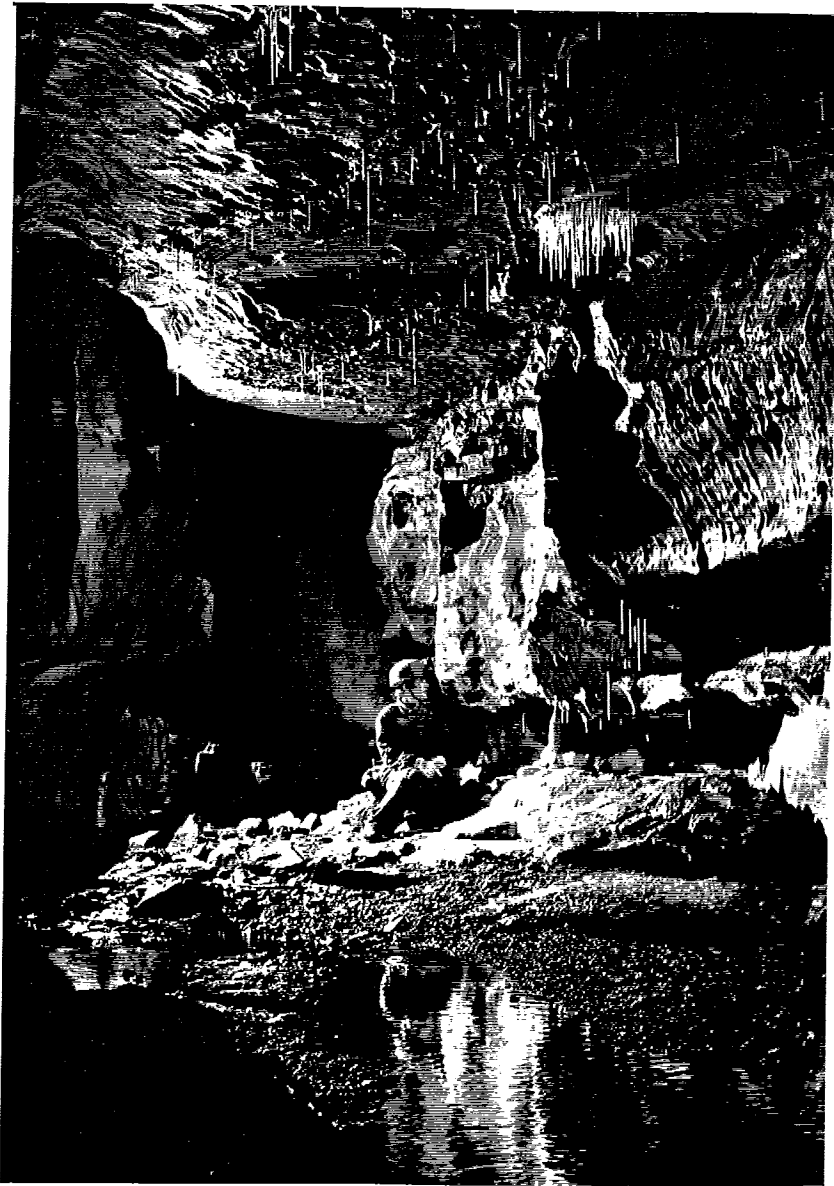


*NEWSLETTER OF THE*

# **U.B.S.S.**

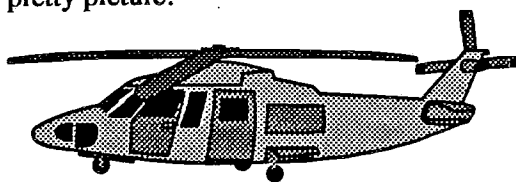


*Vol 10, No. 2.*

**MAY 1994.**

## EDITOR'S EPISTLE.

I've been sitting at this computer for ages, trying to think of a witty and original way in which to open this, my first ever newsletter, but inspiration is definitely lacking. By looking back over past issues, I have discovered that Andy always used to begin with "Well", or "Welcome", and Bill with "Hello", so as I generally like to be different and as I am currently making use of a rather posh computer, courtesy of my flatmate, Jon, I will draw you all a pretty picture!



I would like firstly to thank everybody who has contributed to this newsletter, as it has turned out to be quite a bumper issue. I have tried to alter the old look slightly, but with exams looming rather large on the horizon at present, I haven't been able to do great deal. I do, however, plan to give next term's issue a complete face-lift, so any handy hints, or suggestions will be gratefully received. Also, please continue to send me articles, 'photos, cartoons, stories, poems and any other suitable material. Even though the next newsletter is not due until October, I would prefer to hear from you sooner rather than later. I have finally learnt how to transfer articles from E-mail to Word, so all you have to do is contact me on E-mail. If you don't have access to a computer, then a scribbled note sent through the post will suffice, as I would far rather spend my time typing up articles than doing any work!

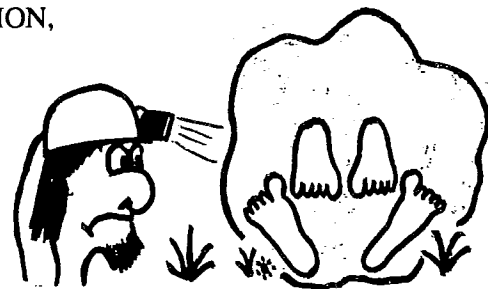
All that is left for me to say now is, "Happy Caving", to all those lucky Crumbles for whom exams are but a thing of the dim and distant past. To everyone else, I wish you all the best of luck. Just remember, if you fail, you're a true caver!

Rach.

*(Please note: All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the individual authors are not necessarily those of the committee.)*

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL  
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,  
UNIVERSITY UNION,  
QUEEN'S ROAD  
BRISTOL.  
BS8 1LN.

## GROVEL.



*Owing to the fact that this club appears to be thriving on rather triangular relationships at present, I have had my lips sewn together, my hands firmly tied behind my back and been threatened with being stripped naked and shot at dawn if I so much as print one word of anything that is of remote interest to anyone reading this column! I am therefore unable to divulge to you what our Y-hang Woman got up to at the annual dinner this year, or inform you of the exploits of a certain Kasakstan Man in the Highbury Vaults one night during his return to England at Easter. I am afraid that for the most part, I will have to leave it to your imaginations, but I am sure, if asked nicely, the Reverend Topher could concoct some suitably libellous stories, to feed those of you with less inventive minds.*

However, do not despair, because for all you gossip-mongers, I have been authorised to bring you the news that Trevor is currently sleeping with Sarah, and it is rumoured that Graham has been seeing rather a lot of Linda lately...

One person that I flatly refuse to spare in all this, is our ex-Newsletter Editor, the intrepid Mulu Man himself. Having suffered at his mercy on countless occasions in the past on the pages of

"Gravel", I am out to seek revenge and feel obliged to inform you that Mulu Man has recently acquired himself a Siamese Twin of the opposite sex. Rumour has it that the unfortunate pair have become so joined at the hip that they have even deemed it necessary to eat several candlelit dinners together in the seclusion of a darkened bedroom.

Bill Miners has recently been exhibiting some very worrying tendencies and arrived at this year's annual dinner dressed as a woman. He looked very chic in a close-fitting sequin dress (for which he was unfortunately forced to shave his chest!), a shapely black jacket and black stilettos. His appearance surprisingly caused the greatest stir amongst several of the female members, who became concerned when they saw how perfectly he filled the "chest cups" of the dress. The words, "I must, I must increase my bust" could later be heard emanating from behind the closed door of the ladies' loos!

