

DAVE STEWART'S CAVE DIVING LOGBOOK 1966/67



Dave Stewart

John Ogden

MOROCCO 1966

COMPILED BY MICK MELVIN

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Introduction

With the tragic death of Cave diver Alan Clegg in the downstream sump of Lancaster Hole at Easter 1964, the Northern Section of the Cave Diving Group had for the most part become inactive with only three members still diving, Mike Boon, Pete Livesey and Ken Pearce.

During this period a number of capable divers from the Somerset Section of the CDG carried out some very successful dives in northern caves. Amongst these divers were Dave Drew, Dave Savage and Mike Wooding.

During the latter part of 1965 a small group of northern cavers with an interest in cave diving came together and once again began operating as a group. These cavers came mainly from The Bradford Pothole Club and The Happy Wanderers Cave and Pothole Club. They worked together as a team and began a series of dives in Langstroth Cave Upper Wharfedale in an attempt to scale the 14metre high aven.*

Throughout the previous year many of the cavers had been dive training at Keighley Sub Aqua Club. These sessions took the form of swimming pool training followed by a lecture on the physiology of diving held in the Cavendish Pub, Cavendish Street Keighley. Most of the group attained their BSAC accreditation at these sessions. Regular attendees were Bob Jarman and Bob Gillibrand and until his untimely death Alan Clegg. The Keighley branch of BSAC was especially easy-going allowing these divers to use a rudimentary homemade rebreathing set.

Early in 1966 a decision was made to reform the Northern Section of the Cave Diving Group, a division of the Cave Diving Group based in Somerset.

On January 22nd 1966 fifteen interested cavers attended the inaugural meeting of the Northern Section of the CDG held at the BSA H.Q. Duke Street, Settle. At the meeting Ken Pearce was elected diving officer and Mick Melvin secretary of the Section.

During the next 18 months the Section carried out many cave dives, and then tragically the activities largely came to a stop in June 1967 with the Mossdale tragedy.

This disaster that took the lives of six experienced cavers, robbed the Section of two of its most active divers Bill Frakes and John Ogden. In the previous 18 months together with Dave Stewart and John Southworth, these two divers had been responsible for many of the Section's successes.

During the period January 1966 to June 1967 Dave Stewart kept a written logbook of the dives carried out by the Northern Section of the CDG and up to the present time this logbook has never been published. The logbook has now been digitised and its entire content is available here.

The Diving equipment

In the early sixties Mike Boon produced and built a breathing set for use in cave diving operations and he gave it the name 'Niphargus'. The apparatus consisted of a 750 litre cylinder of air compressed to 122 bar carried on the side of the body by a harness of web strapping with air being fed to the diver by means of a split stage 'Scubair' demand valve i.e. single hose two stage reduction. Together with the lead weights slung around the waist and a miner's cap lamp for lighting this B.A. was a very compact item of equipment and, with minor modification, was the apparatus being used by members of the Northern Section of CDG throughout this period.

*A Cave Dive with Bill Frakes: Page 10 'Langstroth Cave 1965'.

Although not originally part of Dave's logbook, he feels that this article by should be included for completeness.

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Malham Cove Thursday May 26th 1966

photographer: Pete Livesey

Divers left to Right: Bill Frakes, John Southworth, John Ogden, Dave Stewart



Mick Melvin Langstroth Cave

Sunday May 15th 1966

Photographer: Jim Cunningham

David J Stewart, 511 Wheatley Lane Road, Fence, Burnley, BB12 9EB.
Log of all dives done since formed into a group in January 1966.

NORTHERN SECTION CAVE DIVING GROUP 1966/67

Sunday January 30th Langstroth Cave
6 Divers passed both sumps and took 40ft of NPC scaling poles through. Poles were damaged and it was decided to return at a later date with more poles.

Divers: Jack Pickup, John Southworth, John Ogden, Keith Blackledge, Bill Frakes, Dave Stewart.

