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No. 11

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## EDITORIAL

Firstly I must apologise for the delay in publishing this issue of the journal. This has been principally due to lethargy on my part, which has finally been overcome by persistent threats from the old lags. The accumulation of articles was also very slow, with the result that the first one or two are now a little dated, and, being some months old, have not been metricated.

Many thanks are given to the contributors, and in particular to Rog Bowser who has also put a lot of work into the preparation of this issue. I should also like to thank Denise Kelsall, Chris Hawkins, and my wife for doing the typing.

Unfortunately rising production costs, particularly of the surveys, have forced us to raise the price of the journal again.

Finally I make another plea for articles, especially from the younger members of our clubs.

Jon Hallam

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In addition to the editor, J.R.Hallam, Engineering Geology Unit, Institute of Geological Sciences, Exhibition Rd., London, S.W.7, the following can supply copies of this journal:  
Rog Bowser, Chemical Engineering Dept., Imperial College, London S.W.7;  
Pen-y-Ghent cafe, Horton-in-Ribblesdale, Settle, Yorkshire;  
Bryan Ellis, 'Knockauns', Comwich, Bridgewater, Somerset;

Subscriptions (60p. per 4 copies inc. post.) should be sent to Rog Bowser.

## ST. CUTHBERTS 2

Most cavers that have visited the Mendip area will have heard of St. Cuthberts Swallet and its complex series of interconnecting passages; its tight entrance rift and the much talked about continuation of the cave towards Wookey Hole.

For many years the Cuthberts leaders have found quite a considerable amount of passage within the bounds of the main cave system. In doing so the length of the cave rose from Barringtons figure of about 8,000ft. to something over 15,000, possibly approaching 20,000ft.

On spasmodic occasions, attempts were made to pass the terminal sump which lies at the extreme south-east point of the cave. The sump presented quite considerable problems in that it was choked with gravel only leaving a few inches of space between floor and roof. In 1962 Wynne-Roberts and Thompson and others dug their way under water some 10ft. into the sump noting that its depth was only about 3ft. If only they knew that they were just some 2 - 3ft. from success.

Again in 1967 a combined B.E.C./C.D.G. operation resulted in the divers penetrating some 10ft. into the sump; only this time they dug across the path of the previous diggers. Following the operation the divers continued digging and because they mistook the compacted infilling for solid wall, turned to the right and were probably heading back towards the Sump Passage from which they started! The July flood of 1968 completely refilled the divers trench and so the dig was abandoned awaiting another group of diggers to take up the challenge.

Over the course of the last 5-6 years the Dining Room Dig was dug. This site was of particular interest as it gave the possibility of reaching the 2. streamway or at least reaching a fossil inlet system on the other side of the bounding fault line. In May 1968 several members of the B.E.C. and S.M.C.C. made mid-weekly trips to the site. After some considerable effort had been put into the dig, not without small breakthroughs into open passage, the dig was finally abandoned in September 1969.

The Dining Room Dig had reached a length of over 150ft. and was running parallel to the main fault line - the Gour-Lake Fault. Running concurrently with the D.R.D. was a plan for draining the sump by a series of dams and digging a way through the sump. Several dams were constructed both on the surface and underground, during the course of 1969. In September it was felt by many that priority should be given to the sump instead of the D.R.D.

One of the early visits to the sump area in late September 1969 saw cavers closely inspecting the end of the Gour Rift for possible ways over the top of the end of the Gour Rift. Several minor holes were re-checked but none were really promising. A chance inspection of the sump by this party noted that the water level of the sump had dropped by over 12". The water level in the cave was very low even by St. Cuthberts standards, and it was obvious that something odd was happening in the sump. During the course of the next few weeks an intensive effort was made both to dig out the infilling in the sump and to complete the overdue Gour Rift dam. When the dam was in operation and the water completely cut off from the sump it was found that the water left in the sump completely drained away within a few minutes. With this information the diggers effort intensified so much that during one week alone they made five trips to the site. The general trend of the dig was to the left following the seepage water. This led the diggers to the left of the original sump pool and finally to a very low arch into which the water ran. This continued for a few feet, dropping rapidly to what appears to be another constriction. The west point of the passage cannot be seen but when the dam was released the water flowed with great rapidity into the sump for a number of seconds before the pool backed up and sealed off the dig. To avoid the discomfort of digging through the hole the diggers decided to push to the right where the roof gently lifted and disappeared over the choke. On Friday evening, 31st. October, diggers continued at this point and soon broke through into a low bedding plane. After a 10ft. crawl they entered a passage, 10ft. wide by 30ft. high. From the debris that lay strewn along the passage it was obvious that this was Cuthberts 2. The digging party followed the passage for some 750ft. before returning to the surface and informing other members of the team.

The following day a full team descended the cave and pushed on for another 100ft. before the passage diminished in size and Sump II reached. Subsequent work at this sump showed that this could be baled and the water lowered several inches and possibly reduced to a duck. A diver attempted to dive II but found it too constricted.

A week later the dry spell ended with heavy rain in the area thus making entry into the new passage difficult. On one occasion the water entering the cave made it impossible to even allow time for the sump to drain before the Gour Rift dam was full.

To overcome the drainage problem, a number of pipes have been coupled together and laid through the sump thus allowing the stream to drain directly into the 2 streamway. Various other minor problems have been met and overcome, and at the time of writing it seems that the modifications have achieved little success. Even this engineering modification to Sump 1 does not exclude the possible danger of the sump closing off the escape route and refusing to drain away when the dams are placed in position.

The new passage just beyond Sump 1 is quite large as mentioned above, but after 100ft. the size begins to diminish to a 6ft. wide streamway with an average height of some 30ft. In places the roof reaches 80ft. or more. After some 600ft. a set of double pots is reached similar to those found in Swildons, only the second is much larger and deeper giving the cave a very wet pitch. Several high level holes have been maypoled without any success although the high points in the roof have yet to be reached. The fall of passage is probably in excess of 30ft. giving the depth of the cave at 430ft.+ with over 100ft. further descent to Wookey Hole.

