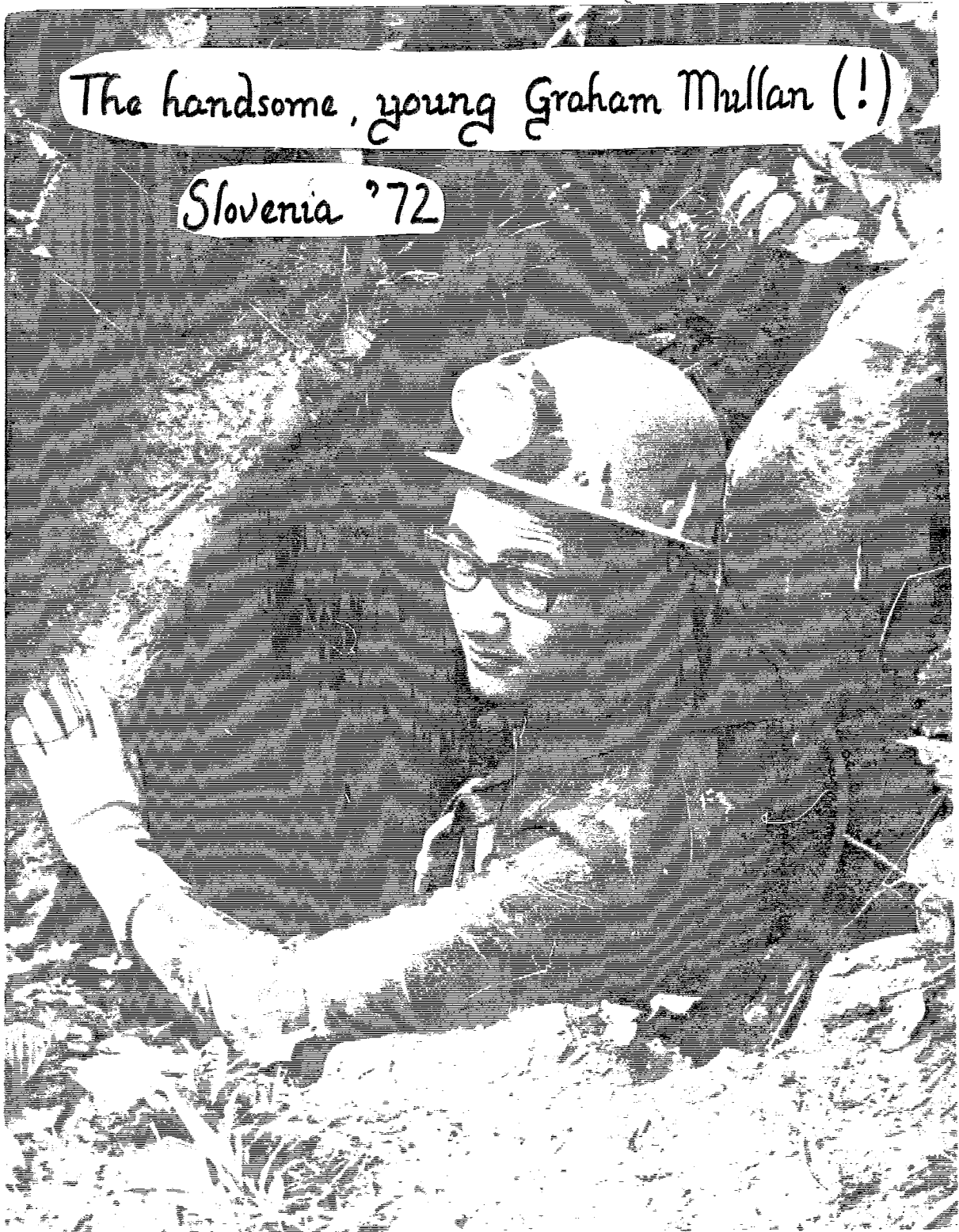


NEWSLETTER OF THE

# U.B.S.S.

The handsome, young Graham Mullan (!)

Slovenia '72



*Vol 10, No. 3.*

**NOVEMBER 1994.**

## EDITOR'S EPISTLE.

This term's issue of the newsletter seems to have been ill-fated right from the start, what with my mean machine of a car deciding to keel over and die with the strain of ferrying me to Bristol nearly every day, and hungry computers gobbling up entire disks full of articles, just at the crucial moment when I was ready to go to print.

