

JOURNAL OF THE



Issue No. 1, 1999

£2.50 to Non-members

FRONT COVER

The front cover celebrates GOES becoming a Limited Company

AGM 1999

Many thanks to Queen Elizabeth Court for hosting this years AGM, held on April 17th, and to Hilary Edwards for providing plenty of tea and home made cakes.

The main topic was the winding up of the Great Orme Exploration Society, and the formation of the Great Orme Exploration Society Limited, a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital.

All committee members resigned from their positions, and were re-elected to serve as directors of the new company.

The only change being Glyn Davies standing down as Equipment officer, and John Carpenter taking his position. Congratulations to Billy Davies, one of the founders of GOES, who was granted life membership to the Society.

TY GWYN LATEST

Yet again, the Ty Gwyn mine has come up with something new. Another passage has been discovered by 3 of the GOES diggers. A small hole was opened up, and through it 20 feet of passage was seen disappearing off into the distance. Unfortunately, this sight only lasted for a short while and the constriction was too tight to pass through. A dig is now under way to try and find this passage from another direction.

CAVE SAFE VIDEOS

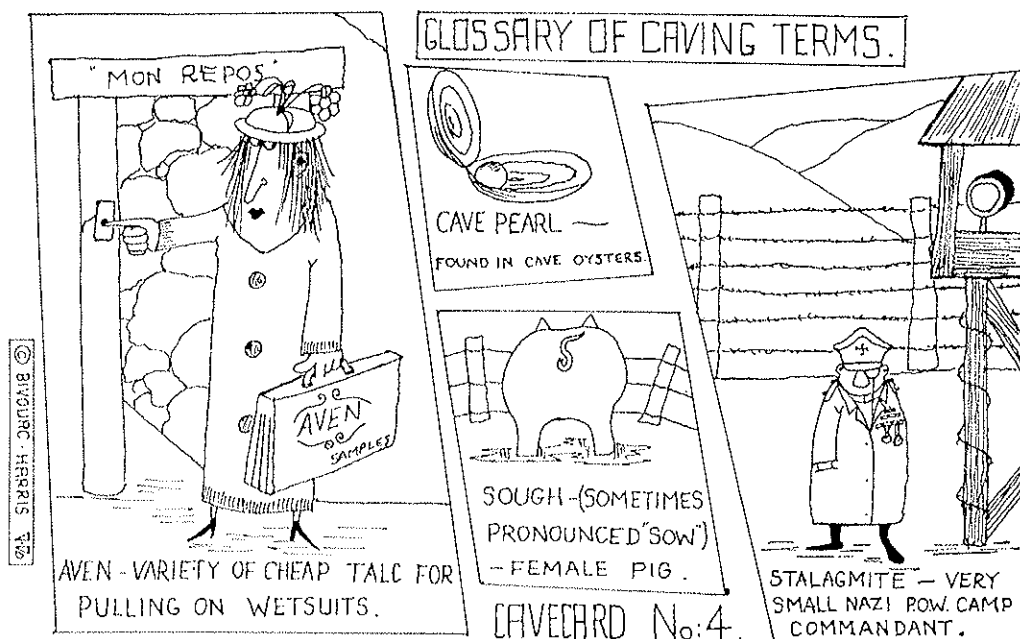
Tony Davies bought the set of Cave Safe videos which show how to safely explore the underground world. The 3 videos were shown in the Kings Head and were found to contain a lot of interesting material. It is planned to show them all again at a later date.

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Articles are always wanted! The next journal is due out in October 1999, so please put pen to paper

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THE ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

Once again Sylvia did us proud at the Kings Head. The table decorations were beautiful, and, most importantly, the food was excellent. I can only answer for the soup, the vegetarian dish and an enormous plate of cheese and biscuits, but everyone else seemed to be equally happy. As for the cheese and biscuits, most of them ended up on the plate of the gentleman on my left. However, to be fair, his red headed friend had warned me beforehand that it was not a good idea to sit by him unless I could eat very, very fast!

Later in the evening, Erik made a nice, short, informal speech (good for you, Erik) after which we were entertained by Mark with his and Glyn's excellent slides. Incidentally, "Thank you", Mark, for a very well organized evening.



The author at work!

As the lights were extinguished for this part of the evening, and the only illumination was candlelight, making notes became difficult. Using a blunt pencil for part of the time, until loaned a pen by Virginia, did not help. When attempting to decipher the said notes afterwards, many of them made no sense at all. Here are some examples, and if anyone can understand them or remember who said what, I would be most grateful:-

"Centre crack. Suti sutee. Spider's legs and Ali's stomach. Cow Serum and Cow Semen. Injections for Hepatitis. Snotties. Buying underpants in M & S", and many more, which are unrepeatable!

It is a little difficult to describe this year's fashions, because there were really no peacocks. The gentleman to my left looked very smart in a navy striped suit and red tie. Tony was wearing a waistcoat, but not a gaudy one as in the past. Some people were wearing two paper hats at once. My husband was sporting an early Christmas present, a nice royal blue shirt which I had permitted him to open especially for the Dinner. Ali had legs for once and my Husband rudely asked her what time they had to be taken back!

The other highlights of the evening were when Ali said she was hot and must open a window. Ali feeling hot is quite unheard of, and it was suggested that her wine must have contained anti-freeze. The Gentleman to my left told some corny jokes and was only shut up by being served with the first pudding. Helen employed the excuse that she could not see the screen, during the slide show, and needed to sit on Richard's knee. But then, she always misbehaves at GOES's Christmas dinners! Earlier Richard had eaten her ice cream, because Helen said it was too cold.

Tom Stone was very much missed. Also poor old Dave Edwards, who had flu!. Hilary tried to behave herself in his absence and did take home a paper hat for Dave. However, she was a bit naughty. She allowed Mike to chat her up, and was escorted home by another gentleman, who shall be nameless, as I do not wish to be involved in any divorce proceedings. Seriously, Dave, we did all think about you.

It was nice to see the new members, Jo and John, and Virginia and Alex. Also Myfanwy and Ramon who have not been around for a while because Ramon has not been very well, and we were pleased to see him out and about. The other two not so far mentioned - Steve and Edward - were seated out of my line of sight, so I have no idea what mischief they got up to (terrible grammar!), but feel sure they must have committed some indiscretions!

