

Seeing that this coming Autumn marks the official 25th. anniversary of the club, I felt that some sort of club history, for all its omissions and probable inaccuracies, might be of interest. Considering the difficulty I've had in finding out the information, it might also help out the future scribe who will one day set out to pen down "ICCC - the first 50 years". The information comes from a variety of sources: 1966-73 are covered by LUCC journals whilst from '73 to the present is covered by the annual Presidents' reports (apart from two who failed to write one) and which, almost without exception begin, "This has been one of the most successful years for the club". The stores contain a few old log books, letters, newsletters etc; and expedition reports are available from the Explo' Board, College Archives, Lyon Playfair Library or BCRA Library, In addition, the odd snippet can be gleaned from general caving reading, particularly ACW's prolific writings. Hearsay and memory can be valuable but should be treated with caution particularly those of the club folk-lore type. The most recent years are largely based on personal memory, and I apologise in advance for the inevitable bias.

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Although cavers were active at Imperial College throughout the previous year, the start of the 1962/63 academic session saw Imperial College Caving Club officially come into being as part of RCC, its aims being (as stated in the constitution - article 2):

- (a) To provide an efficient organisation at Imperial College for those people interested in caving.
- (b) To promote an interest in speleology at Imperial College.

Unfortunately I have been able to find little information on the club's first three years other than the successive Presidents were: Ian Lennon (wrongly put on the pot as J. Lennon), P Gregory, and Tony Waltham who held office for two years (1964/66). The emergence from these "dark ages" came in late 1966 when ICCG joined forces with the University College of London Speleo. Soc. (UCLSS) and Chelsea College Caving Club (CCCC) to produce a caving journal. The first journal of the London University Caving Clubs came out in December 1966, Tony Waltham's editorial stating that:

"..... the three University Club's histories are very closely inter-related and now the journal should ensure that this pattern of beneficial co-operation will continue. It is hoped that it will even stimulate some people to do some caving with a purpose - certainly far more rewarding than the old tourist trips. A mere write up of the log book has very limited interest, while an entirely scientific publication is beyond the scope of the clubs, so this journal is attempting to strike a happy medium."

Aims which, in my opinion, the Journal met very well. The first edition kicked off in fine style with articles on a minor extension in Easegill and a description of ICCG.CDG's diving sites, which ranged from Swildons and Lost Johns (where Phil Collett had found "several cubic feet of undiscovered airspace" in March '66) to the Fontaine Noire in the Dent de Crolles. There was also an extensive description of the IC summer 1966 trip to France. Camping at St. Pierre de Chartreuse (do things ever change) they had been privileged to be permitted to do "tourist" trips in the Dent de Crolles system (the whole cave still being in the course of exploration by a number of very possessive French clubs).

1967 started well for ICCC with some maypoling in Lost Johns, but despite erecting the pole no less than twelve times between Groundsheet Junction and the Lake, no significant inlet passages were found. There was also a lot of activity in Mendip. Several Swildons sites were probed in attempts to find a "dry" cavers by-pass to, the then divers-only, sump 6. There was also an abortive attempt to discover the Mendip Master Cave at the bottom of a very muddy dig (Frog Pot; Priddy) which was eventually filled in by the long-suffering farmer; and in Hollowfield Swallet, IC cavers pushed a dodgy crawl gaining about 20 m. of new passage - which has probably long since collapsed. But, despite all this Spring activity, as well as the "old tourist trips", 1967 was not generally counted a good year for British caving.

On Saturday June 24th, six cavers, two from ULSA and four from the Happy Wanderers Cave and Pothole Club were killed by flood waters in Mossdale Caverns. The tragedy, the worst in British caving was felt acutely by London clubs. The HWCPC were a recently formed, London-based club, well known to ICCC with whom they had co-operated on several projects, and which contained a few ICCC members.

The second half of 1967 did little to make amends. An epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease swept the country, almost completely curtailing caving. As a consequence, after a frustrated Autumn ICCC eloped to France for Christmas. Under the leadership of Jim Winterhalder, the small IC contingent went to Vercors where, despite snowy conditions, they chalked up several classic trips including the Grottes Coufin, Favot, Chevaline, Bournillon, and Gournier. Here I'm ashamed to say they left record of their visit in large sooty letters still clearly visible when the club returned 15 years later.

Back at home and faced with an almost total ban on caving, there was little to do but resort to armchair-caving. During the Winter of 67/68 ICCC joined forces with the Pengelly Cave Research Centre to produce a series of scientific lectures (held in Physics Dept. admission free). These were by outside speakers, and covered such diverse topics as:

Caving in E. African volcanoes and coral reefs.

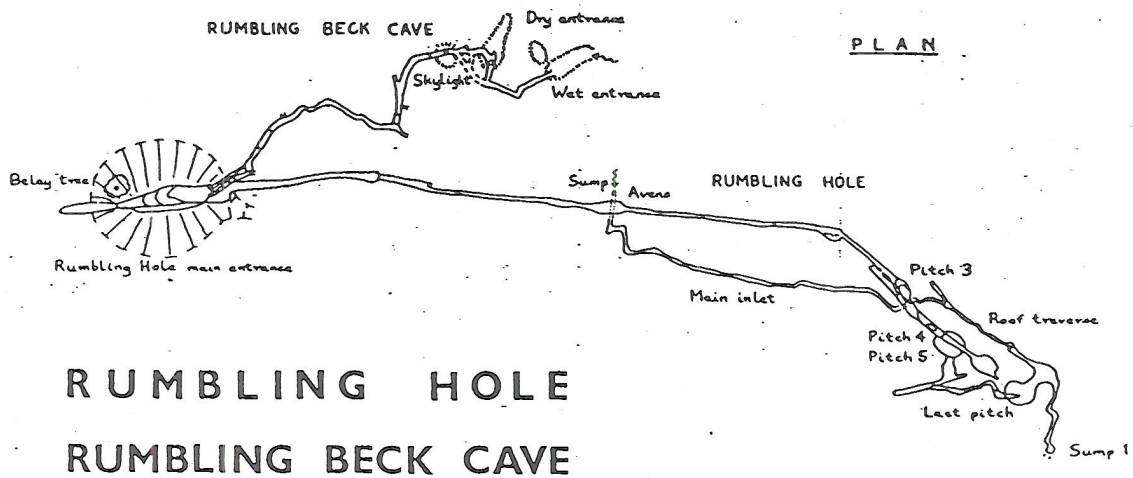
Karst studies in Peak Cavern, Derbyshire.

The strange beings of Kirkdale Cave and their (stranger) discoverers.

Thankfully the onset of 1968 saw an end to the restrictions on caving, and IC were immediately active again in the Dales. In March ICCC and UCLSS surveyed Rumbling Hole and Marble Steps Pot, after which IC turned their attention onto Gaping Gill. In late February, during abortive escapades with scaling poles, they had had a look at the far end of East Passage at the place marked "sump" on the survey. Rod Knapp (the only one with a wetsuit) had been persuaded to investigate, and had negotiated 6m of muddy canal to a very loose boulder choke through which he could see a black void. Concerned about his diminishing life expectancy beneath the hanging blocks he had hastily retreated and the site was left for the time being.