Sunday February 20th Ireby Fell Cavern
Dive at Ireby Fell Cavern (cancelled)
Open Dive at Beezley Falls Ingleton

Saturday February 26th Wookey Hole
Dive at Wookey Hole (cancelled)
Open dive at Bristol Lido

Sunday March 6th Langstroth Cave
7 Divers passed the sumps with 4 more sections of NPC scaling poles. The damaged sections were replaced, but the pole was still too weak to scale the aven.

Divers: Jack Pickup, John Southworth, John Ogden, Keith Blackledge, Bill Frakes, Dave Stewart.

Sunday March 6th Greenfield Beck Rising
3 divers investigated a 45ft bedding plane in the stream bed which issues a small amount of water.

Divers: Dave Stewart, Bill Frakes, John Ogden.

Sunday March 6th Deepdale Rising
3 Divers passed the first sump into the air space a 30ft dive. It was decided to discontinue as two were short of air.
Divers: Bill Frakes, Dave Stewart, John Ogden.

Sunday March 13th Lancaster Hole
West Montague upstream sump
4 Divers arrived at the sump to find a CDG line reel. Bill Frakes and Dave Stewart followed this separately for a total of 150ft. John Southworth followed the line for 400ft. John Ogden followed and dived for 300ft. It was decided to return at a later date with some more diving gear.

Divers: Dave Stewart, Bill Frakes, John Southworth, John Ogden.

Sunday March 20th

Ireby Fell Cavern

7 Divers passed the first sump of 80ft Ken Pearce and Bill Frakes explored the second sump for a length of 100ft, while the rest explored the extensive system beyond the first sump.

Divers: Ken Pearce, Bill Frakes, John Ogden, Frank Barnes, John Southworth, Jack Pickup, Dave Stewart.

Saturday March 26th

Dub Cote Cave

Bill Frakes dived for 100ft to a small air space but decided to return due to the complex underwater passage.

Divers: Bill Frakes (Standby Diver Dave Stewart).

Saturday March 26th

Elbolton Pot

Mick Melvin followed this constricted sump for 15ft to a squeeze, beyond which a large air surface could be seen. Being unable to pass the squeeze the diver returned to base.

Divers: Mick Melvin (Standby Diver Mick Ormerod).

Saturday February 19th

Ibbeth Peril Cave

A Dive at the high level static sump became too tight after 30ft, All three members dived.

Divers: John Ogden, Jack Pickup, John Southworth.

Sunday April 17th

P8 Jackpot Castleton

On the last dive in P8 the line was found to be silted up in the first sump. The plan was for Ken Pearce to dive with a line and tie it to the one already in place. After doing this Pearce returned to base.

Dave Roberts then dived but he had trouble with his ears and had to return to base.

Pearce then dived to the first air bell followed by John Sinclair 3 minutes behind. Pearce then dived into sump two with Sinclair as standby diver. He passed the second sump into a large chamber with another sump following. He then returned to the air bell and both divers returned to base.

Divers: Dave Roberts, Ken Pearce, John Sinclair.

Saturday 23rd April

Dale Barn Cave

Dave Stewart dived the static sump in Dale Barn extension through to another large chamber. On diving into the next sump for 12ft he decided to return due to the angle of the passage and the roof pendants.

Divers: Dave Stewart, (Standby Diver Keith Blackledge)

Sunday 1st May

Great Douk Cave

A dive was made in the upstream sump to link up Great Douk Cave resurgence and the downstream sump in Southercales Pot. On reaching the sump we found that Leeds University speleological association had drifted a rope through from Southercales Pot.

We followed this rope and made the connection, a distance of 40ft

Divers; Dave Stewart, John Ogden, Mick Melvin.

Sunday 6th February

Thoragill Cave

Mick Melvin dived in the upstream sump for 15ft and surfaced in a 10ft high stream passage which he followed for 40ft to a boulder fall. He then returned through the sump and together with Mick Ormerod surveyed the remainder of the cave to CRG grade 4.

Divers: Mick Melvin, Mick Ormerod.