**GOVERNMENT HEALTH WARNING.**  
**EVE (SAGGY BOTTOM) PLEYDELL**  
**IS A BIOHAZARD. CLOSE**  
**ENCOUNTERS OF A CARNAL**  
**NATURE MUST BE AVOIDED AT**  
**ALL COSTS. IF CONTACT IS**  
**ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY, THEN**  
**THE WEARING OF A WIDE-**  
**BRIMMED HAT IS ESSENTIAL.**

*Neil seems to have reached the end of his quest for a lady-friend and settled for the sound of jingling bells and stamping feet, in the form of Morris-dancing Jo. This new relationship caused a small degree of consternation in the household of 8 Lansdown Road, when a condom was found in the washing machine, together with several items of Jo's night wear. It is to be hoped that the couple realised that it was not of the "wash-and-re-use" variety.*

After a great deal of gentle persuasion, (and some not quite so gentle threats), Steve has finally done away with his gangster-style hairy upper lip. The rather controversial moustache, which first made

an appearance during the Austria expedition of 1992, had a long-awaited encounter with an electric razor at this year's annual dinner. So great was the call for its removal that Steve was able to raise a grand total of £115, from club members at the dinner, in return for the moustache. The money is to go towards this year's Slovenia expedition. A special mention must go towards Sarah Walker, who paid £5 to pluck out one of the hairs! Fortunately, Steve was fairly inebriated by this stage and so did not protest too much. Souvenir whiskers may be purchased from Vintner's Wine Bar.

Whilst still on the subject of the annual dinner, one person who certainly should not escape without a mention is Hugo, whose behaviour, far from resembling that of a Russian spy, was somewhat akin to that of a drunken young farmer devoid of underwear. He began by expressing a rather unnatural interest in Bill, and was forced to consummate his infatuation by planting an enormous love bite on poor Bill's neck. (However, this is what must be expected when a man as beautiful as Bill puts on a dress!) What was perhaps more worrying was when he was spotted instructing our innocent Hon. Sec., Eve, on how to unbutton his trousers. Having obviously never seen button-up trousers on an Etonian bottom, Eve was fascinated and carefully did as she was told. A few seconds later, Hugo was to be seen lying on top of her, his trousers adorning his ankles! Unfortunately, Lawrence was in no hurry to come to her rescue, muttering, "If she will get herself into these situations..."

## HON SEC'S CORNER

As most of you probably realise I now have a young, blonde (generally barelegged) sidekick. His current pseudonym is Mr Ian Wheeler, but to all those who know him it is apparently obvious that he is in fact the long lost grandson of Lord Baden Powell. Currently he is undergoing a period of intensive training before I place the huge burden of all our joint responsibilities firmly on his shoulders alone. This initiation involves leading a troupe of prepubescent boys around the Snowdonian mountains for seven days. With the minimalistic kit of a pair of shorts and a woggle "Ian" must ensure that himself and his followers survive for a full seven days on a diet of grass, small furry mammals, not-so-small woolly mammals and the occasional tourist or train driver.

Overwhelmed by her success as Social Secretary Ms Privett has now elevated herself to the even dizzier heights of Newsletter Editor. Unfortunately the stress of such a position is already starting to show. Many a night I have raced down to the kitchen to scare off burglars only to find Rachel wearing a grubby cap, pencil perched on her right ear, drowning in huge piles of paper, on her seventh cup of coffee and her forty second roll-up. However she has obviously succeeded in producing the latest UBSS epistle and I'm very thankful that I had so little to do with it.

Last term provided some memorable occasions, notably our anti-daffodil crusade in Derbyshire, and a make-your-own harness competition in Yorkshire (the winner impressing the judges with his unique usage of two dog leads which enabled him to surmount a 60m pitch). Unfortunately the trip to Wales had to be cancelled as everyone was somewhere else, but if Ian is approached in a friendly manner then I'm fairly certain he could be persuaded to organise a foray in that direction in the Autumn term. There are the possibilities of a couple of weekends in the Dales between now and the summer break, but I'll test public opinion before Ian has to act on this.

As promised I have eventually booked us an evening at the climbing wall in St. Werburghs. This is for anyone who wishes to learn SRT rescue techniques, although the facility for learning basic SRT is also available. It is aimed at those going to Slovenia, but everyone is welcome. The cost is £4, which is Saturday entry rate for the wall, but Dick Willis is kindly donating his time and expertise for free.

The Slovenia Expedition is still going ahead (!), however it has moved forward by one week. That is to say we shall leave England on 27th August and return on 16th September.

One of our members (Mike McHale) has secured several Yorkshire permits for the coming months (see diary). Any member is invited to use these permits. If you have the urge to do so please let Mike or myself know.

Good luck to those with exams, and hope to see you all in a cave, or preferably a pub, soon.

### TOM HEWER

Tom Hower, who died in March, was the secretary of the UBSS from 1924-1927. Those were the days when students always wore ties at the hut, and sometimes in the caves, and when trips out to Mendip were by bicycle. A caving trip was followed by a bath in Bath Swallet, and it was traditional to run naked to the summit of Blackdown at dawn on New Year's day. The countryside looked very different as the areas of forestry and the woods behind the hut are recent, and so the hut itself stood in open country, while Burrington Combe itself was completely bare of trees as a result of grazing by sheep and rabbits.

The UBSS was at the time one of the most popular clubs in the University, chiefly for social reasons. The sport of caving was still in its very earliest days, and many routine trips in the Burrington area would have involved some element of exploration. However, archaeology was of equal importance, and Tom Hower, a medical student, carried out various excavations, especially of tumuli on Mendip and of King Arthur's cave in the Wye valley. He was centrally involved in the establishment of the museum, which was sadly destroyed by bombing during the war.

It was the activity of such members in the early years of the society that established the position of the club in the Burrington and Blackdown areas. On one occasion Tom Hower visited the local land-owner, a Major Leacroft, to ask permission to excavate Rowberrow cave. As the club had earlier been denied permission he was keen to make a good impression, and when offered a drink politely accepted. To his consternation the servant appeared with a tray containing a bottle of champagne and a single glass, the Major saying that he himself never drank before mid-morning. Tom Hower duly consumed the whole bottle, for the sake of good form, with the Major looking on, and was duly granted permission. As he left the Major said that he had turned down the previous applicant as "the insufferable little squirt couldn't hold his drink". The squirt in question was Edgar Tratman.

After leaving the University Tom Hower went on to work in the Sudan, where he once fell out of the cockpit of a biplane in turbulent air, fortunately being pulled back by the pilot's hand on his ankle. While he had a parachute, it would have been of little use as he was using it as a seat at the time. On returning to England he worked in Liverpool before taking the chair in Pathology at Bristol, where he worked throughout the war, on one occasion being forced to leave a dinner party after a waiter opened a serving hatch to find that an incendiary bomb had landed in the kitchen, and that the back half of the building was ablaze and collapsing. He then went down to the General Hospital, where he spent the night patching up casualties of the air raid, still wearing dinner jacket and bow tie.

On retirement Tom Hower devoted more time to his interest in botany, and on several occasions drove his landrover to Iran, Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia on plant collecting expeditions. Back in England he spent most of his time developing his beautiful garden in Henbury, but re-established his links with the UBSS in his late eighties, visiting the hut and attending the opening of the new rooms. He often reminisced about caving, and was once heard to say that he had devoted so much time to caving that he was somewhat surprised that he had managed to pass his finals. Modern cavers may not wear ties any more, but has anything else changed? One can only hope that the cavers of the 1990s go on to lead such eventful and enjoyable lives.