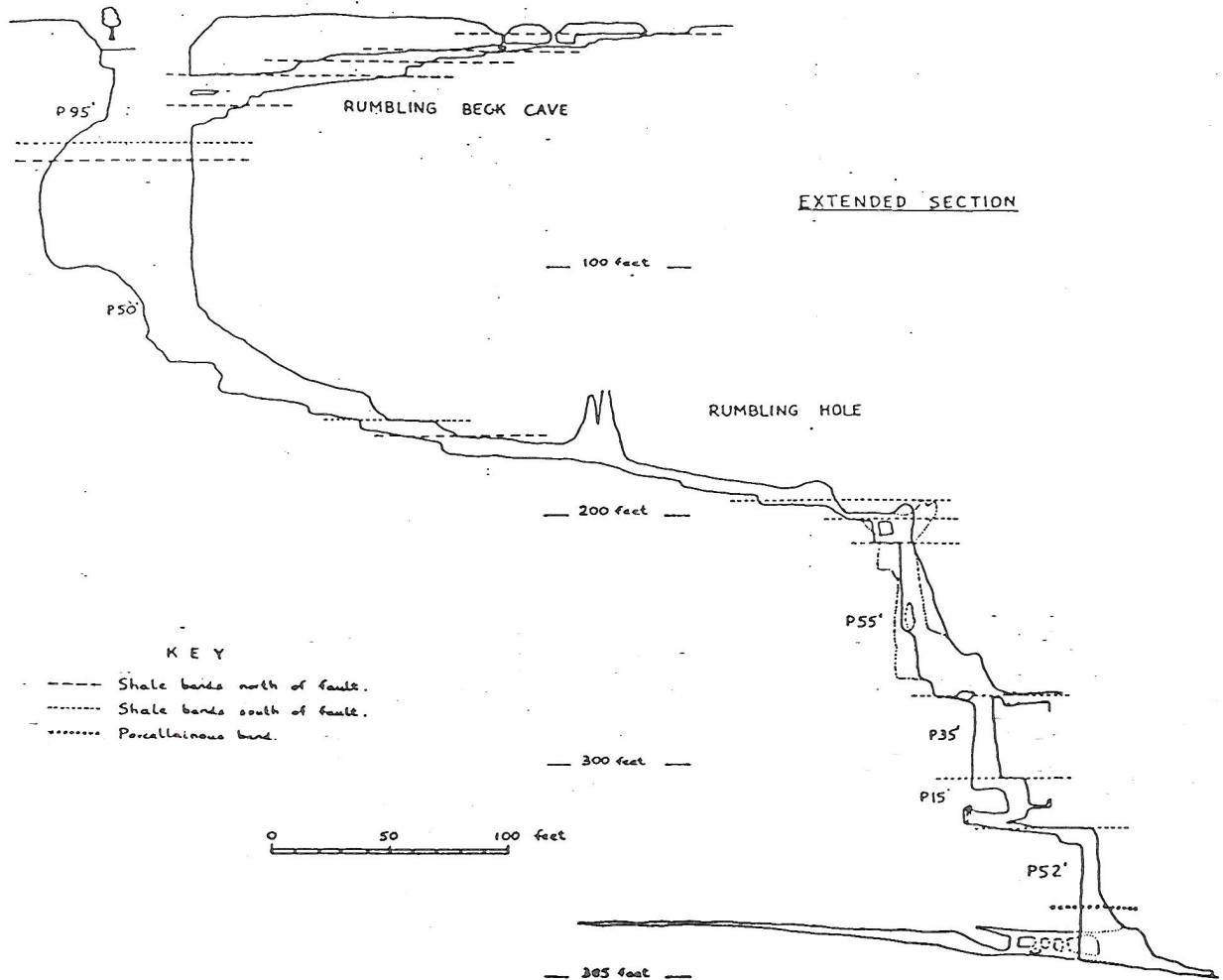
Several more sporadic trips were made during March but only in early May was the choke re-investigated. Rod Knapp and Jon Hallam (UCLSS) did some delicate gardening with a crowbar and got through to a small chamber ending in a "hopeless sump", and a smaller side chamber with an equally unpromising pool which was probed feet-first and found to go on, but with no air space.

Due to several factors ICCC did not return until Whit Monday, but alas it was then too late. In Mud Hall they met a BPC party who told them a little story..... On the preceeding Saturday a BPC group had gone to investigate the original "sump" on the GG survey and had passed the canal and choke to IC's second sump. Here one of the BPC group accidentally knocked a flake off the roof of the sump to reveal a small space. A bit of work produced a useable air



RUMBLING HOLE RUMBLING BECK CAVE

LECK FELL NGR. SD671791 Altitude 1160'
I.C.C.C.-U.C.L.S.S. Survey 1968 C.R.G. Grade 4B.



space so that they could pass through and promptly walked into, "the most important find in GG since the discovery of Hensler's Passages". When finally surveyed this quarter mile of new passage was found to go in a SE direction right under Clapham Bottoms to end only a few hundred feet from the terminal lake in Ingleborough Cave. IC's chagrin on having just missed the "discovery of the decade", can hardly have been more acute.

Meanwhile in June 1968 ICCC returned to St Pierre de Chartreuse, again with permission to enter the Dent de Crolles system for tourist trips. The resulting pitch/route descriptions in the LUCC Journal were based on P Chevalier's surveys, and although described for ladders they remained as one of the few comprehensive English Language guides available of the system until quite recently. ICCC's main diving man Phil Collett went with two CSS members at the invitation of the Speleo Club de Paris to dive resurgences in Turkey.

Perhaps because of having been beaten to the prize in GG after all their considerable work there, IC abandoned the Gill during 1969. The only major extensions of the year were to the Lyle Cavern High Level Series in Lost Johns, done in conjunction with HWCPC. However in diving Phil Collett was breaking new ground. With James Cobbett (BEC), Phil dived the main rising at Ilam Hall, Derbyshire, penetrating a dicey boulder choke to enter a gently descending bedding-plane passage going upstream, which they explored for 26m to a depth of about 10m.

In Notts Pot Phil dived the static sump - although both the nearby up- and down-stream sumps had been explored, this was still uninvestigated. About 3m in he met a cross rift about 10m long and very tight but at one point just wide enough to allow descent to a depth of about 7m whereupon he returned saying that "on the whole the prospects are fairly hopeless". In the light of recent results the NPC obviously did not agree.

In 1970 Tony Waltham led eight UCLSS and three ICCC on the British Karst Research Expedition to the Himalayas. Notable results of this were the exploration and survey of the spectacular Harpan River Cave in Nepal, and an equally spectacular cock-up when dye-testing near the sacred Achabal Spring in the Indian Kashmir. They inserted a large quantity of rhodamine B into a small sink, but unfortunately the underground hydrology was not as they thought, for two days later the marble lined pool in the temple gardens turned blood red; the expedition left hastily for the border.

With a change of editor the LUCC Journal lay somewhat dormant during 1970. Its absence was partly filled by a lesser rag calling itself the "University of South Kensington Caving Clubs News" - an ICCC/CCCC newsletter with Lloyd Tunbridge as editor. As far as I am aware it only managed one edition before 1971 and the revitalised LUCC Journal got under way.