Sunday March 13th

Thoragill Cave

John Sinclair and Dave Roberts passed the sump and laid a permanent guide line. They passed the point reached by Mick Melvin and explored approx. 100ft of tight passage to an impassable bedding plane.

Divers: John Sinclair, Dave Roberts.

Sunday April 10th

Thoragill Cave

Mick Melvin and Mick Ormerod once more passed the sump in very wet weather. Their attempt to pass the tight bedding plane was impossible as it was full to the roof with water. Some members of the Bolton Speleo Group filmed the dive.

Divers: Mick Melvin, Mick Ormerod.

Sunday February 20th

Langstroth Cave

Three divers took diving gear to the sump but on arriving found the water level too high.

Divers: Mick Ormerod, Mick Melvin, Mick Bentham.

Sunday April 17th

Skirwith Cave

John Southworth passed the terminal sump, a dive of 25ft. He entered a chamber 30ft long and then dived a second sump of 25ft to surface in a medium size chamber that contained another sump at the upstream end.

John returned to the downstream end after he had secured a line through the sump. He then dived again followed by Jack Pickup. The two divers then explored the chamber before Jack Pickup returned to the downstream side of the sump with two B.A. units.

John Ogden and Mick Melvin then dived sumps through sumps one and two.

John Southworth dived into sump 3 until his line ran out at 80ft. John belayed the line in a small air bell and then returned to the chamber where the other divers were waiting.

All divers passed sumps one and two.

Divers: John Southworth, Jack Pickup, John Ogden, Mick Melvin, Mick Ormerod.

Sunday May 15th

Langstroth Cave

Due to having a late start it was decided to go to Langstroth cave and attempt to fix up Mick Melvin's Rawlbolt fixture. Soon after making a start it was decided that we could use scaling poles to get up the pitch without Rawlbolts due to a big ledge.

All the divers passed both sumps including a photographer.

Diver: Jack Pickup, John Ogden, John Southworth, Jim Cunningham, Mick Melvin, Dave Stewart.

Sunday 8th May

Dale Barn Cave

Four divers arrived at the sump to find that the water level had dropped about one foot. Dave Stewart dived first into a very tight boulder strewn passage; he had to clear the boulders as he progressed through the sump. He passed the first sump into a 10ft long chamber a dive of 45ft. The next sump was only 15ft into a large chamber where he belayed his line. John Ogden followed and together they explored approximately 1500ft of cave passage without reaching the end.
Divers: Dave Stewart, John Ogden.

Saturday 14th May

Magnetometer Pot

Bill Frakes and Dave Stewart passed the first sump in the Styx passage a dive of 130ft. They followed the line that Bill Frakes had left the week before into 220ft of stream passage to another sump. Bill Frakes dived into the second sump for a distance of 30ft and found it to be silted up. It was decided to return at a later date when the silt might have been washed away.
Divers: Bill Frakes, Dave Stewart.

Saturday 14th May

Ogof Agen Allwedd

A Dive by Mike Wooding (SCDG) and John Sinclair into the upstream sump (for full report see report No.2)
Divers: Mike Wooding, John Sinclair.

Thursday May 26th

Malham Cove Rising

4 divers arrived at the resurgence to try and extend the distance of 80ft that John Southworth had dived the previous week. John Southworth and John Ogden dived together and managed to pass both narrow sections of the dive. At that point John Southworth's reserve Siebe set blew an 'A' clamp, both divers returned to base. Bill Frakes and Dave Stewart dived next and managed to dive as far as Southworth's line reel. The divers made a decision to return to base because of lack of air. The first dive lasted 15 minutes and the second dive approximately 20 minutes. It was noted that at the furthest point of the dive the depth of water was only 4ft.
Divers: John Southworth, John Ogden, Bill Frakes, Dave Stewart.

Saturday July 2nd

Rowten Pot-Kingsdale Master Cave

Two members of the group dived the terminal sump in Rowten Pot a distance of 30ft. The dive connected Rowten with the Kingsdale Master Cave. A stronger and more permanent line is to be laid at a later stage. It is also hoped to shorten the length of the sump by digging in Rowten Pot.
Divers: John Ogden, Bill Frakes.

