SOUTH WALES CAVING CLUB

NEWSLETTER No. 96 1982

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No.96 NEWSLETTER AUGUST 1982

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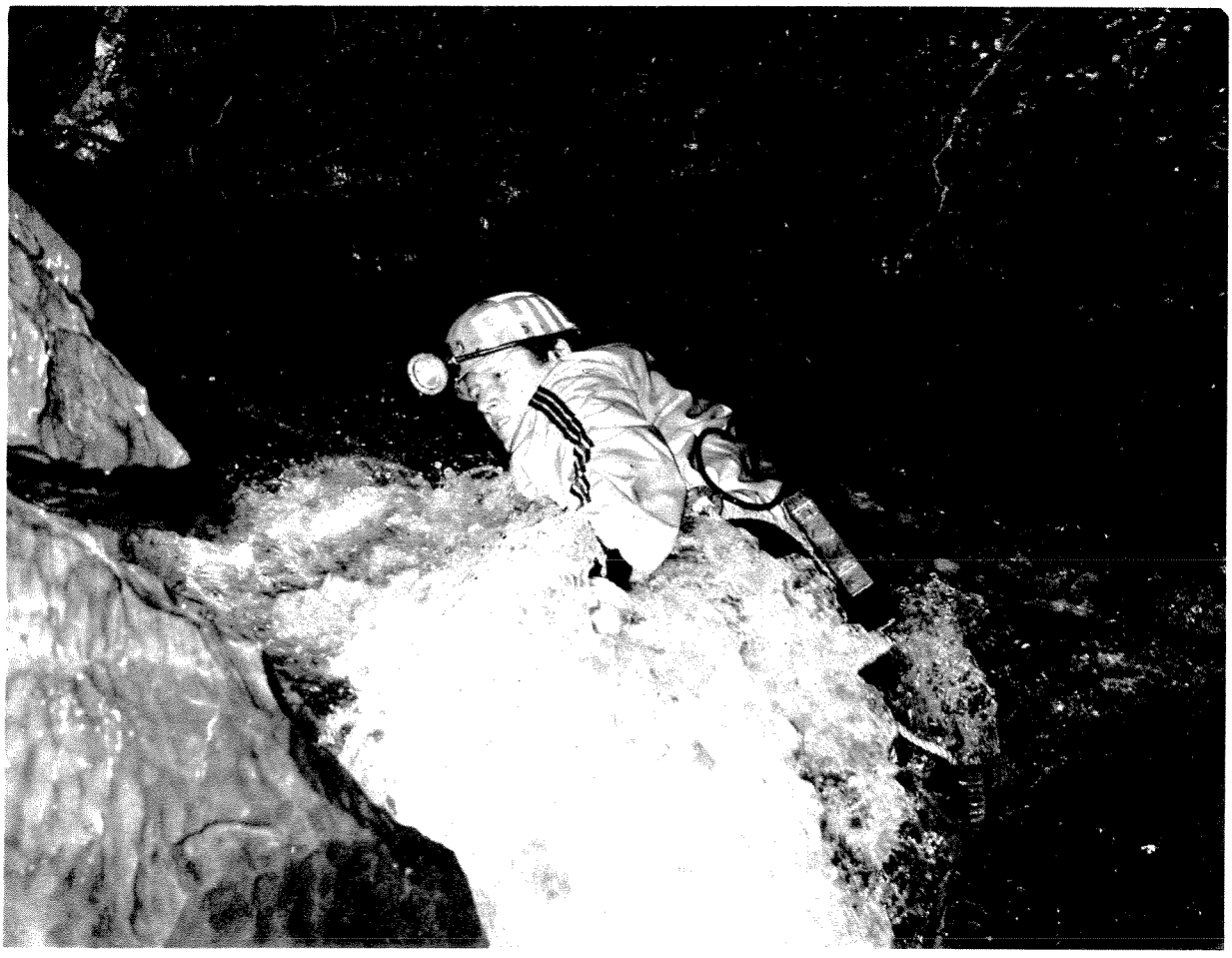
EDITORIAL

All the articles submitted are in this Newsletter. I have no articles for the next Newsletter. I will start chasing but, if past experience is anything to go by, the next Newsletter might appear around Christmas. I could write a scathing Editorial on 'apathy' but then everybody might start writing and stop caving! Better to keep caving, but, if you do something worth hearing about - let's hear about it. If you cannot write - take photographs. I can fill lots of empty pages with photographs and they say that a picture is worth a thousand words!

This Newsletter has a better pictorial content than recent editions (although I will not know what the quality is like until the printer has finished his job) and some of the delay is due to the experiments in photographic copying that I have been forced to pursue. I have discovered that slide-copying is a bit fraught. If using natural light - make sure that you do not have a rotary clothes drier with sheets on it in the garden! If you point the copier at the sky - avoid tree branches! Best results have come from a slide projector beam bounced off a projection screen. I worked with the camera in 'auto' mode and also bracketed a stop each way.

It is an unfortunate fact that production of the Newsletter is still difficult, in terms of quality printing, due to lack of free experience or locally accessible facilities. This aspect is being actively pursued and, if successful, should speed up production - but then we'll need more articles - won't we?!