Roll on next Christmas! Tom is groaning!

Eve Parry, Great Orme, December 1998

MALACHITE: THE ORIGIN... REANA

Just in case anybody really believed the article in the last issue of the journal...forget it. This really is the true meaning of the word Malachite:

After noticing with interest the short feature on the above subject in the GOES journal, issue 2 1998, I would like to further assist by contributing the following, which I remembered from my days as a student metallurgist in Coventry. I studied the various ores of copper, the ore processing and the smelting of the concentrated ore.

The derivation of the name of this ore copper is almost certainly due to its highly distinctive blue/green colour, which makes it instantly recognisable, being well known to the ancient Greeks, Romans and long before them (possibly even as early as 3500 B.C.), by the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean basin, i.e. approximating to the modern states of Egypt, Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Jordan.

The root of the name Malachite comes from the following languages, all of which bear remarkable similarities in spelling and pronunciation as follows:

Old French: 'Melochite'

Latin: 'Molochites'

Greek: 'Molokhitis', which in turn comes from the Greek noun 'Malakhe' = Mallow, i.e. the plant of the genus 'Malva' which bears the distinctive green leaves to which the ore is likened.

The suffix '-ite' comes from the Greek, meaning 'forming' or 'formed from', and is commonly found in mineral nomenclature, such as Calc-ite, Ammon-ite, Graph-ite, Baux-ite and so on. It is also commonly used with the same meaning in other contexts, such as Israel-ite, Raphael-ite, Ludd-ite etc.

David Haynes, Deganwy, November 1998

FROM THE DIARIES OF THOMAS JENKINS

Thomas Jenkins was a 19th Century Renaissance man from Llandeilo, Dyfed, South Wales.

In the 1930s he explored his local caves - prepared for anything - "I took a pistol and Peter brought his clarinet" But at Llygad Llŵchwr near Carreg Cennen Castle he was concerned enough to bring a ball of twine which he attached to a stalagmite in case they got lost. They went 567ft inside. It is interesting that they went in at 8pm and came out at 1pm. Our ancestors had a strange sense of time.

On another occasion he hit a stalactite with a hammer. It made he recorded "as fine and loud a noise as any bell in Llandeilo steeple"

Donated by David Edwards, Llandudno, 1998

THE MYSTERIES OF MERSEY'S MOLE KING, JOSEPH WILLIAMSON

An Expedition has been launched to try to clear up the murky history of Britain's most bizarre underground kingdom. Wealthy businessman Joseph Williamson spent £100,000 in the early 1800s on a series of tunnels and caverns deep beneath Merseyside (entrance). Generations have passed on tales of the eccentric who switched from being the King of Edge Hill. The only entrance to the underground maze was from a trap door in the basement of the Williamson home in Mason Street. For 22 years, using civil engineering skills which predate the London Underground, the haphazard honeycomb was built. If legend is correct Indiana Jones would be a better man to tackle the task because of numerous huge pits and rough passages. For more than 150 years the reason for Williamson's compulsive burrowing has remained a mystery - as has the tunnels scope and layout, but now a team of surveyors using the latest equipment are working to produce a definitive map. Gabriel Muies, 55, who led a team into the tunnels in 1986, is heading the latest bid with support from various local bodies and firms. He hopes to renovate the tunnels and turn them into a tourist attraction. After coming up for a breath of fresh air he said, "The brickwork is absolutely fantastic - it could have been built five years ago, we've found lots of passageways and there are lots of arches which are 20 ft high". Nobody knows why Joseph Williamson did this but he created lots of work for unemployed people.

After the Napoleonic Wars lots of soldiers returning to Edge Hill did not have jobs and he gave money to the poor and asked them to work for it. If the modern day mole's plans come to fruition he too is hoping to create jobs for local people. Mr Muies is still remembered for getting work by gatecrashing a party of bosses from builders Wimpey and saying "gizza job". Granby Toxteth Task Force has given him a grant for his new work. Electrical and heating contractor Ashcroft and Thompson has been heavily involved in the scheme and are providing lighting. Arthur Ashcroft said he thought it feasible to turn the tunnels into a unique tourist attraction. He said "This will be a great thing for the area. There's not a break in the brick work, if we had enough funding it will become a good attraction for Liverpool".

*Ramon Rainford, Llanbedr y Cennin.
based on: Liverpool Echo Thursday May 5 1994.
Report by Alex Hunt.*

TRIPPING AROUND THE BALTIC IN A LANDROVER

For many years, as many of my friends will know, an overland journey around the Baltic has been on my list of journeys that I had to do. At the end of July '98 a chance conversation and then an article in the 4x4 Mart had me making enquiries about an Aid convoy up to the Arctic to deliver hospital supplies to a registered charity called Golden Pelican, based at St. Petersburg. A few faxes and phone calls later, and after finding a good navigator/co-driver - Ian Bright, who had volunteered (I wonder if either of us knew what we were letting ourselves in for!), and a trip to the organisers in Wrexham, Ian and I prepared for the trip; mostly just medical insurance, first aid kits, vehicle insurances, travellers cheques and American dollars etc. The organisers in Wrexham were going to sort out visas and ferries and I understood the medical supplies. Ian and myself would just get ourselves organised as we were both up to our ears in work.



Somewhere in Finland

The preparation of the Land Rover was just a 'good service' plus getting the garage to sort out the fuel tank problem of the rear tank pumping into the front tank and overflowing. Extras included extra sockets for C.B. radio, (Thanks to Nick Jowett and Phil Smith for sorting this out) and the hand held spot light and electric fan (Thanks to Don Smith for these) all wired into the split charge extra battery, so as not to flatten the master accumulator. Ian Bright fitted the C.B. and quickly built a box for the inside to keep the food and spares.

All this went on as letters came through and the Wrexham people phoned me or I phoned them with any questions. At the beginning of September a note and visa application came through from Wrexham explaining how to fill it in and asking for the passport. I duly filled it in and sent it to Wrexham and waited...and waited. A note came through of problems in Russia with letters of invitation - no passport or visa. I rang Wrexham. They had problems; their car was broken they had no transport, I was phoned by people who were cancelling, then we were informed "no visa for Russia" so I rang to retrieve my passport. Ian and I had a council of war and decided "let's go to Europe anyway". Poland is cheap so we are told. "Let's go!"