Sunday September 18th

Keld Head

John Southworth dived to the air bell and continued to explore 30ft beyond a distance of nearly 200ft.
Divers: John Southworth, (Standby Jeff Morgan)

Saturday 24th September

Danny Cave Sedbergh

John Southworth dived a 40ft long sump in this newly discovered cave and explored 1500ft of new cave passage. A line was left in place for future exploration.

Divers: John Southworth (Standby Jeff Morgan)

Sunday 25th September

Kingsdale Master Cave

John Ogden dived 200ft into the Yordas Cave inlet sump to explore 1000ft of new cave passage. Mick Ormerod was unable to dive due to valve trouble.

Divers: John Ogden, Mick Ormerod.

September

Kingsdale Master Cave, Terminal Sump

John Southworth Dived to a depth of 30ft to find a bedding plane believed to be the way on. He did not continue further due to poor visibility.

The total depth of the sump was approximately 50ft. The dive line was not left in place.

Divers: John Southworth, (Standby Mick Melvin)

Sunday 2nd October

Remembrance Pot

Dave Pickup and Dave Stewart dived to a depth of 30ft to find there was no passage for the water to drain away. A small inlet was explored for 20ft by Dave Pickup but became too tight to make progress.

Divers: Dave Stewart, Dave Pickup.

Saturday 2nd October

Alum Pot

John Southworth dived a distance of 150ft into the sump in nil visibility. He was prevented from going any further due to the presence of Barbed wire and debris.

Diver: John Southworth.

Sunday 8th October

Ibbeth Peril Cave

John Southworth dived for 60ft into the upstream sump but was stopped by a tight bedding plane passage. On the return to base John lost his weight belt. He dived once again with Dave Stewart to the point where he lost the weight belt. He retrieved his belt and both divers returned to base.

Divers: John Southworth, Dave Stewart.

Saturday 24th October

Keld Head

John Southworth and Dave Stewart dived together for a distance of approximately 220ft. As they were unable to locate the main air bell they returned to base.

They dived once again together for a distance of 150ft at this point Southworth experienced a problem with his main valve so returned to base once again.

They dived together for a third time and investigated a 40ft deep pothole in the floor on the right hand side of the resurgence. This was thought to be a feeder to the main resurgence.

Divers: Dave Stewart, John Southworth.

Sunday 23rd October

Boreham Cave Littondale

The resurgence sump of this cave (160ft) was passed by Bill Frakes, Dave Stewart and John Ogden. The active stream sumps (upstream and downstream) were survey for the possibility of diving them. A dive line was left in place.

Divers: Bill Frakes, Dave Stewart, John Ogden.

Sunday 16th October

Langstroth Cave

An attempt to scale the final aven was successful by Pete Livesey. After scaling the aven we climbed another 30ft aven but we were stopped after 200ft by a 5" bedding plane passage.

Divers: Pete Livesey, Bill Frakes, John Ogden, Roy Hartley, Mick Melvin, Dave Stewart.

Sunday 23rd October

Danny Cave Sedbergh

John Southworth and Frank Barnes passed both the first and second sumps but were stopped by the tight third sump. Both divers had a good look around but they could not find any side passages.

Divers: John Southworth, Frank Barnes.

Sunday 10th October

Deepdale Rising

John Ogden and Dave Stewart again dived this 30ft resurgence sump to the air bell. John dived down the shaft in an attempt to find a way on, but he was stopped by silt which blocked all the low bedding plane passages.

He returned and reported his findings to Dave Stewart. Both divers then returned to base. The depth of the shaft is about 20ft to 25ft.

Divers: John Ogden, Dave Stewart.

Sunday 11th June

Ogof Agen Allwedd

A successful dive by Mike Wooding, Dave Roberts and John Sinclair in the upstream siphon. For a full report see dive report No.3.

Divers: Mike Wooding, Dave Roberts, John Sinclair.