Dave Edwards

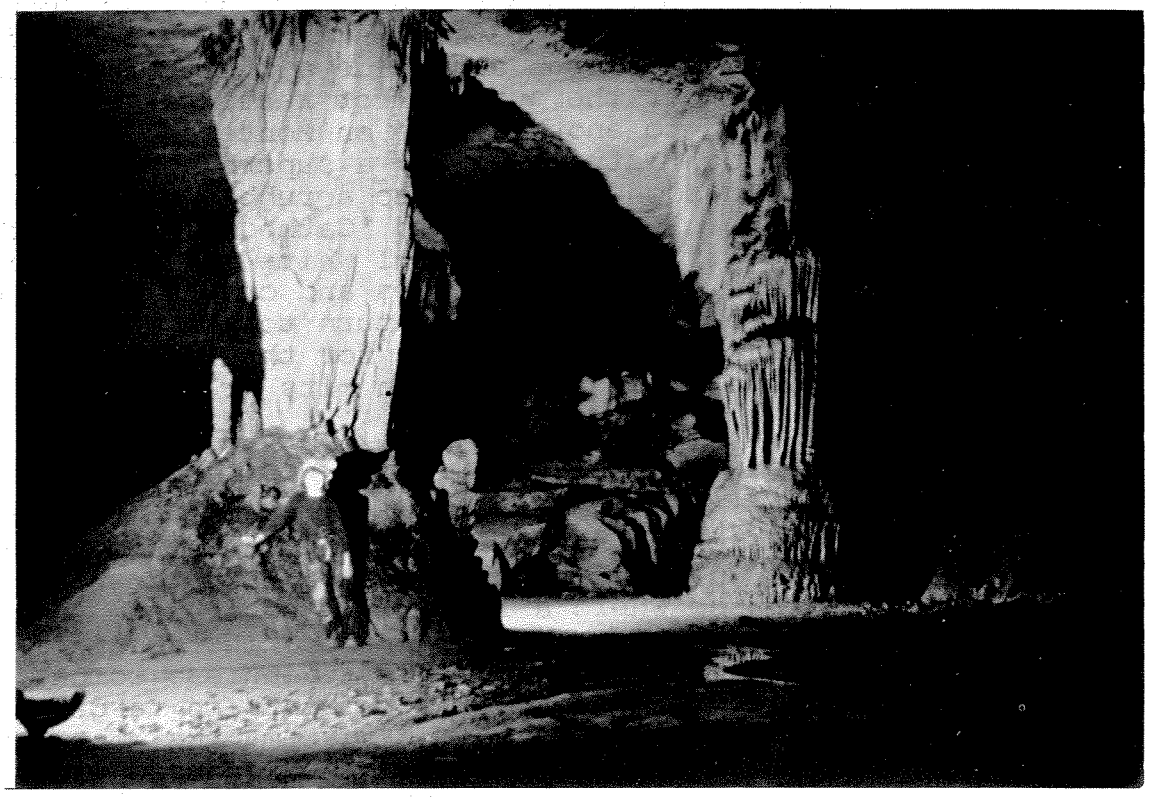


A CAVING HOLIDAY IN ALABAMA

The 1981 International Caving Conference in Kentucky was a positive stimulus to go caving in America, however, business commitments prevented me from attending so I decided to visit Alabama in October instead. This was a fortunate decision as the weather is more clement in the fall, prices are lower and Alabama has more subterranean variety than Kentucky. Eventually, after a great deal of planning and thanks to the Huntsville Grotto and Sir Freddie Laker, I was able to afford a week's caving with my family in between visiting the French Quarter in New Orleans and a two week tour of sunny Florida. We stayed in Alabama as house-guests of Bill and Louise Varnedoe, veteran members of the Huntsville Grotto, who overwhelmed us with their kindness and Southern Hospitality.

The limestone in the Huntsville area has a sandstone capping and almost horizontal bedding. Over two thousand cave systems have been recorded and the details are held in a computerised data bank set up by Bill Varnedoe. The surface featured several flat-topped hills rising to 1500ft above the Tennessee River valley, all clad in deciduous forest. The undergrowth was dense in places and well supplied with clutching and clawing shrubbery. Mountain Lions, racoons, skunks, rattlers, deer and even bears are reputed to inhabit the woods but are rarely seen due to their shyness of humans. In the caves we were amazed at the variety of subterranean denizens. We saw hundreds of cave crickets, several salamanders, crayfish, bats, and once, a large pack rat. Shelta Cave, which runs under the N.S.S. Library in the centre of Huntsville, had an abundance of blind fish in its waters.

Our first caving trip was to Tumbling Rock Cave, about forty miles away near Scottsboro. We made an early start and, stopping to pick up another veteran caver - Chuck Lundquist - on the way, we arrived at the cave before the day's heat had time to develop.

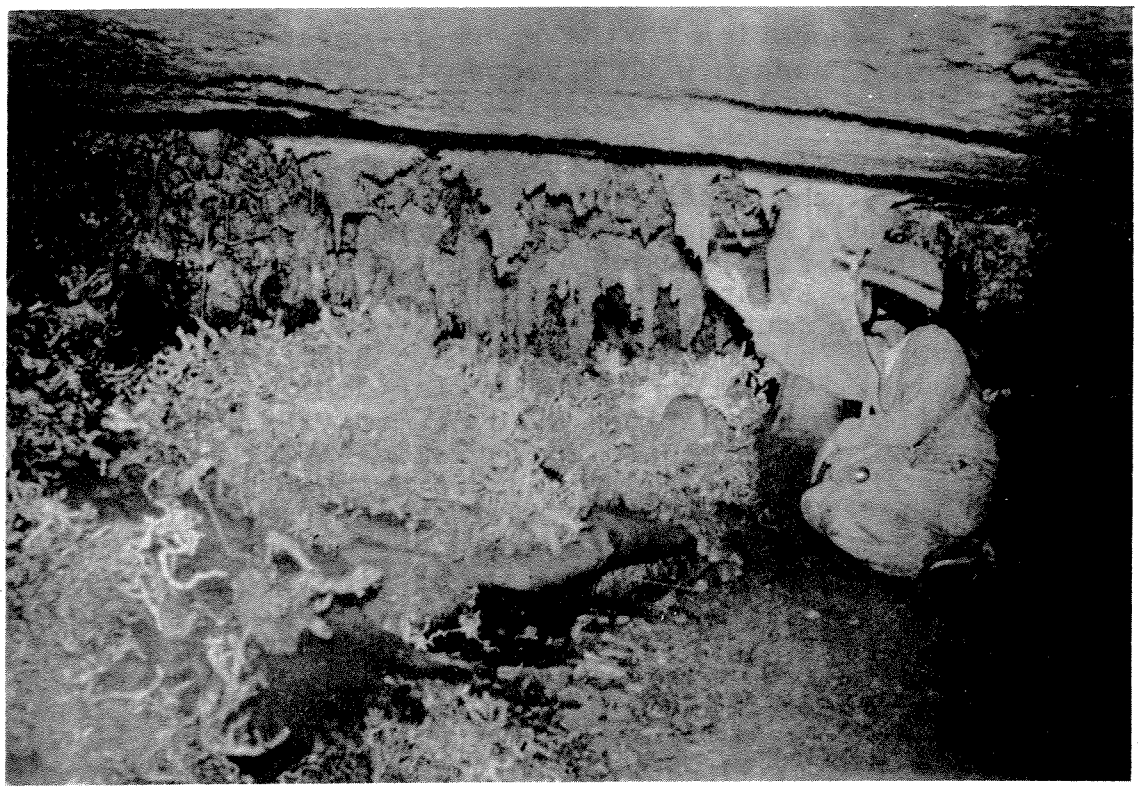


Tumbling Rock Cave

Inside the cave entrance it was immediately noticeable that the atmosphere was considerably warmer than in British caves and I was soon forced to abandon my 'Damart' undersuit and continue in my waterproof overalls. About a thousand feet in we paused to examine an old Saltpetre works, a relic of the Civil War. The passageway continued wide and high with an uncluttered floor and we made rapid progress, passing some large columns shaped like elephants' feet, until the way was blocked by a large boulder ruckle. A period of crawling and wriggling followed until we emerged into a tunnel leading to 'Totem Gallery' with its beautiful columns reminiscent of Indian totem poles. A roomy bedding plane and a complex of small tubular passages followed, with one or two damp sections. At the original 'Tumbling Rock' boulder choke we again had to crawl and negotiate several climbs although under more stable conditions than the original explorers. Eventually we were able to stand upright again and soon entered a huge cavern, 'Allens Alley', its floor a jumble of rocks and massive boulders. Towards the end of this passage, up on the right hand wall, was a most rare and unexpected cave phenomenon, a tar spring called the 'Asphalt Ooze'. The shiny, treacle-like substance dripped lugubriously from the roof onto the boulders below, its glistening mass a trap for unfortunate cave crickets. From here, Bill and I continued on to scale the muddy and precipitous slopes of 'Mount Olympus'. We free-climbed several exposed slabs until, about a hundred feet above Allens Alley, we came to the 'Pillar of Fire' - an enormous stalagmite with a fat, pointed dome striped with bright red pigmentation. On the return journey, in the complex at the end of Allens Alley, we mantleshelfed up through a hole in the roof to gain a passage encrusted with 'popcorn' formations where there were some rare black-calcite flows with white 'spilt milk' on the surface. We emerged into the coolness of the evening, pleasantly tired and surprisingly clean.

The next day I went out with John French, also of the Huntsville Grotto, to drop into some pits on Montesano mountain. We drove into the woods along a rough track and warmed up with a descent of 'Hoopers Well', a ninety foot drop alongside a thirty foot stalagtite. John scanned the ledges near the surface for rattlers, probably for my benefit! We then moved to another area on Montesano and after a downhill scramble located 'Natural Well', a superb open shaft with smooth limestone walls descending 180ft to a rubble cone and a thousand feet of passage. The aptly named 'Cathedral' below the rubble cone was a huge rift, its beautiful white walls soaring upwards into the blackness. In the traverses and crawls below, the dust was considerable so I was glad to return to the daylight. The freehanging ascent was pleasurable except for the last twenty feet where the sweat ran into my eyes; American pits are really hot!