We were due to leave on the Friday and this was now Monday. I rang around to sort out a ferry at short notice - it had to be Harwich, mid morning Friday September 25th so I booked the fast ferry with return on Tuesday 6th October. On Tuesday September 22nd, a phone call from Paddy and her friend Michelle, were we going? Yes, but to Poland as no one else seemed to be going and we had no aid to deliver.

Later that day a fax came through from Wrexham; there was an address in Finland, at Mikkeli, to leave the medical supplies. Now do we just go off on a jolly or do we take some of Paddy and Michele's aid? What to do? Ian and I discussed it at the pub... "damn it, life is not fair- we have to take the aid".

Paddy and Michele had now booked the same ferry as us so this made life easy. I went over to Newtown on Thursday morning with my dad navigating. A 200-mile round trip. We collected a special orthopaedic bed and some Zima frames plus other bits and pieces. Some other people were due to come in that evening to collect some more aid and we would all meet at a lorry stop at the end of the M54 at 1.30am Friday morning.

Ian and I arrived on time, the girls were late, with two very good and true stories; a house down the road from Michele's mum's had been broken into and they had given chase, also when the other vehicle had arrived and filled up it was noticed that it was leaking oil, a £1,500 engine re-build had gone wrong, so sadly this member of the convoy was not going, (was this a fore-taste of things to come?) Fingers crossed, run over a black cat and all will be well as they say.

C.B. Channel 20 set, and so Harwich here we come. Rain and thick, thick fog and a slight worry when Michele's Land Rover died. The lights went out and it rolled to a stop. The battery isolator had been knocked and with it switched back on all was sorted. At Harwich we collect tickets and drove onto the fast ferry, four hours or so and we were in Europe, Netherlands to be exact. It had been a few years since I had driven on the wrong side of the road but I can say now we were back, and with Ian telling me when to overtake there were no problems. We headed for the campsite there to meet three other vehicles ...we hoped.

We put the tents up and prepared the food, Frank and his wife Josey arrived for a chat and a conference as to our plans, I think I was still harbouring ideas if things went wrong we could still head to Poland. It was decided that we would see who else turned up in the morning and go from there. In the morning two extra tents had appeared and one yellow Toyota pickup. This was Steve and his navigator Lucinda, from 'down south'. They had not met before the trip. There were now four vehicles, this was the team. The C.B.'s were tuned in so we could, and did, use them to find each other... later in the journey it was found in the old eastern block most roads still went through towns, no by-passes and it was easy to get left at the lights or be cut up by other vehicles and left behind.

Out of the Netherlands we headed through Germany and into Denmark, we found a campsite here and started the trend for comfort and hired a cabin which five of us shared. Frank and Josey went off and found a proper hotel and Steve used his tent. The next day saw us into Sweden. We felt fuel would cost more in Sweden so we filled both tanks. On the road Steve, who was behind us, reported over the C.B. that fuel was leaking out of our Land Rover. At the lunch time stop I realised it was the same problem that I hoped had been rectified before leaving the UK - fuel pumping from tank to tank. This meant switching the fuel tank over from front to rear every fifty miles...I did this for three thousand miles!!

N.B. On return it was quickly rectified. The part fitted by the garage, a switch valve, was faulty (let that be a lesson - always give the vehicle a good shake down. Run and test everything before a long trip)

We had hoped to drive up to five hundred miles a day over three or four days, but it became evident that if we were to keep together this would be impossible, we had to go as fast as the slowest vehicle (this was not us!). That night Ian and I discussed the problem, at this speed we would need another four days at least, we had to confront this problem now. It is at times like this that you wonder if groups who have never met before will keep together. Ian and I studied the map, up to Stockholm, and a ferry to Helsinki (Finland). This ferry idea would cut out over a thousand miles and would possibly mean no arctic circle part of the trip, but would put us back into the itinerary we had been given by the absent organisers. After the one big meal we were having a day, Ian and I approached the others. Although sorry at the change of route, being realists they agreed.

The next morning we set off for Stockholm and with good navigation arrived at the docks, found the right ferry, Silva Line, and also found it to be much cheaper than even the ferry across to Europe from Britain. This was the first time we were charged with over height vehicles, over 2.4 metres. The ferry trip was to last about fourteen hours and included cabins. The ferry was plush and was like a floating hotel with a mall and shops, live entertainment, smoked glass and small glass lifts travelling up the mall walls to the posh cabins, giving views. Pretty well all of the Baltic countries have a zero policy of drink driving - no alcohol in the blood, with I understand prison for certain offences. This was the only time I had a couple of pints of beer. The cabins we had were below the water line, and later on when I turned in, I found the lift to our floor obviously broken. As I fell asleep I remember hearing a booming sound every now and again, water on the hull I think (a previous ferry on this run had sunk a few years ago when its bough door had fallen off, so I wondered...as you do).

I slept very well. In the morning the lift was still out of action so we all climbed the stairs up top and watched the port of Helsinki come into view. Paddy had the foresight to send a fax to the people in Mikkeli from Stockholm so we drove directly there past the industrial town of Lahti (chain saws, and in the past guns), up to Mikkeli which

we reached around lunchtime. Another phone call and they would fetch us from the main square, we would wait. It was a good chance to send a few post cards. I had not changed much money so very few were sent. The town was large and as usual anyone who was in charge of anything important could speak English. English is the main language used to communicate between peoples around the Baltic and is taught in all schools, Russian possibly being pushed out for obvious reasons.

The Manager of the Finish Charity arrived (which was for the disabled and had had dealings with the Russian group) We followed them to their summer camp by a lake then back to their offices in town, very well set out all on the ground floor and run by the disabled people themselves. I was very impressed with the whole set up! We left the aid at the summer camp and stayed overnight in one of their double-glazed chalets. Lucinda was very keen on going out on the lake so a boat was borrowed, with permission. Ian gallantly made it 'lake worthy' and took passengers out around the lake exploring.

The heating was on in the rooms and as dusk fell it was 'inside quickly'. The rooms had televisions, cooking facilities and very comfy beds. Everything necessary for an easy life. The following day would see us on the ferry to Estonia so I was a little concerned to get a good nights sleep.

