

IMPERIAL COLLEGE CAVING CLUB



NEWSLETTER

No.2/Jan. '84.

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I.C. CAVING CLUB COMMITTEE 1983/84

President: Clive Orrock
Treasurer: Jennie Gilbert
Secretary: Debbie Armstrong
Tackle Officers: Steve Lane
Mark Bown
Transport Officers:

WEEKLY MEETINGS are held on Wednesdays at 1.00 pm. in the Union Lower Lounge, Imperial College Union, Prince Consort Road, London, SW7 2BB, (Telephone: 01-589 5111).

1984 SPRING TERM CAVING MEETS

<u>Dates</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Hut</u>	<u>Special Permits, etc.</u>
Jan. 13-15	Mendips	Belfry (B.E.C.)	
Jan. 27-29	Yorkshire	Northern Pennine Club	Penyghent Pot.
Feb. 10-12	S. Wales	Whitewalls (C.S.S.)	OFD, Agen Allwedd, Dan yr Ogof
Feb. 24-26	Derbyshire	Orpheus C.C.	
Mar. 9-11	Yorkshire	Northern Pennine Club	
Mar. 23-30	Yorkshire	Northern Pennine Club	Magnetometer, Lost Johns, Pippikin

DERBYSHIRE - 4-6th November, 1983

by Charlie Cawthorne

Once again the troops gathered outside the Union for a weekend in Derbyshire with thoughts of what could happen this time following previous disasters in this part of the world. Despite a slow start we made good time and, following eats at a good chippie (on the A610 at Codnor), we arrived at the Jug & Glass at around 10pm., where we met Jim 'Twinkletoes' Briggs and Karl Skinner. Arrival at the Orpheus was followed by some members attempting to pass through the bench seat, with some success. However, Dave W's attempt to squeeze under the stair by the difficult route was less successful. The Hawaiian music was not well received.

Saturdays breakfast was accompanied by more Hawaiian music. We were joined

in Buxton by Helen and then spent a lot of time and a lot more money in Caving Supplies. Eventually we left CS with handfuls of gear and suitably lightened pockets, and set off towards the Oxlow/Giants area. Trips were organised down Nettle Pot, Oxlow and Giants, and Clog joined us from Norwich via the Wanted Inn.

Karl, Helen, Nigel (a first timer underground) and myself went on a straight forward trip into Giants going down via Crab Walk. I finally managed to get into the section of cave below Geology Pot for the first time in five years. However, progress was halted at Spout Hall - East Canal was very high and backed up this far. Returned via the Upper Series where Karl wanted to descend to Crab Walk through No Way passage - a 45° downslope tube filled with calcite which tightens further down. Nigel coped well with the trip.

The Oxlow party covered the first four pitches by ladder and had a look in New Oxlow. Both parties returned sometime before the third group which went down Nettle. After changing, it was decided to retire to the Wanted Inn to wait for the Nettle party. Clog and myself jumped into Clog's car which was parked a short distance behind the van. Before Clog set off, the van began reversing then it stopped - no problem. Then it started reversing again and Clog and myself watched helplessly as the van kept coming and scored a direct hit on Clog's car. Clog's reaction - creased up laughing. The damage was inspected at the pub. The van was non the worse for the bump, but Clog's bonnet had lost a chunk which exposed bare metal/rust underneath. Clog appeared to be more concerned about a small bird which was caught in the grille. After a couple of jars in the pub we were joined by Chris, Jim, John and Simon from Nettle. The latter two coped well and thoroughly enjoyed their first SRT trip. Returned to the Jug & Glass before seeing the last of the Orpheus fireworks (commercial and makeshift - the paint tin variety seemed to be the best).

Sunday saw a return to the Oxlow/Giants area, with the Oxlow and Giants parties from Saturday doing Giants and Oxlow respectively. The slope below the first pitch in Oxlow seems to be constantly on the move and the journey between the first and second pitches is fun! Chris, Gary, John and Simon headed off towards Eldon Hole for an SRT trip but were met by a local who showed them the way to Eldon (they were further over on the hillside than they wanted to be) but then went on to explain that permission was required to get up to Eldon - so this trip was changed to a visit to the tea-shop in Buxton. The Giants party found that someone had pissed off with a club ladder and had left a distinctly inferior one instead. They decided to leave it there. Returned to the Orpheus to clear up and set off for London arriving in time for a jar in the Union.

