

SAFETY ON CLUB MEETS

Clothing

The recommendations regarding clothing set out in this guide should be followed. Members should be encouraged to regard proper over and under suits as a priority purchase before consideration is given to obtaining other caving equipment. Members should be discouraged from embarking on any trips without proper caving under garments and in addition club oversuits must be made available and worn on ALL trips by members who do not have suitable oversuits.

Safety Equipment

The meets leader must always carry a survival bag on every club trip. In addition all club helmets are fitted with a survival bag and all club members should be encouraged to take one with them also (every new member to the club receives a free survival bag from the club).

Food

Whilst the pre-caving breakfast is regarded as somewhat of a tradition there are sound reasons to encourage members to ensure that they eat a full meal before embarking on a caving trip. In addition ALL MEMBERS should take some high energy food/drink with them on ALL TRIPS. This INCLUDES novice trips. Some trips can take several hours to complete and it is essential that individual energy levels are maintained throughout the trip. A good meal beforehand can ensure this in conjunction with additional rations taken on the trip. It is important to remember that even a novice trip could become prolonged in the event of an accident underground and the progress of the whole party is dependant upon the progress of each individual. If any member fails to take food on a trip, other members of the party will be obliged to share their rations, possibly resulting in a weakening of their situation and in turn possibly jeopardising the position of the whole party.

Authority of meet leader

The meet leader will have the authority to refuse to allow a member or visitor to participate in a club meet if in the opinion of the leader there are reasonable grounds to believe that the safety of the individual or the party could be at risk. The grounds for such a decision could be on the basis of improper dress or the relative severity of the trip compared with the experience of the member in question. The decision of the leader in such circumstances is final.

POTHOLING IS BY ITS NATURE A COMMUNAL ACTIVITY. EVERY MEMBER MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THE ACTIONS OF ANY INDIVIDUAL ON A CLUB MEET COULD AFFECT THE SITUATION OF THE WHOLE PARTY.

CLOTHING LIST

Below is a list of suitable clothing, recommended for wearing while taking part in potholing. Caves are dark, harsh environments of water, mud, and hard abrasive limestone rock. So to enjoy the sport more comfortably, the following list has been compiled as a guide:

Under clothing

The under clothing (undersuit), must be a close fit which keeps you warmer. A one-piece suit is the best as it stays together in the middle to keep the cold off the base of the back. Synthetic based material especially Polyester would be ideal, or fibre-pile clothing. Just look in the label of the clothing you are going to wear. Thermal clothing is also suitable for caving, but in some situations two layers may be required due to the thickness of the material. All the above mentioned clothing drains water quickly which will ensure a more comfortable trip. Cotton should be avoided.

DENIM JEANS & CORDUROY'S ARE DEFINITELY NOT TO BE USED FOR CAVING.

Over suits

The over-suits' job is to protect you from the abrasion of rock, and more important is to deflect as much water as possible, and guard against heat-loss. The best ones are of a one piece construction, and are made from PVC-impregnated nylon or polyester. Although for the first few novice trips old cagouls and over-trousers will be o.k. PLEASE NOTE that they are not hard wearing. A hood built in to the suit is an added bonus and will play an important part in keeping you warm in a cold wet cave.

An alternative is to keep a hood with you, such as a balaclava made from polyester which will fit under your helmet when not being used. A polyester fleece balaclava is a relatively inexpensive and HIGHLY RECOMMENDED ITEM OF CLOTHING.

Socks

If possible, neoprene socks (known as wet socks) are the best. These will keep your feet warm when wet, which will make the rest of the body feel warmer. Also they are comfortable to wear and will support the ankle. A thin pair of old socks can be worn over the wet socks to protect them and prolong their life span. If wet socks can't be obtained, the next best thing is wool socks or again polyester socks or furry-socks. BUT PLEASE NOTE, these won't keep your feet as warm as wet socks when wet.

Footwear

The majority of cavers find the best foot wear of all to be the good old wellie. A good cleated sole that is relative soft will grip better than a hard soled boot. Walking boots can also be used, but ones that have lacing hooks on will snag when climbing ladders. The above mentioned footwear will support the ankle very well. You may have to get the next size up than normal footwear if wearing wet-socks.

Headgear

Headgear is in the form of hard hats the type miners or builders would wear. This will protect you from knocks and bumps. These are fitted with a lamp bracket for the lamp to fit on to. A "Y-type" chin strap can be attached and is already fitted to all club helmets. This keeps the helmet in place better than a straight chin strap.

HEADGEAR CAN BE PROVIDED BY THE CLUB.

Lamps

These can sometimes be provided by the club for a small charge (free to members). The money goes to the up-keep of the lamps and to buy spares etc. The lamps are similar to the ones used by miners giving light for up to 8 hours. You can purchase your own lamp at a later stage and, if you decide to, don't hesitate to ask a club member for guidance.

Extras

Gloves can be worn when caving, to protect your hands and keep them warm. Builders or gardening gloves are adequate and are very hard wearing, or even rubber gloves can be worn but are less hard wearing. Belts are provided with lamps when borrowing a club lamp. Leather belts are not adequate for caving as they tend to rot and then the battery pack falls off!! Knee and elbow pads are a good idea and most people going caving for the first time realise the benefits of knee pads very quickly!!

If you have any queries about the above list or you would like any advice then please don't hesitate to call a club officer.

CAVE CONSERVATION

Cave conservation is necessary not only to preserve caves for the enjoyment of ourselves and others, but also to keep access to caves open for caving.

By following a few simple guidelines the damage caused to the cave environment can be greatly reduced.

Behaviour Underground:

Never leave litter or spent carbide in a cave or around a cave entrance.

Take care not to damage formations or touch them unnecessarily and do not remove existing broken formations.

When crossing mud floors follow the obvious tracks to avoid further damage

Stay outside taped off areas as the tapes are there to protect delicate formations.

A more detailed conservation code is available through the CNCC, please contact the Secretary for details.