We returned to Helsinki by a slightly different route (the weather was still sunny and clear) passing many lakes with beautiful views and scenery, another place I'd like to go back to. At Helsinki we checked a few ferry companies for quick ferries and cheapness - time was never on our side on this trip. Using Franks car we went from one ferry office to another finally finding a sea cat type ferry that was going within the hour. By using the C.B. we contacted Ian in the Land Rover. He could obviously hear us but we could not hear him so I asked him to click his microphone. Can he understand us? - CLICK (yes), could he bring the other three vehicles over? - CLICK. They're good things these C.B's. We did find that without a good aerial the distances between each vehicle was not great and Ian as chief wireless operator often had to relay messages from one end of the convoy to the other (we had the best C.B. set up).

This was the first time we were asked for vehicle documents, before getting on the ferry and off at the Estonian end. This was because of vehicle theft. Insurance was also checked and our passports were stamped with an entry stamp. This was the smallest ferry and was designed for nothing larger than a van. We ate and used up our Finish currency.

Estonia was getting dark as we arrived, luckily Josey had picked up a magazine on the boat about this area with hotels etc. One was chosen, and using Franks mobile phone the hotel was called. It was suggested we pay a Taxi to guide us through town to the hotel. I think it cost us about the equivalent of £3.00 total. The Hotel was very good with loads of hot water and en-suite showers, and the rooms were warm.

I think we paid in U.S. dollars. The owner was very good and looked after us well. The vehicles were safe right outside the building. We were hungry so ordered two taxis and headed into the Old Town, which was virtually car free. Having wandered around for a while we found a medieval style restaurant. Three of the party were vegetarian and had problems when eating out in the ex-eastern block because I think the population were just glad to eat and had not had a choice in the past so vegetarianism was very alien to their thoughts.

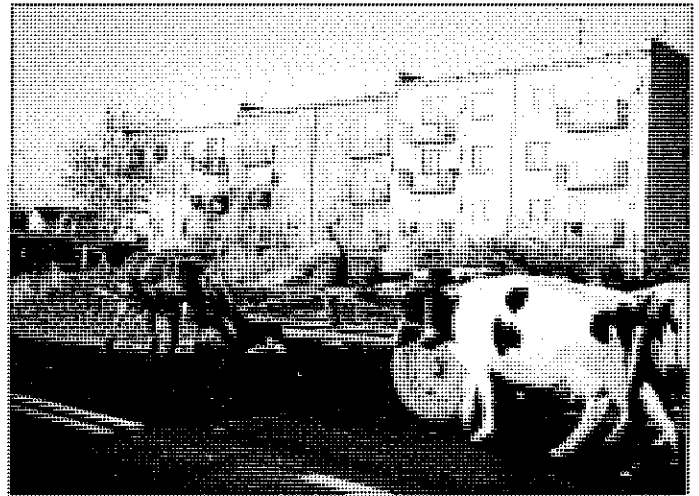
The Restaurant was what I would call posh, expensive looking but with the exchange rate so good to us it was very reasonable. I ordered the Boar steaks which had all sorts of berries and things with it and a few clay flagons of rather strange beer that was very good indeed. The following morning after a good breakfast off we went again. Next stop Latvia and another border crossing and a check of passports and papers. We were given little bits of paper with coloured rubber stamps on them to take through no mans land to the next border post. A change of currency and away we would go, the diesel fuel was now very, very cheap. We hardly stopped in this country and so by early that evening we were in Lithuania and looking for a hotel. This was to be the second worst. On the outside it looked reasonable even the check in was OK. This was possibly the first time the hotel staff tried to rip us off. Luckily for us their idea of a rip off was still cheap, so although the rooms were cold and rather shabby with smelly toilets down the corridor, and a shortage of loo paper, I don't think we minded. Having sorted our rooms out and our vehicles we headed for a restaurant.

This was probably the coldest evening and now as there were no street lights the darkest, around the corner from the hotel we found a restaurant. The place was well decorated and very pleasant. I think the people in charge thought it was their birthday! We had no idea what was on the menu - I chose something because I liked the look of the words.

Ian drew a picture of an Egg, much to the waitresses amusement, and as luck would have it one of the only two customers spoke some English and helped the other members of our group out. The two customers finished their meal and left. The scrambled Egg ordered by the vegetarians had, as become usual, got ham in it. My dish was good what ever it was, and even with a couple of bottles of good beer the bill was very reasonable so a large tip was left.

The following morning we took our little bits of paper to the hotel bar for our breakfast and although it was supposed to be included, we were shown the menu and realised we would have to pay extra to have breakfast - this we did. That hotel was strange, many very good looking girls were wondering around on the ground floor and behind the main desk were shelves full of videos, but no T.V.'s in the rooms. I still wonder if that hotel may have been carrying on some other very lucrative business which we British were just too slow to fully work out at the time!

Also the English-speaking people were very reticent and looking back seemed to start to look worried after they finished translating for us and always left at the first opportunity (was this a product of sixty years of secret police?).



Somewhere in Latvia

Exit stage left and over the border into Poland, no problems. The traffic became much heavier and we were slightly confused at times with the speed limits. When going through a Polish town Steve who was leading went too fast. It should have been 25mph and we were doing 30mph. Once the policemen realised we were British he was very pleasant and although speaking no English sent us happily on our way (watch out for Polish speed traps). Using the local shop food was very cheap including fruit and bananas. The first hotel in Poland was very good and modern. We had a good breakfast, although for some the scrambled egg had meat in it again!! Ian and I had wanted to go to Krakow but it was way south of our route home so we had to leave it. I had been told steer clear of Warsaw as it was difficult to navigate through and unless you had time, impossible to see properly. Ian and I were in the middle of the convoy so could not navigate. We found ourselves going round and round through the outskirts of Warsaw. We all made it through in the end and headed off on the E30 (Euroroute). Imagine forty to fifty year old roads carrying modern forty plus ton lorries and cars, plus horse and carts all going hell for leather and you have an idea of the danger of the roads we were now on. The tarmac had deep grooves like tram lines where the very heavy lorries had sunk into the foundations of the road (which was mostly sand). When you got into one of these ruts it could throw the vehicle onto the other side of the road or off into the ditch or field. A large lorry in front nearly disappeared into a field, with a cloud of dust and dirt marking his progress. Car drivers and lorries often drove down the middle of the road scattering other vehicles coming in both directions onto the grass verges. These people really know how to play chicken - the whole affair was most stimulating.

