

**L.U.C.C.
JOURNAL
N.7 1968**

The Journal
of
London University Caving Clubs
CHELSEA COLLEGE CAVING CLUB
IMPERIAL COLLEGE CAVING CLUB
QUEEN MARY COLLEGE CAVING SOCIETY
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Number 7.

June 1968

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EDITORIAL

First of all I would like to apologise for the late appearance of the last edition, due largely to 'technical' problems, and certain authors being unwilling to part with their literary masterpieces. Secondly, I apologise for the short measure in this issue, shorter, that is, than the last two, but it is very difficult to extract articles from undergraduates who have exams clouding the horizons. Indeed, were it not for the ubiquitous A.C.Waltham, this Journal would not have appeared!

Did you notice the sudden increase in quality of the surveys in No.6? This, unfortunately, has forced the price of the Journal up to 2/-, but I feel the improvement is worth it. In this edition, we have 'new improved' surveys of Rumbling Hole and Marble Steps, again by A.C.W.

Again, due to exams, caving by the London University Caving Clubs has been much reduced in recent weeks, so this Journal is unavoidably more technical than usual. However, I think the articles will be of interest to non-geologists like myself, as well as geologists, who may in fact think all the ideas obvious.

This summer the I.C.C.C. are visiting France again, Q.M.C.C.S. are going to Rumania, while U.C.L.S.S. are caving in Ireland. Reports of these expeditions will appear in the next edition of the Journal in October. At the time of writing, the summer activities of the C.C.C.C. are unknown, but we may have an account from them in October.

Finally, regarding No.6, the comment at the end of the article on Smeltmill Beck Cave should have read '..... for the next M.S.G. journal'.

Mike J.Gibson
(I.C.C.C.)

Copies of this Journal are obtainable from the Editor, c/o R.C.Lethbridge, Zoology Department, Imperial College, Prince Consort Road, London, S.W.7; price 2/6 (inc. postage). Also any correspondence, subscriptions (9/- per 4 issues inc. postage) etc. should be sent to the above address.

RUMBLING HOLE AND ITS SURVEY

A gloomy Saturday in March at last saw Rumbling Hole surveyed by our members. Julian Coward and John Carney of U.C., with Tony Waltham of I.C. managed to do most of the pot twice as the tackle was first carried in and we constantly had to return to continue the survey. Conditions were pleasant for the descent, but while we were at the bottom the water rose considerably and we retreated with the pot in fine flood. On the Sunday, Tony and Julian surveyed Rumbling Beck Cave. However, our fibron tape had been washed off Julian's belt in Rumbling Hole, so two weeks later Tony returned with Johnny Hallam and Rog Scott, both of U.C., to search for this. The sump was again reached but with no sign of the tape - it is probably now in Lost Johns.

The Rumbling Hole water sinks just north of the main hole into Rumbling Beck Cave, in a prominent valley, which is then dry down to Long Drop Cave and Deaths Head Holes. Immediately inside the cave is a low wet crawl which can be avoided by descending the dry entrance down a prominent joint in an adjacent shakehole. However, the next crawl is even lower and wetter, particularly under a boulder beneath a small skylight. The crawl is short and the cave soon develops into a fine canyon passage dropping down numerous cascades; the whole cave showing very clearly classical vadose development from shale bands. After 200 feet, daylight is again met where the water plunges down Rumbling Hole.

The main entrance to Rumbling has been formed where the stream met a very distinct fault and it is quite likely that this was originally an underground pitch only exposed by roof collapse. The fault is easily seen and often has up to 4 feet of fault breccia well cemented with calcite. Displaced shale bands indicate a downthrow on the northern side of about 10 feet and yet slickensides indicate a second period of strictly horizontal movement on the fault. The shaft is elongate, so a fine dry 95 feet pitch at the western end gives a good view of the waterfall, and then a 50 feet scramble, best laddered, leads to the water. The passage from here is narrow and roughly straight as it runs along the fault; numerous small waterfalls are only over jammed boulders which move very easily, immediately making the survey out of date. The second of two avens sometimes provides plenty of water, but the amount seems independent of the weather.

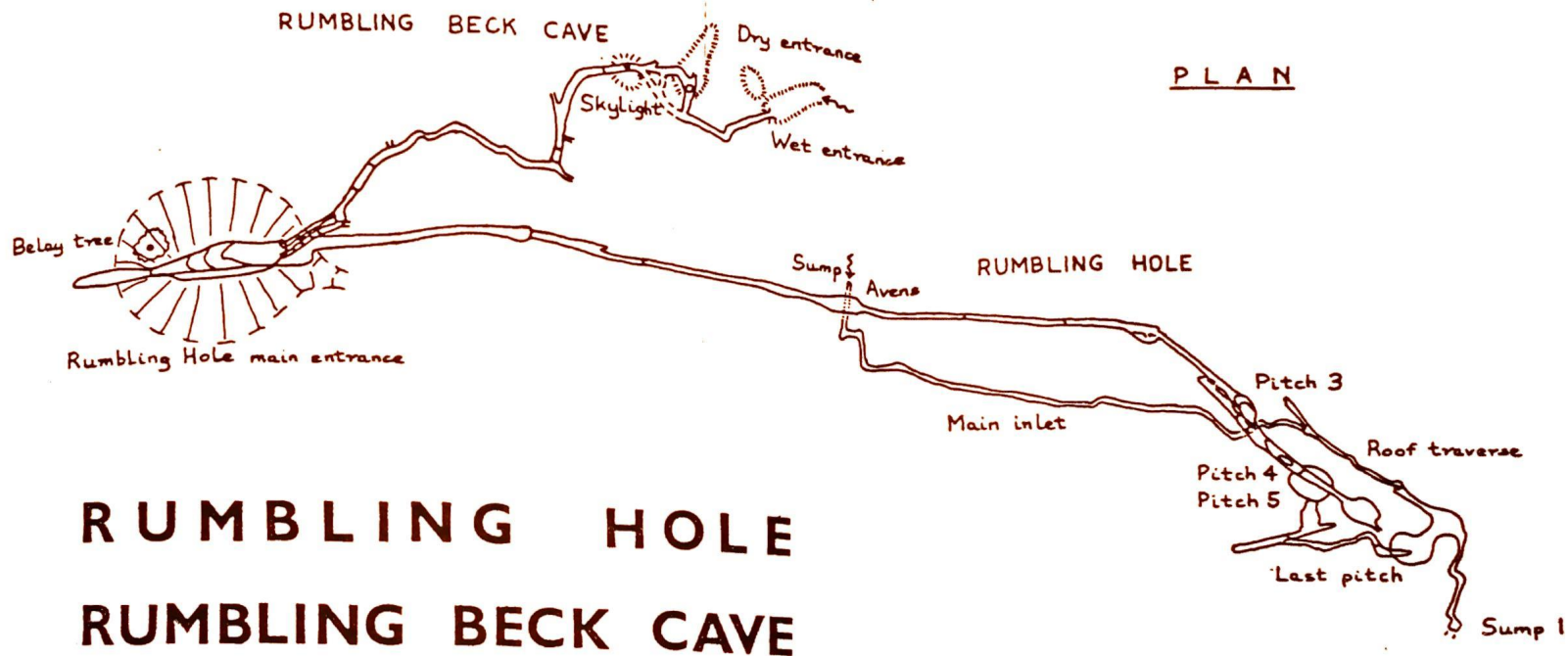
At 250 feet there is a comfortable little chamber where the fault is left behind and the water utilises a prominent joint. Immediately there is a low crawl for a few feet which sometimes gets blocked by boulders. A few feet beyond this the water drops down two pots for about 50 feet, but there is an easily attainable

parallel rift on the right which permits a dry easy pitch. However, we found to our cost that a few boulders jammed near the top of the waterfall can cause the water to back up, and when in flood it will flow down the "dry" bypass - any blockage is easily moved though by a well placed boot. Half-way down the pitch a window reveals the adjacent waterfall. At the bottom a short climb and a pool lead to an easy traverse over the next pitch; the ledges are cut in a shale bed and beyond the pitch a squeeze leads to a low dry decorated chamber. At the end of this is a very tight fissure having an oral connection with the last pitch, the noise from this giving rise to an incredible rumbling sound in wet weather; it is a remarkable coincidence that this unusual sound effect should be heard in Rumbling Hole, which was nevertheless named long before its descent.