Sunday 13th November

Boreham Cave Littondale

John Ogden and Bill Frakes once again passed the non active entrance sump. The original purpose of the dive was to dive the downstream sump and dig the upstream sump. Due to a late start it was decided to dive the downstream sump only.

John Ogden dived 200ft without reaching an air space; he noted that the passage was 25ft to 30ft wide and 4ft high with deep silt on the floor of the passage. Visibility in this sump was 25ft on the inward journey but only 5ft coming back.

As they had no more dive line they decided to return on another occasion. Both divers carried Siebe reserves. A dive line was left in place in the entrance sump.

Divers: John Ogden, Bill Frakes.

May 1966

Magnetometer Pot

Bill Frakes dived the Styx passage sump a distance of 130ft to a large stream passage. Bill then dived a short distance into the second sump.

Diver: Bill Frakes.

Sunday 20th November

Hardrawkin Pot

John Southworth and Dave Stewart dived in the terminal sump. John dived first to a depth of 25ft but he had to return to the surface due to trouble with his ears. The vertical decent was still continuing when John turned back, but no horizontal passages were found.

Dave Stewart dived only to a depth of 10ft and had a closer look at a small recess thought to be a side passage.

Divers: John Southworth, Dave Stewart.

1966

Ireby Fell Cavern

John Ogden passed the first 80ft sump with two non divers. They made a short exploration of the water entering the cave from Low Douk Cave.

Diver: John Ogden

December 1966

Rowten Pot

Bill Frakes and John Ogden passed the upstream sump in Rowten Pot a distance of 200ft. They explored 500ft of new passage to a second sump. The general size of the new passage is 7ft to 10ft high and 10ft to 15ft wide.

No attempt was made to dive the second sump as the divers had no time to return to the first sump where they had left their diving equipment.

Divers: Bill Frakes, John Ogden.

Sunday 11th December

Boreham Cave Littondale

A training dive was held at Boreham Cave when 6 divers passed the first sump. John Ogden dived the active upstream sump after digging it out. He dived a distance of 50ft to a choke of boulders. His opinion was that these could be dug out.

Divers: Mick Ormerod, John Ogden, Dave Stewart, Dave Adamson, John Russum, Stewart Heseltine.

January 29th 1967

Malham Cove Rising

The object of the dive was to blast the large boulder situated 70ft from the entrance using explosives.

After clearing the entrance squeeze John Ogden and Bill Frakes laid a line of Cortex to the boulder and then returned to base. They dived again and laid a charge on the offending boulder, the surface wiring being attended to by Derek Brandon.

The charge was fired successfully and 20 minutes later when the water had cleared, Dave Stewart and John Southworth entered the submerged passage.

Upon reaching the boulder it was found that a section 1ft square had been removed by the explosive. This left an ample space of 2ft for the divers to pass through. At this point in the dive Stewart was having trouble with his valve so both divers returned to base.

Frakes and Ogden entered the rising once again to take a look at the success of their efforts but they did not pass the boulder.

The success of this dive is worthy of note as it was the first time the NCDG has used explosives underwater in a cave.

Diver: John Southworth, Bill Frakes, John Ogden, Dave Stewart, in charge of explosives Derek Brandon.

January 1967

Keld Head

Two dives were made at Keld Head in January 1967, one done jointly by Dr. Oliver Lloyd and John Southworth and the second by John Southworth and Dave Stewart.

The first dive by Lloyd and John Southworth was to attempt to get both divers to the air bell.

Due to the lack of equipment the divers had to dive separately. As a result little worthwhile work was done, except that Dr. Lloyd made a sketch of the underwater passage as far as the air bell.

The second dive at this site was also unsuccessful due to both divers' lights failing on them.

Dave Stewart was unable to clear his ears, John Southworth did not have enough weight and the dive was called off.

Divers: Doctor Oliver Lloyd, John Southworth, Dave Stewart.

Saturday 4th February 1967

Kingsdale Master Cave

The purpose of this dive was to dive the second sump of the Yordas Cave inlet passage. The first sump was passed successfully by three divers who proceeded along the 700ft of passage to the second sump. John Ogden was the first to dive to a depth of 20ft in perfect visibility. The passage in front appeared to drop another 30ft and possible more so John returned to base.

