

CREWE CLIMBING AND POTHOLING CLUB

NEWSLETTER

DEC. 1983.

No. 3.

Welcome to another fact filled super interesting Newsletter. So that you can get onto the 'goodies' inside quickly, I'll keep this introduction short and briefly give you some interesting News gleaned from other sources. News from C.N.C.C. is that Leck Fell is fully booked for weekends 'till June '84. There are very few bookings left for the Easegill system, and on Pen-y-Ghent and Fountain's Fell, over half the permits for Giggling and Hammer have been issued for 1984. Is it any wonder that 'cowboy' tactics are sometimes used to get into these holes. I think it worth mentioning here, that anyone wanting a particular Fell or Cave booking should always 'go through' the secretary and make sure that the date required does not clash with any other Club activity. Nothing can be worse than getting a Permit and nobody turning up, thereby using up a Permit which could have gone to another Club. This has happened in the past and puts further bookings in jeopardy.

Other News from C.N.C.C. is that the loose boulders at the entrance to Ireby Fell Cavern, reported in Derbyshire Caving Ass. News, has been stabilised and is in good order. The lower exit to King Pot is now blocked at the Farmer's request, and the iron ladder at Hensler's Master Cave in G.G. has collapsed but a handline is in it's place.

News from the Derbyshire Caving Ass. is that a fixed ladder is to be installed in the Manchester By-Pass route in Easegill, and Top Sink is now open again.

Those of you who have done P.8 recently couldn't have failed to notice the discarded digging material from the 'Eldon dig' which is now backing up the streamway considerably. I should think (by the look of all that rubbish) that the diggers have now passed Giant's and can't be far off Peak Cavern.

C.Jones.

Redacted

19th October, 1983.

C.C.P.C.

Dear P.A.L.

Putting pen to paper (at last) I would like to thank all the members of C.C.P.C. for their support and help over the past few years. It made my job as a Chairman that much easier. My thanks to Ralph, a good Secretary, an old one but a good one; Paul Holdcroft for taking on the Stores, Training etc.; John Shenton for continuing to do the Treasurer's job (thankless that it is); Mick Edge for doing the raffle over the years; Tony Gamble for dragging me caving when I didn't want to go - special thanks to Tony for letting me carry his bag full of wet caving gear out of OTTER HOLE and even letting me hold his camera on one occasion; my special thanks to Tony Reynolds for learning to shut up when I was in the chair (I knew if I gave him enough bananas he'd learn). Thanks Tony also for dragging me up LOST JOINS all those years ago.

I could go on, as all of you know, but over the years the names and faces are too numerous. There are many happy memories, many many rough trips, but I would not have changed it at all. Most of you know I hold the record for P8 I shall continue to improve that record.

Many many thanks to you all, especially for making me an honorary life member.

Yours sincerely,

L. A. Walker.

P.S. Comments from Newsletter, July, 1983 - Cavers Trapped for Six Hours.
I know how old Tony Reynolds is. Price negotiable - for information ring A. Walker.

A LIGHT-HEARTED TALE

or... NOBODY KNOWS THE BUBBLES I'VE SEEN!

'Oh what a day it's been'. I've been spat at, peed on, prodded and poked, bashed and bumped and had a fairly hairy free-fall descent of a 20ft. pitch before returning to the van and a blissful rest. I'm glad I'll not be needed this afternoon down Manknewer Farm 'cos I've just about had enough of guiding this clumsy load of cretins about.

The weekend started quite pleasantly, having had a comfy ride from Salisbury with me mates, in a Tutonic Rattle Box and then from the Hunters for the journey to Wells Hut, I had travelled in an excuse for a Mini with windows that opened without being open and doors that did not open when opened.

Saturday, me and me mates got a lift in a posh new tranny van to Nine Barrows, which marked the point where a good weekend turned bad.

I was man-handled out of the van by an inconsiderate, kinkily dressed yob and jammed in this metal fixing in front of him. Then he did not seem surprised when, after stuffing my guts full and dropping me in a puddle, I burped 'cos he just sparked-off the sequence of events that I'll relate to you now.

After the lads had shifted a caravan or two, paid the farmer and locked up, we all plodded across the field for the first grovel of the day down the entrance of Nine Barrows where I spied a nice pair while washing the muck off her hands in the small pool. Quite an enjoyable trip to the chamber and, if I might be so bold, expertly guided by yours truly.