The fourth pitch is down a clean circular pot with the waterfall harmless on the other side. At the bottom the water leaves the joint and turns south in a bedding plane immediately dropping another 10 feet. This must be laddered and is very wet unless additional belays are hung from a minute stalagmite near the roof. The water then abandons the bedding plane and turns west along a joint soon to fall over an 8 feet climb. Here the water doubles back into a small canyon cut below a shale bed, and after 40 feet it again meets the main joint and drops 52 feet down the last pitch. The ladder hangs straight down the water and makes it a very wet climb, probably impossible in really full flood, though otherwise the pot is completely safe in any weather conditions. On our second visit the stream was low and a body could then dam the water enough for a rapid dry climb. Just over half-way down the pitch is the 12 inch thick Porcellainous Band, a useful stratigraphic horizon which can be traced throughout the Dales.

The chamber into which the ladder falls is formed on the intersection of the main joint and another east-west joint carrying a thin vein of calcite. From the chamber the passage soon becomes a low crawl and then a canal leads to the first sump. In dry weather the canal is a little longer as the sump is an easy short dive to a few more yards of canal leading to the second sump. This is impassable but it is only a very short distance to the end of the inlet in Lost Johns; the surveys indicate only about 10 feet to go, but the possible error of the Lost Johns' survey, is probably greater than this.

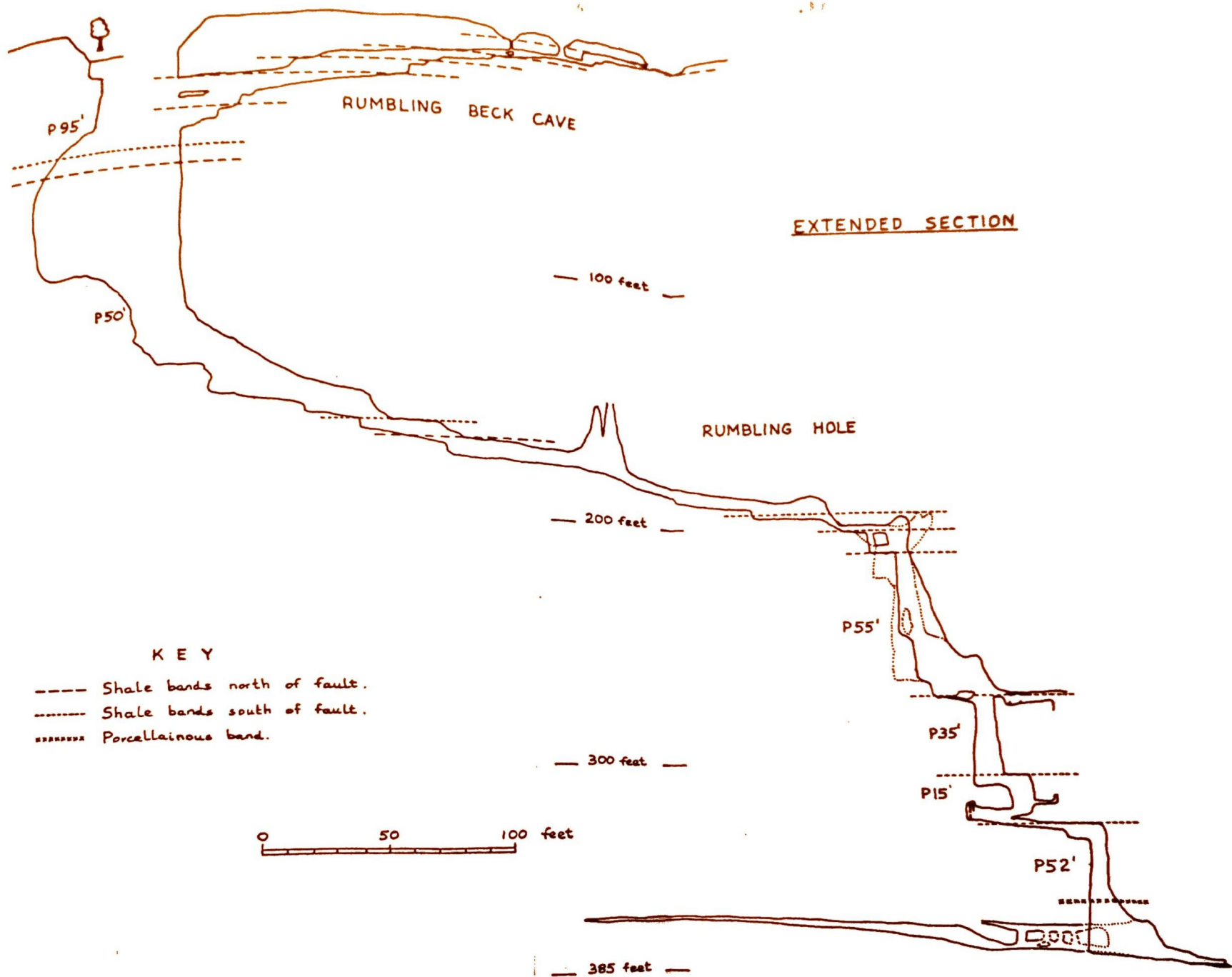
Entering the final chamber is a sizeable inlet stream which the survey shows coming from the west. Going upstream the high narrow passage rapidly develops into a low wet canal, but this is bypassed by climbing 12 feet up a flowstone bank and then crawling



LECK FELL N.G.R. SD671791 Altitude 1160'

I.C.C.C.-U.C.L.S.S. Survey 1968 C.R.G. Grade 4B.

0 50 100 feet



along a false floor. After 40 feet the stream must be rejoined and for the remaining 150 feet the passage gets steadily lower, until a very tight bedding plane sump is reached. In the upstream reaches this passage consists of a small vadose trench cut from a bedding plane which was only opened to a very shallow ellipse by phreatic action, but downstream there is an increasingly large half tube developed in the roof over the deeper canyon passage. The inlet therefore demonstrates two comparable processes of retreating erosion: the vadose canyon is gradually working deeper upstream with the present nick point close to the sump, where the trench is impassably small; and secondly the phreatically opened bedding plane in the roof shows arrested development of a half tube extending itself upstream - a process similar to that described by D.C.Ford as vectoring, which resulted in successive upstream parts of the Swilsons streamway being formed.

The source of this tributary stream is unknown but it almost certainly comes from one of the sinks below Leck Fell House. The main Rumbling Hole stream rose considerably while we were surveying after only a few hours of heavy rain. However, the water in the tributary turned brown even before this, indicating very fast run off and probably a clear vadose system between the sink and this sump.

The survey was carried out using a handheld ex-army prismatic compass reading to one degree, and a fibron tape. An Abney level was also used reading to one degree, but passages below the last pitch in Rumbling Hole and the whole of Rumbling Beck Cave were not levelled in this way. The depth of Rumbling Hole is 385 feet and the total length of the combined system is 1,300 feet.

A.C.WALTHAM (I.C.C.C.)

* Furthermore, in 1899, the first explorers found this entrance passage sumped, presumably due to ponding behind a choke of boulders, and the pot was not fully explored till 1932.

* * * * *

SKOCJAN CAVE, JUGOSLAVIA.

Every caver who happens to be near the Adriatic manages to visit the famous Postojna show caves in northern Yugoslavia, and yet few even know about the Skocjan show cave, only 15 miles southwest of Postojna, which is a far more worthwhile visit. Casteret described Skocjan as "matchless in the world" and its uniqueness comes from its huge scale.

The tourist enters Skocjan through a mined tunnel at the foot of a conical shakehole which is a quarter of a mile across and about 200 feet deep. The tunnel leads into the end of a 2,000 feet long dry side passage which steadily descends; this is liberally decorated with huge stalactites and stalagmites very similar to those in Postojna, and the passage averages 80 feet high and wide. This then leads out on to a ledge above the main streamway which is 150 feet wide and 300 feet high - surely the largest streamway in the world - the path being cut in the walls about half way up. Massive floodlights down by the water appear like 20 watt bulbs and the roof is seldom visible. To the left, downstream, is a great rift a mile long which took 3 years to explore by artificial climbing along the walls as the river is an impassable torrent. However, the show cave route just crosses the entrance to this on a steel girder bridge 150 feet above the water - and in periods of heavy floods even this is submerged!! Upstream for a quarter of a mile the passage maintains its incredible size and the views from the path must be seen to be believed. Looking downwards, what appear to be puddles are in fact sizeable lakes a hundred or so feet across with the stream cascading through them. Just before daylight is reached, the path leads round a high level oxbow (200 feet above the stream) where fabulous formations contrast with the bare rock in the main passage. The exit is where the roof has collapsed, leaving a circular hole 600 feet across with the water crossing its floor over 400 feet below the surface and a long flight of steps takes the visitor back up to the top, half a mile from the other entrance.