I therefore humbly apologise for the lateness of this issue. Where I should be welcoming the new freshers to the club (and we are far from short of those this year!) and saying I hope everyone had a good summer, all I can really exclaim is, "Happy Christmas", as the summer is long gone and the freshers are rapidly growing beards and turning into Crumbles!

I must also apologise for the complete lack of "Gravel" in the following pages. It is not through lack of juicy gossip that I have decided to leave out the column, because gossip is certainly rife and plentiful at the moment, but more because the general consensus of opinion seems to be that the newsletter is in need of a facelift and that Gravel can often be more offensive than funny.

Linda has promised me that for the next issue there will be two articles, one entitled, "Things that Hilary has told me in the toilet of the Plume" and the other, "Things that Hilary has told me that have nearly made me crash my car into Aveline's Hole"! For this issue, however, I have been forced to remain silent and so in place of Gravel, I have included some of the more amusing quotes from the expedition log book and I hope these are a suitable substitute.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this term's newsletter. I have been so overwhelmed with articles that I have had to keep some back for the next issue, but **please, please, please** keep them coming in. The best time to give them to me is in the pub on Tuesday nights, or send them to me, (Rachel), at the address on the back page. I'd also appreciate it if I could receive them earlier, rather than later in the term, (as I'm such a hard-working soul these days!).

Finally, if there is anyone reading this who signed up at Fresh, but who has not yet been caving, or been to the pub to meet us, then please drop in and make yourself known, because contrary to popular opinion, we are not really a bunch of complete wierdos, (well - some of us are normal!) and we will certainly take you caving if you are still keen.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Rach



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

## GEMS FROM THE UBSS EXPEDITION LOG BOOK, 1994.

21-8-94

Dear Eve,

...I look forward to seeing you in Slovenia. I hope I'm not expected to do any caving, as I just intend sleeping and recovering from my "holiday" so far!

James.

25-8-94

*"Packing is the key to a successful expedition"*

T. Martyn, (whilst we randomly threw food and caving gear into a groaning Ford Escort!)

30-8-94

Woke to the sound of Hugo yodelling.

Faffed and festered for many hours.

Packed.

Unpacked.

Repacked.

France arrived and told us there were caves, "in them hills". Bill eventually smiled!

France left again with galloping 'flu. (Hugo ogled his daughters).

Dropped Andy and James in an unspecified car-park and told them to carry very heavy rucksacks up the hill. Left for coffee in Bovec.

Caught up with them all in a debate at the top of the mountain. Why were Topher and Eve the only ones who were smiling?

*"All there is to expedition caving is sweat, piss and blood!"*

31-8-94

Eviction from hut a distinct and increasing possibility.

1-9-94

*"I haven't had a bum injection since school!"*

H.Pile (an old Etonian).

2-9-94

Eve: The rest of the expedition have descended to the valley. Five went down and only one returned. The generator has broken and we are all in the dark. Just me, Topher, a candle and assorted rauchous Slovenians.

Topher: There are many people - my dear Eve-who would be profoundly jealous of you at this moment.

Eve: Who? The odd mountain marmot?

Topher: No, Hugo in the valley, in the rain, without sleeping bag, huddled against Andy for warmth!

*"I can't understand how anyone can get bored of pig. There is so much you can do with one!"*

H.Pile (gentleman farmer's son).

3-9-94

James was instructed to have a day off and sent back to bed.

Eve: ...I suddenly noticed a large hole where no large hole had been before and "Eve'n Hohle was discovered. Loose rift and pitch. Eventually descended 3 ladders with half the cave coming down behind me. Snow plug at bottom.

Came out to find rain, mist, wind and James, in his bivi bag, curled up on the limestone. He'd sneaked out when no-one was looking and discovered the perfect pitch....

James: ....which was an extremely enjoyable 75-80 feet of solid vertical pitch. However, nobody will be surprised to hear that it crapped out at that point. Bugger.