## **UBSS DIARY "SUMMER" TERM 1994**

- May 8th**                    **Birks Fell Permit**  
Possible Yorkshire weekend. Any takers?
- May 14th**                  **SRT Rescue Practice**  
6pm St. Werburghs climbing wall.  
Entry cost £4.
- June 11th**                ***Hammer Pot/Fountains Fell Permits***
- June 25th**                **Penyghent Permit**  
Possible Yorkshire weekend number 2. A return to this death defying cave that defeated all would-be conquerors last year.
- July 8th-10th**           **MRO Weekend, Priddy**  
Lots of activities (rescue, first aid, rigging, explosives), lots of beer AND  
**Wessex Challenge.**  
If you are interested in attending some or all of the weekends events it would be helpful if you could let me know.  
(PS The MRO are also looking for helpers...)
- July 10th**                ***Birks Fell/Wharfedale Permits***  
***Gingling Hole/Fountains Fell Permits***
- July 23rd**                ***Lost Johns/Leck Fell Permits***
- July 30th**                ***Gingling Hole/Fountains Fell Permits***
- August 6th**              ***Hammer Pot/Fountains Fell Permits***
- August 27th**            **Expedition to Slovenia!**  
**- Sept 16th.**
- Sept 25th**                ***Birks Fell/Wharfedale Permits***
- October 6th-7th** **FRESH '94**  
Lots of help needed to recruit more unsuspecting freshers, plus the chance to make a complete idiot of yourself on a piece of rope in the union in front of thousands of people.
- October 8th-9th** **FRESHERS WEEKEND!**
- (Nov 19th**                ***Lost Johns/Leck Fell Permits*)**

All permits in italics are available courtesy of Mike McHale. They are available for any club members to use. However if you do wish to use any please let Mike or myself know before doing so.

## British Cave Rescue Council Conference

On the weekend of July 8th-10th the Mendip Rescue Organisation is hosting this year's conference at Eastwater Farm, Priddy. The programme is approximately as follows:-

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Fri 8th July</b>              | <b>Formal Opening</b><br>7.30pm.   |
| <b>Sat 9th July</b><br>(daytime) | <b>Underground Workshops</b><br>1) <u>GB</u> - first aid and medical help.<br>2) <u>Eastwater</u> - stretchers and communications<br>3) <u>Cuthberts</u> - pitch rigging and hauling |
| (evening)                        | <b>Wessex Challenge</b><br><b>BBQ/Pig Roast (tickets)</b><br><b>Stomp and Bar (tickets)</b>  |
| <b>Sun 10th July</b>             | <b>Surface Demonstrations</b><br>1) Cave diving and sump rescue<br>2) Hymac digging and shaft shoring<br>3) Uses of explosives   |

If people are interested in attending please let Eve or Ian know. (Obviously some workshops would be useful for those going to Slovenia.) Plus we need as many people as possible for the Wessex Challenge! In addition the MRO are asking for any volunteers to help them during the weekend, again if you are willing to give up some of your time during the weekend could you tell us.

## COMPETITION! - Invent a New Name for the Newsletter.

Whilst racking my brains trying to think of a new look for this newsletter, it occurred to me that most publications of a similar nature usually have a name, whereas ours is simply the "UBSS Newsletter". I am therefore inviting you all to think up a suitably witty, catchy and preferably appropriate name. I have already had two suggestions, one being "Krabs" and the other, "Back Passage", but as I don't much fancy having to go around saying, "Have you got 'Krabs' yet?", or "Your 'Back Passage' is in your pigeon hole!", I would like to hear from the rest of you.

Write your suggestions down and give them to me, (Rach), in Crockers, or send them via E-mail. The winning person will have the honour of seeing their chosen name adorning the next issue (and possibly subsequent issues) of the newsletter.

## From Bath with Love

**DATE:-** Wednesday the ninth of March. 1994.

**MISSION BRIEFING:-** A small reconnaissance squad is needed to investigate the disused Ministry of Defence store, known familiarly as, "The Underground City". The team's main objective is to find a suitable location in which to play Quasar with water pistols loaded with green dye, this activity to proceed the annual dinner.

**PERSONNEL SELECTED:-** Agents Cottle, Garrard, Parish and Wheeler.

**DETAILED MISSION REPORT:-** We approached the target area warily in a plain armoured car, piloted by agent Cottle. Leaving excess equipment in the vehicle, we crept stealthily up to the main doors of the store and tested them for potential weaknesses. Alas, they appeared to have been welded securely shut, and it was felt that the use of explosives would have alerted any patrolling guards to our presence. An alternative entrance was therefore sought.

After surveying the surrounding countryside, we found several concealed entrances to the site, cunningly disguised as barns. One of these entrances appeared to have been breached by the rather unsubtle, though admittedly effective, method of driving a Landrover into the brick wall which previously sealed the mine. Thanking providence, we descended into the depths, down a sharp incline and into the bowels of the earth.

Once entrance to the site had been achieved, we set about surveying the area and assessing its suitability for a runaround with water pistols, behaviour that can only be described as healthily immature. Wide, open passages, small offices and ventilation shafts were all greeted with glee, and the area seemed to be eminently suitable for our purposes. Our searches were, however, brought to an abrupt halt by the appearance of a huge steel door, which proved impregnable to assault with a large lump hammer. We resolved to push further into the mine by means of an alternative entrance, and resolved to return to the surface to track down a ventilation shaft.

After invading a nearby field to gain access to a shaft, we hurriedly donned SRT gear and descended once more. This time, a far more satisfying area had been found, with a veritable labyrinth of corridors twisting and meandering ever deeper into the earth. A series of bomb conveyance devices had been left to rust in a semi-dismantled condition, and a couple of wrecked cars cluttered the surrounding area. Exploration soon turned up the entrance to a tunnel, with the legend "Very long passage (1.5 miles) - Don't bother" daubed across in red paint. Deciding that this was clearly a lie, we ignored the advice, and set off down the passage, which descended at a steep angle.

One and a half miles later, we came out of the passage into an open hall and wondered if perhaps we shouldn't have been quite so quick to dismiss previous warnings. Then, interrupting our reverie, came the most horrific noise. It sounded somewhat akin to the noise a fire-breathing dragon would probably make as it came swooping down the corridors of a disused munitions store. Agents Garrard and Parish ran screaming to the sides of the hall, where they cowered in abject terror. Agent Cottle looked around in confusion and I readied myself to meet the brute in single combat. (Typical Boy Scout! - Ed.). Rather disappointingly, no savage monster presented itself, and we were forced to conclude some time later that what we had heard was actually the rush of a train as it passed by on the tracks outside.

After many more bits of passage and the like had been thoroughly investigated, we decided to conclude our activities, having thoroughly satisfied our mission briefing. As we were now in relative proximity to the main doors, we decided to examine them, and discovered that they had been prised open since our earlier inspection. As Agent Garrard was suffering from the onset of



asthma, I accompanied her out of this newly presented exit, whilst agents Cottle and Parish left to dismantle all evidence of our entrance to the mine.

