was contacted to raise the M.C.R.

Naomi was looked at by First Responder Mike Dearden, who was Lakeside cashier but who happened to be on a bus tour. He dressed some bloody cuts on her right cheek, and suspected a fractured cheek bone. She will have two lovely black eyes.

Naomi was worried by Nick being trapped, but before she went off in the ambulance (which originally went to the incident rather than the Guide Room) we heard that Nick had been trapped by two fingers, but managed to extricate himself and was safely on his way out.

1 June 2013 – Eastwater Cavern

Source – WCC Log Book Volume 41, page 58

Nik-Nak, John Cooper and Ali Moody – 30 minute trip to locate a stuck caver. Soon out.

2014

6 May 2014 – Iron Mine on Exmoor

Mendip Cave Rescue were called to assist the police in a search for a possible missing person after personal items were found at the entrance to an abandoned iron mine on Exmoor. A team of four M.C.R. wardens attended the scene and performed thorough detailed search of three adits of which all were to a degree flooded. Nothing was found and the team was stood down for the police to continue with any enquiries.

13 September 2014 – Goatchurch Cavern

Source – Descent No. 244 – June/July 2015

A male suffered a medical emergency (a collapsed lung) while caving. He was assisted out by the party and M.C.R. stood down en route.

2015

27 June 2015 – Box Mines

Source – Descent No. 265 – December 2018/January 2019

A group (4males, if, ages unknown) became lost on the way out of the mine, but was able to make contact with a person on the surface via an open shaft. Wiltshire fire service was called, which subsequently contacted MCR. One of the party was diabetic and, while awaiting the rescue team, felt unwell. Assistance was provided from the surface by lowering sugar products, as requested by the person. On arrival the team members assisted by guiding the group out.

15 July 2015 – Goatchurch Cavern

Source – Descent No. 265 – December 2018/January 2019

A male caver (age unknown) suffered a knee injury. He had made his own way out before the rescue warden arrived; care was continued by the ambulance service.

5 August 2015 – Templeton

On Wednesday 5th August, reports were received at 20:15 that an experienced caver had fallen almost 50 feet down Echo Pot, a recently found shaft at the bottom of Templeton, sustaining several serious injuries. On arrival, Mendip Cave Rescue wardens quickly administered first aid and placed the casualty in a stretcher and carefully hauled him to the surface at 01:10 where he was handed over to the waiting paramedics for further treatment and transfer to hospital. Mendip Cave Rescue were assisted throughout this difficult operation by members of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue service, Avon & Somerset Police, South Western Ambulance service and Wiltshire Air Ambulance.

Source – Phil Hendy's Log Books – Vol 25 – pages 5002 to 5005

A cloudy night, with showers, ending in heavy rain later. Jonathan and Dave went down, to clear rubble from Carpet Crawl. The skip was very sticky, so I greased it, and then pumped up the tyres on the wheelbarrows.

Paul Hodgson came up with his two young sons – they went down the first ladder, then left, as Paul Turner arrived.

Eric walked Lecksy [*a dog*] down to Lower Pitts Dig, to try to loosen the nuts at the end of the winch jib. This time, with easing oil and better spanners he succeeded.

Paul went down to join the others – they had cleared the spoil from the Crawl. As he neared South Pot, Dave heard a crash, like falling rock – he assumed it was someone further up the cave – but Paul told him it must have come from further down.

Jonathan had said he was going into Carpet Crawl to adjust the carpet – but somehow fell down Echo Pot (headfirst, we found out later, though we thought he had gone down feet first). The pitch was not rigged. Dave crawled to near the head of the pitch – he could not see a light, but heard laboured breathing; Jonathan did not respond when called. This was about 8:10 p.m. Although I was by the cars, I could not hear the radio, so Paul climbed out, shouted at me from the “lid.” I immediately called 999 and asked for Police and Cave Rescue. I ended up speaking to someone who insisted on sending an ambulance immediately, although I said it would not be needed for hours. I tried to phone the Vanderplanks and Ali Moody – no response, but I spoke to Prew, who said he would call the Wessex and Mark Helmore.

By this time Dave Turner emerged – he could not get down Echo Pot without tackle, and thought he would be able to help on the surface. He managed to call Dany [Bradshaw].

After half an hour later a policeman and paramedic arrived (the copper stole my notebook and pen, which Dave used to sketch the dig). Soon the rescue roadshow arrived – Police, two fire engines, five rescue vehicles, two ambulances, paramedics, even an air ambulance*, which landed, but did not stay long. M.C.R. also arrived and things got going. The police managed to get the track cleared of vehicles.

I sent two loads of rescue gear down in the skip – some Fire Brigade Rescue bods went down carrying their own kit. They (M.C.R.) managed to get down to Jonathan, administered morphine and began to assess him. It was gone midnight when they started to haul up Echo Pot. I made sure that the genny was topped up with fuel, as if we ran out, we could not restart it when hot. Alan Turner arrived – he was eating in the Hunters’ when he saw rescue vehicles go by – then someone asked where Templeton was. Alan immediately thought that Dave was in trouble. The police would not let him up to the dig, so he parked at the Belfry, and managed to get up by carrying some wanted kit.

It was thought that we might be able to bring Jonathan up in or on the skip, but I did a dummy run, and it was decided that we did not have enough control. A Fire Brigade capstan winch was rejected for the same reason. So the Fire Brigade dropped a rope from the surface to the 166 foot platform, on the inside of the skip run. At the top, this went through a pulley attached to the rail lines, then down to a line of about a dozen cavers and firemen, who pulled on short ropes attached to the main line with jammers.

The haul up Echo Pot seemed to be quite quick but it took a while to get Jon along Carpet Crawl. He was reassessed by paramedics, at about 1:10 a.m. He was brought up to the 166 foot level, and the hauled up to the surface. This seemed to take no time at all, and he was assessed by a team of paramedics, stabilised, and eventually taken by ambulance to Southmead Hospital.

It took quite a while for everyone to get packed up and leave. I hauled up the skip with a lot of M.C.R. kit the rescue vehicles had a job turning in the staff car park, and by this time it was

raining steadily. Our team was the last to leave, and I managed to get home and into bed by 2:45 a.m.

(* The Doctor brought by the air ambulance was a godsend – he was a trauma specialist. When he reached the surface, Jonathan was in a very bad way, and treatment by the Doctor probably kept him alive until he reached hospital.)

6 August 2016 – Aftermath

I heard from Elaine, via Eric, that Jonathan has pelvis injuries, and a collapsed lung – both of which could be life threatening. He also has two broken neck vertebrae (but was able to move his arms during the rescue). He is on ventilation, and will be in intensive care for at least two weeks. Visiting by relatives only.

Richard has put his own lock on the cave, until Tuska gets back from holiday. He is happy for us to go to the surface, and to Lower Pitts Farm Dig – but we need to retrieve the breaker which was left at the bottom of South Pot.

Source – Descent No. 246 – October/November 2015

On Wednesday 5 August one of the regular Templeton Pot diggers, a male in his 50s, fell down the recently found Echo Pitch sustaining multiple life-threatening injuries. Mendip Cave Rescue successfully extracted the casualty after a five- hour operation.

The stretcher was taken directly up the central shaft of the dig, which is over 60m deep; fire service personnel assisted with surface lighting and manpower on the haul. Before the Mendip mist and drizzle enveloped the site, an air ambulance had dropped off a trauma doctor and he was able to give immediate care at the scene before the casualty was taken to hospital. Although still in hospital three weeks later, he is making good progress.

22 September 2015 – Swildon’s Hole

On Tuesday 22nd September, Mendip Cave Rescue received a report from the police 18:30 that there was an overdue party of 4 cavers in Swildon’s Hole. Whilst M.C.R. wardens were on their way to Priddy to undertake an initial check of the cave, further reports were received that the party had surfaced at 18:50, having had some trouble negotiating one of the squeezes and the wardens were stood down.

1 November 2015 – Fernhill Cave

Source – Descent No. 247 – December/January 2015/2016

On 1 November an incident occurred when a 65-year-old member of Dudley C.C. fell down the entrance shaft in Fernhill Cave, one of the Fairy Caves. He managed to extricate himself and was met by paramedics on the surface, then the fire and rescue service carried him to a waiting ambulance; as he was not underground, Mendip Cave Rescue was not called out. He suffered two fractures of the pelvis, two crushed vertebrae and a damaged urethra.

13 December 2015 – Eastwater Cavern

On Sunday 13th December, Mendip Cave Rescue received a report from the police at 20:20 that there was an overdue party of 6 cavers in Eastwater Cavern. Whilst M.C.R. wardens were on their way to Priddy to undertake an initial search of the cave further reports were received that the party had surfaced, having had some trouble route finding in this complex system and taken longer than anticipated to complete their trip, and the wardens were stood down.

20 December 2015 – Eastwater Cavern

On Sunday 20th December, Mendip Cave Rescue received a report from the police at 16:30 that there was an overdue party of four cavers in Eastwater Cavern. Whilst M.C.R. wardens were initially responding, a further report was received at 16:45 that the party had surfaced, having taken longer than anticipated to complete their trip, and the wardens were immediately stood down.

2016

11 February 2016 – Swildon's Hole

M.C.R. wardens received a callout from the emergency services via SARCALL system at 01:52 on Thursday 11th February 2016 that a caver was believed to have fallen down a shaft and had sustained injuries. Whilst the M.C.R. wardens were being mobilised, there was some confusion about the location of the casualty but this was clarified by a subsequent SARCALL message that the caver has fallen down the "twenty", a short pitch in Swildon's Hole, Priddy.

An initial party of four M.C.R. personnel went underground at 03:00, carrying a "first strike kit" with the purpose of locating and attending to the injured caver. Further information came to the surface that necessitated further cavers going underground with more equipment. It was confirmed that a 27-year-old male caver had fallen down the "Twenty" and although initial rumours that he had broken his leg was unfounded, he was found to have a probable broken arm. First aid was administered by an M.C.R. medic, and after appropriate treatment, the injured caver was brought to the surface and placed in an ambulance at 05:18.

M.C.R. were assisted throughout this operation by members of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue service, Avon & Somerset Police and South Western Ambulance service.

5 March 2016 – G.B. Cave

On Saturday 5th March, Mendip Cave Rescue received a report from the police at 15:43 that there was a caver physically stuck in G.B. Cave. Five M.C.R. wardens were already at the M.C.R. store following a rescue practice with Southern C.H.E.C.C., so were able to respond rapidly. Whilst the wardens were travelling to the cave, a further report was received at 16:01 that the stuck caver had been freed and the party had surfaced, and the wardens were stood down.

26 July 2016 – Cheddar Gorge

On Tuesday 26th July, Mendip Cave Rescue received a report from the police at 11:58 that a visitor had fallen and sustained injuries in Gough's Cave, a show cave in Cheddar Gorge. A small group of M.C.R. wardens collected some equipment from the MCR store and made their way to the entrance, where a further report was received that the injured person had been stretchered out of the cave by members of Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue service. The wardens were then stood down at 13:07 and returned to the M.C.R. store.

20 November 2016 – Swildon’s Hole

On Sunday 20th November, Mendip Cave Rescue received a report from the police at 18:37 that a male caver had sustained ankle injuries in Swildon’s Hole, Priddy and was unable to exit the cave. A group of M.C.R. wardens collected some first aid and hauling equipment from the M.C.R. store and made their way to the entrance and located the casualty just below the '20', a short ladder pitch in the entrance series of the cave. First aid was administered, and the casualty was assisted out of the cave and across the fields to his waiting transport. After a successful rescue, the wardens were stood down at 21:28 and returned all the equipment to the M.C.R. store.

2017

11 June 2017 – Box Stone Mine

Source – Corsham Police Facebook Page – 11 June 2107

PCSO Redmond and PCSO Young with the help of the Landlord from the Quarryman’s Arms, assisted three lost males from Bristol in finding their way out of the Boxhill tunnels this afternoon. The males were poorly equipped and had become lost underground. They were spoken to by the officers at the scene before being allowed to return home.

2 July 2017 – Box Stone Mines

On Sunday 2nd July 2017 Mendip Cave Rescue were contacted by Corsham Fire & Rescue to assist with an incident in Box stone mine. A group of three explorers had entered the mines via the Back Door entrance and made their way through the system to Jacks entrance, where their exit was blocked by a large gate recently installed by the landowners. They were unable to retrace their steps, but instead were able to get mobile phone reception through the bars of the gate and ask for assistance. Mendip Cave Rescue have a small team of experienced local cavers who were called to the scene and they were able to enter the mine via a nearby obscure entrance and escort the three explorers to safety.

Source – Trowbridge Fire Station Facebook page – 2 July 2107

HRU mobilised to Box to gain access to release some Youths that had become lost. [*HRU - Heavy Rescue Unit*]

5 July 2017 – Box Stone Mines

Mendip Cave Rescue were called by the police at 03:14 on Wednesday 5th July 2017 for an incident at Box stone mine. A small team of experienced local cavers who know the mines well attended the scene and found a group of 7 explorers aged 17 to 20 who were unable to exit from Jacks Entrance due to a new gate that the owners had erected recently. Having entered the mine via the Back Door entrance and being inadequately equipped and clothed they were lucky to be able to obtain a phone signal and call 999. The Mendip Cave Rescue team quickly escorted them out via an alternative nearby entrance, and apart from being cold and tired, they were unharmed and the incident was closed at 05:43. Our friends from Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service attended and supplied lighting to the scene and passed blankets through the gate to help keep the waiting explorers warm whilst they were waiting for assistance.

This second incident within a week at the same site has prompted Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue service to issue the attached safety notice and has been reported in the local press.

Source – Darkness Below web site report by Chris Smart and Neil Reaich

At about 2:30 a.m. on 5 July, an emergency call by mobile phone was made and the local Fire Service contacted. The Mendip Cave Rescue Organization were called and two local cavers were asked to search for the party.

Unfortunately, the information that the group were safe but trapped behind the grill at Jack's was not conveyed to the two rescuers and they initially searched the Bat Grill, Back Door and A4 entrances to Box. By 4:30 a.m., the rescuers had made contact with the two members of the fire brigade outside, and the seven explorers inside Jack's entrance.

We entered Box through Lady Hamilton's entrance about 15 minutes later and made our way to the grill at Jack's and the party of seven. We had been advised that two of the group were claustrophobic but all seemed in good spirits, although even with fire brigade space blankets they were feeling a little cold.

The group were very badly equipped and lacked helmets, adequate clothing, decent footwear, a compass or a survey of the quarry. Their mobile phone batteries were badly drained so torches were borrowed from the Fire Service and the party exited Box Quarry at about 6:30 a.m. without further incident.

Source – Bath Chronicle (on-line) – 5 July 2017

Seven teenagers have been rescued from a disused mine near Bath.

Firefighters rescued the youths in the early hours of Wednesday morning (July 5) after they became lost in an underground network of tunnels at Box mine.

The group had been lost for about three hours before they called for help, a spokesman for the fire service said.

Fire crew tweeted the news shortly after 7 a.m., adding that it was the second time that shift they had had to perform such a rescue at the disused mine near the village of Box, Wiltshire.

The Twitter account for Trowbridge Fire Station said: "Rope Rescue mobilised to Box once again to release 7 Youths that had become lost (2nd time this shift)."

A spokesman for the fire service said that six fire crews, including one from Bath, were called out at 2.48 a.m. to help rescue the young people, believed to be teenagers.

"They helped walk the people out to safety," he said.

A similar rescue took place on Sunday night (July 2) after three people also got lost in the disused mine.

"A local mine rescue organisation came out to assist us in rescuing the people in both incidents," the fire service spokesman said.

Box Mine is a network of tunnels that was once used to quarry Bath stone.

There are several entrances to the mine system in wooded quarries.

Seven young people aged between 17 and 20 had to be rescued from the mine in 2015.

They were rescued by firefighters after becoming lost in the Cathedral area of Box Cave.

Source – Chris Smart’s post on the Descent Caving Group Facebook page – 5 July 2017

Interesting rescue from Box Quarry in the early hours of this morning. The 3:30 phone call was a good wake up call! The Bath Chronicle report glosses over the role of two local cavers who completed the rescue on behalf of the emergency services (who remained on the surface). The 'rescue' was because the seven youths from Bristol were the wrong side of the new grill at Jacks Workings entrance of Box Quarry. They had successfully traversed from the Back Door entrance to Jacks but were stumped when they found the new grill has no gate in it. I understand that the Back Door entrance will be grilled in a similar fashion this week and Lady Hamilton's will follow shortly afterwards. Not good news. I understand that C.S.C.C. are aware of this catastrophic loss of access.

3 August 2017 – Goatchurch Cavern

Mendip Cave Rescue were called by the police at 16:40 on Thursday 3rd August 2017 for an incident at Burrington Combe. A 16-year-old male was stuck in 'Superman Squeeze' in Boulder Chamber, just inside Tradesman’s Entrance to Goatchurch Cavern. This is a squeeze in a short passage that can be bypassed, and so it was possible to get people to either side of the casualty. Eventually the casualty was freed by moving a large boulder slightly and using drills and 'plug and feathers' to remove some rock from a boulder that was trapping him. Once he was freed the casualty was able to walk out from the cave, and he exited the cave unharmed and none the worse for his ordeal at 19:50.

Throughout this rescue operation, Mendip Cave Rescue worked with representatives from both Avon Fire & Rescue Service and Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service, South Western Ambulance Service H.A.R.T. Paramedics and Avon & Somerset Police, with the road through Burrington Combe closed for a few hours whilst the rescue operation was underway. This successful rescue has been reported in the local press.

Source – Western Mercury – 3 August 2017

A TEENAGER GOT TRAPPED 50 METRES WITHIN A NORTH SOMERSET CAVE THIS EVENING

Firefighters, paramedics and police officers were dispatched to Burrington at about 4.30 p.m. and spent several hours on the scene before getting the 17-year-old to safety.

A Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service spokesman said: “The fire service attended the report of one male stuck within a cave.

“Fire appliances from Avon, Devon and Somerset, along with Specialist Rescue Teams and Specialist Supporting Officers were mobilised to this incident.

“Crews attended from Weston-super-Mare and Blagdon with their Supporting Officers and crews from Devon and Somerset were Barnstaple, Cheddar, Bridgwater and Wells.

“The first informative message from crews on scene reported a 17-year-old male stuck 50 metres within cave, inter agency liaison was taking place with the Ambulance Hazardous Area Response Team and Avon Fire Service.”

Police closed the nearby road to allow emergency services sole access to the cave.

Firefighters, paramedics and specialist rescue teams were able to reach the boy within three hours and get him to safety.

No details about any potential injuries have been released by the emergency services at this stage.

Source – Bristol Post – 7 August 2017

BOY TRAPPED IN BURRINGTON COOMBE CAVES FOR THREE HOURS AFTER TRYING TO SQUEEZE THROUGH ROCKS LIKE 'SUPERMAN'

The teenager was on an outward bound course when his attempt to squeeze through rocks in an underground cavern left him stuck.

A teenage boy had to be rescued from caves after getting wedged between two pieces of rock when he tried to squeeze through using a move used by action hero Superman.

The 16-year-old boy was part of a group exploring the boulder chamber in the Goatchurch Cavern at Burrington Coombe.

Rather than walk around the two pieces of rock – known as Superman Squeeze – the teen decided he would try and go through it instead. But he became firmly wedged between the two pieces of rock.

The rocks are known as the Superman Squeeze as cavers have to take a position used by the action hero when he flies - one arm in front and one arm behind - to get through.

The youngster, who was on an expedition based out of the outdoor centre at Charterhouse on The Mendips, was stuck for more than three hours.

The team of expedition leaders tried to free him with help from other cavers also in the caverns. But when he refused to budge after 45 minutes of trying, the Mendip Cave Rescue Team were called on for help.

Members of the team – all who are volunteers – drilled out the rock around the boy until he could wriggle free.

Mendip Cave Rescue secretary Martin Grass said: “The team the young lad was with tried to get him out, helped by experienced cavers, but they couldn’t – he was solidly stuck in there. “It was the boy’s first experience of caving and had got into a position where he could not help himself or set himself free.

“We used a technique which used to be used by miners to chisel and drill away the rock to free him.” The rescue operation took around two hours.

Once the teenager was free, he quickly made his way out of the cave where he was checked over by paramedics. Mr. Grass added: “He walked out of the cave by himself and was no worse for wear.

“He managed to carry on with the rest of his activities.”

Crews from Avon Fire and Rescue Service were also on scene and closed off the road to allow the rescue teams to access the cave network.

The cave network is around 2,000ft long. The teenager became stuck around 200ft into the cave.

13 August 2017 – Box Stone Mines

Mendip Cave Rescue were called by Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue service at 23:20 on Sunday 13th August 2017 for an incident at Box stone mine. Two young explorers had become lost whilst underground, and found themselves behind the newly erected gate at Lady Hamilton’s entrance, unable to get out, but within signal range for their mobile phone so they were able to summon help. A small team of experienced local cavers who know the mines well attended the scene and quickly escorted the pair to the service via an alternative nearby entrance, and apart from being cold and tired, they were unharmed and the incident was closed at 00:15 on Monday morning.

20 August 2017 – Monkton Farleigh Quarry

Mendip Cave Rescue were called by Wiltshire Police at 19:45 on Sunday 20th August 2017 for an incident at Monkton Farleigh stone mine. One member of a party exploring the mine had become separated from the rest of the group underground and had not returned to their vehicle with the others. After a quick search for their missing person, the remaining members of the party called for help. On receiving the initial call from the police, M.C.R. contacted a number of local cavers who knew the stone mines well, who quickly organised a more thorough search of the mine, whilst M.C.R. wardens were put on standby in case a more protracted search was required. Happily, the missing person was found after a few minutes, a little lost but safe and unharmed, and escorted to the entrance. The stand down message was then sent to the MCR wardens to bring the incident to a close at 20:49.

11 September 2017 – Monkton Farleigh Quarry

Mendip Cave Rescue were called by Wiltshire Police at 00:40 on Monday 11th September 2017 for an incident at Monkton Farleigh stone mine. A party of two people had entered the mine at around 20:00 the previous evening and were very overdue for their callout. M.C.R. contacted four local cavers, who assembled at the mine entrance at 01:25, and two of these conducted a sweep search of the main passageways within the mine whilst the other two provided surface support and coordination with the emergency services. At 02:00 the missing party safely arrived at the surface, having enjoyed a much longer trip than they had planned. By 02:45 the underground search party also arrived back at the surface and the stand down message was then sent to the M.C.R. wardens to bring the incident to a close at 03:05.

2018

Report for the Year to 31st December 2017

Mendip Cave Rescue is a low visibility organisation; a bit like sex and air, you only notice it when you aren't getting any. Its publicity is mostly confined to its "Advertising" outside cave entrances, but the recent Priddy Folk Festival (7th. To 9th. July) saw an M.C.R. information tent on Priddy Green, where the organisation provided 24 hour first aid cover for the event. "Cavers rescue Cavers" has always been a mantra and a truism, and M.C.R. operates below the radar unless external agencies such as the police or fire brigade become involved. Then, regrettably, the concomitant publicity about our sport tends to become adverse. A couple of recent incidents may result in the closure of Box stone mines. That the incidents were so similar, within 3 days of each other, and both involved fire brigades was unfortunate, to put it mildly.

29 April 2018 – Sidcot Swallet

Mendip Cave Rescue were called by Avon and Somerset Police at 11:58 on Sunday 29th April 2018 for an incident in Sidcot Swallet in Burrington Combe. A party of three had entered and explored the cave and one of them became unable to climb out of the Lobster Pot on the return journey. After several attempts at extricating himself, the two other cavers left the cave and called the Police for assistance. Mendip Cave Rescue attended, with two Wardens entering the cave and providing an extra "foothold" so he could climb the Pot. Mendip Cave Rescue were supported by Avon Fire and Rescue and South West Ambulance HART team, and the incident was closed at 13:18 with everyone safely back on the surface.

15 May 2018 – Wookey Hole Cave

Mendip Cave Rescue were called by Avon and Somerset Police at 11:21 on 15th May 2018 for an incident in Wookey Hole Caves in Wookey Hole. A member of the public had slipped within the show cave and had sustained minor injuries and required assistance in exiting the cave. Mendip Cave Rescue attended and stood by to provide specialist assistance if required by the fire brigade who were assisting the person from the cave. The incident was closed at 11:56 with the person safely back on the surface.

19 June 2018 – Goatchurch Cavern

Mendip Cave Rescue were called by Avon and Somerset Police at 21:28 on Tuesday 19th June 2018 for an incident in Goatchurch Cavern in Burrington Combe. A party of two had entered the cave via the Main entrance, and then attempted to exit the cave via the alternative Tradesmen's entrance. Due to the polished nature of the rock they found that they were unable to climb out but managed to raise the alarm to their friends outside, who in turn called the Police for assistance. Mendip Cave Rescue attended, with two Wardens entering the cave and providing a handline and lifeline to assist with the climb. Mendip Cave Rescue were supported by Avon Fire and Rescue and South West Ambulance H.A.R.T. team, and the incident was closed at 22:39 with everyone safely back on the surface.

2 September 2018 – Box Stone Mines

Mendip Cave Rescue received a SARCALL message from Avon and Somerset Police at 18:24 on Sunday 2nd September 2018, on behalf of their colleagues from Wiltshire Police (who don't currently use SARCALL) for an incident at Box Stone Mines. Two people had entered the mines but were unable to retrace their route to the entrance, and instead found their way to the nearby Lady Hamilton's entrance that was gated preventing their exit. They were, however, able to get a mobile phone signal from within the mine to call for assistance. Two experienced local cavers who know the area well were able to attend the scene and quickly escort the pair

to the surface. Mendip Cave Rescue were supported by Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service, and the incident was closed at 19:31 with everyone safely back on the surface.

15 September 2018 – Wookey Hole Cave

Source – Dave King's notes

No, not an official rescue as it didn't go through the police, and hence no incident number. Half a dozen people mobilised to carry a member of the public out of Wookey Hole, some of whom happen to be M.C.R. Wardens.

A male collapsed on the tourist path in Wookey Hole Cave. Wookey Hole rang an M.C.R. Warden direct to ask for assistance to carry out.

The Warden rang Paul Hadfield to collect stretcher from M.C.R. store and also rang the Hunters' since he thought Bob Cork was there.

Bob wasn't in Hunters' so Roger (the Landlord) passed phone to Frank Tully, who told the few of us that were in the Hunters' that a man had hurt his ankle and assistance was required to carry him out.

Frank and Les Williams headed off to Wookey. Dave King bumped into Paul outside Hunters' and went to M.C.R. store to assist with any kit that might be required, then we both set off and headed to Wookey Hole.

On arrival an ambulance was already on site and a short distance (a few hundred metres) inside the cave Dany, Les and Frank had already attended to the casualty, and had him stretchered ready for carry out.

Les, Frank, Paul, myself & Dany Bradshaw, who was already on site, plus Chris Williams carried the man up and down the few staircases and out to the ambulance.

The reasons given for not going through the correct protocols (i.e. police & Sarcall) for a rescue callout was that:-

- Wookey Hole are very supportive of cavers with access to the cave.
- It was only an easy carry out.
- The circus of emergency vehicles (fire tenders, H.A.R.T., A.S.S.A.R. etc) was not wanted.

2019

20 February 2019 – Box Stone Mines

Mendip Cave Rescue received a message from Wiltshire Police at 17:30 on Wednesday 20th February, regarding an incident involving a lost dog near Box Stone Mines. A Jack Russell terrier had apparently entered a small hole the previous day and could be heard barking, but efforts to extract him had so far failed. Four local cavers met at Quarry Hill, Box at 18:15 as Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service was just departing. The Jack Russell (called "Patch") could be heard intermittently through a small hole clogged with leaf litter at the base of a rock outcrop. On inspection of the site it was decided that Patch did not get into the hole that way, so a search

for an alternative way in was undertaken. A small very old low entry on the south side of the outcrop seemed most likely, so one caver crawled in calling to Patch, and coaxed him towards the entrance. A couple of minutes later Patch appeared on the surface for a slightly tearful reunion with his owners. Patch appeared uninjured and none the worse for its stay underground, and the incident was closed at 19:03.

21 August 2019 – Wookey Hole Cave

Mendip Cave Rescue were called by Avon and Somerset Police via SARCALL at 12:20 on 21st August 2019 for an incident in Wookey Hole Caves in Wookey Hole. A female visitor in her mid 30's, had slipped and fallen during the show cave tour and landed on hip/shoulders and was complaining of neck pain. She couldn't move and was feeling very cold in chamber 2 of the showcave. South Western Ambulance Service and H.A.R.T. were also called, although the H.A.R.T. team were stood down when M.C.R. arrived. 4 wardens attended along with ambulance service and stabilised the casualty before transferring her to a stretcher and carrying to the entrance and handing over to the ambulance service. The incident was closed at 13:47 with the casualty safely in an ambulance.

19 September 2019 – Ebbor Gorge (Surface)

Mendip Cave Rescue were called by Avon and Somerset Police via SARCALL at 11:38 on 19th September 2019 to assist Avon & Somerset Search and Rescue with a search on Ebbor Gorge for a high risk missing person whose car had been found at the Ebbor Gorge car park. Ebbor Gorge contains a number of small, short caves where it would be possible to be out of sight of a surface search, so MCR were tasked with searching the underground sites within the gorge. Three M.C.R. wardens plus a local expert met at the gorge at 12:20 and systematically searched all the viable underground sites without finding the missing person, and so closed the underground search at 17:02.

Note that Avon & Somerset Search and Rescue resumed the surface search of Ebbor Gorge on a second day, and unfortunately located the body of the missing person.

OTHER NEWS ARTICLES

Source – Western Daily Press – 13 December 1963

CAVERS DRAW UP POTHOLE SAFETY CODE

The Mendip Rescue Organisation has issued 3,000 copies of a new leaflet giving advice and precautions for caving on the Mendips. Free copies have gone to many of the caving clubs in the area.

Others have been sent to farmers who control entry to some of the main caves and to shops selling caving equipment.

The Caving Code has been drawn up by the leading caving clubs in the area, and wardens of the M.R.O. - the voluntary body that carries out cave rescues in the tricky Mendip holes. Another 1,000 leaflets have also been printed, and Dr. Oliver Lloyd, of Withey Close, West. Westbury-on-Trym, secretary of the M.R.O. hopes to distribute them to cavers who do not belong to clubs.

“Half the caving on Mendip is done by young people who belong to small, mushroom clubs, or no clubs at all. These are hard to contact,” he said.

One page of the leaflet details good caving manners and precautions. The other tells the caver what to do when things go wrong. Tips from the first section include:

ALWAYS leave a note with someone on the surface to say which cave you are visiting and what time you expect to be back.

HAVE two forms of lighting with you, and be able to do repairs in the dark.

HELMETS are essential on verticals, and desirable at most other times.

KEEP in touch with the caver behind you at all times to prevent the party from splitting up.

NEVER use other people's tackle without making arrangements with them, as it may be missing when the return journey is made.

HAVE no less than four cavers in a party, if someone gets hurt, the second stays with him, while the other two go for help.

Advice in times of trouble includes:

IF YOUR Lights fail, or you lose the way, stay where you are and await rescue.

IF YOU have to wait, get out of draughts and huddle together to keep warm.

THE PARTY giving the alarm should observe the M.R.O. notice at the cave entrance - go to the nearest telephone, ring the police at Wells 3481, and stay by the telephone until the rescue warden rings back for information.

TO AVOID getting trapped by floods, consult the weather before going down a wet cave.

Rescuers' 50 years



● Photo: Bob Bowen.

Sandra Lee, b. Hartman,
A. Spanggo Blet, ? J. Cheo, R. Brown,
J. Hat, C. Bradshaw

IN the 50 years since it was formed, Mendip Rescue Organisation has been called out 260 times and rescued more than 600 people from the difficult and tortuous system of caves which honeycombs the Mendip Hills.

The MRO is the second oldest cave rescue organisation in Britain, and tomorrow cavers from all over the country are expected to converge on Cheddar Gorge to celebrate its golden jubilee.

Instead of plumbing the depths this time, they will be hitting the heights. Led by Cheddar Caves education officer Chris Bradshaw, the most experienced members of the party will abseil off High Rock at the top of the George, which, at 380 feet high, is the highest inland cliff in the country.

The organisation basically comprises 20 wardens, but any caver who is around when the emergency call goes out can be pressed into service.

Some of the rescues are extremely difficult due to the nature and position of the caves, and some have been known to take 12 hours.

Source – Western Daily Press – 28 March 1988

RESCUE SQUAD'S MAMMOTH TASK – MONTY ON THE MOVE

A prehistoric monster posed a jumbo-sized problem for members of the Mendip Rescue Organisation. They volunteered to help evict a mammoth - or, to be more accurate, the top half of a mammoth - from its resting place in Cheddar Gorge. The full-size model was originally intended as the centrepiece of a tableau at the Caves, but the panorama was never completed.

So it lay gathering dust in a store at the Caveman Restaurant until caves manager Mrs. Sandra Lee ordered it to be removed as part of a spring-cleaning exercise. The rescue team helped hoist the creature from the building, carry it over several roofs and then load it on a trailer for the journey to their own headquarters near Priddy. They hope to use the model mammoth, which is called Monty, to help raise funds. Mrs. Lee said: "There were a lot of very surprised-looking visitors as the mammoth was driven up the Gorge. "At least he has gone to a good home, because the alternative would have been to cut him up and take him in small pieces to the Cheddar civic amenity site."