The final hotel in the Old Eastern block was probably the worst and was an old Hospital. It was what you would call a doss house. It was clean, but the toilets were smelly. I don't think they had any bleach cleaners or polish in

past times so the older run places still do not bother with it. The sheets were all folded up ready for use but were so well starched you could hold them out level, my final concern about this place was the red marks on the bedroom wall. Could they have been squashed bed bugs? I did not look too carefully.

A stop in Posen, one of the large Polish cities, on the Sunday morning. Reasonably quiet with very good shops and goods about half the British price. Beautiful buildings and no visible vandalism made a welcome break from the driving.

The Polish German border. Having filled up with fuel, we drove past over sixteen kilometres of trucks with them two abreast for the last two miles, all waiting to go through the border. We felt this would be the big one, with the vehicles being well and truly searched. The two Land Rovers were moved into a different lane with the vans etc. and the time taken was not too long (3-4 hours) considering we were now going back into the European Community (we were told that the smuggling of people, drugs, gold and guns were the main reasons for these searches). From the road we saw poverty living next to affluence. One field being ploughed with a horse and in the next a modern tractor, some of the brickwork was terrible with bricks sometimes just piled up one on top of another and not bonded. The cost to us in Britain to bring them up to our standard would be astronomical. Over the border into Germany - no German Border post. I was told that the Germans were very happy with the Polish border and with EEC money which helped pay the border costs. Here we said good bye to Frank and Josey, there is no real need to stay together. Off they go after shaking hands all round. Will we ever see them again we wonder! We set off onto the fifty year old autobahn... bumpy bump from one concrete section to the next, then on to what must have been two hundred miles of contra flow road works through the old East Germany. Billions of Deutschmarks must be going into this whole area. It makes me wonder what the communists spent their money on. Everything was badly built, from the brickwork on the houses to the roads and machinery, and this applied to all of the old communist Baltic states. The money needed to sort out just these States would be colossal and must defy imagination - it has to be seen to be understood.

The best Hotel of the lot sees us still in Germany but on the border to the Netherlands. By driving hard the previous evening we now had some time to waste (so we thought). After our nights stop we set off late. We had gone just a few miles when Frank and Josey shot past us. We must have passed them sometime the previous evening when they stopped early at an hotel (the tortoise and the hare were mentioned). At the next stop I phoned Stenna line to see if I could get a ferry that evening instead of the following day - they say no. No ferries for two days. I go back to the table confused. I'm tired, and talk to the others. Steve needs a Ferry so he rings - No. No ferries for two days. "Hang on", my ferry is booked for tomorrow night what's going on? I ring again and quote my paid up booked reference. Now it's different; "Mr Roberts, we

have been trying to contact you, the ferry will not be running for a few days. If you would like to travel down to Calais we can get you on one of our ships there, and we will give you £20 to cover petrol." This would mean an extra 250 miles through Belgium and France plus up through England. I'm not happy, in fact I'm very, very unhappy. I am told I can have a re-fund (still waiting) so we get another ferry. Steve leads us into the next big town and we find a travel agent, K.L.M. We all booked ferries which worked out cheaper than the so called special deal with Stenna. It's cheaper to book the North Sea ferry in Europe rather than from Britain (my credit card dies at this point, the magnetic strip has worn out. Paddy paid for me and I gave her a cheque). With that sorted the six of us head for a camp site for our last night in Europe. After our meal we walked into the local town to the warmth of a Bar.

The last morning in Europe and Steve and Lucinda leave early. They have a ferry to catch in Belgium to take them back down south. Paddy, Michele, Ian and myself take a leisurely drive down to the Euro port and find the ferry, the girls want to buy tobacco so they get the port police to take us to a petrol station where we fill up, and they clean out the garage of tobacco. The girls also find out that these same police had been organising containers of Aid up to St. Petersburg.

Frank and Josey have turned up again so we get on the ferry together, next stop good old Hull.

To sum up, we covered approximately 3,562 miles over twelve days driving, giving around 298.5 miles per day, at a speed of around forty to fifty miles per hour. Fuel consumption was about 30-32 mpg. We travelled through nine countries using five ferries. Cost per day per person of about £50 per day, or just under, including ferries - but not Land Rover preparation.

So what's the next trip! (maybe filling the roof rack with specific medical aid for a British run Romanian Hospital/Orphanage I have been told about! - Aug/Sept 1999). If I can find someone who could put up with me for six weeks, and if I can find the money, then maybe Netherlands, Germany, Czech Republic, Poland, Slovak Republic, Hungary, Romania, along the Black Sea coast through Bulgaria and into Turkey, Greece, Italy, Germany, and back via the Hook of Holland.

Edric Roberts, Craig-y-Don, November 1998

MINI-MEMORIES BY THE AGED SECRETARY

Whilst I have never been a physically active member of the society, it is possible that I have not only been deeper down a mine than most members, but also higher up in a mine. When I was nobbut a lad in Manchester nearly 50 years ago, I had just moved up into Scouts from Cubs when the troop went to a local colliery on a visit. This was long before the days of organised visits, health and safety, insurance and all the modern inventions for our benefit. Probably one of the scoutmasters worked there or had friends or family down t' pit. So far as I recall we went to Wet Earth Colliery at Clifton, anyway it was near Pendlebury.

I was a bit wary to start with, as a young lad new to the troop who hardly knew anyone I was with, but when we put on helmets with lamps (brilliant!) and then FELL down the shaft, I was worried. To make it worse we were trapped in a metal cage with bits of old criss-cross mesh that you could stick your fingers through, except you wouldn't as the rough wall was going past at 100 m.p.h.. It was very noisy and scary and went on for a long time before stopping suddenly, not at all like the smooth lifts in Kendall's and Lewises' Department Stores. They had comforting labels on to say that the Otis Elevator Company of Chicago serviced them regularly. Not having considered the subject deeply, I was vaguely puzzled about how the service man got there all the way from the U.S.A.

Anyway, when we got out, just by a miner casually sliding a gate out of the way in a manner that suggested this could have happened at anytime we were falling down the shaft, we were in an enormous hall about thirty feet high. What amazed me first, was although we were in a coal mine, someone had gone to the trouble of painting all the walls with whitewash. This area was huge, with trucks and rails and large tunnels leading off. I don't recall there being any ponies, as far as I remember the trucks were pulled by little engines, or as you got deeper into the mine, pushed by men. All the men down there had black faces, white eyes and teeth.

