

A previous newsletter mused on the relationship between caving activity and newsletter frequency, the idea being that lots of caving means infrequent newsletters (no time to write them!). I regret to say that the theory has failed and there has been little caving activity since last autumn.

Another theme of a previous newsletter was the value for money that MSG membership represents; for 1974 this value increases to infinity because we have decided to abolish subscriptions for the time being. The rationale behind this is that only the regulars can be chased into paying up and these persons do the work that leads to the production of our journals. Journal sales have gone sufficiently well to enable us to finance our future publications without having subscriptions. But this means that members wanting journals must buy them so why not get on the standing order list and get your own copies as soon as they are out. Journals 4 (30p.) and 5 (47p.) are almost out of print and Journal 6 (35p.) is going fast. Smeltmill Beck surveys (20p.) are also going fast and will cost a lot more when reprinted.

A further point on the "free" membership is that we shall be revising the newsletter circulation list a little more ruthlessly than hitherto. Anyone whom GS hasn't seen or heard from since 1/1/74 should fill in and send the slip of paper attached; and don't forget to send changes of address and news of any activities, caving or otherwise to pad out further newsletters.

Personalia.

Ivan Gibson has gone to live in Holland and hopes to go caving in Belgium. Several address changes have taken place and a new list is given later. A number of enquiries have been received from persons wishing to start caving - as before we are not in a position to help them. We have also had enquiries from time to time from youth leaders wishing to learn caving in order to take others. Many of the established clubs don't wish to encourage this - it overpopulates the caves and increases accidents. The "trainees" contribute little to a club, and as soon as they feel confident and competent they leave to start their own.

We welcome Martin Shaw and Andrew Skelton and John Parr as new members. The former two are enthusiastic novices who, living in Middlesborough, have been able to join the evening trip routine. Phil Robinson returned from Tasmania in time for the Moldy Dinner but has subsequently returned.

Other "News".

Way back in September was the BCRA Conference. Thanks to Alan Holmes and Ian Cassely MSG were well represented and a worthwhile quantity of publications were sold. The standard of exhibits was generally poor with the exception of North Cards. Mining Club who won the prize. The 1974 conference is to be held in Leeds on the 14th/15th of September. Let's have a good turn out and display.

Caving News.

(a) Other Areas. Skye August 1973.

This is scarcely a "news" item, however from 23rd to 30th August last year AR, PFR, MC and JCL, JDA and CW camped at Camas Malag, the usual spot, surveying and pottering. The main find was Uamh Pharnassus (Parnassus Cave), a pleasant descending streamway, tight in places and ending too low and choked after a high chamber, length 195' and depth 40'. Nothing else of any size was found but Uamh an Ard Achadh was surveyed - at 1,050' the longest Skye cave.

All the Skye work so far together with results from London University and Grampian S.G. have been written up by PFR and will shortly be published in BCRA Transactions. Since our Journal 5 was published, interest in the area has soared and several clubs and individuals are known to be planning to visit, or have visited, the area.

Cresswell Caves (Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire).

PFR's Sheffield contingent have surveyed the eight caves comprising this famous archaeological site. The existing literature implies that the caves are mere rock shelters. However, almost 2,000' of passage has been surveyed and the longest cave, Robin Hood's Cave, is 950' long - quite remarkable for the Magnesian Limestone.

Herne Hill Cave, Maltby (nr. Rotherham).

Accounts in local newspapers of small children being lost in what were variously termed natural rifts and old mine workings exposed in the enlarging of a supermarket car park at Maltby, led PFR and Sid Armstrong to investigate. On arrival they gained permission to unplug the walled up hole in the car park, whence the children had been retrieved by (according to the press) a police constable lowered in on the end of 130' of rope.

Unwalled, the hole (in the centre of a small anticline in Magnesian Limestone) proved to open into a descending crawl, then into a roomy chamber and a series of passages and chambers. Apparently local children had been through the cave quite thoroughly since it was exposed by car park enlargements 6 months before, but no cavers. A subsequent visit saw a few feet of passage gained by much digging, and a survey (Gr.5C) with instruments borrowed from Pete Jackson. Total length was 400', depth 32'.

A brief local area inspection revealed a couple of thoroughly bricked up cave entrances (one shown as "cave" on the O.S. 6" map) and a 15' long cave. However, when time allows, further inspections of the Maltby area will be made.

