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Newsletter No.23.

December 1989

XMAS 1990 - SPECIAL EARLY EDITION!

COMPETITION - GREAT PRIZES * START HRAD * RALPH'S MEMOIRS * GREAT ORME REPORT * REYNOLD'S EARLY EXPLOITS * BATS IN CAVES * MARGE POOPS - AGONY AUNT * LADDERS AND LIFELINES * DCRO RESCUE REPORT * LONG RAKE MINE + ALL THE USUAL CR*P

CHRISTMAS COMPETITION

Something to do while you are lay belching in front of the telly on Christmas Day instead of caving. Solve the following clues to disclose the Christmas message.

Deceased horse pot.	(4,6)	_ _ _ _ = _ _ _ _ _
Cave, boyo.	(4)	_ _ = _
Highest waterfall in England.	(6,4)	_ _ _ _ = _ _ _ _ _
Goliath's orifice	(6,4)	_ _ _ _ = _ _ _ _ _
Not a short hoe mine.	(4,4)	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Cavern below Pevril's keep.	(4)	_ = _ _
Petzle non-start.	(4)	_ = _ _
Manifold copper mine.	(5)	_ _ _ _ _
Mislaid Jack's cave.	(4,5)	_ _ _ _ _ = _ _ _
Spanish, the Mr.	(5)	_ _ _ _ _
Bobby extracted from malachite.	(6)	_ _ _ _ _ _
Frantic lad.	(4)	_ _ = _
Red rose city hole.	(9)	_ _ _ _ _ = _ _ _
Get up rope like the Dr does.	(6)	_ _ _ = _ _
Down rope German way.	(6)	_ _ _ = _ _
Climb before descent by snake	(6)	_ _ = _ _ _
Pitch with 100 feet.	(9)	_ _ _ = _ _ _ _ _
Sick French pig meat cove.	(6)	_ _ _ = _ _
Satans bum, now Peak Cavern	(6,4)	_ _ _ = _ _ _ _ _
Unexpected view in above.	(7)	_ _ _ _ _ _ _
Bovine burial mound	(5)	_ = _ _ _
Tom Pula mixed in Yorkshire	(4,3)	_ _ _ = _ _ _
Exclude cannabis	(3,3)	_ = _ _ _
Perifoot Medic's cave	(2,8)	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ = _ _ _

Write correct answer on the back of a five pound note and send it to the Newsletter editor.

FABULOUS PRIZES

The chance to carry Ralphs
TACKLE BAG

A WEEKEND FOR 2
to Biddulph

The opportunity to wash a
400 ft ROPE

Take the editor for a
BOOZE-UP

A HAIR CUT
by Kev

Verrucas
CRABS

PEAK CAVERN 1959 : A PERSONAL VIEW

It was two weeks before Easter, 1959.

I first heard about the 'incident' in Peak Cavern when I arrived at school on the Monday morning but few details were available until I got home and tuned into the 6 o'clock News on the radio (No TV in those days!) It appeared that a call had been put out for assistance, particularly for small agile cavers so I called Castleton Police Station and was asked to put together a team. The club had few phones in those days so those who had were contacted and the message passed on by word of mouth. Cars were even less common than phones but by 9 pm Brian Griffiths had borrowed his mum's Austin something or other so we two plus Mike Scott (the very first CCPC secretary), Peter Owen and Innes Lumsden set off for Derbyshire.

The sight in Castleton was unbelievable - hundreds of vehicles littered the streets of the village with uncle Tom Cobbly and all in attendance.

We waited in the cave entrance for what seemed an eternity before a call came for "small cavers". In '59 I was a mere shadow of my present self so I must have been close to the front if not at the front. of the queue.

Arriving at Victoria Chamber I was signed in by a fireman in full regalia, asked to transport an oxygen cylinder plus a flask of something hot and to accompany a member of the Civil Defence (younger readers won't remember this reference to a remmanant of 'Dad's Army') whose job it was to carry in and wire up a field telephone (a wire had already been layed). I felt quite sorry for this poor guy dressed in his smart uniform and beret, hardly dressed for caving but this was 1959!

The upstream passage was 'damp' but must have been quite frightening for my companion, especially without a light! Pickerings crawl was unbelievable. The humidity was so high that visibility was almost nil and a number of the precious oxygen cylinders were let off to try to improve conditions. They seemed to mak little difference. The entrance to ****** Chamber was blocked with mud due to the ammount of traffic but a ladder had been dropped down the by-pass which I managed to climb - my companion couldn't manage this but was eventually dragged through the squeeze into the chamber. The mud slope was gradually liquifying due to the ammount of traffic and threatening to block the exit.

Tears came into his eyes when he learned that he hadn't reached the final chamber with his telephone - merely half way. He could go no further so I was given a quick lesson on telephones before setting off with 'phone and flask on my own. I negotiated the eyeholes somehow but managed to break the flask passing it to someone or other on the next vertical climb.

At last I reached 'Moss Chamber' where I connected the telephone. Unfortunately although it worked, everyone using it got an electric shock when trying to ring out! Oh well, physics was never my strong point!

After some discussion it was decided that I should have a go at reaching Neil and to attempt to attach some large metal hooks to his clothing - his original lifeline had broken. I took off my boiler suit leaving myself clad only in woollen long oohns, shirt and sweater (men really were men in those days!)

I set off down the narrow vertical tube made even smaller by a ladder, hauling rope, 2" air line plus my safety rope and smaller air line to the mask I wore around my neck. Oxygen cylinders were in short supply so mine was only turned on when I felt giddy and demanded it! The draught from the 2" air line made the

tube very cold.

After a short climb I found myself standing on the trapped caver who was unconscious but still alive - his heart beat could be heard even in the chamber above. I could only feel him with my feet - no chance of doing much else. I marveled at the acomplishment of R Peters (later to get the George Cross for his part in the rescue attempt) and June Bailey who had apparently achieved so much - I later found that their exploits had been wildly exagerated.

From what I can remember, his right arm was extended and his left arm was wedged across his chest. I was asked to try to move them even if it ment breaking them - they had to be joking!

After what seemed a lifetime I was told to return which I did gladly. I dressed, sat around for a while then went out. It was by now 3.30 am (Tuesday).

At about 4.30 am Mike Scott went into the tube to look for signs of life - there wern't any. The rescue was abandoned and the time of death put at 2.30.

After a short kip in Castleton Youth Hostel we breakfasted and headed back to school - after all the cross country championships were due to take place today and three of us were in the school team.

NEXT ISSUE, THE RECOVERY ATTEMPT.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Get out the old box browny and get yourself down P8! John Shenton is resurecting the 'Photographic Competition'. If there are enough entries, he might rent a public 'phone box to hold an exibition in.

RULES

1. Photographs must be taken by the member of the club making the entry.
2. Photographs must be taken underground.
3. Photographs must be taken since the last competition.
4. Entries may be in black and white or colour.
5. Entries must be prints (not transparencies).
6. Entries may be of any size.
7. The name of the person submitting the entry must be written on the back of the photograph with no indication of identity on the front.
8. Judging shall be by a count of votes cast by members present on the evening of the competition.
9. Each club member may enter any number of photographs.
10. In the event of a dispute, the organiser's decision is final, so there!

Closing date, venue etc. to be announced.

"Is this the way to Simpsons Pot?"

A CHRISTMAS GHOST STORY

CARLSWALK has numerous ghosts. It was supposedly used as a burial ground for victims of the plague from nearby Eyam but the best story started in the year 1750.

A Scots peddlar was a regular visitor to Eyam Wakes in mid August. He held a license to trade there and was a bit miffed to find that his business was being taken away from him by unlicensed traders, so he grassed to the village bobby and they were moved on.

Later in the day, the Scot told the landlord of the Bulls Head that he had to travel to Stoney Middleton. The landlord knew the other traders, a local gang from Bakewell. They were bad news. He was so concerned for his safety that he sent one of the bar staff with him as a bodyguard. The journey passed without incident and the bodyguard returned to Eyam. The Scot went for a jar in the Moon Inn and was confronted by the other peddlars.

He tried to ignore them but they said that they would forget the whole thing and persuaded him to join in a game of cards. The game seemed quite pleasant until one of the five peddlars accused the Scot of cheating. They then beat him to death whilst the landlord looked on.

They hid the body and carried on drinking until midnight. They then took the body on horseback to Carlswalk Cavern and two of them carried the body several hundred yards inside. The moonlit funeral procession was witnessed by two drunken miners but their tale was not believed.

Some twenty years later a young couple in Eyam village were entertaining visitors. The cavern was at this time known as the 'Wonder Cave' and the guests expressed a desire to go and explore it. Their host was not too keen, he had been troubled by recurring nightmares about the cavern. They eventually persuaded him and off they set with a bunch of candles.

The entrance in those days was like a smaller version of Peak Cavern and was a favourite abode for tramps and thieves. This had kept most visitors away since the miners had departed. The party braved the abuse and threats of the inhabitants and set off down the cave. After several hundred yards, the leader of the party went to touch an unusual formation. It turned out to be a human skull! They fled in terror.

The police didn't arrive until the next day and a huge crowd had gathered to see the grizly remains being removed. They were identified as those of the Scotsman by his unusual handmade shoes which had been beautifully preserved. As no one came forward to claim the body, the remains were stored in a chest in the North aisle of Eyam church until they were buried almost a century later. The shoes were taken by the bell-ringer, Mathew Hall, who wore them for several years.

None of the murderers came to formal justice but as often happens in the Peak, all died mysterious and hideous deaths. A pretty female member of the gang developed cancer of the face and became a hideous young hag whilst the landlord of the Moon Inn lay for months in agony and could only die after he had been removed from the pub.

The barefooted ghost of the Scotsman was seen wandering around the cave beckoning people to see see his resting place and presumably looking for his shoes. Even the tramps deserted the entrance and the council used this entrance as a rubbish dump until it was eventually filled in.