Source – *Western Mercury* – 1 April 1988

RESCUE GROUP'S MAMMOTH TASK

Cheddar Cave Rescue Group had a mammoth task on their hands recently when they saved the full-size model animal. The mammoth was bought several years ago as part of a tableau



for the caves but was never used. It was stored behind the Caveman Restaurant and the only way to get it out was to put a life-line on it, haul it up onto the roof then lower it to a waiting trailer to take it to Priddy. Initially, it was going to be cut up and disposed of, but the group decided to rescue it. They are now looking for an individual or business who have the name “Mammoth” and would be willing to buy the animal in return for a donation to the group’s funds. The removal of the mammoth is part of the annual Spring clean of the

complex organised by Cheddar Caves’ manager, Sandra Lee, ready for the summer visitors.

Source – *MRO News No. 6* – December 1994

NEW YEAR – NEW ERA – TRIBUTE TO JIM HANWELL

Whatever happens during 1995, be it flood, earthquake, suicidal students, collapsing boulder ruckles or fat people in thin caves, this year will mark the end of an era for the Mendip Rescue Organization with the retirement from Secretary of Jim Hanwell at the General Meeting in March.

Since the M.R.O. was formed in 1936 it has placed great store in continuity and has only had 3 previous secretaries – Dr. Bertie Crook, Howard Kenney and Oliver Lloyd. Jim has always been the first to say the M.R.O. is nothing more than Mendip cavers with a different, and more serious, hat on. True - but each secretary has, in his own way, affected how fellow cavers and outside bodies perceive us and our efforts.

Jim became a Warden on 6th March 1960 so his service at the sharp end covers that Golden time on Mendip when it seemed that caves were being extended every weekend. Equipment for both cavers in general and rescue in particular was sparse and crude by modern standards and it seemed that not a Saturday night passed without the Hunters being cleared prematurely to haul some bedraggled bods up the Forty. Were we innocent then? Virtually all the M.R.O. kit would go in a couple of tackle bags and the only interest in “outside bodies” was keeping our good relationships with the Mendip farmers and trying to tell the Press as little as possible! Jim took over as Secretary at the 1972 General Meeting and inherited a St. John’s carrying sheet, a couple of pulleys, some NiFe cells and assorted “string” - the bank balance wasn’t much better either and would probably not have bought a beer for every Warden - even at 1972 prices!

How times change- the M.R.O. store is now bursting at the seams with hi-Tech kit worth thousands of pounds and we need an Equipment Officer to maintain it and a Training Officer to show us how to use it! The Secretaries time is increasingly taken up in liaising with others - South West England Rescue Association, Mountain Rescue Council, Association of Chief Police Officers, British Cave Rescue Council, the Press, and, most importantly, the local Emergency Services, the farmers, residents and cavers of Mendip. Anyone who thinks that M.R.O. only exists and functions 10 or 12 times a year when it gets a call is living in dream land. During Jim's tenure in the hot seat to the end of 1993 M.R.O. was been called out 227 times to assist more than 495 people and assorted animals.

Jim has always said that the Mendip Rescue Organization IS Mendip caving - well, yes, he is right but someone had to channel the anarchy and bring order from chaos.

THANKS JIM some poor sod had to do it glad it was you!

Source – Western Daily Press –22 May 1995

CAVE RESCUE LEADER RETIRES

Leading cave rescuer Jim Hanwell has retired as secretary of the Mendip Rescue Organisation after 23 years in office.

But members of the M.R.O., the second oldest cave rescue group in the world, have made sure Mr. Hanwell does not disappear from the rescue scene they have made him their chairman and treasurer.

Mr. Hanwell, who lives in Wookey Hole, enjoyed a surprise retirement party at Priddy Village Hall on Saturday.

More than 700 cavers have been rescued during the lifetime of the M.R.O. and Mr. Hanwell was involved in 200 of them.

He was presented with a picture of Forty Foot Pot in Swildon's Hole – the gathering point for countless rescues.

Source – Wells Journal –25 May 1995

HANWELL, CAVER, GETS HIS OWN SWILDON'S

Top caver Jim Hanwell will not have to move far from his living room to enjoy the delights of Swildon's Hole, one of Mendip's most staggering caves. He will be able to relax and gaze at an oil painting by local artist Robin Gray. The painting was a gift to retired Wells Blue School teacher Mr. Hanwell as he stepped down after 23 years as secretary of the Mendip Rescue Organization. He had been a warden of the group since 1960. During his time as secretary, the group - 25 volunteers who can call on the services of many members of local caving clubs - has been called out 238 times. In that time, it has brought 500 threatened cavers safely back to the surface. A member of the M.R.O. said: "He has done a fantastic job. We are very fortunate that we will not lose his valuable advice completely. He is staying on as treasurer." The M.R.O. is the second oldest cave rescue organization in the world. It was founded in 1936. The oldest is based in Yorkshire. Bob Cork takes over as secretary from Mr. Hanwell.

TYPICAL INCIDENT LOG

INCIDENT AT THRUPE LANE SWALLET 17/18th November 1979

B.E.P received, call from police about 4:05 p.m.
16.10 Belfry called by B.E.P - Batstone to get store opened and kit to T.L.
16.15 BEP called. Irwin to collect drugs from store and start organising at T.L.
16.0 DJI arrives at T.L.
16.50 A. Mills + G. Nye to assess situation. Simon Meade-King already underground to assess. Nye to be runner and report situation.
17.15 D.T.; F.D; R. Mansfield down cave with medical box.
17.42 REM returns requiring diggers to enlarge crawls.
17.47 G. Cullen to dig crawls with R. Witcombe.
17.48 REM; D. Turner; B. Workman to the bottom.
18.00 RM, RW, DT, GC & BW enter cave.
18.00 A.M returns from cave with report on casualty requires laddering equipment and dry clothes + comforts box.
18.20 M. Bishop, Ken Jones, Ian Caldwen, Graham Wilton-Jones, Martin Grass to form hauling and carrying party at Atlas. Took tackle requested by AM.
19.05 BEP telephones for additional help.
19.20 BEP & R. Hill to lay telephone cable.
19.50 BEP & RH at Perseverance with telephone.
20.00 C & C Williams to clear stones.
20.10 C. Forster, John Kettle take Reviva to Perseverance.
20.18 M. Grass (from Party) brings out Kevin Senior (one of casualties party)
20.25 BEP calls for 2 lamps and cigarettes.
20.39 MG & Steve Woolven take cells and cigs. to MB.
21.08 JK & CF out of cave.
21.35 S.M-K + 1 out of cave.
21.55 C & C W out of cave.
22.12 T.L. party formed + 7 (B. Woodward. taken off party to organise party above Perse. Pot).
22.20 JDH to Belfry to organise party for BW (At about this time casualty being hauled up Atlas Pot).
22.25 Call for 2nd. Doctor.
22.44 Claire W. to W. Horrington to collect spare cells.
22.53 T.L. party enter cave. Worry about cavers in cave damaging tele. wire.
23.14 CF & T. Mintram enter cave.
23.18 RW returns from cave.
23.37 BW +7 enter cave to head. of Perse. Pot.
23.41 BEP transfers telephone to Marble Ch.
23.41 Casualty about 100ft from Marble Chamber.
23.43 Mike Glanville arrives.
23.48 1st. Party on way out of cave.
23.49 GC out of cave.
00.20 N. Taylor to M.R.O. store to collect CO2 adaptor.
00.23 M. Glan. + P. Gough down cave.
00.23 GJ out of cave.
00.26 K. James & I. Caldwell out of cave.
00.30 GC & S.W. out of cave.
00.32 AM to Perse. Pot with iron bar for improving belays.

00.41 MB & BW out of cave.
00.45 BEP requests chisels and hammers for clearing ledges above Perse. Pot. (not required).
00.47 G. W-J out of cave.
00.54 D. Walker down cave with soda lime container.
00.57 P.G out of cave.
00.58 AM out of cave.
01.08 Casualty Marble Ch. condition pretty good.
01.08 REM & DT out of cave.
01.11 Casualty on way to Butts Ch. after Reviva treatment.
01.21 S.M-K out of cave.
01.26 R.H. out of cave.
01.32 BEP transfer tele. to head of Perse. Pot.
01.35 N. Mizrahe arrives.
02.03 DT leaving cave.
02.17 DT out of cave.
02.12 tele. Line broken in entrance shaft.
02.30 tele. line repaired.
02.30 Casualty on way up Perse. Pot.
02.37 BEP out of cave. R. West and S. Tuck on telephones.
02.43 Ambulance arrives.
02.48 D. Horswell out of cave (T.L. party).
02.52 New team under A. Mills formed to form hauling party and help near entrance.
03.15 Casualty at head of Perse. Pot.
03.25 tele. wire broken again.
03.35 Casualty 50 ft. from entrance.
04.15 Casualty out of cave.
04.30 ambulance leaves for Bath.
05.00 approx. all leave scene.

JDM Note at start of rescue:

Party of three from Southampton and Sussex down at 13.20 hr. Two experienced, and third one less so. All wet suited and electricians.
N. J. Kermode (aged 21) Univ. of Sussex, Brighton. He fell off the last 20 ft. of Atlas (wet pitch). He was heard to be in distress, so K. Senior went down to help but as ladder was short he returned and sent C. Gibson to raise M.R.O. Senior stayed to help if possible via. dry pitch. Incident happened. about 3.30 p.m.

D.J.I. comments:

Comforts Box must go down with assessment party - so too (Don T insists) warm clothing and goon suits must go down at the same time. With hindsight, I agree I feel whatever the incident, where injury is suspected, these items must go down the cave with the assessment party whether they are needed or not.

There appears to be over long time in getting tackle for Atlas and hauling up pitch (3½ hours) From start of haul at Atlas to entrance about 6¼ hours which would seem reasonable

Times approx. from Atlas to various stages through the cave:

Atlas to Marble Chamber: 3 hours

Marble Chamber to Perse. Pot: 1 hours (bottom of Perse. Pot)

At top of Perse. Pot: 25 mins.

Perse. Pot to entrance: 1.40 hrs.

Problem first few hundred feet; particularly tackling of Atlas. Addition of rawlbolt holes required for easy tackling. Rawlbolts to go down with tackle on rescues. Consideration should be given to improving belay points at top of Perse. Pot.

OBITUARIES

DR. BERTRAM AUSTIN CROOK – (1899-1973)

Source – UBSS Proceedings – Vol. 13 No. 2, pages 292 to 293

It is with great regret that the death of Dr. B. A. Crook is recorded. He died on October 13th after a short illness. With Bertie we have lost a founder member, an honorary member and a Vice-President of our society.

At the end of World War 1, in which he saw active service in the infantry, he came up to the University of Bristol to read Medicine. Early in 1919 he attended the meeting at which it was decided to found the University of Bristol Spelaeological Society. In our society he played a very active part in the discovery and exploration of caves in the Mendips. Those were the days of push-bikes, walking and heavy equipment with candles for lights. He was always a member of 'away' parties to Derbyshire, Yorkshire and the Dordogne. His interests included archaeology and he shared in the work of excavating Read's Cavern, Aveline's Hole and Rowberrow Cavern.

It was Bertie who first introduced miner's carbide lamps into Mendip caving, a very big step forward in cave lighting. The difficulty was to find a satisfactory means of keeping the headlamp firmly fixed to one's head gear, which, in those days, was usually either a battered Homberg hat or a cap. (Helmets came in much later).

Probably his most exciting experience was to be the leader of the first party to enter The Gorge of G.B. Cave via the Wet Way, then always wet. He has described how he fell out of the Wet Way into the Gorge, picked himself up and then found he could see nothing as the place was, by his feeble light, too big to see the far wall and roof. All was black. It was an unforgettable experience. In G.B. another occasion in the Devil's Elbow the top of his spare tin of carbide came off, the carbide was spilled into the water and the acetylene ignited with a bang. It was a matter of a quick exit from the surrounding flames. His comment: "It was a sure fire way of getting out of a tight spot quickly."

To Bertie also, due honour must be paid for originating the Mendip Rescue Organisation, the prototype of many other such organisations that have developed throughout Britain. He applied his medical knowledge to caving accidents and evolved new techniques for rescues. Amongst his achievements was the introduction of plaster bandage for immobilising fractured limbs temporarily till the causality was out of the cave. It was first used in Rod's Pot for an injury that involved a compound fracture of a tibia and fibula.

Through all the years from 1919 to 1973 he has helped the society unobtrusively both as an officer he was treasurer for many years - and as a friend to the younger members. His workshop at his home at Timsbury was always available for such things as ladder making and the like. For all these things we are very grateful.

After qualifying he did the usual series of house jobs and then went into private practice and specialised in surgery at the local hospital at Paulton. He always put his patients first and nothing was too much trouble. He was very well liked for his kindness, skill and integrity. This liking was well demonstrated on his retirement this year when he received many presentations from so many groups, the members of which had good reasons to be grateful to him.

With his death we have all lost a good friend and a good man. Our sympathy goes out to his wife Marjorie and to their three sons and their children and indeed to all those closely associated with him over the years. Such men as Bertie are all too few so our, loss is grievous.

E. K. Tratman.

Source – Cave Diving Group Newsletter – July 1985

OLIVER CROMWELL LLOYD: AN OBITUARY – (1911 – 1985)

On Monday, 20th May 1985, Oliver Cromwell Lloyd, perhaps Mendip's most colourful personality, died. He was found at home by Marco Paganuzzi and Bob Drake, returning diving equipment the next day.

Oliver had lived in Withey House, Stoke Bishop since just after the war. He had been brought up in one of the Stately Homes of England, as befitted a descendant of one of England's rulers - Great Dixter at Northiam, conveniently near Glynbourne, going to Cambridge to do medicine in the 1930's. He qualified in 1937 and during the war went to India, where he developed an interest in entymology - doing research on malaria mosquitoes, and at times walking and studying butterflies in the Himalayan foothills.

By 1949, he was Reader in Pathology at Bristol University and did manage a caving trip in his early days there - he went to the Gorge in G.B. soon after its discovery. This was probably just a public relations exercise.

Tom Hewer, his Professor and Bruce Perry, Professor of Medicine were both active U.B.S.S. members years before. Life was difficult for him in the early 1950's. His wife was ill and at times he felt overwhelmed. He used to cycle out to Mendip, but somehow did not at first fall in with the community. Eventually he did ask if we would take him caving again, a request which resulted in a trip to Sump 2 one Saturday in 1952. It was in the days before wetsuits, or even drysuits, and he could hardly be blamed for stating firmly the following Monday that he would never go again. By the following weekend, the bruises were fading, and he was caving nearly every weekend for the next twenty years, staying either at Burrington or Hillgrove. People were beginning to look again at possible extensions to known caves – G.B., August Hole, and in Wales, Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, were still new. Oliver had been on a Swildon's trip when Luke Devenish blasted the Boss, and was invited to join the exploratory and photographic trip on the following Monday evening. It was Oliver's diary that revealed that this discovery in 1953 occurred on the Feast of the Conversion of St. Paul. His association continued. It is Oliver's birthday (August 4th) that the squeeze commemorates. He logged every trip he made into Swildon's - the number ran to over a hundred.

His closest Mendip association was with the University of Bristol Speleological Association, especially the element of U.B.S.S. concerned with cave diving. For years he was the Treasurer of U.B.S.S.. Many ex-students continued to pay a subscription because of the continuity he represented. Oliver trained with a succession of divers in Henleaze and at Vobster pools, and when one of his medical students, Paul Esser, was drowned in Porth yr Ogof, he felt this deeply. The help he gave with acquisition of apparatus, his willingness to share his knowledge of the caves, and feeling of continuity extended to the non-diving U.B.S.S. fraternity, and from the early 1950's to the 1980's he supported the expeditions to Lisduinbhearna, sometimes twice a year, as provider of transport, photographer and, again, continuity man, and on return would furnish a lighthearted chronicle in song with guitar accompaniment. The expeditions stayed at

Keane's Hotel, when his botanical knowledge enabled him to keep upsides with Mary Angela Keane, who held a doctorate in Botany, and was an expert on the Burren.

His only other overseas venture was with Tratman to Gibraltar. Looking back over his caving career, Oliver seems to have taken over the Mendip scene very quickly. The involvement with M.R.O. seemed only natural at the time. He was known to Bertie Crook, the first doctor in M.R.O. He had university connections with people like Alan Rogers who could do research in physiology; cave rescue seemed more a branch of medicine than it does now. M.R.O. meetings used to go well and business was speedily dealt with. It seemed somehow churlish to raise difficult questions after an excellent meal, the preparation of which and the choice of wines being supervised by Oliver. There was a large element of generosity as well as attempts to persuade. Oliver was one of the first to draw attention to the dangers of hypothermia with cave accidents.

We tended to think of him only as a caver, forgetting he had other interests. His medical position was a university teaching post, and he taught pathology with the same enthusiasm that he gave to caving lectures. He was an authority on melanomas, malignant skin tumours. At one time, the Government of Uganda quite frequently used the services of the Bristol Pathology Department, although I'm not sure either realised this.

He was deeply interested in music, especially opera. When he reached compulsory retiring age, he enrolled in the Bristol University Music Department as a student, producing several works of interest, although these never became well known. He played the spinet which stood in the corner of his sitting room (and the full drum kit. that stood in the other Ed) and years ago held occasional concert parties at home. He was the possessor of perfect pitch -- not always a gift - and he sometimes found other people's pianos hard to live with. Again, he loved teaching. I well remember returning from a weekend in Ffynnon Ddu listening to his resumé of the Wagner Ring. This account occupied the entire journey from Craig-y-Nos to Bristol, apart from a few minutes when he broke off, I suppose at about Act 3 of Die Walkure, to exchange pleasantries with a jay-walker near Raglan. It was probably his interest in opera which led to amateur dramatics. This certainly dated from his days at Cambridge, where he produced a script for the medical student's pantomime which had to be censored by the Vice-Chancellor's office. "Twelfth Night", produced on the lawn at Wills Hall, was a favourite and a success. Oliver's involvement continued right to the end of his life. He had introduced the rescue Film at the Cave Rescue Conference on May 17th, and had done it well. He handed over the films for safe-keeping, almost as if he had a premonition. He had a good evening, and he must have gone out on a high. Cavers were not encouraged to attend the funeral. I know this is not as he would have wished it.

He could be an infuriating man at times, and he would not tolerate hypocrisy or woolly thinking, but his commitment to the caving scene and to generations of students, was sincere and total.

D. M . M . Thompson.

Source – published by B.C.R.C. article by Jim Hanwell

DR. OLIVER C. LLOYD

Dr. Oliver C. Lloyd died at his home in Bristol on Monday 20th May 1985, just after the weekend conference of the British Cave Rescue Council held on Mendip. Only on the previous Friday evening at the Hunters' Lodge Inn, Priddy, Oliver had set things off to a good start by showing the old Mendip Rescue Organization film that he had inspired and made in 1960. He

was in fine form, and this is how we prefer to remember him here. He would like that, for, in a recent letter he wrote: “My own view of history is not that of Tacitus. I live in the present and look forward.” I replied that those who made history need not be too busy to write it. And Oliver was at his best in both.

Most aspects of British caving over the past 30 years have been influenced in some way by Oliver’s charismatic approach. He was widely known and instantly recognisable from County Clare to Clapham; very colourful, often brilliant, sometimes too glaring, yet never dull. When the spotlight moved from him, he directed from the wings. His professional commitment to the School of Medicine at Bristol University and his personal skill at swimming merged together naturally in cave rescue work and cave diving in particular. Oliver was the driving force behind both on Mendip throughout much of the 1950’s and 60’s. Cave diving took over in the 1970’s when he retired from medical research and underwent a hip operation.

It would be unfair to Oliver not to mention his love of music and dramatics too, for he was an accomplished instrumentalist, sang madrigals and led many a bar room sing song. His tastes in the arts were broad and his knowledge of the classics even encyclopedic. Good food, wine and company were to his fancy and he was an impeccable host. I shall not forget his dinners for M.R.O. Wardens at Withey House, nor the hampers of sandwiches taken underground on early caving trips. Even to stop here does not do Oliver justice.

The end was as abrupt and eventful as his first appearance on Mendip, for he was on the exploration party that found the St. Paul’s Series in Swildon’s Hole in 1953 when virtually still a novice caver. It happened on the Conversion of St. Paul and Oliver chose the name. I think that caving became his road from Tarsus at that moment. On August 4th this year, many cavers will celebrate Oliver’s 74th birthday as a wake in the Old Grotto down Swildon’s. Many will be much younger than when he first went caving. Yet none will be his like.

Source – Bristol Evening Post – 29 October 1985

‘STRANGE MAN IN SHORTS’ IS SADLY MISSED

THE eccentric of Withey House was potholing pathologist Dr. Oliver Cromwell Lloyd, who died in May.

He joined Bristol University as a lecturer in pathology in 1948, and became reader in morbid anatomy at the university and consultant pathologist for United Bristol Hospitals. He lived at Withey House for around 35 years and did little to it. One of his few modifications was to plug rows of holes in the ceilings – part of the original heating and ventilation system with dozens and dozens of corks from wine bottles.

He was a tall, gaunt man with varied sartorial tastes. He was a familiar figure at Bristol inquests in sober suits. In the Withey Mead area of Stoke Bishop, he was the elderly sun-worshipper in shorts. On the Mendips, he was the helmeted and overalled potholer and member of the cave rescue team.

He chose to celebrate both his 60th and 70th birthdays with sherry, cake and friends deep inside Swildon’s Hole, near Priddy. After his death, fellow cavers held another party in Swildon’s Hole on what would have been his 74th birthday in August.

And everywhere the eccentric was not so much tolerated as liked and respected. He held musical soirees at home for students – and once in a competition to find who lived in the worst-kept home, he managed to come second.

Neighbours whose neat gardens caught the overspill of weeds from his wilderness didn't mind because they liked him.

One was warned by her mother not to talk to “that strange man in shorts” but ignored the advice and, like all the others, now mourns his loss.

His university colleagues would sometimes find a paper bag on their doorstep.

Inside, no note, just some strange edible fungi. And they knew that the donor was Oliver Cromwell Lloyd.

Many of the people who knew him in his later years thought he was a lifelong bachelor with no interest in such mundane hobbies as household DIY and gardening. In fact he was a widower, and in his early years at Withey House both house and garden were kept in showplace condition. In those days, the doctor had a wife. According to local legend, she was very beautiful and very clever, but lost first her mind and then her life after losing a longed for baby. After that tragedy, Oliver Cromwell Lloyd allowed time to turn his garden into a nature conservation area and his home into a museum.

Source – Wells Journal – 25 May 1989

DR. STANLEY CANNICOTT - DEATH OF CAVE RESCUE TEAM DOCTOR

Mendip consultant psychiatrist Dr. Stanley MacCormick Cannicott has died, aged 68, following an illness.

Dr. Cannicott was the doctor to the Mendip Cave Rescue Service for 15 years. The funeral took place at Cheddar Roman Catholic Church last Monday. He was educated at Downside School, Stratton-On-The-Fosse, near Bath, and gained a History M.A. Degree and a Medical Degree M.B.B.Ch from Trinity College. He served in the World War Two and was awarded the Military Cross and Croix De Guerre. Dr. Cannicott, who leaves a wife Shirley and three sons, was married in 1946, at the end of the war.

He worked in mental hospitals and moved to Cheddar with his family in 1960, taking up the post of consultant psychiatrist at Mendip Hospital in Wells. He was buried at Cheddar.

Source – WCC Journal No. 224 (April 1990), page 126

Sadly, yet with many lively memories, we record the death of Dr. Stanley Cannicott during the summer. Stanley started caving on Mendip whilst a pupil at nearby Downside School before the last War. He was also a keen member of their cadet corps. When the war came, Stanley joined up from university and saw much front line action as a paratroop officer and field surgeon. Being fluent in both French and Spanish, he also worked with the Resistance. He was decorated for valour and severely wounded himself. On returning after the War to work as the senior psychiatric officer in local hospitals, he settled with his family in Cheddar and joined the Axbridge Caving Group.

It was always a comforting and invariably colourful moment when Stanley arrived on the scene at rescues to attend injured cavers. All his field surgeon's experience and psychiatric skills went to work and we learnt a lot from seeing him in action; often unorthodox but unfailingly practical and effective. His First Aid lectures for wardens at the Mendip Hospital in the early seventies were masterpieces of anecdote and demonstration; he did not just talk about injections, for instance, but pulled down his trousers, stuck the hypodermic needle into his thigh and invited us to inject him with water whilst calmly explaining the do's and don'ts of the process. At one meeting to consider how we might get a badly hurt caver back through Blue Pencil, soon after Swildon's Four was first discovered, Stanley seriously set out his requirements for performing an amputation in the cave. Needless to say, these were startlingly simple and made sense.

The last rescue Stanley attended was when Graham Price fell off the old Forty Foot Pot in Swildon's in November 1973 and fractured his pelvis. Tim Reynolds and I were patching him up for the carry-out when Stanley arrived. Barely glancing at the patient, he asked us if we were happy with the plastering we had applied around the waist, then joined the hauling party saying: "We'll soon find out if you've done the job properly". He was an immensely practical and reassuring person who gave everyone great confidence in themselves. That is why he responded well to cavers and us to him.

Jim Hanwell

Source – Wells Journal – 3 March 1994

LUKE DEVENISH – TRAILBLAZING CAVER DIES – (1920- 1994)

A trailblazer for the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation has died at the age of 73. Luke Devenish, of October House, Bradley Cross, Cheddar, was a keen caver and a driving force behind the lifesaving team founded in 1936.

"Luke was the lynchpin of the operation in the immediate post-war years of the 1950s and into the 60s, in a period when the cave rescue service in Mendip was truly developing," said friend and organisation secretary Jim Hanwell.

"He was a warden and was the first person to be called out by the police when he was living at Priddy, and as a volunteer he serviced and provided all the equipment involved in getting people out.

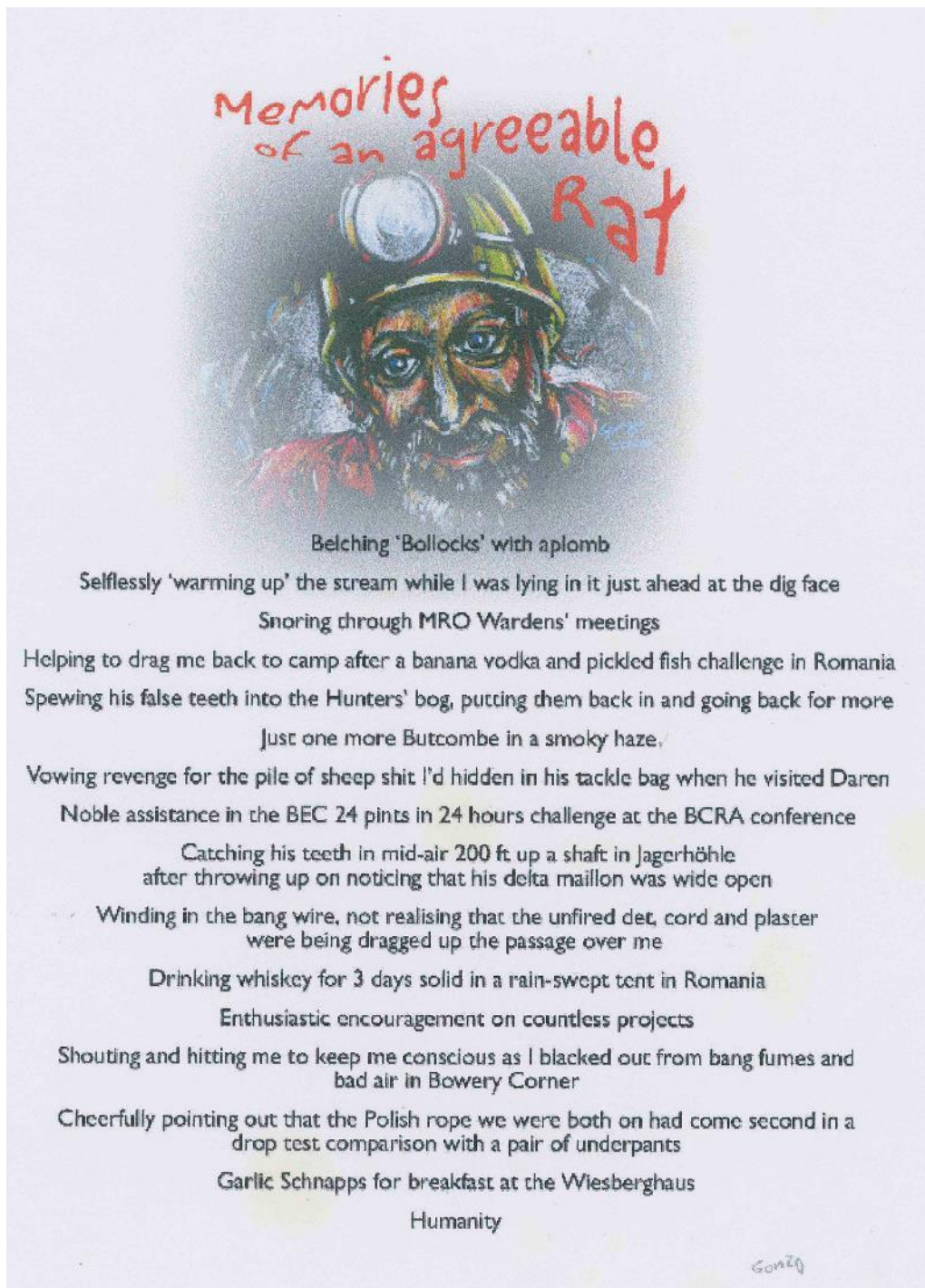
"He must have been involved in 100 or so cave rescues during his period and he was a father figure to us all and a very colourful character," he said.

Wife Norma added: "It was often dangerous and there were deaths, but very often someone would be reported missing and he'd go round to the cavers' huts and then find him in bed – and not reported back."

Welsh-born Mr. Devenish served in the Army tanks division during the Second World War and when he was demobbed, came to Wells to work in the museum, where he put bones together. A fellow of the Institute of Explosive Engineers, he also worked as a blasting engineer and undertook many underwater assignments.

The couple moved to Washingpool, before moving to Cheddar 11 years ago, when Mr. Devenish retired. He also leaves three children, Peter, Colena, Janine and one grandson, Sam.

TONY JARRATT (1949 – 2008)



MENDIP CAVE RESCUE (MCR)

Formed in 1936, and originally called the M.R.O. (the Mendip Rescue Organization) we are the second oldest cave rescue organization in the world, with only the Cave Rescue Organisation in Yorkshire as a longer running cave rescue organisation. The Mendip Rescue Organisation was renamed to Mendip Cave Rescue (M.C.R.) in February 2008 to better reflect our activities. One of sixteen cave rescue teams in the British Isles, we are responsible for rescues from caves and disused stone mines in the Bristol area, Somerset, Wiltshire & Dorset. Injuries, even relatively minor ones become a much more serious matter when they occur underground. Medical assessment and immediate care are complicated by the hostile cave environment - the total darkness, cold, wet and mud compound the severity of the situation. Add to this the practical problems of evacuating an immobilised casualty from a confined and arduous situation and you have a serious undertaking.

Acting on behalf of the Police, M.C.R. are responsible for all aspects of the operation underground, from marshalling the required cavers, sourcing and deploying specialist equipment through to control and coordination of the rescue. After assessment, First Aid and stabilisation the hard physical work and technical difficulties of the evacuation begin. The logistics of having the right equipment and the right number of rescuers in the right place at the right time, in safety, in an exposed, sometimes wet, sometimes claustrophobic, sometimes vertical, sometimes unstable environment, whilst continually monitoring and caring for the casualty mean that an evacuation may take many hours.

A VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATION

We are cavers who rescue cavers whenever and wherever an accident occurs. Self-help with voluntary service is a strong and enduring ethic amongst Mendip cavers - a tradition that has kept M.C.R. at the forefront of technical developments and techniques since its formation. Support is received from the whole of the caving community, both in terms of practical assistance and finance. Whilst acting on behalf of the Police, M.R.O. is entirely self-financed and does not call upon Local or National Funds. M.C.R. holds large amounts of highly specialised and sophisticated equipment, including state of the art communications equipment to enable direct communication between the surface and the incident location underground. Much of this equipment is expensive but its purchase is funded entirely by cavers who also carry out all the maintenance.

How to Call Out Mendip Rescue Organisation in an Emergency (1938)

A member of the party in which the accident has occurred will go to the nearest call box and ring Glastonbury Police – give number of the call box and name of cave in which accident has occurred. He must wait at call box until Rescue party arrives.

The Police will ring the Rescue Wardens in rotation. To the first warden they are able to get in touch with they will give the number of the call box and the name of the cave.

The Warden will phone the call box and ascertain the exact locality of the accident. He will ring back to the police informing them of the number of men to be called out and will set out immediately for the scene of the accident.

The Police (in the meantime) will ring the remainder of the wardens who will set out immediately for the accident, picking anyone up en route. In event of less than two of the warden Doctors being available the police will immediately get in touch with one or two of the listed Doctors. On receipt of a message from the Warden the police will call out as many

NOTICE FOR POSTING IN PHONE BOX.
=====

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION.

Lift Receiver, dial and ask for Glastonbury 15 (Police Inform Police that you require services of Mendip Rescue Organisation.

Give Name of cave and number of this call box which is

Replace Receiver and wait until you are rung back by one of the wardens.

DO NOT LEAVE THIS BOX UNTIL HELP ARRIVES.

Squads as are necessary to make up the full compliment of men required and inform them of location of meeting point. Squad leaders are responsible for getting out men in their squad. If unable to obtain the number of men as promised they must report back to the police. If the whereabouts of a member of their squad is known the Police should be informed so that they may get in touch with him as necessary.

At the scene of the accident the Senior Warden will take complete charge. In the event of the Senior Warden not being a doctor he will collaborate closely with the listed Doctor called out, and follow his instructions completely in so far as they relate to the treatment and removal of the patient.