YORKSHIRE - 18-20th November, 1983

by Mark Bown

Twas a bad affair, little good drinking and caving was to be had! Friday saw the departure from Beit of two, yes two, tranny vans. Having avoided the terrors of the M1, cutting up north by the A5, tragedy struck as the Union van had a blow-out just outside Sheffield - but for the grace of Steve Lane, neither of the vans would have got to a Boozer. Then Steve sped off into the distance to pick up Helen from Leeds Station, having to miss the pub (what a shame). Just as the new wheel was put on the other van the AA turned up, their services being gratefully received by a wimpy little man who crawled out from under a stone when they turned up. Because of a necessary delay at a Shipham's Pub for the Union van the rented Swan Van arrived somewhat earlier at Greenclose House (N.P.C.). The piss-heads having a distinct advantage in the pit-race as most of the pits were in the Union van.

Saturday, in the classic mode started very late, being held up by a not so quick trip down to 'Grocklesport'. But who was to go where? - In vain we looked for a leader. "I don't care, they'll go where they want to anyway, so whats the point!" El President Orrock was heard to mutter. Out of the confusion three trips were botched together - Roaring (purring) Hole, Tatham Wife and Cherry Tree Hole. A fair trip was had, but nowt special.

The second tragedy was at hand. Keith (in the chippie) had run out of specials!! The unfortunate deprived parties sulked off to the Hill Inn where great fun was had by most defacing correspondence to foreign climes. The evening ended up in the 'happy' crowd forming two cliques:

1. those pissed, singing dirty songs and with transport,
 2. those not pissed, not singing dirty songs and without transport,
- half of the former departing without any of the latter, the remainder of the former returning swamped with the whole of the latter.

Sunday started somewhat earlier than Saturday, parties being reluctantly guided down Rowten, Bull Pot and Ireby Fell. As in all good stories, bad luck comes in threes, with Steve (bend-a-van inc.) Lane being attacked by a tree in a ditch, the lovely white Swan van being 'reformed'.

The overall quality of the trips may be summed up in the passing comment "It weren't as good as Derbyshire!" (My God! What impression of the finest caving area in G.B. are we giving the Freshers?).

Vows were taken by all not to lead any more 'namby' trips this year and to return at Christmas for the terrors and pleasures of Grade V's in West Kingsdale.

SOUTH WALES - 2nd-4th December, 1983

by Clive Orrock

Members present:

Chris Birkhead	Clog	Harry Lock	Simon Sewerd
Charlie Cawthorne	Richard Collocott	Clive Orrock	David Warrington
Helen Cawthorne	Tony Dutton	Neill Pattinson	

Friday 2nd December saw our gallant heroes off on the road again, travelling westward to "the land of my Fathers" and all that. Having picked up Helen (and a few beers) in Newport all arrived safe and sound at Whitewalls on a crisp, clear night.

Saturday dawned equally crisp with everyone getting up at the disgustingly early hour of 8.30 to take photos and have the usual slop and slime breakfast. Reading the out-of-date magazines Simon was horrified to learn from the Sunday Times that a man's testosterone level peaks at eighteen, "So I'm nearly past it already", he wailed. Can't think what he's worried about - some of us are almost in our dotage!

Anyway, eventually all set off to S.W.C.C. to try and get into O.F.D. We managed to gain entry to Cwmdwr and so set off in two parties: Charlie, Helen, Harry and Dave; and Clive, Neill, Simon and Richard. Both groups were headed towards the confluence but O.F.D. being the maze that it is we never saw each other, although we did meet groups of Croydon C.C. in various stages of lostness. Eventually all emerged to catch a superb sunset - more photos.