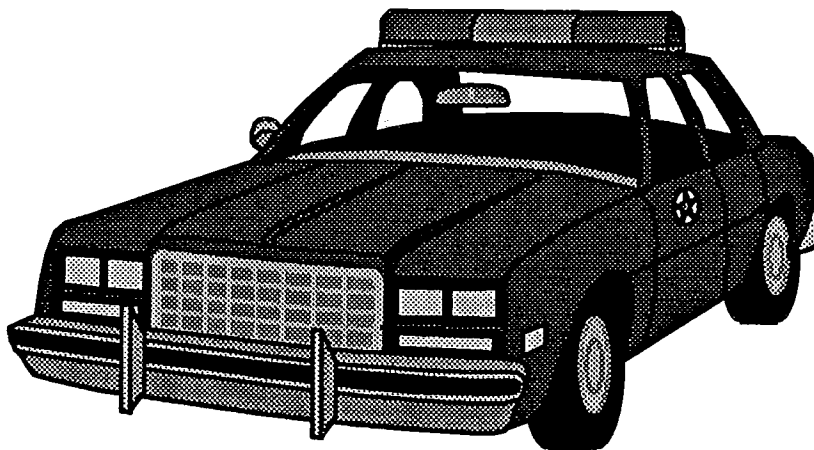
Emerging once more into the open air, we were slightly taken aback to be greeted jovially by a man in a mining hat. Taking him to be another agent, we greeted him in kind, and were left looking a little foolish when it turned out he was actually a security guard to the establishment. Just as I was about to neutralise him with nerve gas fired from my wristwatch, a fellow guardian arrived and we were forced to surrender gracefully. Agents Cottle and Parish were soon to join us, their exit from the shaft being considerably hampered by the bastard guards dropping our ropes down to the floor.

There we stood, all four of us, disgraced and waiting for the arrival of the local constabulary, an arrival which had been precipitated by the evil communist security guards. As we waited, suffering the endless questions of the Bolsheviks who had captured us, it became more and more obvious that we were going to miss our eleven o'clock debriefing deadline, scheduled to take place in the local hostelry. This disturbed us greatly, and we were almost relieved when the Police rolled up. A quick flash of our identity cards and a knuckle carressing handshake were enough to get us out of any trouble, and after exchanging names and addresses with the officers in question and allowing our wrists to be collectively slapped as a sort of token gesture towards justice being done, we legged it back to our transport, hoping we were not too late for our debriefing.

Alas, it was three minutes past eleven by the time we returned to our armoured car. The bars were shut, our contact had left, and we had failed in our mission at the very last moment. So, after toying with the idea of 'phoning Agent Privett and rather amusingly telling her that we had all been locked up in the slammer for the night (an idea that had to be rejected on the grounds that Agent Cottle was not in any hurry to have his testicles removed with a sharp knife), we departed for home.

**\*\*\*\*\*MISSION REPORT ENDS\*\*\*\*\***

Agent Wheeler.



# WHAT DID CAVE MEN AND WOMEN WEAR?

An Archaeologist(?) writes

Sorry, but I was waiting for a real expert palaeolithic archaeologist to answer the Treasurer/Editor's sapient doubts (*Newsletter*, 9, 3; November 1993). I guess they must all be very old or dead (the experts, not the Treasurer's suspicions) so I'll do what I can.

No, I don't think that the persons who inhabited Aveline's Hole wore slinky off-the-shoulder numbers in rabbit fur. Nor should you take too seriously the popular pictures of fur bikinis and the like. Sadly though, we don't have any remains of clothing from the period, neither frozen like the Iceman nor desiccated. What we do have is indirect evidence. Perhaps the most exciting is the burial of a man at Sungir on the upper Volga in Russia, possibly dating from before 20,000 BC. With this were 3500 beads of bone and mammoth ivory. The position of these beads, in continuous bands round the skull, round the shoulders, forearms, wrists, chest, waist, thighs and ankles, suggests that they had been sewn onto skin clothing in which the dead man had been buried. The continuous bands of beads and the absence of any fasteners suggest a jerkin pulled on over the head, perhaps with a hood, and combination trousers ending in skin boots. Skin clothing of this sort, together with furs would have equipped reindeer and mammoth hunters for life on open periglacial steppelands. Bone and mammoth ivory needles and awls from Upper Palaeolithic sites have long been thought to imply that the fully modern humans who appeared in Europe around 40,000 – 35,000 BC had developed sewn skin clothing of the kind inferred at Sungir, as a necessary adaptation to the harsh climatic conditions of the time. The miniature stylised female 'Venus' figurines of around 21,000 BC, found in Russia and in central and western Europe, seem to show a variety of plaited bands and head coverings, while one from Buret' in Siberia, 2000 km east of Sungir, seems to be wearing a hooded 'overall'.

So far we don't have the same kind of evidence for the archetypal 'Cavemen' of popular mythology, the Neanderthals who preceded fully modern humans in Europe and who seem to have been gradually replaced by them over a 5000 year period. The Mousterian industries associated with the Neanderthals lack a significant bone or antler component, and there are no needles or awls, so they may not have worn sewn clothing, unless they used wooden needles, though their numerous flint scrapers suggest use in hide and skin preparation and this is sometimes confirmed by study of the wear traces. They may even have worn suede leather boots. Though they often seem to have lived under less severe conditions than fully modern humans, some hunted reindeer and they would have certainly needed effective clothing and tents. My guess is that we might have a very different picture if we had a full range of organic material preserved from their sites.

In France, bones from the lowest level of the site at Biache-Saint-Vaast (Pas-de-Calais), dating from a mild phase in the Saalian glacial phase around 200,000 years ago, indicate specialised hunting of adult bears, with butchering and specific activities including fur processing, while it has been suggested that beaver bones from the site at Bilzingsleben in Thuringia, some 200,000 or so years earlier, may be from animals killed for their pelts, so that use of some form of clothing may possibly go back to the earliest human inhabitants of Europe. It is of course very likely that these earlier humans, as well as later ones, used plant materials – bark and vegetable fibres for clothing, but this information is so far lost to us.

A.M.A.

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Graham Mullan

Another year passes in which the Society does not go bankrupt. Connoisseurs of our accounts, and of these reports may notice certain changes from last year, but really there is very little to report.

The Receipts and Payments Account (Income and Expenditure as was - we now have a new auditor and are catching up on a changing world) shows the cost of *Proc.* 19.2, but not 19.3 which was received but not paid for before the end of the financial year. If the Editor gets his finger out, therefore, the current year's accounts *may* show the cost of two issues. Otherwise, expenditure was much as usual. Income is a little strange in that two publications grants from the University are shown, not one large one, but income from investments follows interest rates so is way down.

This loss of income in a still inflationary world, plus the fact that the *Proceedings* accounts are still artificially healthy, as explained above, is why we have agreed to increase the Annual Subscription for ex-students and outside members from **next** year. This will rise to £12 p.a. next year (joint £18 p.a.). I have therefore taken the liberty of including new bankers order forms with this newsletter. Please return these **PROMPTLY**. New Deeds of Covenant are not required.

You will also find membership cards enclosed with this N/L. this has arisen, in part from the South Wales Caving Club having difficulty recognising members of those clubs with annual permits for OFD. (I suggested annual tee shirts that you all had to buy, but the Committee wasn't keen for some reason.)

Finally, the annual plea: To all of you, listed below, who have not paid your subs yet £10 was due in March, please pay promptly.