A visit to Anvil Cave turned out to be a most interesting day's outing necessitating a voyage up Flint Creek, near Hartselle, in Chuck's canoe. It was a cloudy day with showers so the two or three miles of paddling clad in our caving gear was not marred by mosquitoes or heavy perspiration. On reaching the cave, a heavy downpour sent us scuttling for the entrance where a low crawl led us into an incredible maze of passages. Bill gave us a set of 'rally' instructions, typed in four languages, which had been used for a Congress competition. Visitors had to negotiate a series of checkpoints in target time. Since there were several entrances to the system, the most amusing clues were those out in the open which led the confused victims from one entrance to another. Eventually we reached the middle of the



Helictite Heaven - Fern Cave - Alabama

maze where we lunched on Chuck's tinned sausages before trying to find the way out. At several junctions we each took different routes but eventually regained the entrance at which we had started. On the return canoe journey we stopped several times to investigate small streams and bluffs, prospecting for new caves. I actually discovered one, a small tube from which a draught issued, its vast extent being rapidly surveyed by Bill and Chuck for the records before lack of time forced a return to Huntsville.

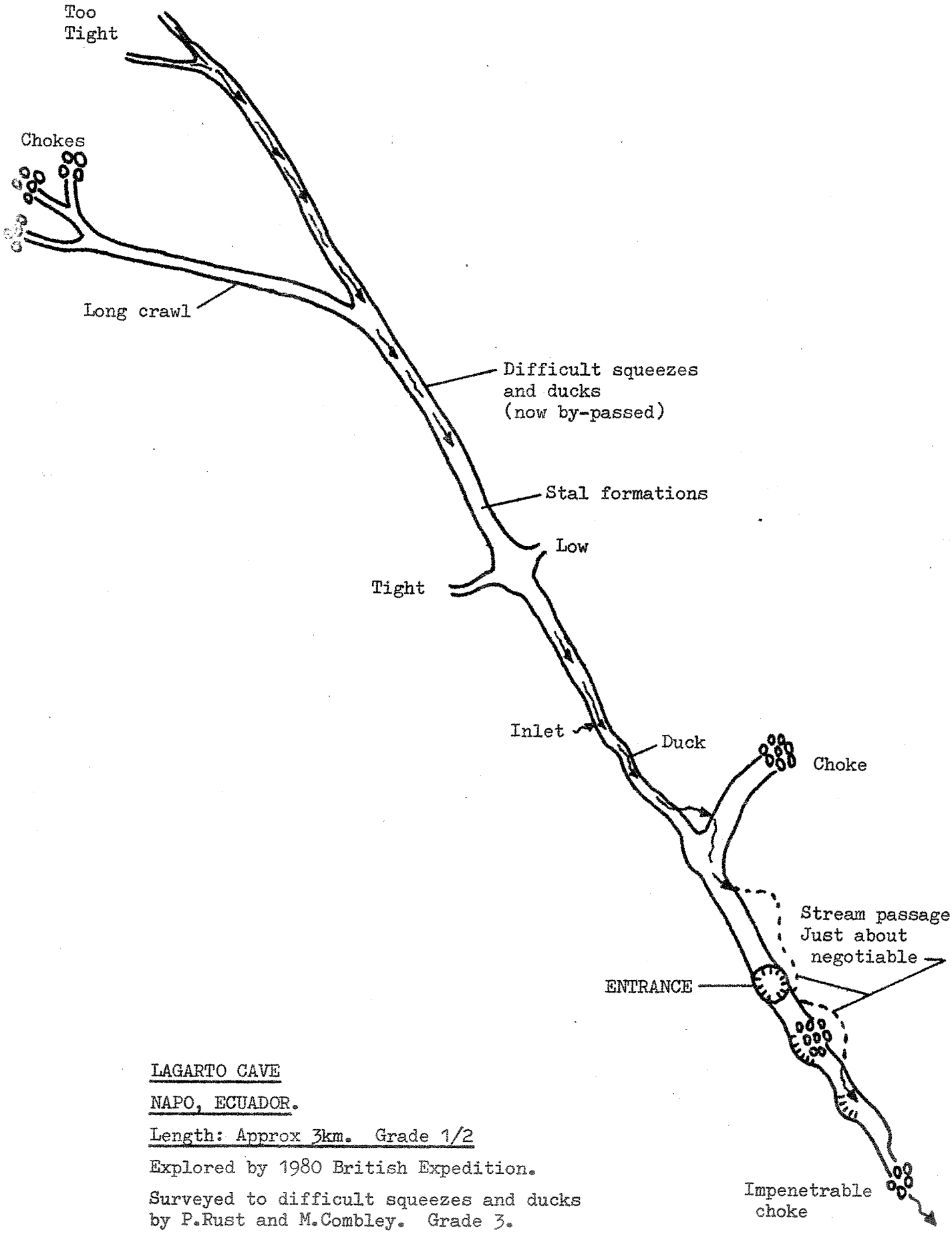
The highlight of the holiday was, for me, a descent of Fern Cave. I had hoped to abseil down 'Surprise Pit', over 400ft deep, but a 'superior' trip had been planned via another entrance to avoid humping rope up the jungle-covered hillside in the heat. The party consisted of 'J.V.' Sweringen, the leader, and his father, Van; together with Avis, John and two other visitors - Russ from New Jersey and Pakwan from Thailand. After a journey involving a truck drive and some considerable effort in dense undergrowth, we eventually arrived at Fern Sink. The sink was under a small cliff; peat blackened, dripping with moisture and steaming in the sunshine. We clambered down into the sink and followed a small streamway to the head of Surprise Pit. It had an aura of depth and we respectfully traversed around the lip to gain a large platform for a better view. We dropped a few stones into the void and listened to the distant echoes from far below. Our curiosity satisfied, we returned to the surface. It would have been an exhilarating abseil but we were off to 'Helictite Heaven' for a visual rather than adrenal stimulation. A short walk along the same contour and we came to 'Johnson's Entrance', a small slot in the wall of a large ravine. 'J.V.' and I entered first with the tackle, climbing down through a boulder choke into a series of large bedding caves, well decorated with muddy speleothems. We made one or two detours to inspect pits in the floor