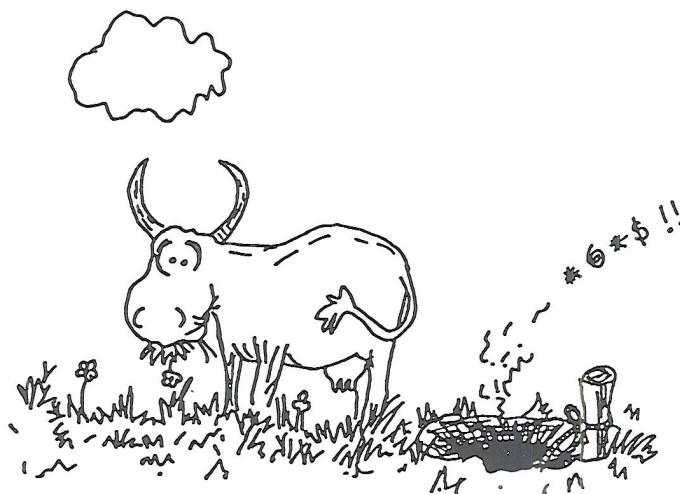
Chris and Tony remained on the surface. Chris showing our Aussie friend the beauties of our "green and pleasant land" through the bottom of a pint glass in the Ancient Briton. Once all were assembled again we returned to Whitewalls to find Clog - already well-aled and fast asleep in the front of his car. After reviving Clog (no easy matter) we set off to Crickhowell for "tucker", and a good nights session in The Bridge.

Thankfully on Sunday we only had to stagger as far as Aggie to get underground, Simon chasing sheep on the tramway with cries of "I'm still eighteen!". Clog, Chris, Charlie and Helen set off in usual Charlie fashion at a cracking pace to try and get round the outer and inner circles. Harry, Tony, Clive, Simon and Neill went for a general wander round - jogging the $\frac{1}{2}$ km up to the Cliffs of Dover and back, and then onto NW junction.

The outer/inner circle party eventually settled for just doing the outer circle (clockwise) because of shortage of time, and then still emerged nearly two hours late. Otherwise they had had no trouble and vowed to return again another day - whats with all the new enthusiasm for Aggie?

In conclusion a good weekend, superb weather and some good caving done,

though I don't think Tony fully appreciates English (or Welsh) fish 'n' chips
- but I gather English beer has his full approval.



(FROM MY DADDY WAS A CAVER)

LADDERS AND LIFELINES

by Steve Lane

In this article I am going to explain the basic ladder and lifeline techniques, those wishing to know more can look up the references given at the end. Perhaps I should say that I consider the use of ladders to be somewhat antiquated so this review is biased and I hope most of you will see why and learn S.R.T. techniques. However, a knowledge of ladder techniques is still essential.

The use of ladders and lifelines dates back to the beginning of caving history. It was the main method of descent into caves until S.R.T. began to develop in the late sixties and early seventies. American and continental cavers use S.R.T. almost exclusively these days but ladders and lifelines still linger on in Britain. Fortunately the more enlightened are becoming proficient in and enjoying the elegance of S.R.T.

Right, after criticising the use of ladders perhaps I'd better justify it. First lets look at the strength of the equipment in use. The weakest point of the ladder is the c-links which are capable of taking a load of around 300kg each. The wires can take a load of about 750kg although in some cases bad rigging can greatly reduce this amount. When the ladder is firmly (?) attached to a good belay at the top of the pitch then as only body weight is loading the ladder (say a maximum of 150kg) this arrangement looks safe enough. However, our intrepid explorer is only connected to the ladder by hands and feet, very often in muddy and tired conditions - this doesn't look so good. So just in case our hero (or heroine) should accidentally fall everybody always uses the magic lifeline properly. This lifeline is usually tied onto the same belay as the ladder and wrapped around the lifeliner in some weird and wonderful fashion reminiscent of a 1920's sewing machine - commonly called the 'traditional' technique (if technique is the right word!). This arrangement can be vastly improved on if a modicum of common-sense is used.