The water actually sinks about a quarter of a mile away but this is not included in the show cave, and the rising is 10 miles away down by the coast.

(To reach Skocjan by car, follow the signposts from near Divaca on the main road from Postojna to Koper, which follows close to the Italian border southeast of Trieste.)

A.C.W.

SOME NOTES ON EASTERN MENDIP AND ITS CAVES -

(A General Account for Cavers Interested in this Area.)

The Mendip Hills exhibit a basic structure of four 'en echelon' (parallel but staggered) elongate domes or periclines with an east-west axial trend. This account is based upon the most easterly of these four structures, which is the second largest. This pericline is asymmetrical with the beds on the northern limb dipping at approximately 60° - 80° whilst those of the southern limb dip at between 10° and 40° .

The core of the pericline is composed of Silurian volcanics (andesitic lavas and tuffs) and shales, with marls and sandstones of Devonian age. Both of these geological systems are brought to the surface in this area by the folding. The flanks and ends of the pericline are composed of Lower Carboniferous strata which is partially obscured around its outer edge by younger sediments. The Carboniferous limestone here is about 2,700 feet thick with the lower limestone shale at its base.

There can be traced a definite line of sinks at the lower limestone shale junction with the Carboniferous limestone. For example, just south of Oakhill where there is a line of swallets including Little London, Oakhill and Blakes Farm. The resurgences occur around the fringes of the limestone outcrop, two of the most important being the Ashwick Grove Risings and St. Dunstan's Well.

Most of the known caves occur on the northern limb of the pericline. This area probably contains as many caves per given area as western Mendip, but few are at present known for several reasons, mainly the lack of such variable relief as is present on western Mendip to expose the systems, the probability of a greater soil and drift covering on eastern Mendip, and the lack of any combs or gorges in the area. Also many entrances and depressions may have been obscured by the results of prevalent periglacial conditions during the ice age. Some vertical development does occur in the caves but not to any great extent. The caves of Fairy Cave Quarry show this (Balch extension contains a 40 feet pot) as does Bottle-head Slocker at Downhead which contains a 30 feet pitch. The latter system is developed in close proximity to the Downhead fault. The lack of any large pitches is not surprising since the vertical height between the majority of the sinks and the level of the resurgences is only 100-150 feet. The water table in previous times must have been higher than at present since many eastern Mendip caves show a phreatic origin (development below the water table by solutional means), such as Brownes Hole and Hilliers Cave.

The largest system known on eastern Mendip at present is Stoke Lane Slocker and this system shows that after its formation it was later dissected and then invaded by another stream. It is an almost horizontal system and contains some very large chambers (Bone Chamber being the largest). There was almost certainly another entrance to the cave in earlier times. This system shows a remarkable change of character from Stoke I to Stoke II, from small low passages to large roomy chambers. Balch Cave also possessed some large chambers nearly of the same dimensions.

The two main resurgences of the area to the North are St. Dunstan's Well and Ashwick Grove Risings. The former emits large volumes of water and is capped by Bristol Waterworks. The main source of water for this rising is from Stoke Lane Slocker, but the stream which sinks in Withybrook Slocker also rises here. Between Withybrook and St. Dunstan's Well there is a fault, with the possibility of a well developed cave system along this fault line. However, at present no real progress has been made at either end. A small dry system is present over St. Dunstan's Well - Jack's Hole which may have acted as an 'overflow tube' in times of flood, or as the main water-course when the water table was at a higher level. Withybrook at present ends in a boulder maze which cannot be penetrated. In Ashwick Grove there are four main resurgences, the lower two are capped by Bristol Waterworks and the upper two are only intermittent. These resurgences are fed by water from Oakhill, Blakes Farm, Springfield and other smaller slockers in that vicinity.

The caves which are present on eastern Mendip are usually well decorated and often show a predominance of white flowstone formations. For example, both Balch Cave and Stoke II are very well decorated, as is the recently discovered Balch extension which contains a great variety of flowstone and crystalline calcite formations including helictites and calcite 'flowers'. Cave pearls have been noted in both Balch and Stoke Lane Caves.

In Fairy Cave Quarry, Hilliers Cave is blocked at present by quarry waste and mud but it may be possible to make a connection from Fairy Cave. Some parts of Balch Cave still remain but are not very stable. Fairy Cave itself is still intact but the first chamber here is also 'shaky' due to blast damage.

Fairy Cave Quarry shows well that the limestone under eastern Mendip, in this area at least, has a high proportion of caves but these are seldom shown in the surface features. Hence to some extent the numbers of eastern Mendip caves is at present somewhat dependent upon quarrying activities. Although relatively few large systems have been found on eastern Mendip to date, there are numerous smaller systems and the indications are that potentially this area is one of the best on Mendip for discovery of new systems and the further development of the known caves.

This article has not intended to go into the more detailed points of information of the area, nor has it mentioned many of the numerous sinks and risings present, but is submitted as a broad outline of eastern Mendip in the hope that it may attract the attentions of a few more cavers to this area.

Some Useful Maps:

One Inch Geological Survey Sheets 280 and 281 - solid and drift. (covers most of Mendip)

Six Inch Geological Survey Sheets ST 64 NE and ST 64 NW (covers part of eastern Mendip).

References:

"British Caving" by the C.R.G. Chapters 1,2 and 5.

"British Regional Geology - Bristol and Gloucester District" by the Geological Survey.

"The Caves of Mendip" by Barrington.

Also various publications of Cerberus Speleological Society (especially Jan.1964) and Border Caving Group.

A FEW VISITS TO MARBLE STEPS.

Once upon a time, long long ago, members of I.C. started gathering surveys of Yorkshire pots, and found there wasn't a good one available of Marble Steps. Recently the problem was rectified.

March 30th saw Tony Waltham (I.C.) and Johnny Hallam (U.C.) surveying the main route down the pot which had been laddered by C.P.C. The rather interesting morphology of the pot was then more fully appreciated and it was also found to be deeper than expected. - So, two weeks later Tony returned with Julian Coward (U.C.) and poked about in, and surveyed some of the side passages. The entrance was also levelled on this trip from a bench mark on the road and so revealed that the final sump was on the same level as Keld Head - but more of that later. A hole in the roof over the mud slope just beyond the main chamber was also peered out, and hence the next visit.

The weekend of May 11th was extremely wet and so provided a fine chance to see the safe entrance series in full flood. A fair stream was running down the Gulley and disappearing down Steps Pot so the main entrance pitch was only lightly sprayed. A huge stream was crashing down the main inlet, and while the bypass passages were only showery, the waterfall in the main chamber was a fine sight. The amount of water was comparable to a fairly dry Fell Beck, and half of this was sinking in the floor of the chamber and half going down the blind 80 feet pitch.

The passage beyond here was then dry but not long after the stream filled up the 80 feet pot and so immediately overflowed down Rift Passage. Consequently, a very large stream developed down here in less than a minute - comparable to a minor tidal wave. This would have filled the Intestines route and also probably have sumped the crawl in Rift Passage. So the moral is "Never descend Marble Steps in dubious weather".

The purpose of this visit however, was to maypole above the Mud Bank. This was done and 42 feet up the foot of the Great Aven was reached where the initials U.L.S.A. 1966 were found. The retreat to the surface was made interesting by having to carry a 20 feet length of maypole which refused to disconnect. The party this time consisted of Julian and Tony, with Rog Bowser and Geoff le Patourel (both U.C.).

Finally, on June 5th Tony and Johnny returned and surveyed the Intestines and the Stream Inlet Series.