and to locate the connection to the Northern Series before entering a phreatic passage with a vadose trench hiding the imperceptible 'Bolt Drop'. J.V. belayed an ancient piece of 'Blue-water' to a large rock flake and we abseiled down through a small hole into a circular pit about forty feet deep. At the bottom we removed our gear, as the rest of the trip was free-climbable, and waited for the others. As they were slow arriving, I explored down the next pitch into a rift chamber, taking an easy route to the left ending at a deep pit. Eventually the others arrived and we climbed down a more difficult route to the right into a deep rift. With J.V. leading, we traversed along this rift, about 200ft deep, but with plenty of footholds, for a considerable distance. In some sections there were beautiful encrustations of gypsum crystal, in others heaps of loose rubble and fragile rock flakes. After some time we took a downwards chimney to gain access to a lower series of small, crumbly tunnels full of loose rock. A tightish, vertical slot dropped us into a large chamber, glittering with gypsum crystals, with the largest crystal that I have ever seen protruding from the roof. It was more than four feet long and like a small, sculpted Christmas tree. Whilst the others tried to extrude John through the slot, I took some photographs. John was heavily built, but compressible, and after removing most of his clothes was forced through in one piece. He pulled himself together and we took a low, dry and very shattered passage ending in a crawl into the bedding planes of the fabulous 'Helictite Heaven'. Bushes of curved helictites sprouted from the floor, dazzling white crystal stars glittered from the walls, and as far as one could see, helictites writhed and twisted in a profusion that was unbelievable. This was not all! A letterbox allowed access to a deep rift thatched with helictites and crystals. A short traverse led to a succession of beautifully embroidered chambers and spectacular grottoes, all pristine white and prickly with crystals and curving speleothems. I tried to decide what to photograph, at the same time getting an indelible impression on my memory. By the time that I had used up all my film the others were ready to leave and we crawled back into the drab connecting passage, blinded by what we had seen. The journey back to the surface was uneventful but lengthy. John negotiated the tight slot, J.V. eventually found the return route onto the traverses and, after ascending the 'Bolt Drop', we passed the entrance series to emerge into pitch darkness. The scramble down through the woods in the dark was also a memorable experience, the snares and pitfalls worse than any underground, but we finally made it back to the truck, scratched and torn, to change out of our caving clothes. A convivial evening followed to complete a superb day's caving.

Apart from the caving trips, we packed in several excellent walks, a tour of Huntsville Space Centre and a visit to Nashville so our holiday passed incredibly quickly. When the time came to leave, we hoped that our farewells to Bill and Louise would be 'au revoir' and not 'adieu' and as we drove away southwards through the cotton fields we looked back at the wooded Alabaman hills and knew that we would never forget our holiday there.

John Gillett

Editor's Note: The two illustrations are prints of black and white photographs taken of colour prints (Cibachromes) of the original slides. If the quality has degraded, blame the process - not the pictures!



LAGARTO CAVE

NAPO, ECUADOR.

Length: Approx 3km. Grade 1/2

Explored by 1980 British Expedition.

Surveyed to difficult squeezes and ducks
by P.Rust and M.Combley. Grade 3.

LAGARTO CAVE - ECUADOR

The 1980 British Caving Expedition; Pete Cardy, Pete Francis, Simon Amatt, Don Grubb, Mike Combley and Phil Rust, first explored Lagarto Cave in November. We were escorted by local Indians to the entrance, located in the jungle close to the town of Tena in the Napo Province. We cleared the collapsed entrance of overgrowth and found two tunnels leading off in opposite directions. The collapse had occurred in the middle of a major passage, some 30 feet high and 40 feet wide. Pete, Simon and Don climbed into the passage offering the easiest access which followed a course almost due North. Climbing over large blocks lying on the floor of the huge tunnel, they encountered a stream which disappeared into a small hole in the passage wall. A short way upstream the passage divided into two; the left hand passage being abandoned and dry, the right carrying the stream and much larger than the other. The latter was followed but soon closed down into a complex boulder choke. The stream emerged from another small hole on the left just before this choke. A retreat was made to follow the first dry passage which now looked a better prospect. This soon closed down into a section of squeezes beyond which the same stream was regained. Here, the passage shape changed dramatically from the initial, flat-topped tube to a narrow, vadose canyon, four to six feet high, carrying the stream. Mike and I passed a duck which extinguished the carbide lights and found ourselves in a wider, 'keyhole' canyon. Further on, climbing out of the stream and along collapsed boulders for about 400m, we squeezed into a large chamber with three passages leading off. Ignoring the two side passages, we followed the larger, main passage past some beautiful stal formations, down a steep, sandy slope and through a nasty, nine-inch bedding plane crawl. After we had slipped out of this and down another steep sand-bank, we found that the passage regained its characteristic canyon shape for another 200m to what was apparently an impenetrable choke. Having simultaneously explored and surveyed we decided to make a quick retreat as the afternoon floods were due and we didn't want to get marooned the wrong side of the duck.

On the second trip to Lagarto, I was accompanied by three Ecuadorian climbers on their first caving trip. Leaving two of the Ecuadorians at the termination of the last trip, Jorge Anhalzer, one of the climbers, and I followed the stream through a series of difficult squeezes and ducks to pass the choke. We followed the active stream passage until we found a high-level dry passage leading off to the left. Thinking that this would only be a small oxbow or a dry extension, we climbed out of the main stream to investigate. For 400m a stooping passage got smaller and smaller until it became a flat-out crawl over sharp stones. Initially we heard water flowing underneath this dry extension but the sound soon disappeared. At the end of the long crawl we excavated a hole underneath a large block hanging from the roof and entered into a large chamber. At this point Jorge's light failed completely and my own carbide was getting low. A quick reconnaissance beyond the chamber showed an open passage about 3ft high and 4ft wide with a small stream trickling around the boulders which littered the floor. Returning to our now very cold companions, waiting without lights, we retreated out of the cave on one very dim carbide, the end now open and awaiting further exploration.

The following weekend all four of us returned and managed to pass the squeezes and ducks of the initial terminal choke.

The agonizing crawl made the Ecuadorians vocalize their feelings about the sanity of cavers in general, but the chamber was re-entered and the inviting passage, left open from the last trip, explored. The passage led to a complicated series of small tubes and boulder chokes which we followed until they either got too small or the collapse became too dangerous. I entered the main choke for about forty feet but began to feel a little lonely when some small boulders managed to dislodge themselves from the roof, reminding me of the choke that fell in on Martyn Farr and myself in Mazeways III. Again a retreat was made. We returned back to the collapsed entrance to explore the southerly trunk passage. Two routes allowed access to this; one regaining the stream and the other, via a difficult climb, joined at the same spot. Passing another two sky-light entrances not located on the surface, we pushed on, going downstream until it disappeared into an impenetrable choke about 500m from the entrance. At this point the cave is very close to the surface and I think that a resurgence would not be all that far away. A walk along the surface may prove this.

Three months later I returned with another novice caver, Sue Downing, and a local boy called Jon. We headed straight for the main stream-passage not yet explored and, staying in the stream, we followed the narrowing passage for another 120m until another division was met: both passages carried small streams. I followed the smaller, right-hand passage first, crawling over collapsed boulders and round sharp bends until a boulder blocked any further progress after about 40m. The other passage was more or less the same but got very tight after about 60m. This passage carried the larger stream but the very small nature of both passages suggests that the end of the cave is near. We retreated back to the large chamber where the last two unexplored passages led off. We quickly ascertained that both passages terminated after only a few metres.

The only places left to be pushed in Lagarto Cave are the boulder chokes and these are a little too dangerous given the location and situation you find yourself in; no rescue teams, no cavers, ni nada. The length of the cave is approximately 3km but a survey has not been made yet and is not likely to be made due to the lack of cavers, enthusiasm and equipment. Perhaps the 1982 Expedition will survey the cave.

Phil Rust.