Craven.

Echo Pot on Fountains Fell has been extended by ULSA to a depth of over 400'. The extension includes what has been described as a broken pitch of 330'. The stream sinks in an impenetrably tight passage whereas the deepest point is a choke of mud and boulders.

ULSA have also pushed a hole known as the Mistral in the bank of Easegill, to a narrow rift section 70' or so long originally only passed by the Brooks, to reach the Hobbit area of Pippikin, giving this latter system two widely spaced entrances.

A 500' sump in Boreham Cave, Littondale, has been passed by CDG and KCC divers, giving access to big passages with a mysterious river and superb formations. Several thousand feet of passage have been explored. The river poses the problem that no comparable resurgences are known in the locality.

(b) The Northern Dales.

Cliff Beck Head.

Last August on a surveying trip with PFR, Chris Pattison passed a nasty duck (2" air) in the l. inlet to where the stream entered from several roof fissures. The r. passage (The Conduit) was found to end after a low bedding in a final 6' aven, where the passage divided into two impenetrably small inlets. This point is directly under the floor of the large Buttertub beside the road, but about 35' lower. The cave is 440' long. On a trip to finish the surface survey of the area Phil Robinson introduced PFR to the gentle (?) art of whaletailing and jumaring.

Potential risings for the Botcher Gill Sink have long been debated. Fluorescein solved the problem when after about 90 hours Swinnergill was brightly coloured. The water was found to be rising subtly from beneath a scree slope on the E bank of Swinnergill. Just north of the rising a cave was found - Stone Root Cave - digging out a squeeze 25' in led to a promising choke in a side passage where a stream was audible. The main passage ended where daylight was visible from the side of the gorge (about 110' of passage in all). A dig at the choke on a later trip found the passage too tight.

On the subject of water tracing, John Parr (readers of the N.P.C. Journal Vol II No.2, 1959, will recall JP discovered the major proportion of Crackpot Cave - he has retained his interest in the Northern Dales despite his present infrequent opportunities for field work) and GS carried out some tests in the Crackpot area. First, they confirmed the observation of Martin Daves (YURT) that a small proportion (c.10% on this occasion) of the east branch of Summer Lodge Beck, when diverted into the sink at the head of the gorge rapidly (30 mins) resurges at the most southerly of the two small risings on the east bank of the Beck. Secondly they visited Tarn Sike and Bloody Vale Sink (near Broken Rift Pot). The former had about twice the flow of the latter so a large quantity of fluorescein was put in whilst a small quantity of Rhodamine B was put in the latter. Next day, Croft Beck which flows through Bloody Vale was green, showing Tarn Sike to flow north, as does its surface channel. If Bloody Vale behaved

similarly the red colour would probably have been masked by the time that the observation point near Summer Lodge was reached. Summer Lodge Beck above Croft Beck (i.e. the water from the Crackpot rising) looked "possibly pink" - a marginal result. Oxnop Beck however was its normal clarity. Obviously more work is needed, and is planned, to define the catchment boundaries and to relate the water in the cave to the rising.

Devis Hole.

When I first started writing this newsletter several weeks ago, this item was to be called "The Devis Finale", reporting the completion of the survey (excepting the SE mine passages). Regrettably (!) a visit by AS, ES, GS and MS to one of the extremities of the maze area gave after a little digging some 200' of new passages with several continuations. These were left unexplored in order to provide an incentive for the surveyors to return. The route to the new parts is tighter than the oil drum !

Incidentally, there is no truth in the rumour that meets are now being organised on an alphabetical rota of surnames !

Miscellaneous.

Keld Heads Cave has been revisited since the item in the April 73 newsletter. The final bedding has finally been pronounced final ! Most of the looping passage has been surveyed but the rest and the downstream extensions still await volunteers. The survey of Whitcliffe Scar Caves has commenced and the extension of the West Cave, of Feb. 73 was revisited and extended slightly. The total length of the extension is about 100' and of the West Cave 330', with an overall depth of about 60'. Flushiemere Mines have been re-entered on joint meets with the Errington brothers of Consett. Unfortunately the working on which the caverns are supposed to be is blocked by a fall, and because of the ladder work and the length of level to be traversed, evening trips have given insufficient time to work on it.

YURT have discovered Yad Moss Cave (about 380' long) at the head of Upper Teesdale.