Mark

(Christmas Spirits)

27.10.73. KNOTLOWE MINE

AN EARLY START AT LAST, 8 O' CLOCK, ALAN PICKED ME UP WITH BYRON AND BRUNCE ALREADY ON BOARD READY TO GO. I WAS READY FOR THE OFF FOR ONCE, WHEN ALAN KNOCKED, AND AWAY WENT. A QUICK WALK AROUND LEEK WHILE WE WAITED FOR KEN AND PHIL, ALTOGETHER BY HALF PAST EIGHT AND OFF TO MONYASH

BYRON FETCHED THE KEY FROM THE FARM AND AFTER A COMPLICATED PIECE OF BACK TRACKING WE CAME TO THE TRACK LEADING TO THE ENTRANCE, ITS VERY ROUGH AND WITH FOUR ON BOARD THE 'BEETLE' TOOK A BIT OF A POUNDING. EVENTUALLY THE TRACK CAME TO A HALT MUCH TO THE RELIEF OF ALAN AND MOTOR.

CHANGING IN THE OPEN AIR AGAIN, A LOT WARMER THAN LAST TIME, BUT STILL COLD, AND AT LAST A WET SUIT TO GO DOWN IN. ACROSS TWO FIELDS TO THE 60' CLIMBING SHAFT. THE SHAFT IS COVERD BY A STEEL LID PUT THERE FOR SAFTY REASONS BY DERBYSHIRE CAVING RESCUE, UNDERSTANDABLE FOR THE SHAFT DROPS STRAIGHT. AN ALLAN KEY IS USED TO UNDO THE COVER'S WHICH ALSO MAKES A GOOD STRONG BELAY POINTS. WE LADDERED THE PITCH FOR THE RETURN TRIP AND ABSAILED DOWN TO A RATHER MUDDY BOTTOM. SCRABBLED THROUGH TO THE 25' PITCH. A QUICK LOOK AT THE WATERFALL CHAMBER. A PITY WE COULDN'T DO THE THIRD PITCH, STILL THERE'S ALWAYS OTHER TIMES, THEN TO THE DREADED 'BUNG'. ALAN WAS FIRST TO GO, LAUGH, BUSTER KEETON COULDN'T HAVE MADE IT MORE FUNNY, HELMET ASQUE HE CAME STAGGERING BACK "I'LL NEVER GET THROUGH THERE" WHAT A SIGHT. WELL AFTER HIS HELMET AND BATTERY

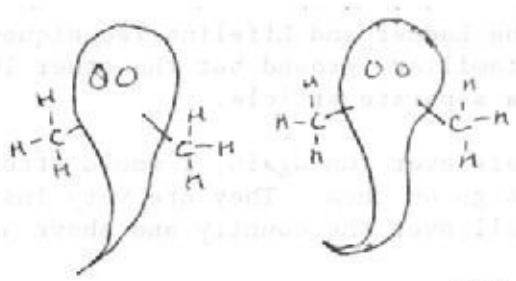
OFF HE JUST MANAGED IT. BYRON JUST SAT BACK AND LAUGHED HIS HEAD OFF. ITS ONE ALMIGHTY TIGHT HEAVE TO GET THROUGH, AND A TIGHT CRAWL ONCE YOUR THROUGH. WE ALL COLLECTED OUR PIECE OF 'GALENA' OR PHIL GOT LOADED DOWN WITH OUR PIECES. ONCE MORE THE LAMP PACKED IN, I WONDER IF I'M THE ONLY ONE, OR IF NOT THERE CAN'T BE TOO MANY OF US WHO HAVE CRAWLED THROUGH 'THE BUNG' BLIND. WE DID AN AWFUL LOT OF CRAWLING UNTIL WE CAME 'CRIMBOVEIN'. IT WAS TRYING TO FOLLOW THE VEIN THAT BYRON GOT STUCK IN THE MUD. BRUNCE PULLED HIM BACK OUT AND THAT WAS ENOUGH FOR THE DAY. 60' IS THE BIGGEST LADDER CLIMB EITHER ALAN OR MYSELF HAVE DONE. IT DIDN'T SEEM HALF AS FAR DOWN AS IT DID BACK UP. GOT HALF CHANGED WHEN ABOVE 40 RAMBLERS DECIDED TO CLIMB OVER THE GATE AND COME STROLLING ON PAST BYRON WAS THAT COVERD IN MUD, HE HAD A BATH IN A HORSE TROFF. THE NEXT TRIP DOWN WELL HAVE TO DO THE WATERFALL PITCH, IT LOOKS A VERY GOOD AND INTERESTING PITCH.

TIME DOWN 10.15 AM.

TIME OUT 3 30PM

TOTAL TIME 5 ¼ HRS.

PARTY :- BYRON, BRUNCE, PHIL, KEN, ALAN AND MYSELF



(Methylated Spirits)

P8 - THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME!

For those who missed Jackpot during the dry spell and the subsequent article in Descent I'd like to point out just what you missed!

The mainstream sumps, 1, 2 and 3 led to a very impressive rift terminating in sump 4, the vertical section being fitted with fixed ladders. Up to the point of writting (Oct 89) this sump remains unopened but it's cross section suggests that only a short dive remains and perhaps even this will open up despite the water level remaining constant for several weeks.

The upstream inlet, sump B3 was passed (and subsequently a diving line installed) to a muddy climb up to a boulder choke with a rather inviting (!) hole.

The level in sump C2 had dropped about 15 m to reveal a steep passage leading to a 5 m pitch into water. The previous point reached by divers was about 5 m short of the top of this pitch, no mean feat since the passage leading to it must have been torturous to say the least when wearing diving gear. Hopefully someone will by now have donned a bottle and followed the outlet to its pool before normal conditions return.

Just as a matter of further interest, the hole in the floor 30 m down from top sump (B3) was followed to its conclusion, a silted blockage, and on one of our visits the small trickle falling down the second pitch was dissapearing down a hole up a short passage on the left a short way downstream.

Ralph

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CAVE TRAINING COURSES, DCA

These were heavily subsidised by CRO to the tune of £300 and lost about half as much again due to poor attendance. Because of this, it is not known whether the experiment will be repeated. Those who did go recieved a bargain at £5 per course.

From the CCPC, Kev, Sarah and I covered three of the courses, ie Cave Surveying, Ladder and Lifeline Techniques and Advanced SRT Including Self Rescue.

Kev and Sarah report that the Cave Surveying course was an explaination of the BCRA booklet, Cave Surveying. It was very good but highly technical and it would be difficult to write a meaningful report on it.

Kev and I were mind boggled by the SRT course. After spending what seemed like most of the day suspended from the celling/each other we managed between us to learn enough to be useful. The course demonstrated how with little equipment and a big brain you could haul 20 stone cavers up 100 ft pitches etc. It also raised a few interesting questions about the kind of equipment we use. In a later Newsletter I will try and list some of these. When we've rehearsed a few times, we will attempt to pass on this knowledge via a training session.

Sarah and I did the Ladder and Lifeline Techniques on different days. 90% of the course covered familiar ground but the other 10% was quite horrifying. I have covered these in a separate article.

IF these course are ever run again, I would strongly advise anyone who can spare the time/money to go on them. They are very instructive, a bargain, a chance to meet cavers from all over the country and above all else, fun.

Mark

LONG RAKE MINE, YOULGREAVE

12th October 1989

Kevin told me about this one. Whilst on a circular walk in the Peak District a few months ago, I jumped over a wall to have a pee and was confronted by a vast chasm at least 200 ft deep (I had one of the most spectacular pees of my life!). This one wasn't in 'The Caves of Derbyshire' and I decided to return with a bolting kit sometime in the future and have a look around.

One night Kevin told me about this really spectacular mine entrance with endless rickerty ladders and seven miles of passage. I looked on the map and realized that this was the chasm I had peed down. Great!

We drove up to the picnic area above Youlgreave, changed and tried to follow Kev's directions. All we could find were piles of sand and a few horrible shafts at the bottom of funnel shaped depressions. It was pitch black by this time. We decided to split up (rather foolishly, Inga has no sense of direction). I wandered off, found the entrance then went to find Inga.

Kev had said "Look for a flat bit and walk staight accross it." Inga had done this and the flat bit had turned out to be a pond. Not very happy!

The entrance is situated about half way along the rake. The handrail Kev had spoke of was like a bannister - luxury caving.

The first six ladders zig-zag back and forth accross the rake, landing on unstable little platforms. At about -120 ft the seventh ladder dissapears through a hole in the floor. Every time you think you've reached the bottom, there's another ladder. The thirteenth ladder lands in a hauling level at about -260 ft.

The place is absolutely brillaint. Everything is in place as though the miners have just finished their shift (maybe they had and we were in the wrong mine!) Amongst the artifacts are kibbles, buckets, shovels, a miners coat hung on a nail, rails and sleepers still in place and two toilets (Liam, please note).

Parts of the mine look a little unstable and there has been quite big collapses in several places. Although the floor appears solid, it is in fact false and holes reveal a further fifty foot drop at the very least. Numerous ore shoots enter the passage and the gates have given way on some, partially blocking the passage with rubble. Kev's advice not to touch anything was well observed.

A stroll of about 200 yds leads to an inclined plain and the maintainance shed complete with fuse boxes, a generator and Women's magazines (not Men's!) A little further on is a cage and the next shaft can be descended via three ladders to the lower workings. These contain an ore cage and ladders to even lower workings. Back in the top level a ladder can be climbed into the working part of the mine which is a vast chasm with shafts to the surface. The passage beneath contains some fine formations including straw stalactites some 15" long.

To sum up, this is an excellent evening trip especially suited for anyone interested in recent minning techniques. With seven miles of passageway it can be as long or short as you want.

To find it, drive along the Buxton-Ashborne road and turn off at the sign for Arbour Low. drive past Arbour Low (heading East) until you see the picnic area a couple of miles down the road. Walk back along the road for 100 yds to where the fence on the left gives way to a wall. Climb over and follow the vague path to a bannister at the edge of the chasm.

All you need is a boiler suit, lamp and helmet. Don't put too much faith in the ladders or platforms (one person at a time). The access arrangement' seems to be don't let anyone see you. Happy caving!

Mark

CAPTION COMPETITION No 5

It's just as well that the photo's not too clear - you would bring you're Xmas dinner back up!
Study the photo and use your skill/experience to fill in the caption to indicate what Iain / Wendy was saying/thinking.

Best entries to be included in a forthcoming newsletter.

CAPTION COMPETITION No 5.

Iain/Wendy "..... ...."