At the chamber, it was decided to continue down to the far dig. The young lady in the party led this section, guided by her current new fangled box of tricks. We followed down this tight tube where, unfortunately, my nose got rubbed in the grot, so exit one cave guide. Again, I was man-handled to this bloke behind, who immediately diagnosed my problem - congestion of the nasal passage.

Instinctively, by the vindictive glint in this blokes eye. I knew what was coming as he collected a mouth full of lukewarm spit. I laid back with thoughts of England or Ingrid and waited as he puckered his lips. Then, I tensed as he - but it never came 'cos when I looked round, I could see that my man had got the full broadside right in the eyeball. Everyone curled up and laughed. I had a good giggle too until that bloke started shooting spit at me like a sub-machine gun, prodding my hooter, he was, at the same time.

Suddenly, my airway was clear, I could let off steam but the fun, games and fireworks did not end there as that bloke was looking down on my head - with his 'smelly' still alight. It had to come, I could not stand it anymore, I exploded with rage when his flame got too close to my head and then the laugh was all mine when he leapt back in surprise, banging his head on the ceiling of the cave.

Anyway, I was reinstated back to my rightful position of cavers guide. We proceeded out of the dig, back past the chamber but as I was approaching the short scramble over the boulder ruckle, I started getting thirstier and thirstier. Total dehydration soon followed. I was speedily removed from my stance, put on the cold, damp cave floor and then subjected to the most degrading treatment one could imagine, as because there was no water in that part of the cave, he . . . well . . . used what natural resources were available and . . . er . . .

well . . . yer know . . . peed on my head!

I quickly showed a spark of life, although the thought of all that second hand beer and stuff now inside me gave my stomach a wierd gassed-up feeling. I led the way out without further incident and was overjoyed when a rest was called near the entrance to Sludge Pit as HIS lamp was now suffering.

But ecstasy was short-lived as the ladder was grabbed. We, me and my man, entered the hole, leaving HIM to sort out his problem lamp.

Down into the pitch black depths we grovelled, finding the five foot drop to the larger passage leading onto the ladder anchor point (a pipe), then down onto a small ledge where the ladder was uncoiled and secured to the pipe.

The ladder was then checked to see that it was hanging correctly and then, while holding onto the pipe, he looked down to make sure it wasn't caught before he started to climb down.

Next moment, I was emulating a falling brick as me and the helmet had simulataneoulsy departed from him to find ourselves hurtling earthwards together at an alarming pace. Luckily the old helmet bore the brunt of the fall but I could imagine the poor thing moaning softly as he lay beside me assessing his bruised state.

My man was in dead lumber now as he had either to wait at the top of the 20ft. pitch for his mates to come in or to find his own way back out without both helmet and light.

I could hear him groping along the passage after he had scrambled to the top of the ladder pitch. There followed a few moments of swearing and cursing as he tried to find the final length of passage high on his right-hand side. In time, the sounds faded into the distance as he slowly made his way to the entrance.

I lay on that cold floor for sometime after his departure before hearing any new sounds. My nose was bunged up again and had gone quite cold. Thrashing about noises penetrated my thoughts as the sound of two people returning to the ladder pitch (with only one light though?) travelled down to us two miserable souls.

The lighted man descended the pitch, then shouted up to his mate (who, I later recognised to be my man) to tell him that I had been found. He carried me slowly down to the small pool to attend to my needs and by the time his mate had arrived after descending the pitch in total darkness and tripping over numerous boulders. I was feeling quite light-headed again.

I had had enough by this time, as had my man, so we both returned to the surface where the sun was shining brightly, so I was no longer needed.

Everyone made their way back to the van and I breathed a sigh of relief as the contents of my guts emptied into a polythene bag.

My grandad never had days like this when he was working for Florence on the wards. It certainly is a hard lift for a carbide lamp so be nice to a smelly friend today.

D.Staff.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION 1983.

At the last meeting (November) it was agreed to hold a photographic competition, to be judged at the annual 'DO' at the Biddulph Arms in February. The competition is open to all members and entries can be either prints or slides. The number of entries per member is restricted to five, and these should be given to Ralph, together with an entrance fee of 50p, (or 10p per entry). This competition, we hope will become an annual event, but for this first one prints or slides of any vintage will be accepted.