Bill Frakes then dived to assess the possibility of diving the sump, but he soon returned to base.

The divers formed the opinion that if a future attempt is made on this sump deep water diving equipment would be required.

Divers: John Ogden, Bill Frakes, Mike Boon.

Sunday 5th February 1967

Gavel Pot

John Southworth dived into the sump just below the entrance pitch; he found it to be silted up after a 30ft dive at a depth of 20ft. Dave Pickup then dived but he was also stopped by silt.

The divers formed the opinion that if the silt was not removed by nature there is no chance of extending this sump.

Divers: John Southworth, Dave Pickup.

Sunday 12th February 1967

Malham Cove Rising

John Southworth dived to the boulder at the 70ft mark and left a line reel before returning to base.

Southworth and Ogden dived together on the main dive in an attempt to connect with an air space.

At 200ft from base a small boulder choke was encountered which the divers cleared and then passed.

At 250ft they came upon another boulder choke which Ogden was only partially able to clear.

A low passage 1ft high and 4ft wide was visible on the far side of the boulder choke.

Both divers decided that it was too dangerous to attempt to dig the obstruction so they returned to base.

Frakes and Stewart dived to the boulder at the 70ft point and retrieved the line reel. On the way out Stewart took a look at some small side passages but nothing of importance was found.

Divers: John Southworth, John Ogden, Bill Frakes, Dave Stewart.

March 1967

West Side Pot. Abbotside Common

A dive was made in this newly found pothole to see if the sump could be passed. Dave Stewart dived 15ft into the sump reaching a small slit approximately 1ft wide by 2ft high with a deep build up of mud inside. He formed the opinion that no advancement could be made in the sump. Andy Chater then dived into the sump but could only confirm Dave's findings.

Divers: Dave Stewart, Andy Chater.

March 1967

Swildon's Hole Somerset

An attempt was made to extend sump 12 which at the time had not been passed. The object of the trip was to get 5 divers to sump 12 and get as many as possible to endeavour to dig out the sump. Due to the lack of air only Mike Boon was able to dive. Mike dived into the sump and reached far enough into the sump to see an air space beyond it.

At that point his valve started to flood and he had to abandon the dive. The diver reached the conclusion that sump 12 could be passed with a small amount of digging.

Divers: Mike Boon, Bill Frakes, John Ogden, John Southworth, Mike (fish) Jeanmaire.

March 1967

Dry Gill Resurgence. NGR SD 718759

John Ogden and John Southworth dived this resurgence cave in an attempt to trace its source to the Dry Gill resurgence on Scales Moor.

Both divers dived together but were stopped after 30ft by a low bedding plane.

Divers: John Southworth, John Ogden.

Easter 1967

Marble Arch System. Fermanagh

The recent extension to Skreen Hill passage terminated in a large sump at the upstream end. A dive was arranged with Sherpa's from The Irish Caving Club. The sump was passed and found to be 100ft long. Beyond the sump the cave passage is believed to terminate in a boulder choke very close to Polnagollum of the Boats.

The total length of new passage is approximately 2500ft. It is believed to be the largest and the most beautifully decorated cave passage ever discovered by The Cave Diving Group.

It was also the first time that an Irish caver has dived a sump in Eire.

Divers: Mike Boon, John Ogden, Bill Frakes, Dave Stewart, Colin Vickers, Darryll Magee I.C.C.

The Mossdale Tragedy June 24th 1967

In the introduction to this logbook I have mentioned the Mossdale tragedy and how it affected the members of the Northern Section of the CDG.

For a full account of the tragedy I refer the reader to the Happy Wanderers Cave and Pothole club web site www.happywanderers.org.uk and the comprehensive article written by Dr. Tony Waltham.