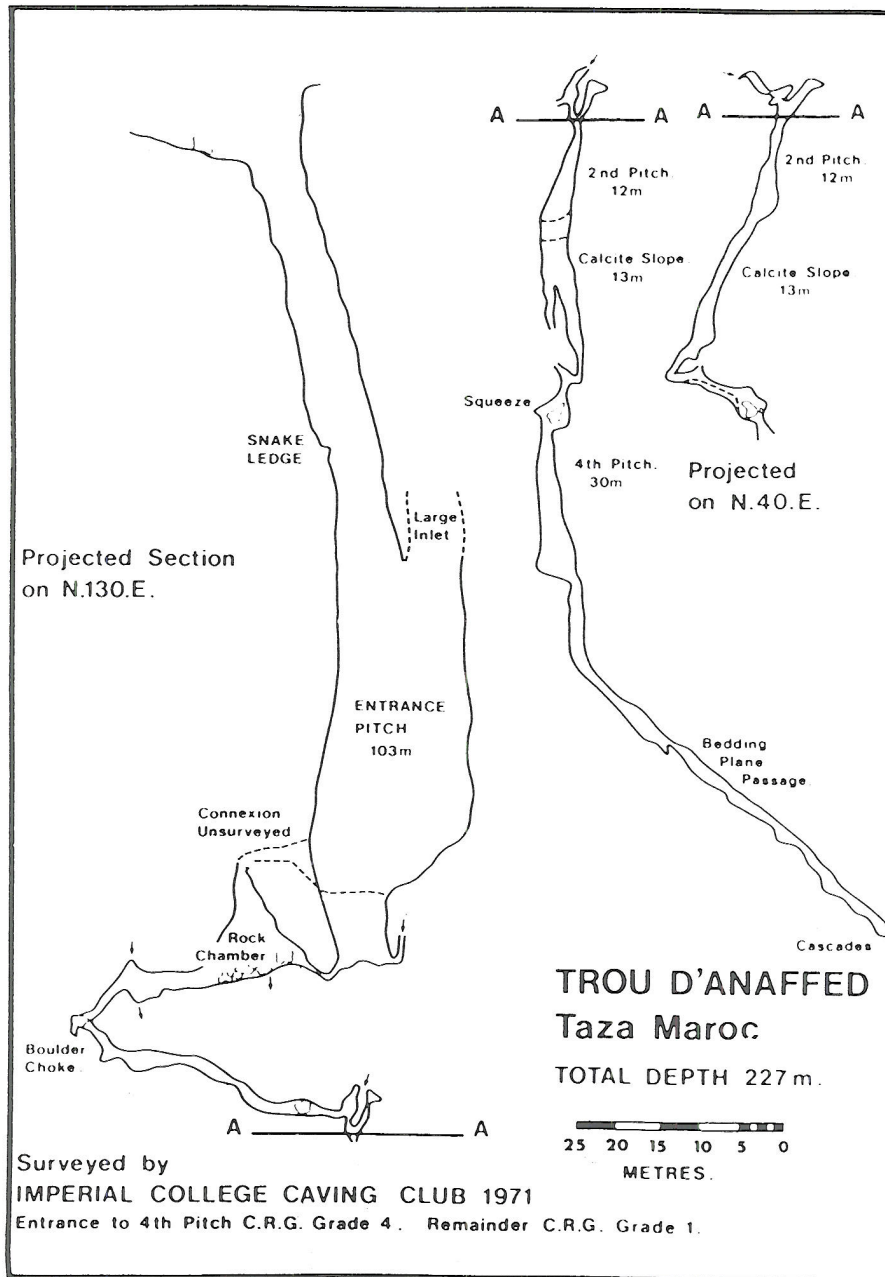
Despite considerable efforts, 1971 saw no major discoveries at home. ICCC and CCCC cavers scaled a massive 25m aven at the end of SE Passage in Lost Johns, but were only rewarded with a meagre 60m of new passage. In November Phil Collett dived upstream in the Gavel terminal sump to find a pleasant phreatic tunnel with a considerable flow of water, but was stopped from continuing beyond 50m by shortage of line (by 1987 this sump has still not been extended beyond a flooded shaft whose depth effectively blocks further progress).

In the Summer of 1971 ICCC originally planned to go to Peru but due to a variety of reasons this was postponed. Instead they went to Morocco which was thought would be "useful for training purposes". The nine men plus camp followers under the leadership of Dave Prime were all transported out in a heavily laden 35 cwt. transit crewbus which suffered considerable tyre trouble

despite being restricted to "good" roads. In contrast to the Himalaya expedition it was, as the report says:

"..... envisaged from the very beginning as being virtually non-scientific; its purpose merely to discover any caves we could in the High Atlas."

Which they did, surveying several new caves as well as others briefly investigated by a previous SUSS expedition, including Trou d'Anaffed which at -227m was the second deepest cave in North Africa.



Tony Waltham and Roger Bowser did not go, being down the Berger with MUSS and ULSA. In the LUCS Journal write-up of their trip (which exceeds the Morocco expedition report in length), ACW says:

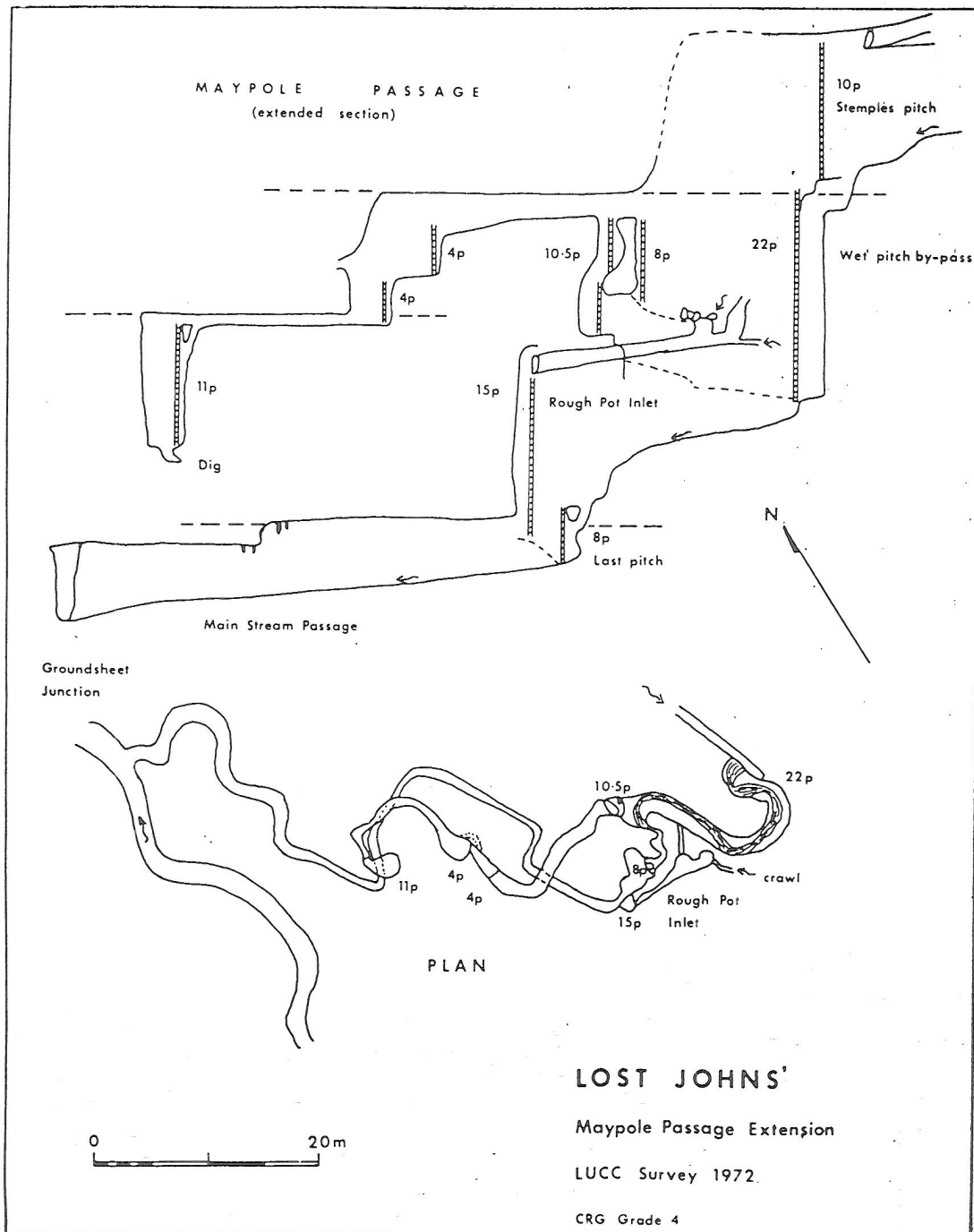
"A club could hardly have a finer summer excursion than a visit to the Berger - though there are only a handful of clubs in the country who could provide a suitable team"

A pity they had to go with other clubs and not ICCS. The write-up also includes the revealing little sentence (by the spanner bearer?):

"Tony Wa. rigged most of the pitches."

In 1972 the delayed IC Karst Research Expedition to the Peruvian Andes finally took place with six members and Rog Bowser as the leader. This was a highly successful expedition doing much pioneering speleological and geological work. Notable successes were the first bottoming and survey of Peru's and S America's deepest cave at -407m (the record still stands today), the first survey of Peru's (then) longest cave, as well as the exploration and survey of many other new caves.

Back at home exploration was also being done, including the discovery of Maypole Passage in Lost Johns, Keld Nook Pot in Kingsdale and a soon abandoned attempt to dig into "caverns measureless to man" at the bottom of an old mine shaft on Grassington Moor. the club also managed to persuade IC Film Soc. to make a film of IC cavers defying death in an epic Calf Holes-Browgill epic. Shot on 16 mm with minimal provision for film lights, only some came out - I wonder what became of it?

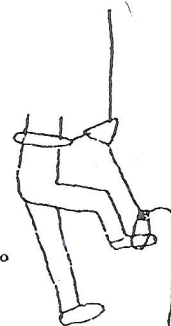




1: The ladder breaks



2: Tying the first overhand knot



3: Foot into loop

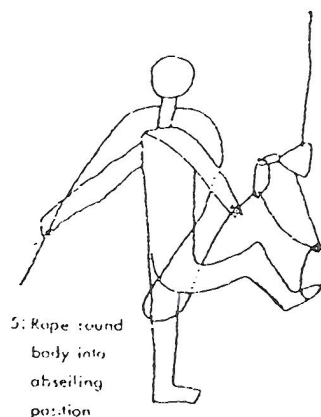


4: Tying the second overhand knot

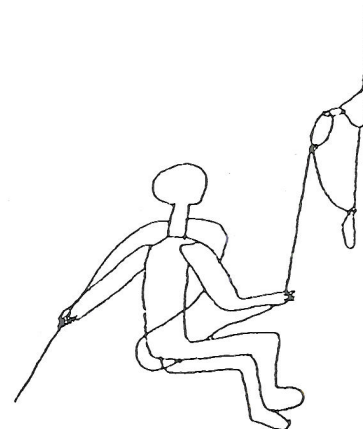
Reflecting the current advances in pitch work, the Lucc Journal of Spring 1973, for the first time described single rope techniques (of a sort!) as well as ICC/CCCC's latest maypoling/climbing activities, which read something like an English version of "Subterranean Climbers". During trips to the Far Eastern Passages in Gaping Gill it had been noticed that in wet weather considerable volumes of water descended from an aven above Avalanche Pot in Boulder Chamber.

Maypoling began at an aven immediately before Boulder Chamber but this met with failure. Resorting to aid climbing, they traversed out from Far East Passage to reach the central back wall of Boulder Chamber, and from here started bolting up the wall. At a point 21m up the wall directly above Avalanche Pot a restricted hole led to 50m of active keyhole-shaped passage. Some climbs followed, then some pools (with cave pearls), after which was another aven. Scaling 24m up this, a short traverse entered a superbly decorated grotto. From here more short climbs and traverses led to yet another aven. Off to one side of this, the water was followed up climbs of 10m and 11m, a short section of passage and a further 10m climb. Yet more traverses and climbs finally reached a strongly draughting, but hopelessly tight calcited hole, requiring very liberal applications of Dr Nobel's Linctus. This point has since been shown to be within 3m of the surface and very close to Grange Rigg Pot.

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5: Rope round body into abseiling position



6: Abseiling down

At this point the fortunes of ICC briefly waned. Having plotted the rise of the club in the years up to 1973, part 2 will deal with its fall, near extinction and resurrection in the years up to the present.

As far as I am aware, no. 14 was the last LUCC Journal. Why it should have faltered is not clear although at this point the fortunes of ICCC, the leading London University Club, briefly waned, due at least in part to falling membership.