Marble Steps is interesting and unusual because it really consists of two distinct systems. The entrance passages as far as the Mud Bank are fragments of a huge cave system which was once the major sink on Gragareth. This was undoubtedly preglacial and was largely filled by debris at the end of the glaciation - a prominent fill level can be seen at 1,090 feet in the Great Aven. The continuation of this system lies either in the floor of the Main Chamber or the Flooded Pot (which does drain itself in very dry weather), but both routes are very likely beyond the scope of the keenest digger, because there is a vast amount of material there, and the use of Rift Passage as a flood overflow shows how little water can manage to filter through this choke even under pressure. This major pre-glacial system probably continues through Duke Street in Ireby Cavern which is at an altitude of about 900 feet, only some 600 yards W.N.W. of the Main Chamber, and is of remarkably similar dimensions. Certainly the Inlet Rifts and Steps Pot and possibly the Stream Inlet Series are later, largely post glacial additions to this system.

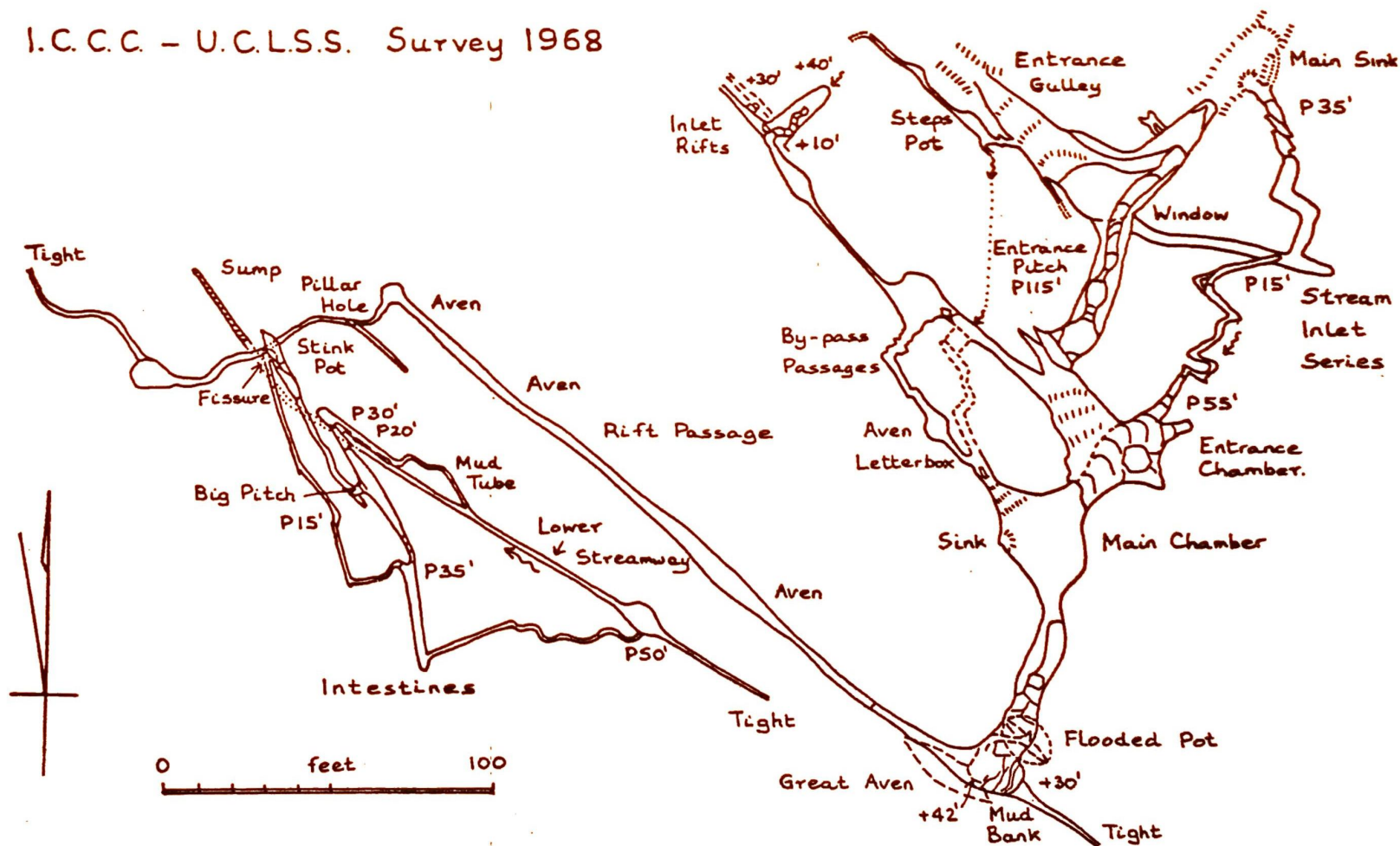
Some years ago, Ken Pearce and a B.S.A. party climbed an aven somewhere near the entrance and found 300 feet of passage leading back under the surface stream bed. The survey of this was lost and the passage can not now be found, so its exact position remains a mystery.

The glacial infill damming the main passages must have once been near perfect for only a backing up of later water can have resulted in the formation of the far series - Rift Passage and beyond. These passages are very different, being mainly constricted and should