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION.
INSTRUCTIONS TO POLICE.
=====

1. On receipt of notification of accident tell party phoning to hang up and wait at phone until rescue party arrives. Obtain number of call box and name of cave.
2. Ring Wardens in Rotation. To first Warden obtained give number of call box and name of cave. Keep a line clear for warden to ring back.
3. Receive instructions from Warden.
4. Continue ringing Wardens and inform each of name of cave.
5. In event of less than two warden Doctors being available obtain a listed Doctor.
6. Get in touch by phone or by phoning nearest station with sufficient Rescue Squad Leaders to ensure that the full number of men asked for is on the way to the scene of the accident.

The Wells ambulance to be called out only on the instructions of the Doctor. The Mendip Rescue Organisation will not be responsible for any charges made for use of the ambulance.

All concerned in the Rescue Organisation will be supplied with special maps showing quicker routes to definite meeting places. It will be necessary to give the letter of the meeting place only when phoning instructions.

How to Call Out Mendip Cave Rescue in an Emergency (2018)

- 1 - **Dial 999** (or 112-the single European Emergency Number).
- 2 - Ask for the **POLICE**.
- 3 - If calling from a mobile ask for **AVON AND SOMERSET POLICE**.
- 4 - Then ask for **CAVE RESCUE**.
- 5 - Prepare to give the following details:- Cave Name; Location within cave; Numbers and condition of those involved; Details of any injuries sustained.
- 6 - **STAY BY THE PHONE**. If using a mobile stay in a good reception area.
- 7 - A Mendip Cave Rescue Warden will call you back for more details so please keep the phone line free.

Useful Information

The following information is very useful to help the M.C.R. Warden get the right equipment and team members on site to quickly resolve the incident.

If an accident has happened ...

What happened?

Where underground did it happen?

When did it happen?

How many are injured?

What are the known injuries?

When did they go underground?

How many are still underground?

If a party is missing or overdue...

When did they go underground?

When should they have come out?

How many are in the party?

Where did they go underground?

What route were they planning to take?

SELF HELP

Unlike many sporting pastimes, caving offers considerable opportunity for doing irreparable damage to the participant. Analysis of the several hundred incidents the M.C.R. has been involved in has identified the main causes of rescues to be the result of FLOODS, FALLS and FAILURES of crucial equipment. Obviously, no single set of rules can cover every eventuality but in general *Accidents Don't Just Happen*, and there is usually some error of judgement at the root cause of them. You can minimise the chances by applying the following basic procedures.

Before going underground, leave accurate and unambiguous written word of the cave you intend to visit, your intended route and a realistic indication of your expected time of return. Best practice is to try and leave call-out messages with knowledgeable people on Mendip, but if you do have to leave written messages with friends elsewhere, then please make them aware of the appropriate police force and the correct call-out procedure (*see previous page for details*). Please do not change the basic plan and then neglect to amend the call-out messages left behind.

EQUIPMENT

COMMUNICATIONS

In the early days of cave rescue underground communication between the rescue party and the surface was by a caver “running” from the victim, to pass on information relating to the condition of the victim and what supplies/manpower were needed.

The next refinement was in the 1960’s when ex War Department field telephones were purchased, the main problem is that the handsets were connected by a heavy cable unwound from a large heavy drum.

WIRE TELEPHONES

The field telephones were then replaced by lightweight handsets connected by a thin single strand of wire; however this was easily broken. The single-wire telephone used the conductivity of the ground to provide a return path for the current. It had the advantage that only half the weight of cable had to be carried. S.W.T.s are cheap, rugged, and preferred to the traditional army field telephone.

M.R.O. - INFORMATION SHEET No 5

Comprises: 3 Ammo Boxes plus wire

Boxes 1 & 2 - Underground telephones containing one hand-set and one head-set (+ waist-mounting box).

Box 3 - Surface telephones containing 2 hand-sets.

Wire - Twin single strand wire (blue/yellow). Several 1,200 feet reels. One reel mounted on a wire dispenser that may be attached to a waist belt.

Short (170 feet) reel FOR SUMP USE ONLY.

Connecting Up:

Run out wire as required avoiding stretcher route where possible. Connect one wire to each terminal - it does not matter which way round. Waist-mounting box may be attached to waist belt. Any combination can be used - e. g. head-set one end, hand-set other end. Use RED BUTTON to CALL and BLACK BUTTON to TALK. You do not need to release black button to receive. Two-way simultaneous conversation is possible. Talk clearly and slowly.

Sump Use:

Use small reel of wire (170 feet).

Open box and remove one telephone (either type).

Close box and tow through sump on rope carefully.

Set up second telephone somewhere dry if possible.

AVOID GETTING TOO MUCH WATER IN TELEPHONE. DO NOT IMMERSE IN WATER.

(November 1987)

GRUNTERPHONE

A re-engineered version of the Ogofone*. Various minor circuit modifications were made to the original, primarily to eliminate some components which were obsolete. Designed and used by the Mendip Cave Rescue Organisation.

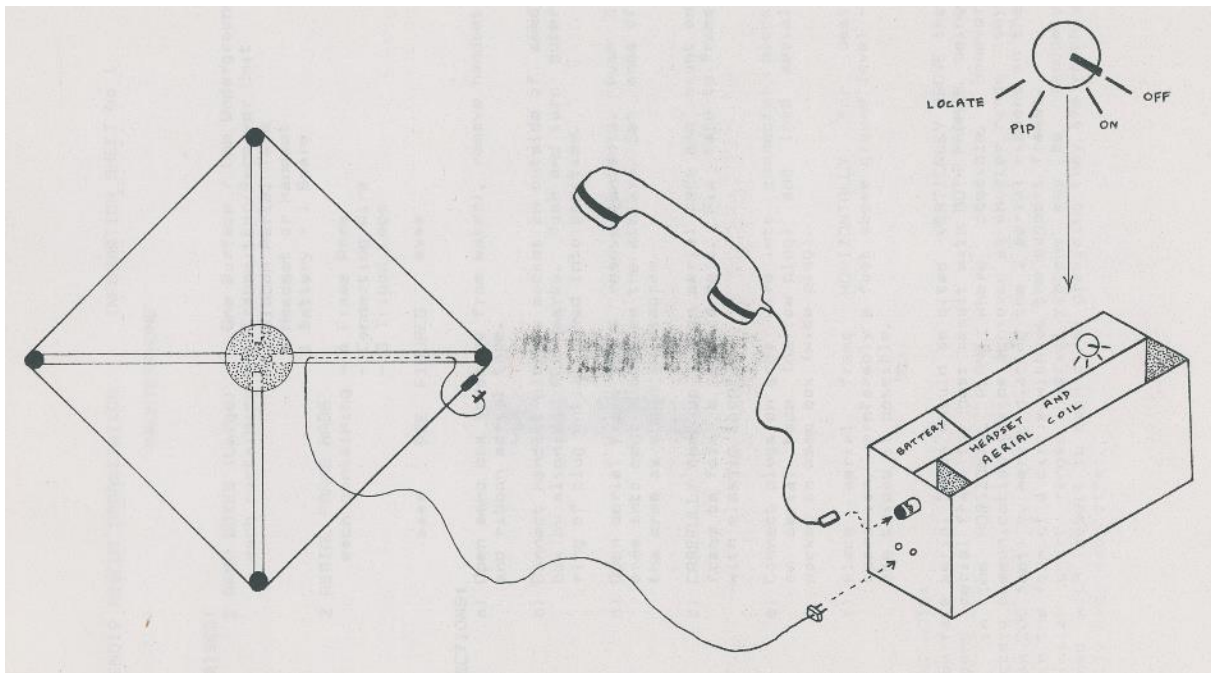
*The Ogofone is a single sideband transceiver with a tone facility for radio location. Mk2 units operated at 87.5KHz. The antenna is a 1 metre square 64-way ribbon cable, tuned to resonance.

Observations from incident report - 6 June 1989 - Swildon's Hole - The Grunterphone was used initially at Sump I. The depth of rock here is probably near to 500 feet thus making communications quite tricky for the surface operator due to external interference. The underground operator is shielded, to some extent, from this interference. In dire emergency, a code system could be set-up using a more easily detectable "pip tone" for a Yes/No code. The surface operator would have to ask the questions.

M.R.O. - INFORMATION SHEET No 1

1: COMPRISES:

2 AMMO BOXES (Large)	One Surface / One Underground	
each containing	1	Transmitter/Receiver Unit
	1	Ribbon Aerial Tape
	1	Headset or Handset
	1	Battery + 1 Spare
2 AERIAL FRAME BAGS		
each containing	4	Frame Arms
		Connecting Wire
	3	Tripod Legs



2. CONNECTIONS:

- a) Open ammo box (protect from water), remove handset and ribbon aerial tape.
- b) Connect handset plug to socket on outside of ammo box by aligning RED marks Push and turn outer ring of plug Until locked into position.
- c) Open aerial frame bag & remove contents. Push 3 arms into centre boss on the 4th arm. Set ends of the arms as shown in diagram.
- d) Carefully open up ribbon aerial tape and mount on frame to form a square coil. Fix tape to frame with elastic loops.
- e) Connect plugs on grey wire into connector block on aerial tape (narrow plug) and into aerial socket on ammo box (wide plug).
- f) Place aerial frame horizontally for best operation preferably a foot above ground level use tripod if possible.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The Surface aerial frame should be sited vertically above the Underground aerial frame for best result with both frames being mounted in the horizontal plane where possible. However satisfactory communication may be achieved at shorter range (say less than 200 feet) by merely placing the 2 aerial ribbons on the ground in the form of a circle without the support frames. At similar short ranges, aerial ribbons may be randomly positioned with respect to each other providing they are roughly vertically over each other.

3. OPERATING PROCEDURE:

It is important that the following procedure is adopted at the start of operations and at each site-change thereafter. This should avoid confusion.

- a) UNDERGROUND OPERATOR switches on to PIP' position when equipment is set up. Listen for PIP and hiss in handset to indicate that equipment is OK.
- b) SURFACE OPERATOR should leave switch set to the ON position as soon as equipment is set up. Listen for hiss and other interference in handset to indicate that equipment is OK.
- c) When SURFACE OPERATOR receives a regular PIP tone he should establish contact with the UNDERGROUND OPERATOR by pressing the TRANSMIT SWITCH on the handset and speaking.
- d) As soon as message is passed say "OVER" and RELEASE TRANSMIT SWITCH and listen for reply. N.B. No reply can be received until switch is released.
- e) Once communication is established the UNDERGROUND OPERATOR should switch to the ON position to reduce annoyance from PIP.
- f) Should no PIP tone be received by the SURFACE OPERATOR after a reasonable time lapse, he must carry out a search of the area immediately above the appropriate part of the cave until he receives the PIP tone. Keep coil HORIZONTAL.

NOTES:

- 1) It is very important that, before either operator moves to a new site, both are fully aware of where this will be located. DO NOT MOVE until the other operator has acknowledged location.
- 2) Avoid placing any metal (ammo boxes, karabiners, etc.) in the vicinity of the aerial frame especially near the centre.
- 3) Keep both surface and underground sites permanently manned.
- 4) The LOCATE switch position is used for surveying purposes ONLY. The surface team must be fully conversant with the technique before any attempt is made at location. However, assuming the techniques are known, surface location can be achieved by switching the SURFACE unit to LOCATE and the UNDERGROUND unit to PIP.
- 5) Ensure that there are NO EXPLOSIVE ELECTRICAL DETONATORS in the vicinity of the aerial frames.

(March 1988)

RADIO TELEPHONES

M.R.O. - INFORMATION SHEET No 5

Description: The M.R.O. has 5 types of Radio Telephones:

- 1) Base Stations - located at the Belfry and Wessex.
- 2) Mobiles - mounted in the cars of some Wardens.
- 3) High Power Portables - 1 at the Belfry, 1 at the Wessex.
- 4) Standard Portables - 1 at the Belfry, 1 at the Wessex.
- 5) Pocket phones - 2 at the Belfry.

Function:

- 1) Base Stations - Used as Control Centres during a rescue in conjunction with a Mobile near the cave site. These sets are fixed and powered by mains electricity.
- 2) Mobiles - Used to communicate from a road location to a cave entrance or with the Control Centre or with another Mobile.
- 3) High Power Portables - May be used as an alternative to the fixed Mobiles or at a cave entrance. They have their own aerial or may use a magnetic aerial attached to a car roof.
- 4) Standard Portables and Pocket phones - Lower powered than the above and can only be used in favourable sites - i.e. Swildon's to Priddy Green.

Transmission:

All transmissions **MUST** follow recognised procedures - i.e. All messages must begin and end With Call Sign - Hunter plus identification number (e.g. Hunter One, Hunter Two, etc.) (See note below) Messages must terminate with the word **OVER**. No swear words - transmissions on the National Search and Rescue frequency are monitored.

Relays:

In bad reception areas such as Burrington Coombe, G.B. and Longwood Valley a relay will be needed. Locate a Mobile at Charterhouse Warren Farm for example to communicate between G.B. or Longwood and the Belfry. Burrington is be more difficult - a High Power Portable may be needed on top of Blackdown.

Note: Type of radio can be identified by the call-sign. i.e. Hunter 1 to 9 are Mobiles: 1X are High Power Portables 2X are Portables and Pocket phones.

(November 1987)

THE MOLEPHONE

In the 1980s, underground communication was revolutionised by the introduction of the Molephone, a system that uses magnetic induction to transmit messages through solid rock. The Molephone uses low frequency induction which allows it to provide through-rock communication to a depth of a few hundred metres. Rescue teams no longer remained out of touch with the surface controller for hours on end.

Due to component obsolescence the Molephone was superseded by the HeyPhone.

THE HEYPHONE

The HeyPhone is a system which provides through-rock communication for use by cave rescue teams. It allows communication between a cave and the surface as well as between two or more underground locations. A range of up to 1km can be achieved although this depends on various factors including the geology and the size of the antenna.

The HeyPhone operates on the same principle and frequency as earlier rescue communication systems used in the UK, most notably the Molefone.

The most obvious difference between the Molefone and the HeyPhone is in the antennas. The Molefone is intended for use with one metre square 'loop antennas'. These are quick and easy to set up, but they do limit the range. The HeyPhone uses an earth antenna. Two lengths of wire are run in opposite directions away from the radio. Compared to a loop antenna, a very much stronger signal results so the range is correspondingly greater.

Cave radio experimenters in France have achieved communication through more than a kilometre of rock using earth antennas. The downside of earth antennas is that they take longer to set up.

The opportunity to test the equipment came on Saturday 24th February 2001, in Daren Cilau, when a caver dislocated his shoulder some 5 km into the system. The system worked just as expected and allowed the under-ground team to pass the news that the casualty was (eventually) making his own way out of the cave.

CAVE LINK

However, the last few years have seen the emergence of a new system, Cave-Link, which has been developed in Europe. This has many similarities to the Molephone, it is portable and can transmit through rock, but communication is via text message rather than voice. Its advantages over the older systems are that it has greater range and the surface unit does not need to be directly over the underground unit to enable effective communication. As a result, one surface unit can transmit to several underground units placed at strategic points along the cave.

The text-based system of communication makes for unambiguous reception, with no need to struggle against broken or noisy voice messages.

The underground set, including its aerial, fits into a medium sized Peli waterproof case. The units are self-contained, with built in rechargeable batteries whose life can be measured in tens of days.

A Cave Link base station in the B.E.C. Caving Hut (The Belfry) has been able to communicate with Cave Link underground stations at several distant locations in St. Cuthbert's Swallet.



Cave Link Base Station (Surface)



Cave Link Underground Station

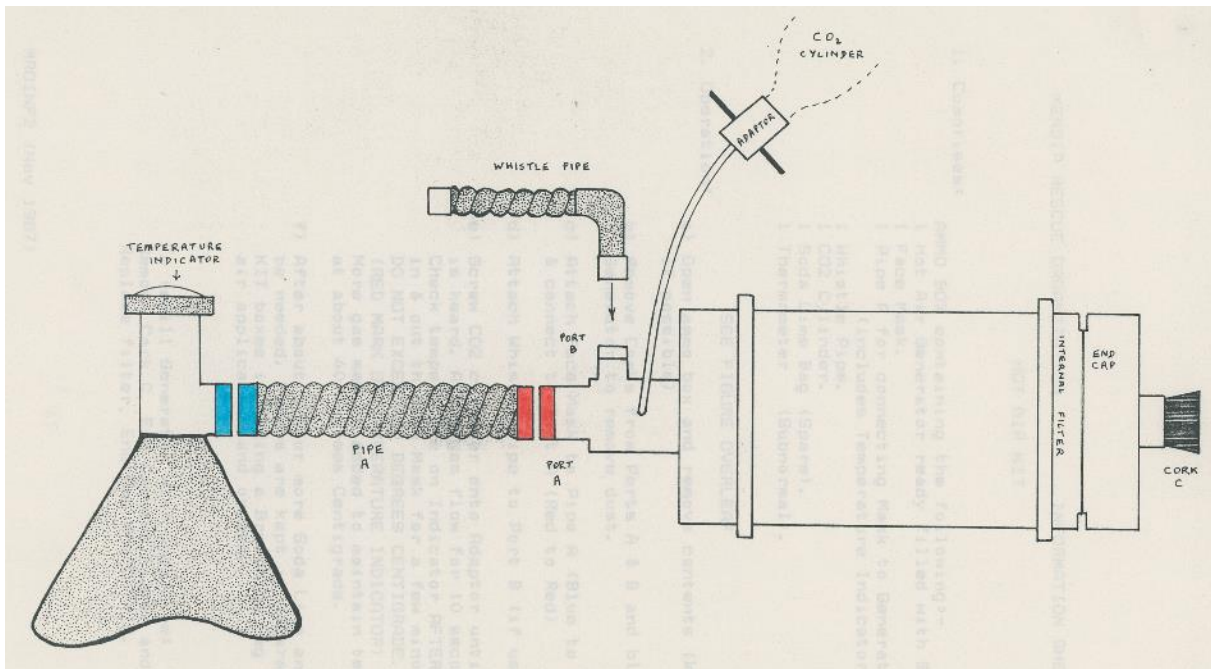
HOT AIR KIT

M.R.O. - INFORMATION SHEET No 2

1. Comprises:

AMMO Box containing the following:-

- 1 Hot Air Generator ready filled with Soda Lime.
- 1 Face Mask.
- 1 Pipe A for connecting Mask to Generator. (includes Temperature Indicator)
- 1 Whistle Pipe.
- 1 CO₂ Cylinder.
- 1 Soda Lime Bag (Spare).
- 1 Thermometer (Subnormal).



2. Operation

- a) Open ammo box and remove contents (keep clean if possible)
- b) Remove Corks from Ports A & B and blow through Generator to remove dust.
- c) Attach Face Mask to Pipe A (Blue to Blue) & connect to Port A (Red to Red)
- d) Attach Whistle Pipe to Port B (if used).
- e) Screw CO₂ cylinder onto Adaptor until gas flow is heard. Allow gas flow for 10 seconds. Check temperature on Indicator after breathing in & out through mask for a few minutes. Do Not Exceed 50 Degrees Centigrade. (Red Mark On Temperature Indicator) More gas may be added to maintain temperature at about 40 degrees Centigrade.
- f) After about 1 hour more Soda Lime and Gas will be needed. Spares are kept in separate Hot Air Kit boxes including a Breathing Bag for forced air application and oxygen. To refill Generator with Soda Lime: Remove Cork C, End Cap and Filter and fill. Replace filter, End Cap and Cork C.

(November 1987)

MISCELLANEOUS EQUIPMENT

M.R.O. INFORMATION SHEET No 11

Route Marking Equipment:

Flashing Beacons (4 off), Cones, Tape, String (for Stone Mines)

Provisions:

a) Underground Canteen in Ammo Box: Soup, Coffee, Sugar, Dried Milk, Dextrosol, Solid Fuel Stove plus Fuel, Spoon, Billy Can, Tin Opener.

b) Surface Packs in 2 large ammo Boxes: Soup, Coffee, Sugar, Dried Milk, Tea, Sweets, etc.

c) Butane Cookers

Clothing:

Polar suit, Polar suit & Goon suit pack, Polar suit with detachable arms and legs, Blankets, Flectalon rescue blanket, Re-usable Heat Packs.

Hand Tools:

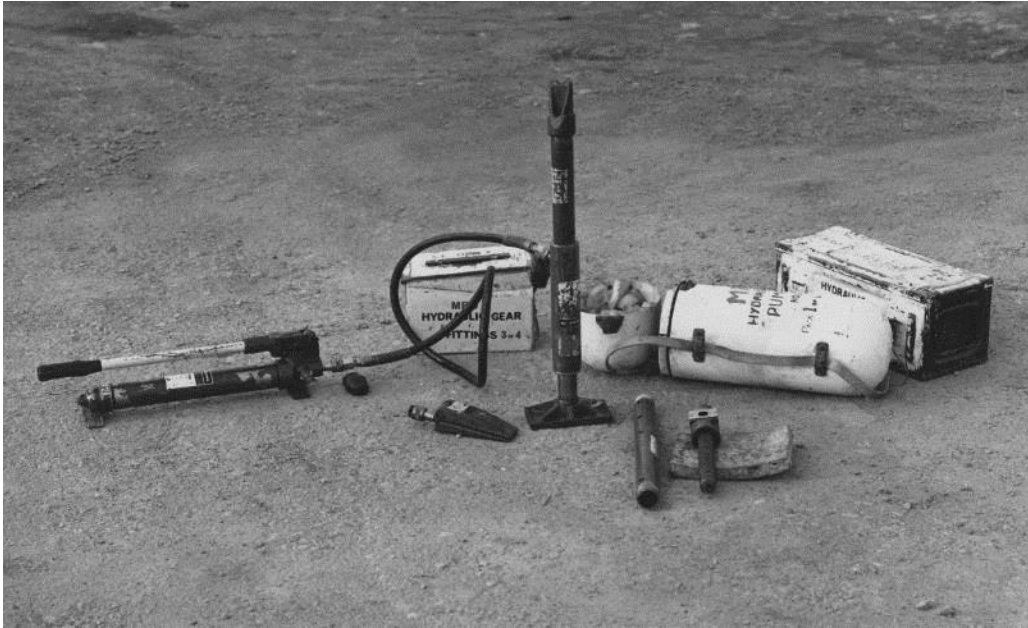
Spade, Shovel, Entrenching Tool, Chisels, Lump Hammer, Solo Picks (2), Various Stemples, Various Rock Anchors.

Pneumatic Tools:

Percussion Drill, Chisel, Water Pump

N.B. These items require a large air compressor (100 psi)

(November 1987)



Pneumatic Tools

FOOD

COMFORTS BOX

M.R.O. INFORMATION SHEET No 6

Two Comforts Boxes each containing the following:

1. Temgesic Tablets - Powerful pain killer. - NOT TO BE GIVEN WITH ANY HEAD INJURIES OR CONCUSSION Allow 2 tablets to dissolve under the tongue. NOT to be chewed or swallowed. Repeat dose every 2 hours. Record dose & time given and hand this information (in writing) to Ambulance personnel. Side effects - may make some people sick.
2. Ativan Tablets - Tranquillizer. Give 2 tablets - chew or swallow. Dose - every 4 hours. Record dose given and hand to Ambulance personnel.
3. Airway.
4. Soup - in can with opener and mug.
5. Stove - plus solid fuel and matches.
6. Chocolate - 2 bars.
7. Dextrose Tablets - glucose.
8. Wound Dressing.
9. Space Blanket.
10. Stanley Knife.

11. Sundries: String, knife, pencils, note pad, whistles (2), wire, pliers, bulb, candles, screwdriver.

12. Heat Pack re-usable.

One in each Comforts Box. 3 more in marked ammo box in M.R.O. Store.
To Use: Bend red activator stick. Once initiated the pack will provide heat for several hours depending on insulation. Apply to trunk avoiding direct skin contact which might be painful.
To re-activate: Immerse in boiling water and simmer for 20-30 minutes. Allow to cool.

(November 1987)



List of Contents from an old comforts box

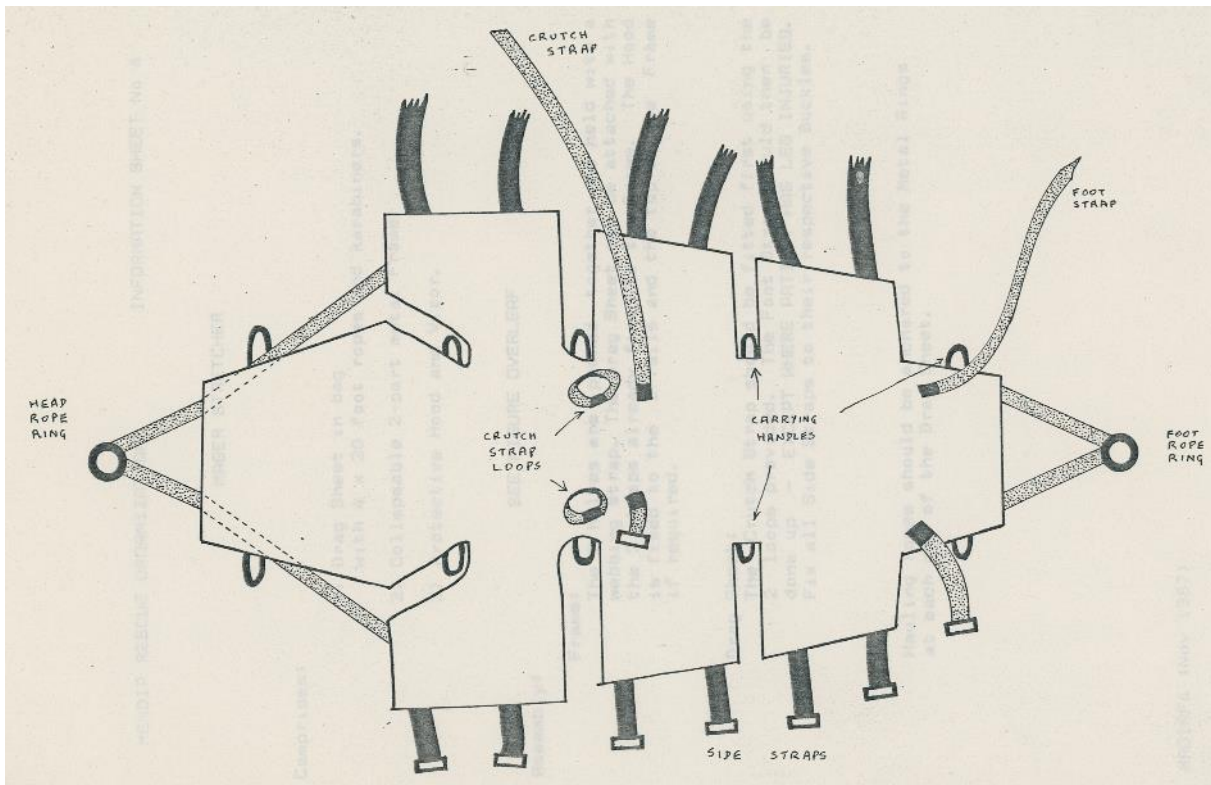


MAGER STRETCHER

M.R.O. INFORMATION SHEET No 4

Comprises:

- 1) Drag Sheet in bag with 4 x 20 foot ropes and karabiners.
- 2) Collapsible 2-part metal Frame.
- 3) Protective Hood and Visor.



Assembly:

Frame:

The 2 halves are pushed together and held with a webbing strap. The Drag Sheet can be attached with the 2 straps already fixed to the Frame. The Hood is fixed to the 2 rails and the top of the Frame if required.

Drag Sheet:

The Crutch Strap should be fitted first using the 2 loops provided. The Foot Strap should then be done up - Except Where Patient Has Leg Injuries. Fix all Side Straps to their respective Buckles. Hauling ropes should be anchored to the Metal Rings at each end of the Drag Sheet.

(November 1987)

Mager Drag Sheet

The Mager drag sheet is well suited to Mendip caves, and the M.C.R. continues to use the drag sheet on a number of callouts, where other teams seem to be preferring the "Neil Robinson" stretcher or the Slix stretchers.



Slix 50" stretcher



The left photograph shows the Short Slix (with the head end towards the camera and the "articulated skirt" to support the legs of the casualty away from the camera). Note the colour coded webbing.

The right photograph shows the spinal board (with the central orange padding) fitted into the Short Slix.

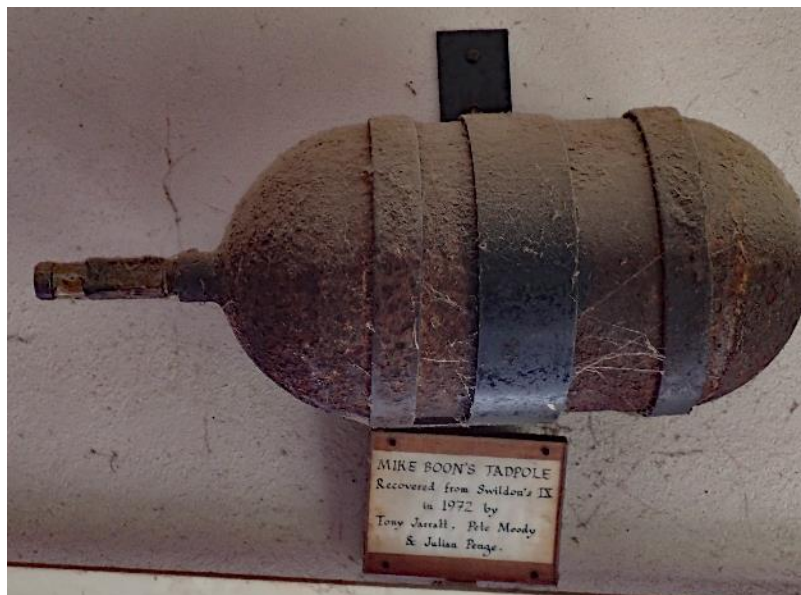
SUMP RESCUE

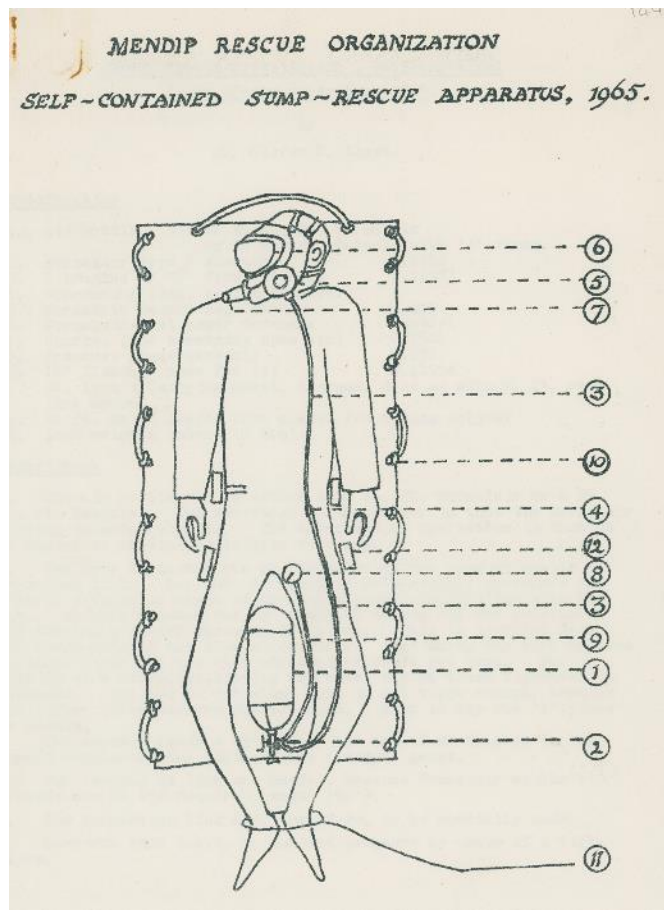
Mendip Rescue Organization - Self-contained Sump Rescue Apparatus 1965.

by Dr. Oliver C. Lloyd.

Specification

1. Air bottle - either 40 cu. ft. Normalair or 26 Cu. ft. Tadpole with 'A' clamp.
2. Normalair Type 2 Adaptor C.2750
3. 2 Lengths of 27 flexible hose C.11953
4. Connecting link, specially made.
5. Normalair demand regulator C.900
6. Normalair flat visor facemask C.930/1
7. Snorkel (for breathing open air) C.1520
8. Pressure gauge assembly C. 950
9. 16' flexible hose for (7) C.11954
10. St. John's Carrying sheet, canvass, done up with 20 ft. rope (not shown)
11. 20 ft. waist length onto ankles for towing subject
12. Lead weights (about 16 lbs).





Description

1. The air bottle can be either a 40 cu. ft. Normalair or a 26 CU. ft. Tadpole. The advantage of the former is that the Normalair fitting is more reliable. The advantage of the latter is that it is easier to obtain and lighter to carry.
2. The Type 2 Adaptor can be fitted to either type of bottle described in 1. For the "A" clamp it is necessary to remove the central fitting by means of an alum screwdriver supplied with the kit. We have adapted the 'A' clamp by taking out the grub—screw and fitting a larger screw in its place. This is operated by a piece made of the alum screwdriver. The screw can then be done up thumb tight and the alum screwdriver won't get lost. For fitting on a Normalair fitting the wheel nut at thumb tightness is adequate. But for an "A" clamp this is not tight enough, because the pillar valve washers are too hard. That is why the piece is needed. The Adaptor feeds a "Y" piece, one arm of which goes to the demand regulator, the other to the pressure gauge.
3. Two lengths of line are needed, because Normalair wouldn't provide one of the required length (50").
4. The connecting link had, therefore, to be specially made.
5. Converts 1800 p.s.i. to ambient pressure by means of a tilt-valve.
6. The Normalair facemask will fit any type of face with or without a beard. The cushion is filled with water, not air, so that it will not collapse at any depth. It has no gag, and can therefore be worn easily and comfortably by a subject who has never dived before or who is unconscious.