Subscriptions are still due from:-

Ed Bailey *pd*  
Fenella Brown (*renewed*)  
Steve Cottle (*pd*)  
Paul Drewery (*pd*)  
John Hutchinson  
Pete Moody (2yrs) *renewed*  
Graham Purnell  
Mark Tringham *pd*  
Mark Wisdich

Hannah Bartholomew *pd*  
Ian Butterfield (2yrs) *pd*  
M. J. Crossley-Evans  
Paul Harding *pd*  
Peter Johnson *pd*  
Marco Paganuzzi *pd*  
Mike Simms *pd*  
Sarah Walker *pd*

Dr Martin Bell *pd*  
Stephen Carrington  
Marcel Dijkstra *pd*  
Dan Harries *pd*  
Topher Martyn *pd*  
David Patmore *pd*  
M.M. Thomson *pd*  
Mike & Nicky White *pd*

6

## UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST JANUARY 1994

EXPENDITURE	£		£	INCOME	£	£
Proceedings 19.2	4532.89			Publications Grants: University of Bristol	2000.00	
Postage of Proc. 19.2	221.31			Oliver Lloyd Fund	<u>500.00</u>	2500.00
Offprints	401.61					
Part Postage Proceedings 19.3	<u>105.91</u>		5261.72	Members Subscriptions		1266.90
Tools & Equipment Current Capital	55.20			Student Members Subscriptions		354.00
	<u>77.70</u>		132.90			
Library			249.28	Union Grants: Capital	77.18	
Museum			<u>342.41</u>	Current	<u>400.00</u>	477.18
Sessional Meetings			20.00			
Postages			179.19	Interest on Investments: Bank	378.53	
Hon. Secs Petty Cash			37.48	N.S.B.	<u>45.81</u>	424.34
Stationery & Duplicating			226.21			
Rates & Taxes			26.22	Sales of Publications (not C. of C.C.)		927.90
Insurances: Third Party	147.75					
Property	<u>285.12</u>		432.87	Sales of Shirts		52.00
Subscriptions & Licence			65.50			
Travel Money			406.08	Donations		515.00
"Fresh"			26.00			
Donation To Mendip Rescue Organisation			10.00	Surplus on 1993 Annual Dinner		10.00
Sundries			<u>44.83</u>			
				Tax Refund on Covenants		<u>270.44</u>
						6797.76
				Transfer from Printed Publication Fund		500.00
				Excess of Expenditure over Income		<u>162.93</u>
			<u>7460.69</u>			7460.69
				PUBLISHING ACCOUNT 1993/4		
Balance at 1 February 1993				Sales of "Caves of County Clare"		744.90
				Debit balance at 31 January 1994		<u>520.76</u>
						1265.66

## BALANCE SHEET AT 31 JANUARY 1994

(12)

..D.J. Allen C.I.P.F.A.

## **THE SAGA OF THE GB SHOWCAVE**

Its the year 2020. The field known as the Gruffy Field has been sold by the Bristol Water Works, back in the pre-apocalyptic days when cavers were real cavers and wore now't but crushed velvet cod-pieces and neoprene G-strings, when you only had to queue half an hour at the Twenty in Swildons, and Daren wasn't connected to OFD. It was the long hot summer of '94 that it all started. Bristol Waterworks sold the land around GB to a company owned by the Charterhouse Caving Committee. However, late in '99, the company was taken over in a hostile bid by the GB Showcave Plc, a subsidiary of the Mullen and Willson Showcave Empire. Development of the GB Showcave complex started soon after. (after a suitable backhander to the local planning authorities...)

The BEC digging consortium was hired to open up the head of the Gorge and a concrete path was constructed down to the Bridge (which had to be removed after advice from the Chief Geotechnical Engineer Prof. Ride, as the Health and Safety Exec deemed it to be unsafe). A path was also constructed up into White Passage and Fault Passage was blasted big enough to allow even Bob Churcher to pass, (using Semtex bought second hand off the IRA) to make a route into The Loop and down into the Hall. Here a series of steel walkways were fixed to provide a safe route down the Oxbow and to a large viewing platform at the end of the streamway. The route out was built up the mainstreamway, a forty foot steel stairway installed at the pitch and the stream diverted down the side of the pitch, and rejoined the main path at the (ex) bridge. An alternative exit was engineered up Mud Passage, most of which had to be blasted to the HSE minimum size of 2 m diameter.

As with other showcaves, any stal away from the public view was removed and cemented in more obvious locations (at least that which was left after stal jewellery became fashionable in the late 1990s). This was augmented by fibreglass and concrete stals skilfully crafted by the UBSS master craftsman and honorary old codger Mr C.A.S. Elf.

The Adventure Caving Centre was set up shortly after the main showcave was opened. Charterhouse Cave was engineered to make it suitable for novice trips, and up to 10 trips per day are now lead round by that caving mega-star and doyen of British caving, Steph Wheatfield (promoted after starting with the company in the canteen as the tea lady). Through trips to GB were the highlight of the trip after the Chiaroscuro connection had been forced late in '96. Plans are in hand for 'Adventure Cave-diving' trips, since the sumps in the Ladder Dig Extension extensions had been connected through to Gough's Sump 4 in 2005 (now an easy trip after most of Goughs had to be removed during the operation to make Cheddar Gorge safe for tourists by turning the cliffs into safe gentle slopes, all because someone had got squashed and the relatives sued the owners for £10 million).

Radon gas had been a problem, since it was first sensationalised in the late '80's. The problem was rectified by drilling two large boreholes into the ends of GB and Charterhouse, under the direction of the Radon consultant Prof. Gunnjy (and his sidekick Rob Highland) of Uddersfield Univ.

The Visitor Centre and permit office is perhaps the highlight of the entire complex. Built to rival that elegant building at Cheddar Caves, along the lines of the now fashionable 1960's concrete tower blocks, it occupies pride of place at the main entrance. A smaller gift shop and museum were built at the Mud passage exit, and connected by a high level walkway. Car parking facilities for over a thousand cars and personal air-transporters were constructed between the entrance and the road - itself widened to two lanes, partly for the tourist traffic, and also as part of the Trans-Euro route from the super-quarries of Crook peak and Callow Hill to London and Europe. The landscaping of the area was carried out by the

world-renowned landscape architects Topher and Parrish Ltd.

The area to the south of the entrance was turned into a Jurassic Park style theme park, (helped by an out of work film director called Spielberg) and picnic area. The Tynings Great swallet dig had been filled in during the infamous 'Dig Wars' between the UBSS, BEC and WCC during the late 1990's. Caving in the area had been banned by the Mullen (whose hairstyle was now back in fashion for the third time) and Tusker special locks fitted to repel any marauding Southmead kids.

The next scheduled developments are to extend the tourist route into Bat Passage by blasting a tunnel into the Great Chamber from the mainstreamway, and on through the GBH dig, up Grahams Back Passage ('cos its small, dark and shitty) and into Gurt Big Huge Ginormous Chamber, (discovered in 1998 by the dynamic duo, Miner and Ferret). The next proposed site for development is St. Cuthberts, bought after most of the BEC were 'accidentally' annihilated during a particularly violent Wessex Challenge in 2005. This would then provide a through trip (1 1/2 miles avoiding the city centre) to Wookey Hole.

At present the GB Showcave has 60 members of staff, and over 10 visitors a year.

### *The Staff:*

Owners:	G. Mullen and L. Willson.
Management:	S. Cottlefish and R. Privates.
Secretaries:	Miss Pleytex and L. Barnyard.
Treasurer:	H.Y. Hang-Davies.
Cave Consultant and bullshitter:	Prof. Andy Ferret, BSc, Ph.D, Ma.D, N.erD.
Geotechnical Engineer:	Prof. S. Ride, B.Eng, Ph.D, MICE, FRS, PiSS.HE.aD.
Digging Consultant:	Mr Miner.
Adventure caving leader:	S. Wheatfield, UBSS, BCRA.
Landscapeers:	Topher & Parrish Ltd.
School Liaison officer:	Mr Sim Sure.
Radon adviser:	Prof. Gunnjy.
Scientific Officers:	The Smart Bros & the Atkinswine.
Public Relations:	Mr Huge Piles and K.I.D. Wheeler.
Staff Relations:	R. Wa'hay-Campbell.
Museum Curators	Miss L.A. Kerred & C. Sqhawkes.
Car park attendant	J. Sweeney-Todd.
Maintenance	C.A.S. Elf & Son.
Medics	Drs H. Wellbeing, A. Garrotte and A. Boycott.