MARBLE STEPS POT

Gragareth

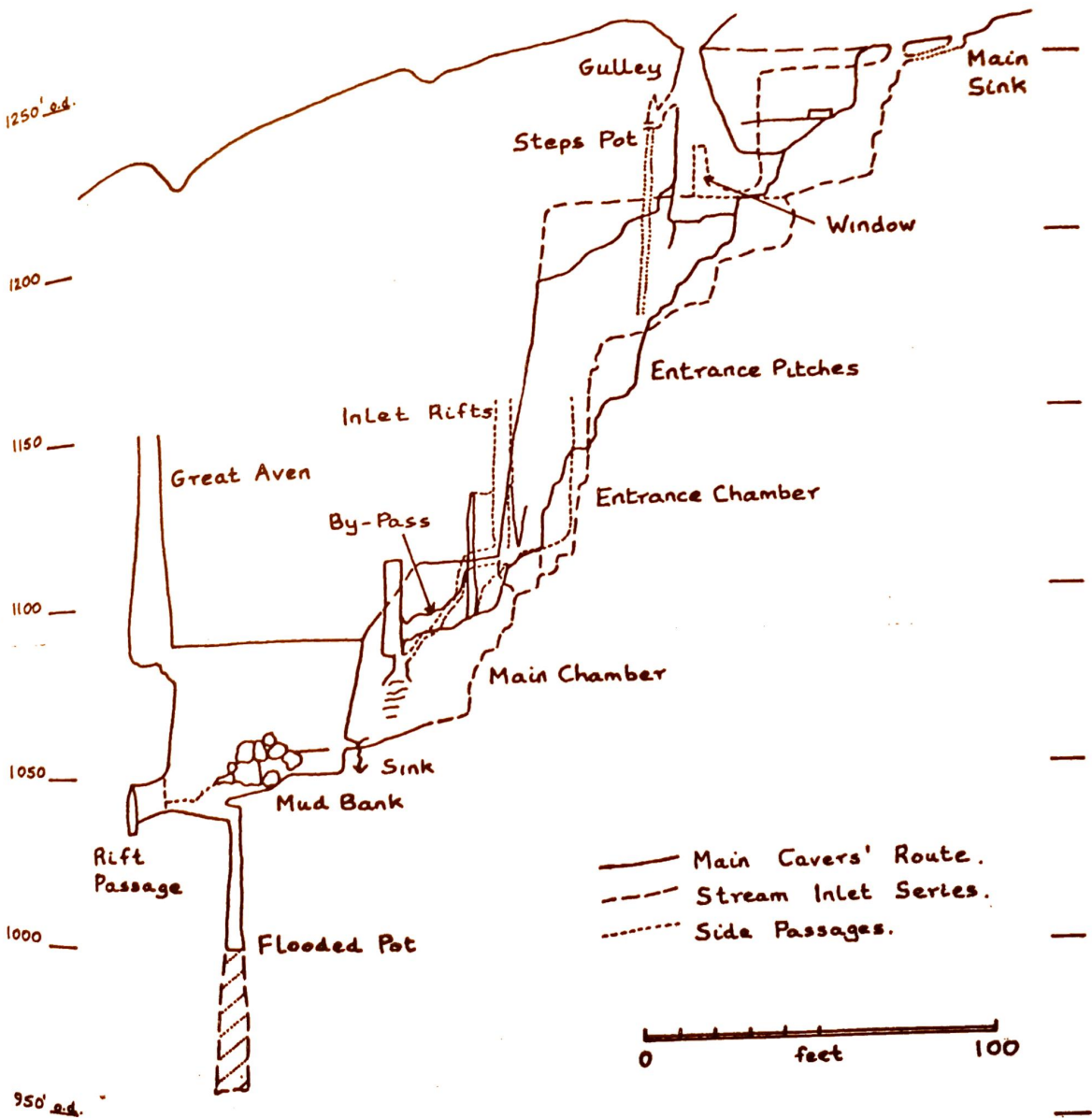
I.C.C.C. - U.C.L.S.S. Survey 1968



MARBLE STEPS POT

Projected Section of Near Series

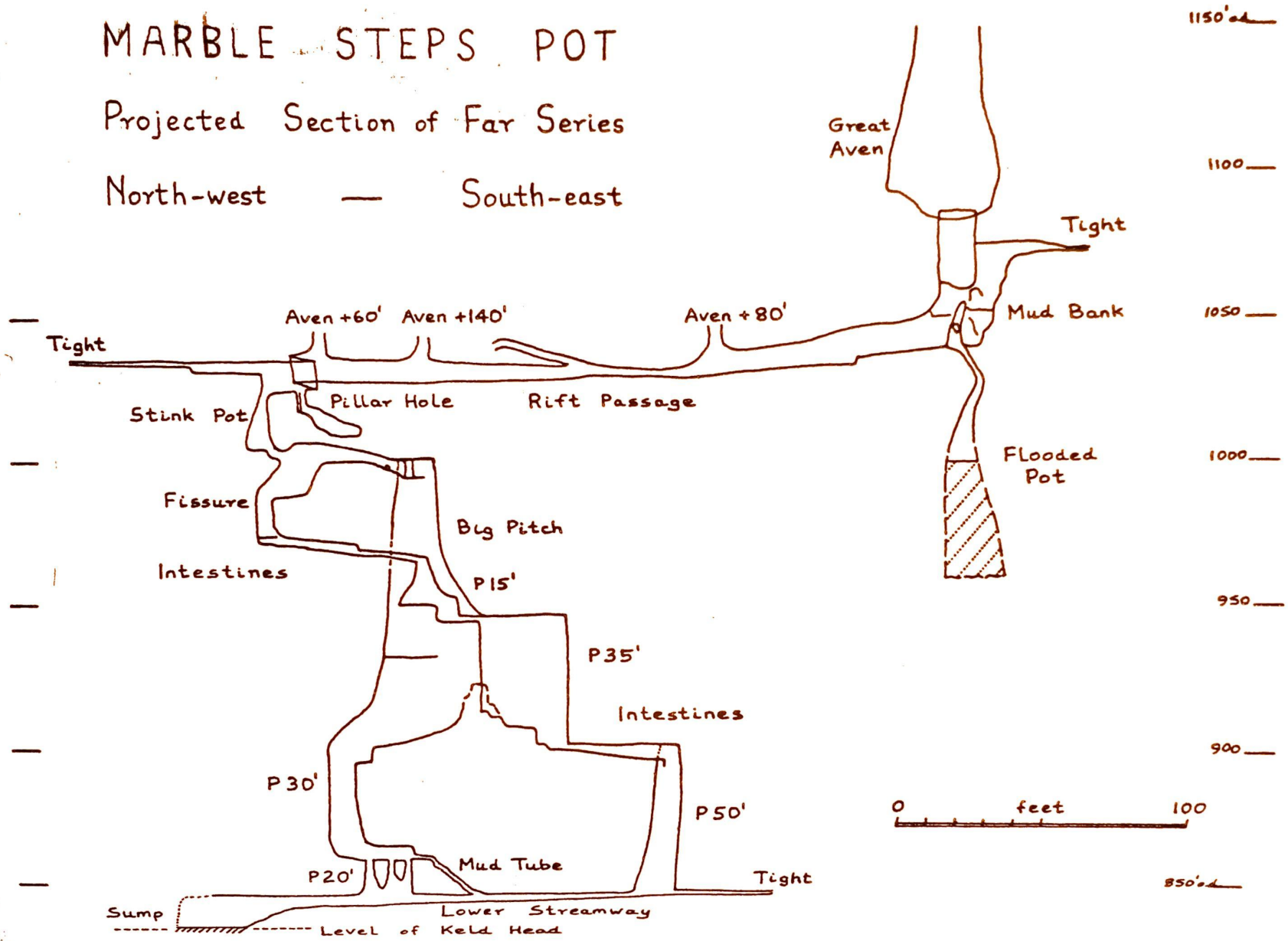
South-west — North-east



MARBLE STEPS POT

Projected Section of Far Series

North-west — South-east



be completely dry when visited as many of them very quickly flood to the roof in wet weather. Rift Passage has three more avens in it, all scaled by a B.S.A. party some years ago, and finally leads to a narrow canyon passage meandering westwards. This eventually gets too tight but a protracted banging session might yield results as it is pointing into the great unknown and is straight above the final sump. In the floor of this passage is Pillar Hole, which appears to spout water at times, and Stink Pot which is the route on. From here it is only a very short distance down a series of rifts including three pitches to the final sump.

An alternative is provided by the Intestines. From the bottom of Stink Pot a short climb and pitch leads to this passage which is generally constricted, particularly at the tops of the 15 feet and 35 feet pitches, but is nowhere tight. The place is liberally strewn with huge pieces of timber which only testify to the incredible force of the flood waters which go down there. A rift from the foot of the 35 feet pitch leads through to the Big Pitch on the other route and could provide an invaluable escape or rescue route. The Lower Streamway leads direct to the sump, but in the other direction, from the foot of the 50 feet pitch, is a tube which soon becomes too tight, but along which can sometimes be heard the sound of water.

The survey clearly shows how much the cave is controlled by joints and faults. These form a complex fracture zone running N.W.-S.E. dipping about 85° S.W. and are parallel to and only about 500 yards from the North Craven Fault. Most in the far series are only joints, but many in the entrance series are very likely faults; Ken Pearce noted slickenslides in his "last inlet passage". Bedding plane development has been limited though there are significant shale beds at 900 feet, 945 feet, 1,000 feet and 1,035 feet above sea level.

A florescein test by the N.P.C. in 1954 showed the resurgence to be Keld Head. However, as the dye was placed in the surface stream, this is only pertinent to the water sinking in the Main Chamber and the Flooded Pot. Furthermore, the final sump in the far series is less than one foot above the level of Keld Head, and also considering its position, it is quite possible that any water down here drains North-West towards Ireby and Leck. Much remains to be known about this end of the system.

The survey was made using a fibron tape, Abney level and Suunto and Prismatic compasses. The main route is C.R.G. grade 5B to the foot of the Big Pitch and grade 4B from there

to the sump. Intestines and side passages were done to grades 3B-4B except Steps Pot which was too tight for our surveyors and its pitch is therefore only sketched in. A bench mark was engraved on a prominent rock at the head of the Gulley and this is at N.G.R. SD.68027707, and was found to be 1,252 feet o.d. by Autoset levelling from the Turbary Road. Keld Head was similarly levelled at 829 feet o.d. The length of Marble Steps is 2,350 feet, and its depth is 422 feet.

A tackle list for Marble Steps can never be precise as nearly all the pitches can be partly climbed. However, the following gives a comfortable trip:-

<u>Pitch.</u>	<u>Ladder.</u>	<u>Wire Belay.</u>	<u>Rope.</u>
Entrance	115'	10'	-
Stink Pot	25'	2'	-
Big Pitch	95'	10'	120'
30' Pitch	30'	15'	50'
Last Pitch	20'	5'	-
Intestines Fissure	15'	20'	-
Intestines Two	15'	20'	-
Intestines Three	35'	20'	50'
Intestines Four	50'	20'	70'

Single lifelines only are needed as the pitches are near enough to the end to allow only half the party down at once with no waste of time. To descend the Stream Inlet Series ladders of 30 feet, 15 feet and 55 feet are needed, each with a 20 feet belay and a lifeline for the 55 feet pitch.

A.C.WALTHAM (I.C.)

NICK POT.

For several months enquiries about Nick Pot brought conflicting second hand accounts from many people who knew legendary figures who allegedly had done the pot, but when these were tracked down they denied the charge emphatically. Finally, two reputable cavers were pinned down and we received the following descriptions of their trip down the pot: "The worst pitch I have ever done. It is jolly wet and loose - certainly a bad S.S.P." and, "Oh, it is quite easy - it's overrated you know !" So we decided to go and see for ourselves what the pot was like.