D. J. Irwin.

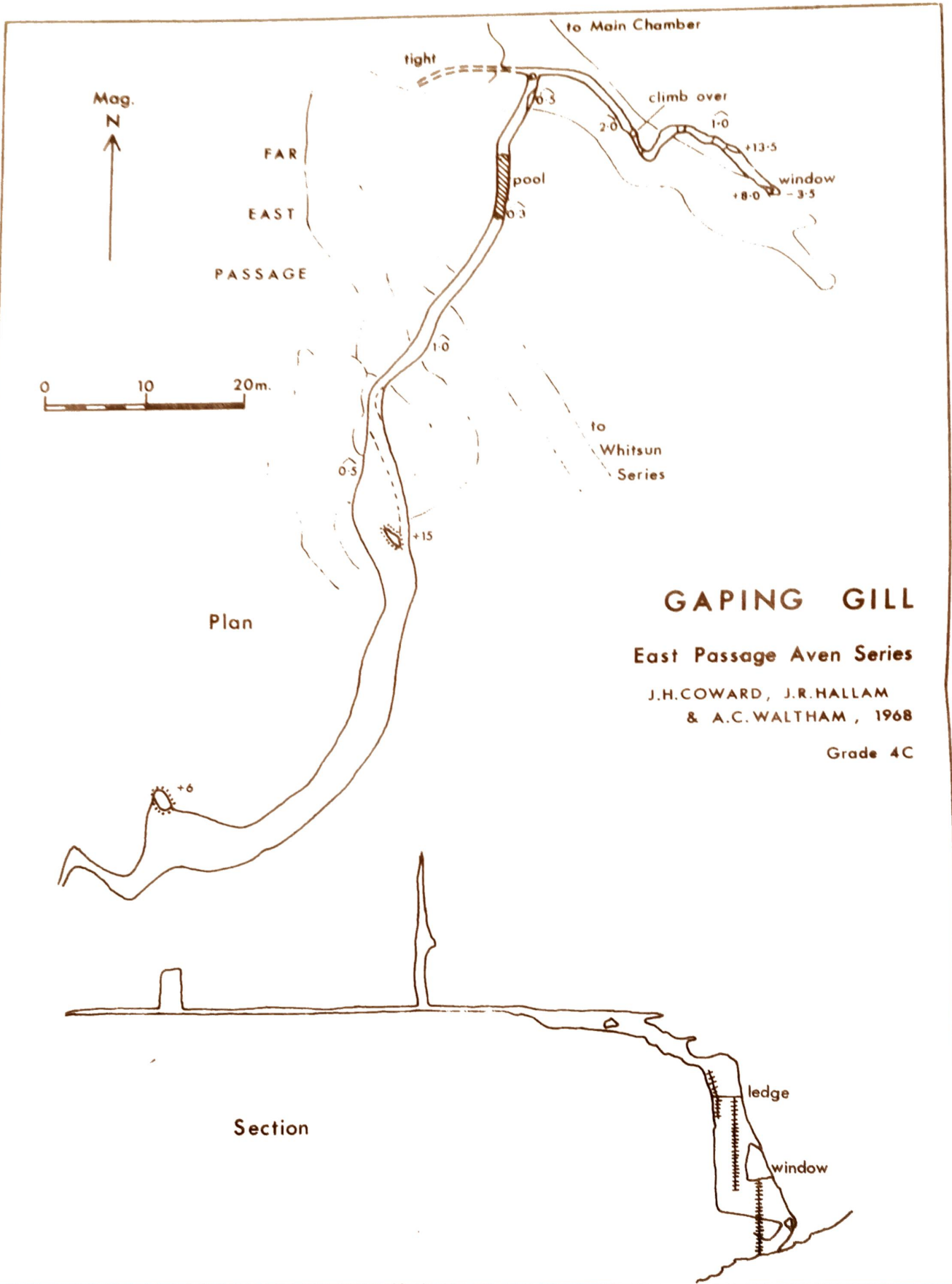
## GAPING GILL AVEN SERIES SURVEY

The London University Caving Clubs had a prolonged attack on the end of East Passage in Gaping Gill during the season 1967-8, and found some short bits of passage but missed the Whitsun Series discovery by pure bad luck. (See full description in JLUCC no. 7). One part of the work was to re-examine the Aven Series first entered by the C.P.C., and this was successfully done under the leadership of Jon Hallam and Jim Winterhalder.

The passage at the top of the aven was surveyed by Messrs. Coward, Hallam and Waltham, but this was regarded as "classified" information, and only now has been let through for publication, (see attached survey). The passages themselves are revoltingly unpleasant, in keeping with most of East Passages general character. The three ladder pitches lead up to a narrow twisting low streamway which splits after about 70ft. The right hand passage soon closes up but that on the left leads into a low wet muddy crawl which is seemingly endless. Finally it splits again. To the right, after a few yards, is the small terminal chamber discovered by the C.P.C. To the left the wide bedding-plane crawl becomes narrow and low. A wet squeeze leads to a further short crawl round a right angled corner. At first this appeared worth pushing, as the passage is heading towards Car Pot. However, a recent visit has finally shown it to be completely blocked by glutinous grey mud.

As the survey shows practically the whole passage is in one bedding plane, though the correlation of this and the other features must await the publication of a better survey of the Gaping Gill System.

A.C. Waltham.





## LOST JOHNS'

### Battle Axe - Sink Chamber

From his survey work in Lost Johns', Tony Waltham predicted a 15ft. difference in level between the Battle Axe upstream sump and the one in Sink Chamber. This suggested that the sump would not be continuous, and that a short length of passage with a 10-15ft. waterfall might be found between the two sumps.

Diving from the sump (1) upstream of Battle Axe, I found it to be 9ft. long with a depth of 4-5ft. I surfaced in a rift which was at a slight angle to the main sump, it had a 5ft. airspace, and was shallow at the North end.

Sump 2 was 30ft. long and 3-4ft. deep ending at Battle Axe 3, which was a similar shape to Battle Axe 2. Sump 2 contained two airbells, Round Bell and Long Bell.

On my first trip on March 1st 1970, I did not go any further. I had not seen Sink Chamber myself, but I had been told that the water sank into boulders. I did not want to do any prolonged underwater digging as I was going to use the same bottle in a Somerset show cave the next weekend.

On March 22nd I went back to dive sump 3. This was smaller in cross section than the other two and as the current kept the walls clear of silt the visibility was good. The passage was about 18ins. high with occasional boulders on the floor. I stacked the boulders at the side of the passage to make the return trip easier. The sump was 11ft. long and 1-2ft. deep.

Above sump 3 I found a short passageway leading to a small waterfall. Lights from above indicated that this was not the intermediate one predicted by Tony but was, in fact, the one in Sink Chamber. The 15ft. difference in level turned out to be imaginary when Tony reread his survey notes!

## Free Diving Possibilities

It is considered that the first two sumps could easily be made suitable for free-diving. There are adequate belay points to which divers could attach the necessary lines. However, this would hardly be worthwhile unless some satisfactory method was found of preventing the boulders from continually falling into the upstream end of sump 3. A possible alternative would be to excavate the shale band above the third sump and so make a dry bypass.

P. Collet.

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## Other Recent Work in Lost Johns'

Imperial College Caving Club had booked Lost Johns' for the weekend 7th and 8th February, so it was decided to hold a working weekend there.

Unfortunately transport trouble left most of the party stranded at Luton until Saturday afternoon and the whole programme was not carried out. However, a small group of LUCC consisting of Paul Hartland, Neil Smith, Robin Thompson, Martin Leach, Dave Prime, Andy Parker and Tony Waltham made it and laddered the pot via Centipede to the Master Cave.