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On a more serious note, caves like GB are not safe from development. All too often, they could simply be quarried away and lost forever to help widen the M25. R.I.P Fairy Cave, Balch Cave... Large tracts of the Mendips are already owned by quarry companies, who are busy trying to create their own Cheddar Gorges. Alternative supplies of hard-core for roads are available, but when top quality limestone costs only a few pounds a tonne, its not economic to use them. Its taken Nature over a million years to sculpt the Mendip landscape, it'll take Man a few centuries at most to level it - how long can Mendip last...?

*Andy Farrant*

### THE GREAT AUSTRIAN COW WASH OF 1993.

It's a 750 mile drive through Belgium and Germany to get from Oostend to Hilde's campsite in Bad Aussee near Salzburg and it takes a day. At the time I arrived, the summer expedition of the Cambridge University Caving Club had been going on for two weeks and had not got very much done. Parts of Kaninchenhöhle, our ongoing cave on the Loser Plateau, a 1000m high limestone carbuncle which overlooks the town, had been rigged. There was a lot of laziness to be distributed among not very many people.

Wookey, the expedition leader, had arrived half a week before me and had spent an afternoon fetching a 230 metre rope from the cave entrance where it belonged and brought it down to base camp. He had scouted out a gorgeous 200 metre long abseil off a cliff overlooking Grundlesee lake (a four mile long lake one mile up the road). It was an excuse not to go caving. He talked me into coming with him. Clive, the CUCC president-elect, also wanted to come. He wasn't interested in caving either.

This silly abseil occurred the day after I arrived in Austria. Experience shows that on any hang-gliding holiday I have had, my best flight is on this precise day, the day after I arrive at the place. This was no exception. After a brisk walk up a track, we clambered down through a steep forest, as far as we dared, to the place where everything, including the soil, seems in danger of spilling over the edge of the cliff, and tied the rope to a tree. And ourselves to the rope. Wookey disappeared first. Half an hour later Clive and I could see him jumping up and down on the roof of his van parked by the lake about a mile away. This was the signal. It's too far to shout. I went next, after a lot of whimpering. It became evident that we'd made a couple of little mistakes. Firstly, the rope was bone dry. Abseiling works by wrapping the rope around a friction device. The faster and the longer you descend, the hotter your friction device becomes because your potential energy is being converted into heat. It is theoretically possible to accidentally melt through your rope. So progress was slow. Also, despite our rather poor efforts, the rope tied to the tree was wrapped over a few bare sharp rocks as you hung on it. I could feel it grating, trying to cut through as I descended suffering the worst case of vertigo for many years. Trying to pretend I was flying a glider just didn't work. A hundred metres of ten millimetre diameter grey string is simply not as reassuring as fourteen square metres of wing above your back. When I was 30 metres from the bottom, Wookey shouts, "It looks like you're going to live this one, Julian."

I kept the pace of the expedition up by going to top camp (a mere 25 minute walk from the cave entrance in daylight) that evening and going on a caving trip with Wookey the very next day. We were to rig and poke around the limit of exploration in an area called "em Far Too Far". There were some complicated free-hanging rope obstacles on the way. We constructed another one at a place called "em Strange Downfall". This is a twenty metre deep pit. Two years earlier, I had been on a trip that had discovered a tortuous route into the chamber on the other side of this pit. Some clever people had later rigged a rope down into it so now there was a short cut. You go down "em Strange Downfall", walk across the bottom of the pit, and then go up "em Strange Upfall", thus bypassing an hour of scrofulous caving that had been hitherto necessary. We improved this even more by putting a taught rope across the pit and calling it "em Strange Acrossfall". It was rather scary. We rigged it while we were on the wrong side of the pit, as far as I was concerned, so there was no way to avoid it on the way back out. I never went there again.

After seventeen hours underground, we got out of the cave, having missed three meals and one night of sleep. So I didn't do anything that day. One day later, I persuaded my body to get up and go hang-gliding. There was a west wind (the worst direction for Loser, the locals say) and it was slightly overdeveloped. A top to bottom takes about ten minutes. I therefore landed in the bottom landing field ten minutes after I took off. Then I was followed by a handful of paragliders from the local school. Monique, a hanger-on to that crowd for the day, was moping around in the car park on her last day of a one month long business tour selling Airwave's toys to the Austrians. We talked. She had been in Piedrahita last year a week or so before I went there and had enjoyed some of the best flying she had ever known.



(When I was there, there were cunimbs and the wind blew in the wrong direction for the whole time.) Her timing was spot on; that evening there was a serious storm which flooded the campsite and it rained pretty consistently thereon for the next nineteen days with one or two half-day breaks when the wind blew in the wrong direction.

I knew this was going to happen so I brought contingencies for other sports. Like two sets of diving equipment. (The spare one was for Wookey to have a go.) All I needed were some air tanks. Grundlesee lake was just up the road and we were going to dive in that. There was a diving shop about 15 miles away run by an American who looked like Eugene Terreblanche. I rented two bottles at exorbitant price. Wookey has no qualifications at all so I had to pretend that I required all that air for myself. Being only one person, Eugene gave me one backpack to attach on the tanks. Wookey used it. My only alternative when we were diving was to carry mine in my rucksack in order to mount it on my back. We went for our illicit dive in the lake and it was appallingly muddy and boring, just as everyone back home in England said it would be. There really was very little indeed. Except mud. You could push your hand in it up to your shoulder without any effort. There were a few logs and tree branches lying around in the murk. You had to swim forwards all the time because if ever you stopped you were engulfed in a thick cloud of silt. And when you got close to the shore there were one or two pond weeds and a few tiny silver fish. Eugene's answer to this is to say, "The Austrian lakes have some of the best diving in the world." He's lying because it's his business, but it takes you about five dives to make sure of it. So that was that.

The next day a proper cloud descended on top of Loser and it snowed heavily. Those stranded at top camp begged for lifts to get them down from the plateau. I drove my car up and got stuck on the road a quarter of a mile from the carpark where the path from top camp ends. There was two inches of snow and less than 20 metres of visibility through the fog which, for a small mountain in the northern hemisphere in the middle of July, is pretty bad weather.

Despite all this utter nastiness in the mountains, down in the valleys, particularly on Grundlesee lake, there was hardly even a hint of wind. Wookey had brought along his windsurfing board which, consequently, was rarely any use. A local Austrian caver who dives and to whom I had complained about the price of hiring tanks one evening showed up and deposited his spare in the campsite. So now I had free diving, for what it was worth. Though a full tank can sustain life underwater for about an hour, I found that the optimum dive time was about twelve minutes. Longer than that and it becomes exceptioninally tedious. I found an airbell in one corner of the lake. Someone had bolted five enormous chains to a big rock and had hung above it a sort of inverted fibreglass bucket into which you could surface and sit down. For a change, I started diving at night with a caving lamp. The difference is, you can see less, which is an improvement.

Back at the campsite there was a lot of festering going on. Normally shopping is a chore no one wants to do, but Clive seemed to enjoy it and went to town twice a day to get bread, cheese and eggs (breakfast and lunch), and bags of cheap vegetables for the evening slop. There was an infinite supply of beer (40p a bottle) bought in by the crate, and for the first time in history, no women whatsoever, so everyone had to be sociable for a change.

It was a tough task, but even with all this excellent entertainment, we got bored out of our minds. Unwisely, some people decided to go caving. I wasn't so stupid and compromised with a day out surface prospecting. That is, clambering over the plateau looking for new cave entrances. A pair of us took some ladders and checked a few holes that day. At the bottom of one shaft, I found a tight little slot, slipped into it, breathed out and got through. I wound up in a promising chamber which, after half an hour of poking around and setting off minor rock falls everywhere, I decided didn't go anywhere. There was now a problem of getting out. Going up through tight bits is much harder than going down, particularly as you have to breath more than once because it takes more time. This hole was out of the question. Fortunately we had brought a hammer, otherwise I would have been trapped there until I had chipped off enough bone from my ribcage to let me out.