Iain is a dirty git [_]

Please give/post entries to Mark Lovatt

Redacted

199. P.8. (JACKPOT), CASTLETON. Thursday 6 April 1989

Six novices with one professional instructor descended P.8. in flood. They went as far as the first pitch which all the novices descended. When they were all down, the process was reversed, and they began climbing up once again. All went well until it was the turn of the fifth novice who, in spite of a number of attempts, was too cold and exhausted to manage the climb up the waterfall. The instructor left four of his party at the top of the pitch and two at the bottom whilst he went out to the surface to summon assistance. He then went back down the cave. The first team members down met two of the novices at the foot of Idiot's Leap, cold and suffering from the onset of exposure (none of the novices were wearing wetsuits). Following team members took them to the surface and helped them up to the road (they could only walk with difficulty). Two more novices were found at the top of the first pitch and sent on their way to be met and assisted out from Idiot's Leap. Contact was made with the remaining two who were still in the wet and spray at the foot of the pitch and a team member descended to find both very cold and one semi-conscious. When more manpower arrived the two were hoisted up the pitch and helped to the entrance, where polythene sheeting had been put in place to partially deflect the water.

200. EYAM AND STONEY MIDDLETON AREA. Thurs. 11 May to Sun. 7 June 1989

On Sunday 7 May Michael Boulton (16) disappeared after leaving his part time job in the middle of Eyam. On Wednesday, the police wished to extend the area of search and asked D.C.R.O. and P.D.M.R.O. to assist on Thursday. A twelve strong D.C.R.O. team searched all the caves and mines on the North side of Stoney Middleton Dale (including The Delf and Eyam Dale) while the surface was swept by a P.D.M.R.O. team. Nothing was found and further help was requested for the weekend to check out known holes over a wider area, and also investigate holes reported by the police and M.R. teams during their surface searches. In the event, this pattern of working became the norm for a total of thirteen days or part days throughout the search period as teams varying in strength from two to twenty-five checked out approx. 334 different locations making 57 shaft descents as well as entering and investigating many caves, culverts etc. Eighty three D.C.R.O. members from all teams were involved on the search, many turning out more than once. Radios were used on loan from the P.D.M.R.O. and D.C.R.O's recently approved Land Search and Rescue Frequency callsign ("Caver") was used for the first time.

By the time the search was wound down, a circular area one mile in radius from Eyam had been searched in detail and ribbon searches had been carried out 100 yards either side of all roads and tracks within a five mile radius. Absolutely no sign of the missing youth was found and his disappearance continues to remain a complete mystery.

201. SHELDON, TADDINGTON & MONYASH AREA. Sat. 27 May to Sun. 4 June 1989

On Monday 15 May the body of Colin Grindley was found by police in a layby near the top of Taddington Dale. He had been shot dead and a murder inquiry was started. The police considered it likely that the murderer(s) had disposed of or concealed the murder weopon and other items in the area - probably down a mineshaft. Initially Magpie Mine and the other mines near Sheldon were considered the most likely sites and D.C.R.O's assistance was requested. On Saturday 27 May twenty members from two regular teams and the P.D.M.H.S. met at Magpie Mine and commenced work checking out the shaft caps and, where necessary making descents. By the end of the weekend 16 shafts had been descended and interest centred on 3 deep flooded shafts (Magpie, Hardrake and Mandale). During the following week Hardrake was pumped out, Mandale dived, and (most difficult of all) Magpie was checked out using a remote control submersible video camera. The following weekend further mines etc. were visited bringing the total number of locations checked to 70, including 23 shaft descents over the eight day period of the search. A total of 62 members were involved from most teams.

202. WELL AT BRACKENFIELD. Tuesday 6 June 1989

The police asked D.C.R.O. to look at a well at Brackenfield as part of the ongoing search for the missing Taddington murder weopon. The well was approx. 3 ft. in diameter and 12 ft. deep with 6 ft. of water (and other stuff). The well was laddered and a diver went down to search the bottom. Nothing was found.

203. TADDINGTON & MONYASH AREA. Tuesday 21 June 1989

Again in connection with the search for the Taddington murder weopon the police had compiled a list of shafts etc. that needed looking at. Ten Central Team members arranged an evening turnout and inspected thirty six locations, descending twelve shafts varying in depth from 20 to 120 feet.

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF INCIDENTS 200 TO 203 -- SEARCHES AT EYAM & TADDINGTON

Between 11 May and 21 June 1989 (42 days), 117 members turned out 236 times on 22 days for an estimated 1850 operational hours. Including time calling out teams, organising equipment, planning, collating information, writing reports and liaising with police, mountain rescue and others, the total (excluding members' travelling time) would exceed 2000 hours (or 250 x 8 hr. man days). During the four operations 441 locations were visited to investigate caves, mines, mineshafts, mineshaft caps, soughs, open rakes, culverts, wells, drains, ponds and even an ice-house and a lime kiln. Caves and horizontal mines were normally investigated to just beyond the limit of daylight penetration. Some mineshafts were investigated using powerful lights but 92 were descended, some more than once (many in excess of 300 ft.). Two long soughs were traversed (one twice), as were 14 stream culverts (some hundreds of feet in length). Three deep flooded shafts were investigated, one by diving, one by pumping out 60 ft. of water, and one by using a remote control submarine (with video camera) in 105 ft. of water commencing at 595 ft. below surface. Three other mines were searched in detail using metal detecters.

204. ODIN MINE, CASTLETON. Saturday 24 June 1989

An ill equipped party of three novices descended at about 22.00 on Friday night and descended the first internal pitch to a ledge at about -40 ft. They did not have sufficient tackle to descend to the bottom (a further 100 ft. or so) and so two of them climbed out. The third member of the party was unable/unwilling to climb back up on the rope they had (now knowing how deep the pitch truly was!) His companions tried to encourage him for some time before giving up and leaving to telephone for help at about 03.00 on Saturday morning. A small number of Central Team were called out and four members descended, rigged the pitch with ladder and lifeline and brought the marooned man out.

205. DARFAR POT, WETTON MILL, STAFFS. Sunday 20 August 1989

A well equipped and experienced caver slipped whilst climbing Pedigree Pot. His foot slipped out of his footloop and he could no longer reach his upper ascender. In spite of trying for some time he was unable to recover to a climbing position and became exhausted. His two companions were unable to haul him bodily up the pitch as the rope was too muddy so he had to hang around whilst help was summoned. The rescue was effected by a small number of Team who lowered a rope with footloops down to the marooned man and hauled him up. He was then helped out to the surface without undue difficulty.

206. P.8. JACKPOT, CASTLETON. Tuesday 29 August 1989

Close to midnight D.C.R.O. was contacted by the police with a report that a cave diver was overdue in the downstream sump complex. The Diving Team were called out together with an initial dozen Central Team members. Yorkshire divers were also put on standby. However, as the first team members entered the cave they met the overdue diver on his way out. It seems that he had been doing some work on the iron ladder on Budgie Pot and had then gone to investigate Sump 9 and the trip had taken rather longer than he had anticipated.

Dear Aunty Marje

I have recently been digging in the area around Plantation Pot. A couple of weeks ago I was driving through Wetton in somewhat of a hurry when I ran over a dog which was on the end of a lead held by an old lady. As I didn't have time to mess around with vets and suchlike, I took my shovel and hit the dog over the head to end its misery. Imagine my ammusement when a week later I was driving through Wetton and I saw the old lady again. The dog was walking in front of her with a huge bandage on its head! How I laughed!

Marje says

Next time, take it down Plantation Pot with you and do a proper job on it.

Dear Aunty Marje

Whilst caving in South Wales, I found a colony of bats. As no-one was around and it was close to my cat's birthday, I slipped one into my tackle bag and took it home for 'Tiddles' to play with. Unfortunately, the bloody thing was vicious and bit Tiddles. He has now started to behave in a very perculiar manner, sleeping in a shoe box and wearing a black velvet cloak with a red silk lining etc. Is this condition dangerous?

Marje says

At the moment the condition is not serious. However, as your cat is a 'Tom', look out for further developments. If he starts driving around in a 'Skoda' and trying to exchange currency with foreign cavers at extortionate rates, have him put down immediately!

Dear Aunty Marje

I have this compulsion to ask other cavers to hold my tackle and sometimes I can't find the right hole. Is this serious? (CONTINUED ON PAGE 196).

WARNING - THIEVES!

On Wed. 20th September a group from the Derby based Viking Venture Scouts rigged the Eyam Dale Shaft of Carlswark and then walked down to do the through trip from the lower entrance. When they reached the bottom of the shaft all their gear had gone! This happened between 7.30 and 9.00 pm. They later discovered that a car parked nearby but unconnected with their group had been broken into at about the same time. The theft of the gear has been reported to the police. The equipment stolen was :

2 Caving Supplies ladders (pressure bonded) 10 Ft and 25 ft, 10" spacing.

25 m of 11mm Edelred rope

1 spreader

3 steel screwgate crabs, 11 mm 'D' offset

2 alloy snap crabs, 11 mm 'D' offset

Troll bolt hanger and bolting spanner.

All gear except the rope is stamped or tagged 'VVU'.

If you are able to help, please inform Mr Mitchell, 3 Hollies Rd. Allestree, DERBY (Tel 0332-559745).

This particular cave is very vunerable to theft as ladders must be left in place rigged from the surface and near to the road. No thief would feel too guilty as his action would not actually strand anyone.

On a weekend in early November, a University minibus was completely cleaned out by theives at Stoney Middleton. Everything was taken, including the cavers cloths.

A car nearby was stripped of all caving gear unyet climbing gear was thrown into nearby bushes.

Perhaps Nigel can come up with a device for electrifying ladders or something!

STARI HRAD

Stari Hrad is the deepest cave in Czechoslovakia. Situated in the "Low Tatras" near the town of Liptovsky Mikulas, it is 424 metres deep, and five kilometres long, with several large chambers, impressive pitches, and a roaring streamway in the lower reaches.

In the summer of 1989, the Detva caving club, who control the access to the cave, hosted us for the day and guided us on a trip to the bottom of *Stari Hrad*. In addition to the caving trip,they fed us and took us on a tour of the local places of interest. Our day out with the Detva was the most enjoyable and exciting day of our Czechoslovakian expedition.