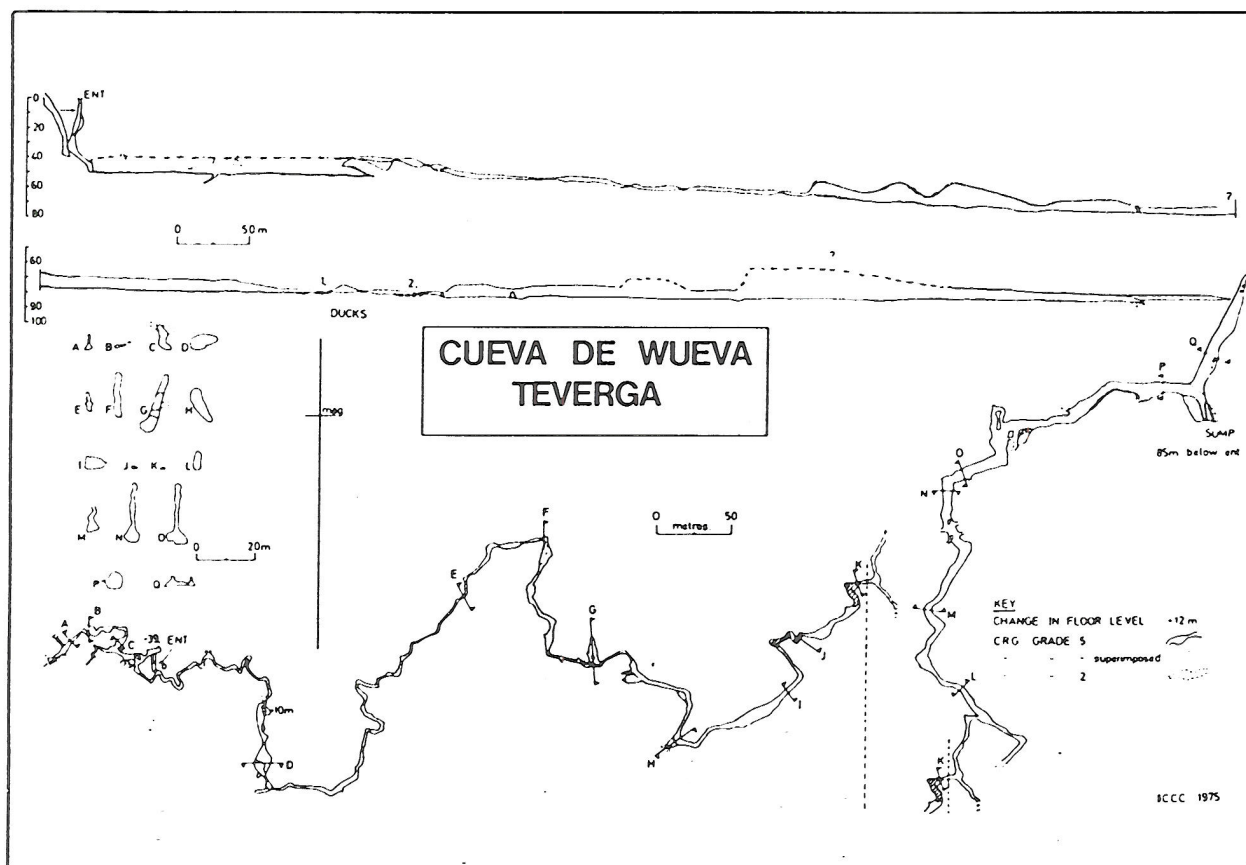
During the summer of 1973 the club was still in a healthy and active state, but in Autumn the new intake was low and coincided with many of the most active members leaving college. The club log book recording the freshers' trip (to Yorkshire) sums it up:-

"Poor turn out of freshers, only 3, even poorer turn out of past members, only Agro."

Things did not improve, even the Dinner Meet (held in March at the Star Hotel, Wells) attracted only seventeen people. Added to this were various van problems, not the least being national petrol rationing during November which forced a Yorkshire meet to be diverted to Mendip.

The start of the 1974-75 session did not bring the hoped for flood of new people, only three, and in November a Yorkshire meet was again diverted to Mendip due to lack of interest. However for the few who did go, the Friday night session in the New Inn, Priddy ended up with a clandestine, midnight trip into Swildons. Emerging at dawn they managed to sleep off the night's excesses in the Wessex Hut - paying only day rates - one definite advantage of nocturnal caving.

However, despite the slow start, things did eventually pick up, and by the summer enthusiasm was such that a expedition set off to the Cantabrian Mountains of Spain. Led by John Millar, the 13 person group was the first to visit this particular area (80 km W. of the Picos) where their discoveries included three major caves with a total of 3 km of cave passage. Several very promising leads were found, and so plans were made to return the following year.



The return to Britain and the start of the 1975-76 year at last saw the long-awaited increase in membership, which fate conspired to try and erradicate soon after. A Saturday morning of the November Yorkshire meet saw parties set off down sunset and Meregill. Meanwhile, on the surface, torrential rain suddenly swept the Dales. In Sunset the party of five had reached the foot of the 20m pitch when the water began to rise and they started out. Their subsequent battles against raging floods were made even more exciting as, one by one lamps failed or were lost (all were Premier carbides - no club cells as yet). They eventually emmerged safely with only one guttering carbide between them. Meanwhile down Meregill the flood pulse hit as the three man party were descending the second pitch. After desparate struggles on ladders, a near drowning and a chilly enforced nine hour wait between pitches they finally got out, the abandoned gear being recovered the next day. It was fortunate that rescue was not required as the CRO was already overstretched with nine other incidents on that very damp Saturday.

However in March the CRO's services were needed when someone fell about 5m from a stemple in Pippikin sustaining back injuries. Five hours after the hue and cry had been raised by the other person on their two man trip, he was out having escaped with no broken bones but a much bruised back and pride.

During Easter 1976 three members went to Spain to investigate an area about 100 km from the previous area, and here they discovered several hundred metres of new cave during their three week stay. Later, as planned the summer saw a return to the Cantabrian Mountains by eight members led by Nick Shaw.

On the afternoon of August 28th. Paul Romeril, Nick Towers, Derek and Mark Tringham entered the Cueva Vegalonga to explore the sump. Derek dived with enough air for about 30 minutes, intending to explore the sump for about 10 minutes and maintaining contact with the surface through the line. He maintained contact for a few minutes before this was lost. After 10 minutes had elapsed his brother, Mark prepared to enter the sump being first back up diver. Using the same line he searched the sump for 15 minutes maintaining contact with the surface through the line, and going about 30m in and 15m down. He found no trace of his brother.

At this point the flow rates in the cave noticeably started to increase and visibility in the sump became virtually zero. As a consequence further rescue attempts were prevented but a spare lamp was secured to the line and emmersed in the sump. All then evacuated the cave in high water conditions and contacted the Spanish authorities. Local cavers arrived and some Spanish cave divers were flown in by the Spanish Army. Despite poor visibility they extensively explored the spacious sump but eventually, due to the difficulties of the sump, and considering the time that had elapsed the rescue attempt was finally called off. The expedition returned to Britain shortly after.

Derek was a very experienced caver who had caved extensively abroad and was a respected and competant cave diver. His death was a sad loss to the club.