Meanwhile, even Clive had got critically bored and went caving for the first time. Wookey took him on a trip to "em Far Too Far" and, not surprisingly, he got knackered beyond belief. Usually it takes about four hours to climb out. Wookey and the other guy on the trip left him behind. Later on, Clive's lamp expired. Sometime in mid morning he was noticed to be still missing and something got done about it. Clive had been underground for 27 hours - quite a respectable sum - so he didn't bother to go caving again.

Suddenly it was sunny for a day. In fact it was a perfect day for hang-gliding. Little fluffy clouds could be seen popping up in a blue sky. At last I was going to have a proper flight. But the wind was still west. Never mind, I knew of the perfect hill to fly from only 50 miles away. I found a second driver from among the pool of bored cavers and drove off. The sky became more excellent, but when I reached the hill there were no gliders flying above it. The single track road up it seemed rather busy and full of policemen who diverted me into a small town before I was near the top. A pilot who lived there came out and explained to me that the hill was closed for the day because of a downhill cycling race competition. I had wondered why people were wandering around covered head to foot in plastic armour. "But", said the local pilot, "if you think there is a west wind then there is a site 20 miles further along the main road that you should go to." It was well past midday when I reached it. The site must have been less than 100m high, covered in trees, overlooking a town. There were a couple of paragliders not doing too well. "Only a complete bastard would redirect someone to this location", I thought, and drove all the way back to Loser.

It's now 2 o'clock and I have just driven 150 miles to get to the place where I originally started. One solitary hang-glider was flying from mountain to mountain very high above. Would I get a chance to join him? No! I flew, the sky went grim. I went down not having gotten above take off. He came down and told me that I had set off too late. And anyway, one mother of an alpine storm was heading this way. We could see it darkening one half of the sky. There were spots of rain as I tied my glider onto the car. High above, some maniac had launched and was flying in a totally straight line away from Loser. I could tell he wasn't losing any height because he cleared a second mountain whose ridge is at the same altitude as take-off. Obviously he was riding some sort of gust front. Even now, I still wonder what became of him.

The rain was unbelievable. Over two inches in a quarter of an hour. The campsite became a network of lakes and rivers. Boxes of mixed herbs floated out of the mess tent, down the road and underneath the cars which were themselves in water up to their wheelhubs.

I had one more notable flight where I managed to stay level with take-off for a whole 25 minutes. My peace and frustration was only disturbed by a helicopter which kept flying past me and landing on the hill. I wondered if I was supposed to do anything about it such as go away and get down because it was passing underneath me, going over the top and then around me. I decided to ignore it. If a helicopter wants you to piss off, there are many ways it can say so. Finally it flew past fairly close by at a slightly higher altitude. It was dangling a dead cow by its neck from a rope. I went down.

The final day of the expedition was a scorcher. There were no thermals at all. Not a single one. This was verified by a procession of paragliders gliding down the rocky face of the mountain at fifteen minute intervals. It was time for washing ropes and drying things out in the campsite. This year we took all our ropes back to England with us. Some of last year's rope which we had left behind at Hilde's had been eaten by mice. Next year I'll get it right. Last year I was stuck with one bad site as well as bad company. This year it was one bad site, but good company. Next year, I go for relocatability (in other words, going somewhere else if it is raining). One's got to make sure that the quality of the company doesn't slip. The car's probably going to break down then. Maybe in ten years time I'll get everything together and for once experience the sort of European flying that everyone else I know seems to take for granted.

*by Julian Todd.*

## THE BATTLE FOR BOX MINES.

featuring: Alison, Bill, Andy, Steve, Rupert and Tim.

*As ideas go, this wasn't a bad one. "I know", said Rachel, (coherent for once), "how about abseiling down a ventilation shaft into the M.O.D. mine and firing water pistols at each other?". Combining, at it did, danger, water and mindless violence, this was immediately appealing. A date was therefore set for the morning of the annual dinner.*

*Saturday morning found a motley band of people congregated outside the tackle store. A few problems had been encountered with the M.O.D. mine, (but the less said about that, the better! - Ed.), so it was decided that Box Mines would be a more suitable venue. There followed a quick trip to "Children's World" to get "tooled up"! Most people opted for a simple water pistol. Bill, however, went for a cross between a howitzer and a water cannon, a weapon so awesome that I kept expecting the U.N. to come and impound it. After an impromptu gun fight in the car park narrowly missing various prams, we set off.*

*Perfecting our aim by shooting each other on the move, we eventually reached Box Village. Standing by the road with caving lights, surveys, water pistols and rucksacks full of water, we suddenly realised we hadn't decided on any rules! However, this was deemed unimportant.*

*Splitting into two teams, (Bill, Alison and Andy versus Steve, Rupert and Tim), we headed for two different entrances, agreeing to make our way to the "Black Horse" junction and "have it out" there. Fortunately, the entrance nominated for the first team was non-existent, so by the time they got to the Black Horse, we had set up a suitable ambush. As we withdrew, we shouted out the next place to reach, the idea being to make it there before the others.*

*There was a short, but violent clash at the old crane, followed by a more protracted burst of fighting at the well. Jumping off a rocky ledge, I landed a short step away from a yawning chasm. I had found the well!*

*Finally, we found ourselves back at the Black Horse. By now, we were beginning to think tactically, but several clever bluffing and flanking manoeuvres soon degenerated into the usual point blank soaking - and so to the pub to dry out!*

*All in all, a superb idea with plenty of scope for development. Could this be a new way of whiling away the time at the top of a pitch?!*

Tim

## CAVES - WHAT ARE THEY GOOD FOR?

(or more geological ramblings)

Andy Farrant

Following on from the last article in the newsletter on dating caves, some of you may be wondering why bother? Good question. Well, as I mentioned in the last article, caves are not just dark holes in the ground to be used for recreation. They are also valuable geological study sites. This is because caves are protected from surface weathering and erosion and thus preserve sediments and stal which would otherwise be lost. These can then be used to answer a whole host of geological problems, especially when put into a chronological framework by dating. Some of the geological problems which caves can be useful for are briefly outlined below.

### *Palaeoclimatic studies.*

Much work has been carried out looking at the palaeoclimatic signature of stals and caves. Stalagmites generally only form during relatively warm wet periods. Under cold conditions (glacials) there is not enough  $pCO_2$  in the soil from biological activity to enable drip waters in the cave beneath to become saturated with calcium carbonate, and any water may become locked up in ice. Under arid conditions, many of the drips simply dry up. Thus by analysing a suitably large data set, it's possible to identify periods when stalagmites were growing - ie interglacial periods. In tropical areas, such as the Bahamas, stal growth continues during glacials, but may be affected by changes in rainfall seasonality and other factors.

Large climatic fluctuations can also bring about other changes in the cave environment. In the UK for example, during cold periods, large amounts of coarse sediment were transported into the caves, often infilling the passages with gravel or silt. During the ensuing interglacials, these gravels were partially washed out and often capped with stal. A good example occurs in GB, where there are remains of at least four major sediment infills, all capped by stal which is datable - the bridge is part of one such gravel fill.

The actual stalagmites themselves contain palaeoclimatic information too. Many contain growth hiatuses when conditions were unsuitable for growth. They also contain annual bands, like tree rings which potentially may provide a high resolution signature of growth. Pollen grains trapped in stal can yield information on the surface vegetation, and hence climate.