We rose at 5.0.a.m., the usual start time for a busy day in the Tatras, above or below ground. Our rendezvous was at 7.0.a.m. in the national park near Liptovsky Mikulas, several miles away, and we had to hurry breakfast to arrive on time.

At the park, we waited for the arrival of our guides from the Detva caving club. About ten minutes later, a new red Skoda, swished into the car park, and drew up alongside. A very large person emerged from the driving seat. This was Petr, our guide! Tom, our host and the Brno club president, introduced us. Petr was the discoverer of *Stari Hrad*, and obviously well built for that task. Petr stood six foot seven on a pair of legs like tree trunks. His ruddy face was split by a large smile of welcome. As he shook hands, each of us felt the strength in his grip, and I noticed that his arms were about the same size as my legs. A genial giant of the Tatras! His wife Helena was diminutive in comparison, but one could not help noticing that she too was well muscled and extremely fit looking. Neither of them could speak English, so it was difficult to converse properly with the meagre Czech that we could muster, but they were so clearly pleased to see us, and so welcoming, that their actions spoke better than words.

After a brief conversation, Tom, and Pavel, his companion, drove off with Petr and Helena to try and obtain access permission to the park roads. Although we had permission to visit the caves, we needed a special permit to allow our cars to enter the park, and since the cave was about three miles from the roadhead, and about two thousand feet higher up the mountain, we wished them success. Blanca and Ivosh, two english speaking members of the Brno club, stayed with us. They were both considered to be fit enough for the descent of *Stari Hrad*, and would accompany us underground.

About half an hour later, Tom and the others returned. They had obtained the park access permit for us, but as Tom and Pavel were not considered fit enough for *Stari Hrad*, they left us to take a walk nearby. I wondered exactly what we were in for!

Petr and Helena signaled that we should move off, so we boarded our cars and followed them along the forestry roads into the valley. Mel and Adrian in the Fiesta; Jane, Ian, me and Kevin in the Cortina, and Blanca and Ivosh in their blue Skoda.

We eventually drew up alongside a large clearing in the forest. Hundreds of trees had been blown down in the spring gales, and the forestry workers had been hard at work clearing up the resultant mess. We parked our cars alongside a deep ditch, out of the way of the foresters heavy tractors and equipment, and unloaded our rucksacks. Tom had warned us that the uphill walk was quite arduous and would take at least an hour, so we had packed the minimum of food,light and clothing. With no delay, Petr hoisted a large rucksack to his shoulders and strode off up the hillside.

Helena explained that we need not try to keep up with Petr, as he had to go ahead to prepare for us. Nevertheless, we followed him up the hill at a fair speed, leaving Helena, Blanca and Ivosh to follow at a more leisurely pace. The track narrowed as we entered the trees, and ran alongside a small stream. Petr stopped to point out a hunter's hide in a large pine tree. We managed to ask him what it was for, and received the reply that it was for shooting bears. As far as I could make out, they had recently shot a bear weighing about four hundred kilos. If that was correct, that was a very big bear! None of fancied meeting such an animal, so we stuck closely to Petr's heels.

As the track became steeper, Petr tried to explain that we could rest if we wished, and paused long enough for Helena and the others to catch up with us. I explained that we would prefer to keep going, "*Pomalu, pomalu*" until the top, even though we were by now feeling rather hot. On we went, the gradient becoming ever steeper, and the path more slippery as we encountered the limestone. Eventually the way zigzagged up a precipitous slope among the trees to a substantial ledge running beneath a limestone cliff. Petr indicated that we were nearly there... it had taken just over half an hour!

The ledge widened, and as we followed it around a right hand bend in the cliffs, we came to a wooden bunkhouse built into a cave entrance. The bunkhouse looked well built and perfectly sited to avoid snow and rock falls. The timber and ironwork must have bent many a Detva caving club member's back in heavy portages up the steep hill now below us.

Petr withdrew a set of Allen keys from his rucksack, and started to undo a multiplicity of locks on the bunkhouse door. The locking system was designed to keep out the most determined burglars. To gain entry without the specially cut keys would have required explosives!

Once he had opened the door, Petr entered and started the "Preparations" that Helena had referred to earlier. Inside the bunkhouse were several bunks, a stove, and neatly organised shelves and cupboards. Water was available, piped from a siphon pool in the cave behind. Petr pulled out a large bench and positioned it under the overhang in front of the bunkhouse for us to sit on. Before I could sit down, he placed a sheepskin rug on the bench as a cushion. I sank down in comfort after the sweaty climb whilst Petr busied himself opening draws, rummaging in cupboards, and performing other chores. All of us were amazed at the superb accomodation and facilities. On the bunkhouse door was a table of weights carried by the Detva club members. What a great deal of work they had put in to construct this haven!

Petr unearthed some wood shavings and stuffed them into the stove. Uncorking a bottle of meths, he sprinkled it over the shavings. Recorking the bottle he put it back in the cupboard, and lit the fire. Several logs were added next, and soon he had a roaring blaze going. The little chimney spouted smoke up and across the roof of the overhang, the occasional sparks being quenched in the process. Everything had been well thought out; even the avoidance of a forest fire.

Petr motioned for us to take off our sweaty shirts and hang them to dry on an airer over the stove. Then, with most of the "Preparations" complete, Helena and the others arrived. If we had not followed Petr so closely, we would have had an even greater surprise. Blanca and Ivosh were wide eyed in amazement at the lavishly furnished bunkhouse, the welcoming seats, and the warm fire. Helena, after a brief word with Petr, put a kettle on the stove. She then disappeared under one of the bunks, and emerged with two electric cap lamps. Even in this relative fortress, she had hidden their valuables as an extra precaution.

Whilst we changed into our caving clothes, Petr and Helena pottered about preparing sandwiches and unpacking various items from their kitbags. Once the kettle had boiled, Helena prepared hot lemon tea for us all, and seated comfortably, we sipped it cautiously, a superb view across the forest to the distant mountains in front of us. The day had started well indeed.

Time passed quickly, and as soon as Petr and Helena had changed into their overalls, the various cups and utensils were washed and our surface clothes and all easily removable items returned to the hut. Petr relocked the door, and then one by one we filed along the ledge and uphill to the Stari Hrad entrance.

The name *Stari Hrad* means "The Old Castle". A particularly apt name, as we discovered. A narrow ledge led through a portal in the limestone into a medium sized chamber which had one side open to a superb view, making it into a limestone belvedere. Well appointed as usual, there was even a rail to prevent people falling off and a small seat for the older members to sit and admire the beautiful scenery. Down in a recess at the far side was the route to the underworld. Petr lit his lamp and started the descent. One by one, we followed him.

We entered a small steeply descending passage, about one metre wide and two high, where it was difficult to move quickly, especially those of us with tackle bags on our backs. Unencumbered, Petr moved very rapidly, and we had to hurry to keep up. Soon there was a staircase of dried mud steps dropping down steeply to a twisty turning narrow meander. One or two small drops which followed were equipped with short wooden ladders. The tortuous passage ended at a twenty metre pitch, where we queued to descend.

Most of the Czechoslovakian caves that we had seen so far had been equipped with assorted metal and wooden ladders, so it was no surprise to find that the pitch was already rigged. However, the fixed aid here was of a type that we had not encountered before. An alloy and wire ladder was in place, but instead of hanging freely, it was tensioned by bolts at top and bottom, to make the descent easy. I thought that it would be very helpful on the way out.

The pitch was about twenty metres deep in a roomy shaft that was dry, so the descent was relatively easy. At the bottom, Petr did not wait, and set off again once the first two had landed. However, as we were not a large group, the last person to descend was not far behind, and we spread out in a convoy along the passages that followed. Three small pitches, equipped with wooden and steel fixed ladders led to the bouldery *Slepou* gallery and we eventually came to the thirty five metre *Hlavna* shaft. This shaft had three sets of the tensioned ladders, with awkward crossovers between each. The last and deepest section of tensioned ladder had an additional aid, metal hoops to stop cavers falling off. The hoops were made of alloy strip about three inches wide, bent into a circle about four feet in diameter, and provided with two tension wires on the side opposite the ladder to allow climbers to lean against the hoops and have a rest. Descending was not so easy with a tackle bag slung from a "*Cowstail*", as the gaps between the hoops were at four foot intervals, just enough for a bag to slip between and jam the descent! Since I was the only one of our party with a tackle bag slung like this, everyone else thought that the hoops were a magnificent innovation, in spite of my regular cursing.

The way on from the bottom of the pitch was via a narrow rift where we had to chimney down on rough limestone. Occasional enlargements meant delicate manoeuvres to avoid falling, or kicking rocks on to those below. A complex route through the rift led to a meander and then to the top of the deepest pitch in the cave. The "*Tristarska*", forty four metres (130ft.) deep and in a wide shaft was equipped with tensioned ladders and hoops. The beginning was at an angle of about forty five degrees, and after about fifteen feet suddenly became vertical which made the abyss below very impressive. We descended the ladder three at a time so, in spite of being a large party, there was minimal holdup. By now, I had devised a way of preventing my tackle bag from snagging so made a rapid and exhilarating descent.

Helena descended last, and we waited for her at the base of the "*Tristarska*" before following Petr into the huge "*Prieskumnikov Hall*". Here we climbed a steep slope and filed along a small path to a viewpoint where Petr sat on a large rock to address us. With some translation from Blanka, he explained that this had been the end of the cave up to 1980 as there was a siphon ahead which had been passed by divers. The Detva club had blasted the siphon so that ordinary cavers could gain easy access to the rest of the cave. The Czechs do not mess about the niceties of sport, and Petr justified the demolition of the sump as a scientific necessity. After a brief pause to cool off a little, we clambered down the rocks and stooped through the blasted sump to gain the *Bielu* gallery beyond.

On the left, washed by a steady shower of water from above, was a large boss of reddish coloured flowstone; "*Etna*". In the roof interstices were several beautiful crystal flowers of Aragonite. After a pause to inspect these formations, we descended to the "*Buffet pod Etna*", a sort of tearoom equipped with a shelf on which stood a stove, kettle, and tea making and cooking utensils. We were now about 270 metres below the entrance, and feeling quite hot from the rapid descent, so this was a most welcome prospect. Petr, however, who seemed to have had instructions to give us a "sporting" trip, was keen to keep on the move, so all thoughts of a sit down and a brew-up were shattered.