After walking a good way we had to get onto trucks, lie low and then went rocketing and racketing off into the blackness. You had to lie low as the rocky ceiling of the tunnel was only inches above your head, if anyone had sat up, that would have been the end of them. All the tunnels had bits of planks and cut tree trunks (pit props) holding them up. This took us to the coal face. Here there was actual mining going on. The seam was less than three feet deep and though I was only about 11 or 12 I had to bend double to walk along. At the end of it, at the coal face was a miner, stripped to the waist, black all over, hacking at the coal face with a pickaxe as he lay on lumps of rock and coal. Two others threw the huge chunks, twenty times the size of those I put on the fire at home, into the wheeled trucks. It was dusty and dirty, very hot, noisy and uncomfortable. Even the pit props weren't straight. I thought that even if I didn't do too well at the Grammar School, I wasn't going to choose this for a job.

Once you've seen that, there isn't much else to see, after all they weren't going to let us actually watch blasting, so back on the trucks to the main hall, a quick look at conveyor belts (yawn) and up the lift shaft, somewhat slower, just about 4X Lewis's speed.

Well then, I thought I'd just wash my hands and perhaps my face and we'd be on the bus home. But no! We had to take off all (yes ALL) our clothes and go into a row of showers, not even cubicles. The tiles were white, but all the spaces between the tiles were grey as was the water around my feet. I turned round to wash my back and stood open-mouthed staring at Harold Mallender's big brother who was really hairy in very strange places. Not just hairs like you get on moles, but masses of it, like a head of hair under his arms and in another place. How odd, anyway it must have been catching, because it happened to me some years later.

Looking back, I think that my trip down Wet Earth went down about 800 ft. That drop down the mine shaft certainly took a long time. Moving on about seven years, I was to go up 200 feet above ground level at a mine. I had been studying for my "A" levels and having seen a nice glossy book about bridges in South America, had vaguely thought it would be interesting to do Civil Engineering at university, after all, I had to do something. A son of friends of the family, Jeff Sides, had recently qualified and was working at Agecroft Colliery in the Irwell Valley, Salford*. He offered to take me and show me what doing a civil engineering job was like. When we got there, I saw these two strange box tower structures, surrounded in scaffolding up to a tremendous height. I had never seen anything like them. He explained that they were for winding gear for a new colliery at Agecroft to cater for the nearby power station. They were a new design, all the previous winding towers being open lattices of girders with a big wheel at the top. Jeff said "Come on, we'll go and see what's happening" and casually started climbing all these long ladders as though one did it all the time - well he did, didn't he. By just concentrating on the rungs in front of me I got up to the scaffolding planks where he stood, looking at steel formwork being wired into place. We were now about

200 feet up, roughly level with the tops of the huge cooling towers. As I stepped on the end of one plank, its other end rose smoothly into the air, and I indicated that I thought it was time to go and look at the ground installations. I did briefly take up Civil Engineering, but never again went as high or as low as I did on the trips to two coal mines, both now gone, but not forgotten.



David Edwards, Llandudno, August 1st 1998

*The day I wrote this, I learned that in Salford it is

- a) illegal for a woman to clean windows standing more than six feet above the ground and
- b) illegal to inflate an animal carcass in the street. Look out for this when next watching Coronation Street!

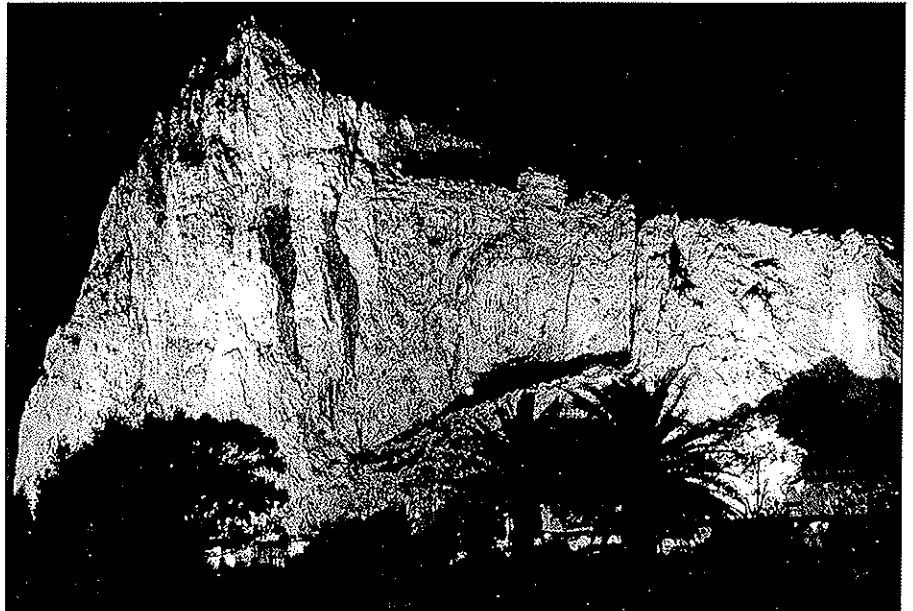
WINTER QUARTERS

I had planned to do the Combat Casualty Care Course for my RNR annual training but it wasn't available. When the opportunity came up to do two weeks in the Gibraltar Services Medical and Dental Centre as a locum General Practitioner I was definitely interested. The lure of some milder weather for two weeks was beguiling and I didn't take too long to make up my mind. In early February, as snow was falling over most of the British Isles, I flew out to Gibraltar, arriving at dusk with the ambient temperature a modest 14°C.

I stayed at HMS Rooke wardroom as was, now the tri- service Gibraltar Officers Mess and from my cabin, (sorry, room) I had a magnificent view of the Rock, over the harbour, to Spain and the African Pillar of Hercules. The Medical Centre, a modern General Practice, was a short walk away, as with most things on the Rock, though walking up the Rock can turn quads to jelly.

I completed General Practice training some years ago before retraining in Geriatric Medicine. A rapid refresher in paediatrics, ENT, dermatology and psychology was anticipated and I had brought the appropriate Oxford clinical handbooks. It was all useful stuff for Physician of the Week duties and guaranteed to bring renewed understanding of the GPs lot and role.