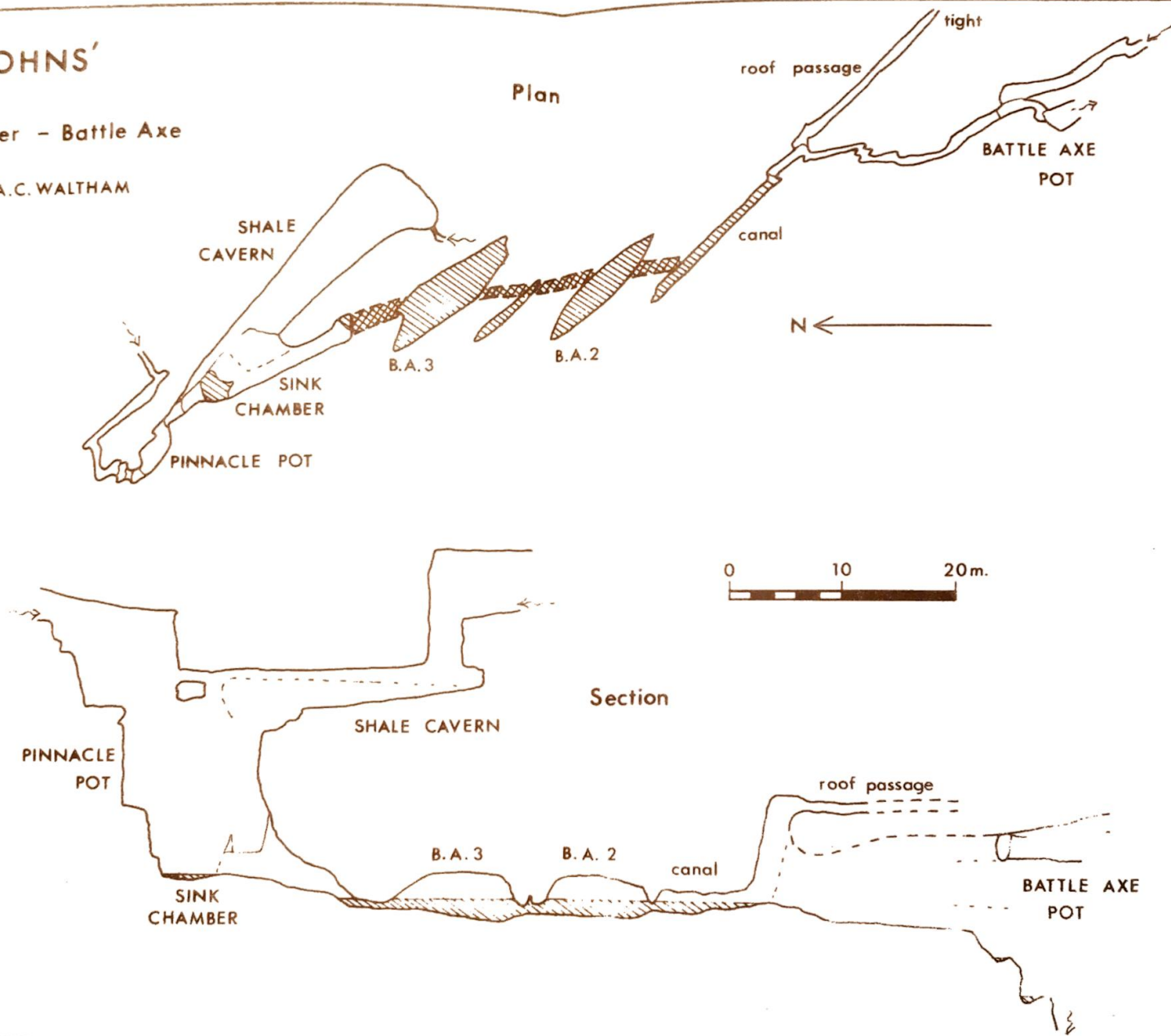
The majority of the group went on a tourist trip downstream in the Master Cave while Tony scuttled about completing miniscule details to his incredible survey. Paul and some C.P.C guests went sightseeing in the new extension above Lyle Cavern, leaving Neil drilling rawlbolt holes to install the fixed wire on to the Lyle Cavern pitch. He managed to get the bottom bolt in place and start on the hole for the top one before the star drill broke.

Meanwhile the C.P.C. party recovered the maypole and connectors from the High Level Series and proceeded to drop the poles down the Lyle Cavern pitch, producing a few holes in the floor! At this point everyone retreated to the surface.

# LOST JOHNS'

Sink Chamber - Battle Axe

P. COLLETT & A.C. WALTHAM



On Sunday the pot, which had been left laddered overnight, was descended rapidly. New arrivals included Lloyd Tonbridge, Mike Powell, Geoff Wadge, Rog Bowser and Jon Hallam. Mike, Geoff and Rog were the first to arrive at Lyle Cavern. Mike and Geoff went exploring, while Rog and Paul continued drilling the top bolt hole with a new star drill. When the hole was finally finished the pulley system was installed and checked, involving Paul in three trips up and down the pitch!

While this had been going on the maypole was being erected some 300ft. downstream of Lyle Cavern. Help was required down there, so the new wire was tested and the pitch finally deladdered exactly seven months after it had been laddered! We arrived downstream to find a maypole swaying in the breeze with Tony on the end of it and rocks falling from above. Eventually it was rigged properly and Neil, Tony and Rog ascended to a greasy ledge sloping back into the Master Cave on two sides. The party aloft was now joined by Dave Cobby and Kenny Taylor H.W.C.P.C. We maypoled up to another ledge containing some dried rimstone pools. The whole ledge was covered in thin, muddy, flowstone, which broke under Tony's weight, causing some amusement. A 40ft. high aven, with a small stream coming in, rose above this ledge. The maypole was inserted into this aven and Rog and Kenny ascended. They both confirmed that the holes in the top were too tight. From this vantage point some promising but inaccessible holes were noticed on the far side of the Master Cave. Tony made a quick sketch survey of the avens and we descended to the Master Cave. The pot was deladdered, and so ended an enjoyable days caving.

R. Bowser.

### Access to Lyle Cavern High Level Series

The fixed equipment consists of a continuous loop of wire running over a pulley which is attached to a  $\frac{1}{2}$  in. Rawlbolt. The wire is in two parts. The heavier of 15 cwt strength runs through the pulley at the head of the pitch, while the lighter of 6 cwt strength runs through a  $\frac{3}{8}$  in. eye Rawlbolt at the bottom. The two are joined together by heavy chain links, to which they are attached by copper ferrules. The pulley and both wires are made from

stainless steel, so corrosion of the system should be negligible. The equipment was inspected in January this year and found to be in good working order.

To use the system, 75 ft. of ladder is krabbed to one chain link, together with a lifeline system, preferably a fixed line and a self-lifeline as this is lighter than a conventional pulley system. The ladder is hauled to the top using the light line, taking care not to twist it. When the other chain link reaches the bottom it is krabbed to the eyebolt.

On reaching the top of the pitch it is best to rebelay the ladder to a flowstone column, for which a 10 ft. wire is required.

#### HOW I SURVIVED THE BLACK HELL OF DOW CAVE, DESPITE FLAKED LIGHT, TORN WETSUIT, BREAKING ROPES AND CRUMBY LEADERSHIP

One Saturday our brave, fearless, stunted, intrepid and generous president Keith Preston decided that we should experience the Dow Cave-Providence Pot trip. As he began describing his previous trip a year earlier in a thick Yorkshire accent I began recalling certain passages in 'Life and Death Underground' and 'Potholing' (I prefer reading to potting, I find it increases my life expectancy) like '...there have been so many accidents in this system that one finds it difficult to keep track of them.' and '...accidents...are so numerous that it would be boring to recount all of them.' Stiffening my upper lip I came back to reality in time to hear Keith say '...it took us seven hours, and by the time we got out pubs wor shut op !'