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THE KARST HYDROGEOCHEMISTRY OF THE CARBONIFEROUS LIMESTONE OF NORTH DERBYSHIRE

The following is an Abstract of the Ph.D. Thesis submitted by N.S.J.Christopher; a copy of which is held in the HQ Library:

'Water samples were collected from 20 representative sites in North Derbyshire and N.E.Cheshire at intervals varying from hourly to monthly over a three year period. All samples were analysed for all major and some minor components. The results were used to evaluate controls on temporal variability, to examine water classification techniques and to identify aquifer types. Additionally, the results from 62 further sites were used with

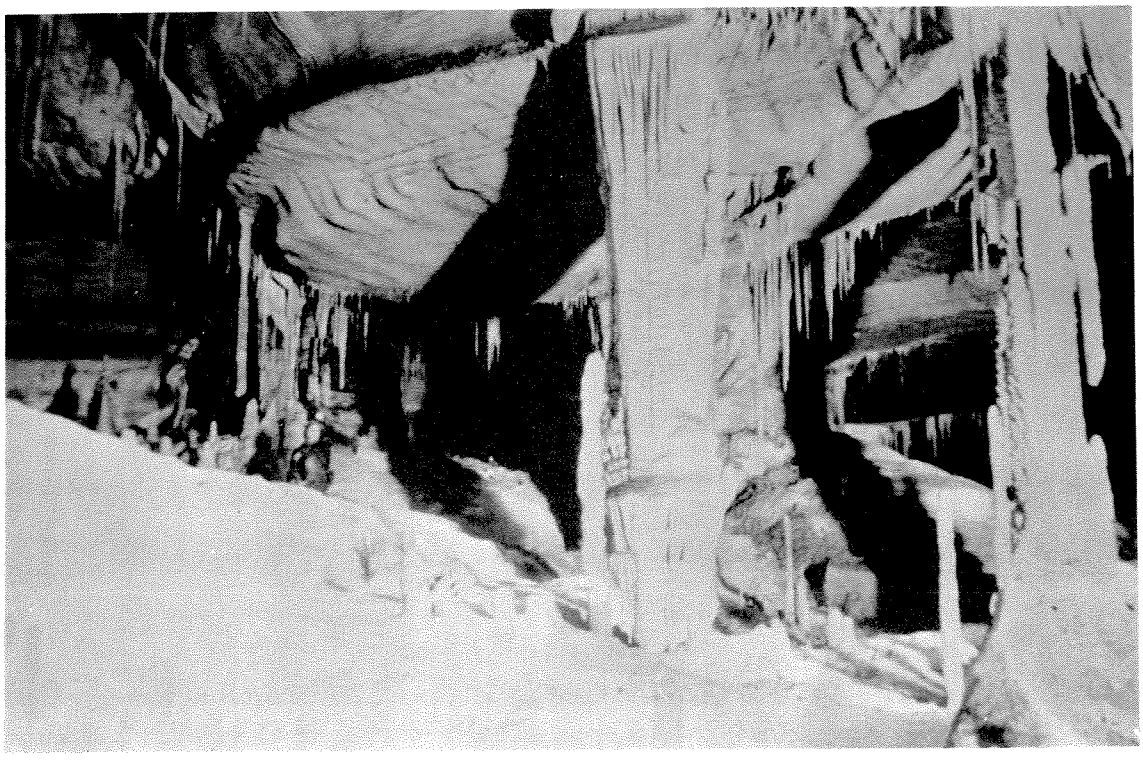
other published results to evaluate geochemical controls on water composition over the whole Derbyshire karst.

A complete spectrum of water chemistry types related to hydrochemical regime was identified by indicators suggested by other workers and new parameters discovered and developed during the present work. The complete spectrum that previous studies have only partly characterized includes highly variable surface streams, intermediate types and saturated diffuse flow resurgences whose variability approaches the precision of the analytical methods. Particularly successful new indicators were the ionic ratios $(Ca + Mg)/(Na + K)$; $Ca/(Cl + SO_4)$; $Cl/(Na + K)$ and relative entropy. The final concentration of dissolved calcium was related to the solubility of calcite, calcite precipitation under open system conditions and ion exchange. The dominant control on temporal variability of conduit resurgences was rainfall during the preceding 48 hours.

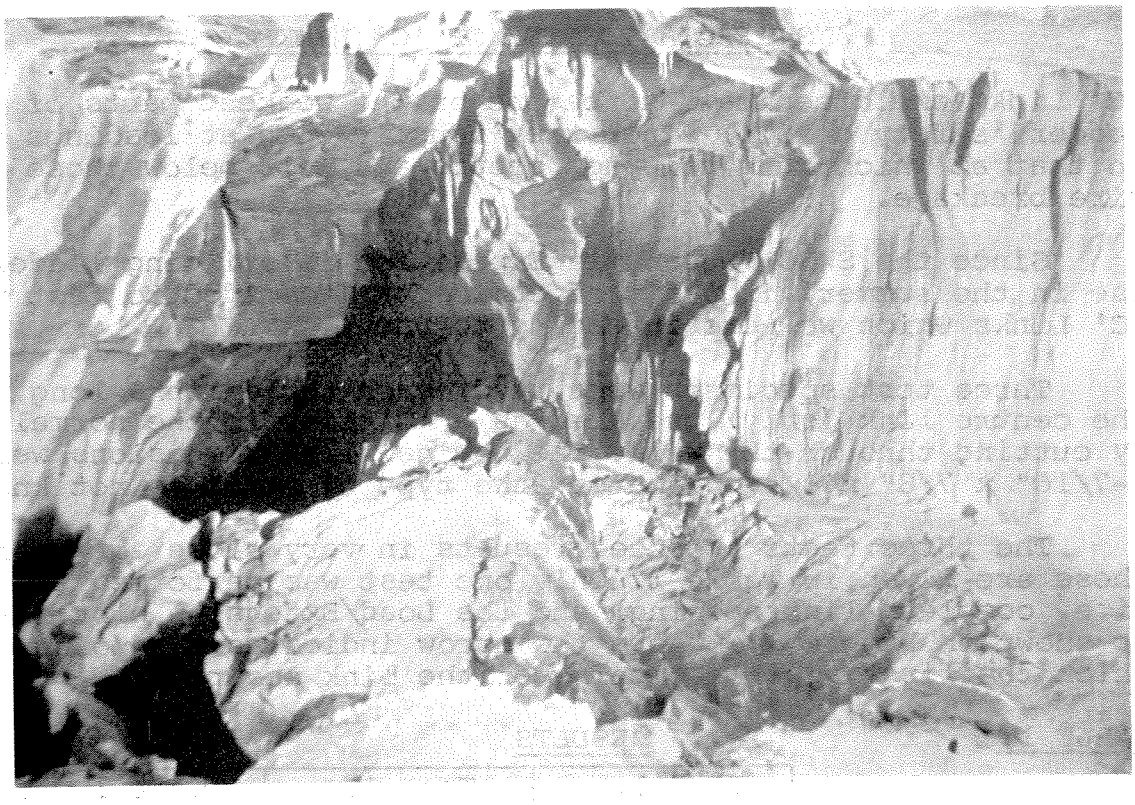
The dominant geochemical process was limestone solution and erosion rates of $55 \pm 12 m^3/km^2/yr$ were deduced, of which 40% occurs at the surface. Other geochemical controls were contact with or the presence of shale, dolomite or lava in the catchment. Further, pollution by road salt or fertilizer and open or closed system evolution were factors.

Thermodynamic studies have shown: the dominant ion-pairs are $CaSO_4^o$, $CaHCO_3^+$ and $MgSO_4^o$ in non-thermal waters; the waters are stable with respect only to kaolinite and saturation levels to calcite and dolomite are influenced by the Ca/Mg ratio.

Flood pulse and dye tracing studies have shown the Castleton aquifer to be dominantly of a fractured rock type, with some preferential flow paths and many previously unsuspected crosslinks between known caves.



Exit Cave - Tasmania



Main Passage - Exit Cave - Tasmania
(10 miles long - note figure on ledge)

BOOK REVIEW

THE CAVE EXPLORERS by JIM EYRE

This book should appeal to everybody, caver or not, who has even an ounce of adventurous spirit left in their body. The older reader will appreciate the hardships of the way things used to be done; the younger reader will appreciate the up-to-date S.R.T. techniques used on big pitches; and everybody will appreciate the alcoholic haze surrounding all the activities.