7. The snorkel is fitted with a two way tap, so that until diving starts the subject can breathe open air, This saves the bottle air,

8 & 9. are needed, so that the accompanying divers may know how much air is in the bottle.

10. is a simple canvass St. John's Carrying Sheet, which is in standard use for all cave rescues on Mendip. It is laced up from the feet towards the head by means of a 20 ft. proofed sizal rope.

11. The line attached to the ankles is for No. 1 diver to use for drawing the subject through the sump..

12. Lead weights to correct buoyancy.

Method

The apparatus was designed for use in Sump 2 and 3 in Swildon's Hole for Cave rescue from Swildon's IV, V, VI, VII, Cowsh Aven, and other side passages. It would be equally useful in Stoke Lane 2 and 4. It is too bulky for Swildon's Sump 7 and might be rather a squeeze in Stoke 6.

For Sump I in Swildon's Hole another type of Sump Rescue Apparatus was made in 1960, (Lloyd 1961). It has the advantage that it can be used by cavers who are not trained divers. It has the disadvantage that it cannot be used in a long sump. It could not be used in the Sump 2 and 3 complex in Swildon's. It is also more bulky.

For 3 years M.R.O. has been trying to elaborate a self-contained sumping apparatus such as this, once it became known that (a) Sump 3 was passable and (b) cave rescue via Blue Pencil Passage was impossible. We have been held up by lack of divers. Since the beginning of 1965, however, there has been an adequate number of trained divers available to operate a self—contained apparatus, and so we pressed on with the design.). Mike Wooding made the original specification and item (4). Dr. Allan Rogers completed the work.

Dr. O. C. Lloyd kept things moving.

The subject is done up in the carrying sheet (shown undone in - the diagram) and taken through the sump feet first. No. 1 diver controls the speed and the bottle air tap, No. 2 diver follows and controls the head. It is the job of No. 2 diver to turn the snorkel tap to the bottle as soon as diving is about to begin and to control the movement of the head, so that the mask does not get damaged or dislodged. In fact the mask should not get dislodged, if it is properly fitted, Damage is unlikely, but if the visor is only cracked, water will not enter, as the pressure inside is the same as that outside.

A practice was held in the shallow lake at the Bristol Lido on 13th July 1965 and was found to be satisfactory. For Cave rescue the bottle can be carried in a specially made Canvas bag with carrying straps (shoulder or hand) and all the rest will go in one army pack. The divers have to be responsible for their own equipment and apparatus.

Reference

Lloyd, O.C. (1961) Cave Rescue", Med. Jour. South-West, 76, (ii), No. 280 : 37-49.

SUMP RESCUE FILM

The Film on Sump Rescue made by the Mendip Rescue Organisation

The Swildon's Hole streamway beyond sumps Two and Three was discovered in 1957 after blasting through Blue Pencil Passage from the Paradise Regained Series. This higher-level fossil series bypassed much of the streamway; a godsend in the days before wet suits. It was hardly surprising that no attempts were made to dive back upstream from Swildon's Four to Two straightaway. All efforts were directed at further downstream pushes through PR. In those days, the divers used bulky oxygen rebreathers, wore large dry suits, carried Aflos and were heavily weighted for bottom walking. Scores of cavers acted as sherpas humping packs of gear through PR to Four. And they would wait there for hours whilst the divers pushed on through sumps Four and Five to explore Swildon's Six. With so many people using the already stale air in PR, headaches, vomiting and extreme exhaustion became noticeable and worrying. I once remember carbide lamps and candles guttering out. Our concern about foul air was highlighted by the Neil Moss tragedy at Peak Cavern in March 1959. His death was brought about by a carbon dioxide excess rather than a lack of oxygen.

Dr. Oliver Lloyd, then Secretary and Treasurer of M.R.O., took on the problem of what would be done on Mendip in the event of rescuing cavers through sumps and from places where the air was bad. He enlisted the help of Dr. Allan Rogers, a colleague in the School of Medicine at Bristol University. Allan had just returned from Antarctica as the physiologist on Sir Vivian Fuchs successful crossing of the continent. He had a particular interest in respiration and was a seasoned Mendip caver as a member of the U.B.S.S. Within little time, it had been agreed that breathing apparatus with extended high-pressure hoses and full face masks would cover both eventualities. It so happened that Norntalair-Garrett, an engineering firm based at Yeovil nearby, manufactured such equipment. They had provided the oxygen apparatus used on several Himalayan expeditions, notably the successful ascent of Everest in 1953. M.R.O. was given bottles, hoses and three masks with attached demand valves for trials and evaluation. These became M.R.O.'s Sump Rescue Apparatus Mark I by the summer of 1959. Apart from Mines Rescue equipment in use, this was the first light-weight equipment suitable for rescue work in caves. A few modifications were made and Mark II remained the only Sump Rescue Apparatus in the country for the next twenty years.

A Dexion and alloy model of Swildon's Sump One was made and the "Normalair" equipment exhaustively tested in swimming baths until both cave divers and non-diving wardens of M.R.O. were confident in using the equipment. All of us took turns at being strapped in to Oliver's beloved carrying sheet and were towed backwards and forwards through the "sump". It was decided that the first operation at the actual Sump One would be filmed. And so, another of those mammoth portage trips that Swildon's was becoming renowned for was arranged in May 1960. I think it was also the last. The film was entitled "Cave Rescue" because it also included scenes of hauling patients up the old Forty Foot Pot. It was shot by Tony Morrison, and the cast of "hundreds", so it seemed, was directed by Oliver himself. In the best Hitchcock tradition, he also made an appearance in one of the nicest scenes showing Mr. Albert Main helping out as he always liked to on such occasions. Who else would narrate the commentary but Oliver! The premier was a splendid event when Oliver gave the Edward Long Fox Memorial Lecture to a large and eminent gathering of physicians at the University of Bristol in 1960. The cast of cavers packed the gallery by invitation. At the time, Oliver was in his fancy shirt, boot lace tie, leather jerkin, half-mast jeans and fluorescent socks phase. Amid all the academic robes, he made quite an impact.

The lecture was subsequently published in the Medical Journal of the South-West, Volume 76(u) Number 280, in April 1961. Oliver gave his last performance with the film at the opening of the British Cave Rescue Council Conference on Mendip at the Hunters' Lodge Inn, Priddy, in May 1985. He died three days later. For the past few years, M.R.O. has superseded the old sump rescue apparatus with a Kirby Morgan Bandmask 10 system. The Normalair equipment was loaned to Wookey Hole Caves and is on display there among many other historic items from pioneer cave diving days on Mendip. A video has been made of the original Cave Rescue film for the record.

Jim Hanwell

SUMP RESCUE DEMONSTRATION AT WOOKEY HOLE CAVES,

27th SEPTEMBER 1986

by Bob Drake

Source – WCC Journal Volume 19 – No. 213 May 1987 – pages 67 to 69

The Kirby Morgan Bandmask 10 apparatus was demonstrated at the resurgence pool outside the caves. About forty people attended throughout the day. Many of the divers who came, from other caving regions, which gave them a good opportunity to try out our sump rescue equipment and techniques. Several non-divers tried the mask on land and were shown how it works. A few divers experimented with the apparatus in the resurgence pool, testing it for buoyancy and air consumption.

We then did a rescue dive through the resurgence sump as Owen Clarke from South Wales volunteered to be the victim. The mask was fitted and the air supply belted around his waist. He was lowered into the water face upwards. I then took hold of him around the chest and under his arm so that he could grip my hand for communication and leave my other free to hold the diving line and guide him. Richard Bartrop, from Derbyshire, took his feet and had enough freedom of movement to enable any snags we encountered in the sump to be freed with comparative ease. This worked very well, and it only took us about four minutes to tow him through to the mud bank in the First Chamber. About 10 cubic feet of air was used. The support divers were swapped around and the procedure repeated on the return trip to the entrance. 68

All taking part were impressed with how well the system worked, including Owen who quite enjoyed the ride! We also proved that the Kirby Morgan apparatus can be used quickly and simply without the need for a full stretcher. In deeper sumps, there would still be a need for a buoyancy aid, but the technique would be just as effective.

STATISTICS

INTRODUCTION

When compiling this book it seemed that from the 1990's to the present time that the number of cave rescues and incidents had fallen from the high levels of the 1960's, 1970 and 1980's (74, 72 and 86 respectively) to that of 2000's and 2010's (28 and 39 respectively).

Tables were compiled showing the number of rescues, by decade, by cave and the type of rescue then another series of tables also by cave but in this instance showing the type of injury. The reasons, in my opinion, for the drop in numbers is discussed below the tables.

RESCUES

All rescues/incidents from 1930 to 2019 including self rescue and rescues attended by M.R.O./M.C.R. Incidents when the rescuers were put on standby or did not venture underground are not included. Animal rescues are also not included in these statistics.

Note the cause of the rescue is the first cause of the incident e.g. a fall may lead to exposure.

Cave Diving incident
? Number not reported

The number in square brackets, after the cave name, represents the incidents when M.R.O./M.C.R. were put on standby, did not go underground or a false alarm. Surface incidents are not recorded.

1930's

Cave	RESCUES/INCIDENTS	Lights failed	Stuck	Rock fall
		People rescued		
Avon Gorge	1		1	
Goatchurch Cavern	1			1
Mercavity Cave	1		1	
Sidcot Swallet	1	2		
TOTALS	4	2	2	1

1940's

Cave	RESCUES/INCIDENTS	Blacked out	Fall	Exposure/Exhaustion	Lights failed	Stuck	Rock Fall	Fatality
		Number of people rescued						
Axbridge Ochre Cavern	1					3		
G.B. Cave	2		1				1	
Coral Cave	1		1					
Read's Cavern	1				2			
Stoke Lane Slocker	1						1	
Swildon's Hole	1			1				
Wookey Hole Cave	2	1#						1#
TOTALS	9	1	2	1	2	3	2	1

1950's

Cave	RESCUES/INCIDENTS	Lost/overdue	Fall	Exposure/Exhaustion	Lights failed	Stuck	Rock Fall	Fatality
		Number of people rescued						
Cleeve Hill, Gloucestershire	1					1		
Drunkard's Hole	1						1	
Eastwater Cavern	3	?	1	1				
G.B. Cave	1				5			
Goatchurch Cavern	2	2	1					
Longwood Swallet [1]	2		1		5			
Read's Cavern	1	1						
Rod's Pot	2		2					
Stoke Lane Slocker [1]	1				2			
Swildon's Hole [3]	6	7	1	1				1
Tower Mine	1						1	
Wookey Hole Cave	1	1#						
TOTALS	22	11	6	2	12	1	2	1

1960's

Cave	RESCUES/INCIDENTS	Lost/overdue	Injury	Fall	Exposure/Exhaustion	Lights failed	Flood	Stuck	Tackle	Rock Fall	Fatality
		Number of people rescued									
Box Stone Mines	1	2									
Combe Down Mines	1	6									
Cuckoo Cleeves	2								?	2	
Clarcken Combe Ochre Workings	1			1							
Drunkard's Hole	1									1	
Eastwater Cavern	3							2			1
G.B. Cave	3			1					7		
General search of caves	1	2									
Lamb Leer	1			1							
Longwood Swallet	5			2		?	3				1
Nine Barrows Swallet	1			1							
Pen Park Hole	1							1			
Portishead Sea Cave	1				1						
Rod's Pot	2	3		1							
St. Cuthbert's Swallet	5		1	2			12				
Sidcot Swallet	4			1				3			
Stoke Lane Slocker	2	3					1				
Swildon's Hole [1]	39	11+?		10	16	4+?	34+?	1	3+?		
TOTALS	74	27	1	20	17	4	50	7	10	3	2

1970's

Cave	RESCUES/INCIDENTS	Lost/overdue	Injury	Fall	Exposure/Exhaustion	Lights failed	Flood	Stuck	Tackle	Rock Fall	Unable to dive sump
		Number of people rescued									
Box Stone Mines	3	6				9					
Burrington Combe	1	4									
Cave on Brean Down	1						3				
Combe Down Stone Mines		1									
Conkwell Cave No. 1	1									1	
Cuckoo Cleeves	1							2			
East Twin Valley	1									1	
Eastwater Cavern [1]	6	15					6+?	2			
G.B. Cave	2			1						1	
Goatchurch Cavern [3]	3			1		2		1			
Lamb Leer Cavern [1]	2			2				2			
Longwood Swallet [1]	3			1	2						
Mangle Hole [1]											
Manor Farm Swallet	2			1		?					
North Hill Swallet	1							1			
Read's Cavern [1]	2	2				5					
Rhino Rift [1]											
Rod's Pot	3			2		1					
Search of wells, Glastonbury	1	1									
St. Cuthbert's Swallet	2									2	
Sidcot Swallet [1]	2							2			
Sludge Pit [1]											
Stoke Lane Slocker [3]	4	2					9+?				
Swildon's Hole [8]	26	5	3	8	5	4	4	2	2	1	2
Thrupe Lane Swallet	1			1							
Ubley Warren Swallet	1							1			
Upper Flood Swallet	1	1									
Wookey Hole	2	1#							1#		
TOTALS	72	38	3	17	7	21	22	13	3	6	2

1980's

Cave	RESCUES/INCIDENTS	Lost/overdue	Injury	Fall	Exposure/Exhaustion	Lights failed	Flood	Stuck	Tackle	Unable to dive sump	Fatality
		Number of people rescued									
Banwell Stalactite Cave	1					2					
Bleadon Hill Caves	1	1									
Box Stone Mines	3	3+?									
Brown's Folly Mine	1					7					
Cuckoo Cleeves	1			1							
Devil's Cave, Bathampton	1					2					
Drunkard's Hole	1							1			
Eastwater Cavern [1]	5	9+?					11	2			
Frome Storm Drain	1	1									
G.B. Cave	9	4		4			11+?				1
Goatchurch Cavern	5		1	4							
Gough's Cave	3	1						1	1#		
Hunters' Hole	1								2		
Lamb Leer Cavern	1			1							
Longwood Swallet [1]	6		1	2				1	6		1
Manor Farm Swallet	1				1						
North Hill Swallet	1			1							
Read's Cavern	1					2					
Rhino Rift [1]	1	2									
Rod's Pot [2]	3			3							
St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1			1							
St. Dunstan's Cave	1							1			
Sidcot Swallet	1							1			
Singing River Mine	2	2				4					
Sludge Pit	3			2				1			
Swildon's Hole [10]	29	13+?	2	10	7	1		1		3	
Thrupe Lane Swallet [1]											
Wookey Hole Cave	2								1#		1#
TOTALS	86	23	4	29	8	18	22	9	10	3	3

1990's

Cave	RESCUES/INCIDENTS	Lost/overdue	Injury	Fall	Exposure/Exhaustion	Lights failed	Flood	Stuck	Rock Fall	Unable to dive sump
		Number of people rescued								
Bathampton Stone Mines [1]										
Box Stone Mines	3	13				2				
Cuckoo Cleeves	1							1		
Dallimore's Cave	1							1		
East Twin Swallet	1	4								
Eastwater Cavern [3]	5	5+?		2			3			
G.B Cave [2]	4	6+?		1					4	
Goatchurch Cavern [1]	2			2						
Lionel's Hole	1	1								
Longwood Swallet [2]	1			1						
Lyncombe Lodge Mineshaft	1			2						
Read's Cavern	1	2								
Redcliffe Caves	2	3								
Rhino Rift [1]										
Rod's Pot	1	?								
Sally Rift, Warleigh Woods	1	1								
Sidcot Swallet	2				1		1			
St. Cuthbert's Swallet	2				2				1	
Spar Pot [1]										
Stock's House Shaft	1								1	
Swildon's Hole [8]	27	2+?	3	10	8+?			3		1
Thrupe Lane Swallet	1			1						
TOTALS	57	37	3	19	11	2	4	5	6	1

2000's

Cave	RESCUES/INCIDENTS	Lost/overdue	Fall	Exposure/Exhaustion	Flood	Diving	Stuck	Fatality
		Number of people rescued						
Box Stone Mines	1	?						
Cain Hill Shaft [1]	1	1						
Fairy Cave Quarry	1	2						
G.B. Cave	1	?						
Goatchurch Cavern	2	3					1	
Hunter's Hole	1	2						
Manor Farm Swallet	1			1				
North Hill Swallet	1		1					
Priddy Green Sink	2	2	1					
Quarry Hill Mine, Box	1	2						
Ridge Mine, Corsham	1	3						
Rhino Rift [2]								
St. Cuthbert's Swallet	2		1				1	
Stainsby's Shaft	1	1						
Swildon's Hole	10	1+?	5	3		1		
Thrupe Lane Swallet	1				1			
Upper Flood Swallet	1							1
Wookey Hole	1		1					
TOTALS	28	16	9	4	1	1	2	1

2010 to 2019

Cave	RESCUES/INCIDENTS	Lost/overdue	Fall	Medical Emergency	Stuck	Rock Fall
		Number rescued				
Box Stone Mines	6	21				
Eastwater Cavern [1]	1				1	
Fernhill Cave	1		1			
G.B. Cave	1				1	
Goatchurch Cavern [2]	5		2	1	3	
Gough's Cave	2		2			
Hillier's Cave	1		1			
Monkton Farleigh Quarry	2	3				
Reservoir Hole	1					1
Rhino Rift	1	2				
Sidcot Swallet	3		1		2	
Swildon's Hole [1]	10	5+?	5			
Templeton	1		1			
Upper Canada Cave	1					1
Wookey Hole Cave	3		3	1		
TOTALS	39	26	16	1	7	2

INJURIES

1930's

None recorded.

1940's

Cave	Blacked out - Diving	Fall - Fracture - Skull	Fall - Unconscious	Shock	Fatality - Diving
	Injury				
Coral Cave			1		
G.B. Cave		1		1	
Wookey Hole	1				1

1950's

Cave	Exposure	Fall - Bruised	Fall - Fracture - Leg	Fall - Unconscious	Fracture - foot bone	Rockfall - Cut/ Bruised	Fatality - Hypothermia
	Injury						
Eastwater Cavern				1			
G.B. Cave					1		
Goatchurch Cavern			1				
Longwood Swallet		1	1				
Rod's Pot			1				
Swildon's Hole	1						1
Tower Mine						1	

1960's

Cave	Battery Burns	Fall – Back Injury	Fall – Broken Nose	Fall – Cuts/Bruises	Fall – Fracture - Arm	Fall – Fracture - Leg	Fall – Fracture - Pelvis	Fall – Fracture - Skull	Fall – Head Injury	Fall – Head /Leg Injury	Fall – Leg Injury	Fall - Sprain	Exposure/Exhaustion	Rockfall – dislocated shoulder	Fatality - Hypothermia	Fatality - Rockfall
	Injury															
Cuthbert's	1									1		1		1		
Clarken Ochre							1									
G.B. Cave				1												
Lamb Leer							1									
Longwood			1												1	1
Nine Barrows						1										
Portishead Sea Cave													1			
Rod's Pot						1										
Sidcot											1		1			
Swildon's		1		1	2	1		1	1				10			

1970's

Cave	Exposure/Exhaustion	Fall – Cuts & Bruising	Fall – Dislocated Shoulder	Fall – Fracture - Cheekbone	Fall – Fracture – Collar Bone	Fall – Fracture – Leg	Fall – Fractures Multiple	Fall – Leg Injuries	Fall – Unconscious	Rockfall - Bruising	Rockfall – Cut Head	Rockfall – Punctured Lung	Unconscious
	Injury												
G.B. Cave		1			1					1			
Goatchurch Cavern			1	1									1
Lamb Leer Cavern	1								1				
Longwood Swallet	1					1							
Manor Farm Swallet		1											
Rod's Pot						1		1					
St. Cuthbert's Swallet											1	1	
Swildon's Hole	3		1	1		4	1	3					
Thrupe Lane Swallet							1						

1980's

Cave	Asthma Attack	Exposure/Exhaustion	Fall – Cuts & Bruising	Fall – Dislocated Shoulder	Fall – Dislocated Knee	Fall – Facial Injuries	Fall – Fracture - Arm	Fall – Fracture – Ankle	Fall – Fracture – Leg	Fall – Fracture – Wrist	Fall – Multiple Fractures	Fall – Unconscious	Rockfall – Fractured toes	Torn Muscles	Unconscious - Diving	Fatality - Rockfall	Fatality - Diving	Fatality – Heart Attack
	Injury																	
Cuckoo Cleeves									1									
Cuthbert's						1												
G.B. Cave			1				1		1		1							1
Goatchurch				1	1			1	1					1				
Lamb Leer			1															
Longwood			2										1			1		
Manor Farm		1																
North Hill							1											
Rod's Pot								2	1									
Sludge Pit			1			1												
Swildon's	1	6	2	2				1	2	1		1						
Wookey Hole															1		1	

1990's

Cave	Asthma Attack	Exposure/Exhaustion	Fall – Cuts & Bruising	Fall – Dislocated Shoulder	Fall – Fracture – Leg	Fall – Fracture – Ankle	Fall – Fracture – Wrist	Fall – Head Injury	Fall – Injured Ankle	Fall – Injured Knee	Hysteria	Rockfall – Injured Foot
	Injury											
Eastwater Cavern			1				1					
G.B. Cave					1							
Goatchurch Cavern			1			1						
Longwood Swallet				1								
Sidcot Swallet											1	
St. Cuthbert's Swallet		1										1
Swildon's Hole	1	6+?	3	3				1	4	2	1	
Thrupe Lane Swallet					1							

2000's

Cave	Exposure/Exhaustion	Cuts & Bruising	Fall – Cuts & Bruising	Fall – Fracture – Leg	Fall – Fracture – Knee	Fall – Knee Injury	Fall – Injured Ankle	Leg Injury	Fatality – Heart Attack
	Injury								
Blackmoor Swallet	1								
Goatchurch Cavern		1							
North Hill Swallet							1		
Priddy Green Sink					1				
St. Cuthbert's Swallet			1						
Swildon's Hole	4		1	1		1		1	
Upper Flood Swallet									1
Wookey Hole				1					

2010's

Cave	Cuts & Bruising	Dislocated Knee	Fall – Ankle Injury	Fall – Fracture – Arm	Fall – Fracture – Collar Bone	Fall – Fracture – Leg	Fall – Neck Pain	Fall – Fracture – Multiple	Fall – Fracture – Rib	Fall – Leg Injuries	Medical Emergency	Rockfall – Injured Fingers
Fernhill Cave								1				
Goatchurch Cavern		1								1	1	
Gough's Cave						1						
Hillier's Cave									1			
Reservoir Hole												1
Sidcot Swallet		1										
Swildon's Hole			1	1	1					1		
Templeton								1				
Wookey Hole Cave	1		1				1					

DISCUSSION

In my opinion the drop in numbers of cave rescues and incidents had fallen from the high levels of the 1960's, 1970 and 1980's (74, 72 and 86 respectively) to that of 2000's and 2010's (28 and 39 respectively).

- Advances in equipment
 - Lighting
 - Clothing
- Greater amount of information available
- Training
- Smaller number of active cavers

Equipment – Lighting (brief discussion, including some of the lamps I have used)

Candles



From the very earliest caving trips on Mendip (mid 1880's) by Herbert Balch were conducted by candle light of which he wrote in *The Mendip Caves* –

“...candles are by common consent the most dependable illuminant, as they cast no treacherous shadows, though electric torches are a good standby....?”

Balch was a lifelong exponent of the candle, although he did use a large cumbersome acetylene lamp on occasions.

Candle on compressed cardboard miners helmet

Carbide Lamps



The first carbide lamps that resemble modern ones came on the scene in 1900 but they did not become popular until the 1920's. For decades the carbide lamp was the only caplamp considered suitable for caving. Its durability and economy made it the only logical choice for cavers. However, the carbide lamp was slowly abandoned for electric lights as they became more reliable and less expensive.



Water, from the top chamber of the lamp, in a controlled manner, slowly drips onto small lumps of carbide stored in the bottom

chamber. This reaction generates acetylene gas which escapes via a jet in the centre of the reflector and is lit to produce an intense flame which illuminates a small portion of the cave.

The trip report below illustrates how carbide lamps were prone to be extinguished in damp or draughty conditions -

Longwood Swallet – 8 April 1955

Source – Fred Davis Log Book – Volume 1, pages 12 to 19

Caught 9:30 a.m. 27 bus and was joined on it at Glastonbury by Roy.

After some discussion with the conductor as to whether where we wished to alight was “Hill Grove” or “Priddy Turning”, we left his bus at Priddy Turning and marched West to hut. We put things in order here and were about to prepare a cold meal of sardines and bread when Norman Potts arrived. He rapidly fell in with our plan to reconnoitre August Hole and so having eaten we drove, instead of the expected march, over to Charterhouse and Lower Farm.

Getting into caving gear in the open brought back memories of his racing days to Roy but we were soon ready and tramping down Longwood Valley for the cave entrance. The usual mud abounded in the valley and the tight entrance passages of Longwood produced the usual grunts and groans.

At bottom of second 10 foot pitch we turned right, instead of left into Rift Chamber of Longwood Swallet.

This soon brought us into a moderate sized chamber with much water coming from the roof. Followed the water down through the floor and into an even wetter chamber.

There was only one corner where you could safely hold your head up and not have your acetylene lamp extinguished.

From this chamber a low tunnel, six feet long, with the stream running through it, brought me to the top of a chimney. Britain Underground had said something about 30 feet of rope required on a pitch so I doubled my 60 feet of hemp around a spur of limestone and slid down the chimney. It was very wet.

Roy declined to accompany me and returned to the surface so Norman followed. Here we had our first taste of what was to come.

Having only an acetylene lamp it became extinguished by the water and left him in the dark. Attempting to shine my light up the chimney it was also extinguished and I had to light my electric.

Norman joined me in a small circular chamber, a stream passage, almost dry, led up and a very wet, very low one led downwards. Waterproof matches having been called upon to relight our lamps we set off to explore the upstream passage. It continued for some fifty yards then there was a narrow chimney. I almost forced a squeeze up this, could in fact look into a quite sizable chamber, but was too deep in the chest to continue.

Returning down this passage we rapidly regained the foot of the wet chimney, then keeping our heads well down, my auxiliary electric had now ceased to function, I later found out that the bulb had blown, and entered the very wet, low downstream passage. In size it was somewhat similar to the Drainpipe in Goatchurch, perhaps a few inches higher, but it had several inches of very cold water flowing along its bottom. Through this we crawled until, at last, turning to the left the stream entered a high rift, prettily decorated at the top, and we were able to traverse well above the water.

Quite soon we came to a bridge across this rift, leaving the investigation of the streams continuation till later we climbed up over the bridge and so entered two grottos, vertically above

each other and with fine gourd slopes facing us. We sat and sung various mountaineering and caving songs until, feeling chilled, I suggested the exploration should be continued.

Below the bridge we dropped back into the stream and moved forward a yard, Norman leading, then, in front of us the floor dropped away and the stream went thundering into darkness. Norman looked, said "No", and asked me to look.

The pitch seemed almost circular in section and the opposite side bulged out into what seemed like the floor not ten feet below us. I climbed down four feet but hold petered out.

I considered a traverse to the left and then jump onto the floor not four feet away, all very well, but what of the return journey, "Unjustifiable", was my comment to Norman as I returned from my reconnaissance. "Let's have another look," he said, and the next thing I remember is seeing him, on hand holds only, the stream washing over him, and lamp out. Then the hands released their hold, a slither and thump, some crashes, and no sign of Norman.

Anxiously I craned my neck to peer over the edge, at last, from some great depth came a weak voice, "Don't come down here."

After what seemed like ages I saw him appear from directly under me, climbing slowly up a slope in darkness, or near darkness, my lamp now being the only light between us.

By lowering the strap of my haversack to Norman I was able to haul his lamp up to me and light it, then pass it back to him. Then I would brace myself in the stream ready to provide assistance to Norman when he reached the critical point of the climb, but time after time his lamp was again washed out and it had to be tenderly passed to me for relighting.

When I was just about to decide to go for the rope left in the chimney we decided on one last attempt, placing Norman's lamp low on a ledge to the left, it did not give him as much light as he would have liked but at least it would not wash out. I dangled my right leg well over the edge, Norman fought for a grip on it, found one, pulled and was with me. Stopping only for some Mint Cake we turned and left the spot.

But our troubles were not yet over, we reached the bottom of the chimney, and the rope was hanging down it without difficulty but now we were faced by a problem. Only acetylene lighting between us and the chimney entirely filled with spray from the rushing waterfall. Making sure the waterproof matches were in my pocket I said to Norman, "We shall have to climb in the dark, we can feel our way up by following the rope," slung the haversack round my neck and started, five feet up and, as I had expected, my lamp went out.

My memory is rather hazy about the rest of that climb. Somehow I kept moving up, the rope was a great help as I had no worries about going astray but the problem continually nagging at the back of my mind was "shall I be able to light a lamp when I reach the top."

Finally I realised the rope was travelling horizontally and I somehow wedged myself into the low tunnel at the top, away from the falling spray but lying on my left side in about six inches of water. Shouting for Norman to commence the climb I felt for my tin of matches, shook as much water as possible from my hands and carefully opened it. Tenderly I extracted a striking board and a match, laid the board along the top of the tin and struck the match, it fizzled out and did not light and the striking board fell from my grasp. Plenty more matches to try but only one more striking board. Carefully I got it out, held it firmly and struck a match. I lit. Tenderly

I tilted it so the flame crept firmly up the wood then brought it to the jet of my lamp. I was blinded by the bright light that resulted.

Carefully I climbed back and gave Norman a light then started back up the tunnel, as I emerged into the small chamber, keeping my head well down my lamp went out, struck by some spray.

It seemed that our troubles were not yet over. Relighting my lamp I covered the flame with my hands then carefully crawled to the one dry corner. Norman copied my tactics and we rapidly recovered our rope.

Then Norman walked over to start the climb up into Longwood Water Chamber, and out went his light. It was relit but again went out and he completed the climb by light from my lamp. Now my turn, head down I groped blindly for handholds and succeeded in making the climb without having my lamp extinguished. Our troubles should now be over.

At the bottom of second pitch in Longwood we met a large party of, they said Mendip Cave Group. I had never heard of them before, they were carrying piles of equipment and each man had rope and karabiners around his waist. They quite seriously explained that Norman had been injured by his fall he would soon have been rescued, they were a strong party and knew the cave.

Next morning we learnt that one of them had a tumble whilst in the Longwood system and twisted both his ankles. They called out the M.C.R.O.



Oldham Lamp

Main Bulb – 4v 1A, Pilot Bulb – 4v 0.46A. Light output 50 lumens. Run time approximately

12 hours.

The battery was worn a belt on the waist and connected to the headset via a cable which also sometimes snagged on the rock.

Battery : Height 19cm, Width 12.5cm, Depth 4cm.
Battery weight 2.2kg



Speleo Technics FX2



Sealed Ni-Cad cells that are totally leakproof and no topping up is required. Run time approximately 10 hours. The FX2 is coated with a 1.3cm thick red soft plastic shell for protection.

The battery was worn a belt on the waist and connected to the headset via a cable

Battery : Height 13cm, Width 8cm, Depth 5cm
Battery weight 1.4kg

Cost (in 1984) £45 which includes headset.
Charger £13.70

Kirby Caving Light

Sealed nickel metal hydride battery cells.

The battery was worn a belt on the waist and connected to the headset via a cable.

Battery : Height 8cm, Width 17cm, Depth 5cm.
Battery weight 1.3kg.



Speleo Technics Headlite

Improvements in NiCd technology the battery pack to be made small and light enough to be worn on the rear of the caving helmet. The battery is comprised of three matched NiCd cells sealed into an orange plastic case about the size of a cigarette pack. The case has a molded socket that connects to the headpiece cord and is also used for charging. This ‘brick’ battery concept, which is virtually indestructible.

0.5A halogen bulb and a 0.3A pilot bulb

The original 2.2-ampere-hour battery pack and .5A bulb provided 7 hours of light (12 hours using the pilot bulb). But a further refinement of NiCd chemistry allowed an “improved” 3.5Ah battery that provides nearly 10 hours. The complete system weighs only 0.5kg.

Battery : Height 7cm, Width 8cm, Depth 3cm.
Battery weight 0.3kg.



Headlite on a Texalex Caving
Helmet

Scurion Lighting

Scurion Lamps are well built, waterproof, bright, and versatile. Maximum output ranges from 720 lumens to over 1500 lumens (as of 2016). All the lamps use two different LEDs. One has a broad output (flood), and one has a very narrow, focussed beam (spot). Each has up to four output levels, and each can be used independently of the other. These options can all be user programmed according to preference for unique optimisation. Scurion lamps run off Li-ion

batteries to maximise brightness and runtime. The battery case is normally mounted on the back of the helmet. The case fits four Li-ion cells as standard.

Battery : Height 9cm, Width 9cm, Depth 3cm.