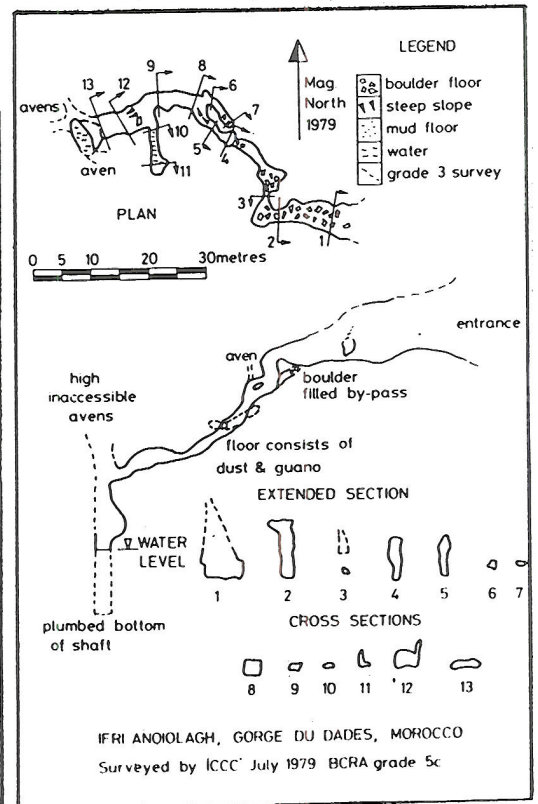
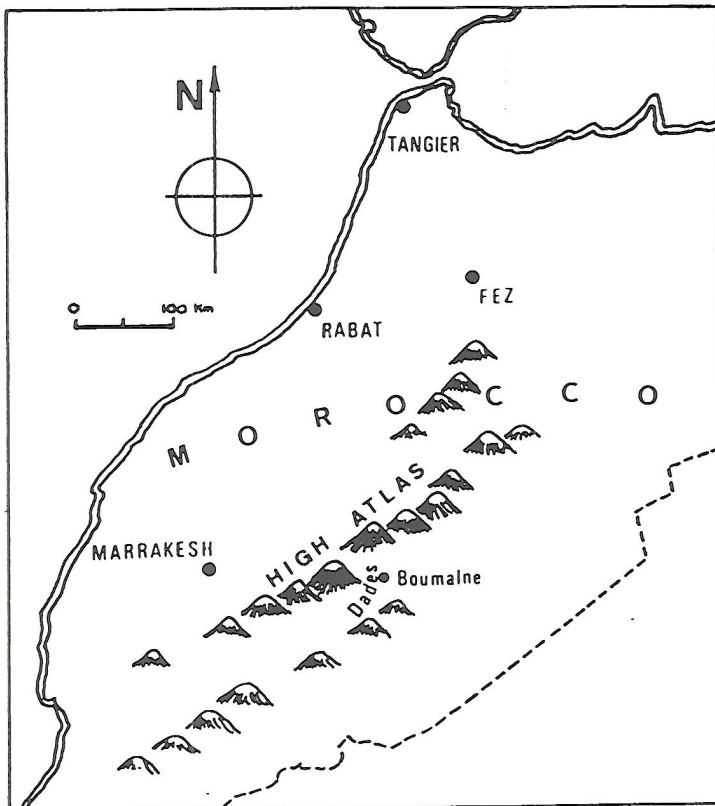
With the summer's loss casting a black shadow over things, the start of the 1976-77 year saw the club's fortunes at their lowest ebb. The active membership totalled only one - Clog - the other member having been injured in a car accident and so disinclined to take part in any physical events. An immediate, large recruitment was vital.

Thankfully freshers' activities attracted many new members and the club was pulled back from the brink. With a severe lack of experienced members the year's events were pretty chaotic but were nevertheless well attended. There were also many private trips in conjunction with other London clubs.

Numbers continued to increase in 1977 despite half the club nearly being wiped out when Clog rolled the van in Yorkshire. The only other "misshap" of the year was a Mendip trip getting snowed in at the old MCG hut for five days with little food but a barrel of beer! Particularly heavy usage throughout this and the previous year, together with a growing acceptance of SRT forced much gear to be replaced and a large quantity of new Terylene SRT rope to be bought. Also the stock of club cells (lead-acid and Nicad) was now being regularly enlarged at a rate of two new cells per year.

1978 again saw a good crop of freshers, although again some were nearly wiped out on a very wet Yorkshire meet (f**k the gear boys, what about me!!!), so that now the club was again at full strength (20-30 members). In addition there was finally a more even spread of years and departments. Hopefully this would avoid some of the previous problems such as half the club leaving when Physics III graduated, or that most cavers were from RSM who usually gained employment overseas and so were unable to participate after graduating.

The highlight of the year was the summer 1979 expedition to the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco, a venture prompted by the results of the 1971 expedition. Led by John Harrison the nine man group concentrated on the gorges of Dades and Todra North of Boumalne. Many small solution passages and rock shelters were found but no large systems. Unfortunately, more impressive were the finds of the IC S&G-based expedition to Turkey which found several 200m deep potholes in the Taurus Mountains.



With a large, active membership, trips in 1979-80 were both numerous, well-attended and diverse with trips to Devon, Portland and, at Christmas, Belgium. The Dinner Meet held in Mendip was exceptionally well attended, with four ex-presidents (two having travelled over 800 miles just to be present). Large amounts of equipment were purchased during the year, in particular the club now reckoned to have sufficient numbers of lamps to eliminate the need to hire lamps externally.

Looking back over the years covered so far, it is interesting to note the changing trends within the club; trends which largely reflect the changing attitudes in British caving as a whole.

By the mid 1960s much of underground Britain had been thoroughly explored, at least all the more obvious sites, but there was still considerable potential for individual clubs, even those removed from the caving regions, to make new discoveries. In its early days much of the clubs activities were thus centred around original exploration in Britain. The ever present Tony W. seems to have rather dominated the club in these years and clearly fostered "speleology" as opposed to "caving" ie. not doing just "the old tourist trips". In all fairness many of the so-called tourist trips were probably very unrewarding, or at least fairly unenjoyable for many people with few wetsuits, troublesome carbide caplamps and the dubious joys of long ladder climbs up wet pitches. A Feb '67 trip down Car Pot by 4 ICCG (third time to the bottom for some) took 13 hours, and the cave still had to be completely de-laddered on another day - this sort of time scale was normal at that time.

As original home exploration became harder to achieve (viz. scaling efforts and lengthy digs) the club, in line with many in Britain, increasingly turned its attention abroad. "Expeditions" progressed from tourist trips to France towards pioneering work in remote regions of the world, as now. Simultaneously with the decline in emphasis on home exploration, and fostered by wetsuits, club cells and ultimately the acceptance of SRT/dry gear caving (although by 1980 the general standard of SRT competence was still poor) there was a rise in sport caving down progressively harder caves.

So to continue; with a large proportion of the previous year graduating numbers again dwindled in 1980-81 but it was still a reasonably active year with some hard caving done (Penyghent Pot and the like). A week tour to Belgium planned for Christmas was unfortunately abandoned through lack of interest in favour of a private Yorkshire trip. Similarly a summer tour/expedition did not materialise, although some time was spent in the Dales.

Autumn 1981 didn't attract many new faces but a large, very active group remained from the previous year. The standard of hard caving increased with deep vertical descents and the club's first free dive trip to Swildon's 9 and the Swildon's Long Round Trip. Dry gear/SRT caving was becoming de rigueur, and, after it was proposed to mount an expedition to Astraka, Greece with its deep shafts, a SRT course was arranged at the now sadly-missed Whernside Cave and Fell Centre. Here much useful experience was gained and we were introduced to those wonderful things - cowstails! Of course, certain die-hards still maintained that rebelay could be accomplished adequately by simply crooking an arm round the belay as the descender was unclipped from the top rope. That was until the Dinner Meet when he fell down the last pitch (~10m) in Swinsto sustaining multiple fractures to the right arm and numerous cuts and bruises. He was assisted to the surface by other members of the party and the CRO was not required, although the dinner was a bit delayed.