Preferring to believe the second description we (Phil Collett and Tony Waltham of I.C., Johnny Hallam, Roger Bowser and Julian Coward of U.C.) set off from Crummack in dry grotts loaded down with tackle and walked up towards Simon Fell. The pot is developed along a fault running approximately N.W.-S.E. and the entrance is in an obvious shakehole in the position shown in P.U.

The whole pot is very short with only about 200 feet of horizontal passage. The first pitch of 35 feet, with a 10 feet belay, is reached after a short rift passage, down to a chamber which shows the effects of the fault action very well. The passage drops rapidly down some small climbs to an easy crawl followed by two avens before the big pitch is reached.

For several minutes we played like jobs throwing everything in sight down the pitch and listening with horror at the disturbing time the stones spent falling down the pitch. The stream has cut a deep groove in the floor of the passage and falls away to ones left, so we kept well over to the right and started to feed innumerable lengths of ladder down the pitch, mixing some 12 inch spaced and some 10 inch, to add interest to the climb. Meanwhile, piles of rope were being sorted out and merrily knotted together. A 25 feet belay was put around a substantial knob and we were all set to go.

The weather was fairly dry and although the wooden dam still seemed to be in working order, it was not used. However, if the weather was "normal" one could use the dam with advantage, while "wet" weather would probably make the pot impossible.

With some muttering I was volunteered to tie-on and pushed towards the edge of the pitch. In the "Martin", Nick Pot seemed like a good idea, but my enthusiasm waned as I approached the pitch. However, with threats from above and 100 feet of rope around my shoulders and on my head, I soon reached the first ledge about 70 feet down. Although it was a sizeable ledge, it was covered several feet thick with a glorious tangle of ladders, which I bodily flung with gay abandon into the black abyss at my feet. The ladder beside me twitched a few times and after several seconds twanged violently as it took the full weight of the rest of the ladder.

I glanced over the edge. All I could see was the spray splashing off the walls and disappearing into the distance. Thank God I could not see the bottom! More shouts from above necessitated setting off again. My enthusiasm was still waning rapidly. The shaft which is developed on the fault is roughly

boat shaped, 40 feet long and 20 feet wide, and the first 50 feet or so of the climb below the ledge is on the wall. The spray soon soaked me although it fell with no real force. Further down the pitch becomes free although one never really feels isolated as in the nearby Juniper Gulf - which has one of the most impressive pitches in England. Slowly I plodded down and finally reached the ledge 30 feet from the bottom. Soon I scrambled down the remaining ladder to the bottom. The pitch is 270 feet deep and that sure seemed like a large pitch to climb. A narrow passage leads down to the sump - quite promising as sumps go, although there was a depressing collection of debris floating on top. The underwater passage though could be made out at the far end of the sump.

Pleased though I was to have come down, I now had the unpleasant task of getting out. I tied on and whistled, and got a glorious strong pull as I started off. In spite of this, 270 feet was a long way. After some time, I struggled over the edge and my enthusiasm for Nick Pot returned as I got my breath back. We all went down, the others no doubt encouraged by my stories of pounding waterfalls, slipped rungs, loose rocks and my desperate panting as I told them of the horrors of this pitch!

To add absurdity to the proceedings, Johnny decided Nick Pot would be a good place to collect some shale samples. So he went down with a "butty" bag, covered with plastic bags, cold chisels, hammers, note books, pencils and curses, and while hanging 200 feet up he conscientiously filled up various bags with shale samples. I doubt if many samples have been taken half-way up the pitch in Nick Pot!

The bottom of the pitch was deladdered from the ledge. Otherwise we spent what seemed like endless hours rolling up ladders and ropes. However, we finally moved out to sunbathe in the glorious sunshine, content after doing a deep, but little done pot hole.

J.COWARD (U.C.L.S.S.)

REVIEW - WHITE ROSE P.C. JOURNAL.

Vol.5 no.1. 40 pp. Undated. Price 3/-.

This publication is only little better than the average caving club journal as it has an unfortunately large proportion of "chatty" articles. However it does contain two outstanding reports which make it a good buy. First is an article, accompanied by a

grade 3 survey, on the exploration of 900 feet of passage in Crystal Beck Pot, Littondale, which involved the diving of 6 sumps - almost up to Mendip standard. Second is the description of the excavation of a shale bed to traverse the big pitch in Nick Pot, to find almost nothing at the far side. Of the remaining features the more interesting describe diving in Cow Dubs, an attempt to drain sump I in Ireby Cavern (which didn't work) and an almost ladderless descent of Pool Sink.

A.C.W.

FAR EAST - GAPING GILL.

It was all Jim's fault. Jim Winterhalder, that is, the infamous president of I.C. Caving Club. It seems he was obsessed with the notion that Tatham Wife Hole and Black Shiver Moss Pot, to mention but two, had been 'stolen' from him by the Northern hoodes. So once again he sought inspiration by spending a few restless nights on the floor of I.C. tackle store. This did the trick. He burst into the snack bar one lunch time and announced that this time he would not be foiled. East Passage in Gaping Gill was going to 'go'. Endless master caves and caverns measureless to man were taken for granted. In fact it seemed certain that we would over-shoot Ingleborough Cave, and probably pop up through the sump in Penyghent Pot. Incredible as it may seem, Jim was at this time blissfully ignorant of the rumour flying around the Dales, that East Passage had already gone. This rumour, which I first heard last November, was that the sump marked on the G.G. survey near the end of East Passage had been passed by the Happy Wanderers, to reveal about 600 feet of passage, terminating in a sump, which was being dived with some success. The men of Braida Garth have persistently denied any knowledge of such a system and no evidence has been found to substantiate this rumour.

Jim's great plan was to examine all of Far East Passage in minute detail, back as far as Brothers' Junction, to survey it, and finally to try and re-enter the extension discovered by the Craven Pothole Club. The C.P.C. in an attempt to follow upstream the small stream which sinks in Terminal Chamber, had used extension ladders to gain access to a constricted passage some 65 feet above the boulder floor of the high chamber near the end of East Passage. This was done on their winch

meet in 1949, and their journal at the time described the passage as 150 feet of low, wet crawling. No further details were given, and just how this passage ended was something of a mystery to us. P.U. mentions this extension, and gives the length as 450 feet, which in fact is much nearer the truth. Since 1949 only one other visit had been made to this crawl. This time it was reached with standard scaffold poles on the Bradford Pothole Club winch meet of Whitsun 1965. The late Bill Frakes and Colin Vickers were the masterminds behind this trip. They spent only an hour at the top and returned dismayed to tell their support party that the miserable crawl ended in a small chamber where they had found the inscription 'C.P.C. 1949'. It seems that they had been quite unaware of the original exploration by the C.P.C.

Thus it was that on one sunny but very chilly Saturday morning, late in February, Jim led his little band of intrepid (or was it apathetic?) adventurers up from Clapdale, over the crisp snow to Gaping Gill. Rod Knapp, Tom Sharp, Mike Gibson, Neil Smith and Jim descended Bar Pot with 4 scaling poles (they had little choice, as the poles were firmly frozen to their hands). The intention was that the remaining two I.C. members, Tom Turner and Dave Prime, together with Mike Binns and Brian Chadwick of the Sheffield University Club, should go down Flood Exit Pot (just to add a little more interest and a great deal more effort to the trip) and meet the others at the bottom of the big pitch.

An hour or so later, as the Flood party were rapidly reaching the conclusion that even by I.C. caving standards they were employing a rather novel tackle list, it was agreed that Frustration Pot was very aptly named! They rapidly returned to the surface, and were just beginning to enjoy an afternoon in the sun, when someone made a most unfortunate discovery - the correct entrance to Flood.

Meanwhile, Jim's party had descended Bar Pot and after leaving two of the four scaling poles (by some chance these happened to be the two steel poles) at the bottom of Flood for the other party, had proceeded to the Main Chamber and into East Passage. After waiting some time they had not arrived. Tom Sharp remained in East Passage, while the others returned to search for the missing brethren. Needless to say they had only just reached the main pitch in Flood Exit. Slowly the steel poles and an abundance of other gear was conveyed towards East Passage. The monotony of this task was however alleviated by the fact that a party from Nottingham University was close on their tail and Jim was somewhat loath to admit to any 'foreigners' just what he intended to use the poles for. The tactics apparently were to run from one chamber to the next, secreting the poles each time while everyone endeavoured to get their breath. When the Nottingham

party finally overtook them, the excuse given for the poles was that someone had spotted a rather large inlet entering the main chamber. It seems nobody was entirely convinced by this.

