

THE FIRST CAVE DIVERS

Wookey Hole Caves are considered to be the birthplace of British cave diving. In 1935, a cave explorer called Graham Balcombe walked along the river bed from Chamber 3 to Chamber 4. His heavy and cumbersome deep sea diving equipment was not at all suitable for exploring caves. In spite of this, Balcombe reached Chamber 7 later that year. Since then, advances in modern diving technology have allowed divers to explore as far as Chamber 25.

HAND-OPERATED AIR PUMP

This provided the diver with his air supply. Too much air would make his suit 'balloon' upwards; too little and he would find it hard to breathe, a hazard known as the 'squeeze'.

GUIDE ROPE

This helped the diver to find his way back out of the caves.

AIR HOSE

A long, flexible pipe that connected the diver's helmet to the air pump at the surface.

HELMET

This was made of copper, had strong glass windows at the front and both sides and was very heavy.

LIFELINE

This carried a telephone cable so that the diver could talk to his support team at the surface.

LEAD WEIGHTS

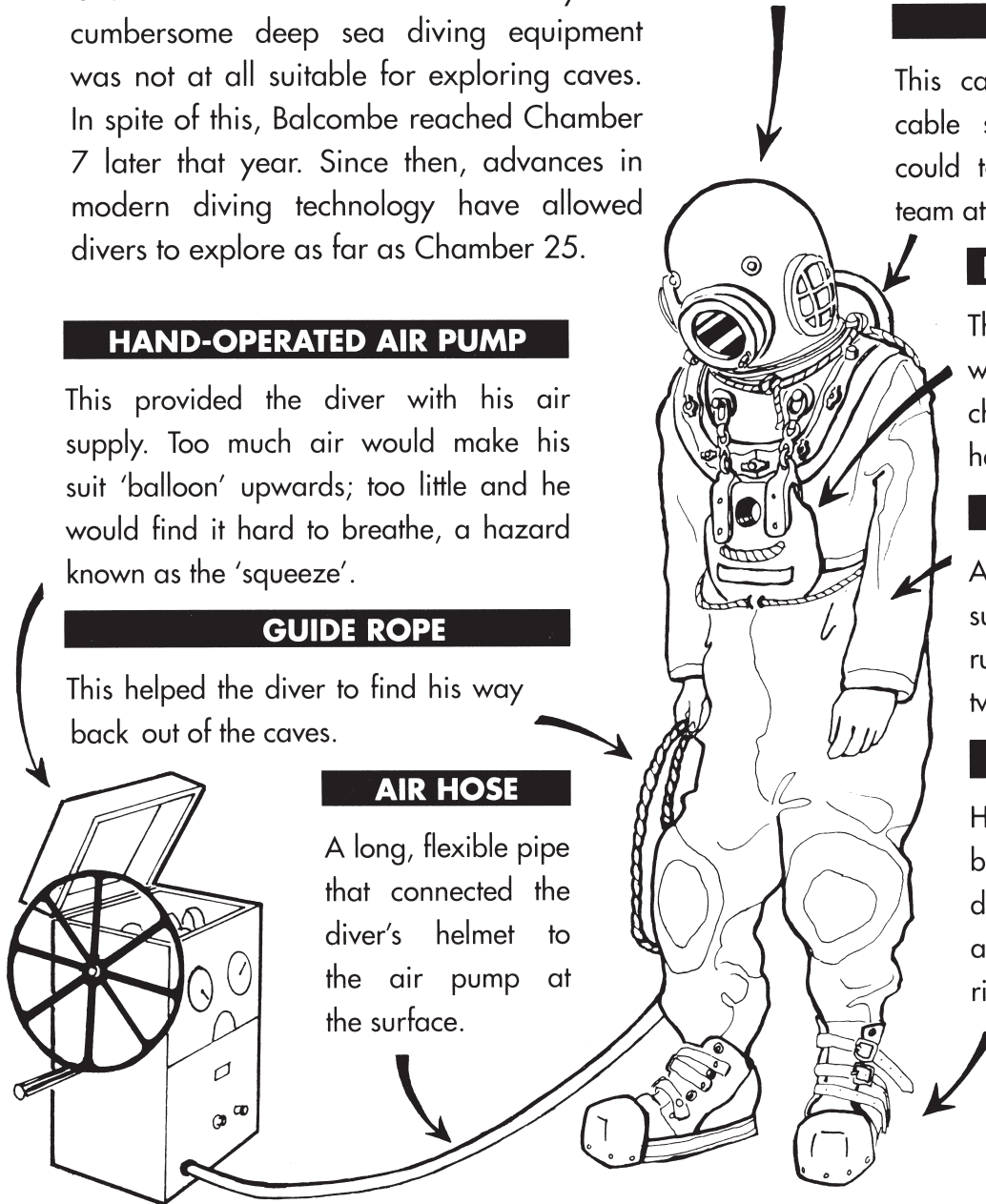
These huge weights were carried on the chest and back to help the diver sink.

DRY SUIT

A totally watertight suit made from rubber fitted between two layers of canvas.

BOOTS

Heavily weighted boots helped the diver to stand up and walk on the river bed.



Questions

1. Why was the diver's guide rope so important?
2. Why did the diver wear huge, weighted boots?
3. What was the diver's dry suit made from?
4. How did the diver talk to his support team at the surface?
5. The air supply was very important. What happened if the diver received too much or too little air?
6. What do these words mean? Use a dictionary to help you.
(a) hazard (b) cumbersome (c) canvas (d) flexible