Lets look at the lifeline - the rope is good and strong (hopefully) but thats about all. The lifeline should always be attached to a separate and fail-safe belay and not to the ladder belay. The weakest link is the lifeliner him(her)self - using traditional techniques the lifeliner is in danger of getting badly hurt should the person climbing the ladder fall. A far better method of lifelining is to use some form of friction device to belay the climber. There

are a number of ways of doing this - using a figure eight, petzl stop or other descenders is a possibility. However, the simplest and the best is the Italian hitch which must be used on a large karabiner so that the knot can reverse. These friction devices allow easy arrest and controlled lowering of a fallen climber. The techniques can be equally well applied in a double rope situation for the first up and last down.

So to make the technique safe we should use a lifeline belayed directly to the rock with the lifeliner just controlling the dead rope - if all belays fail in this situation then only one person will die and not two. Ideally the climber should be wearing a sit harness and something to grab into the ladder with. This technique, however, still has inherent problems. The main one being that the rope moving up and down the pitch is in danger of snagging, there are also communication problems and two people are needed to operate the system.

A better and safer method is self-lining. In this situation a rope is rigged close to the ladder and the climber abseils down the pitch in S.R.T. fashion and then protects the ladder ascent using a jammer. Basic equipment consists of sit-harness, cowstails, descender, jammer and a few karabiners. This technique, however, demands a good knowledge of S.R.T. to make it safe - and, of course, with S.R.T. you don't have to carry all the ladders!

Ladder and lifeline techniques if done properly and safely are acceptable, but the vast majority of cavers, (or should I say people who go down caves), have little or no idea of how to rig pitches and use the gear safely. Perhaps the main reason for this is that large quantities of equipment need to be hauled underground for safe laddering - far better to carry just the rope and use S.R.T.

References:

1. Elliot, D., Cave Science, Vol. 9, No. 4, Dec. 1982, Equipment and Techniques. Several articles - very detailed and well worth buying.
2. Marbach, G., and Rocourt, J.L., Techniques de la Speleologie Alpine.

FRACTIONNEMENT ET DEVIATION

by Steve Gill

As a club we nearly always tend to rebelay our ropes in order to prevent any excessive abrasion and although this is an admirable practice it is both time consuming and uses alot of rope. I have therefore translated (roughly) from Techniques de la Speleologie Alpine the French comparison of rebelays and deviations in the hope that the club's pitch rigging will become more elegant (though just as safe).

REBELAYS

DEVIATIONS

Placement

The necessity of strong, well placed anchorages means that, except in a few exceptional cases, bolts must be used.

A rope knotted to a rebelay often lays very close to the rock and so sometimes another rebelay must be tied a few meters further down the pitch to remove the new rub point.

Natural anchors of little strength are easy to find. 6mm cord slings are light. It is advisable to use them with chocks. If one uses pitons the gain in weight is zero but they are a lot faster to place than bolts.

Crossing

The crossing of 'one' rebelay, even an exposed one, is a simple manoeuvre which demands little effort - it is merely time consuming. However, the crossing of large numbers of rebelays can take a very long time and when descending the chance of making a mistake exists especially if you are tired. When ascending the manoeuvre is not so difficult.

Crossing a deviation is a very fast manoeuvre. It is also very safe as one stays permanently on the rope preventing accidents due to mistakes in both the descent and the ascent.

Length of rope

The loss of rope in loops and knots when rebelaying is quite large (approx. 2-3 meters on average).

No loss of rope length - hence the use of this method for exploration.

Successive pitches & large pitches

The breaking up of pitches by multiple rebelays allows the fast ascent of a large team, its members being spread along the rope between rebelays. The reduction in rope length means that bounce due to rope stretch is reduced.

NONE of these advantages.

On large pitches, a large number of rebelays is comforting

(very subjective) in that they reduce the distance travelled in one go.

Conclusion

Rebelays and deviations are two methods which can be employed to rig a pitch without rope abrasion. The exclusive use of one or the other is not a good idea - both should be used with thought and care depending on the conditions met.