The prize for the winner will be an enlarged, framed print of the winning entry, with the winner's name on. We are hoping to be allowed to hang the print in the meeting room of the 'Bleeding Wolf'.

BLAST FROM THE PAST, or A WALK DOWN MEMORY LANE SWALLET.

When I had decided to do a 'Blast from the Past' in this issue of NEWSLETTER, I thought it would be interesting to take from an old log book, a trip down Giant's in the pre-blasted days, however while I was looking I found an old Newspaper cutting which will jog the memories of the older cavers, and give us younger, more hairy cavers an insight into what caving was like in the immediate post-war years.

NICLE, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1959.

Potholers forced up after nine hours underground

SIX members of the Crewe Cave and Pothole Club (J. Johnson, B. Griffiths, M. Scott, J. Shires, M. Potts and M. Manuel) descended Giant's Hole, Castleton, on Saturday. When the sump or flooded passage was reached, water had to be baled over concrete dams for two hours until an air space formed between the roof and the water.

A four or five-inch air space finally appeared and M. Potts dived through, closely followed by the other five. After a short halt to take some photographs the cavers pressed forward, down a 25-foot waterfall and along the Great Rift Passage for a quarter of a mile until a syphon was reached—a scum-covered whirlpool where the cave roof is submerged by the roaring river.

The cave at this point rapidly develops into a maze and it was with some difficulty that the by-pass to this syphon was found. The by-pass is a tunnel some 50 yards long, filled with water, and the idea is the same as at the first sump (to bail over the dams

until there is an air space), only at this sump there are two dams instead of three.

In flames

With everybody's attention on the dams, it was quite a shock when a loud explosion was heard. The startled cavers whipped round to see what was happening and saw one of their number holding out his hand, apparently engulfed in flames. He dropped what was in his hand into the water, which doused the flames.

What had happened was that his acetylene lamp had generated too great a pressure for the jet, with the result that the inflammable gas escaped from everywhere possible, causing an explosion. These explosions are quite common with this type of lamp, yet they are used by cavers more than any other type.

The leader, at this point, decided not to continue with the exploration, as the three cavers, without waterproof suits, were feeling the effects of the cold. The party reached the surface at 10 p.m., after being nine hours underground.

A SAFER METHOD OF BELAYING OR LIFELINING - THE ITALIAN HITCH

The conventional waist belay is really quite complicated and as practiced by most cavers leaves much to be desired. The drawbacks to this technique or your own (lack of?) technique are best illustrated by holding a fall (real or practice).

If the waist belay is applied correctly, it is still quite difficult to hold a fall when there is more than a small amount of slack rope, especially with a heavy person. Lowering off can be painful, again particularly with a heavy person. The main problem is that the load comes directly on to the belay person. The belayer could be pulled down the pitch, or pulled off his stance and let go of the rope. If the fall is held, the belay person is still held into the system and is unable to move away if necessary, without fairly elaborate procedures.

To sum up, the waist belay is at its best when not actually needed, when it comes to actually holding a fall it is not very satisfactory, on the plus side it can be used to give some assistance to the climbing caver.

The Italian Hitch has several advantages over the waist belay particularly if tied directly to an anchor point.

- a) easy to hold a fall even with a very heavy person, or with a lot of slack rope.
- b) easy to lower a person, or lock off the rope and allow the belayer to escape from the safety chain.
- c) No strain on the belayer.
- d) Less to go wrong (i.e. less to remember to do correctly) if tied to a good anchor point with a large karabiner.

The main disadvantages are (a) that it is not as easy to give a good pull, but this can be done by a second person (belayed) in front of the Italian Hitch.

- b) The rope becomes twisted, but this can be minimised by user skill.

The Italian Hitch is unsuitable for 3 strand, stiff, or polypropylene ropes - but a Fig of 8 descender can be substituted for the Italian Hitch in these cases and used in a similar fashion.

USE OF THE ITALIAN HITCH FOR BELAYING OR EMERGENCY ABSEILING

TYING THE KNOT Form like a pair of glasses with one rope behind and one in front of the horizontal. Put the loops together into a LARGE karabiner to complete the Italian Hitch.