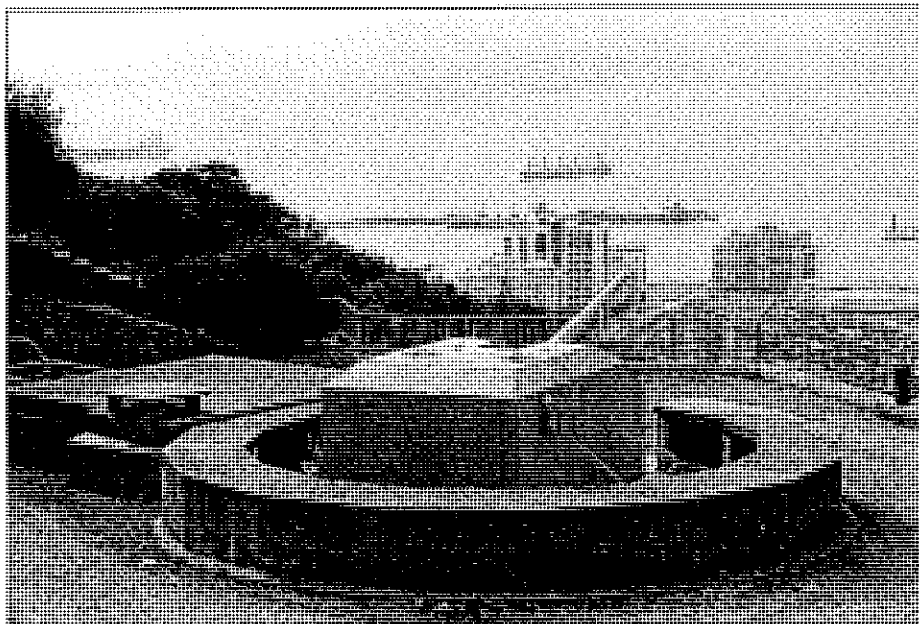
repeat prescriptions measured in yards were never seen, nor were carrier bags full of pills or potions and home visits were almost as rare. A welcome break indeed.



Capers and carrying on at the frontier were in evidence and on several days long queues developed. Spanish film crews and reporters were seen daily at the frontier and around the town but life went on. I was more interested in the similarities between the Rock and the Great Orme. Both are limestone headlands rich in archaeology with numerous bone caves and tunnels, joined to the mainland by marshy ground, now reclaimed. There really is a North West passage through the Rock. Unlike the batteries of the Great Orme's Coastal Artillery School, quite a number of Gibraltar's batteries have survived. While Gibraltar has its apes the Great Orme can only offer goats and although there's no airport yet Gloddaeth Avenue running shore-to-shore would serve quite well.

My wife and young son joined me for the final weekend. The weather had been unusually good for almost all of my stay but had saved the best till last, glorious sunshine and 23°C as we watched the Changing of the Guard, toured the Nature Reserve and basked on the beach. I shall still have to do the Combat Casualty Care Course but after this will I want to go to Norway for a winter deployment with Medical Squadron, Commando Logistics Regiment. Absolutely!

W.D.F. Smith, Chester, March 1999



Driving the EMIS computer records system was more of a challenge than this and came as a shock after the simple flexible analogue records technology in hospital practice, pen and paper. It wasn't so difficult. What else was different? The practice cross-section bore little resemblance to what I had known as a Salford GP trainee or know now - young fit service personnel and their families. Virtually everyone was younger than myself,

BATS UNDERGROUND

Very few bats now breed in caves, but many rely on caves or cave-like places for hibernation, and some use such places for other purposes. Cave-dwelling bats are threatened by loss of underground sites, or by excessive disturbance. Organisations interested in the study and conservation of bats, caves and mines have cooperated to explain the problems and how they can be minimised.

Bats face threats from many causes, such as modern agricultural practices, and the destruction of roosts in buildings. The protection of underground sites is just one important part of bat conservation as a whole. Some of our 15 species of bats traditionally bred in underground sites and many rely on such places for at least part of their hibernation period. Some bats also use these sites temporarily for a variety of purposes, such as for mating roosts or night roosts during feeding or in inclement weather. Bats are particularly vulnerable to disturbance whilst breeding and during hibernation.

Some bats, such as noctules, serotines and pipistrelles, are rarely found in underground sites while others, such as the two horseshoe bats, are heavily dependent on them.

Summer breeding:

Traditionally, both lesser and greater horseshoe bats bred in underground sites. There are now very few such colonies left and these are restricted to the south and west of Britain. Daubenton's bat frequently breeds in underground sites, usually near its feeding sites over water, but rarely in structures of interest to cavers or mining historians. At least one Natterer's bat colony breeds underground. Repeated disturbance of any such colonies will affect the breeding success.

Winter hibernation:

All British bats feed on insects and are faced with the problem of surviving the winter when the number of flying insects is greatly reduced.

Insectivorous birds migrate, search for overwintering insects or alter their diet, but bats hibernate. They seek out undisturbed sites with low temperatures and, by lowering their body temperature to close to that of their surroundings, reduce their heart, breathing and metabolic rates. This greatly reduces their energy requirements and allows them to exist on the fat reserves laid down prior to hibernation. Many bats also require a humid environment to avoid dehydration. Thus, underground sites provide ideal conditions for many hibernating bats.

Different bats prefer different temperatures depending on the species, sex, age and condition of the individual. Their requirements, and the weather, change throughout the winter, so bats frequently wake and move, either within the roost site or to a different roost site.

Greater horseshoe bats move into underground sites earlier in the winter and choose warmer temperatures than many other bats. At this time, temperatures of up to 11°C are suitable, but in February they will choose temperatures closer to 7°C. Females choose warmer sites than males; adults choose warmer sites than juveniles. Animals in poor condition will choose colder

temperatures. Long-eared bats prefer cold temperatures and move into underground sites particularly during prolonged cold spells, but they still stay near the entrance, where temperatures will be lowest.

Hibernating bats are cold to the touch and unable to move quickly; it may take up to an hour for a bat to become warm enough to be fully active and once the arousal process is started it is often irreversible. Bats have limited fat reserves to survive the winter period and each arousal uses a considerable amount of energy - possibly enough for about 10 days hibernation.