If a bolt is very poor think about using it for a deviation rather than a reelay.

Reference:

Marbach, G., and Rocourt, J.L., Techniques de la Speleologie Alpine.

VIEWPOINT

by Clive Orrock

A mere five years ago there were only three caves in the world deeper than 1000 meters. That was after the result of decades of 'modern' exploration using light alloy ladders and lifelines. Now there are about fifteen holes over this magical 1000m figure. These recent successes are undoubtedly due to the use of lightweight S.R.T. techniques allowing small, highly efficient teams to bottom deep caves safely.

Now, I do not intend to wade into the murky waters of the S.R.T. verses ladder/lifeline debate, but I should like to make some personal observations. Firstly, new-comers to caving in the club have been quick to appreciate the benefits of S.R.T., and this is only to be encouraged. In the past couple of years the use of rope techniques has enabled us, a small college club, to safely tackle caves which would have been impossible if we were restricted to ladders.

However, ladders will be around for a long time yet. Many clubs still extensively use ladders and lifelines, and in many cases their use is obviously preferred. On a trip, say, to Swildon's 1 and 2, who would generally rig the 20' for S.R.T.? Also as a means of introducing people to caving, and here I'm really thinking of University Freshers' trips, ladder and lifelines on short pitches are essential if one is to get people underground and basically 'sell' the sport. Finally it must be said that personal S.R.T. gear

can be expensive on the pocket which has only just recovered from the shock of buying a wetsuit.

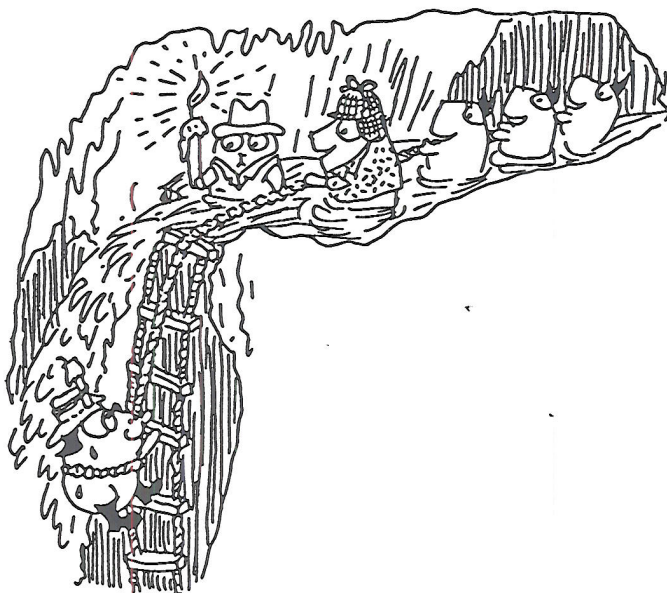
Thus although once hooked on S.R.T. you may vow never to climb a ladder again, the chances are that if you cave with this club or with any other, sooner or later you will be faced with a ladder.

S.R.T. practice; pitch rigging, general safety, etc., within the club I consider to be very good. The same cannot be said for our ladder and lifeline techniques. I am as guilty as any, but how often have you climbed a pitch without a lifeline: "It's only a short twenty-five foot", you say, but its enough if you fall. With the risk of sounding morbid, I quote from the 1982 C.R.O.(Cave Rescue Organisation) statistics:-

Sept. 11th, 19.01 Tatham Wife Hole	Caver fell 25' from ladder on first pitch. <u>No lifeline.</u> Severe bruising, muscle damage to leg.
Aug. 14th, 18.58 Ireby Fell Cavern	Caver fell 25' from ladder on first pitch. <u>No lifeline.</u> Serious chest injuries, including 11 fractured ribs. DIED during rescue.

Think, that could be you - or me, we've all done it at some time. Also, remember that when you climb a ladder you are often anchored by one, well-used and abused bolt - would you prusik on a rope fixed to one bolt? Equally well, lifelining is generally not done as well as it could be and often offers little more than psychological protection to the climber, and a positive threat to the lifeliner.