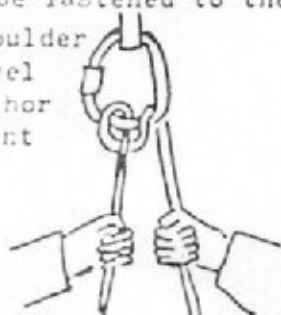


The knot is very easy to recognise: it swings over the karabiner and reverses itself if the rope is pulled alternately at one end then the other. This reversal is a necessary function of the knot, so a large karabiner is essential.

BELAYING

The knot works by friction of rope running over a moving rope and around the karabiner, it is very effective in holding falls. The karabiner is ideally fastened to a very good anchor point at shoulder level, or less satisfactorily can be fastened to the harness providing you are well belayed.

Shoulder
level
anchor
point

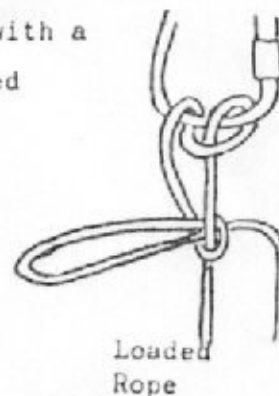


The rope is "fed" around the karabiner whether paying out or taking in. If there is a fall the knot automatically assumes the correct position, and it is easy to lower.

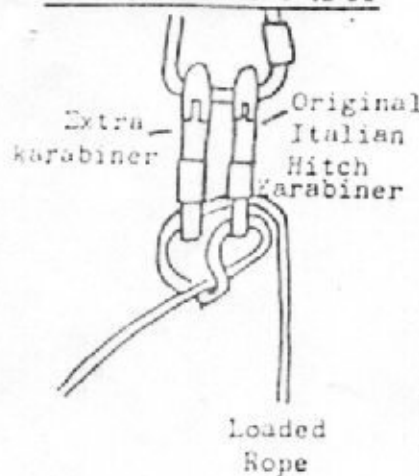
LOCKING OFF

The Italian Hitch can be locked off with a half hitch (take care not to trap fingers) and released under load.

A second half hitch can be added for security.



ONE WAY LOCKING KNOT



The Italian Hitch can be used as an improvised jammer. Start with the knot in the "taking in" position and insert an extra karabiner to prevent the knot reversing. Where to put the extra karabiner? Remember the loaded rope goes over two karabiners. Insert the extra one behind the Italian hitch karabiner.

Emergency Abseil



Abseiling is probably best restricted to emergency use only, because the rope becomes severely kinked.

The Italian hitch is unsuitable for 3-Strand, stiff or polypropylene ropes.

Having read the ridiculous attempt at underground to surface communication by the author of 'Planning a successful Expedition to Axe Hole' (see previous Newsletter) using carrier pigeons fitted with Oldhams, I decided that an intellectual approach was all that was required, so despite a certain degree of brain damage due to inadequate diets during and immediately following the war years, the 'Think Tank' (often rechristened the 'Stink Tank' by jealous rivals usually found amongst the lower ranks) comprising of our revered and elderly statesman was commissioned to solve the problem. Fortunately the brain drain had not depleted their numbers to any appreciable extent, but performance had noticeably deteriorated with the arrival of a multitude of 40th. birthdays (celebrated several times by some!!) and with the falling of hair. No doubt this decreased hair activity has been caused by inadequate blood supply to the brain, due to hardening of the arteries as a result of alcohol poisoning and to a reduced inner brain temperature caused by inadequate insulation between scalp and atmosphere. Certain younger members have been known to capitalise on this particular handicap and a black market in head protection began to flourish on a particular foreign expedition. Personally at this point I would like to register my objections to this particular form of exploitation of the less able.

However, back to the main point of this article, communications. The Oldham idea was obviously doomed to failure due to the weight of the battery and the difficulty in getting the correct size of helmet. (Caving Supplies were approached but Phil Brown was doubtful of the commercial value of stocking helmets of this size.) The prototype system involved equipping the birds with a second hand 'Jones Lighting System' minus the "Willy warmer" as this was thought unnecessary, since not even male pigeons are equipped with the required appendage. (These lamps can usually be bought cheaply from the designer or even exchanged for a small quantity of Ruddles County.) Unfortunately, due to wiring difficulties the "willy warmer" wire coil had to remain in place, causing the birds difficulties on starless nights since the coil produced a magnetic field cancelling out the Earth's magnetic field, thus making navigation impossible. Even on clear nights or sunny days when pigeons revert to normal techniques (for pigeons that is) the peaked helmets caused further problems by shading the bird's eyes and when the peak was removed the bright light seemed to confuse the birds, who seemed to find difficulty in distinguishing artificial light from sunlight or starlight. Pigeons weren't the answer.