The gallery became larger as we continued our descent, and eventually opened out into the huge "*Revajov Dom*", where it was difficult to discern the roof. Petr paused to explain that this was the largest chamber in the system, and that we were now 300 metres deep. He then strode on to the brink of a steeply descending canyon at the far end.

The way down was quite hairy in places, with several difficult climbs and loose boulders. At the bottom of the first section, there was a huge block on the lefthand side of the canyon. Here we gingerly inched out over a considerable drop and had to grab a piton at arms length, swing out over the abyss and then clip into a handline that ran behind the block and into a vertical, relatively tighter, rift. After all of the precautions taken with the previous pitches, it seemed incongruously dangerous.

The remainder of the rift had walls of rough limestone, and was fairly easy to negotiate until we reached the "*Riecnou*" pitch. The "*Riecnou*" pitch had a large stream flowing over the lip, forming an impressive waterfall, which made a deafening noise. Once again we were amazed at the ingenuity and care that the Czechs had taken to provide for our safety.

A heavy steel tube had been anchored across the rift. Welded to the tube at convenient intervals, were several steel mesh 'footplates', enabling us to walk easily above the torrent and reach the pitch-head without getting wet. The twenty metre pitch was equipped with tensioned ladder, with restraining hoops down the first ten metres, and the bottom unrestricted to allow climbers to get off the ladder and into a rather awkward rift descent alongside the water. Even here, the comfort of the caver had been catered for. A large PVC pipe had been installed to take the main volume of the water. However, this pipe proved to be an obstruction and made the descent rather tight and difficult with a tackle bag.

At the bottom of the rift there was a deep pool, where a rather sporting traverse around a large rock caused some of our party problems. Blanka, who seemed to be averse to falling into the water, took a lot of coaxing and some rather masculine help, before she gained the other side. Jane had no problems and swung across in a comparatively professional manner.

We were now approaching the bottom of the cave. In a small chamber that followed, Petr showed us a turbine, driven by the water through a series of pipes and valves, that powered a generator. He explained that they were still trying to extend the cave through a tight section further on, and that the electricity was used for drilling shot-holes. The next time we came the cave would be deeper!

After the generator chamber, the rift began to contract, until we came to an enlargement where there was a small crossrift above a very narrow canal. Here, we stopped where there was room to sit down. Petr explained that this was the bottom of the cave. At present, the canal was impassable without recourse to chemical attack. The depth below the entrance was 424 metres. Our descent had only taken two hours.

Petr and Helena had sandwiches inside their overalls, I had food for Jane and myself in my tackle bag, and the others had various items of food secreted about their persons. We shared nuts and chocolate and sipped water from a bottle that I had also brought. Petr produced some ripe plums for us to share as a dessert. In spite of the noise of the water, and the damp atmosphere, it seemed quite cosy in our rocky niche. We exchanged conversation between mouthfuls until all of the food had been consumed. Petr shook the crumbs off himself and prepared for the ascent. The rest of us did likewise, suddenly realising that it would be a bit harder climbing out than dropping in.

The ascent, however, went very quickly, apart from the long climb up the "*Tristarska*" where Blanka became very tired. Petr, who had hung back, motored up to her to provide physical and vocal assistance. The hoops were, as expected, a considerable help to her, allowing occasional rests to recover, and it was not long before she reached the top, puffing and panting with the exertion. From then on we went at a more sedate pace and it seemed like no time at all before we were struggling through the narrow entrance passages. We emerged on to the ledge of *Sturi Hrad*, steaming from our exertions and blinking in the bright sunshine. The trip had only taken four and a half hours.

Petr went ahead to unlock the bunkhouse, whilst the rest of us paused to extinguish our lamps and admire the view. When we finally caught up with him, he had already opened the door and perked up the fire to warm some water. Helena took off her overalls and disappeared inside for a wash whilst Petr led Kevin, Ivosh and Ian down hill to a shower supplied from the sump in the cave behind the bunkhouse. Since the water was icy cold, only these hardest (and dirtiest) had a shower, the rest of us preferring to wash in a bowl of warm water outside the hut. Soon all of us were clean and dressed in our surface clothes.

Helena, who had been very busy inside the hut, emerged with some soup, bread, and salad. What excellent hospitality... she and Petr must have carried it up the hill especially for our benefit. We all tucked into a most pleasant and welcome meal, washed down with more lemon tea. With the meal, the superb view at our feet, the comfort of the bunkhouse stools, and that warm sensation flowing in our muscles that results from a good trip, it was a blissful moment.

Through the medium of Blanka, Helena explained that we would now go on a short tourist excursion to visit some gypsies, who lived a nearby valley. Petr wanted to buy some goats cheese, and thought that it would be interesting for us to do the same.

We all helped to wash up and clear the things away, and it was not long before Petr was locking up the bunkhouse again. As we started the steep trail down to the valley, I took a last long look at the idyllic chalet nestling under its cliff, and wondered if any of us would ever return there in the future.

The route that we took down was shorter than that which we had used for ascent in the morning, so we were soon back at the cars again. After a few photographs, we set off behind Petr and Helena's car and drove to an open field about two miles away, where the gypsies were camped with their herd of goats. We parked the cars and walked over to some of them who were sitting on the grass near a wood pile.

A filthy old gypsy emerged in a cloud of woodsmoke from a ricketty wooden shack and spoke to Petr. After a brief conversation, they both disappeared inside the shack and soon re-emerged bearing carved wooden mugs, of dubious cleanliness, which contained curdled goats milk. We were expected to drink it!

Casting caution to the winds, Jane sipped some and declared that it tasted a bit like liquid yoghourt. To prove the point, she swallowed several mouthfuls of it! We had three mugs to empty, so I tasted some and discovered that it was not at all bad, provided that I did not look at the mug too closely. I drank half a mugfull. Adrian and Kevin also drank some, but Mel and Ian decided that discretion was the better part of valour as far as a dose of the squits was concerned. Helena, Blanka and Ivosh helped us to polish off the rest of the beverage, whilst Petr negotiated the purchase of some goats cheese.

We had tasted some Czech goats cheese before, and, in my opinion, it was quite delicious. However, the gypsy had only two cheeses, each weighing about two kilogrammes, and looking like large footballs. This was a bit too much for any of us to contemplate buying. Petr decided to buy one nevertheless; he reckoned that he could sell it off piecemeal at the office. At least the gypsy seemed to be satisfied. After wiping his cheesy hands on his milk stiffened trousers he waved us farewell, grinning toothlessly. We bade the other gypsies goodbye and returned to the cars for the next part of the "tourist" trip... a visit to what seemed to have been described as a sort of sauna.

Petr headed down the valley and into the outskirts of a small village. There were crowds of people about, obviously in a holiday mood, and lots of cars were parked at the roadside. We managed to park with some difficulty, and walked over to what seemed to be the centre of attraction, aware of a frightful pong in the air. I wondered if the goats milk was having an effect on someone, but the fartlike smell seemed to be a purely local phenomenon. We were approaching a line of sulphurous springs!

The springs were volcanic in origin, and apart from the dreadful stink, were supposed to have healing powers. There were several places where one could bathe in them, and a sort of Buxton spa building where one could even drink some. I suddenly realised that this was where we were to have our *"Sauna"*!

We soon stripped off our outer clothes, and, choosing the pool with the least accumulation of sulphur around it, walked down some steps and immersed ourselves to the chin. Apart from Ian, who had a hole in his pants or something, we all enjoyed a communal bath.

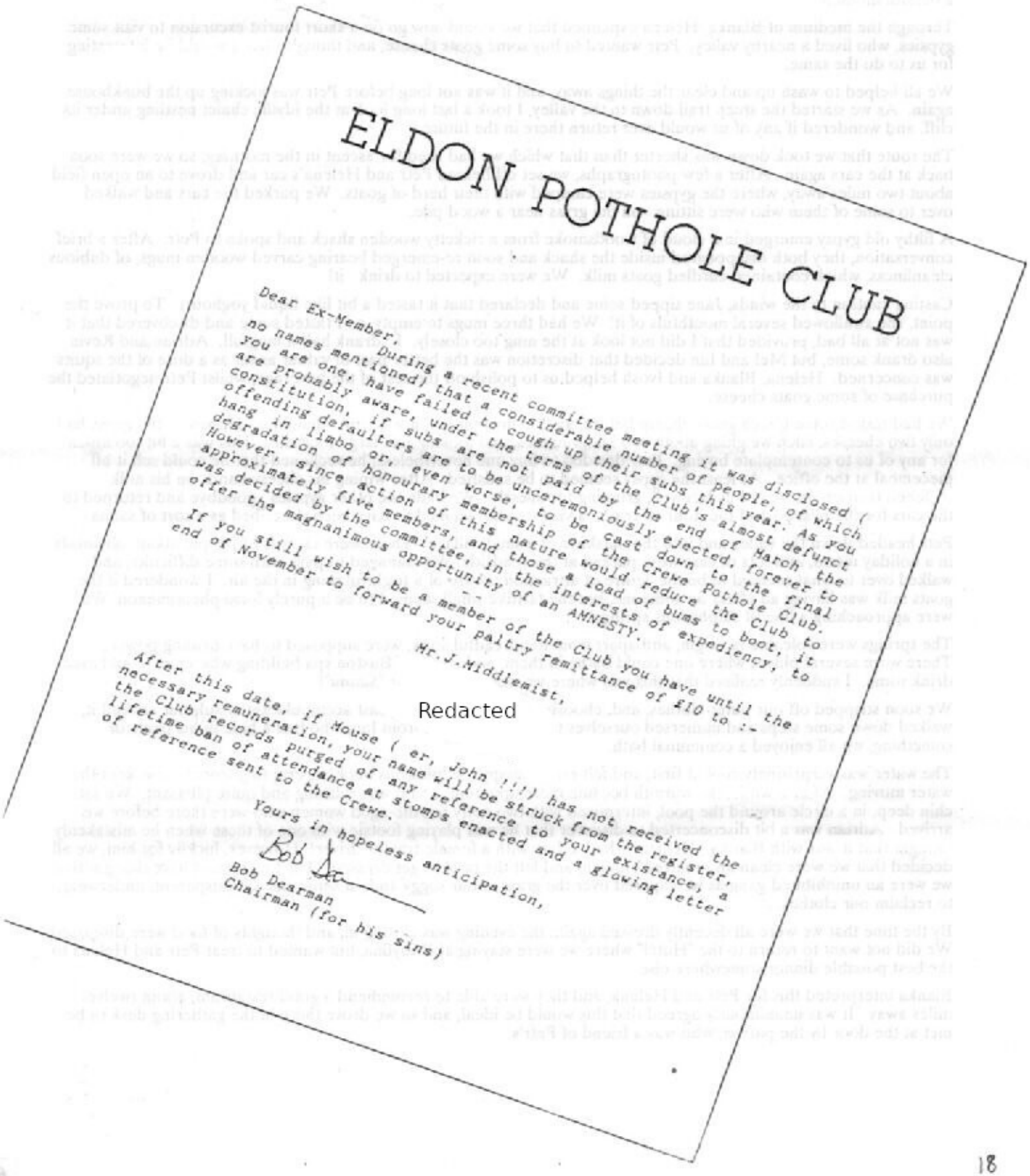
The water was surprisingly cool at first, and felt rather soapy. Sulphurous bubbles, erupting from below, kept the water moving. After a while, the warmth became more apparent, and it was relaxing and quite pleasant. We sat, chin deep, in a circle around the pool, intermixed with two hefty middle-aged women who were there before we arrived. Adrian was a bit disconcerted to discover that he was playing footsie with one of these when he mistakenly thought that it was with Blanka. He nearly had a date with a female tractor driver! However, luckily for him, we all decided that we were clean and relaxed enough, and left the pool to get dressed. The locals must have thought that we were an uninhibited gang as we capered over the grass in our soggy and, in some cases, transparent, underwear, to reclaim our clothes.