I must admit that I was completely captivated by this book. The descriptive writing bought the situations alive and brought back many memories of early caving days. The style of writing is also just right, using that brand of humour that any caver who has just survived a tough or frightening trip will use to describe his ordeal over a pint or six - humourously making light of all the difficulties.

Generally, the book plots the caving career of the author from his first trip in 1942 to his recent descent of Golondrinas. In between, he covers the early exploration of Lancaster/Easegill, his first and later involvements with Cave Rescue, his overseas trips to France, Yugoslavia, Spain, Bulgaria and Greece, and the Mossdale tragedy.

'The Cave Explorers' comes in hardback and is available at SWCC HQ. Illustrations are in black and white; few, but mainly impressive, with the odd humourous cartoon thrown in for good measure. This book can comé no more highly recommended than the fact that at least two SWCC veterans were seen to spend the whole of Whitsun week creeping off into corners to finish another chapter.

Dave Edwards

STRENGTH TESTING OF 'C' LINKS

'C' Links are often said to be one of the weakest parts of the ladder 'safety chain', since they usually open at loadings similar to that at which rung slippage occurs and well below those for wire breakage.

Since the SWCC Yugoslavia Expedition is building ladder to use in the summer, in a fit of curiosity I decided to test the 'C' Links which we were intending to use.

Three test specimens were used, each three links long, with the centre link (only) prepared as a 'C' Link in the normal way by cutting through the weld. The nominal link dimensions were:- 1-7/16" x 7/8" x 1/4" diameter; the type of steel is not known.

The three tests produced results in very close agreement and these are given in Table 1. Only one test was performed to failure (i.e. complete link opening) and the Load/Extension plot for this is shown in Figure 1., where the arrow indicates the point at which the first visible opening of the link occurred.

TABLE 1. RESULTS

	Test 1.	Test 2.	Test 3.
Rate of Strain	1 cm/min	1 cm/min	5 cm/min
Load at first visible opening	275 kg	267 kg	233 kg
Max.load during steady opening	380 kg	378 kg	396 kg
Min.load during steady opening			373 kg

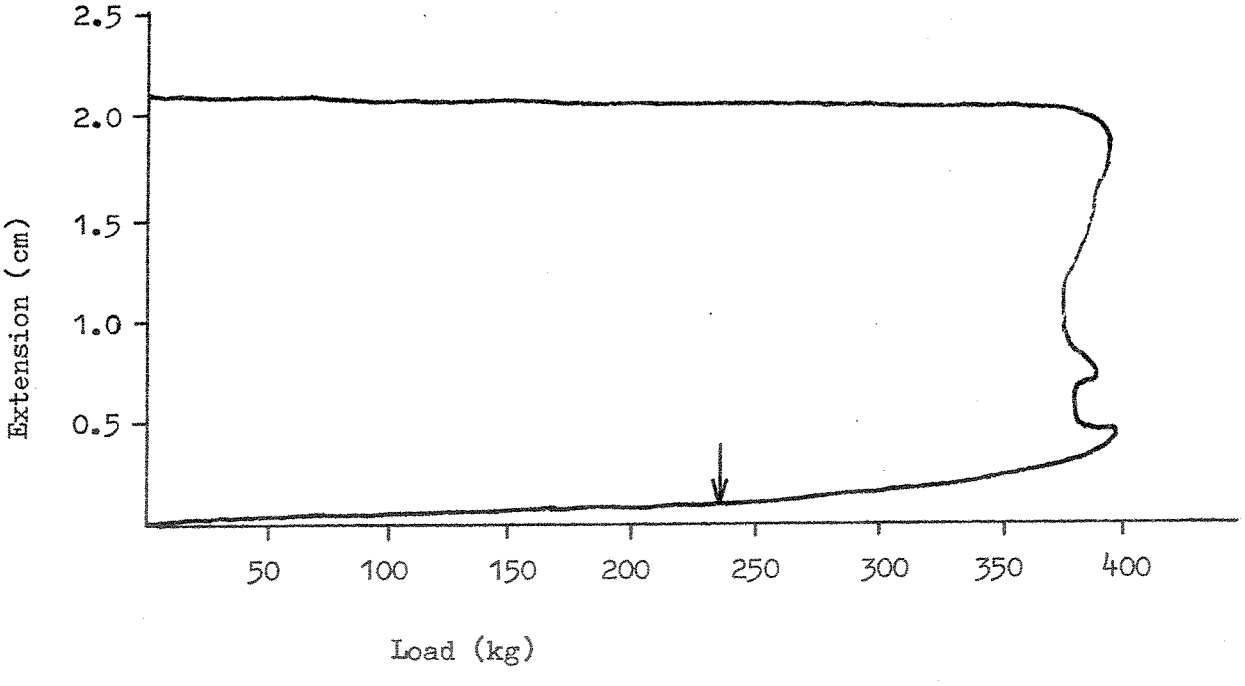


FIGURE 1. Load/Extension Graph for 1/4" diameter 'C' Link.

The following points may be worth noting:

1) The links began to open visibly at about two-thirds of their failing load. The apparent difference at the higher rate of strain may well merely reflect the difficulty of trying to mark a fast moving chart.

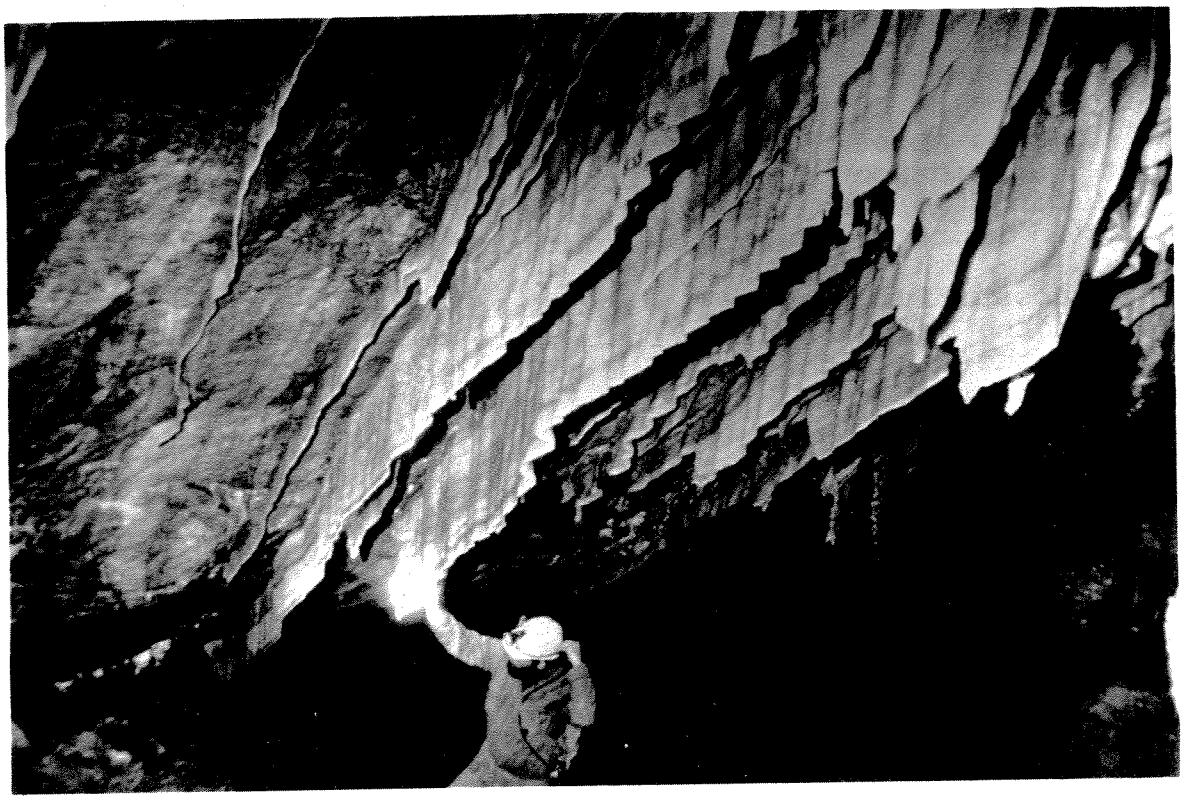
Hence, in a steadily applied loading situation such as might be found when using a Tirfor or a hand-operated winch, visual inspection of the links would be enough to ensure safe operation. When they start to open - stop pulling!