Weights : lamp head: 160g, caving battery box (aluminium): 111g, four cell battery: 190g



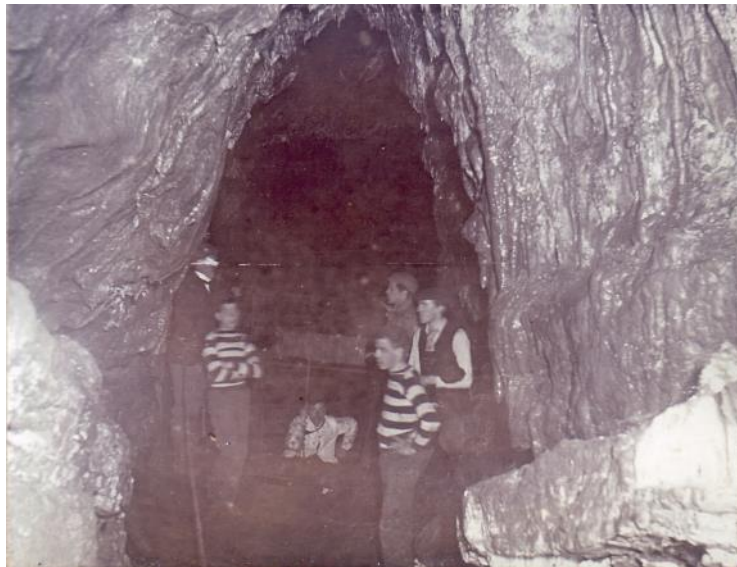
Equipment – Clothing

Source – Pioneer Under the Mendips – Herbert Ernest Balch a Short Biography – W.C.C. Occasional Publication Series 1, Number 1 – October 1969

Page 3 – For the relatively small and dry caves that were known on Mendip up to 1901 the simplest equipment was good enough. Old clothes and shoes, the inevitable cloth cap, candles, and a bag of food sufficed, just as they do many schoolboys of today of their first trips.

Pages 28 and 29 – [Trip to the Water Rift in Swildon’s Hole with Mr. Balch] – We met at Priddy Green on a streaming wet August morning (1931) armed with articles he enumerated :”Nailed boots, woollen garments next to skin. 7 lbs candles, and food for three meals”. A party of Boy Scouts camping at Priddy joined us while H.E.B. leading, and his brother Mr. Reginald Balch leading the rear end. Some of the Scouts had mackintoshes on, and Mr. Balch advised them to leave them behind because he said “they would ruckle up like a pawl”. Sound advice, as some who ignored it, found out afterwards.’.....

..... At the entrance, [after the trip] Mr. Balch checked everybody out as he had checked us in, and we proceeded to Priddy Green, saturated, shivering with cold (in spite of our woollen clothing), but in a joyful state of mind. What did discomfort matter? We had been underground with Mr. Balch. The Caving Bug had bitten – and bitten deep!



**Typical early caving clothing. Lambs Lair – At the
Windlass – Figs. Mr. Parkinson, Mr. C Pereira, Mr. Willcox,
Mr. Barnes, Mr. Scott, Mr. H Pereira. c. 1896.**

Source - Wells & Mendip Museum.

Goon Suits

Source – Cave and Craig News – April 2013, page 3

One of the greatest items of gear that started to appear on the caving scene around the late 1950's was the anti-exposure suit, affectionately known as the goon suit. Originally designed for aircraft crew these lightweight, inflatable overalls could be worn under normal caving overalls and had the ability to keep a caver dry and protected from the cold. Whilst they were new these suits were fantastic, but their designers had never intended their use for any activity as destructive as caving, so their life tended to be short. When they first appeared on the military surplus market they could be purchased for as little as ten shillings but within 5 years the last few to appear on the market were being grabbed at 7 to 10 pounds each.

In the early 1960's the goon suit, due to the ease of damage, scarcity and cost, gave way to the wet suit. These had the double advantage of insulation and weight reduction, as a full set of wet woollens from a failed goon suit, plus overalls, could add 25kg to a person's weight when climbing a wet pitch.

Wet suits

Source – RRCPC Newsletter, Volume 49 Number 4, December 2012

Neoprene ('synthetic rubber') was first manufactured in 1930 and 'Foamed Neoprene' was found to have good insulation and buoyancy properties and led to the invention of the 'sports' wetsuit in the 1950s and soon became popular with surfers and scuba-divers in California. Wetsuits started to be worn by cavers around the mid-1960s - an early photograph of can be found in *British Caver* 36 (1967.) They increased in popularity during the 1970s-80s and were especially useful for wet trips, waterfall ladder pitches etc. An article in the *SUSS Journal* (1976) provided a good review of the types of wetsuit available at the time, however the

introduction of SRT techniques during the 1980s triggered their decline and replacement by modern fleeces and oversuits.

From 1970 several water-sports and sub-aqua companies started to promote wetsuits for cavers. The early adverts offered DIY kits – for about £6 the caver could buy either a pattern to cut-out or ready-cut neoprene, but the seams had to be glued and/or sewn, and sealed with tape. Not surprisingly many just fell apart or were shredded on the first hard cave passage.

SOME GIRLS...

... WILL HELP, OTHERS WON'T. BUT YOU DON'T NEED TO BE A DRESSMAKING GENIUS TO BUILD YOUR OWN WET SUIT. ESPECIALLY NOT WITH OUR INSTRUCTIONS TO GUIDE YOU. AND THE SAVING IS FANTASTIC.

Kits for 2 piece suit with bootees from £6.10.0 single skin
*
£8.10.0 double skin
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AQUAEQUIPMENT

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*Phone
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Wet Suit materials

You won't improve on these prices however hard you try.

Advertisement for a wet suit kit
Decent No. 12 May/June 1970

Ready-made suits with double skin and nylon lining were an improvement, but it was Warmbac who started to make wetsuits specifically for cavers in 1972. Their order form in *Descent* asked for precise measurements, so their made-to-measure ready-to-wear wetsuits fitted much better; there was a choice of thickness, type of lining; one-piece or separate jacket & trousers and a smooth or shagreen finish for better wear and the seams were water-tight! All this for £12-£17, but always black with yellow stripes!

By the mid-1980s most of the water-sport companies had ceased to advertise whereas Warmbac continued has continued to develop their caving wetsuits and cave diving wear to the present day.

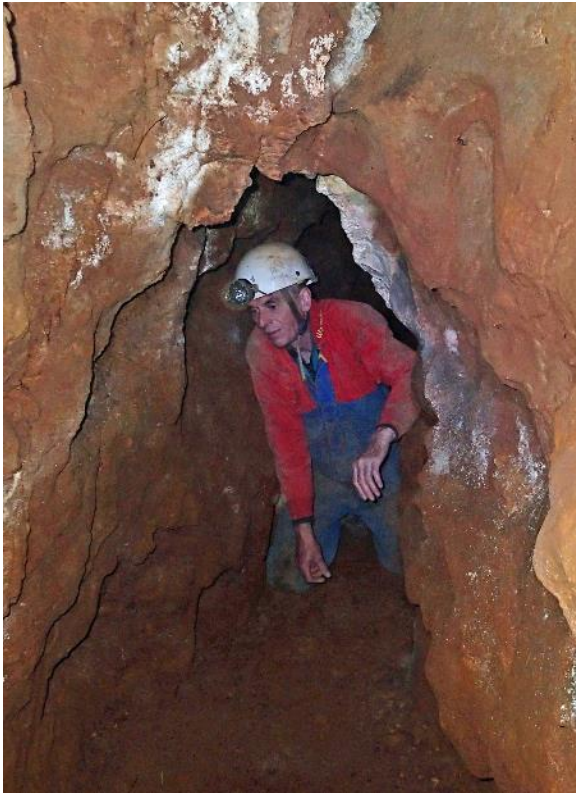
Wet suits, worn in “wet” caves were perfect, however in “dry” conditions the caver became quickly overheated. The wet suit also provided a welcome cushion against knocks and abrasions



Over Suits and Under Suits

The caver on the far left is wearing a wetsuit made from a kit.

Note the “yellow” taped seams.
Source - Dave Irwin collection.



Warmback Over Suit

From the 1980's a purpose manufactured over suit was used by cavers, some waterproof and some semi waterproof. Elasticated wrist and zip/Velcro kept the caver reasonably dry.

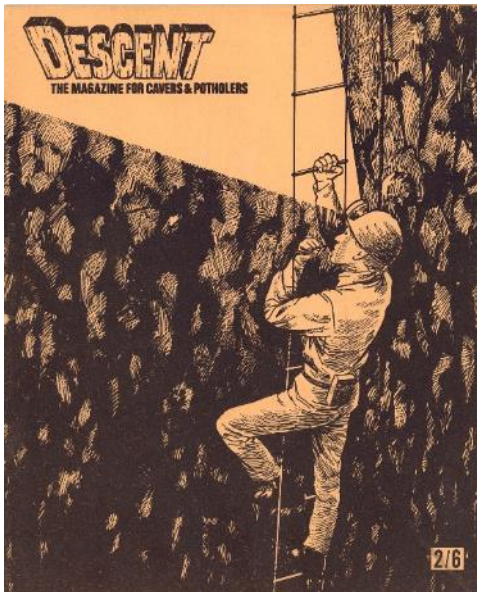
Cavers also wear a one piece under suit for warmth this is manufactured from a lightweight material and has the wicking nature of fleece and the ability to shed water quickly.

Footwear

Cavers have used many types of footwear from hob-nailed boots, walking boots and trainers. Now the preferred footwear is wellington boots that provide a good grip.

Available Information

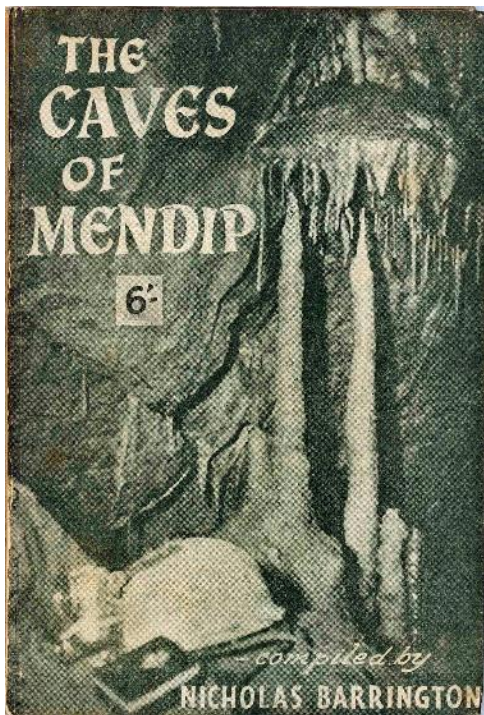
In the early days of caving information relating to the caves was spread by word of mouth then via club journals and newsletters (*W.C.C. 1934 to present, B.E.C. 1947 to present, A.C.G. 1950 to present, M.C.G. 1954 to present, S.M.C.C. 1954 to present, C.S.S. 1956 to present*). Italics indicate that these publications are available on-line.



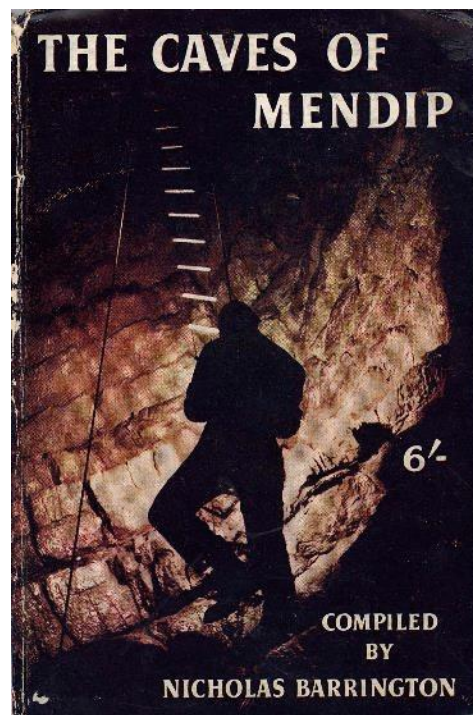
The next phase for the distribution of information came with magazines – Mendip Caver 1964 to 1970 and Descent 1969 to present.

Front Cover Descent No. 1
January 1969

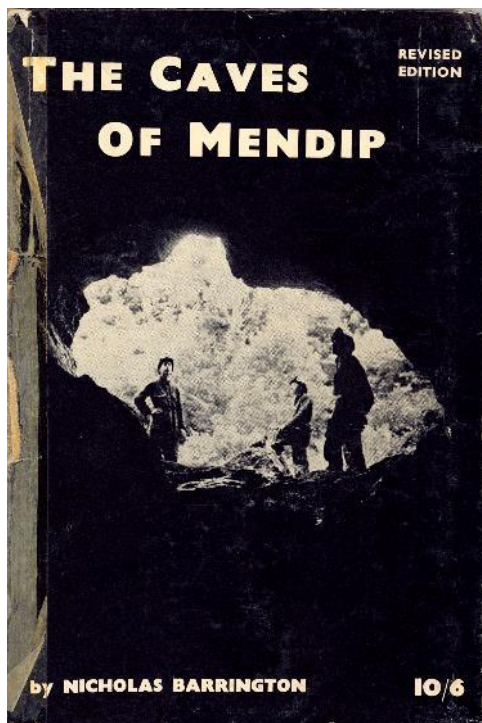
The main source of information became available from 1957 and from that date to the present these books have been continuously available –



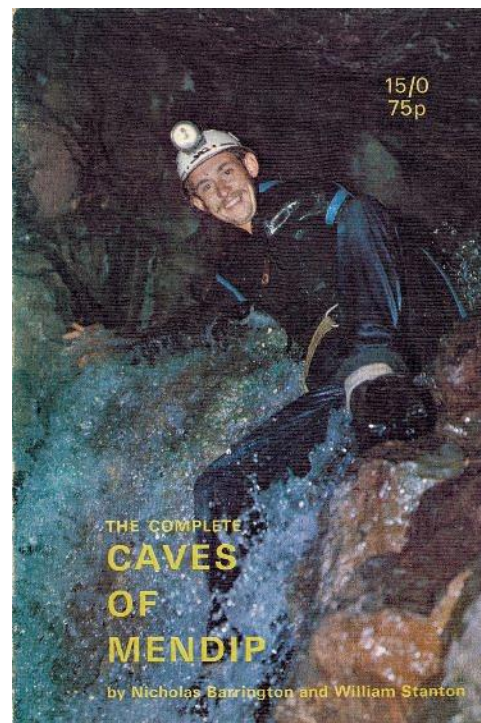
Published 1957 - 75 Pages



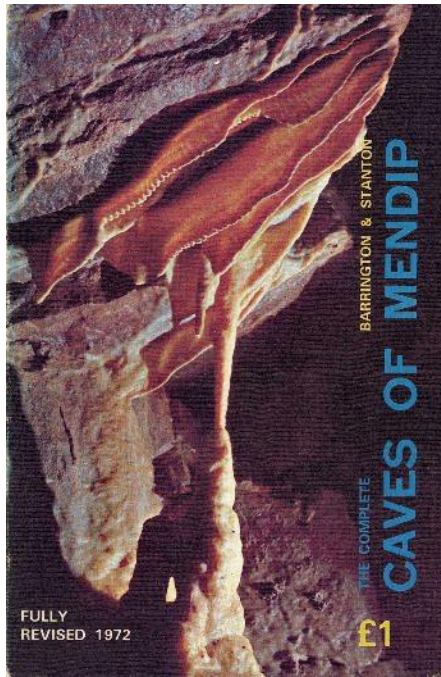
Published 1962 - 81 Pages



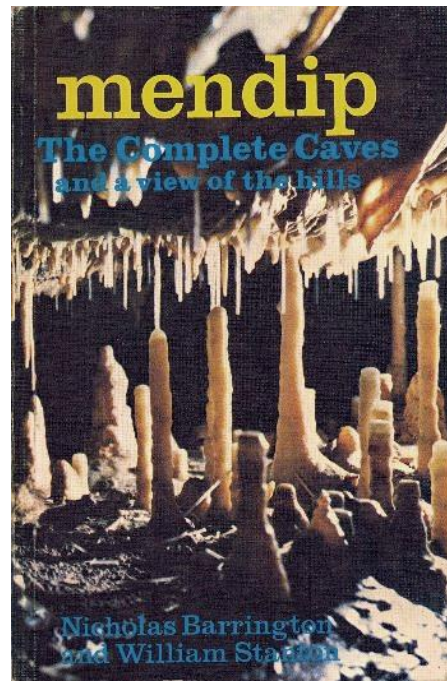
Published 1964 - 91 Pages



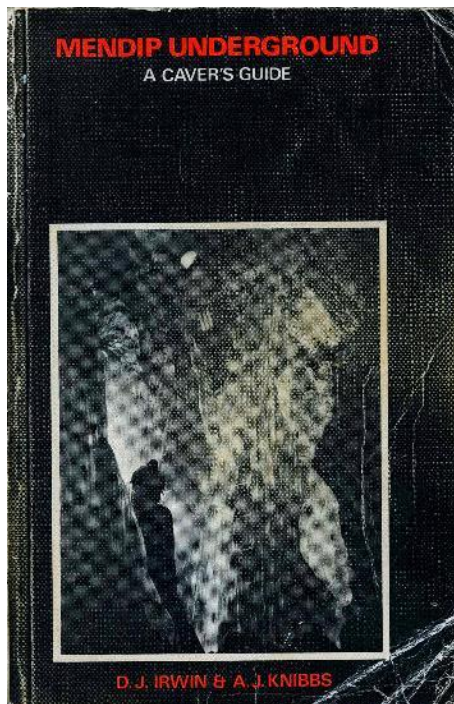
Published 1970 - 131 Pages



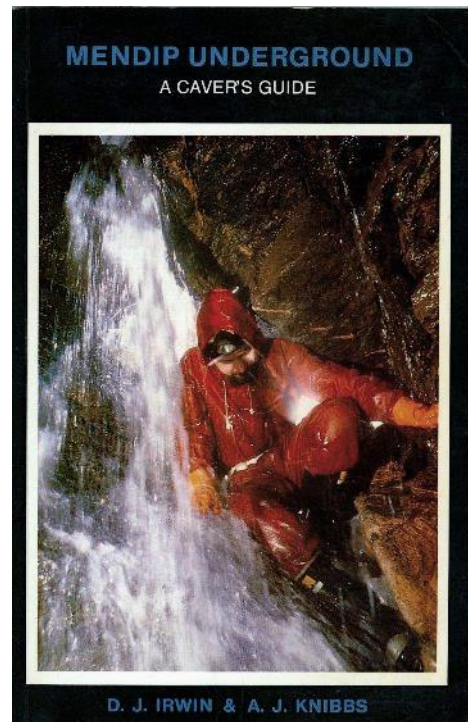
Published 1972 - 155 Pages



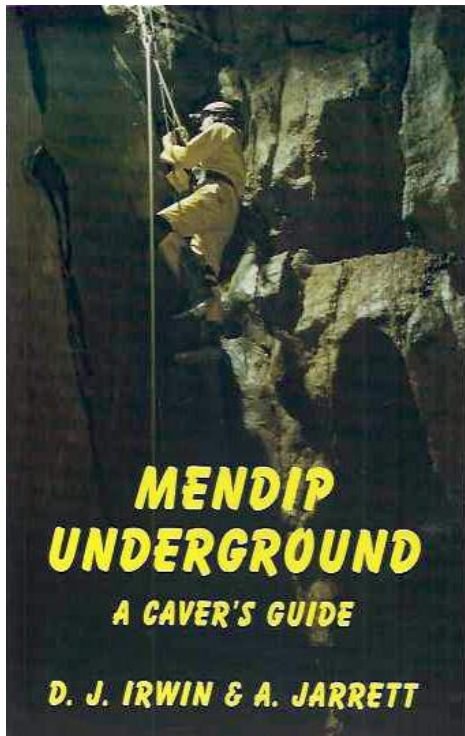
Published 1977 - 236 Pages



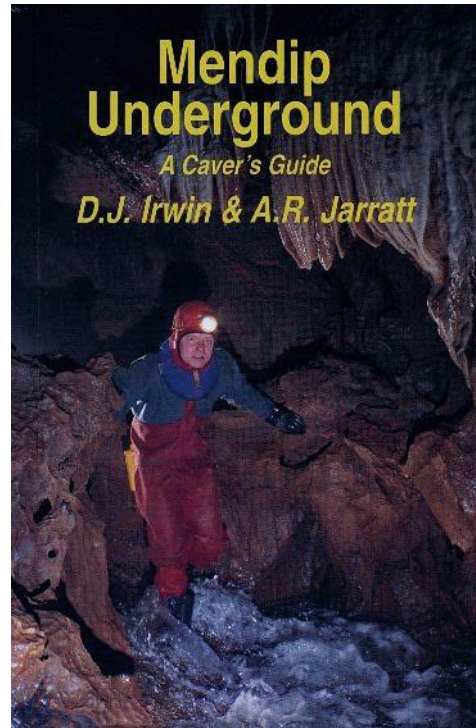
Published 1977 - 176 Pages



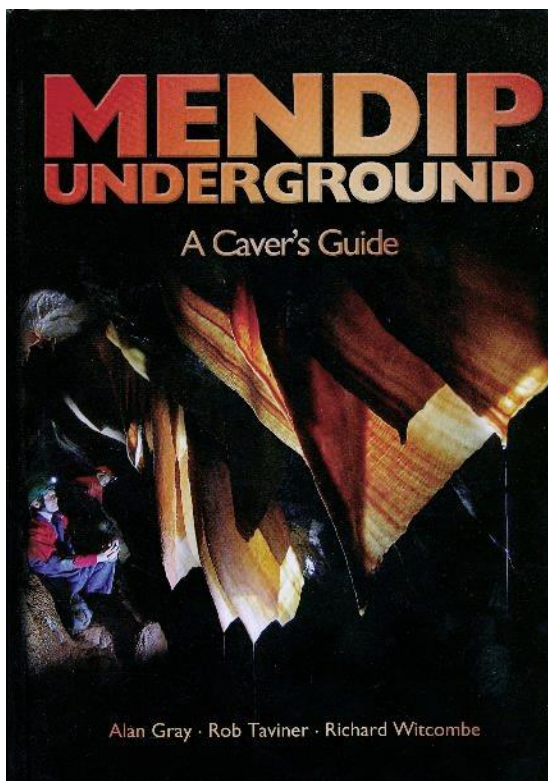
Published 1987- 212 Pages



Published 1993 - 240 Pages



Published 1999 - 241 Pages



*Published 2013 - 485 Pages
Hardback and larger format*

Since the mid 1990's vast amounts of information has become available via the internet – club publications via their web sites, dedicated caving web sites –

Darkness Below – “Your one stop site for caving, mining and other underground news.”

UK Caving Forum

The Mendip Cave Registry & Archive (MCRA) –

- On Line Search for any of the 3,500 sites on Mendip with caves shown on Google Satellite view and OS Maps
- Bibliography with over 31,000 entries from AD 883 to the present
- Free downloads of cave surveys
- 75 caving films
- 6,757 caving photographs
- 21,000 pages of cavers' Log Books
- 6,000 pages of club publications
- Large selection of caving articles
- Mendip Geology
- Mendip Archaeology

The MCRA is a registered charity –

Maintenance of a registry of all caves, mines and other associated locations within our area.

Maintenance of an archive of all information relating to the above, including but not limited to photographs, surveys, logbooks and bibliographies.

Collating and publishing the above information to make it available for the purposes of research, education, sport and general interest.

Training

Training is available via the caving clubs, scouts, universities and the CSCC.

A taster of caving can be experienced from -

- The Wild Wookey Experience includes 3 hour caving experience with professional instructors. Abseiling! Climbing! Crawling! All equipment and overalls provided.
- Adventure Caving in Gough's Cave.

Communications

Underground – from “runners” chasing through the cave to the surface to report on the victim's condition to request supplies and more manpower, to the present day when the surface controller can be constantly updated of the condition of the victim and send supplies down as requested. Also with the Cave Link fitted with a SIM card a Doctor, anywhere in the world, can give advise to the underground crew caring for the patient.

Surface – Having to run across the fields from the cave entrance, hopefully find a working telephone box, and contact M.R.O./M.C.R. via the police to having to run across the fields from the cave entrance to the parked car to get a mobile phone hopefully there is a signal and contact M.R.O./M.C.R. via the police.

CONCLUSION

Although in the surface situation good communication has reduced the time taken to call the rescue personnel and in the underground situation, where required, the rescue team can be in contact with the surface controller this has not led to a decrease of incidents but has contributed to a decrease in the length of time of a rescue.

As previously stated, in my opinion the drop in numbers of cave rescues and incidents had fallen from the high levels of the 1960's, 1970 and 1980's to what is seen now; due to –

- Better lighting – with a candle a caver was just able to see a handhold, with a carbide lamp two foot steps ahead, but with the modern LED lamps a large chamber can be well illuminated.
- Far superior clothing – from just wearing old clothes and getting soaked and very cold, the latest clothing keeps the caver dry and warm.
- Information – Vast amounts of information is now available so cavers know how long the pitch is, the correct route to take and how long a sump is. Warnings are provided for dangerous parts of a cave.
- Training – Rather than just following the example of friends high quality training is available.
- Finally it is the view of myself and many other cavers that the numbers of cavers on Mendip had declined.

M.R.O. CAVING CODE 1963

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

CAVING CODE

Normal Caving

1. It is usually best to ask the owner's permission before entering his cave. Never grudge the farmer his shilling; goodwill is worth more than that.
2. Always leave a note with someone on the surface to say which cave you are visiting and what time you expect to be back.
3. Make sure that your lights are in good order and that you carry with you the necessary spares. It is a good thing to have with you two forms of lighting and to be able to do repairs in the dark.
4. Clothing should be adequate for the type of trip contemplated. Wet caves need warmer clothing. Strong boots are recommended. Helmets are essential on verticals and desirable at most other times.
5. Keep in touch with the caver behind you at all times; this prevents the party from getting split up. The leader should be on the look-out for signs of fatigue or distress, particularly with beginners. He should give the necessary encouragement and be prepared to turn back. Take food with you for any long or energetic trip.
6. Always take your own tackle for a ladder pitch. Never use other people's tackle without making arrangements with them: it may be missing when you return. If you find a pitch already laddered you may either (a) leave your ladders at the head of the pitch, contact the party below and ask them to put your ladders in position, when they go out, or (b) take up the other ladders and put down your own, especially if they are better. It is courteous to roll up the other people's ladders. Never go away with other people's tackle, not even if you have lost your own. Never put ladders side by side on a pitch. Never have more than one person climbing at a time.
7. A life-line should be available for all verticals and must be used on verticals of over 20 ft. It is not sufficient to have it just in case; the leader must insist on its use. On long pitches (e.g. Lamb Leer) it is essential either to use a double life-line or to leave a life-liner at the head of the pitch.
8. Leave no rubbish in a cave or near its entrance. Spent carbide should be buried or tipped into an active streamway (not pools). Don't use it to defile the rocks and stalagmite. Spent batteries, flash bulbs and toffee papers are rubbish, and should be removed.
9. In Swildon's Hole Sump I is a safe free dive of $6\frac{1}{2}$ ft. Sump II is 30 ft. and should on no account be attempted free. Sump IV of 15 ft. is difficult and should not be attempted for the first time, unless in company with someone who has done it and knows it well. In Stoke Lane Sump I (2 ft.) is safe unless there is flooding. If there is a river running in the Pebbly Crawl, the sump will be impassable. Sump II should not be attempted. All other sumps on Mendip are best avoided.
10. It is not usually safe to have less than four cavers in a party. If someone gets hurt, the second stays with him, while the other two go for help.
11. Join a reputable caving club, if you want to learn and enjoy good caving.

Front

In Times of Trouble

1. If your lights fail or you have lost the way, stay where you are and await rescue. This may take a long time, unless you have observed Rule 2 above.
2. If you are cold, wet and shivering, you are particularly prone to accidents. Everything you do has less efficiency and takes twice as much energy, so don't try any tricky climbing. Keep going steadily and eat some food. If you have to wait, get out of draughts and huddle together to keep warm. If possible, move about from time to time to restore the circulation.
3. If someone gets badly hurt, observe Rule 10 above. Put extra clothing on the subject, if you can. If you can get him moving on his own, do so; but it may be best to await rescue.
4. The party giving the alarm should observe the M.R.O. notice at the cave entrance. Go to the nearest telephone, ring the Police at Wells 3481 and stay by the telephone, until the Rescue Warden rings you back for information.
5. To avoid getting trapped by floods, consult the weather before going down a wet cave.
 - (a) Swildon's Hole. If the stream is over the entrance grating, the 40 ft. pot will be impassable. Anyone below the 40 should await rescue in a dry place above flood level. If anyone is known to be below the 40 by someone on the surface, alert M.R.O.
 - (b) Stoke Lane. See Rule 9 above.
 - (c) Longwood and August Hole. The Tunnel may fill up completely, while if water is going down the entrance shaft, this may not only make this shaft dangerous but it may flood part of the by-pass to the Tunnel.
 - (d) St. Cuthbert's First Ladder Pitch may become impossible in times of flood. Get comfortable and await rescue.

Avoid doing battle with flood waters; they are likely to win.

NOTES:

Published by the Mendip Rescue Organization, October 1963. Hon. Sec. and Treas. Dr. Oliver C. Lloyd, Withey House, Withey Close West, Bristol, 9.

CAVE RESCUE CALL OUT SHEETS & SIGNS

5. Equipment :-

- Surgical splints and dressings
- Sling Stretcher
- Primus Stove
- Kettle
- 2 Aluminium Hot Water Bottles
- 1 Pulley Block
- 2 Crowbars
- 1 Entrenching tool

To be kept at Wessex Headquarters, Mendip

6. Procedure in event of Accident

1. A member of party will go to the nearest call-box and ring Wells 97. (Police). Give number of call-box and name of cave in which accident has occurred. He must wait at call box for instructions from Warden.
2. The Police will ring Wardens in rotation. To the first Warden in touch, they will give name of cave and number of call-box.
3. The Warden will phone call-box and ascertain the exact locality of accident, what injuries are known and how many in party. He will call up Wardens and Squad-leaders as necessary.
4. At the scene of the accident, the Senior Warden will take charge. In the event of the Senior Warden not being a doctor, he will collaborate with the doctor called out and follow his instructions in so far as to the treatment and removal of patient.
5. The Wells or Bristol ambulance to be called out only on instructions of doctor. The M.R.O. will not be responsible for expenses incurred.

Durham West & Sons, Printers, Pauldon.

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

CONSTITUTION.

1. **Committee:-** consists of two members from each of the following constituent Societies :-

1. Wessex Cave Club.
2. Bristol University Speleological Society.
3. Bristol Exploration Club.
4. Mendip Nature Research Club.

Function :- to decide matters of general policy and finance.

Hon. Sec :- Dr. B. A. Crook,
Timsbury, Nr. Bath.

2. **Wardens :-**

Dr. Woolley	Wells	37.
Dr. Crook	Timsbury	13.
T. H. Stanbury	Bristol	77590.
F. Frost	Bristol 44221	(20110)

Function :- to control and organise rescue work.

3. **Doctors :-**

Dr. K. Pridie	Bristol	35358.
V. T. Baxter	Bristol	77257.
H. Taylor	Bristol	57343.
Jenkins	Bristol	53458.
J. Field	Keynsham	2343.
S. J. V. Gilson	Midsomer Norton	120.
D. Prowse	Thornbury	2352.
Mrs. Fitzgibbon	Bristol	82211.

4. **Rescue Squads and Leaders.**

Leader :- J. Lander	Bristol	54026.
Deputy :- P. Dolphin	Bristol	54026.
Members :- H. Tranter		
E. R. Champeny		
A. Fisher		

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (front) Early

Leader :-	T. H. Stanbury	Bristol	77590.	Leader :-	W. G. Tucknott	Wells	216.
Deputy	D. H. Hasell	Bristol	77590.	Deputy	F. C. Hucker	Wells	34.
		(Ashcott 34; week-ends)			Rev. John		
Members	J. Pain	Bristol	76471.		T. G. Baker		
	T. Johnston	Bristol	66478.				
	L. Peters						
	(Diving Group)			Leader :-	P. Stewart	Bristol	46922.
				Deputy	R. Cater		
				Members	T. Pidwell		
					H. Arnold		
					J. Chapman		
Leader :-	R. Stride	Avonmouth	555.	Leader :-	C. Low	Winterbourne	3257.
Members	K. Dixon	Bristol 23749	(813891)	Members	J. Dunnington		
	Miss Hall	Timsbury	13.		C. R. Withey		
	R. Marshall	Bristol	813891.				
	R. Fletcher	Bristol	23749.				
	A. Stride.						
Leader :-	K. W. Humphries	Keynsham	2152.	Leader :-	D. Donovan	Bath	5673.
Deputy	D. W. White	Keynsham	2285.	Members	C. Barker		
Members	C. Downs				J. Nash		
	H. Davis				Miss Harris		
	Dr. J. Field	Keynsham	2343.				
Leader :-	D. A. Coase	Bristol	33441.	Leader :-	G. Williams	Bristol	21684.
Deputy	S. Bosworth	Bristol	63642.	Deputy	R. J. Murphy	(56297)	54433.
	G. Lucy	Bristol	66425.	Members	Fred Frost		
	G. Fenn						
	(Diving Group)			Leader :-	C. Tudgay	Bristol	46769.
					T. E. Thomson		
					G. Prater	Portishead	2212.
Leader :-	J. Parkes	Avonmouth	98.	Leader :-	K. W. Fisher		
Deputy	M. Gummer				W. Cushing		
Members	Miss Boulter	} University			D. W. Parsons		
	Miss Dumbleton				A. J. S. McMillian		
	O. Hepworth						
	P. Harvey			Function:-	to be ready to turn out if called and call all men in squad and get them to the scene of the accident.		

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (rear) Early

FIRST AID KIT

Stretchers, bandages, splints and dressings will be kept at the following Club Headquarters:

- University of Bristol Speleological Society, Top of the Link, Burrington;
- Bristol Exploration Club, "The Belfry," The Beeches, Priddy;
- Wessex Cave Club, Hillgrove, Bristol Road, Near Wells.

CONSTITUTION

1. Committee—The Wardens with power to co-opt representatives of any Club or Society wishing to co-operate.
2. Hon. Sec.—C. H. Kenney, 5 Vicars' Close, Wells.
3. The number of Wardens is not fixed, and the Committee may add to the list any suitable person.
4. Meetings to be called at the discretion of the Secretary, but not less than one in each calendar year.
5. The Committee will maintain the organisation's notices at entrances of caves and erect new ones if considered necessary.
6. Lists of Cavers willing to assist in a rescue will be kept by all Wardens.