By the time that we were all decently dressed again, the evening was closing in, and thoughts of food were discussed. We did not want to return to the "Hotel" where we were staying at Pribylina, but wanted to treat Petr and Helena to the best possible dinner somewhere else.

Blanka interpreted this for Petr and Helena, and they were able to recommend a good restaurant, about twelve miles away. It was unanimously agreed that this would be ideal, and so we drove there in the gathering dusk to be met at the door by the patron, who was a friend of Petr's.

A few beers later, in a rosy atmosphere, we ate one of the best meals of the holiday. A really convivial evening followed and Petr gave us several books and pamphlets about *Stari Hrad* and other local cave systems. Eventually the celebrations had to come to an end. Petr and Helena had to work next day and had a long drive back to Detva ahead of them. We said our goodbyes in the darkness, and watched the red lights of their car disappear into the distance. Two remarkable people, who had given us an unforgettable experience. All of us hoped to see them again sometime.

John.E.Gillett



ELDON POTHOLE CLUB

Dear Ex-Member,

During a recent committee meeting it was disclosed (no names mentioned) that a considerable number of people, of which you are one, have failed to cough up their subs this year. As you are probably aware, under the terms of the Club's almost defunct constitution, if subs are not paid by the end of March the offending defaulters are to be unceremoniously ejected, forever to hang in limbo or, even worse, to be cast down to the final degradation of honourary membership of the Crewe Pothole Club. However, since action of this nature would reduce the Club to approximately five members, and those a load of bums to boot, it was decided by the committee, in the interests of expediency, to offer the magnanimous opportunity of an AMNESTY.

If you still wish to be a member of the Club you have until the end of November to forward your paltry remittance of £10 to :-

Mr.J.Middlemist,

Redacted

After this date, if Mouse (er, John !!!) has not received the necessary remuneration, your name will be struck from the register, the Club records purged of any reference to your existance, a lifetime ban of attendance at stomps enacted and a glowing letter of reference sent to the Crewe.

Yours in hopeless anticipation,

Bob Dearman
Chairman (for his sins)

GREAT ORME WEEKEND

What a superb weekend! Everyone who went thoroughly enjoyed themselves. We drunk the bar out of beer on the second night and Robert and Lenka suprised everyone by turning up out of the blue.

The Great Orme Exploration Society went out of their way to provide superb entertainment by taking people caving, skiing, climbing, boozing and providing two excellent slide shows explaining the history and exploration accompanied by a very professional commentry. Barry and Yvonne were very tolerant, serving booze all night, cooking excellent food at give-away prices and putting up with muddy cavers rambling around the building without complaining once!

The trip that I went on (Ty Gwyn Shaft I think) was led by Phil, a super guide who only got us lost once. It started with an abseil of c 150 ft and a swing-off into a side passage. This was followed by a walk/stoop/crawl through a maze of passages.

The place has a powerful atmosphere of time and mystery about it. Parts of the upper workings have been dated as bronze age and these may well be the oldest underground workings in Europe. Phil pointed out what is believed to be evidence of early fire-setting techniques where rock has remained blackened for 3,000 years. Numerous artifacts have been left in situ. I was fascinated by the stone hammers, huge hard pebbles, which were used to work the mine.

A reminder of the rock's pagan past (?) was the remains of a sacrificed cat surrounded by other relics of paganism. This is similar to the one which now resides in the three Stag's Heads and is thought to be evidence of ritual sanctification of the mine. The GOES have been requested to remove the cat for safe keeping in a museum, but no one would volunteer.

Taped off were the imprints of miners clogs, clearly visible in the mud. Some of them were very small indeed and can't have belonged to a very old person.

After passing the cat for the third time ('Does this stemple ring a bell?" "It might if you hit it hard enough") we descended a couple of fixed ladders and were confronted with a crawling size passage. At the end of the passage was what must be the deepest shaft I have ever seen. This kept the party amused for a while, seeing who could lob the biggest rock down it.

Up another ladder and a small scramble and we were into the ancient workings. These displayed a completely different mining technique and were much more open than the rest of the mine. For my money, this was definitely the best part but some of the traverses were a bit on the loose side. A short climb up of 40 ft brought us out into brilliant sunshine and back to the 'Wedgewood' for a pint.

Mark

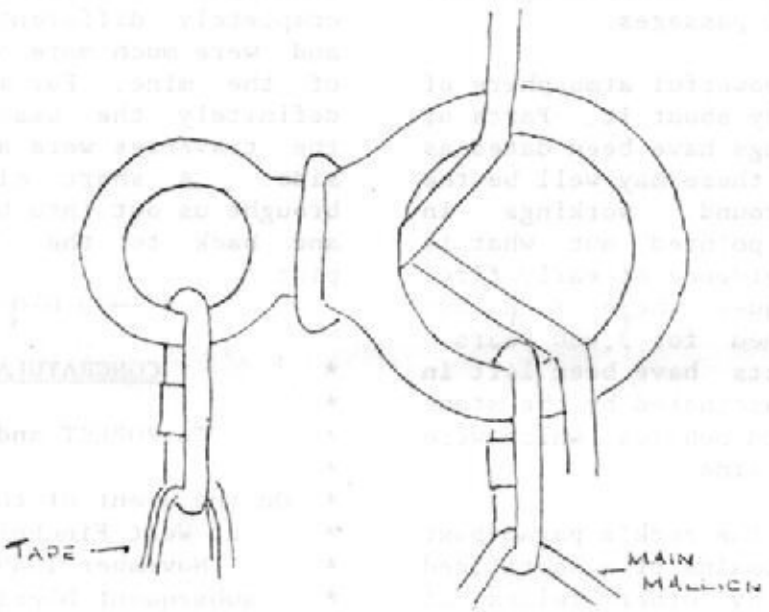
--—-0-0-0-—--

* CONGRATULATION *
*
* To ROBERT and LENKA *
*
* On the event of their marriage *
* at West Finchely on 11th *
* November 1989 and the *
* subsequent blessing of the *
* marriage at St Edwards in LEEK *
* on Saturday 16th December. *
*
* Apart from a fair contingent *
* from the CCPC, the Blessing was *
* attended by Lenka's Mother and *
* Father, who anyone who was on *
* the Czec trip will remember *
* made us very welcome with their *
* home made Slivovich and also *
* Eva who helped with the *
* financial transactions. Mr and *
* Mrs Bentley put on a superb *
* spread at the farmhouse whilst *
* Phil managed to get 24 tickets *
* for his works Xmas party for *
* the night time knees-up. *
*
* Robert was true to form and got *
* lost on the way back from the *
* church. *
*

THE FIGURE OF EIGHT STOP

Here's an idea from Czechoslovakia which Robert passed on to me. Its a different way of using a figure of eight so that it incorporates the safety feature of a Petzle stop; ie if you render yourself unconcious during a descent, you stay fixedonto the rope rather than plummeting to the bottom. Whether this is a good idea depends upon where you happen to be when you loose conciousness. Personally, I would prefer to take my chances and break an ankle than drown by being suspended under a waterfall, but there again....

The mode of operation is to use the figure of eight as a lever to open and close a friction knot. The large ring of the figure of eight is threaded onto the rope as in the diagram by threading a loop through the ring, twisting the loop through 180° and passing the loop over the small loop. The figure of eight is then attached to the main mallion of your sit harness by the big ring. The small ring is fitted with a length of tape (via a Crab if you have a spare one) and you're in business.



(Definitely NOT to scale)

To descend, simply pull downwards on the tape. To stop, let go of the tape.

The reason for the tape is that the figure of eight tends to get too hot to touch after any distance. Wether you use a Crab or a Mallion to attach the device to your sit harness is up to you but I remember a crab coming undone on Liam at the top of a pitch.

This method does work, I tried it suspended from a bridge and it was a complete success. It still twists the rope just as a figure of eight used in the conventional manner and probably doesn't do the rope an awful lot of good if you do it too often. I don't know how an insurance company would view a claim if you happened to mention that you were using the device sideways instead of in the position it was designed for and I would not like to personally recomend it until it's been tried and tested by a few other people. For those brave persons who enjoy a novelty, that is how it is done. Used at the head of a pitch, it may have an application in lifelineing or for lowering heavy tackle sacks.

Mark L

SOME THOUGHTS ON LADDERS AND LIFELINES

After attending the recent DCA run course I thought I would pass on a few pearls of wisdom.