I recovered conciousness on a cold cobblestone in Kettlewell, and shortly afterwards was obliged to begin an incredibly long walk to the Providence entrance. The only redeeming point was that I was unlikely to get overheated as large chunks had fallen out of my wet-suit elbows, knees and crotch, but I did not feel happy about attempting the cave with four delicate portions of my anatomy so

vulnerable. Earlier we had taken the precaution of copying the survey and a summary of the directions from the chapter on Dow-Providence in David Heap's book 'Potholing' and we read these while recovering from the walk (this is possibly a breach of copyright, please don't tell him). The entrance shaft is no longer timbered, as described, but held up with steel poles. After this the first part of the cave is very complicated with arbitrary climbs all over the place, the first memorable landmark being a stretch of very thick and deep mud at the end of a crawl. After this crawl (the Snake) we came out into a series of large chambers. The descent from the last of these, Depot Chamber, was aided by a short length of rope, but this snapped under the weight of Derek's paunch which was bringing up the rear with Derek. Despite a hard fall no bones appeared to be broken so we pushed on to a rather nice streamway.

We walked downstream and through a bypass into another section of steamway, occasionally taking out the directions, '...would you say those rocks were of a ashen hue like burnt tobacco, John?' and came finally to a dry chamber, Bridge Cavern. Tiptoeing under a large number of poised, obviously heavy boulders we met the stream again and shortly afterwards Eight Hundred Yards Chamber. Up to this point the trip had taken less than two hours and we began talking hopefully about a three hour trip, little did we know that we resembled heroes in a Greek tragedy with the Gods cackling over the nasty fate round the next bend in the passage (the odd literary allusion helps lift the tone).

Round the next bend in the passage was a large stream choke with a rope going up it. Heap describes an easier climb further back but the rope is now presumably the best bet. After a long struggle we all finally made it to the top and walked on into a long chamber, Brew chamber. We stayed in this for some time until it rather suddenly stopped with no way on. Deducing that we ought to have gone back down to stream level we began walking back, with Keith looking for an easy climb down. He found one to his satisfaction after some time and we all slid down and walked on down the stream. We were finally halted by a large

choke with a rope up it! My attempts to strangle Keith were foiled by the others who decided he might still be useful, so we once again struggled up and this time went straight back down the other side to make sure. However, this put us upstream of the Narrows entailing much struggling and total immersion to get through. By going a few yards only down Brew Chamber it is possible to bypass these with ease.

After yet more streamway we came to the next memorable point, a nicely frothy sump with the way on through a rock window on the left. Just past this one is supposed to begin the Terrible Traverse, and we had a go. A few yards of trying to stay on ledges consisting of slightly bulging walls convinced us that we should follow the route taken by Keith on his earlier epic, when they walked along the stream all the way to the sump. We later discovered that the water level had been considerably lower on that occasion. Progress was quite quick for some time, then the passage degenerated to a keyhole shape with not enough air in the stream slit to make it possible. We crawled along the top of the slit for a bit then Keith decided to try to force himself back into the stream. By the time he had decided he wasn't going to make it he discovered that he wasn't coming back without help either. A quick vote was taken and was in favour of trying to help him out. This wasn't easy as there was only room for one person to kneel at each side of him and tug on his arms. After some fruitless exertion I remembered that the rum fudge ration was in his boiler suit and started to rip it off assuring him that the extra thicknesses of boiler suit were making all the difference. While tugging at the shoulder seam however, he rather abruptly popped out of the slit. John had been amusing himself timing the operation which apparently took twentyseven minutes.

We sat down for a few minutes to read the instructions again and debated whether it would be better to try to find the route on, try to get back to Providence or sit and wait for the C.R.O. During this period my Wife expired. I was also feeling exposed and regretting that I didn't know the words to 'Abide With me'. We finally decided to look around a little before going back and to our surprise further up the fissure we came across the telephone

wire'. On a short trip from Dow a few weeks earlier Derek and I had got this far and recognised it as Gymsum Traverse, although it is more a passage than a traverse. We followed it along to Hardy's Horror, a slit in the floor leading back to the stream past the sump. Heap devotes two pages to his efforts to find this feature which puzzles me as there only seem to be two slits to choose from, the furthur one being the loosest and having the better climb down. From the stream it was a short walk to Dow Cave and then a hunchbacked stroll out to daylight.

The entire fiasco took five and a half hours. Those performing were Keith Preston, John Lace, Derek Knight and Tony Reynolds, all of U.C.L.S.S. I threw away the written directions the next day, I didn't think we would be needing them again.

Tony Reynolds

#### LONDON UNIVERSITY CAVING CLUBS EXPIDITION TO IRELAND

The five Chelsea members were :-  
Barbara Brojer  
Bill Frost  
Paul Hartland  
Martin Leach, Phil Hickley  
Robin Thompson (kings College).

Although the southern caving areas of Ireland are well known and fully documented in Dr. E.K. Tratman's six pound book, the northern areas have received surprisingly little attention. Chelsea decided to mount an expedition to Countries Sligo, Fermanagh, Cavan and Leitrim, and it was hoped that the information gained on the expedition would help others organise a trip there.

The expedition was called the "London University Caving Clubs Ireland expedition", with the hope of having a joint expedition with other London Clubs. Unfortunately members of the other London Clubs were committed to other things which was a pity



because the trip cost only £8 including food. The College minibus, roof rack and interior packed with vast quantities of tackle including 7 maypoles and 50 "Drilanchors", chugged out of London at midnight on the 260 mile journey to Holyhead. Having over estimated the time taken to get along the A5, we arrived very tired early Monday morning, confronted by a 5 hour wait. Fortunately we managed to get the earlier 11.00 a.m. ferry, which is recommended. No food can be taken into Ireland, and must be bought in Dublin.

Food is generally no cheaper in Ireland, and in some cases much dearer. As the minibus was consuming far more petrol than we anticipated, it was necessary to cut down on the food allowance. It was a credit to Martin, our provisions officer, that out of £15, given to him for food, he managed to supply us all with excellent meals and still have change at the end to get us home.

From Dublin, (best avoided as it is like London without any sign posts!), one takes the road to An Uaimh (Navan) and Cavan. From Cavan a  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch map is useful as the roads twist about through Belturbet, keeping to the road to Ennskillen and the unapproved road to Belcoo. About 2 km. outside Blacklion the I.C.C. cottage is situated on the left hand side of the road to Sligo.

The key to the hut was collected from Dick Moffit's cottage and we were immediately confronted by the fantastic Irish hospitality which we were to meet again and again. He promptly offered to come up to the hut, bringing with him piles of logs for the fire and a churn full of well water.

## TUESDAY

On the Tuesday, thanks to Sheffield University's suggestion, we drove to the Bricklieve Mountains, which was an area suggested by them as promising in their 1962-63 expedition. Unfortunately we missed the Bricklieve Mountains and had a look round Keshcorran (1500 m. north of Kesh, O.S. map 7). This is a hemispherical mountain with numerous large cave entrances high in the cliff walls and easily visible from the 'main' road. The remote area behind Kesh-corran and to the north west of Bricklieve was explored thoroughly and Phil after

about half an hour exclaimed that he had found a cave. Everyone clambered into a small depression in the side of a gorse covered slope with shouts of ... "It goes! Hey it looks big," we all entered a steeply dipping rift passage. Having brought only one cell for illumination, it was a quick trip back to the van and a change into dry grots.