2) Most of the opening occurred at a more-or-less constant load of 370kg or over (8001b plus). This is rather more than I expected before commencing the tests and is almost certainly more than the loads required for rung slippage.

3) The tests underline the unsuitability of 'C' links for any belay which might be subjected to shock loadings.

Taking Figure 1: the energy absorbed by the 'C' link was approximately 370kg x 2cm, or 72.5J. This is not a lot and, unless my maths is very rusty, is approximately equal to an 'average' caver falling less than four inches. That is, of course, per 'C' link and excludes any stretch in the system but I think the point is adequately clear.

Sam Moore



The Silk Shop - Kubla Khan - Tasmania

KISS MY WHIP - A MASOCHISTS GUIDE TO CAVING

(Report on a caving trip in Tasmania)

Having spent most of the winter months in vain and painful attempts to get off the West and North coasts with scuba gear for a dive, the summer arrived at last and the sea began to flatten.

Obviously time to give up while I was still on a losing streak and try something else. (Caving!!!) I blew the dust off my gear and tried on the dried-up and crumpled boots, the grit-impregnated vests and the S.R.T. harness that had fitted me so nicely when I'd been 10kg lighter. Agony!!

So, off to Mole Creek to give it all a try. Our party numbered seven on Saturday morning and the day dawned warm and clear and lovely for walking. With this in mind we donned our gear and made our way to Kubla Khan taking with us not only S.R.T. gear, but also ladders to double up on possible perversions. The day had been designated a 'photographic' day, much to the upset of the two younger members of the party who were hoping to get at least a good day's caving out of the trip. So, passage down the drops and through the cave was further slowed by the process of blinding people with flashes and making photographic models spend long periods kneeling in cold pools (it makes them look deeper in the photo).

At last the two younger members could bear it no longer and, casting remarks as to the mental state of the rest of the party, shot out of the cave leaving us looking at photographic subjects and making remarks like 'three weeks at f8' to the blue figures in the pools.

At this point I made an attempt to photograph 'The Great Khan', a 10m + high stalagmite in a huge, rock-filled chamber, using magnesium flash powder. I set up the camera, opened the shutter and poured out half a cupful of magnesium mixture. I then inserted a 200mm long length of slow fuse into the mixture (enough for 20 seconds according to ICI) and lit the end. Instead of making the normal fizzing noise, the fuse made a high-pitched whistle. The noise was so unexpected that I froze over the flash for a second, still holding the match in my hand, when the 20 second fuse blew through (in approx 1½ seconds) and the flare exploded!

For about five minutes I was unable to see anything except a large, dancing white blob in front of my eyes but, as my vision came back, the first thing that I could see was my right hand, blackened and with what looked like a lace-curtain of burnt skin hanging from it.

As my vision returned, so did the feeling in my hand and eyelids. A move was made as far as the first cold rimstone pool and both face and hands were plunged in. A rapid exit through the cave was made with stops at every cold pool (fortunately there are a fair number when one looks). The fact that we had also brought three 10m ladders with us made it easy for me to get up the pitches; I dread to think how I would have managed with a blasted hand on S.R.T.

Once out of the cave, I found the run between the entrance and Mole Creek reached an all time high in pain due to the lack of cold pools and the heat of the day. The nurse at Mole Creek quickly passed me on to Deloraine Hospital who in turn passed me on to Launceston. A quick patch-job there and I was passed on to Savage

River where six days in hospital were followed by six weeks of dressings three times a day.

The end result was a hand that looks a little like something out of an Egyptian tomb, although it can still push a Jumar up a rope. The photo? That didn't come out! My body, crouched over the flash, threw a vast, black shadow down the chamber. However, I did get the Masochist of the Year award from my friends; a choice between a new whip or some more flash powder!

Frank Salt

Editor's note: My heart bled when I read this article, so, as a consolation prize to Frank, I decided that I had better make an effort to print the photograph of the 'Great Khan', (along with three others), that he sent me two years ago. These are black and white copies of colour copies of colour slides!

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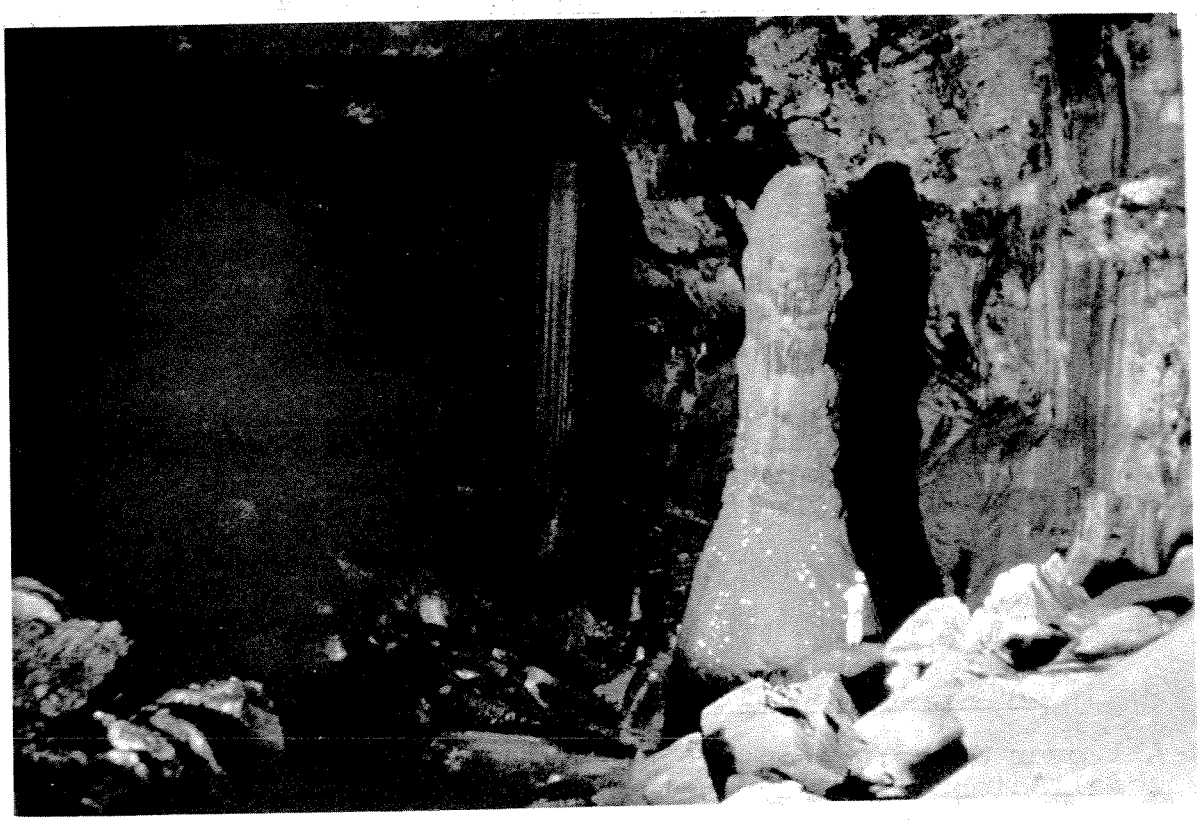