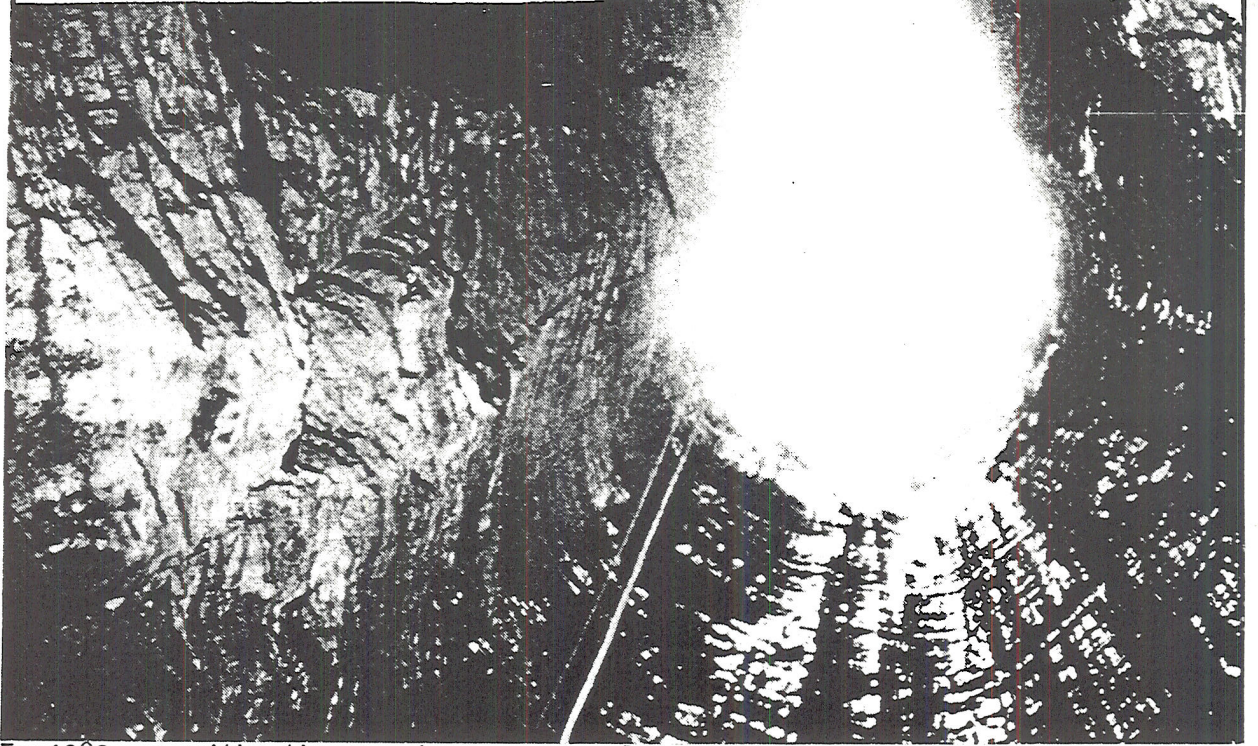
The culmination of this very successful year was the expedition to Greece by eight members, where, despite considerable hardship and attacks by wild dogs -

"Gary was bitten by a dog, by a dog,

On Tymphe moor baht 'at....."

...many new shafts were discovered and surveyed. These included the first full descent of Tripa Pago-Palati (The Ice Palace) one of the few caves in the region to show any horizontal development. A descent by all expedition members was also made of the 435m deep Epos Chasm, in itself no mean undertaking for a small college club.

The 120m entrance shaft of Tripa Tis Nifis, Astraka, Greece. Photo by Chris Backhouse.



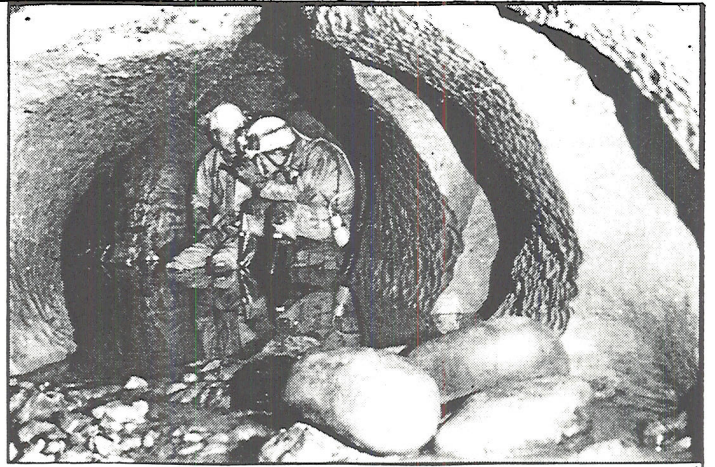
In 1982, as with the previous year, a large part of the club remained at college and the caving standard remained high. Whilst the ladder vs. SRT debate ranged back and forth in "Caves & Caving", ICCC was totally sold onto ropes, or even "string" after the struggles with thick, heavy Bluewater in Greece. Perhaps somewhat over confident after the mega-shafts of Astraka, during the winter of '82-83 there were a couple of close calls in deep, cold, wet Yorkshire pots (Meregill).

The conclusion of another year's hard caving was a trip to Vercors, France for three weeks in the summer. The descents done make an impressive list; Ramats, Fumant, Trisou, Gournier, Grotte de la Luire, Jean Noire, Malaterre, Pot du Loup, Puits St. Vincents, Trou qui Souffle, Fromagère, and so too did the number of bottles of wine that were drunk between the nine people there!