The cave was a rift with a boulder floor, dipping at 45° for about 30 m in a north direction. It was well decorated and obviously untouched, as the floor had crystal pools which were pure white. Unfortunately the rift choked and despite various efforts would go no further. There were however interesting side passages with entrances too tight to get into, (despite Bills effort in stripping and removal of Nife cell). The boulder floor was covered with many calcified animal bones and skulls and apart from the caves on the west face, which are almost show caves, the rest of the search proved fruitless.

#### WEDNESDAY

After a hearty breakfast the minibus roared along the deserted Irish roads towards Sligo and the elusive Teampall Shetric. Pete Lord of the Sheffield expedition suggested this as the most promising and interesting cave in the particular area that they covered. (All the high area south east of Truskmore mountain.) After spending about four hours trampling through very wet marsh land in pouring rain, we eventually found the entrance by following a "dry" valley at the end of the farm track from the village school in Gurteen. The entrance is a spectacular heavily vegetated depression with an 8 m. waterfall. Upstream the water goes underground and emerges again in open moorland about one hundred feet from the shakehole. As it was by now getting dark we postponed further exploration until the next day.

#### THURSDAY

Armed with 6 maypoles, bolts, photographic and surveying gear, our party of six trudged over the hillside and deposited the vast amount of gear in the shelter of a derelict bire. We descended the first pitch, which was a free climb of about 5m, avoiding the main waterfall, and armed with a ladder

we followed the streamway down. After a sharp turn to the right and climb into the roof of the passage, we were confronted by a very wet, deep pitch with no safe obvious belay. (The rock in Teampall Shetric is extremely cherty and brittle.)

A jammed boulder in the roof was used as a belay, and having unrolled 18 m. of ladder we still could not see the bottom. A further 9 m. of ladder was added and a gulp of horror was taken as I started to descend the pitch amidst a shower of chert "pebbles", cracking under the strain of Phils weight. After 10 m. I found I was climbing in the full force of the main streamway, and to go further would risk being pulled off the ladder by the tremendous battering of the water. A tight line brought me quickly back to the head of the pitch, and we proceeded to look for a dry way down. This was found by going back upstream to the entrance, and taking the dry passage to the right, through some boulders, to the head of a 18 m. "dry" pitch. The belay here was also found to be a jammed boulder in the passage, about 3 m. from the edge. The party descended into a large chamber, enveloped in spray from the water fall down the wet pitch. After a scramble over large boulders; we followed the streamway along a wide passage which narrowed to a 3 m. climb down a cascade, into a small but high chamber. Following the streamway further, led to a wet 11 m. pitch and sump. The volume of water made any exploration of the sump impossible, but I was later informed that Sheffield had pushed along for 5 m. or so in dry weather, but due to the limited air space and cold, a wet suit hood would be preferable. We turned our attention instead to the sump in O'Connell Street, which is in fact a continuation of Red Rift. O'Connell Street is a very high and straight rift, which appears to be very close to the surface. The whole place is very loose and covered in mud which appears to be subsoil. The sump is very deep and has a nightmarish muddy slope to its edge. Above the sump and in front of it, a small hole can be seen at the top of a pile of boulders, which Sheffield suggested we maypoled. This we did, but the passage became tight after only about 6 m., with no signs of it opening out. In fact we appeared to be very near the surface at this point, as there were roots protruding in the walls. On examination of the survey in relation to

# TEAMPALL SHETRIC

Gurteen, Leitrim

Chelsea College Caving Club

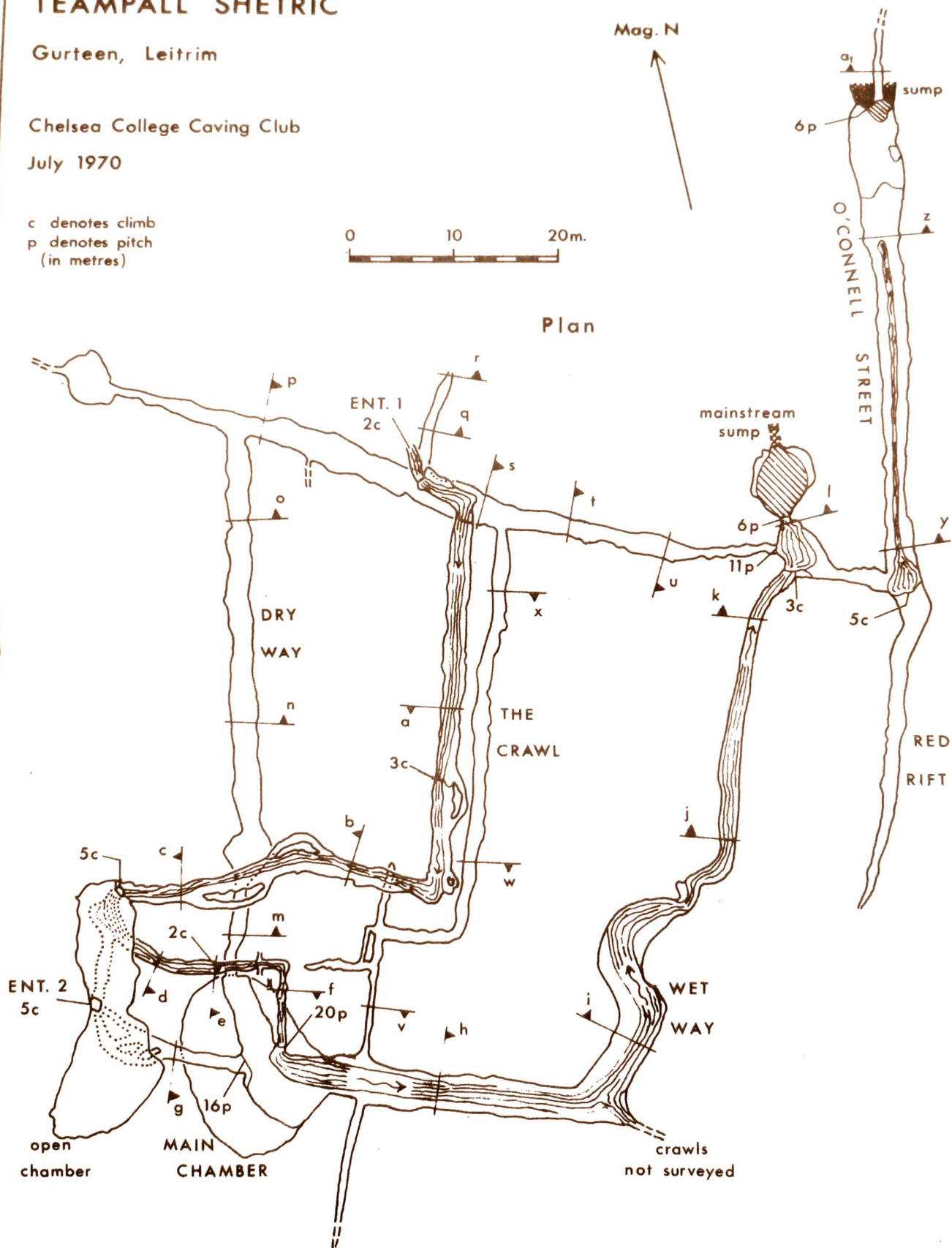
July 1970

c denotes climb  
p denotes pitch  
(in metres)