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

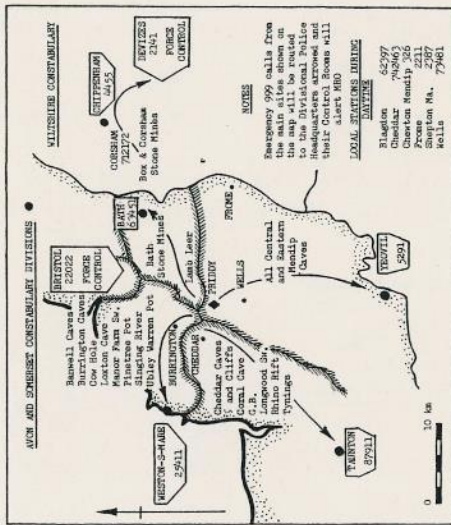
PROCEDURE IN EVENT OF ACCIDENT

1. Person having knowledge of accident will go to the nearest call-box or telephone and ring the Police. (Wells Police Tel.: Wells 2197).
2. The Police will require the following information:
 - Name and address of caller.
 - Number and situation of call-box or telephone.
 - Nature of accident
 - Name of cave.
 - Position of accident in cave (if known).
 - Number of people in party.
 - Whether experienced cavers.
3. The informant will remain at phone for further instructions.
4. The Police have been requested to ring Wardens in list order until one is located.
5. The Police and Warden will jointly decide what action is necessary.
6. The Warden will in all cases contact Dr. Crook at TIMSBURY 13 who will provide medical assistance or advice.
7. If the assistance of cave divers is required, ring a Diving Warden.
8. Any further action will be at the discretion of Wardens and Police.

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (front) Early

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION		
<u>WARDENS</u>	Telephones	
	Day	Night
C. H. Kenney, 5 Vicars' Close, Wells	2288/9	3211
F. Frost, 22 Wolesley Road, Bishopston, Bristol 6	81966	44221
J. Ifold, Leigh House, Nempnett Thrubwell, Chew Stoke	Blagdon 432 or 400	
Prof. E. K. Tratman, Penrose Cottage, Blagdon, Nr. Bristol	Blagdon 274	
P. Dolphin, Overhill Cottage, Easton-in-Gordano, Somerset	Whitchurch 2162 Ext. 12	Phil 31115 (Police)
T. H. Stapbury, 74 Woodleigh Gardens, Whitchurch, Bristol	Whitchurch 2162 Ext. 12	Whitchurch 2369
L. W. E. Devenish, Chapel House, Priddy, Nr. Wells	Priddy 20 (Post Office)	
D. Donovan, 12 Royal Crescent, Bath	Bristol 24161 (Geol. Dept.)	Bath 5073
L. Millward, Avalon, Bishops Road, Cleve, Nr. Bristol	Yatton 3211	Yatton 2159
D. M. Thomson, 4 St. Joseph Road, Weston	B.R.I.	Weston 4638
<u>MEDICAL WARDEN</u>		
Dr. B. A. Crook, Timsbury, Nr. Bath	Timsbury 13	
<u>DIVING WARDENS</u>		
G. Lucy, 46 The Crescent, Henleaze, Bristol	67838	66478
J. Ifold, Leigh House, Nempnett Thrubwell, Chew Stoke	Blagdon 432 or 400	

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (rear) Early



M.R.O.
IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT
DIAL 999 ASK FOR POLICE
THEN REQUEST POLICE FOR
CAVE RESCUE
GIVE DETAILS AND STAY AT PHONE UNTIL
CONTACTED BY MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

The above information is posted by the entrances to all major cave systems in the area. The same Emergency Call procedure should also be used for

CLIFF RESCUE
 and all incidents underground in Avon, Somerset and Wiltshire

In the event of an Emergency Call for both Cave and Cliff rescue services, the Police will contact the first MRO Warden available in the order given overpage. The Warden will call others as required. Informants must give instructions to the Police on where they can be contacted by telephone and stay there until called by an MRO Warden for all details.

The appropriate Police authority decide jointly with the MRO wardens alerted what course of action to take. All helpers should report to the warden in charge so that a full record of the rescue can be compiled. MRO reports are published annually.

MRO is entirely a voluntary service organised by the Wardens listed overpage. All are cavers who live in the area and are members of Mendip clubs. The support of experienced club cavers and any rescue teams they form is important to the work of MRO. Funds are solely from donations and used only for providing equipment and rescue facilities.

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (front) 1980

WARDENS	CODE	DAY	CODE	NIGHT	RADIO COMMUNICATIONS WARDEN	CODE	DAY	CODE	NIGHT
1. B.E. Prewer, Old Chapel, West Horrington, Wells.	---	Wells 72081	---	Wells 73757	E. Dunford, 10 Shaftgate Avenue, Shepton Mallet, Somerset.	---	Ashecott 505	---	Shepton M. 3270
2. D.J. Irwin, Townsend Cottage, Friday, Wells.	---	Wells 69381	---	Friday 369	RESOLVE DEPUTY, The Belfry, Friday, Wells, Somerset.	---	Wells 72126	---	Wells 72126
3. A. Thomas, Allen's House, Friday, Wells.	---	Weston-a-Mare 32171	---	Friday 269	CLIFF RESCUE, Clibbers through:	---	Wells 72126	---	Wells 72126
4. F.J. Davies, Camp V, Neighbourne, Oakhill.	---	Burton 3362 or 3326	---	Pilton 237 or 246	M. Riddell, 16 St. Michael's Avenue, Clevedon, Avon.	---	Clevedon 873081	---	Clevedon 877106
5. T. Large, 53 Portway, Wells.	---	Wells 73960	---	Oakhill 840004	MOUNTAIN RESCUE SUB-POST NO 92, St. John's Ambulance Station, The Keys, Cheddar, Somerset.	---	Cheddar 742403	---	Cheddar 742403
6. M. Palmer, Laurel Farm, Farley, Wells.	---	Wells 73030	---	Wells 78666 (neighbour)	ROCKSPOT, C. Bradshaw, The Bus Station, Wells, Somerset.	---	Wells 73054	---	Wells 74382
7. M. Bishop, Bishop's Cottage, Friday, Wells.	---	Friday 370	---	Wells 74693	CLUB CONTACTS, Rescue teams via:	---	---	---	---
8. J. Duke, Bridge Farm, Dilcoote, Wells.	---	Wells 73688	---	Wells 78920	Bristol Exploration Club (B. Cross)	---	Bristol 779881	---	Wells 74789
9. J.D. Hannell, 50 Wells Road, Wooley Hole.	---	Wells 78799	---	Bath 29292	Wessex Cave Club (B. Drake)	---	Bristol 624965	---	---
10. B. Woodward, 243 Bloomfield Road, Bath.	---	Bath 6941	---	Wells 74661	M.H.C. (P. Gray)	---	Byfleet 45616	---	---
11. M. Taylor, Whiddon, Chilton, Wells.	---	Bristol 22022	---	Wells 74061	Univ. Bristol S.S. (C. Pepper)	---	---	---	---
12. G. Batstone, 8 Prospect Place, Bathford, Bath.	---	Bristol 20877 or 236945	---	Wells 74061	Border Carving Group (K. Speller)	---	---	---	---
13. A. Butcher, 16 Little Parks, Holt, Trowbridge.	---	N. Trowbridge 782697 (weekends)	---	Wells 74061	MENDIP NUMBERS IN EMERGENCIES	---	---	---	---
14. B. Craig, 49 Newton Green, Nailsea, Bristol.	---	Avermouth 823641	---	Wells 74061	Hunters' Lodge Inn, Friday.	---	---	---	Wells 72275
15. S. McManus, 'Greystones', Friday, Wells.	---	Wells 74061	---	Wells 74061	Queen Victoria Inn, Friday.	---	---	---	Friday 385
16. P.J. Stanning, Kitas Croft, Westbury-on-Trent.	---	Bath 313500	---	Wells 74061	New Inn, Friday.	---	---	---	Friday 665
17. P. Franklin, 10 Glen Drive, Stoke Bishop.	---	Bristol 683084	---	Wells 74061	Friday Green Call-box.	---	---	---	Friday 300
18. P. Davies, 'Coptalls', West Hill, Wrexall.	---	Nailsea 852009	---	Wells 74061	Burrington Combe Cafe.	---	---	---	Blagdon 62227
19. D.C. Lloyd, Withay House, Withy Close West, Bristol.	---	Bristol 683229	---	Wells 74061	Stirrup Cup, Northmoor.	J.E. Fry	---	---	Blagdon 62486
20. P. Frost, 71 Hazelbury Road, Bristol.	---	Whitchurch 832022	---	Wells 74061	Manor Farm, Friday.	B. Main	---	---	Friday 423
MEDICAL WARDENS	---	---	---	Wells 74061	Science Combe Farm, Friday.	J. Main	---	---	Friday 218
Dr. D.H. Thomson, 'Pinkacre', 1618-Mendip, Bath.	---	Wells 812244	---	Wells 812230	Longwood Grange Farm, Charterhouse.	R. Tria	---	---	Cheddar 742513
Dr. P. Glanvill, 38 High Street, Chard, Somerset.	---	Chard 3380	---	Taunton 79001	Manor Farm, Charterhouse.	M. Jefferies	---	---	Blagdon 62335
Dr. M. Glanvill, 184 Jocelyn House News, Chard, Somerset.	---	Chard 3380	---	Chard 4262	Tynings Farm, Charterhouse.	B. Coml	---	---	Cheddar 742501
Dr. S. Parker, 7 Priory Walk, Fortbury, Bristol.	---	Bristol 622821	---	Chard 4262	Outdoor Centre, Charterhouse.	T. Elkin	---	---	Blagdon 62867
Dr. B. Everton, 48 Capel Road, Lawrence Weston, Bristol.	---	Avermouth 822131	---	Chard 3917	Stoke Bottom, Stoke St. Michael.	P.J. Marks	---	---	S-on-F. 232273
Dr. M. Mignani, Tudor Cottage, Minsterworth, Gloucester. (Gloucester Cave Rescue Group)	---	Westbury-on-Savern 316	---	Chard 3917	Thruppe Farm, Manstury.	W.M. Burt	---	---	Shep.M. 2797
	---	RADIO CAR WHISKEY 7	---	Chard 4262	Beaconfield Park, West Hartytree.	W. Burdge	---	---	V. Hart, 277
	---		---	Chard 4262	Eastwater Farm, Friday.	I. Gibbons	---	---	Friday 287
	---		---	Chard 4262			---	---	

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (rear) 1980

Information in Emergencies

CLIFF RESCUE

Alert Team through AIR CALL FACERS
Give message to Ring MRO Warden at appropriate number. Repeat message.

C. Summers, 29 The Tynings, Avonmouth 82224
Cleveland 875211

Cheddar Mountain Rescue Post, St John's Station, The Bays, Cheddar 742403

BRISTOL WATERWORKS

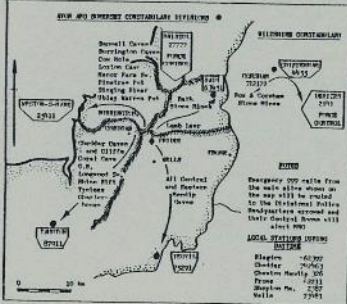
Advise PW of all rescues at both Longwood Swallet and Swildons Hole, Bristol 668881 or Freephone 981

CONTACTS

Vessex Cave Club (R. Drake)	Bristol 779881	Wells 74789
Nades Caving Club (R. Coaling)	Bristol 693871	Thornbury 416634
Border Caving Group (B. Bomer)	Farnham 726199	Farnham 726199
Cerberus Spelaco Soc (J. Swift)	Tinsbury 71910	Tinsbury 71910
South Wales CRO (B. Joplin)	Bristol 594349	Radstock 33224
Devon CRO (B. Johnson)	Exeter 51951	Ottery St Mary 3212
Mendip Exploration Gp (J. Sandford)	Weeton-a-Mare 33521	Wells 870594

POLICE

All Call-outs are dealt with through the Police in the Avon and Somerset and Wiltshire constabularies. The following map illustrates the appropriate Divisions in both Force areas. The Teovil Control co-ordinates rescue calls.



The information on these lists is intended to help during emergencies and must not be republished for general use.

J.D. Hamwell, Hon Secretary & Treasurer M.R.O.

Dated: November 1983

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

M.R.O.

IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT
DIAL 999 ASK FOR POLICE
THEN REQUEST POLICE FOR
CAVE RESCUE
GIVE DETAILS AND STAY AT PHONE UNTIL
CONTACTED BY MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

The above information is posted by the entrances to all major cave systems in the area. The same Emergency Call procedure should also be used for

CLIFF RESCUE

and all incidents underground in Avon, Somerset and Wiltshire

In the event of an Emergency Call for both Cave and Cliff rescue services, the Police will contact the first MRO Warden available in the order given to them. This Warden will call others as required. Informants must give instructions to the Police on where they can be contacted by telephone and stay there until called by an MRO Warden for all details.

The appropriate Police authority decide jointly with the MRO wardens alerted what course of action to take. All helpers should report to the warden in charge so that a full record of the rescue can be compiled. MRO reports are published annually.

MRO is entirely a voluntary service organised by the Wardens listed overpage. All are caveers who live in the area and are members of Mendip clubs. The support of experienced club caveers and any rescue teams they form is important to the work of MRO. Funds are solely from donations and used only for providing equipment and rescue facilities.

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (front) 1983

General Call-out

WARDENS (alphabetically)	CODE	DAY	CODE	NIGHT
C. Batstone, 8 Prospect Place, Bathford, Bath.	—	Bristol 20877 or 296945	—	Bath 859976
H. Bishop, (c/o T. Hughes Wootkey Hole, Wells.)	—	Wells 77235	—	Wells 77235
G. Bolt, 4 The Retreat, Foxcote, Radstock, Bath.	—	Frome 63417	—	Radstock 33782
B. Bradshaw, Hurst Batch, Wootkey Hole, Wells.	—	Wells 76224	—	Wells 76224
A. Butcher, 212 The Common, Holt, Trowbridge.	—	H. Trowbridge 782697	—	H. Trowbridge 782697
B. Cork, 25 The Mead, Stoke St. Michael, Bath.	—	Shepton Mallet 3333	—	Oakhill 840033
F. Davies, Camp V, Highbourne, Oakhill.	—	Bruce 3362 or 3326	—	Oakhill 840004
J. Dikes, 18 West Shepton, Shepton Mallet.	—	Wells 73688	—	Shepton Mallet 4815
F. Franklin, 10 Glen Drive, Stoke Bishop, Bristol.	—	Bristol 683094 (weekends)	—	Bristol 683094
J. Hamwell, 50 Wells Road, Wootkey Hole, Wells.	—	Wells 78799	—	Wells 76221
T. Jarrs, 63 Portway, Wells.	—	Wells 73960	—	Wells 76786
S. McManus, "Greystones", Friddy, Wells.	—	Wells 74061 (weekends)	—	Wells 74061
E. Prener, Old Chapel, West Horrington, Wells.	—	Wells 72081 Ex. 286	—	Wells 73757
P. Rowford, 1 Vicarage Close, Coxley, Wells.	—	Wells 72081 Ex. 293	—	Wells 75407
M. Taylor, Plum Tree Cottage, Langford Lane, Langford.	—	Lulsgate 4441 Ex. 287	—	Wrighton 862127
B. West, 4 Quarry Villas, Easton, Wells.	—	Wells 870948	—	Wells 870948
G. Milton-Jones, The Bassets, 8 Dams's Lea, Wedmore.	—	West Coker 2779	—	Wedmore 712284
B. Woodward, 243 Bloomfield Road, Bath.	—	Bath 61244 Ex. 779 or 640	—	Bath 29292
B. Workman, Meadow View, Little London, Oakhill.	—	Wells 72081 Ex. 247	—	Oakhill 840815

Special Call-out

	CODE	DAY	CODE	NIGHT
B. Dore, Hunters' Lodge Inn, Friddy, Wells.	—	Wells 72275	—	Wells 72275
E. Dunford, 10 Shaftgate Avenue, Shepton Mallet.	—	Ashcott 210505 (RADIOS)	—	Shepton Mallet 3270
RESCUE DEPOT, The Belfry, Friddy, Wells.	—	Wells 72126 (RADIO TELEPHONE CALL SIGN 'HUNTER')	—	Wells 72126
UPPER FITTS, Vessex Cave Club, Eastwater Lane, Friddy, Wells.	—	Wells 72310	—	Wells 72310
B. Craig, 49 Newton Green, Nailsea, Bristol.	—	Avonmouth 823641 Ex. 339	—	Nailsea 857864
F. Davies, "Cophalls", West Hill, Wraxall, Bristol.	—	Nailsea 852009	—	Nailsea 853321
O. Lloyd, Withey House, Withey Close West, Bristol.	—	Bristol 683229	—	Bristol 683229 (CONTACT FOR DIVING EQUIPMENT AND GIG)
M. Palmer, Laurel Farm, Yarley, Wells.	—	Wells 73025	—	Wells 74693
M. Stanton, Kites Croft, Westbury-sub-Mendip, Wells.	—	Bath 313500 Ex. 262	—	Wells 870328
A. Thomas, Allen's House, Friddy, Wells.	—	Weeton-a-Mare 32171	—	Wells 870269
MEDICAL WARDENS				
Dr. D.M. Thoburn, "Pinkacre", Leigh-on-Mendip, Bath.	—	Wells 812244 SAVRS RADIO 203	—	Wells 812230
Dr. A. Roycott, 14 Walton Rise, Westbury on Trym.	—	Bristol 663497	—	Bristol 507869
Dr. A. Nash, 10 Frenchay Close, Downend, Bristol.	—	Bristol 962979	—	Bristol 659082
Dr. S. Parker, 7 Priory Walk, Forthbury, Bristol.	—	Bristol 622821 Southmead Hosp.	—	F111 2903
Dr. P. Glanvill, 38 High Street, Gant.	—	Chard 3380	—	Chard 4262
Dr. M. Glanvill, 18A Jocelyn House Hens, Chard.	—	Chard 3380	—	Chard 3917
Dr. N. Mistrall, Tedor Cottage, Minsterworth, Gloucester.	—	Westbury-on-Severn 314	—	Minsterworth 376
Dr. B. Swinton, 48 Chapel Road, Lawrence Weston, Bristol.	—	Avonmouth 822151	—	Avonmouth 822131

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (rear) 1983

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

Avon and Somerset

CAVE and CLIFF

RESCUE CALL-OUT BY THE POLICE

also

OLD MINES

Avon, Somerset and Wiltshire

On receiving an Emergency Call
Obtain essential details then
Tell Informant to wait at their
Telephone until called by the

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

Alert M.R.O by telephoning down
List below in the order shown and
Give details to first answering call

Name	Exchange	STD	Number	Availability
PREWER	WELLS	0749	73757	ALL TIMES
DAVIES	DAKHILL	0749	840004	ALL TIMES
HANWELL	WELLS	0749	78221	ALL TIMES
WEST	WELLS	0749	870848	ALL TIMES
DCRS	WELLS	0749	72278	ALL TIMES

CO-ORDINATE INCIDENTS THROUGH
YEovil CONTROL

Use same call-out for SEARCH and RESCUE on hills and moors

THE ABOVE CANCELS ALL PREVIOUS LISTS. MARCH 1985

M.R.O. Cave Rescue List (front) 1985

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

M.R.O.

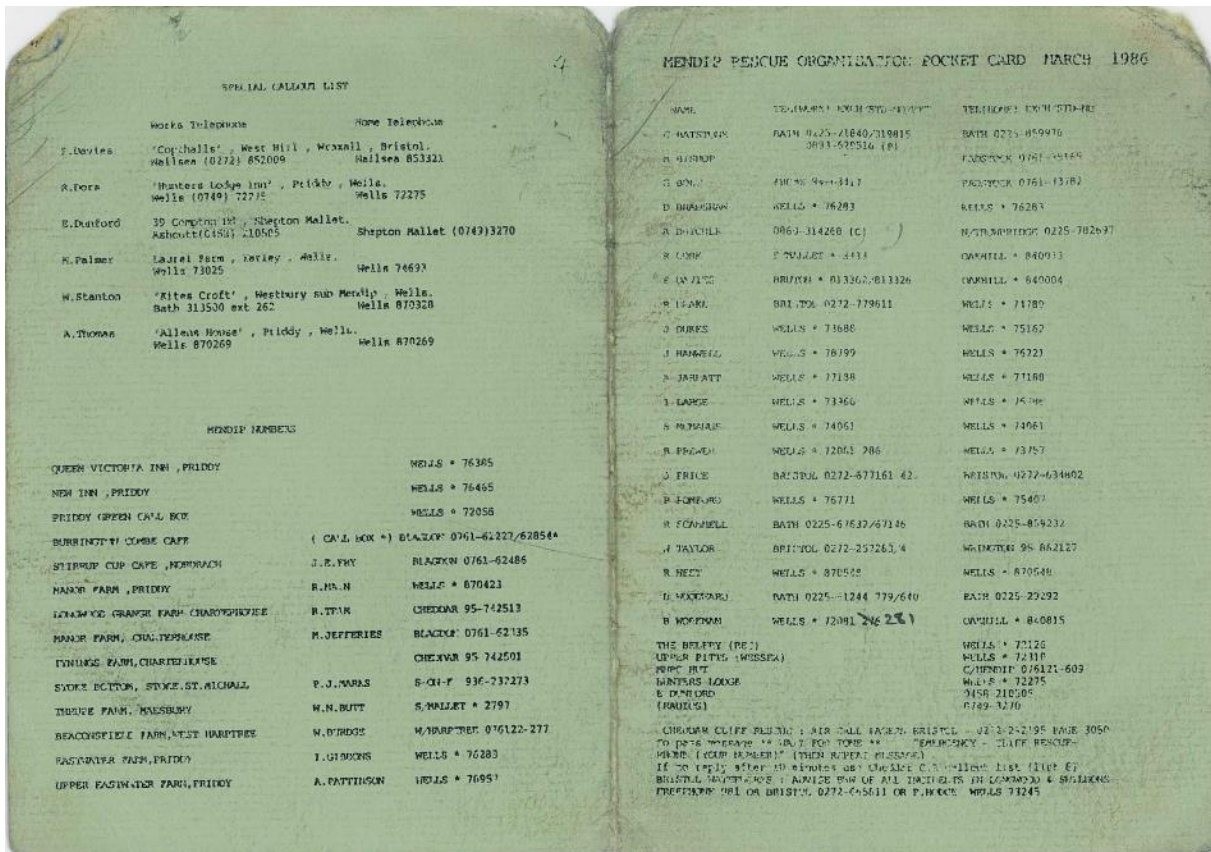
IN THE EVENT OF AN ACCIDENT
DIAL 999 ASK FOR POLICE
THEN REQUEST POLICE FOR
CAVE RESCUE
GIVE DETAILS AND STAY AT PHONE UNTIL
CONTACTED BY MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION

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to all major cave systems in the area. The same
Emergency Call procedure should also be used for

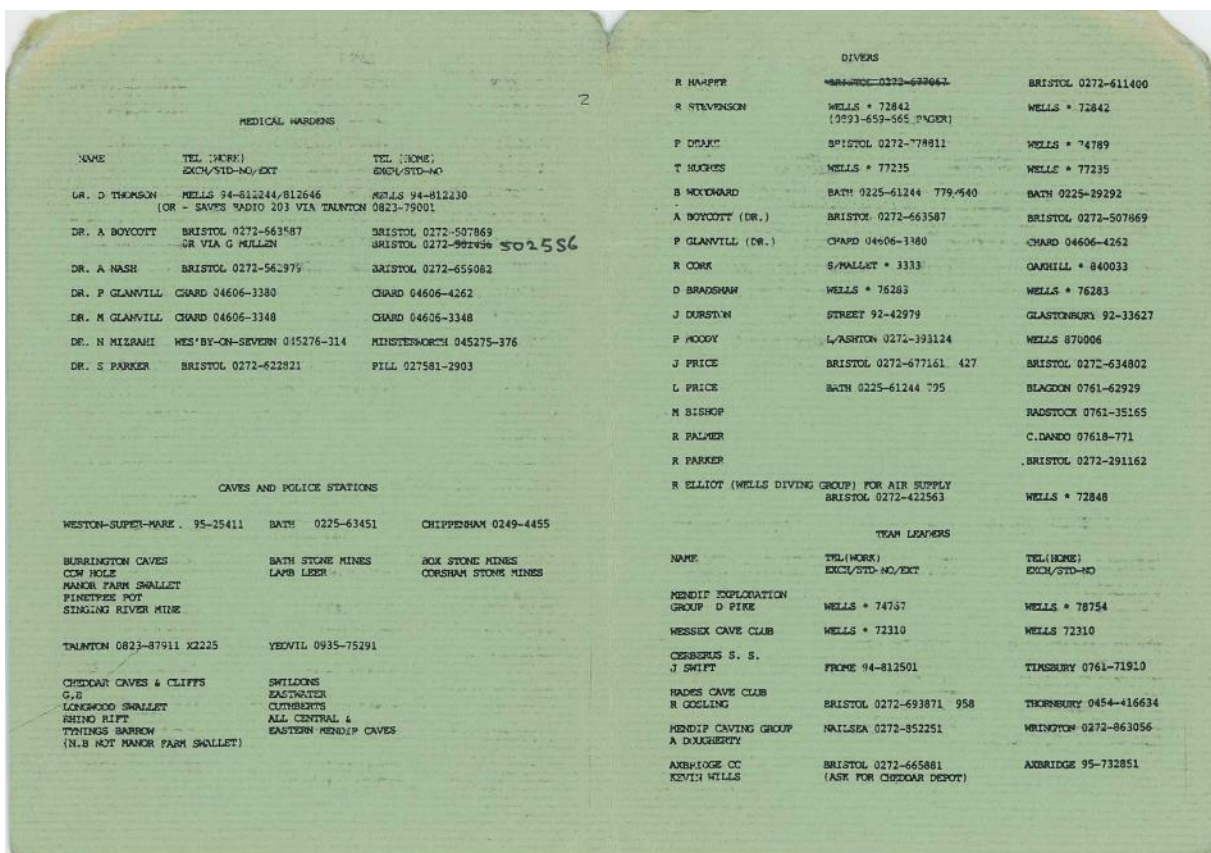
CLIFF RESCUE

and all incidents underground in Avon, Somerset
and Wiltshire

M.R.O. Cave Rescue List (rear) 1985

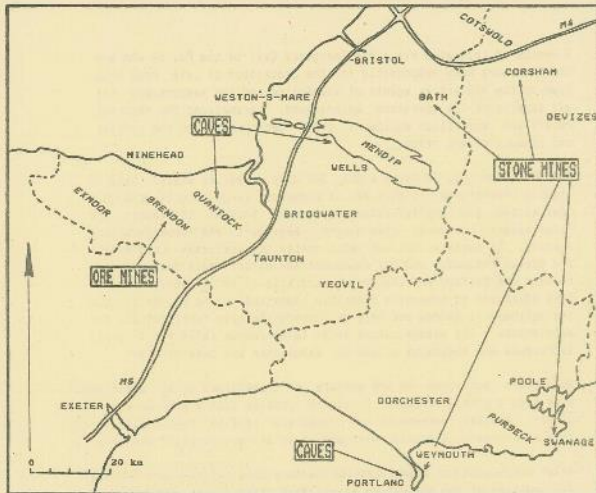


M.R.O. Call Out Pocket Card (front) 1986



M.R.O. Call Out Pocket Card (rear) 1986

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION
Avon, Somerset, Wiltshire, Dorset.



References on Caving in the region:

IRWIN, D.J. & A.J. KNIBBS.
MENDIP UNDERGROUND.
Mendip Publishing, 1987.

BARRINGTON, A. & STANTON, W.
MENDIP: The complete caves and a view of the hills.
Earlon Productions, 1977.

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION 1988

CAVE RESCUE

The famous caves at Cheddar and Wookey Hole lure thousands of visitors to Somerset. Another 20 miles of underground passages, accessible only to cavers, attract at least 50,000 enthusiasts to the area every year. Occasionally accidents happen.



Cave rescues in this region are carried out on behalf of the Police by a volunteer body provided by local cavers known as the

**MENDIP
RESCUE
ORGANIZATION**

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (front) 1988

**MENDIP
RESCUE
ORGANIZATION**

Formed in 1936, just one year after the pioneering Yorkshire C.R.U., the Mendip Rescue Organization is the second oldest such group in the world.

Whilst the MRO acts on behalf of the Police and can only be requested through them, the rescuers concerned are entirely self-financed and do not call on local or National funds. Self-help with voluntary service is a strong and enduring ethic amongst Mendip cavers; a tradition that has kept the MRO at the forefront of technical developments and techniques throughout its 52-year history.

CAVERS RESCUE CAVERS

This spirit of responsibility has ensured grass-roots support from the whole of the caving community, both in terms of man-power and finances. Links with other cave rescue teams and the Mountain Rescue Committee are important nationally, and strong international ties exist with groups in many countries around the world.

The MRO is one of 13 cave rescue teams covering the whole of the United Kingdom and Eire and is responsible for rescues from caves and old stone and ore mines in the counties of Avon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset.

CAVERS BEAR THE COSTS

**TO THE END OF 1987 THE MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION HAS
ATTENDED 284 CALL-OUTS AND RESCUED OVER 6300 PEOPLE**

999 EMERGENCY CALLS

A rescue is initiated via a 999 Emergency Call to the Police who are the Statutory body responsible for the protection of Life. From this time on the MRO act as agents of the Police and are responsible for all aspects of the operation underground: marshalling the required cavers and specialist equipment, their deployment, and the control and conduct of the rescue.

The MRO is on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to assist those in trouble underground. To this end it possesses large amounts of highly specialized and sophisticated equipment. Amongst its members are first-aiders, doctors, cave divers, engineers and communications experts. It operates its own radio net on the national Land Search and Rescue frequency and has equipment for direct radio communication between the surface and the underground site of an incident. Much of this equipment is expensive - certain items cost up to £1,000 - but its purchase is funded entirely by cavers who also carry out all the maintenance. The unique nature of a cave rescue calls for original techniques and apparatus allied to experience and determination.

An injury sustained on the surface is transformed at an underground site from a straightforward first-aid problem into a much more serious matter. Medical assessment and immediate care is complicated by the cave environment; the total darkness, cold and wet compound the severity.

After assessment and immobilization the hard physical work and technical difficulties of the evacuation start. This phase of any rescue can take hours so that it is hard for the non-caver to comprehend just what is going on. The logistics of having the right piece of equipment or number of rescuers in the right place at the right time and the need for continual monitoring of the victim added to the physical danger of the cave combine to ensure that even a staple injury sustained just a few hundred feet underground might mean a rescue lasting several hours. In extreme cases it might take hours to move just a few yards.