David Baines and Nigel Ball, who presented the course warned us that a lot of cavers are very set in their ways. They will scorn the idea of rigging a ladder so as to avoid water or lifelining anything under 40ft or using anything other than 'traditional' round the waist / shoulder / neck lifeline. They then went on to demonstrate that such cavers are potentially lethal and should be avoided like a dose of pox! Their case went something like this:-

Ladders rigged down waterfalls are quite often fun, I think everyone will agree with that, but bear in mind 1) the limitations of your party and 2) what happens if the water rises.

Apart from the quick 'Round Trip' in Giants or something similar, the time you are most likely to use ladders is when taking relatively inexperienced people who don't possess SRT gear down holes. These people often have blind faith in your abilities and judgement. Consider that they might be knackered on the return journey and rig accordingly. If the water rises, a real danger (which had never entered my mind) is that rocks and stones can be washed down streamways and over pitches. These could quite easily break a hand / leg / head or simply knock a climber off a ladder.

As for not lifelining short pitches, this is potentially fatal. Modern thinking is that the ladder is a secondary piece of equipment used to aid the lifeliner to move people up and down pitches. It is without doubt the weakest part of the system. A new ladder should break at around 700 Kg and will absorb just about bugger all in terms of shock forces. A well used ladder may not even support the weight of two cavers. Some new ladders tested on behalf of the OCG broke at around 90 Kg (less than 14½ stones, see letter next page). Always assume that the ladder is going to break when lifelining. We were told of cases where people have been paralysed by 6 ft falls and people have even died following 10 ft falls.

Anyone who insists on 'traditional' lifelining techniques should be sent for a compulsory go on the drop machine before they next go caving. This machine simulates the effect of a 12½ stone caver falling. Even when the rope is taut, you are belayed and expecting the fall, it is quite horrifying. A person of 14 st was lifted 2 ft from the ground! This clearly demonstrates that all lifelining should be 'direct' ie so that the shock is transfered directly to the rock via an Italian Hitch, Petzle Stop, Figure of eight or similar device instead of through the lifeliners body! It is wise to belay yourself to something solid whilst lifelining but it is safer not to bother rather than to belay yourself to the same anchor as the friction devise. If the bolt comes out, it will drag you over as well.

Of all the devises we tried it was agreed that a Petzle Stop was the easiest to operate (and the most expensive) with an Italian Hitch coming a close second (knots are pretty cheap). The latter does require a pear shaped crab or the knot may fail to operate if it cannot reverse itself. It is also necessary to be able to lock the devise off so that you can go to the cavers aid. If a caver has climbed 90' up a 100' pitch it may be more desirable to haul him up 10' than lower him back down. This requires a good selection of SRT equipment (why are you using a ladder if you have SRT equipment?) I will explain this in a future article.

A problem that I have always encountered is a lack of belays at the bottom of pitches. Whilst the top is normally peppered with spits, I can never remember seeing one at the bottom. The solution, I was told, is to instal them (I'm sure a lot of

purists will cringe at this). If you look hard enough they are probably there anyway. A more 'cave friendly' idea is to use natural belays. The most obvious ones are large rocks that can be threaded with a tape. They do not have to be monsters provided that the lifeliner or a friend sits on them during use. Another rather cosy idea is to connect several people together via their belts using crabs and use them. This could be good fun in the right company!

The speed of climbing should be governed by the lifeliner, NOT the climber ie you can't be lifelined too slowly, only climb too fast.

We looked at a case where a youth had slipped on a ladder and his leg had become jammed between the rungs. What would you do? The usual answer was lower him off. This would be impossible if his leg was well jammed. Any attempt to do so would result in him hanging upside down. This is a very dangerous position. Only Superperson would have the strength to haul him back up. The only answer is to lower the ladder which would be impossible with a conventional wire belay under load. Anyone who caves with me in future may notice that I now use a 9mm rope spreader (tied through the loops, not the 'C' links) and carry the means to cut this!

Whilst mentioning 'C' links, these are traditionally regarded as the weakest part of the ladder. Normally this is true of new ladders (although this was not so in the case of the 'Orcus' ladders). With older ladders, they tend to snap anywhere above the first rung. The reasons given for this are 1) water becomes trapped inside the talurit and corodes the steel and 2) the traditional way of fastening rolled ladders by linking the ends through the loop puts strain on the ends. The solutions are 1) a regular squirt of WD40 in the talurit and 2) don't fasten rolled ladders in the traditional way, bind them with a sling instead.

Ladders may also be damaged by being trampled underfoot. Any spare ladder at the bottom of a pitch should be rolled up in such a way that it hangs a few inches above the ground. This will prevent it from being stood on.

Modern thinking says that ladders should be rigged well clear of the water via a traverse line if necessary. Lifelines should ideally be rigged from a 'Y' hang. The last person down abseils and the first person up prussiks. A Petzle Stop is the ideal tool to lifeline someone up a pitch and at least one jammer is required to haul a tired caver. Belay belts should be replaced by sit harnessess and cows tails should be used when appropriate. This leaves one last question. Apart from when taking people down who don't have SRT gear,

WHY USE LADDERS AT ALL? Mark L

PROBLEMS in construction have been found in caving ladders sold by G. Fowler of Doncaster, who advertised their sale on the Pot Pourri page of *Descent* in issue 88. These have been highlighted by Orcus Caving Group, who arranged for their testing when members noticed a non-standard technique had been used for the C-link attachment. They had the links tested by a qualified engineer, who reported that these had not been secured by an approved talurit, but with a small piece of aluminium rung tube, through which the cable had been passed and then doubled back. This tube had then been creased along its length using a hammer and chisel.

The links were tested to failure: slippage began at 89kg, and the link pulled out at 89.7kg on one, and at 90.3kg and 90.65kg on the other. The rung at the point of load did not slip.

R. Wilding of Orcus CG noted that these failures represented about a 14 stone person standing on the ladder - 'a long pitch, a slightly larger than average caver, and/or ladder sides not quite evenly loaded, and the local rescue team are in for a busy night'.

Mr Fowler was contacted by OCG and, in view of the possibility of problems with other ladders he has sold, he will either arrange for the replacement of the talurit by an approved firm or will refund the money on return of the ladder. Mr Fowler can be contacted at 29 Fernbank Drive, Armthorpe, Doncaster, S. Yorks DN3 2HD.

DESCENT OCT/NOV 1989

Some of our 15 species of bats traditionally bred in underground sites and many rely on such places for at least part of their hibernation period. Some bats also use these sites temporarily for a variety of purposes, such as for mating roosts or night roosts during feeding or in inclement weather. Bats are particularly vulnerable to disturbance whilst breeding and during hibernation.

Some bats, such as noctules, serotines and pipistrelles, are rarely found in underground sites while others, such as the two horseshoe bats, are heavily dependent on them.

Summer breeding

Traditionally, both lesser and greater horseshoe bats bred in underground sites. There are now very few such colonies left and these are restricted to the south and west of Britain. Daubenton's bat frequently breeds in underground sites, usually near its feeding sites over water, but rarely in structures of interest to cavers or mining historians. At least one Natterer's bat colony breeds underground. Repeated disturbance of any such colonies will affect the breeding success.

Winter hibernation

All British bats feed on insects and are faced with the problem of surviving the winter when the number of flying insects is greatly reduced.

Insectivorous birds migrate, search for overwintering insects or alter their diet, but bats hibernate. They seek out undisturbed sites with low temperatures and, by lowering their body temperature to close to that of their surroundings, reduce their heart, breathing and metabolic rates. This greatly reduces their energy requirements and allows them to exist on the fat reserves laid down prior to hibernation. Many bats also require a humid environment to avoid dehydration. Thus, underground sites provide ideal conditions for many hibernating bats.

Different bats prefer different temperatures depending on the species, sex, age and condition of the individual. Their requirements, and the weather, change throughout the winter, so bats frequently wake and move, either within the roost site or to a different roost site.

Greater horseshoe bats move into underground sites earlier in the winter and choose warmer temperatures than many other bats. At this time, temperatures of up to 11°C are suitable, but in February they will choose temperatures closer to 7°C. Females choose warmer sites than males; adults choose warmer sites than juveniles. Animals in poor condition will choose colder temperatures. Long-eared bats prefer cold temperatures and move into underground sites particularly during prolonged cold spells, but they still stay near the entrance, where temperatures will be lowest.

Hibernating bats are cold to the touch and unable to move quickly; it may take up to an hour for a bat to become warm enough to be fully active and once the arousal process is started it is often irreversible. Bats have limited fat reserves to survive the winter period and each arousal uses a considerable amount of energy -possibly enough for about 10 days hibernation.

Awakenings scheduled by their own internal rhythms or stimulated by natural conditions, can be accommodated, but it is not easy to make up weight lost in winter and many bats continue to lose weight in April and early May - well after the end of true hibernation. Any unplanned wakings, for example by human disturbance, increase the risk of fat reserves running out before the winter is over. With little prospect of replenishing these reserves the bat may die through starvation or at least fail to recover sufficiently from hibernation to breed successfully.

Individual bats can be found in the same sites at the same time, year after year; a whiskered bat was recently found in the site at which it had been ringed 24 years previously. It had been found several times in the intervening period, always at this site. After being refound over 80 times in 26 years, one greater horseshoe bat's range and movements were very well known.

Checklist of British Bats

Bat Species	Reliance on Caves	Distribution	Status
Greater horseshoe	major	local	rare
Lesser horseshoe	major	local	rare
Brown long-eared	partial	widespread	v. common
Grey long-eared	partial	local	v. rare
Barbastelle	partial	widespread	rare
Noctule	none	widespread	common
Leisler's	none	widespread	rare
Serotine	none	local	common
Pipistrelle	none	widespread	v. common
Mouse-eared	major	local	v. rare
Bechstein's	partial	local	v. rare
Natterer's	major	widespread	common
Daubenton's	major	widespread	common
Whiskered	partial	widespread	frequent
Brandt's	partial	widespread	frequent

A Conservation Code

Caves and mines, their formations, artefacts and fauna, are all part of our national heritage. All visitors to underground sites should strive to maintain these sites for current and future generations.

Always follow the safety and conservation codes published by the caving and mining history organisations and liaise with local groups over access and safety requirements.