The 'Great Khan' - Kubla Khan - Tasmania

BATS AND THE LAW

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is illegal for anyone without a licence to kill, injure or handle a wild bat of any species in Great Britain; to possess a bat, whether alive or dead; or to disturb a bat when roosting. Ringing or marking bats or photographing them (except when they are flying outdoors) thus requires a licence from the NCC. It is also an offence to sell or offer for sale any wild bat, whether alive or dead, without a licence. (Sale includes hire, barter and exchange.) But the law does allow one to tend a disabled bat, in order to release it when it recovers, or to kill a seriously disabled bat which has no reasonable chance of recovery.

Bats have been given fuller protection than other protected wild animals because of their special requirements for roosting. It is now an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection or to disturb a bat while it is occupying such a place; and this applies even in houses and outbuildings. The only exception is for bats in the living area of a house. The NCC must be notified about any proposed action to get rid of bats or any operation likely to disturb them or their roosts and must then be allowed time to advise on whether the action or operation should be carried out and, if so, on the method to be used and its timing.

To summarise, do not kill or injure bats or disturb them when roosting, or block entrances to their roosts and only handle them to remove them carefully from the living area of your house or to feed and tend them if this is essential. If bats are unwanted, do not take action yourself; obtain advice from Dr.R.E.Stebbings (who is authorised to act for the NCC) or from one of the other NCC addresses below. Application for licences should be made to the NCC's London address - 19/20, Belgrave Square, London SW1X 8PY.

Fines on conviction for an offence are up to £1,000 per bat killed etc.

N.B. This explanation should be regarded only as a guide to the law. In case of doubt, reference should be made to sections 9-11 and 16-27 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

N.C.C. 44, The Parade, Roath, Cardiff CF2 3AB.	N.C.C. Plas Gogerddan, Aberystwyth, Dyfed SY23 3EB.	N.C.C. Ffordd Penrhos, Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 2LQ.

Information supplied by Mel Davies.

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CAVES AND THE WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981

All over Wales, caves are known inside what are termed 'Sites of Special Scientific Interest'. In South Wales particularly, several major caves are situated inside SSSI's but some of them are also within the Brecon Beacons National Park. In recent years, a few caves have been destroyed by quarrying, some have been polluted by oil and others affected by drainage operations prior to afforestation. These notes may help you to understand the 1981 Act; they are taken from 'Earth Science Conservation' No.19 of Feb 1982,

published by the Geology and Physiography Section of the Nature Conservancy Council.

'THE WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981: ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR EARTH SCIENCE CONSERVATION.

After lengthy and detailed debate in both Houses of Parliament, the Wildlife and Countryside Act received Royal Assent on 30th October 1981. Many of the provisions of the Act, including the majority of those relating to nature conservation, came into force on November 30th, and the remainder will be brought into force shortly. The Act strengthens the statutory provisions for nature conservation (including geological conservation) in Britain, and modifies the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, which provided most of the Conservancy's original powers. In particular, the new Act increases NCC's ability to safeguard sites from threats which do not constitute development as defined in planning law, such as agricultural improvement and afforestation. This article seeks to give a brief resumē of those provisions of the Act which relate directly to earth science conservation.

The Act leaves unchanged the operation of the Town & Country Planning system, under which most threats to geological or geomorphological sites are parried. Additionally, however, it stipulates that the Conservancy must be consulted over activities which can be undertaken without planning consent where these have been specified as likely to damage scientific interest. Under the terms of Section 28, the Nature Conservancy Council are required to renotify all existing SSSI's, and to notify all new sites, to all owners and occupiers, to the local planning authority in whose area the SSSI is situated and to the Secretaries of State for the Environment, for Scotland and for Wales, as appropriate. This notification must now define the features in which the special scientific interest of the site resides and must provide a list of all activities which could damage this interest. Once a three-month consultation period has elapsed, the owner and occupiers of each SSSI are required to seek the Conservancy's agreement before undertaking any of the activities specified in the notification. Without such agreement, the owner/occupier is legally prevented from carrying out such activities, unless the operations form part of an existing management agreement with NCC or unless three months have elapsed without NCC and the owner/occupier having reached formal agreement over the site. In the event of dispute, or of inability to reach agreement, the Secretary of State can make an Order, under Section 29 of the Act, whereby the period of negotiation is extended to twelve months. Section 29 also specifies the determination of the compensation to be paid by NCC consequent to an Order having been made. The new provisions thus give NCC an opportunity to receive prior warning of potentially damaging activities and an ability to prevent damage taking place until some mutually acceptable form of management has been agreed with the site owner and/or occupier.

The damaging activities which can be controlled in this way include ploughing or drainage improvements which can adversely affect geomorphological features, the deposit or storage of agricultural waste or materials in disused quarries or pits, and the disturbance of dunes through the extraction of shell sand for agricultural liming.

The Act also facilitates the conservation of limestone pavements.

Section 34 requires NCC to notify local planning authorities of limestone pavements of special interest within their area. The Secretary of State, or the local planning authority, then has the power to make a Limestone Pavement Order, prohibiting the removal or disturbance of any limestone. This section thus resolves the earlier uncertainties regarding limestone pavements - previously the extraction of limestone for agricultural purposes was a permitted activity, whereas commercial extraction, for rockery or ornamental stone, required planning permission. In practice, the distinction between these two forms of extraction proved impossible to draw, since stone which was first removed for agricultural purposes could later be disposed of commercially. Under the new Act, the removal of limestone pavement for agricultural purposes is no longer exempted from control; once a Limestone Pavement Order has been made, it will be an offence to remove any material from these scientifically unique features.'

Compiled by Mel Davies.
Permission to publish given by Dr.G.P.Black, Geology and Physiography Section, Nature Conservancy Council.

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BATS IN GOWER CAVES

During the recent winter, a census of bats in Gower caves has been carried out. This involved visiting as many caves as possible twice over. The first visit was in early December, just after that cold snap, when many bats may have been driven underground prematurely. The second was in March when populations are probably stable, particularly after a winter that was not remarkable for its mildness. The caves entered included Bovehill Pot, Cathole, Tooth Cave, Minchin Hole, Bacon Hole, Ogof Gwyntog and several un-named seacaves. Information on past populations was gathered by asking old stagers like Maurice Clague Taylor, Norman Lloyd and Frank Baguley, and slightly younger stagers like Pete Francis and colleagues of his who also work in Outdoor Pursuits Centres in Gower, but who are not Club Members. A general impression has been gained that bat numbers are down compared with, say, 10 years ago, but this may only be part of a short-term cycle. Does anyone know of any other Gower caves with bats in; perhaps recently, or in the distant past? You may have noticed some while looking around the bone caves or perhaps while on holiday.

All information will be gratefully received. Meanwhile, many thanks to the people mentioned above. I should add that, since all bats are now protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, my census involves a fleeting glance at the bat, sufficient to identify it, then a quick withdrawal. Only ringed bats need be approached and these only once per winter!

Please write to the address below, or telephone.

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