

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

CIRCULAR TO MEMBERS 9th Dec. 1965.

The U.B.S.S., Cave Diving and Cave Divers

The U.B.S.S. Does not have a cave diving section. Cave Diving is an esoteric sport, for which careful selection and training are necessary. There is already in existence the Cave Diving Group, which makes the necessary selection and undertakes the training of cavers wishing to pursue this sport. It is unnecessary and undesirable for the U.B.S.S. To undertake any equivalent activity, one of the more compelling reasons being the Society's rule against internal cliques. This rule is that every member of the Society shall be entitled to take part in any activity of the Society. This would be impossible if the Society had a cave diving section. The correct thing for members of the Society to do who wish to take up cave diving, is to seek entry into the Cave Diving Group, and under take its training.

On the other hand the Society exists to promote amongst other things underground exploration, and cave diving is a recognised activity to this end. It therefore offers no discouragement to its members, who wish to go cave diving. On the contrary it promotes their interest in a variety of ways, providing workshop facilities, space for decanting cylinders, apparatus for casting lead weights, help for members who wish to book water for training practices, the use of ladders on club trips where cave diving is done, the loan of its rooms for Cave Divers meetings and the extensive use of its library.

Conditions might arise in which the U.B.S.S. Might have to review this policy.

CAVING

Stoke VIII by D. Savage.

Stoke VII was first entered and explored as far as Sump 7 by Drew and Wooding on the 20th February, of this year. Wooding had investigated Sump 7 without air kit by following an air space for an estimated 100ft. to a small chamber.

On the 22nd of May Drew, Wooding and myself transported one set of air kit to Sump 7 and I dived into the sump on a light coullene line. After following a narrow rift like passage elongated along the bedding (which dips at nearly 80° here) for about 30ft. I emerged in a small chamber with 3ft or airspace roofed with loose boulders, from where it was possible to talk back to base via a small overwater air connection. The way on from this point was not immediately obvious, but after feeling around with my feet I located a small opening beneath a boulder at a depth of about 4ft. Diving again I squeezed through this opening and wriggled horizontally through boulders in a tight rift passage for a further 40ft to a shingle bank similar to that at the upstream entrance of Sump 4 in Swildons. After a short tight squeeze at the top of this bank I emerged from the sump into a small, low chamber some 10ft. long and 6ft wide. I could hear the sound of a stream and concluded that this must be Stoke 8! Hopes of substantial additions to the cave on this occasion were soon dashed when having taken the trouble to dekit, I found the way on blocked by boulders only 20ft from the sump. I did some gardening but concluded that a lump hammer would be necessary to force a way on. On a subsequent occasion, the 30th Oct. Half an hours work in an awkward position with the hammer enabled me to pass with difficulty through a very tight vertical squeeze between loose boulders. I came into a small chamber with the stream entering beneath a pile of boulders on the right. Climbing down over a pile of boulders directly in front I followed the stream along a straight passage following the strike around and underneath boulders until after a hundred foot or so I came to an impossibly tight duck beneath a large boulder. A further half hour's work with a lump hammer failed to open up this duck sufficiently to get through and so in the interest of safety (my spare light had become slightly damaged) I decided to leave it for a later date. The way on past the duck can be seen and looks promising.

Stoke Lane is now about half way through its resurgence at St. Dunstan's, and a consideration of the local geology indicates that most of the rest of the cave will be similar to Stoke 7 & 8, i.e. developed along the strike with frequent boulder obstructions and the odd sump. I think that an eventual through trip is not beyond the realms of possibility, though it will entail some pretty determined effort.

In Swildons, a new through route from the North East Tributary passage in six to Shatter Passage, via two sumps and some very tight and tortuous passage, was opened up during the summer by the opening of the two sumps. Swildons thus possesses two round trips both of which have been done on numerous occasions; but the figure of eight trip, including both round trips, had never been done. On Sat. 13th Nov. We (Mike Norton, Dave Savage and Peter Standing) set off to do this trip. Rapid progress was made through the normal route to four, sump 4 was passed and the tributary passage was reached. After a few 100ft. of relatively easy ascending passage, the first static sump, Gloop Sump, was reached and bailing started. However, after about half an hour we all began to feel "stuffy" and to suffer headaches, so two moved back as far as possible while Dave continued bailing. The air around the sump soon became almost unbreathable and bailing was finished just in time to prevent loss of consciousness.