*"Somewhere under this mountain*

*Deep down low*

*There's a cave that I dream of*

*That's beginning to go!"*

4-9-94

...then off to Scrotsky Jama, where Eve and Toph thrashed another 10m after knocking out some bits of cave. Eve got round the second hairpin and went a bit further, before it became chossy and unstable and tighter. Still draughting, still going, but a bit pointless as no-one else would have been able to negotiate the corner.

Will come back in '95 with a team of oiled midgets, or Ian!

Scrotsky Jama - 1

Eve's oversuit - 0.

5-9-94

Topher and James have deserted - finks.

The real soldiers battle on.

6-9-94

Eve: Surveyed Scrotsky Jama alone, using a 4m length of rope with knots at metre intervals. Almost worthy of the Timothy Parish Hero Award for Useless and Stupid Acts, I fear.

....and so back to the hut for one of the most legendary meals in UBSS history.

*"That was revolting." A. Cook.*

7-9-94

Andy has galloping gut rot!

## **THE EXPEDITION ALPHABET**

"A" is for ADVENTURE and ANARCHOSPELEOLOGY (breaking into show caves without paying).

"B" is for BACON, BACON, BACON and BOLLOCKS (and BARBARA).

"C" is for CUCUMBER. ("C" isn't for CAVE!).

"D" is for DESERTING RATS and DIGGERS-ON-TOUR '94.

"E" is for ELEEMOSYNARY (oo er!), ENERGY, ELEPHANTS and ELECTRICITY (lacking around here). Also EVE (because without her you'd be much more unhappy!)

"F" is for NO F\*\*\*ING FUEL. Where's petrol-breath Parish when you need him?!

"F" is also for Andy "FIR TREE", the new stream-lined Andy "Barrel"

"G" is for GEOLOGY (luckily Andy Farrant wasn't on the expedition, otherwise this entry might have been considerably longer!)

"H" is for HUGO, otherwise known as HORROR and HELL!

"J" is for JAMES, whose dedication and enthusiasm, against all odds, is encouragement and an example to us all. COME BACK JAMES, WE LOVE YOU!

"L" is for LUST (an entry by Eve, who carried 24 condoms up the mountain!)

"M" is for MASSIVE STONES IN TOPHER'S RUCKSACK!

"Mc" is for MacDONALDS (even Ljubljana has a MacDonalds, although the burgers did look a bit like horse meat!)

"P" is for PEPPER, in great excess in Hugo's food. Could this have been the downfall of the expedition?!

"P" is also for Hugo "PONG" PILE! and "P" is a PRAYER for Rach and Tim as they sit their exams!

"Q" is for QUIP-U, who made plenty of money out of us, when we bought lots of unnecessary gear!

"R" is for RUCKSACK, without which we wouldn't be able to carry stupidly large amounts of gear around, or in Hugo's case drop large amounts of gear 500 feet down the mountainside whilst looking for caves!

"S" is for SLOVENIAN NATIONAL ANTHEM.

"V" is for VIRTUAL REALITY (the only caves to be found here!).

## *The Hon Sec Speaks*

Hello, good evening and bollocks. This is the bit where I'm supposed to go on about things and generally behave in an Honorary Secretary-like manner, rather than wander around looking distracted, which is my preferred *modus operandi*. I'm not entirely sure that I'm qualified enough to write this, but we'll see what I can do.

Well now, what can I say? The past few months have veritably flown by. The Summer expedition to Slovenia was enjoyed by all, or so I am led to believe, though I couldn't actually go myself due to crippling financial problems, so I can't lend the weight of my personal opinion to the matter. The term appears to have got off to a grand start, with more new members than you could boil alive in even the largest of cooking pots, with most of them returning undissuaded by our behaviour on the Fresher's weekend. My heartfelt thanks go out to Tim for his frenetic organisation of the start of term trips, and for generally doing all the stuff that I was too unaware/insensible/incompetent/asleep to do.

On the caving front, our next proper weekend away (I'm assuming that this isn't coming out before Bonfire Night), will be to Derbyshire over the weekend of 9/11th December. We have a Peak Cavern permit for the Sunday, and a slap-up Christmas feed booked in the pub for Saturday night. I will have to send numbers off for this in the not too distant future, so have a think about whether you are interested in going or not. The meal will be a tenner, the rest of the weekend shouldn't cost a great deal, but I haven't really got a clue what I'm on about, so I'll finish the sentence, rather than invent an in all probability wrong figure. Anyway, a splendid time is guaranteed for all, and, if you're really lucky, you'll also get to meet my mother, who lives not a million miles away. What greater incentive could you have to spend your time and money?