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (rear) 1988

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION 1989

MENDIP NUMBERS

HUNTERS LODGE INN, PRIDDY	WELLS 72275
QUEEN VICTORIA INN, PRIDDY	WELLS 76395
NEW INN, PRIDDY	WELLS 76465
PRIDDY GREEN CALL BOX	WELLS 74329
SHIPMAN SQUARE CALL BOX	WINScombe 0934 842150
BURRINGTON COMBE CAVE	BLADDON 0761 62227
BURRINGTON COMBE CAVE CALL BOX	BLADDON 0761 62854
STIRRUP CUP CAVE, NORDRACH	J. E. FRY BLADDON 0761 62486
MANOR FARM, PRIDDY	R. MAIN WELLS 870423
LONGWOOD GRANDE FARM, CHARTERHOUSE	R. TRIN CHEDDAR 0934 742513
MANOR FARM, CHARTERHOUSE	M. JEFFERIES BLADDON 0761 62335
CHARTERHOUSE O/D CENTRE	BLADDON 0761 62287
CHARTERHOUSE O/D CENTRE WARDEN (HOME)	CHEDDAR 0934 742287
STOKE BOTTON, STONE ST. MICHAEL	P. J. MARKS STRYN-ON-FOSSE 936 232273
THRUPE FARM, MAESBURY	W. N. BUTT S/MALLEY 2797
EASTWATER FARM, PRIDDY	J. GIBBONS WELLS 76283
MENDIP HEIGHTS CAMP SITE, PRIDDY	WELLS 870241
MVIC HUT, GREEN ONE	C/MENDIP 076121 609
MCG HUT, NORDRACH	BLADDON 0761 62797
MVC HUT, UPPER PITTS, PRIDDY	WELLS 72310
BEC HUT, BELFRY, PRIDDY	WELLS 72126

MRO RADIO CALL-SIGNS

HUNTER ENTRANCE	CAVE ENTRANCE
HUNTER CONTROL	CONTROL POINT (WARDEN-IN-CHARGE)
HUNTER RELAY	RELAY POINT (WHERE HEADED)
HUNTER BELFRY	SEC HQ AND MRO STONE
HUNTER MESSEX	MCC HQ
HUNTER ZERO	BRITISH TELECOM LINK - PRIDDY
HUNTER COMS	COMMUNICATIONS ADVISOR - E. DUNFORD
HUNTER MOBILE	ANY RADIO TEMPORARILY ASSIGNED
HUNTER ONE	J. HANNELL - MOBILE
HUNTER TWO	F. DAVIES - MOBILE
HUNTER THREE	B. PREMER - MOBILE
HUNTER FOUR	R. WEST - MOBILE
GRUNTER ONE	SURFACE GRUNTERPHONE
GRUNTER TWO	UNDERGROUND GRUNTERPHONE

WARDENS

NAME	TEL: (WORK) EXCH/STD/NO/EXT	TEL: (HOME) EXCH/STD/NO
C. BATSTONE	S BATH 0225 444451	RADSTOCK 0761 37367
M. BISHOP	S WELLS 77575	RADSTOCK 0761 35165
G. BOLT	-	RADSTOCK 0761 33782
D. BRADSHAW	F WELLS 72848	WELLS 72848
A. BUTCHER	S BRADFORD-ON-AVON 02216 4000 CARPHONE 0860 314268	N/TROWBRIDGE 0225 782697
R. CORK	F S/MALLEY 3333	OAKHILL 840033
P. CRONIN	BRISTOL 0272 715190/723326	BRISTOL 0272 715190/723326
F. DAVIES	F BRUTON 813362/813691	OAKHILL 840004
R. DRAKE	WELLS 72063 (AM) OR BRISTOL 0272 779881 (PM)	WELLS 74789
J. DUKES	WELLS 73686	STREET 92 43329
J. HANNELL	WELLS 78799	WELLS 76221
A. JARRATT	WELLS 77188	WELLS 77188
T. LARGE	S WELLS 73960	-
S. MCMANUS	S WELLS 74061 CARPHONE 0860 842437	WELLS 74061
B. PREMER	F WELLS 72081 x 286	WELLS 870678
J. PRICE	BRISTOL 0272 677161 x 387	BRISTOL 0272 634802
P. RICHFORD	WELLS 76771	WELLS 75407
R. SCAMPELL	S BRISTOL 0272 865860 x 78	BATH 0225 659232
N. TAYLOR	F W-S-MARE 0934 635252 x 260 CARPHONE 0860 227815	WRINGTON 0934 862127
R. WEST	F WELLS 870548	WELLS 870548
B. WORMAN	F WELLS 72081 x 396/441	C/POLDEN 0278 722726
E. DUNFORD	ASHCOTT 92 210505	S/MALLEY 3270
R. DORS	WELLS 72275	WELLS 72275

**** F = FIRST AIDER S = STONE MINES ****

BRISTOL WATERWORKS:

ADVISE BWM OF ALL INCIDENTS IN LONGWOOD & SWILDONS.
FREEPHONE 981 OR BRISTOL 0272 665811 OR P. HODGE - WELLS 73245

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (front) 1989

MEDICAL WARDENS

NAME	TEL: (WORK) EXCH/STD/NO/EXT	TEL: (HOME) EXCH/STD/NO
DR. D. THOMPSON	WELLS 94 812244	WELLS 94 812230
OR	SAVES RADIO 203 VIA TAUNTON 0823 79001	
DR. A. BOYCOTT	BRISTOL 0272 463587	BRISTOL 0272 507869
OR	AIRCALL PAGER 1110/1111 VIA BRISTOL 0272 268351	
DR. A. NASH	BRISTOL 0272 562979	BRISTOL 0272 659082
DR. P. GLANWILL	CHARD 04606 3380	CHARD 04606 4262
OR	MESSAGE PAGER 0297579 VIA 0345 333111	
DR. M. GLANWILL	CHARD 04606 3348	CHARD 04606 3348
DR. N. MIZRAH	WIMBORNE-SEVERN 045276 314	MINSTERWORTH 045275 376
OR	CARPHONE 0860 716997	

CAVES AND POLICE STATIONS

BANWELL CAVES	BURRINGTON CAVES	
COW HOLE	LOXTON CAVE	WESTON-SUPER-MARE POLICE
MANOR FARM SWALLET	PINETREE POT	0934 635252
SINGING RIVER MINE	UBLEY WARREN POT	
CHEDDAR CAVES & CLIFFS	CORAL CAVE	
G.B. CAVERN	LONGWOOD SWALLET	TAUNTON POLICE
RHINO RIFT	TYNINGS BARROW	0823 337911 x 2225
(N.B. NOT MANOR FARM SWALLET)		
SWILDONS HOLE	EASTWATER CAVERN	YEOVIL POLICE
ST. CUTHBERT'S SWALLET		0935 75291
ALL OTHER CENTRAL AND EASTERN MENDIP CAVES		
BATH STONE MINES	LAMB LEER CAVERN	BATH POLICE 0225 63451
BOX STONE MINES	CORSNAN STONE MINES	CHIPPENHAM POLICE 0249 654455

CAVE DIVERS

NAME	TEL: (WORK) EXCH/STD/NO/EXT	TEL: (HOME) EXCH/STD/NO
R. DRAKE	WELLS 72063 (AM) OR BRISTOL 0272 779881 (PM)	WELLS 74789
D. BRADSHAW	WELLS 72848	WELLS 72848
R. CORK	S/MALLEY 3333	OAKHILL 840033
P. CRONIN	BRISTOL 0272 715190/723326	BRISTOL 0272 715190/723326
J. PRICE	BRISTOL 0272 677161 x 387	BRISTOL 0272 634802
DR. A. BOYCOTT	BRISTOL 0272 463587	BRISTOL 0272 507869
OR	AIRCALL PAGER 1110/1111 VIA BRISTOL 0272 268351	
DR. P. GLANWILL	CHARD 04606 3380	CHARD 04606 4262
OR	MESSAGE PAGER 0297579 VIA 0345 333111	
R. STEVENSON	WELLS 72842	WELLS 72842
OR	PAGER 0893 659665	
R. HARPER	WELLS 77198 (WEEKENDS) CARPHONE 0836 607379	01 462 5775/3455
R. ELLIOT (WELLS DIVING GROUP - FOR EXTRA AIR SUPPLY)	BRISTOL 0272 422563	WELLS 77743

N.B. FOR HOME DIVERS CONTACT R. DRAKE OR B. PREMER.

CLUB TEAM LEADERS

MENDIP EXPLORATION GROUP	WELLS 79222 x 238	WELLS 74789
D. PIKE		
MESSEX CAVE CLUB	BRISTOL 0272 741251 x 2104	BANWELL 0934 822680
P. LACY		
HAKES CAVING CLUB	BRISTOL 0272 797491	THORNBURY 0454 616634
R. GOSLINS		
MENDIP CAVING GROUP	NAILSEA 0272 852720	WRINGTON 0934 863056
A. DOUGHERTY		
ANBRIDGE CAVING GROUP	BRISTOL 0272 665881	ANBRIDGE 0934 732851
K. MILLS	ASK FOR CHEDDAR DEPOT	

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (rear) 1989

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

CAVE RESCUE

IN AVON, SOMERSET, DORSET & WILTSHIRE
Also rescue from old stone & ore mines

1 On receipt of a 999 Emergency Call obtain essential details & insist the caller waits at their phone until contacted by one of the MRO Wardens listed below.

Alert the MRO by phoning down the list below in the order shown. Give details to 1st answering number.

2

NAME	STD	NUMBER	AVAILABILITY
PREWER	0749	870678	ALL TIMES
WEST	0749	870548	ALL TIMES
DAVIES	0749	840004	ALL TIMES
WORKMAN	0278	722726	ALL TIMES
DORS	0749	672275	ALL TIMES

3 ONLY in the event of failure to obtain any of the above numbers Mendip Rescue Organization can be contacted via POLICE PAGER QP 399 through Force Control (Bristol).

The above arrangement is as established with the Association of Chief Police Officers through the Mountain Rescue Committee and the British Cave Rescue Council

CANCELS ALL PREVIOUS LISTS - AUGUST 1992

M.R.O. Cave Rescue List (front) 1992

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IN AVON, SOMERSET, DORSET & WILTSHIRE
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NAME	STD	NUMBER	AVAILABILITY
PREWER	0749	870678	ALL TIMES
WEST	0749	870548	ALL TIMES
BUTCHER	0749	870157	ALL TIMES
TAYLOR	0934	862127	ALL TIMES
DORS	0749	672275	ALL TIMES

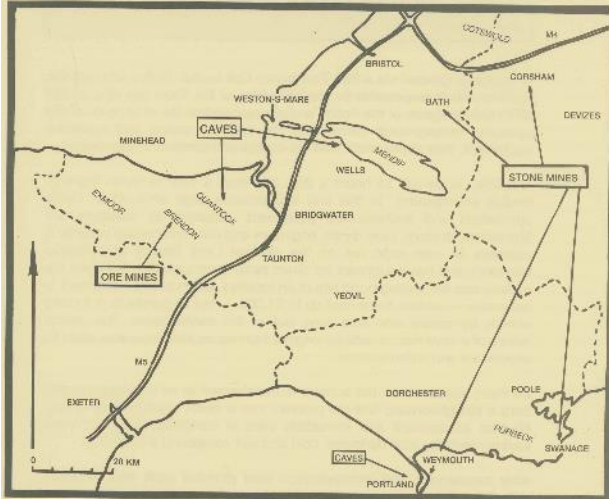
ONLY in the event of failure to obtain any of the above numbers MRO can be contacted via POLICE PAGER QP 399 through Avon & Somerset Force Control or private pager on 0893 947334.

The above arrangement is as established with the Association of Chief Police Officers and the British Cave Rescue Council.

CANCELS ALL PREVIOUS LISTS - JANUARY 1994

M.R.O. Cave Rescue List (front) 1994

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION
Avon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset.



References on Caving in the Region:

IRWIN, D. J. & A. JARRATT
MENDIP UNDERGROUND
Mendip Publishing, 1994.

BARRINGTON, N. & STANTON, W.
MENDIP: The complete caves and a view of the hills.
Barton Productions, 1977.

Hon. Sec. R. Cork
Beechbarrow, Pen Hill, Wells Rd., Wells, Som.
MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION 1994

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Whilst the MRO acts on behalf of the Police and can only be requested through them, the rescuers concerned are entirely self-financed and do not call on Local or National funds. Self-help with voluntary service is a strong and enduring ethic amongst Mendip cavers; a tradition that has kept the MRO at the forefront of technical developments and techniques throughout its 59-year history.

CAVERS RESCUE CAVERS

This spirit of responsibility has ensured grass-roots support from the whole of the caving community, both in terms of man-power and finances. Links with other cave rescue teams and the Mountain Rescue Committee are important nationally, and strong international ties exist with groups in many countries around the world.

The MRO is one of 13 cave rescue teams covering the whole of the United Kingdom and Eire and is responsible for rescues from caves and old stone and ore mines in the counties of Avon, Somerset, Wiltshire and Dorset.

CAVERS BEAR THE COSTS

**TO THE END OF 1995 THE MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION HAS
ATTENDED 366 CALL-OUTS AND RESCUED OVER 750 PEOPLE**

999 EMERGENCY CALLS

A rescue is initiated via a 999 Emergency Call to the Police who are the Statutory body responsible for the protection of life. From this time on the MRO act as agents of the Police and are responsible for all aspects of the operation underground; marshalling the required cavers and specialist equipment, their deployment, and the control and conduct of the rescue.

The MRO is on call 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to assist those in trouble underground. To this end it possesses large amounts of highly specialized and sophisticated equipment. Amongst its members are first-aiders, doctors, cave divers, engineers and communications experts. It operates its own radio net on the national Land Search and Rescue frequency and has equipment for direct radio communication between the surface and the underground site of an incident. Much of this equipment is expensive — certain items cost up to £1,000 — but its purchase is funded entirely by cavers who also carry out all the maintenance. The unique nature of a cave rescue calls for original techniques and apparatus allied to experience and determination.

An injury sustained on the surface is transformed at an underground site from a straightforward first-aid problem into a much more serious matter. Medical assessment and immediate care is complicated by the cave environment; the total darkness, cold and wet compound the severity.

After assessment and immobilization hard physical work and technical difficulties of the evacuation start. This phase of any rescue can take hours so that it is hard for the non-caver to comprehend just what is going on. The logistics of having the right piece of equipment or number of rescuers in the right place at the right time and the need for continual monitoring of the victim added to the physical danger of the cave combine to ensure that even a simple injury sustained just a few hundred feet underground might mean a rescue lasting several hours. In extreme cases it might take hours to move just a few yards.

M.R.O. Call Out Sheet (rear) 1994

CAVE RESCUE SIGNS

Photographs of these redundant signs were all taken at the Wessex Cave Club Hut.



Axbridge Ochre Mine



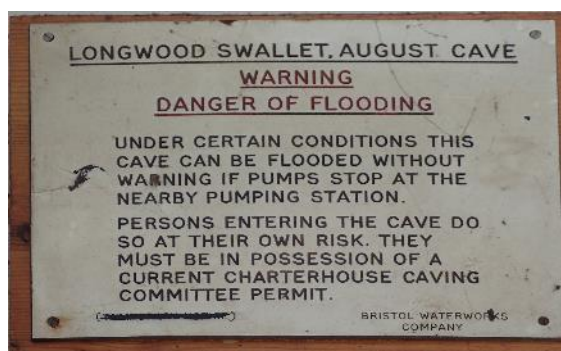
Cuckoo Cleeves



Easter Hole



Eastwater Cavern



Longwood Swallet



Pierre's Pot



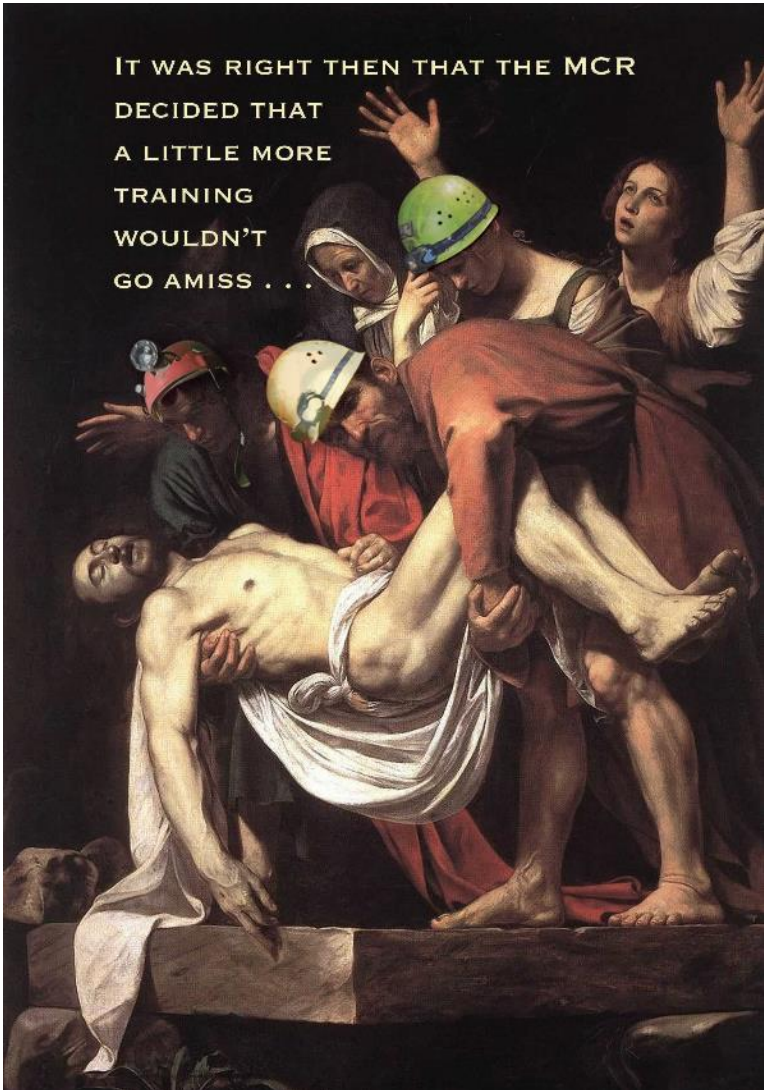
Read's Cavern



Swildon's Hole

ART WORK & PHOTOGRAPHS

From Mark Lumley (Gonzo)



Don't get wrecked at the

MCCR STOMP

Saturday
13th September

From 7pm at Priddy Village Hall

Music · Bar · Food



The Raft of the Medusa by Théodore Géricault (1791-1824) with apologies for blatant plagiaristic image manipulation for a good cause

80 YEARS

MCCR
Mendip Cave Rescue
MRO

First for
Cave
Rescue

MCCR
Mendip Cave Rescue
MRO

MCR^{MRO}
Mendip Cave Rescue

75
YEARS

Cavers
Rescuing Cavers
for 75 Years

Over 420 Callouts since 1936
Over 880 People Rescued

Cavers
Rescuing Cavers
for 75 Years

Over 420 Callouts since 1936
Over 880 People Rescued

MCR^{MRO}
Mendip Cave Rescue

75
YEARS

CELEBRATION DAY
19TH NOVEMBER 2011

Friday Hunter's Lodge: Rescue Videos

Saturday Priddy Village Hall and Top Green:
Day:
Rescue Workshops – above and below ground
Displays and Videos
Speleo Olympics 'Rescue Challenge'

Food and Drink available all Day

Evening:
Talk on Cave Rescue, Auction
J Rat Digging Award, MCR Stomp

www.mendipcaverescue.org
75 Years of Cavers Rescuing Cavers

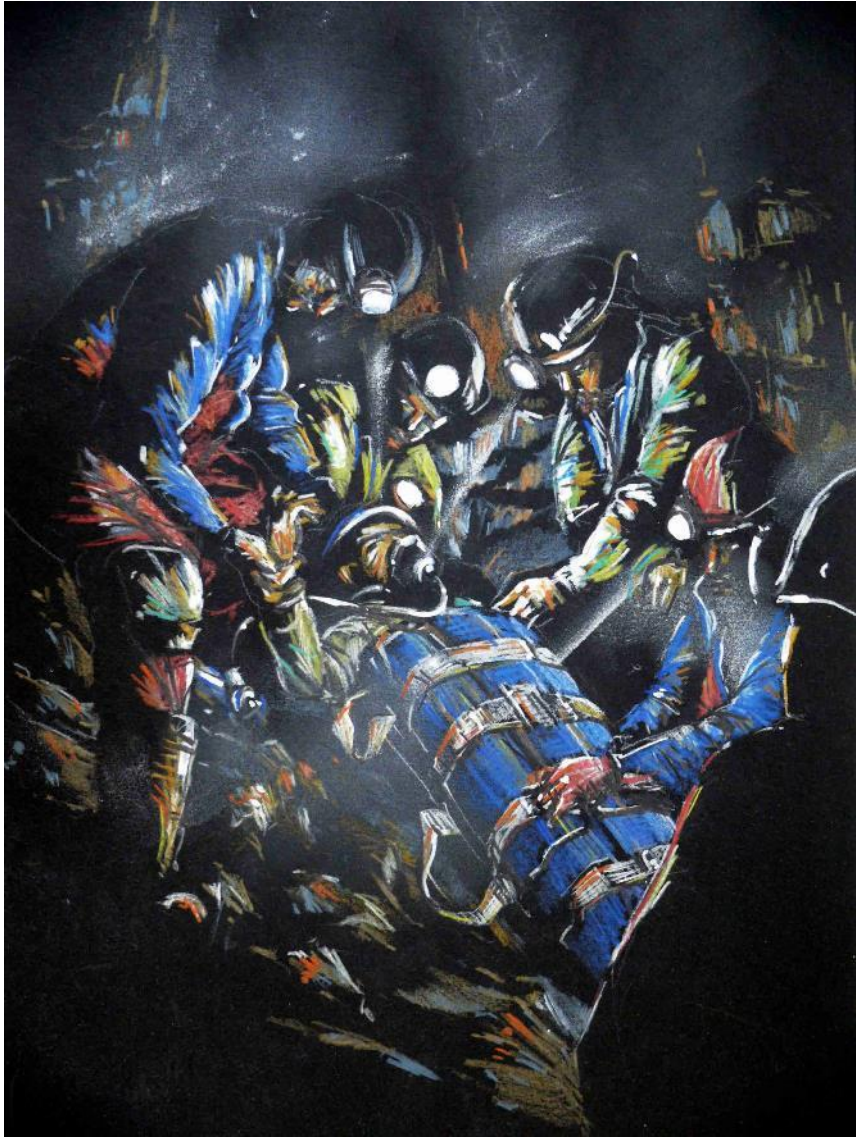
MCR^{MRO}
Mendip Cave Rescue

75
YEARS



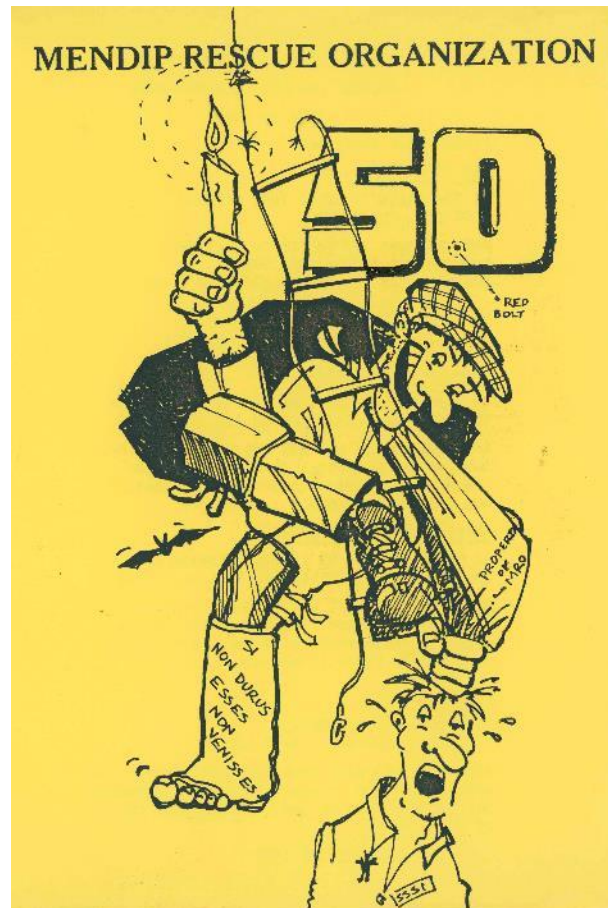








From Unknown Artists



M.R.O. 50th Anniversary 1986 (front)

Si non durus esses non venis - If you do not you would not have come more hard

<p>MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION GOLDEN JUBILEE CELEBRATIONS 1936 - 1986</p> <p>Friday 26th September</p> <p><u>OLD TIME FILMS</u> At the Hunter's Lodge Inn, Priddy. 8.30 p.m. for 9 p.m.</p> <p>Mendip caves and caving as they were between the 1930's and 1960's. A showing of unique 8mm and 16mm films.</p> <p>Saturday 27th September</p> <p><u>DEMONSTRATIONS</u></p> <p><u>Sump Rescue Practices</u> At Wookey Hole Caves by kind permission of the Management starting 10 a.m. to tea.</p> <p>A chance to see and use the MRO's Kirby Morgan Sump Rescue Apparatus in cave conditions. CDG members wishing to dive should contact Bob Drake in advance.</p> <p><u>Abseil off Cheddar Gorge</u> At Cheddar Caves by kind permission of the Management starting at 10 a.m. to tea.</p> <p>A chance to abseil 380 feet off High Rock, the longest upland limestone cliff in the country. Those wishing to take part should contact Tim Large in advance.</p> <p><u>Birthday Party</u> At Priddy Village Hall. 7 p.m. for Buffet at 7.15 p.m.</p> <p>Tickets at £3 each from Glyn Bolt. All proceeds to MRO. Please book well in advance and enter a team of seven for another run of the</p> <p>DREADED CAVE RESCUE GAME</p>	<p>To:- Bob Drake, Axeover House, Yarley, Wells, Somerset.</p> <p>I would like to take part in the Sump Rescue practice at Wookey Hole Caves on Saturday 27th September 1986. I understand that only members of the Cave Diving Group can dive in the cave.</p> <p>Name Date</p> <p>Address</p> <p>Telephone</p> <p>Signed</p> <p>(Enclose an SAE if you have any queries)</p> <hr/> <p>To:- Tim Large, 63 The Portway, Wells, Somerset.</p> <p>I would like to take part in the abseil off Cheddar Gorge on Saturday 27th September 1986, and could be there at (time). I understand that only people over 18 years of age can take part and that I must provide my own descenders. Whilst I appreciate that abseiling ropes will be available, I would like to use my own rope for my descent (delete if inapplicable).</p> <p>Name Date</p> <p>Address</p> <p>Telephone</p> <p>Signed</p> <p>(Enclose an SAE if you have any queries)</p> <hr/> <p>To:- Glyn Bolt, 4 The Retreat, Foxcote, Radstock, Bath.</p> <p>Please send me tickets for the MRO Birthday Party at Priddy Village Hall on 27th September 1986. I would also like to take part in the Cave Rescue Game as a member of the team.</p> <p>I enclose a cheque/PO for £ (£3 each) made payable to the Mendip Rescue Organization, and a Stamped Addressed Envelope for my tickets.</p> <p>I confirm that I am a consenting adult and will in no way hold MRO responsible for loss of limbs or brain cells.</p>
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M.R.O. 50th Anniversary 1986 (rear)

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION LECTURE



ORTHOPAEDIC TRAUMA
Dr. Andy Newton

Hunters Lodge Inn, Priddy.
Friday 20th November 1998
7:30 p.m.

ALL CAVERS WELCOME

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION LECTURE

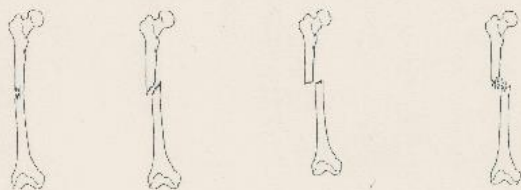


ORTHOPAEDIC TRAUMA
Dr. Andy Newton

Hunters Lodge Inn, Priddy.
Friday 20th November 1998
7:30 p.m.

ALL CAVERS WELCOME

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION LECTURE



ORTHOPAEDIC TRAUMA
PART 2


Dr. Andy Newton

Hunters Lodge Inn, Priddy.
Friday 11th December 1998
7:30 p.m.

ALL CAVERS WELCOME

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

MRO




THIS SATURDAY

Heyphones

A demonstration and practice.
Saturday 22nd September
Hunters Hole &
Hunters Lodge
10.30 am.

MRO
01749 679463



2001

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Bath Records Office
Bristol Reference Library
Mendip Cave Rescue
Wells & Mendip Museum

James Begley
Tony Boycott
Pat Cronin
Martin Grass
Mark Helmore
Phil Hendy
Trevor Hughes
Mark (Gonzo) Lumley
Alison Moody
Mike Moxon
Brian Prewer
Steve Sharp
Rich West
Richard Witcombe

MAJOR SOURCES

Wells & Mendip Museum (Stored in “Balch’s Bathroom”):

Mendip Rescue Organisation 1 – Rescues 1953 to 1993 - Blue Folder
Mendip Rescue Organisation – Name & Address Lists, People 1, Ephemera - Blue Folder
Mendip Rescue Organisation – People 2, Personalities, Public Relations - Blue Folder
Mendip Rescue Organisation – Equipment - White Folder
Mendip Rescue Organisation – Incident Report Forms (1984 to 1994) - Blue Folder
Mendip Rescue Organisation – Administration, Minutes (1956 to 1993) - Blue Folder
Mendip Rescue Organisation 1995.10 – Grey Box File
Mendip Rescue Organisation – Contact with Officialdom – Green Folder
Mendip Rescue Organisation – Fundraising, Medical, Money, Training, T.V. Scripts – Red Folder

M.R.O./ MCR Archive Box containing :

M.R.O. call out details 21/8/1971 – 15/2/1981 – Duplicate book from M.R.O. store (orange cover)
Sump rescue – notes & reports Box File
Box File containing:
 Fred Davies M.R.O. minutes & reports 1964 – 1980’s -
 M.R.O. Correspondence 1938 – 1940’s
 Receipts 1959/1960, 1960/1961
 Documents 1959
 Reports 1960
File of newspaper cuttings (Buff cover)
O. C. Lloyd M.R.O. Record Book, Minutes, reports, Records etc 1953 – 1967 (Green cover)

O. C. Lloyd M.R.O. Record Book, Minutes, reports, Records etc 1968 – 1972 & 1973 AGM
(Black cover)

Jim Hanwell Field reports of M.R.O. incidents 1973 – 1980, plus letters & notes (Buff
envelope)

Jim Hanwell M.R.O. Incident reports Jan 1980 – 1983 (Orange folder)

Rich West's personal rescue folder

Bristol Reference Library

Bath Records Office

Club Log Books – A.C.G., B.E.C., M.C.G., S.V.C.C., W.C.C.

SUMMARY OF MENDIP CAVE RESCUES & INCIDENTS

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
2 July 1669	Pen Park Hole	1	Fatality
17 March 1775	Pen Park Hole	1	Fatality
October 1793	Loxton Mine	1	Broken leg
10 June 1795	Shipham Mine	1	Fall
November c.1800	Giant's Cave, Bristol	1	Trapped by snow fall
24 September 1808	Sophia's Shaft	1	Fall
25 August 1812	Mine at Rowberrow	1	Fatal, crushed by rock
12 September 1814	Lynchcombe Mine	1	Fatal, crushed by rock
September 1819	Mine in Shipham	1	Fatal, crushed by rock
c. 1820	Mine in East Harptree	1	Fatal
10 December 1820	Mine in Shipham	1	Fatal, rockfall
June 1823	Mine in Shipham	1	Fatal, rockfall
31 October 1834	Well in Shipham	1	Fatal, explosion
4 November 1834	Combe Down Mine	1	Crushed by rockfall
21 June 1835	Giant's Cave, Bristol	1	Fall
28 September 1837	Giant's Cave, Bristol	2	Murder and Suicide. Fake news.
1 June 1865	Ham Woods Mine	2	Blasting injuries
1869	Elm Cave	1	Fatality, trapped by rockfall then illness
5 January 1875	Plumley's Hole	1	Fatality
20 September 1876	Vobster Lead Mine, Redhill	1	Fatal, caught in crushing machine
18 December 1876	Redhill Lead Mine	1	Injured leg
9 January 1883	Winford Redding Pits	1	Murder
September 1884	Mendip Lead Mines	1	Drowned
30 September 1886	Winford Redding Pits	1	Rockfall fatal
August 1891	The Murder Hole	1	Murder

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
23 December 1892	Wookey Hole Cave	3	Lights failed
1890's	Lamb Leer Cavern	1	Fall
2 September 1898	Winford Strontia Mine	1	Fatality – cardiac arrest
Early 1900's	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Stuck
March 1909	Sally's Rift	1	Suicide
c. 1910	Wookey Hole	1	Fire from Benzine
28 August 1910	Eastwater Cavern		Flood
1911	Lamb Leer Cavern	1	Fall
1912	Eastwater Cavern		Flash powder burn
1913	Swildon's Hole	1	Unable to climb 40
1913	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall
9 November 1929	Pride Evans' Hole	1	Fatality, exposure
26 August 1932	Avon Gorge, Bristol	1	Stuck while looking for caves
19 June 1934	Mercavity Cave, Bristol	2	Fallen down pitch
4 November 1934	un-named ochre pit		Horse rescued
1937	Burrington Combe		No details available
13 March 1938	Sidcot Swallet	2	Lost, lights failed [10]
25 August 1939	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Trapped, rock fall
7 December 1939	Unnamed mineshaft (Chewton Mendip)		Three hunt hounds rescued
11 May 1940	G.B. Cave	1	Trapped, rock fall
17 June 1941	G.B. Cave	1	Fall [3]
13 & 14 April 1944	Read's Cavern	2	Lost, Lights failed
18 June 1945	Coral Cave	1	Fall, semi conscious
19 October 1945	Axbridge Ochre Cavern	3	Trapped
September 1947	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion and lack of confidence
25 October 1947	Wookey Hole Cave	1	Diver blacked out
9 April 1949	Wookey Hole Cave	1	Diving fatality
Post August 1949	Stoke Lane Slocker	1	Falling boulder
26 March 1951	G.B. Cave	6	Lights failed [5]
27 August 1951	Ogof Fynnon Du, South Wales	2	Floods, trapped [14]
12 January 1952	Drunkard's Hole	4+	Boulder fall, trapped

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
14 May 1952	Tower Mine	1	Collapse of mine shaft, trapped
22 June 1952	G.B. Cave	1	Fall, injured ankle
July 1952	Bridge Cave South Wales		Standby, trapped by floods
July 1952	Stoke Lane Slocker		Investigate, clothing found
2 May 1953	Read's Cavern	2+	Lost
2 May 1953	Swildon's Hole		False Alarm
14 May 1953	Swildon's Hole	2	Lost, lights failed [3]
6 June 1953	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, on standby
6 June 1953	Rod's Pot	1	Fall, badly bruised, on standby
21 March 1954	Rod's Pot	1	Fall, broken leg
8 April 1955	Longwood/August		False Alarm
10 April 1955	Longwood Swallet	1	Fall [18]
11 September 1955	Eastwater Cavern	4+	Lost
1955	Wells	2	False Alarm
10 December 1955	Wookey Hole Cave	1	Diver – self rescue
4 May 1956	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion/Hypothermia [6]
September 1956	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue – Ladder removed
4 November 1956	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck [3]
11 November 1956	Stoke Lane Slocker	2	Trapped, lights failed
13 January 1957	Cleeve Hill, Gloucestershire	1	Trapped, stuck [10]
17 March 1957	Eastwater Cavern	1	Fall, head injuries, broken ribs
21 April 1957	Swildon's Hole	2	Overdue
2 February 1958	Swildon's Hole		Overdue
21 February 1958	Swildon's Hole	4	Trapped, tackle removed
6 April 1958	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Fall, broken leg
27 July 1958	Eastwater Cavern	1	Trapped, stuck, exhaustion [4]
10 December 1958	Swildon's Hole		Overdue
14 December 1958	Longwood Swallet	5	Lost, lights failed
17 January 1959	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion, fatal hypothermia
24 January 1959	Peak Cavern, Derbyshire	1	Alert
29 March 1959	Swildon's Hole	6	Standby – boulders moving
1 October 1959	Goatchurch Cavern	3	Lost, lights failed [5]
24 January 1960	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	10	Floods, trapped