When past this sump 150ft of very tortuous passage was followed to the next sump which was set upon without delay. Soon the air here began to foul and it is as well that this sump did not take too long to bail as the water from it sealed off the previous sump and hence our retreat! Anyway, we emerged after a little digging into comparatively fresh air and after half an hour's crawling found ourselves in the familiar wet ducks of Shatter Passage. By the time we were out of Shatter Pot our heads had cleared some what and we set off for the Troubles and completed the figure of eight in eight hours.

As there is no ventilation between the connecting passage (Link Crawl) the air gets fouler with each party going through. From the symptoms we suffered at the time and after we estimate that the concentration of carbon dioxide was about 10% sign while bailing the last part of the first sump. This is well above the fatal dose over long periods (6-7%) and future round trippers should ensure that they are well acquainted with the symptoms and dangers (brain damage and death) of carbon dioxide poisoning.

During the past three months since the pipe on the 40ft. pot in Swildons was "forcibly removed", scarcely a weekend has passed without a rescue or some incident taking place. One weekend three cavers decided to descend the pitch on the ladder down at the time and to climb straight back up. Unfortunately one of them could not climb up against the water and many cavers lost valuable drinking time while he was hauled out via the pulley at suicides leap. His classic comment on reaching the surface was "Will I get my photo in the papers!" Other incidents have occurred when "experienced" cavers persist in taking first or second time cavers down the ladder, these having understandable difficulty on the return climb. It is hoped to have another pipe installed very soon and it is hoped that the M.R.O. call out rate will drop accordingly.

MANOR FARM

A visit was paid last weekend. Over the last year the stream has cut itself a passage from the surface to the bottom of the dig and has completely undermined the concrete shaft in the process. Hence, in the long run it is thought that a new shaft will have to be dug. Work will start as soon as the weather is favourable. If any old members are likely to be down on Mendip from Easter onwards, any help would be gratefully received.

KEYS TO THE HUT

Due to the loss of some equipment (including one lifeline) during the past term, the lock on the Hut is to be changed and keys limited to Committee members to those who use the Hut frequently ONLY. The change will be effective from January 8th.

SESSIONAL MEETINGS

Monday, January 17th, Archaeology lecture in conjunction with the Department of Classics. Subject to be arranged.

Monday, February 14th. Lecture: Recent Excavations on Roman Sites in Somerset, Barry Cunliffe, M.A., F.S.A.

Monday March 7th A.G.M. Presidential address by Dr. E.K. Tratman - 4th International Spelaeological Conference Yugoslavia.

MENDIP CAVE BIBLIOGRAPHY

This important publication is available to members at 25/- from C.R.G.

Mr Inett Homes;
Upleandon Trumpett,
Ledbury,
Hereford.

ANNUAL SPELAEOLOGICAL DINNER

This is to be held at the Cliff Hotel, Cheddar on March 12th (Saturday) 1966. The meal will consist of four courses and there will of course be an extended license. Cost of the meal will not exceed 17/- per head and depends on which menu is chosen. All those who wish to attend should let the Hon. Secretary (Mike Norton) know by the end of January.

AWAY TRIPS

Derbyshire Trip leaving Bristol for Buxton Friday 17th December.

Hostel; Guests of Eldon Pot-Hole Club, at their upper room in Spring Gardens.

Caving Will include Giants Hole on Saturday and a conducted trip round Knotlow Mines on Sunday.

Dinner The Annual Dinner of the E.P.C. Is on Saturday 18th. December. Guests are welcome - O.C.L. Is attending it.

Leave for Bristol late afternoon of Sunday 19th. December.

Trips are also fixed for Yorkshire on January 14th/15th and to S. Wales on January 29/30th.

NEW YEAR PARTY

The New Year's Party will be held as usual at the Hut. All those intending to come should notify Mr Tratman, saying how much food and drink they are bringing, not later than December 28th.

Singed M.G. Norton
M.H.P. Green.