What else? Well, if you have any thoughts on the matter, I'd like to hear from you about where you want to go next term, and when. We'll definitely be off to Yorkshire some time, and if you want a weekend in Wales, I'm all ears. Don't be shy; come and talk to me. It won't hurt. I promise.

And finally, for all you people reading this who haven't got yourself down a cave yet, all is not lost. You can find us every Tuesday in Crockers pub on Cotham Hill from about 9:30 onwards - come along for a chat. Or, if you're feeling really brave, give me a ring; I dare say my number is kicking around inside this newsletter somewhere.

Right, that's it for now. Hope to see you all soon, preferably in a state of the most mindless intoxication. Toodle pip, and all that.

**IAN**

## The Sale of G.B. and Charterhouse Caves

*Graham Mullan*

By now many of you will have heard rumours about the plan by Bristol Water plc to dispose of the land under which these two caves lie. Although the negotiations have yet to be completed we now have enough information to give a reasonably complete account of what is happening.

Most members of the Society will be familiar with the access controls which govern G.B. and will be aware that the land has been owned for many years by Bristol Water as part of the catchment for the important risings at Cheddar. By owning the land, the Company has been able to closely control activity on the land, thereby safeguarding the quality of the supply. However, since the Water Acts came into force, other legal controls have been in force which mean that the water companies can look after their assets without needing to actually own them. Thus Bristol Water, like many other water companies, have been quietly disposing of land they no longer need to hold.

This fact came to the attention of the Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT). This body has a policy of buying up important areas of land in the region in order to conserve and safeguard their features. This piece is, of course particularly important, not only because of the caves, which have been designated by English Nature as a Site of Special Scientific Importance, but also because of its biological interest, being unspoilt by modern farming practices and its surface karst features, having about the only virtually untouched stream sink left on Mendip. For these reasons the Trust are keen to purchase the land, and put in an offer the Bristol Water.

This fact came to the notice of the Charterhouse Caving Committee (CCC), and of your committee. We felt that we needed to safeguard both your interests in access to the

caves, and to ensure the proper conservation of the underground and so entered into the negotiations. The positions of the other parties soon became clear; Bristol Water were happy to sell to a conservation body, provided that the interests of the cavers were satisfied, and the SWT agreed that our participation was essential as they had neither the expertise nor the experience to manage the underground. English Nature, too, were happy with a joint arrangement between the CCC and the SWT for the future management of the site.

To cut a rather long story short, therefore, the result is that the CCC clubs will form a new company (this is necessary to legally hold the land) which will take a 150 year lease of the underground from the SWT when they have bought the freehold from Bristol Water. Access to the caves will remain largely unchanged, but future management of the site will be on the basis of the Conservation Plan which we have prepared and which has been agreed by English Nature and approved by the National Caving Association.

The new arrangements will mean that the Society will no longer have the sub-licence for G.B. held under the current scheme, and with it will go some of our less well-known privileges, such as the veto on publications. We will, however, be maintaining a strong input to the conservation of the site, and will continue the day-to-day maintenance of the lock, and the monitoring of the access regulations.

At present, these changes will not affect access to Longwood Swallet, or the other CCC controlled caves, although it is intended that responsibility for them will pass from CCC to the new company that replaces it.

# YORKSHIRE

WITH: Simon, Sarah, Jim, Steve, James, Eve, Lawrence, Mat and Tim.

It was 12 am on a Friday afternoon and another high precision UBSS expedition was about to swing into action. I met Eve outside the main library.

"So", I said, "who do you reckon is going up this weekend?"

"Well, I think Steve has already gone up this morning with James, Neil maybe - but he's not sure. Simon could be and I think so is Andy Cook - possibly."

This, we both agreed, was about as definite as the UBSS could get, so we went off collecting enough people together to fill a hire car for the weekend. Four hours later, we were down at Budget Rentals.

"I'm sorry", said the nice lady behind the desk, "but the Fiesta isn't ready yet. However, we could let you have this turbo diesel Mondeo for the same price."