A number of other animals with homing instincts were considered, but each time the age old problem of lighting reared its ugly head. The solution finally came during the monthly committee meeting, held on the geriatric ward,

BATS !!

Unfortunately British Bats are protected by law, so it became necessary to import foreign specimens from a dubious source in Transylvania. These arrived in an odd-shaped wooden container, which has already proved useful as a container for carrying bulky equipment and doubling up as a comfortable 'bivvy' should the need arise. I'm sure that the more intelligent amongst you will already have spotted the flaw --- Bats don't "Home" . This was overcome by an extensive course of conditioning, (referred to as brain-washing by some authors) The idea was to persuade the bats to return to the desired roost each time they were released. The wooden box was made more attractive by the addition of a red velvet lining, and a number of experiments proved the ideal food to be a mixture of pig-pudding and liquified raw liver. Despite repeated attempts to feed the animals on proprietary bat food consisting of bed bugs (SWCC) and cockroaches (OCC) they seemed disinterested in anything but the evil-looking concoction supplied by the local abbatoir. The conditioning worked well, it was only necessary to release the bats underground. (They seemed to work best after dusk, becoming inoperative round about dawn, which fortunately coincides with one of the 'dry' periods mentioned in the previous article. With the attached message the bat will then fly to the open wooden container, placed close to the cave entrance, equipped with an adequate supply of pig-pudding etc.

The system has not been without it's teething problems and one of these seems to be the quality of operator. So far all those involved have disappeared without trace during their first mission, no doubt the attraction of the bright lights of Buxton have proved too strong, but at least the bat population appears to be increasing despite assurances that all those supplied had been neutered. No doubt these minor problems will be solved before the next issue.

J.R.Johnson.

FOR SALE

The ideal furry pet for Xmas. Ring CCPC c/o S-G-T
Quantity of small caving helmets. Apply.
One 'Jones Lighting System' Name and address supplied.

WANTED

Experienced bat operators. Ring N'Castle 666.

LOST

Forty seven experienced cavers. Contact: Equip. Advisory Panel CCPC.

** Editor's note, Due to great age of the author of the above article, it was decided to use the 'old english' spelling of PIGEON, hence PIDGEON.

FUTURE MEETINGS.

SAT. 10th. DEC. CRO. Meeting. (Guaranteed to cure sleeplessness.)
SUN. 18th. DEC. St. Cuthbert's
SUN. 8th. JAN. Marble Steps. Ireby Fell.
MON. 9th. JAN. CCPC. AGM.
SUN. 29th. JAN. Swinsto, Simpson's etc.
SAT. 11th. FEB. Agen Allwedd. (Provisional date only.)
SAT. 18th. FEB. CCPC. Annual 'do' Biddulph Arms.
SAT. 25th. FEB. Rescue Practice.
SUN. 4th. MAR. Nick Pot, Diccan, Alum etc.
SUN. 11th. MAR. Lancaster Hole.
SUN. 25th. MAR. Juniper Gulf, Long Churn.
SAT. 7th. APR. Youth Course. Ilam.
SUN. 15th. APR. Meregill, Black Shiver, Tatham Wife.
SUN. 29th. APR. Grange Rig to Xmas.
SUN. 6th. MAY. G.G etc.
SUN 10th. JUNE. Dow - Providence.
SAT. SUN. 14/15th JULY. Dan-yr-Ogof. (Provisional date only)

John Gillett is going to S.Wales on Sat. 17th Dec. and anyone wanting to do OFD. 1 - 2. should contact John.

On the 29th. Feb. 1984 Mr. Jerry Woolridge, F.R.P.S. is giving a talk to the Stoke-on-Trent Camera Club entitled "Wonderful World of Caves". Described as a Caving show including, equipment, prints, slides and a hologram. The venue is, Tawney House, Webberley Lane, Longton. None members can attend.

AMMENDMENTS TO MEMBERS LIST.

Zig Wezasek , Home Tel. Redacted

LOST

Bottle, Peak Cavern, Reward, Apply.

WANTED

Experienced (middle aged) leader for attempt on Moss Chamber. Experience in Nursery/school/playgroup an advantage. Apply.