I would like to thank Dave Stewart for keeping this logbook and making it available for all to read.
Mick Melvin

A Cave Dive with Bill Frakes

Langstroth Cave November 7th 1965

This was my first cave dive using breathing apparatus and as far as I am aware, this dive was also the first cave dive made by Bill using diving apparatus. Twelve months earlier Bill had passed the short sump in Elbolton Cave by free diving and he had free-dived a short sump in Rumbling Hole (Leck Fell) He had also been stand-by diver for Pete Livesey at Stonelands Cave (Littondale) but had not been required to dive.

The Divers:

Bill Frakes, Mick Melvin, Dave Stewart, John Russum.

Dave Copley and Chris Whelan of the B.P.C. assisted on the carry into the sump. As we only had three sets of diving gear it was decided that Bill and I would make the first dive and return to base. Then John using his own diving gear, would dive with Dave using mine.

Our objective was to explore the cave beyond the sumps with the intention of assessing the feasibility of scaling the 45 foot aven reached by Mike Boon in September 1963. We also made a decision to replace the existing line through the sumps with a new Courlene dive line.

The cave passage as you come up to the first sump is a water filled canal, with the roof of the cave sloping downwards into the water and forming the 45ft. sump. After I had donned my diving gear I submerged myself in the canal leading to the sump to test my headlight, air supply and buoyancy. I felt a tap on my helmet and raised myself up to see what had happened. Bill who was standing in the canal next to me asked "what are you doing?" I thought the answer obvious but replied "I am checking out my gear before the dive" At this he muttered something about me wasting air and he began to sing the words of the latest release by the Rolling Stones (The Last Time) I include this anecdote not to denigrate Bill, simply to reveal the humour of the man.

It was decided that I would dive first, if all went well on reaching the far side of the sump, I would carry on crossing the small chamber (Higham Hall) linking sump one and two and dive through the next short sump 10ft. into the stream passage beyond. I would then signal for Bill to follow with three sharp pulls on the line.

The main sump begins with a short duck into a cross rift where the guide line was belayed. From the cross rift I dropped to the floor of the passage and in good visibility was able to see a roomy underwater passage leading away in front of me. As I moved into the sump the left hand wall was close at hand but I was unable to see a wall over to the right. The reassuring nylon line lead away in front, beckoning me forward.

Passing under a flake which arched down from the left, I rose to the roof of the passage to keep in contact with the line as it hung against it. I made good forward progress and keeping my eyes on the line, I was surprised to see it rise upwards and disappear into the solid cave



roof. This unexpected sight made me stop momentarily in the water and I began to move my right hand forward along the line to where it had disappeared. As my hand reached the roof of the cave, first my fingers, and then the whole of my hand followed the line into the roof of the cave passage and I did not understand what was happening for a few seconds. Swiftly I realised what I was seeing, and moving forward pushed my helmeted head against the object above me. I broke the surface coated in the scum which had covered the surface



of the sump pool in Higham Hall, scum which from beneath had appeared as a solid roof. I crossed the floor of the chamber in thigh deep water to the second sump 10ft. which I dived through without difficulty to reach the large chamber first entered by Alan Clegg on May 17th 1963, Sedbusk Hall. I gave the required three tugs on the line and Bill was soon standing beside me slapping me on the back and saying well done! Removing our diving kit we made our way along a fine stream passage for about 60ft. to the bottom of a very impressive shaft with a large stream falling 45 feet from the lip of a noticeable cave passage above. We spent some time at the foot of the shaft, where we discussed the prospect of ascending it with maypoles at some time in the near

future. After coming to a decision that the shaft could be climbed with the use of maypoling techniques, Bill and I returned through the sumps back to base, from where John Russum and Dave Stewart dived through the sumps using our gear. During the course of the dives we replaced the existing Nylon guideline with a new Courlene line.

N.B.

On later diving trips into the cave we found two other air-bells in the main sump. I believe that the sumps are now free dived using these air bells. Not to be recommended.

References:

CDG Diving Review 1963, pages 10-11.

CDG Diving Review 1964-65, pages 48-49.

White Rose Pothole Club, 1965 Newsletter No.58,page 2.

Mick Melvin 2011

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