An area of ongoing research is stable isotope and trace element studies of stals. Carbon isotope analysis ( $\delta^{13}C$ ) of stalagmites may be able to indicate the type of vegetation on the surface, while oxygen isotope analysis ( $\delta^{18}O$ ) has the potential to provide information on palaeotemperature. Alternatively, trace element analysis may potentially provide us with the same information. They may also be able to offer a record of changing conditions at the surface through time - such as vegetation cover, degree of soil development and other palaeoenvironmental variables. Fluid inclusions of water trapped in stals can yield isotopic signatures of the water from which the stal grew. This may also be used to determine palaeotemperature and precipitation from oxygen and hydrogen isotopes.

### *Constraining past sea-levels.*

Sea-levels have fluctuated tremendously, especially over the last 2 million years during the ice ages. During glacial periods, sea level drops due to the amount of water taken

up in the ice sheets. New caves form, and previously submerged caves are drained and stalagmites form. As stal cannot form underwater, they indicate the cave must have been above sea-level at the time they were formed. During the next interglacial, the ice sheets melt and sea level rises. By dating the now submerged stalagmites, an age for the period of low sea level can be determined, providing the land mass itself has not been tectonically uplifted. Much work has been done in the Blue Holes of the Bahamas (which are tectonically stable) dating the submerged stals and constraining the periods of low sea level

High sea level stands can also be constrained by dating marine caves and mixing zone caves formed at the salt-fresh water interface on limestone coasts, and are now left high and dry. These define the palaeosea-level, and can be dated.

### *Landscape evolution*

Fossil caves represent former stages in the evolution of the landscape. For instance, fossil resurgence caves *eg.* Gough's Cave and Great Oones Hole in Cheddar, since truncated by down cutting of Cheddar Gorge, mark former valley floor levels. If the age of these fossil caves can be determined, the rate of valley incision can be calculated - about 20 cm per thousand years for Cheddar Gorge. In areas where the valley incision is controlled by tectonic uplift, the rate of uplift can be calculated - similar calculations can be done on tectonically rising coasts by dating uplifted marine caves and coral terraces. Similarly, the rate of passage incision can be calculated by dating stals on the passage walls. Misfit high level passages can give clues about the previous landscape - the large fossil passages in Agen Allwedd and Daren Cilau are the remains of large underground rivers long since captured by the River Usk.

### *Event markers.*

Caves can also record catastrophic events such as volcanic eruptions. Stalagmites from Sutherland in Scotland have recorded a growth spurt caused by ash fall-out from an acidic volcanic plume erupted from Mt Hekla in Iceland. Flooding events are often recorded by sediment layers in stals. Earthquake damage may be represented by a particular generation of broken stals.

### *Palaeomagnetic signature.*

The earth's magnetic field can be recorded by magnetic grains incorporated in stalagmites. The secular variation (how the Earth's magnetic field has changed over the last few thousand years) can be analysed from stals, and dated from the same specimen. This potentially gives a much better record than that obtained from sediments which is subject to post depositional movement and can't be dated so well.

### *Archaeological.*

The role of caves in archaeological studies is even greater - one only has to look at the vast amount of material in the museum! Much of our understanding of human evolution has come from artifacts found in caves.

One final note - sampling stal is obviously detrimental to the cave environment (although probably not as bad as say quarrying or digging). If sampling stal, the relevant permission should be obtained and sampling should be kept to a minimum, and only done if absolutely necessary.

So, next time you pop down GB - have a care, it's far more than just a pretty hole.

## ZEN AND THE ART OF UBSS-HUT MAINTENANCE.

*by Henri Welbourne.*

It was a quiet weekend before the start of term. Rachel in her infinite wisdom had declared that it was crying out to be filled with a little bit of hut maintenance. So great was the enthusiasm of our social secretary, that nothing, except the prospect of a trip to the Lakes, was going to keep her from working her guts out all weekend. Unfortunately it seems that the Cumbrian temptation was too great, and so Tim and Rachael, (who had the idea,) accompanied by Steve, (to keep them company,) and Hilary, (embarrassed?,) duly sped away up the great and glorious M6. And they weren't even going caving!

Meanwhile, back in Bristol, the intrepid team of Eve, Simon, Topher, Alison and myself were determined to carry on regardless. And so on Saturday, Alison I were to be found trundling along in Tim's landrover towards the Mendips. I was slightly disconcerted by requests to hold on to the gear-lever whenever we attempted sharp corners in second gear. ("Tim says it tends to jump out"). The high point of the journey was when we just managed to overtake a rather elderly gentleman on a rather elderly moped. We arrived at the hut just in time to help unload large quantities of stolen goods - sorry I mean severed wood - from Simon's van. This had arrived courtesy of Topher and the university botanical gardens.

Having already, in one fell swoop, just doubled the size of the wood store, we felt it was time to sit around, drink some beer and congratulate ourselves on a job well done. We did attempt to saw up some of this wood, but Topher, the expert garden gnome, decreed the hut's bow saw to be blunt and so we sent him off to Wells to fetch his chain-saw. The land-rover returned from this trip via the "scenic route". This was the first off-road trip of many. At about this time Andy and Sarah turned up, having actually **been** caving, and in spite of Steve's best attempts to strand Andy in Bristol by not telling him that his lift was running away to the Lakes.

By evening, we were all sitting around in the hut, busily barbecue-ing anything that we could get our hands on. People started to arrive from all over the place. Neil, Sally and (another) Andy came up all the way from Devon, (having gone all the way **to** Devon earlier in the day). Sally (another one) and Ian (not the little one) came up all the way from York Road. Around midnight Simon decided to use the chain saw to chop up more wood for the fire. He wasn't the soberest of men at this point, and so I was almost tempted to start believing in guardian angels when the saw ran out of fuel after two seconds. Eve and Topher spent the night outside on a bed of dead leaves, listening I am told, to the elephants in the woods. Alison spent the night inside, dreaming about finding lots of UBSS members in the bath pretending to be mermaids.

The next morning Alison disappeared for a while to go and try on her wedding dress. (Is there something I don't know about?). Various people got dropped off to walk back to the hut from Cheddar. Eve, Topher and I sat around reminiscing about the Sunday after the last bonfire party when we had sat around for the entire day before just managing to get a caving trip under ground by 7 p.m. History was not destined to repeat itself. There was more activity on this occasion. For a start I sawed some wood in the intervals of tea drinking. When the landrover returned from Axbridge then Topher energetically started to dismember and remove a spelaologically minded, horizontal hawthorn from Bath Swallet. I returned to Bristol at lunchtime in the hope of catching up with some visiting relatives, after half the tree had been removed.

I assume that the Cheddar party returned safely since most of them made it to Crockers last Tuesday. Simon disputes my claim to have cut more wood than anyone else. He says that he did more but that he tragically burnt all the evidence. Eve has informed me that the toilet **and** the woodstore **and** the hut (and I believe the whole of Black Down) were completely refurbished after I left. Who am I to question the veracity of an HonSec? I didn't learn much about Zen on this week-end, but then I learned even less about hut maintenance. Nonetheless it was a very enjoyable week-end and many thanks to Simon for getting all the food for the barbecue.

### **Committee and Other Important Posts for the Year 1994/95.**

The following is a list of the names and telephone numbers of the new committee, elected at this year's AGM and also some of the non-committee members occupying important posts.

HON. SECRETARIES	Eve Pleydell	741453
	Ian Wheeler	686660
HON. TREASURER	Graham Mullan	502556
STUDENT TREASURER	Hilary Davies	441698
COMMITTEE	Linda Wilson	502556
	Steve Cottle (Tackle Warden)	744550
	Rachel Privett (Newsletter Editor)	741453
	Henri Welbourne (Social Sec.)	237426
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