Projects.

On a recent Devis trip GS tried out a "Cyalume" chemical light stick, as an emergency light. In the level the visibility was about 10' maximum. One could just about see one's feet and make out passage shape. On the surface 2 hours after starting it, it was scarcely possible to see one's feet and walking in heather was treacherous. There was very little reflection of the light emitted such that, as a marker, it was only visible when viewed directly. The glow lasted over 24 hours getting dimmer gradually, a brighter (and hence shorter lived) version would be better.

GS now has a computer programme for calculating survey co-ordinates. This means that the awful truth about mis-closures of circuits can easily be discovered before plotting out. For example, on the Whitcliffe Scar West circuit between upper and lower entrances, there is a 2% misclosure, and from the co-ordinates and data it seems likely that it arose from our efforts to survey down the climb from the upper to the lower passage. This section will be repeated on the next trip.

Journal 7.

Thoughts and suggestions are being collected for Journal 7. Soon it will be volunteers to write articles - so get thinking and writing, or drawing - cartoons, cover designs, frontispiece, illustrations - all needed. Lastly a further reminder to get your name on the standing order list if you want a copy. Remember our journals are now so popular that they fairly rapidly go out of print. As in early days, contributors will get a copy at a rate that reflects their contribution.

MSG LIBRARY

M.S.G. exchange journals with a number of clubs and these are available on loan to members. For postal loan, members should note the postage on the envelope when they receive them and enclose this amount in stamps when they return the journals. The "librarian" (G.S.) will also assist with requests for information and may possibly possess other journals, particularly BSA, CRG and BCRA publications.

The library also has a set of MSG publications so one can catch up on the early history. The first MSG log - up to end 1967- has gone astray. This vital document is in a thick lever-arch file, so please have a good look for it. Other items missing from the library include the PUSA survey of Gaping Gill and the ULSA surveys of Far Country (one large and one small version) and Whitsun Series. Rumour has it that the club also gets C.S.S. journals but the librarian has never seen any and hasn't sent any exchanges! If any member wishes to donate publications to the library they will be gratefully accepted.

B.U.S.S. - Omnibus I (2-4)
Books - Underground Adventure by Gemmel & Myers;
Underground in Furness by Holland.
B.P.C. - Bull. 3 (9); 4 (1-4, 6); 5 (7-9).
BCRA - Bull.1
BSA - Caves and Caving 1(5) 1938; Bull O.S. (77,80,82,83);
B.C.C. - Rev. 1
C.U.C.C. - J. 2(1)
Castleton C.C. - N/L 2
C.R.G. - N/L 106
C.S.S. - N/L 11(2) 1968.
C.N.C.C. - H/book 1969.
C.P.C. - J. 2(6); 3 (3,5); 4 (1-6); 5 (1).
D.C.A. - N/L 1(6)
Descent - 1-4, 8-15, H/Book 1970, 17, 18, 22.
G.S.G. - Bull. 4(2); 5 (3,4); O.P. 2
G.C. - J. N S 3,4
K.C.C. - J. 5,6
L.U.S.S. - J. 1(1,2)
L.U.C.C. - J.6
MSG - Rept. (1-4); J. (1-6); N/L (1967, 1969 - 1974)
M.U.S.S. - J. (1-6)
NCMRS - I.S. No.4; O.P. No.5; Trans 1 (2); Mems 2 (1-3).
N/L 3.
N.P.C. - N/L (24-42); J. II (3), III (1)
NUCC - Expl. 1968.
RRCPC - J (5,6)
SUSS - J. 1(2-6); 2(1,2); N/L 21.
SWETCCC - Speleo 6 (1), 7(2,3), 8(1), 9(1-3), 10(2), 11(1,2)
S.S.I. - Irish Spel. 1(1)
Speleologist - II (6A, 8, 12)
T.C.C. - Speleo-Spiel (53-55)
U.I.S. - Bull. (1,2) 1970, 1(3), 2(4), 2(6).
UBSS - Proc. Various offprints.
ULSA - Rev. 1-11; Expl.J. 1969; Alum Pot 1972.
YURT - Rept (1-2)

The abbreviations are mostly obvious if you know what you are looking for!

Address List of Members

The letter 'R' indicates members registered for 1974 and they need not fill in the form unless they wish to place a standing order for journals. Others should send the form to G.S. (address below)

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Signed

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