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
2 May 1960	General search of all caves	2	Missing cavers (84 caves searched) [75]
29 May 1960	Clarken Comble Ochre Workings	1	Fall down a mineshaft – multiple injuries
30 July 1960	Eastwater Cavern	1	Fall, fatal chest & back injuries
14 August 1960	Swildon's Hole		Overdue party
27 August 1960	Swildon's Hole	14	Floods, trapped
27 August 1960	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	6+	Floods, trapped
23 October 1960	Longwood Swallet	1	Fall, head injuries
23 November 1960	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
15 February 1961	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, cuts and bruises
31 March 1961	Longwood Swallet	4	Trapped, lights failed
1 April 1961	Swildon's Hole	4	Alert, lights failed
14 May 1961	Shaft 120		Pig rescued
12 August 1961	Pen Park Hole	2	Trapped, stuck on ledge
14 October 1961	Swildon's Hole	1	Tired on climb
Early 1962?	Seven Sisters Mine	?	Lost
3 February 1962	G.B. Cave	1	Fall, head injury
1 April 1962	Combe Down Stone Mines, Bath	6	Lost
7 April 1962	Sandford Hill		Cow fell into mineshaft
30 May 1962	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken arm
16 September 1962	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall from ladder on the 20
3 November 1962	St. Cuthbert's Mineries Pool	1	Drowning (cave diver)
9 March 1963	Drunkard's Hole	3	Rock collapse at entrance
17 March 1963	Longwood Swallet	1	Floods, fatal hypothermia
12 May 1963	Longwood Swallet	1	Fall
8 July 1963	Wookey Hole Cave	1	Missing person [7]
5 October 1963	Longwood Swallet	3	Floods, overdue
30 October 1963	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, exposure
5 November 1963	Baker's Pit (Devon)	1	Alert
17 November 1963	Swildon's Hole	7	Floods, trapped
4 January 1964	Swildon's Hole	6+	Trapped, tackle removed
9 February 1964	Llethrid Cave, South Wales	1	Fall, broken leg
7 June 1964	Swildon's Hole	?	Heavy rain

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
7 June 1964	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, fractured skull
3 August 1964	Swildon's Hole	6	Trapped, tackle removed [4]
21 October 1964	Eastwater Cavern	1	Trapped, stuck, on standby
21 February 1965	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck, on standby
7 June 1965	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck [2]
7 July 1965	Carlswark Cavern Derbyshire		Standby, divers
19 July 1965	Swildon's Hole	4	Overdue, lights failed [9]
25 July 1965	Swildon's Hole	6	Floods, trapped [15]
19 September 1965	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhausted
23 October 1965	Swildon's Hole		Unable to climb
28 November 1965	Swildon's Hole		Exhaustion
24 December 1965	Castle Farm Swallet		Fatality - Cow
12 February 1966	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, exhaustion, exposure
20 February 1966	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Fall, head & leg injuries
13 March 1966	Sidcot Swallet	1	Fall, ankle hurt, lights failed
6 April 1966	Leigh Woods Mineshaft		Dog rescue
14 May 1966	Swildon's Hole	1	Unable to climb 40
14 May 1966	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall on the 40
15 May 1966	Swildon's Hole	2	Lost, lights failed [4]
3 June 1966	Rod's Pot	1	Fall, broken ankle
6 August 1966	Swildon's Hole	4	Floods, fall, exhaustion
20 August 1966	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Fall, dislocated shoulder
21 August 1966	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken arm
31 August 1966	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	NIFE Cell burn
22 October 1966	Swildon's Hole	2+	Floods, trapped
26 November 1966	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, shoulder hurt [5]
22 December 1966	Swildon's Hole	3	Lost, exhaustion
26 December 1966	Cuckoo Cleaves	2	Boulder fall, alert
30 December 1966	Swildon's Hole	2	Trapped (locked in)
28 January 1967	Stoke Lane Slocker	1	Floods, trapped
26 March 1967	Swildon's Hole	2	Trapped, tackle
5 May 1967	Eastwater Cavern	1	Trapped, stuck [5]
11 June 1967	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken leg
14 October 1967	Swildon's Hole	1	Floods, exhaustion

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
28 October 1967	Swildon's Hole	?	Floods, trapped [13]
29 October 1967	Swildon's Hole	1	False call out
29 October 1967	Lamb Leer	1	Fall, severe bruising
8 November 1967	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
10 March 1968	Cuckoo Cleeves	12+	Trapped, tackle
5 April 1968	Bomb Mine		Potential for incident
13 April 1968	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck [5]
22 April 1968	Storm drain, Pontypool	2	Divers sent
12 May 1968	Portishead Sea Cave	1	Trapped by rising tide, exhaustion
12 May 1968	Nine Barrows Swallet	1	Fall, broken leg [21]
25 May 1968	Swildon's Hole	3	Exhaustion
26 May 1968	Swildon's Hole	1	Hypothermia
2 July 1968	Swildon's Hole	2	Overdue [5]
3 November 1969	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
15 March 1969	Box Stone Mines	2	Lost, lights failed
23 May 1969	G.B. Cave	3	Trapped (locked in)
15 June 1969	Swildon's Hole	1	Hypothermia
25 October 1969	Stoke Lane Slocker	2	Lost
2 November 1969	Swildon's Hole	4	Lost
4 November 1969	Stoke Lane Slocker		Investigate empty car
27 November 1969	Rod's Pot	2	Lost, lights failed [1]
14 December 1969	G.B. Cave	4	Trapped (locked in) [4]
22 December 1969	Poulnagollum	2	Light failure (M.R.O. kit used)
27 December 1969	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
14 February 1970	Wookey Hole	1	Diver tangled in lines
21 February 1970	Little Neath River Cave	?	Floods, divers requested
3 May 1970	Goatchurch Cavern	2	Lost, lights failed [3]
9 May 1970	Longwood Swallet	1	Fall, injured ankle
1 June 1970	Agen Allwedd, South Wales	2	Standby
5 July 1970	Swildon's Hole	2	Lost [1]
26 July 1970	Sidcot Swallet	6+	Overdue
4 August 1970	Goatchurch Cavern	6	Search
13 September 1970	Swildon's Hole	2	Overdue
11 October 1970	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Boulder fall, head injuries

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
28 November 1970	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, dislocated shoulder
29 November 1970	Rod's Pot	1	Fall, injured knee [3]
29 November 1970	Eastwater Cavern	?	Standby, floods
28 December 1970	Longwood Swallet	?	Overdue
3 January 1971	Malicious call		
24 January 1971	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, stuck
13 February 1971	Porth-yr-Ogof, South Wales	1	Diving fatality, search
23 May 1971	Swildon's Hole	8	Overdue
21 August 1971	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Boulder fall, injured shoulder
16 October 1971	G.B. Cave	1	Boulder fall, bruised leg
28 November 1971	Eastwater Cavern	6	Floods, exhaustion
28 November 1971	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue
15 January 1972	Ogof Fach, South Wales	1	Standby (divers)
4 February 1972	Search of sites around Priddy	1	Suicide
27 February 1972	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue
7 March 1972	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Caver collapsed, unconscious [5]
4 April 1972	Swildon's Hole	2	Trapped, tackle removed
10 April 1972	Stoke Lane Slocker	1	Trapped, floods [3]
28 April 1972	Rod's Pot	1	Lost, lights failed
28 June 1972	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Overdue
23 July 1972	Swildon's Hole	1	Broken kneecap – self rescue
24 July 1972	General alert	1	Overdue
22 August 1972	Brockley Combe (mines)	1	Missing person, search
3 October 1972	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue
8 October 1972	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion/hypothermia
25 October 1972	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured leg
26 October 1972	Stoke Lane Slocker	4	Overdue
25 November 1972	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck [8]
17 December 1972	Read's Cavern	2	Lost [11]
21 December 1972	Eastwater Cavern	5	Trapped, tackle [5]
29 December 1972	Porth-yr-Ogof, South Wales		Standby, divers
31 December 1972	East Twin Valley	1	Rockfall, trapped
21 January 1973	Swildon's Hole	1	Injured ankle

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
28 January 1973	Rod's Pot	1	Injured ankle
28 January 1973	Box Stone Mines	6	Lost
15 April 1973	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken leg [24]
24 April 1973	Swildon's Hole	3	Trapped, tackle [8]
24 June 1973	Stoke Lane Slocker	?	Flood, alert
30 June 1973	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Fall, dislocated shoulder
30 June 1973	Longwood Swallet	1	Fall, head injuries [6]
15 July 1973	General alert		Heavy rain
22 July 1973	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, stuck
22 August 1973	Conkwell Cave No. 1	1	Trapped by rockfall
27 October 1973	Sidcot Swallet	2	Lights failed, panic
12 November 1973	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, fractured pelvis
1 December 1973	Eastwater Cavern	?	Overdue
10 January 1974	Sludge Pit	?	Overdue
19 January 1974	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken leg, beyond Sump [49]
19 January 1974	Eastwater Cavern	3	Overdue [2]
20 January 1974	General alert	1	Overdue
27 January 1974	Eastwater Cavern	?	Overdue
3 February 1974	Eastwater Cavern	8	Overdue
24 February 1974	Upper Flood Swallet	2	Lost!
15 June 1974	Agen Allwedd, South Wales	1	Diving fatality (sump rescue kit sent)
29 June 1974	Lamb Leer Cavern	2	Falls, multiple injuries [55]
21 September 1974	Mangle Hole	4	Overdue
13 October 1974	Box Stone Mines	5	Lost, lights failed
26 October 1974	Goatchurch Cavern	?	Overdue
16 November 1974	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, unwilling to dive sump
23 November 1974	Sludge Pit	5	Overdue
8 December 1974	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck [6]
1 January 1975	Swildon's Hole	1	Overdue
10 May 1975	Swildon's Hole	5	Overdue
26 May 1975	Burrington Combe	4	Lost
29 June 1975	Blacknor Hole, Portland	1	Boulder fall, broken leg (standby)
30 June 1975	Ubley Warren Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck [4]

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
31 August 1975	Stoke Lane Slocker	2	Overdue
13 September 1975	Stoke Lane Slocker	?	Floods, alert
2 November 1975	Eastwater Cavern	8	Overdue
9 November 1975	Swildon's Hole	5	Overdue
6 December 1975	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured knee
19 February 1976	Sludge Pit	?	Overdue
21 February 1976	G.B. Cave	1	Fall, broken shoulder [18]
27 March 1976	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured shoulder
5 July 1976	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue
4 September 1976	Rhino Rift	?	Overdue
15 September 1976	Box Stone Mines	4	Lost, lights failed
4 October 1976	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured leg [6]
16 January 1977	Stoke Lane Slocker	?	Investigate parked cars
5 February 1977	Wookey Hole	1	Diver overdue
6 February 1977	Swildon's Hole	1	Exposure
3 April 1977	Manor Farm Swallet	?	Trapped, lights failed [2]
4 June 1977	Buddle's Wood Shaft		Search for a dog [5]
11 June 1977	Stoke Lane Slocker	8	Trapped, floods
11 July 1977	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, unwilling to dive Sump I
6 August 1977	Swildon's Hole	4	Lost, lights failed [4]
27 August 1977	Lamb Leer Cavern	1	Exhaustion [6]
11 September 1977	Read's Cavern	4	Overdue [7]
24 September 1977	Ilam Rising, Derbyshire	1	Diving fatality (standby)
28 September 1977	Swildon's Hole	?	Missing party
29 October 1977	Eastwater Cavern	4	Overdue [2]
20 November 1977	Cuckoo Cleeves	2	Trapped, stuck [6]
20 November 1977	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion [6]
3 December 1977	Boho Caves N. Ireland		Standby, divers
11 December 1977	Burrington Combe		Surface search
18 December 1977	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall from 20 - sprained ankle.
24 December 1977	Multiple hoax calls		
5 March 1978	Swildon's Hole	2	Overdue
29 August 1978	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue
9 September 1978	G.B. Cave		Search for missing cow [6]

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
14 September 1978	Search of wells, Glastonbury	?	Presumed missing person
17 September 1978	Read's Cavern	5	Lost, light failure [11]
1 October 1978	Mangle Hole	?	Overdue
2 October 1978	Lamb Leer Cavern	7	Overdue
29 October 1978	North Hill Swallet	1	Stuck
13 November 1978	Cave on Brean Down	3	Stranded in sea cave
9 December 1978	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue
31 December 1978	Charterhouse Hostel	6	Snowbound children evacuated
8 March 1979	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured back [4]
22 April 1979	Longwood Swallet	1	Exhaustion [5]
2 July 1979	Combe Down Stone Mines	1	Lost, lights failed [6]
16 September 1979	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, injured knee [4]
17 November 1979	Thrupe Lane Swallet	1	Fall, multiple injuries [34]
24 November 1979	Manor Farm Swallet	1	Fall, head injuries [8]
9 December 1979	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion [6]
27 December 1979	Swildon's Hole	4	Trapped, floods [4]
3 February 1980	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion [8]
22 February 1980	Cuckoo Cleaves	3	Fall, broken leg [10]
24 February 1980	Swildon's Hole	1	Overdue [0]
11 April 1980	Box Stone Mines	?	Presumed missing children
5 May 1980	Brown's Folly Mine, Wiltshire	7	Lost, lights failed [1]
21 May 1980	Cheddar Cliffs	2	Stuck [2]
24 May 1980	Longwood Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck
7 June 1980	Manor Farm Swallet	1	Exhaustion [3]
16 August 1980	G.B. Cave	1	Fatal heart attack
1 October 1980	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, unwilling to dive Sump I
8 November 1980	Sludge Pit	1	Fall, head injuries
15 November 1980	Banwell Stalactite Cave	2	Lost, lights failed
17 January 1981	Agen Allwedd, South Wales	1	Boulder fall, broken leg
14 February 1981	Longwood Swallet	1	Fall, badly bruised
15 February 1981	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue
5 March 1981	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue
13 March 1981	Read's Cavern	2	Lost, lights failed

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
6 June 1981	St. Cuthbert's Minery	?	Presumed missing person
11 July 1981	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken leg
23 July 1981	Devil's Cave, Bathampton	2	Lost
28 July 1981	Box Stone Mines	3	Lost, lights failed
1 September 1981	G.B. Cave	4	Overdue [3]
13 September 1981	Singing River Mine	3	Lost
20 September 1981	Swildon's Hole	1	Overdue
14 November 1981	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Fall, broken ankle
14 November 1981	Wookey Hole Cave	1	Diving fatality
29 November 1981	Swildon's Hole	4	Overdue
17 February 1982	Manor Farm Swallet	?	Snowstorm, overdue party alert
17 February 1982	Eastwater Cavern	7	Overdue party search [2]
20 February 1982	Sludge Pit Hole	1	Trapped, stuck claustrophobia
14 April 1982	Hunters' Hole	2	Trapped, unable to climb [1]
28 April 1982	G.B. Cave	1	Fall, broken arm and dislocation [7]
5 May 1982	Longwood Swallet	6	Overdue party alert
25 June 1982	Alert	?	Overdue party
15 August 1982	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue party alert
15 August 1982	Sludge Pit & Underwood Quarry	1	Overdue party alert
26 October 1982	Eastwater Cavern	2	Lost, lights failed [5]
29 October 1982	Sidcot Swallet	1	Trapped, stuck
21 November 1982	G.B. Cave	11	Floods, trapped
31 December 1982	Rhino Rift	2	Overdue alert
9 January 1983	Lamb Leer Cavern	2	Fall, bruises, rope burns [6]
21 February 1983	Thrupe Lane Swallet	7	Overdue
13 March 1983	Longwood Swallet	1	Rock fall, broken bones in foot
7 May 1983	Swildon's Hole	2	Refused to climb ladder
28 May 1983	Rhino Rift	4	Overdue
22 June 1983	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion [4]
9 October 1983	Alert	?	Overdue party
17 October 1983	Swildon's Hole	8	Overdue
23 October 1983	Frome Storm Drain	2	Reported lost [5]
23 October 1983	Sludge Pit	1	Fall, bruises, broken toe [9]

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
31 October 1983	Velvet Bottom	1	Search abandoned car
12 November 1983	St. Dunstan's Cave	1	Trapped, stuck [15]
13 November 1983	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue party
10 January 1984	Swildon's Hole	?	Alert
8 April 1984	Cheddar Gorge	1	Alert
June 1984	Lisdoonvarna		Cow rescued M.R.O. rope used
15 July 1984	Swildon's Hole	4	Overdue, lights failed [4]
19 July 1984	Fairy Cave Quarry	1	Alert
Summer 1984	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Broken ankle
19 August 1984	Swildon's Hole	6	Overdue, misunderstanding [4]
25 October 1984	Bleadon Hill Caves	1	Missing person, suicide [6]
3 November 1984	Swildon's Hole	1	Alert
5 December 1984	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion, unable to climb [6]
8 December 1984	Manor Farm Swallet	3	Alert, overdue party
17 December 1984	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion, unable to climb [11]
1 May 1985	Gough's Cave	1	Trapped, tourist, drunk [4]
5 May 1985	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Fall, head injuries [8]
6 June 1985	Eastwater Cavern	1	Stuck
9 June 1985	Little Neath River Cave	?	Floods, standby divers
4 August 1985	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion, unable to climb [11]
17 August 1985	Cheddar Gorge	1	Tourist hurt, standby
September 1985	Swildon's Hole	1	Lost
19 October 1985	Cheddar Gorge	1	Fall, broken ankle and cuts [5]
20 October 1985	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped, stuck [16]
29 October 1985	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue party
8 November 1985	Swildon's Hole	?	Alert, presumed missing party
27 December 1985	Rod's Pot	3	Overdue party
1 January 1986	Thrupe Lane Swallet	4	Floods, alert
11 January 1986	Longwood Swallet	1	Boulder fall, fatality [26]
18 January 1986	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion, unable to climb [5]
23 March 1986	Swildon's Hole	1	Dislocated shoulder
13 April 1986	Swildon's Hole	1	Epileptic fit [7]
13 April 1986	Cheddar Cliffs	1	Climber stuck
27 April 1986	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Fall, dislocated shoulder [4]
3 September 1986	Thrupe Lane Swallet	1	Presumed overdue

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
7 September 1986	G.B. Cave		Overdue [5]
22 October 1986	G.B. Cave	1	Fall, bruised back [9]
6 December 1986	Eastwater Cavern	1	Lost, reported trapped [8]
15 December 1986	Rod's Pot	?	Presumed overdue
1 January 1987	Swildon's Hole	2+	Overdue
2 January 1987	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion, unable to climb 20
18 January 1987	Swildon's Hole	1	Refused to dive sump [11]
25 January 1987	Eastwater Cavern	3	Overdue
2 February 1987	Cheddar Cliffs		Goat
8 February 1987	Pen Park Hole		Two dogs
15 February 1987	Blackmoor Swallet		Dog [4]
30 March 1987	Gough's Cave	1	Stuck, CO ₂ risk [7]
25 April 1987	Rod's Pot	1	Fall, broken ankle [14]
17 May 1987	North Hill Swallet	1	Fall, broken arm [2]
17 May 1987	Rod's Pot	1	Fall, fractured leg [6]
14 June 1987	North Hill Swallet		Cattle knocked belay off bar
21 June 1987	Rod's Pot	1	Fall, broken ankle [6]
22 June 1987	Swildon's Hole	2+	Overdue
5 July 1987	Cheddar Cliffs		Goat (same one as 2 February!)
17 July 1987	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, back injury [9]
18 July 1987	Swildon's Hole		Few details available
6 August 1987	Swildon's Hole	2+	Overdue
17 September 1987	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Torn muscles [6]
10 October 1987	Singing River Mine	4	Lost, lights failed [6]
17 October 1987	Swildon's Hole	1	Dislocated shoulder [15]
8 November 1987	Longwood Swallet	1	Fall, fractured skull and wrist [4]
18 November 1987	Wookey Hole Cave	1	Diver resuscitated
4 January 1988	Sandy Hole (Portland)	1	Trapped under rock
23 January 1988	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion, unable to climb [8]
14 February 1988	Box Stone Mines	2	Lost
16 February 1988	Longwood Swallet	6	Trapped, locked in [4]
4 March 1988	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, concussion, cut scalp [5]
19 March 1988	G.B. Cave	1	Fall, fractured lower leg [16]
20 March 1988	G.B. Cave	?	Flood alert for party in Ladder Dig [3]

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
5 April 1988	Swildon's Hole	?	Alert after ladder found abandoned on the 20' [4]
16 April 1988	Eastwater Cavern	12	Flood, self rescue
15 May 1988	Eastwater Cavern	3	Overdue party [6]
26 June 1988	Gough's Cave	1	Diver tangled in line
8 July 1988	General	?	Premature call out
17 July 1988	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured ankle [17]
28 December 1988	Calf Puke Hole	1	Calf rescued from mineshaft
29 December 1988	Swildon's Hole	2	Overdue party [1]
29 January 1989	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken leg [10]
2 February 1989	Swildon's Hole	10	Missing party, lost [3]
26 March 1989	Charterhouse	1	Dog down mine shaft [4]
28 March 1989	Swildon's Hole	1	Asthma attack
8 April 1989	G.B. Cave	1	Fall, fractured jaw [25]
6 May 1989	Drunkard's Hole	1	Exhausted, stuck [5]
18 May 1989	General search	1	Overdue party
2 June 1989	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, broken wrist [30]
2 December 1989	General alert	1	Overdue party
23 December 1989	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Fall, dislocated knee [5]
13 January 1990	Thrupe Lane Swallet	1	Fall, broken leg [15]
4 February 1990	Cheddar Cliffs	2	Fallen cows trapped
11 March 1990	Sally Rift, Warleigh Woods	1	Missing body, search
1 April 1990	Read's Cavern	2	Lost, trapped, light failure [8]
28 April 1990	Longwood Swallet	?	Overdue party
31 May 1990	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue party
16 July 1990	Eastwater Cavern	1	Fallen cow trapped in Entrance
23 July 1990	Shute Shelve Cutting	?	Crashed motorcycle
19 August 1990	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue party
31 August 1990	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue party
2 September 1990	Alert	1	Hospitalised climber
6 October 1990	G.B. Cave	?	Overdue party
6 October 1990	Swildon's Hole	1	Dislocated shoulder [7]
24 October 1990	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured ankle
24 October 1990	Spar Pot, East Twin	3	Overdue party
31 October 1990	Dallimore's Cave	?	Presumed overdue

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
3 November 1990	Sidcot Swallet	1	Scared
3 November 1990	Swildon's Hole	1	Twisted ankle
6 January 1991	Eastwater Cavern	1	Stuck, floods, light failure [4]
3 February 1991	Eastwater Cavern	1	Fall, back injuries [7]
27 February 1991	Longwood Swallet	1	Fall, dislocated shoulder [8]
13 April 1991	Wookey Hole Canal	1	Heifer, early morning dip
18 April 1991	Eastwater Cavern	1	Stuck [4]
31 August 1991	Alert	?	Overdue party
3 October 1991	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, back injuries [7]
2 November 1991	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue party
23 November 1991	Eastwater Cavern	2	Overdue party
19 December 1991	Sandy Hole, Portland	2	Lost [2]
19 January 1992	G.B Cave	4	Trapped by boulder fall [8]
19 January 1992	Jack's Workings, Box	9	Lost, light failed [3]
30 May 1992	Swildon's Hole	1	Broken ankle at Double Pots
5 June 1992	Stoke Lane Slocker	3	Overdue party
26 June 1992	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhausted, stuck
23 July 1992	Swildon's Hole	4	Overdue party
28 July 1992	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Fall, broken ribs [10]
23 August 1992	Lionel's Hole	3	Trapped by floods [8]
12 October 1992	Waterlip Quarry	1	Dog trapped on cliffs [3]
14 November 1992	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, injured knee [14]
19 December 1992	Box Stone Mines	1	Missing person, alert
23 January 1993	Swildon's Hole	2	Fall, bruised and shaken [17]
14 February 1993	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion [6]
21 March 1993	Swildon's Hole	5	Overdue party
23 March 1993	Eastwater Cavern	1	Fall, fractured wrist [16]
9 April 1993	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue party
16 April 1993	East Twin Swallet	4	Lost party [3]
1 May 1993	Sidcot Swallet	1	Stuck
22 June 1993	Box Stone Mines	2	Lost for 30 hours, light failed [8]
12 October 1993	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue party
23 October 1993	G.B. Cave	1	Fall, broken leg [15]
27 November 1993	Goatchurch Cavern	?	Overdue party
30 January 1994	Attborough Swallet	1	Alert - missing digger

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
26 March 1994	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion - unable to climb [5]
29 March 1994	Longwood Swallet	3	Overdue
6 April 1994	Swiss Valley Cave		Body reported - false alarm
5 June 1994	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall - knee injuries [9]
18 June 1994	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Fall - injured pelvis [12]
3 September 1994	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped beyond squeeze [9]
16 October 1994	Cuckoo Cleaves	1	Stuck in rift [6]
13 November 1994	Box Stone Mines		Presumed missing person
14 November 1994	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall - injured ankle 4]
30 December 1994	Eastwater Cavern	2	Overdue
7 January 1995	Bathampton Mines	2	
27 January 1995	Burrington Area	20	Poor communication
11 February 1995	Eastwater Cavern	7	Overdue [2]
11 February 1995	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped [22]
11 February 1995	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	2	Exhaustion
22 February 1995	Swildon's Hole	1	Dislocated shoulder [14]
20 March 1995	Swildon's Hole	1	Dislocated shoulder [12]
23 March 1995	Eastwater Cavern	3	Overdue
5 April 1995	Redcliffe Caves	2	Lost
15 April 1995	Swildon's Hole	2	Poor communication
28 June 1995	Swildon's Hole	1	Trapped [18]
19 August 1995	G.B. Cave	4	Overdue
24 August 1995	Redcliffe Caves	1	Lost [6]
16 September 1995	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Broken bone [5]
17 September 1995	Swildon's Hole	1	Hypothermia [9]
14 January 1996	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion [7]
3 March 1996	Rhino Rift	3	Overdue
7 April 1996	Box Stone Mines	4	Lost
21 September 1996	Swildon's Hole	4	Overdue
20 October 1996	Swildon's Hole	?	Heavy water conditions at the 20
20 April 1997	Box Stone Mines	?	Suspected lost children
27 April 1997	Swildon's Hole	2	Overdue [2]
22 June 1997	Blackdown	40	Surface search
31 August 1997	Swildon's Hole	1	Overdue [6]
17 October 1997	Dallimore's Cave	1	Stuck [7]

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
16 November 1997	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion
30 November 1997	Eastwater Cavern	3	Overdue [5]
16 January 1998	Gurney Slade Quarry	1	Search for missing person [3]
21 March 1998	Swildon's Hole	1	Asthma attack [18]
24 March 1998	Eastwater Cavern	?	Overdue
25 April 1998	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue
10 May 1998	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall - head injury
12 August 1998	Lyncombe Lodge Mineshaft	2	Reported fall
7 November 1998	G.B. Cave	6	Jammed entrance lock
14 November 1998	Eastwater Cavern		Overdue
17 November 1998	Blackdown/Rowberrow		Missing person search
21 February 1999	Rod's Pot	3	Overdue [2]
24 April 1999	Long Sutton		Missing person search
9 May 1999	G.B. Cave		Jammed entrance lock
13 July 1999	Swildon's Hole		Fall - head & leg injuries
27 July 1999	Stock's House Shaft	1	Rockfall - trapped
3 January 2000	Thrupe Lane Swallet	1	Flood
20 January 2000	Swildon's Hole	5	Presumed lost
8 May 2000	Rhino Rift	4	Overdue
23 July 2000	Stoke St. Michael Area	1	Missing Person
7 August 2000	Wookey Hole	9	Hoax Call
1 October 2000	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Stuck in Entrance Rift [1]
2 December 2000	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhaustion unable to climb [9]
2001	Thrupe Swallet		Cow rescued
4 February 2001	Ridge Mine, Corsham	3	Overdue [3]
14 May 2001	Stainsby's Shaft	1	Missing Person [9]
3 August 2001	G.B. Cave		Overdue found in the Hunters'
12 September 2001	Goatchurch Cavern	3	Unable to climb Coalshute [9]
26 January 2002	Manor Farm Swallet	1	Unable to climb [4]
13 November 2002	St. Cuthbert's Swallet	1	Fall - spinal injury
7 December 2002	Swildon's Hole	1	Pre-existing medical condition [13]
2 May 2003	Wookey Hole area	1	Missing person search
3 May 2003	Swildon's Hole	1	Diving
9 November 2003	Radstock area	1	Missing person search

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
9 November 2003	Shepton Mallet area	1	Missing person search
27 November 2003	Crewkerne area	1	Missing person search
28 February 2004	Swildon's Hole	1	Knee injury [7]
4 September 2004	Wookey Hole	1	Leg injury [5]
24 October 2004	Great Elm and Mells area	1	Surface search – body recovered [13]
24 February 2005	Rhino Rift	?	Overdue party
3 March 2005	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Trapped [2]
14 May 2005	Priddy Green Sink	1	Fall injury, broken kneecap [28]
29 May 2005	OFD	1	Fall injury
16 October 2005	General	1	Overdue
17 January 2006	Swildon's Hole	1	Non rescue (protester)
2 April 2006	Hunter's Hole	2	Overdue
30 April 2006	Quarry Hill Mine, Box	2	Lost, lights failed [5]
30 April 2006	Upper Flood Swallet	1	Fatality – heart attack
30 May 2006	Fairy Cave Quarry	2	Lost
9 December 2006	Wookey Village	1	Surface search
18 March 2007	Box Stone Mines	?	Party reported locked in the mine [9]
2 May 2007	North Hill Swallet	1	Injured Caver [8]
24 May 2007	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Trapped and injured caver [1]
4 October 2007	Fairy Cave Quarry	2	Overdue
11 October 2007	Swildon's Hole	1	Dazed
25 October 2007	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhausted [6]
12 March 2008	Swildon's Hole	1	Exhausted unable to climb [6]
9 May 2008	Swildon's Hole	1	Overdue / False Alarm [1]
30 June 2008	Priddy Green Sink	2	Overdue
1 November 2008	Cain Hill Shaft	1	Overdue
1 November 2008	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, fractured leg [6]
16 November 2008	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall
16 August 2009	Rhino Rift	2	Overdue
29 May 2010	Hullavington, Wilts	1	Missing person - search cave
5 August 2010	Swildon's Hole	1	Overdue [2]
12 February 2011	Sidcot Swallet	1	Dislocated knee
5 March 2011	Swildon's Hole	?	Overdue

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
17 March 2011	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Dislocated knee
5 May 2011	Swildon's Hole	5	Lost
13 May 2011	Sidcot Swallet	1	Stuck
25 May 2011	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall - fractured collarbone
14 September 2011	Hillier's Cave	1	Fall – punctured Lung
10 December 2011	Unknown Mine near Banwell		Dog rescue
2 January 2012	Swildon's Hole	3	Overdue
5 March 2012	Banwell Wood mineshaft		Dog rescue
21 April 2012	Rhino Rift	2	Overdue, key broke in lock
9 June 2012	Gough's Cave	1	Fall
14 August 2012	Cheddar Gorge	1	Fall
25 August 2012	Upper Canada Cave	1	Rockfall
14 October 2012	Swildon's Hole	2	Overdue [2]
7 April 2013	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, leg injuries [20+]
5 May 2013	Reservoir Hole	1	Injured hand – self rescue
1 June 2013	Eastwater Cavern	1	Stuck
6 May 2014	Iron Mine on Exmoor	1	Missing person [4]
13 September 2014	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Collapsed lung
27 June 2015	Box Stone Mines	4	Lost
15 July 2015	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Fall, knee injury
5 August 2015	Templeton	1	Fall, serious injuries
22 September 2015	Swildon's Hole	4	Overdue
1 November 2015	Fernhill Cave	1	Fall
13 December 2015		6	Overdue
20 December 2015	Eastwater Cavern	4	Overdue
11 February 2016	Swildon's Hole	1	Fall, possible broken arm
5 March 2016	G.B. Cave	1	Trapped, stuck
26 July 2016	Gough's Cave	1	Fall
20 November 2016	Swildon's Hole	1	Ankle injury
11 June 2017	Box Stone Mines	3	Lost – rescued by the police
2 July 2017	Box Stone Mines	3	Lost – rescued by the Fire Brigade
5 July 2017	Box Stone Mines	7	Trapped – entrance blocked
3 August 2017	Goatchurch Cavern	1	Stuck
13 August 2017	Box Stone Mines	2	Trapped – entrance blocked

Date	Cave	No.	Remarks
20 August 2017	Monkton Farleigh Quarry	1	Lost
11 September 2017	Monkton Farleigh Quarry	2	Overdue [4]
29 April 2018	Sidcot Swallet	1	Unable to climb Lobster Pot [2]
15 May 2018	Wookey Hole Cave	1	Slip in show cave M.C.R. on standby
19 June 2018	Goatchurch Cavern	2	Unable to climb Tradesman's Entrance [2]
2 September 2018	Box Stone Mines	2	Trapped – entrance blocked
15 September 2018	Wookey Hole Cave	1	Fall – injured ankle
20 February 2019	Box Stone Mines		Dog rescue
21 August 2019	Wookey Hole Cave	1	Fall – injured neck
19 September 2019	Ebbor Gorge	1	Surface search

[*] numbers in brackets are the number of M.R.O./M.C.R. rescuers going underground