Remember also that bats need your help to survive the winter. Most hibernating bats are very difficult to see - many squeeze into cracks and crevices and only the two horseshoe bats normally hang free. Just because you cannot see them does not mean they are not there! Remember the grading system (described on page 4) and seek advice about any activity that might affect bats.

Those visiting known bat sites for purposes such as recreation, are asked to observe the voluntary conservation code and respect any special restrictions that have been placed on particularly important bat sites. Because disturbance can be so damaging, only a limited number of people are licensed to disturb or handle hibernating bats in underground sites and licences are only issued after training has been given. Such licences are issued for controlled, carefully considered basic survey and monitoring and occasionally for scientific research.

Bats and the Law

All bats are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. It is illegal intentionally to kill, injure or take any bat; to disturb roosting bats; or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for roosting. The NCC must be consulted over any proposed alteration to a site known to be used by bats, for example by installing a grille or opening for public access. This also applies to any industrial development, such as quarrying or use for mushroom growing.

- **Do not handle bats.** Also beware of dislodging bats from their roosting position particularly when you are moving through low passages.
- **Do not photograph roosting bats.** Flashguns can be very disturbing.
- **Do not warm up hibernating bats.** This can arouse them. Try not to linger in confined spaces as even your body heat is sufficient to cause arousal.
- **Do not shine bright lights on bats.** Both the light and the heat can trigger arousal.
- **Do not use carbide lamps in bat roosts.** Carbide lamps are particularly undesirable because of the heat and fumes.
- **Do not smoke or make excessive noise underground.** Any strong stimulus can arouse bats.
- **Do not take large parties into bat roosts in winter.** Rescue practices should also be avoided when bats are present.
- **Do seek advice before blasting or digging.** Explosives can cause problems both from the blast itself and from the subsequent fumes. In known bat sites, blasting should be limited to the summer or to areas not known to be used by bats. Digging operations may alter the microclimate of bat roosts.

Site grading

Caves, mines and other underground sites are being graded according to their importance to bats. This grading takes into account not only the number and species of bats involved but also the physical nature of the site and the pattern of usage by the bats. Compared with other European countries, numbers of bats recorded in British sites are small; there are fewer than 20 known sites with more than 100 bats.

Grading gives an indication of where limits on human access would help bat conservation. **Many sites also have access control for other reasons and these may take precedence over control for bat conservation.**

The grading of particular sites is being agreed by negotiation between the bat conservation organisations and either the NCA or the NAMHO in cooperation with their member groups. Details will be available from them. In many cases a more detailed statement on access control will be available from these organisations. Access control does not necessarily mean access prohibited. Significant populations would have to be recorded before any access restrictions would be requested. Incidental observations of bats can be made without infringing the Wildlife and Countryside Act and reports are welcomed by the NCC.

Grade 1 *(fewer than 10 sites)*
Sites used by bats throughout the year for hibernation and breeding. Access controlled throughout the year. Visits by prior arrangement with the keyholder, in agreement with the relevant national or regional caving organistions or NAMHO, normally during spring or autumn.

Examples:
Swan Hill Quarry, Shropshire (*used by up to 80 lesser horseshoe bats throughout the year*);
Rock Farm Cave, Devon (*used by several hundred greater horseshoe bats throughout the year*).

Grade 2 *(fewer than 100 sites)*
Sites used by large or locally significant numbers of bats during the winter (normally 1 November to 30 April, but extended in a few cases) where seasonal access control is considered desirable or is already in effect. Control over activities such as blasting may also be required.

Grade 2a: Sites already gated or grilled. Unrestricted access by arrangement with the keyholder during the summer or restricted access by agreement between the keyholder, NAMHO or NCA or other relevant caving body during the winter. This agreement may cover activities such as blasting.

Examples:
Agen Allwedd, Powys (*used by more than 200 lesser horseshoe bats during the winter. Access controlled by a management committee that takes account of the bat interest. Blasting banned during the winter (1 Oct to 20 May)*);
Hangman's Wood Deneholes, Essex (*used by 30-40 Natterer's, Daubenton's and long-eared bats. Recent restriction on visiting during the winter is significantly increasing the number of bats.*)

Grade 2b: Sites without protection. Unrestricted access during the summer but winter visits and blasting should be avoided unless agreed with NCA/NAMHO.

Examples:
West Llangynog Slate Mine, Powys (*used by more than 50 lesser horseshoe bats*);
Ettington, Warwickshire (*used regularly by the rare barbastelle bat as well as small numbers of Natterer's, Daubenton's and long-eared bats*);
Sandford Hill, Mendip, Somerset (*various cave and mine sites used by greater horseshoe bats*).

Grade 3 *(many sites)*
Sites known to be used by small numbers of bats during the winter. No formal access control but proceed with caution and follow the conservation code. Avoid winter visits if practical. Report numbers of bats seen.

Examples:
Eglwys Faen, Powys (*small numbers of lesser horseshoe, whiskered and Daubenton's bats*);
Gnomeys, Godstone, Surrey (*used by small numbers of Natterer's, Daubenton's, whiskered, Brandt's and long-eared bats*).

Grade 4 *(many sites)*
Sites not known to be used by bats or with only occasional records. Follow the conservation code and report any bat sightings.

Site Protection

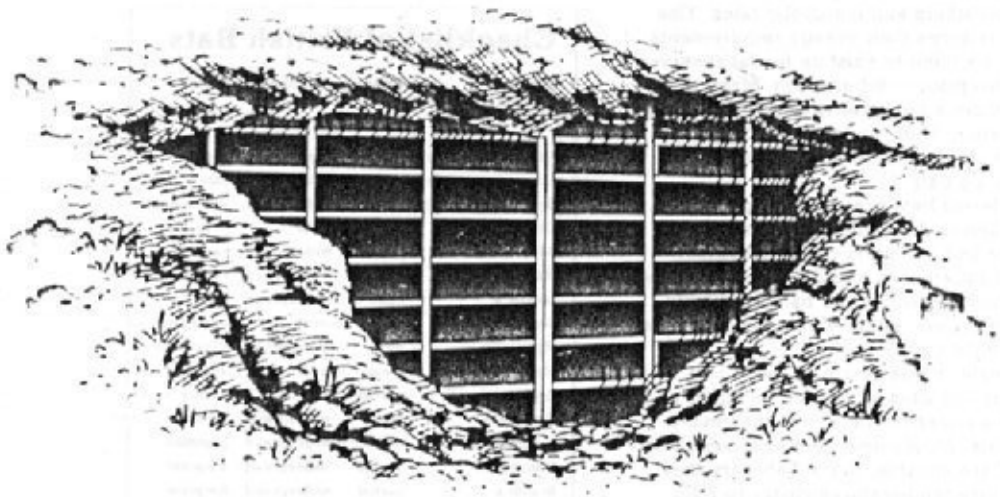
In the past, some sites that would otherwise have been lost were saved because of the presence of bats.

Many sites have been lost through sealing for safety or security purposes. Sealing should only be regarded as a last resort, where other methods of site protection are not possible or permitted. Liaison between interested parties can help preserve and protect such sites. Some underground sites are already protected either for nationally or locally important bat populations and many sites have been protected for other reasons but incorporate bat access. Most sites remain unprotected and while some will be protected in the future, the majority will rely on the goodwill and common sense of visitors to ensure their continued use by bats.

Site protection for bats normally consists of incorporating a grille into all or part of the entrance allowing free access for bats but limiting human access. The extent of the grille will depend on the nature of the site and the air flow desirable. Such grilles are usually made of horizontal bars with a 150mm air gap and vertical bars spaced at between 450mm and 750mm.

Where no human access is acceptable, perhaps for safety reasons, a small gap as little as 10cm by 25cm will allow access for bats, but may limit air flow to the extent that the site will not achieve maximum bat potential.

- If a site known to be used by bats is to be grilled, gated or sealed, it is a statutory requirement to consult the NCC.
- Grants are available to assist with the provision of grilles or gates suitable for bat access.
- If a site not known to be used by bats, is to be grilled, gated or sealed, adequate access for bats should be incorporated wherever possible.
- If a site is to be grilled for reasons of bat conservation, access arrangements for other interest groups should be negotiated with the owner and conservation bodies.
- Minor modification to existing site protection may improve the potential for bats.
- In the protection or preservation of any site, bat conservationists can offer advice, support, sometimes influence, help in the physical work and may even be able to help with the finances!



Current Members	Work	Home
Adrian Hanson-Abbot		
Gill Argo		
Dave Bailey		
Jason Bailey		
Ron Beckett		
Rodney Beaumont		
Melvyn Bratt		
Derek & Jane Brookes		
Daren Conde		
Tracy Conde		
Neil Conde		
Ian Copeland		
Russel Copeland		
George Crane		
Nigel Cooper		
Ross Evans		
Michell Fallon		
Peter Forster		
Ian Freeman		
John Gillet		
Liam Gilling		
Mick & Caroline Green		
Ian Grindey		
Paul Holdcroft		
Ian Housley		
Lionel Howarth		
Ralph Johnson		
Cliff Jones		
John Kelsall		
Stan Kowalik		
Steve Knox		
Liam Kealy		
Brian Kirkland		
Steve Lamb		
Mark Lovatt		
Kevin Mountford		

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Redacted

Current Members (Cont)

Phil Marsden
Geoff Millington
Steve Mills
Lionel Parkinson
Tony Reynolds
Mark Riva
Alan Scragg
Martin Soliman
Paul Shenton
John Shenton
John Smith
Peter Steadman
Alan Steele
Alan Walker
Paul Wightman
Zig Wozasec

Redacted

Past Members

Neil Clamp
Christine Scragg

Some of this list looks a bit lacking in detail. Please check your details and let me know if anything needs adding/changing. It is important that this list is kept up to date, otherwise you may miss a CRO callout, not get a newsletter or most important of all, miss out on a caving trip!

PS I circulated a copy of this for correction at the last meeting but unfortunately, it went missing. I will try again at the next meeting. Please bare with me.

Mark

MEETS LIST 1990

<u>January</u>	<u>March</u>
Sun 28th Lancaster/Easegill	Sat 10th Swinsto's
	Sun 25th Juniper Gulf
<u>February</u>	<u>April</u>
Sun 11th Penyghent Pot	Sun 15th Christmas Pot/Grange Rigg
Sun 25th Out Sleets Beck	Sat 28th Little Neath River Cave