Mag. N

Plan

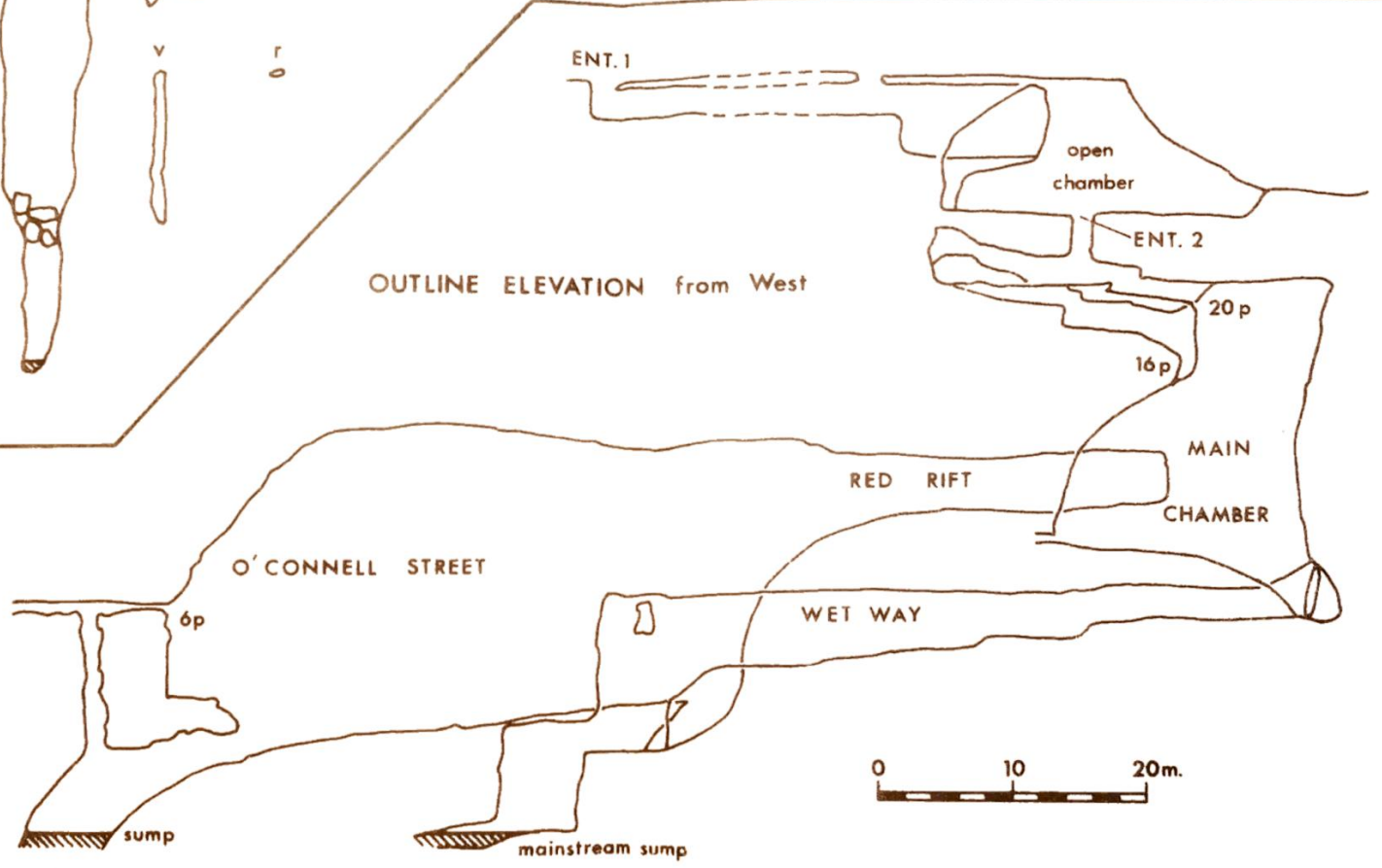




CROSS - SECTIONS



OUTLINE ELEVATION from West



the surroundings, Bill found a few shakeholes directly above the sump in O'Connell Street.

The hole in the floor of the maypoled passage appears to link directly with the O'Connell Street sump and a 5'16" th drill anchor with a steel fishplate was left in position when the maypoles were taken out. On the way out a passage branching off to the left was found. This was large at first, but narrowed rapidly into a very tight crawl up a small stream. The stream branched to the right and another small stream entered from the left. Both of these were too tight to follow, and climbing or rather squeezing upwards, we climbed back over the tight passage and entered numerous decorated chambers, with passages leading off in various directions. Unfortunately time was getting short, so reluctantly we had to make our way out, or the others would be wondering where we were.

#### FRIDAY

Robin, Bill and Martin started to survey the cave from the entrance, along the main streamway down to the sumps, meeting Phil and myself photographing the cave near the sump.

#### SATURDAY

Teampall Shetric again, but with Robin, Phil and myself surveying the dry series, with Martin photographing the cave and Bill and Barbara ferrying maypoles and tackle back to the van.

The dry series begins in the main chamber and involves a pleasant crawl to a point 11 m. above the 3m. climb in a rift which links with Red Rift. An alternative route takes one via a tighter crawl to a point level with the main streamway just below the 18 m. pitch. This ended the exploration of Teampall Shetric, which apart from the chert, compares favourably with many Yorkshire caves. With further exploration the cave has quite a few possibilities, and on the whole is a very interesting system.

#### SUNDAY

Martin, Bill, Barbara and Robin went on a 3 hour trip

with Gordan and Mary Wilson from the I.C.C., down Marble Arch. This lies in a very impressive valley, with a large stream resurgence. However our party returned a little disappointed in the much acclaimed Marble Arch. The chief complaint being the vast quantities of mud, which was not appreciated by Phil or myself, as we had decided not to cave that day, but to sample some of the delicious Irish bread and cakes, which I can really recommend.

#### MONDAY

The party moved to fresh ground and camped out in the Knockmore mountains, with the intention of doing Pollaraftara. A camp site was found which was about as perfect as one could want, and what was left of the day was spent "festering", and sampling Guinness in a fantastic Irish pub in Kiltyclogher. After closing time at 11.30. we were invited in to a back room and given tea and buttered Irish bread.

#### TUESDAY

After a most memorable breakfast of four day old mincemeat, the party changed into wet suits for an expected eight hour trip in Pollaraftara.

The entrance is at the base of a stream, about 1 p.m. from the end of a farm track leading to the Knockmore valley basin. It is situated at the foot of a steep sided escarpment in the valley. The first pitch involves a climb of 3 m., down into a small passage. A handline belayed from the tree at the entrance provides an easy scramble down through a cascade, (I.C.C. recommends db. lifeline in wet weather). At the base of the cascade a boulder shewn shelf leads to a 6 m. pitch, through a hole into a large chamber. A tight crawl along a sewer pipe channel, at the top of a rift, leads down via various twists, into the main stream passage. The stream is followed and various diversions have to be taken where the roof has collapsed. After considerable distance down the streamway a mud slope was found, which had an 8 m. ladder of dubious origin pegged in at the top. (I.C.C. are placing a bolt here in the near future.) This was climbed carefully and the route from there on was well marked by footprints in the mud. Various passages of promise were found and many of the chambers contained extremely long stalactites and pure white flowstone

formations. We were all very impressed by the system, but the best was yet to come. The water pools were now becoming noticeably deeper and the non-swimmers amongst us were rather apprehensive of pools now about chest depth. Eventually there was nothing left but to swim or attempt to swim as the case may be. The passage was now about 3 m. wide and we were completely out of our depth in water. Swimming along for about 60 m., the cold water was beginning to become noticeable despite wet suits. With no obvious end to the system a decision to turn back was reached. The canal would be best crossed on future occasions, using a dingy. At this stage "Mars" bars proved to be a life saver and a rapid exit was made to get warm. A unanimous decision that Pollaraftara was one of the most sporting caves the club has visited was reached, which ended a 10 day unforgettable and most enjoyable expedition on a high note.