Finally our intrepid heroes reached Mud Hall, where Jim, always ready to employ novel methods to overcome the most straightforward of obstacles, belayed a 15 feet ladder to the end of about 60 feet of rope. Needless to say there was no sign of the ladder from the top. Undeterred he set off down, to find that the ladder was 5 feet short of the floor. The next man descended, assured by Jim that the tackle was perfectly adequate. By the time the last person was down, the rope and ladder had found a more direct path to the floor, with the result that most of the ladder was in a heap at the bottom. The slight problem of just how they were going to get back up this pitch was apparently not considered.

When the party reached the turn-off to Brothers' Junction, Rod Knapp and Jim decided to investigate this notorious bedding plane. Attired in little more than a pair of Y-fronts, Jim inserted himself into the crawl. He claims to have gained another 3 feet (removing boulders with the aid of his chin) - stopped only by the fact that his ears were in imminent danger of being scrapped off his skull. The short distance back to East Passage was surveyed by these two, who then moved on to Terminal Chamber, with the intention of surveying up to Brothers' Junction. Curiosity, though, soon got the better of them, and they decided to see how the maypoling was progressing. Unfortunately Brian Chadwick had picked the wrong aven, apparently misled by a length of wooden ladder left behind many years before by the C.P.C. Some difficulty was experienced in pushing the poles up the hole, due to the large number of projections. As the last pole was just being fixed beneath the rest, the top one became wedged in a crack. To try and loosen it the bottom pole was pulled. The result was that the rather inadequate connectors failed to hold together any of the poles, which cascaded down onto the four unfortunates standing at the bottom. Scraping aside the corpses, Jim re-erected the structure, and this time had climbed 10 feet when a large rock became dislodged and knocked Brian back to the ground.

Everybody then retreated to the large chamber upstream, where Mike Binns found a rusty old bean can behind a boulder, and in it proceeded to brew hot chocolate over two candles.

As we found on all the subsequent trips, apathy was by this stage rapidly becoming evident in most of the party. Jim, Mike Gibson and Tom Turner did however make one last attempt with the pole. This time Jim reached 25 feet, where it became obvious that the aven closed up on the north side and was hopelessly choked on the south side.

Everyone then moved down to the spot marked as 'sump' on the G.G. survey. Rod Knapp, having the only wet-suit, was persuaded to investigate. He negotiated a muddy wet canal for about 20 feet, which led up to a dry mud slope. At the end was a boulder choke. On closer examination this was found to be filling a steeply ascending rift. When lying in one particular position, Rod managed to see up between the boulders to what seemed to be a black void. After deciding that any attempt to remove the boulders would result in a very rapid decrease of his life expectancy, he prudently returned.

Being thoroughly sick of East Passage, the majority set off back towards Bar, leaving Rod, Mike Gibson and of course Jim to persevere with the surveying. This was finally completed at Brothers' Junction after another 2 hour's work.

Mud Hall, needless to say, had to be prussiked. This was accomplished by Dave Prime, who then continued on with Brian Chadwick to deladder Flood Exit. Everyone else met up at the top of the 100 feet in Bar. Mike Gibson had found some means of stepping off the ladder about six times on this pitch, so as not to tire the lifeliners too much!

The main party struggled back from Bar to Clapdale as dawn was breaking, to find that there was no trace of Dave or Brian. It later transpired that they had emerged from Flood and taken the somewhat unusual route to Clapham via Newby Moss. To check their navigations they had woken a farmer at 4.0 a.m., who told them in very succinct terms just where they ought to go.

It was a month later, at the end of March, when the I.C. Caving Club once again found itself at Clapham. Fortunately the College had had the foresight to send Jim to the muddy wastes of the East Coast to collect bugs. This should have resulted in a pleasant weeks caving for the rest of us, but it was not to be. Inevitably, it was decided that with Jim out of harm's way, we might be able to do the job properly, that is get the pole up the right hole. So on the Monday afternoon before Easter, five of us were dropped in Clapham Bottoms by a landrover, with an incredible mountain of gear. Neil Smith and I would descend Disappointment, as neither of us had done it before, while Dick Sunderland, Dave Kerr and Andy Parker would go down Bar with the bulk of the gear, including two more lengths

of aluminium pole. Neil and I had a rather slow trip, due mainly to the fact that we were carrying a variety of ladders, ropes and ammunition boxes in addition to the tackle for Dis. After passing the mud and water crawl to East Passage, we reached Mud Hall just as the others were ladderling it from the normal side.

It was decided that as everyone was grossly unfit and enthusiasm was at a rather low ebb, it would be out of the question to persevere with the maypoling and have to drag the gear back up Dis. and Bar as well as deladderling these pots. When someone suggested that we go straight out of Bar, and return the following day a little fresher, no-one needed much persuading!

On Tuesday evening, we were back at Mud Hall, armed with a mountain of food (on Jim's 17 hour trip, the rations had apparently been limited to about six bars of chocolate!) Near Brothers' Junction we spent some time digging boulders out of various holes, but to little avail. One particular boulder proved rather awkward, so Dick drilled a hole in the end of it, and put in a small rawlbolt. A length of courlene was attached to this, which four of us pulled energetically for several minutes, until the bolt suddenly left the boulder, and we all tumbled head over heel into a mass of clinging wet mud.

Eventually, we got all the gear to the end of East Passage. A large window was soon spotted about 25 feet up the left-hand wall of the chamber, and as this was almost directly above the slit from which the stream emerged, we decided that this must be the aven that the C.P.C. had originally climbed. Two lengths of steel pole and two of aluminium we joined together and pushed up the wall until the top one reached past the window. This time we had no fear of the whole contraption collapsing on us, for Rod Knapp had manufactured some new connectors from heavy steel tubing, to bolt externally over the poles. Even when carrying a person's weight there was hardly any visible bending of the structure.

I climbed the ladder, and gingerly stepped through the window to find that there was a parallel shaft behind, separated from the main chamber by a thin wall of rock. This shaft, elliptical in section, dropped about 15 feet on the far side, and extended upwards for about another 30 feet, to where the stream could be seen emerging from a small hole.

The first thing to be done was to rebelay the ladder, if possible, to some natural belay point. Fortunately there was a convenient block of rock on the far side of the shaft. This however meant threading the belay over the rock window, which happened to be rather jagged. To overcome this I decided to try and kick off the sharp edge. So grasping a rock flake and leaning back into the shaft, I started kicking. Then it happened - the flake exhibited a sudden animosity towards its parent wall, and joined me in a rather rapid descent to the floor. I landed firmly upon my backside. Fortunately it was on this occasion covered by four long sweaters and two pairs of trousers, not to mention a reasonable layer of fat. After lying under the waterfall for a few minutes, I came to the conclusion that perhaps I was not going to die after all. In fact, as I got to my feet I found that I was not even bruised. I did however have a rather nasty feeling, when having climbed back up to the window, I contemplated what a fall down the other side might have done to my carcass. Large boulders, 30 feet below would not have made quite such a pleasant landing. With enthusiasm somewhat dampened we soon decided to set off back to Bar. We eventually reached the surface after some 17 hours underground.

The fourth attempt by I.C.C.C. to conquer East Passage was made in early May. On this occasion the party consisted of Dave Sweeting, Dick Sunderland, Rod Knapp, Neil Smith and myself. As usual it was a slow, lumbering trip, with the inevitable mountain of gear to be carried down, which this time included a sledge hammer and crowbar! This problem was partially overcome, however, by lowering several ladders and ropes, together with ten feet of steel pole, directly down the main shaft of G.G. We took the somewhat longer route via Bar Pot, and on entering the Main Chamber had little difficulty in finding the gear, as the 450 feet of rope which had followed it down seemed to be spread over half the floor. In spite of several hours effort we made little progress with the maypoling on this occasion, principally due to the fact that the normally small trickle of water falling down the shaft behind the window had swollen to very considerable proportions. In fact the whole of G.G. was surprisingly wet. The small falls which come down over Avalanche Pot and the boulders above Mud Hall were very heavy indeed.