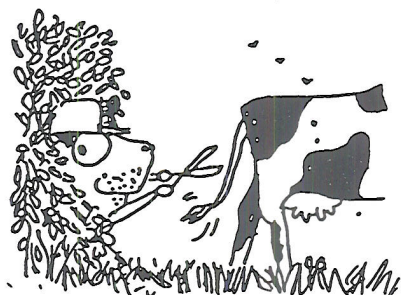
In short although ladders and lifelines are something of a Cinderella technique they are something everyone ought to know how to do and how to do properly. There's no excuse, and I intend to try and foster a greater awareness of ladders and lifelines (and their hazards) before we have an accident although thankfully by now we will be using S.R.T. more and more.



BOTH FROM

'CAVES AND CAVING'

NO. 21, AUG 1983.



DEBBIE'S TIT-BITS

Well here it is, what you've all been waiting for (?) - issue no. 2 of the I.C.C.C. Newsletter. I am pleased to say that the initial enthusiasm for the Newsletter hasn't worn off and there is no shortage of articles being produced - even if people do have to be reminded a couple of times. On the whole the first Newsletter got a very favorable reception which makes the effort put into producing it worthwhile. All that remains is to persuade a few of our newer members to contribute articles to the next Newsletter - after all we're not producing an O.A.P.'s journal!

A note to the editor.....

There appeared in the last issue of this Newsletter an unsolicited warning regarding 'Beaver' wetsuits supplied by Alan Steele of Inglesport.

May I establish that I did not complain about the quality of the garment, but merely pointed out to Alan that the neoprene was not in fact as hard wearing as he claimed. (After further use I have found it to compare more than favorably with other wetsuits I have owned.).

I have been a customer of Inglesport for some six or seven years now and have always found them most helpful and forthcoming with advice, information, etc.

Perhaps a little more investigative journalism, rather than depending on hearsay, could prevent further unwarranted attacks in the future?

Yours,

C. Birkhead

C.S. Birkhead

(The poison dwarf).

News of Members

As you all know, Steve Gill left for the Antarctic at the beginning of November and arrived at Halley in December. He left a message to say that if anyone would like to write to him he will write back next year when he gets the letter.

His address is:- Mr. S. Gill, Halley, British Antarctic Survey,
Port Stanley, Falkland Islands, South Atlantic.

The post of transport officer is still vacant if anyone would like to take up the job. Any takers see Clive.

A reminder from the Tackle Officers

Just remember that neither Clive nor Steve nor Mark can recognise everyone's personal gear so if it is loose in the Stores it may well be assumed to be club equipment and used accordingly. Personal equipment is not covered by Union insurance and although we will always try to look after peoples personal property it might get moved about if its in the way, so you leave stuff in the Stores at your own risk.

For Sale

(To a good home) Jaguar II rucksack, good condition, any reasonable offer - See Clive Orrock.

Finally for the Dinner Meet...

CAVING MATILDA

(to the tune of Waltzing Matilda)

Once a jolly caver came upon a swallet hole,
Under the shade of a rowan tree,
And he sang as he tied his ladder to a stalagmite,
"Who'll come a caving, Matilda, with me?"

CHORUS Caving Matilda, caving Matilda,
Who'll come a caving, Matilda, with me?

Repeat last two lines of verse

Far beneath the surface, deep inside that master cave,
"Where", said the caver, "can the through route be?"
And he sang as he heard the murmer of a waterfall;
"Who'll come a caving, Matilda, with me?"

Up came a cloud-burst, funneled down that swallet hole,
Up rose the water - two foot three,
And he sang as the water rose into his bedding plane;
"Who'll come a caving, Matilda, with me ?"

Up came the rescue, mounted on an ambulance,
Up came the wardens, one, two, three,
And they sang as they sat and waited for the sun to shine;
"Who'll come a caving, Matilda, with me?"

Far beneath the surface, deep inside that master cave,
There lies a caver, ne'er to be seen,
And his ghost may be heard as you pass by that swallet hole;
"Who'll come a caving, Matilda, with me?"