Anyone wishing to visit this area of Ireland would be well advised to get in touch with Gordan and Mary Wilson, who are a mine of information on the local areas and most kind and hospitable guides. Gordan Wilson is sending Chelsea C.C. an Ordnance survey reference sheet, to enable future parties to order maps from Dublin.

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### Acknowledgements

The expedition would like to thank Chelsea College Student Union and Mars Limited for their support.

### References

Tratman, E.K.           The Caves of N.W. Clare  
Coleman, J.C.           The Caves of Ireland   Tralee, 1965



## Ed. Note

At the beginning of this article, Mr. Hartland asserts that the northern caving areas of Ireland have been given scant attention. I think that to say this rather maligns the many British clubs which over a long period have extensively explored and described these areas. One has only to peruse Coleman's treatise to find scores of appropriate references. It must be admitted, though, that many of these valuable articles are becoming increasingly hard to obtain, and a detailed volume similar to Tratman's would be most valuable.

Paul Hartland

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## CAVING IN THE HIMALAYA - AUTUMN 1970

This expedition went under the title of 'British Karst Research Expedition to the Himalayas, 1970' and consisted of ex London University members. The aims of the expedition were to study and explore limestone regions in Kashmir and Nepal, particularly looking for cave systems. The expedition members were, from U.C., John and Sue Carney, Julian and Mary Coward, Geoff le Patourel, Keith and Roy Turnbull and Jan Waltham, and from I.C., Rog Bowser, Phil Collett and Tony Waltham, (leader).

We left England on August 1st, after a year of preparation, in a converted ex. Home Office fire tender. It was based on the R.L. chassis, and we had enlarged the cab to seat eleven and modified the rear for load carrying. We arrived at Srinagar in Kashmir 3 weeks later, having travelled through Belgium, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The weather was very good, in fact, we had no cloud all the way from Germany. The temperature reached 115°F in the shade in Afghanistan, but fortunately we had acclimatised reasonably well by then.

A morning was spent in Srinagar looking around and checking how far we could go along the Leh road. We found we could go as far as the Zoji la Pass, which was convenient as the limestone finished there. We set up base camp near Baltal at 2750 m. and started out to explore. There were several springs marked on the map but these appeared to be rising out of gravel and looked very unpromising. The limestone seemed thinly bedded and the angle of dip was close to 90°, so the area didn't look too good. However, we explored the area fairly well, reaching about 4300 m. in the process. The area was small enough to make one day trips out of base camp feasible in the majority of cases. A two day trip was required though, to visit Amarnath Cave. This cave is well known as a centre for Hindu pilgrimages on account of the ice stalagmite in it. There is a reasonable path to it up the Sind valley from Baltal. The first of the team to investigate it were Phil and Rog. The River Sind was followed upstream for about 15 km. to within sight of its glacier source and a steep zigzag path was used up to the cave at 3870 m. Feeling tired we stopped and bivvied for the night at 3690 m., and returned to camp the following day as we had not expected to take so long.

A few days later Julian, Mary, Keith and Roy set off for the cave, reached it, and spent the night there, returning the next day. The cave turned out to be nothing more than a rock shelter. We found one or two short caves about 5 m. long in the valley but little else, so after ten days we left for the Jellum risings near Achabal and Verinag.

We stayed at Kokanag in one of the Dak bungalows, which are built by the Indians for tourists and are very cheap. Ten days were spent looking at the springs and trying to find some sinks. We were told of a cave in a nearby village, the Bhamajo Bat Cave which was about 60 m. long and had a large colony of bats. Geoff spent several days there catching, counting and dissecting bats, while Rog spent a day on a dig at the end of the cave. Needless to say it did not go! Each of the risings was investigated but none was found to be penetrable. Julian completed a lot of hydrological work, for which Rog did the analyses.

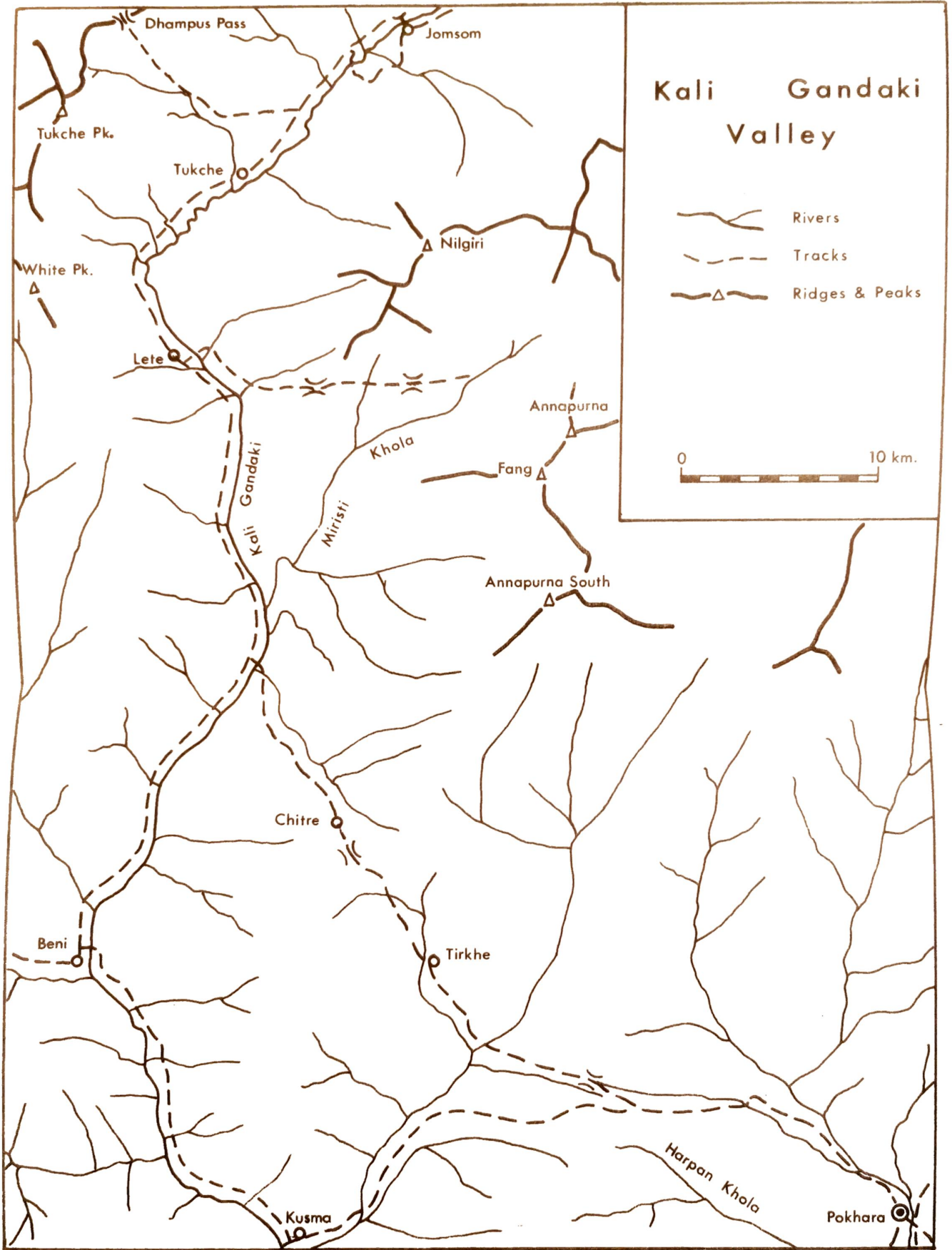
A few days before we left a river sink was found into which we inserted about 5 kg. of Rhodamine B and