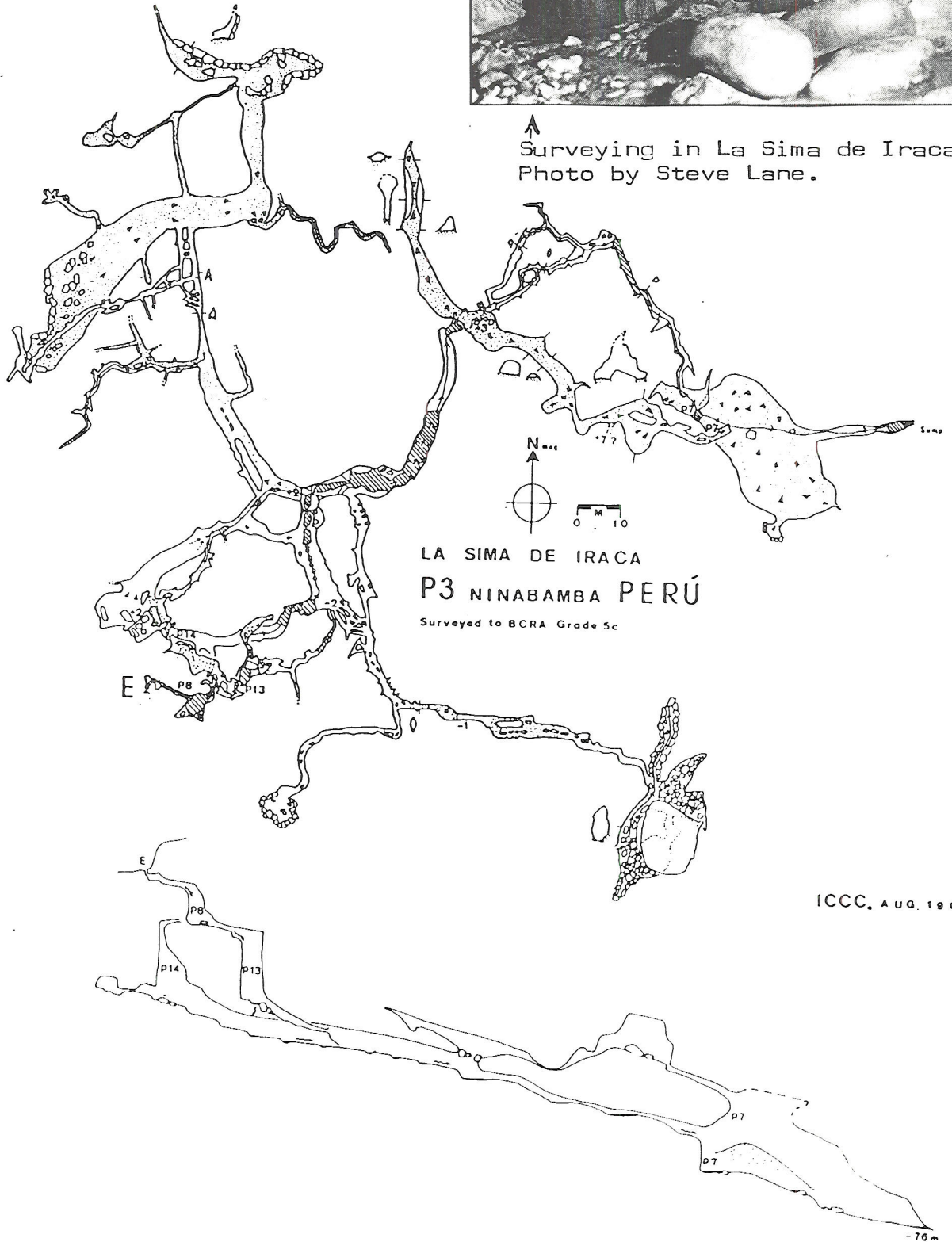
With a large number of people graduating in 1983 it was vital to restock with new members, and thankfully the haul was good. Flooded with novices the standard of caving took a brief step back but quickly rallied as enthusiasm was high and rope techniques were being taught from the very start. Again a Whernside course put the finishing touches, but only at the cost of several very exasperated Whernside instructors. Also during 1983-84 the current club newsletter was started up.

With enthusiasm and competence high amongst a large active group, further swelled by ex-students, summer 1984 again saw a trip to France. This was based initially in the Vercors followed by a move across to Chartreuse for trips in the Dent de Crolles. This was followed by an eight person expedition to Peru, prompted initially by the 1972 expedition but based further north. Notable successes included the exploration and survey of Peru's longest cave (2.5 km) and several other caves associated with the main river cave system.

The Autumn 1984 intake was low but with a strong membership from the previous year enthusiasm and expertise remained high in social as well as caving activities. Hence in addition to the traditional Dinner Meet, there was also a Christmas Dinner, again delayed, this time because of the club giving assistance at a climbing incident at Malham Cove. The culmination of another very active year was a return to St. Pierre de Chartreuse and the Dent de Crolles system (still guided by the description in LUCJ Journal No. 4). This was followed by a move across to Autrans, Vercors for the long-planned assault on the Gouffre Berger. In little more than a week this 1100m deep cave was rigged and derigged (admittedly with some assistance from a group of Aussies) with 9 out of 11 members getting to the "bottom".



↑
Surveying in La Sima de Iraca
Photo by Steve Lane.



1985-86 was a very varied year. In February IC cavers had the unhappy task of giving assistance at a serious incident in Longwood-August. The Dinner Meet was enlivened by sudden flooding which resulted in three parties being delayed; the first briefly held up in Disappointment Pot, the second assisting another club to get out of Meregill, and the third sitting out floods in Penyghent Pot before finally emmerging safely under their own steam and with their own gear. This was the first incident involving the CRO (who were more concerned by three other more serious incidents) since 1976.

Then of course there was ITV News coverage and headlines in the Standard about a "bizarre new twist" in the so-called Missing Bride Case, when ICCG cavers were called in by Hertford CID to investigate mines and "caves" near Potters Bar.

Finally 1986 ended with another expedition; eight people going to the Canadian Rockies. Two months of bush wacking and running away from bears produced new cave finds in several different areas.

And so we arrive at the twenty-fifth year, 1986-87. The results of the Canada expedition were presented at the BCRA conference at Manchester University, while in the spring ICCG held its own in-house "exploration symposium" slide-show. The two freshers trips (both to Yorkshire because of the SSSI problems on Mendip) attracted so many people that a third novice trip was required (S. Wales). However strangely few new people maintained their initial interest and so missed out on an excellent Christmas Dinner (at the Brass Cat, Settle) an event now firmly established on the calender. The spring term saw much caving done despite considerable van troubles, whilst the very lively Dinner Meet was for once thankfully incident free. The 1987 summer tour broke new ground with the club's first ever trip to Italy. Three weeks were spent based around the Corchia system in the Apuan Alps, and the very enjoyable trip saw everyone bottom this, Italy's deepest cave. A fine end to another years caving with Imperial College Caving Club.

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Understandably the nucleus of British Caving has always been centered in the Yorkshire Dales, and ICCG, being so far distant from Yorkshire, or indeed any caving area has always been somewhat removed from where the action is. This is probably inevitable. Nevertheless throughout its history ICCG has always been more closely allied to Yorkshire, and today when nearly every London club is established in Mendip or South Wales, IC alone in the capital has its heart in the Dales. It remains shut off from the northern caving scene and yet refuses to align itself only with southern clubs. I don't think it will ever become one of the few "Great University Clubs" - not from any failing on the part of its membership, but purely because of its geographic situation.

Backed by a "rich" college exploration board and students union (if in these days any college society can be said to be even adequately funded) ICCG will hopefully continue to do what it does best. That is, to competantly, intelligently and sensibly introduce people to caving in all its aspects, to train them in modern caving techniques, to do hard caves in Britain and abroad, and to mount pioneering expeditions throughout the world. In addition it has never been a closed university society, but it always has, and I hope always will continue to be, open to certain non-students and in particular to its past members. Finally, though I don't see much evidence of it at present, there is no reason why, with so many intelligent scientists and engineers, we, or at least individuals can make their mark doing good speleology as well as the "old tourist trips". Anyway, whatever happens in the forthcoming years, I'll look forward to reading about it in another 25 years.

POTHOLOGERS AID HUNT FOR BODY

Five potholers have been called in by police to search for the body of Mrs Anne Lock, 30, who disappeared 24 days ago, in the labrynth of underground wells and caverns a mile from her home.

The potholers, from Imperial College, London, yesterday carried out a feasibility study of the Swallow Holes at Brookmans Park, Hertfordshire, pending a full search.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH
THURSDAY JUNE 12, 1986