We did decide, though, to have another look at the boulder choke beyond the so-called sump at the end of Far East. Rod Knapp's description of this had made it sound quite hopeful. As Neil and I had the only wet-suits on this trip, we paddled through the canal and up to the choke. After a while I managed to find the one position where one could look upwards through the boulders and see the black void which Rod had noticed. The crowbar was

promptly passed to me, and I placed the end of it gingerly in the spot where it seemed it would do the most damage. Holding the other end, I retreated as far as possible and twitched a few times. Suddenly a small pile of boulders cascaded down in front of me. We cleared these away and I carefully inched forward to see what had happened. The choke appeared more unstable than ever especially when viewed from beneath! There was however a definite opening into a chamber above. After a little more gardening with the bar, the gap was large enough to get through. Neil and I climbed up and found ourselves in a chamber about 20 feet long, 8 feet broad and perhaps 12 feet high. Most of the floor was unmarked dry mud, but in the far corner lay a sump. Immersing myself to the neck I was unable to feel anyway on. Under the opposite wall of this chamber was a short crawl which led into a second chamber, perhaps a little larger than the first. On the far side was a second sump, but rather different from the other. A bedding plane sloped gently into the water, and at the farthest point, about 3 feet in, its height was no more than 6 inches. We could see no signs of any air space beyond. In fact, at the time it seemed pretty hopeless.

We left via Bar Pot where we had a most unpleasant experience. One end of the double line that we had left on the 100 feet pitch was now ere to be seen. Dave Sweeting, who volunteered to do the climb, found it some 70 feet up the pitch. Apparently a loop had snagged high up on the rear wall. It is to be hoped that the club which left our tackle in such a disgraceful state soon acquires a more responsible attitude to potholing. It is no joke after 15 hours underground to be faced with a 100 feet pitch and no lifeline.

As the members of I.C.C.C. were occupied with examinations at Whitsun it was left to a party of the old lags to continue the work in East Passage. The Saturday and Sunday having been spent in Juniper and Nick, it was not until Whit Monday that we turned our attention to G.G. Alas, as we were soon to discover, this was too late. Our party this time consisted of Tony Waltham, Phil Collett, Rog Bowser and myself. The descent on the B.P.C. winch made a pleasant change from Bar Pot and we were soon at the top of Mud Hall. Here we met a party of four from the B.P.C., liberally coated in mud, who told us a little story!

On the preceding Saturday, a B.P.C. party of seven - Alan Brittain, Gerald Benn, Dave Brook, John Green, Christine Davies, Mike Bycroft and Carl Pickstone had gone to have a look

at the Far East Sump, just as we had done. When they reached our second sump, Gerald Benn had decided to wash his feet. The unexpected result was that a flake came off the roof of the sump. This was removed, after which the prospects looked decidedly better. Some hammer and chisel work was done on the roof, until it was possible for the party to pass through on their backs. The air space at this stage was still fairly constricted. Once through they ascended a steep mud bank and walked into what must surely be the most important find in G.G. since the discovery of Hensler's system over 30 years ago. On this trip they only had sufficient lighting to cover 1,500 feet of the passage. Reluctantly they withdrew and were winched out after 10 hours underground. It seems that the departure from G.G. of the very muddy characters had not passed unnoticed, for rumours were circulating that something big was afoot! In the style reminiscent of a James Bond saga, the B.P.C. blocked all the tracks leading up to G.G. with all the vehicles at hand, to try and forestall any gatecrashing. In the early hours of Monday morning a second party descended, this time consisting of Gerald Benn, Alan Brittain, John Green and Dick Glover. They pushed on to the end, discovering in all nearly half a mile of passage. Though the first few hundred feet are apparently quite high and very well decorated, much of the remainder is a low wide passage, perhaps two or three feet high and extremely monotonous. The passage ends in a fairly large chamber, blocked by a large choke of boulders, many of which are gritstone. Hot on the heels of this second party came that ubiquitous duo from U.L.S.A., the Brook brothers. The grade 5 survey that they made apparently gives a straight line distance of 1,700 feet for the new passage, which goes in a south-east direction right under Clapham Bottoms. Terminal Lake in Ingleborough Cave is only a few hundred feet from the final chamber.

Our chagrin at hearing this news can hardly have been more acute. Even so, we resisted a strong temptation to push the B.P.C. members back down Mud Hall, and pressed on to try our luck yet again with the maypole. This time, mainly through the Herculean efforts of Phil Collett, we managed to erect 40 feet of pole in the hidden shaft. I clambered up the ladder and managed to step off onto a small ledge. From here we then used another short length of pole to reach the top. For the first hundred feet or so the passage is fairly constricted and twists a great deal. It rises perhaps 10'-15' in this distance, and then forks. Straight on it can be followed for about 50 feet to where it becomes a bedding plane a few inches high with solid roof and floor. To the left the passage becomes a low wide crawl, with a few inches of water covering a gravel floor for most of the way. After covering some 250 feet we reached an aven and managed for the first time to stand upright. The crawl continues

on past the aven for about another 180 feet to the small terminal chamber which the C.P.C. first reached. This chamber is in the form of an elliptical dome, developed at the bottom of a very narrow rift, which never exceeds 3 inches in width. There is no prospect of an extension here without the use of a prodigious quantity of explosive.

We set off back towards the winch, only to discover that Mud Hall had been deladdered by the B.P.C. The only route left to us was out via the mud and water crawl to Henslers, and thence through New Henslers to Bar. This we managed, though with failing lights it was a close shave.

The following Saturday Tony and I returned with a large U.C. contingent - Julian Coward, Rog Bowser, Rob Basto, Tony Reynolds and Rog Scott. The object this time was to survey the passage and climb the aven. The surveying was most ably accomplished as far as the aven by Tony and Julian, but not quite so ably beyond that by Julian and myself. The aven, however, presented a more awkward problem. With the aid of a couple of pegs, Rog Scott managed a fine piece of climbing to reach the first ledge 20 feet up. A ladder was hung down and Julian went up to try his hand at the next stage. This consisted of a decidedly airy traverse back over the shaft and into a small chamber which appeared to be the end. Further progress was made, however, after a club hammer had been applied to a few flakes. A near-vertical tube was reached, which decreased in size as it was followed upwards. Tony Reynolds, the smallest member present finally declared the tube to be impassable after he had reached a height of some 50 feet above the level of the crawl.

Altogether the members of I.C. and U.C. have spent a total of 85 hours this year on their trips to East Passage. For our efforts we have been rewarded with a little over 100 feet of passage. Still with Jim back in business after his exams we are hoping this may not be the final figure!

Jon Hallam
(U.C.L.S.S. & C.P.C.)

A NOTE ON RECENT MEETS AND EVENTS

The I.C.C.C. Easter meet was spent at Clapham in the Manchester Hut (next to the pub!) and was unfortunately not very well attended - only five members present. Apathy and the proximity of the local resulted in only three underground trips, two into the G.G. system and a brief glance at Tatham Wife Hole. The two G.G. trips, via Bar and Disappointment Pots were to Far East Passage, and both were some 17 hours long. Most of the time was spent struggling with maypoles which were poked into numerous avens, to little or no avail. Certain elements also amused themselves diving into filthy crawls, also with little success. Needless to say the idea behind these activities was to force a way into Car Pot.

U.C.L.S.S. plus A.C.W. seem to have been the most active in recent weeks. They have surveyed Rumbling and Marble Steps, and visited Tatham Wife, Grange Rig, Rowten, Alum, Simpsons-Swinto, Rift and others too numerous to mention.

A few comments from Tony Waltham:-

- 1) Juniper Gulf is formed in a fault, not merely a joint.
- 2) A 350 feet lifeline is advisable for comfort and safety for the 275 feet pitch in Nick Pot. There are ledges at 70 feet and 250 feet down, the ladder hanging against the wall most of the way. All but the top 70 feet or so are well sprayed, and in any but the driest conditions, the pitch would be ludicrous.

It is rumoured that the Pant-Mawr streamway (S.Wales) has been entered near the resurgence via a couple of pitches.

James Cabbett has dived the inlet sump in Swildons 2 opposite the Landing. He came up in the cross-rift airspace, but the way on is too narrow.

Phil Collett (ex I.C.C.C.) and Dave Savage have been messing about in Wookey 18 and put a belay on a boulder in this area.

From the latest Speleologist: Peter Johnson has found Metcalfe's old diaries in which he records a descent of Gaping Gill in the 1850's! Other descents recorded even earlier than this are of Alum, Tong Kin West and Sell Gill. See the Speleologist for more details.