awaited results. Detectors were placed in all possible risings and sure enough, 3 days later, the rising at Achabal turned pink to the horror of the locals. This happened on the day we left for Nepal so we did not stop around too long!

The journey across India to Nepal took about five days, passing through a flooded area near Lucknow. We had to spend the night at the Indian customs post at Nataunwa, then drove through five miles of 'no man's land' to the Nepalese post at Bhairawa. It took a few hours of negotiation to clear this customs post, but we were allowed to enter. We gathered from the customs officials that there was a British Army Gurkha camp at Bhairawa so we spent the afternoon searching for it. At last we located it by following an army truck in the rain. We arrived and asked to see the C.O. who gave us a marvellous reception including tea and biscuits in the officers mess. They fixed us up with an hotel and invited us back for drinks. We stayed in Bhairawa for three days sorting out our gear at the camp into porter loads. The road from Bhairawa to Pokhara had been washed away in the monsoon, so we had to fly there. The army kindly commandeered space on planes for us and our gear. We were ferried out in three flights to be met by our porters at the airport. We stayed in an hotel nearby to negotiate the porters' pay and finish our packing. Eventually we left Pokhara on the 24th. September together with 47 porters, a sirdar and his assistant, and two sherpas, Jangbu and Lacpa.

The walk into Tukche took eight days and involved 100 km. of up and down path, crossing passes of 1800 m. and 3000 m. The path was very good, being a main trading route, though it is generally true to say that to climb 1000 m. in Nepal one must in fact climb 1500 m. and descend 500 m.! At Tukche we paid off the porters and set up base camp just north of the village at 2600 m. The Lama, Mohgul Singh, loaned us the village hall for use as a kitchen and store, and this was to become our centre for the next month.

The next day we started our search for caves, Julian Keith, Roy, and Rog, leaving Tukche early in the morning for the Dhampus Pass, each carrying about 20 kg. The path was fairly good and we reached the Upper Tukche yak pastures at about 3 p.m. at 4000 m.



and set up camp for the night. Cooking was by wood fire, supplemented by yak dung - an excellent slow-burning fuel. We packed up early the next morning and set off. The path climbed less steeply than before, over a lot of scree. About midday it began to snow, and as visibility was rapidly deteriorating we pitched camp early in a snow couloir at 4900 m.

Waking the next day, we found we were about 3 hours from the pass, but, as Keith had a cold, the others were content with climbing a nearby 5200 m. peak which gave good views of the pass, Tukche peak and Dhaulagiri. In clear weather we set off for base camp, arriving at about 3 p.m.

Generally the weather followed a similar pattern each day, being clear all night and in the morning, and cloudy by 2 p.m., then clearing again by 7 p.m. when it was dark. Dawn came in the valley at about 8 a.m., with the sun rising over Annapurna; at about 5 p.m. the sun set behind Dhaulagiri.

I stayed in base camp for a few days festering, while Tony, John and Lacpa had a look at the Kusangmo Cave. It proved to be a 30 m. long calcited tufa cave taking a moderately sized stream.

My next trip out of camp was with Keith, Roy and Jangbu. We were to find a route to the Dhaulagiri meadows below the east glacier and establish a camp up there, as it was one of the most promising areas. We set off rather late in the day, at noon, and were forced to set up an intermediate camp at 3700m. on the meadows with splendid views of the mountains and valley. The area contained several Karst features, including dry valleys, springs, clints and solution markings, but no caves. I stayed up at this camp for 5 days exploring the surrounding area. On returning to base camp I spent some time analysing water samples from several springs. I also joined Geoff on a bug hunting trip to the Kusangmo Cave.

A few days later I set off with Julian and Mary to climb White Peak, 5270 m., and to strike the meadows camp. We reached the camp at about 4 p.m., and moved it up to 4600 m. the next day. White Peak was climbed the following day and the camp moved back down again. A further day was spent watching

yak being milked and then reluctantly breaking camp and returning to Tukche.

By this time Geoff and Phil had left for Pokhara with two porters to look at some caves there, and John, Sue and Jangbu were also getting ready to leave. Julian and I began preparing for our trip to the Miristi Khola basin. We packed our gear up, sorted out food, and hired a porter. On October 29 th. we left Tukche with Lacpa and the porter. We travelled south down the valley, camping by the Tangdum Khola at 2450 m. We left at 8 a.m. the next day ascending through 100 m. of bamboo forest followed by steeper climbing and traversing, finally we pitched camp at 2 p.m. just below the pass of April 27 th. at 4270 metres. We had to melt snow for water as there were no streams. The next day the porter left for Tukche and we set off crossing the pass (4390 m.) quickly. We now began an interminable traverse over snow covered paths making the going fairly hard. We traversed all day camping at 4450 m. on the second pass at about 4 p.m. A further 3 km. of traversing the next day, followed by a 1000 m. descent led us into the Miristi Khola valley. We pitched camp and walked up the valley to the N. Annapurna glaciers, returning by 5 p.m. We could see the caves that Herzog referred to from the camp, but these turned out to be merely rock shelters in conglomerate, although this was sitting on 300 m. of good looking caveless limestone. Due to lack of time we returned to Tukche the following day, stopping overnight at our previous 4270 m. camp.

The base camp at Tukche was cleaned up and we left for Pokhara on November 9 th., finding it a hive of activity.

Geoff and Phil had been collecting at the Harpan River Cave. This was explored and surveyed and found to be 1500 m. long and 30 m. deep, but in a limestone conglomerate. Three days later we caught the bus back to Bhairawa, the road having been repaired. We were very sorry to have to say 'Goodbye' to our porter sirdar. We found the Nepalese people extremely friendly and helpful.

On the medical side we did very well, only having a few cases of dysentery and these were on the journey out. We found that altitude affected us far less than we had expected. No one had headaches, nausea,

etc. The only effect noticed was that everthing was much harder work and people tended to be lethargic. The highest camp we used was at 5030 m. with no ill effects.

We finally left Nepal on November 15 th., and arrived back in England on December 8 th., after a most enjoyable and memorable expedition.

R. Bowser.

It should be stressed that this is an entirely personal account of the expedition. A full report, together with maps, surveys, photographs and geological reports will be published about Easter. Copies will be available from Rog Bowser, Chemical Engineering Dept., Imperial College, London S.W.7, costing about 85 p. each.