Awakenings scheduled by their own internal rhythms or stimulated by natural conditions, can be accommodated, but it is not easy to make up weight lost in winter and many bats continue to lose weight in April and early May - well after the end of true hibernation. Any unplanned wakings, for example by human disturbance, increase the risk of fat reserves running out before the winter is over. With little prospect of replenishing these reserves the bat may die through starvation or at least fail to recover sufficiently from hibernation to breed successfully. Individual bats can be found in the same sites at the same time, year after year; a whiskered bat was recently found in the site at which it had been ringed 24 years previously. It had been found several times in the intervening period, always at this site. After being refound over 80 times in 26 years, one greater horseshoe bat's range and movements were very well known.

Bat Species	Reliance on caves	Distribution	Status
Greater horseshoe	Major	Local	Rare
Lesser horseshoe	Major	Local	Rare
Daubenton's	Major	Widespread	Common
Brandt's	Partial	Widespread	Frequent
Whiskered	Partial	Widespread	Frequent
Natterer's	Major	Widespread	Common
Bechstein's	Partial	Local	Very rare
Mouse-eared	Major	local	Extinct
Pipistrelle	None	Widespread	Very common
Serotine	None	Local	Common
Noctule	None	Widespread	Common
Leisler's	None	Widespread	Rare
Brown long-eared	Partial	Widespread	Very common
Grey long-eared	Partial	Local	Very rare
Barbastelle	Partial	Widespread	Rare

From the internet, March 1999

<http://www.sat.dundee.ac.uk/~arb/bats/>

More detailed information about bat species can be found on the Flora-For-Fauna web pages. See also Bat Conservation International, Inc.

Figure-of-Eight

This is a very versatile knot most commonly used for attaching ropes to anchor points. Most things that can be done with fancier knots (e.g. double loop knots for a Y-belay) can also be done with a suitable combination of figure of eights. If you only learn one knot, make it this one.



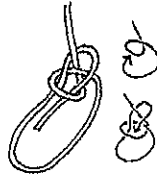
Figure-of-nine

The figure-of-nine knot can be used as an alternative to the figure-of-eight. It is very similar to a figure-of-eight with just an extra turn before finishing the knot. It is a little bulkier than the figure-of-eight but has greater strength.



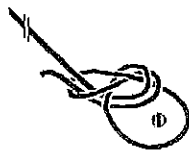
Bowline

This can be used for tying a rope around a belay but is most often used for tying the end of a safety line rope around a person when belaying them up a climb or ladder. This knot does have a tendency to loosen and can come undone so it is a good idea to use a half hitch to secure the "tail" of the knot to the loop.



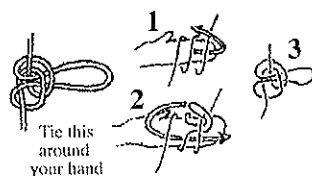
Yosemite Bowline

This is a variant of the basic bowline which gets around the problem of the knot loosening itself by taking the end of the rope and threading it back through the knot. This is a neat alternative to using a half-hitch to secure the end of the rope and the resulting knot has the strength of a figure of eight.



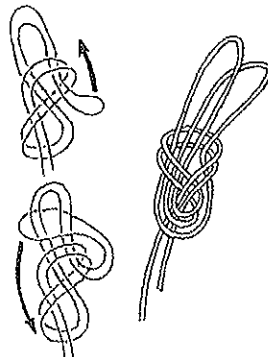
Alpine Butterfly

A good knot for rebelaying or for tying rub points out of a rope. Its main advantage is that the two strands of rope emerging from the knot are at 180 degrees to one another rather than emerging in the same direction as in a figure-of-eight for example. This makes it a good mid-rope knot and good for rebelaying because it has greater strength than a figure-of-eight if the rebelay fails.



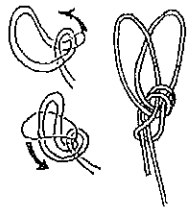
Double Figure-of-eight on the bight

This double loop knot is most commonly used for rigging Y-belaying. The nature of the knot means that it is reasonably easy to adjust the loops by moving rope from one of the loops to the other.



Bowline on the bight

This is another double loop knot suitable for rigging Y-belaying. It has the advantage that it is a bit less bulky than the figure-of-eight on the bight.



Italian/Munter Hitch

An excellent self-reversing friction knot suitable for belaying people when climbing or using a ladder. It can also be used for abseiling and gives a smoother ride than a stitch plate. This one is worth learning for all those occasions when you forget your stitch plate or descender.



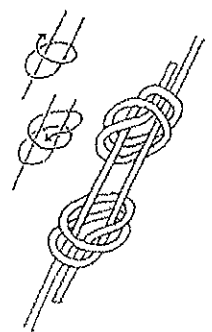
Clove Hitch

This simple knot is very useful for when you need a rapid belay around an object or through a grab.



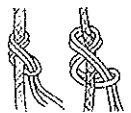
Double Fisherman's

The standard knot for tying two ropes together. If used in the middle of a pitch, a loop knot such as the figure-of-eight should be tied into one of the "tails" of the knot for safety during knot passing. The two knots that compose the double fisherman's should not be mirror images of one another (i.e. they should have the same "handedness") otherwise they won't stack properly.



"Hedden" Knot

This one was invented and used around 1960. It is possible to get it to jam but it is easy to loosen.



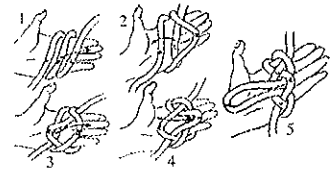
Constrictor Knot

A new knot useful to cavers and climbers was invented early this century by Clarence Ashley. He calls it "the constrictor knot" and is enormously resistant to coming undone. He claims it can be used in a pinch as a radiator hose-clamp!



Farmers hitch

This knot is excellent for tying in the middle of a climbing rope, for rebelaying, for lashings of many kinds, anywhere a loop that leads fair both ways is wanted. The method for putting it in is simplicity itself:



Take three turns of the rope round your hand, then:

1. Move centre part over right part.
2. Move new centre part over left part.
3. Move new centre part over right part.
4. Pull new centre part up to form the loop
5. For most satisfying results, remove hand before fairing or loading knot!