Carelessly signing away all my worldly possessions if we so much as breathed excessively hard on the paint work, we were handed the keys. The UBSS had gone executive!

Leaving Bristol at 9.30 pm, we eventually pulled into the caravan site at Ingleton just after 1.30 am. Mat, Eve, Lawrence and I piled out to find Steve and James sound asleep having done a pull-through down Simpsons that afternoon.

We were joined in the morning by Jim, Simon and Sarah, who had spent the night over at the campsite. Lost Johns Cave was to be our goal, so we split into two teams - Jim, Simon, Sarah, Mat and I nobly volunteered to derig and so stomped off to the Fountains Cafe for breakfast, whilst the others headed off to rig down the cave.

One hearty breakfast and a good deal of faffing later found us braving the windswept expanses of Leck Fell. Fortunately, Lost Johns is only about 10ft from the roadside and we were soon traversing over rushing streamways and abseiling down beautifully fluted pots. Lost Johns was obviously designed for SRT - gorgeously shaped pitches, interspersed with scalloped passages and even some rather pretty formations.

Eventually, we came to the famous Battle-Axe Traverse and Valhalla Pitch. Battle-Axe Traverse is great fun - a long traverse high in the roof of a dizzyingly deep rift, which pops out at the head of Valhalla Pitch - awesome. No time to hum "Flight of the Valkyries" as you push out along the walls to reach a tricky deviation; then the long, long drop to the pinprick lights of Steve and Jim waiting at the bottom.

One pitch later we met the others coming out. Carrying on down, we met the main streamway - a scary mixture of clean-swept walls and heavily undercut corners - this obviously carries a fair amount of water in flood. We wandered up and downstream for a while, before eventually heading out to derig.

Of course, being complete Wendies, we didn't drink enough in the pub that night, so next morning found us once more in the Fountains Cafe deciding where to go caving. Mat, Simon, Sarah, James and Jim decided to head for Rowten Pot, whilst Steve and I headed for Heron Pot.

We drove up to the head of Kingsdale and struck out East, vaguely following the guide book directions. Having inserted ourselves into various unstable and particularly horrible holes, we eventually found the correct entrance. Heron Pot consists of a delightful winding stream passage with two short pitches. Below these, it becomes a bit nastier - eventually descending into a horrible flat out crawl. This went on for some distance, the only thing pulling us on being the lure of some supposed bottom entrance - which eventually materialised in the shape of a particularly wet duck.

We then dashed back up the hill and into the cave to derig, before moving on to the other side of Kingsdale to visit Yordas Cave - an old showcave. We scroamed around in the bottom part for a while, before moving to the top entrance and doing a pull-through down the main waterfall just for the hell of it. It was then back to Bernies for a cup of tea and to wait for the others to finish Rowten.

*Tim.*

## **FRESHER'S WEEKEND**

*After being convinced that caving really was good fun and parting with my six pounds at the Fresher's Fair, I found myself standing in Hiatt Baker car park at 9:30 on the morning of Saturday October 8th. I had plenty of time to get acquainted with people, since the minibus was three quarters of an hour late, (maybe this is why we have had to walk to the union ever since!). We were expertly (!) driven by Eve, the trip up the lane to the hut being almost as exciting as the caving itself, the minibus screaming away in first gear with Eve doing her best to break the axles!*

*However, against all odds, we made it to the hut, where it was decided who was to go down which cave. I volunteered to go down one called Swildon's hole, with Graham. Also present were Simon, Emily, Tim, Bond, Topher and Owen.*

*After arriving at a small car park, we were shown to a barn where we could change. I was told that this was a luxury and that usually you had to change on the side of the road. Now I believe it! After a short walk through fields, we arrived at the cave entrance. Graham disappeared down the hole and into rushing water. For some strange reason, I followed him. It was the first cave (other than show caves) that I had ever been down. After five minutes, I was in love with it. I had a brilliant time. I was thoroughly soaked through and worn out by the time we got out (after about three hours). I was very surprised to see a party of school children down there, one with a polystyrene cycling helmet with a light taped to it!*

*In the evening, we all sat around a big bonfire and were given some sort of stew for dinner. It was a substantial improvement on Churchill food! Someone then suggested going to the pub, apparently just a short walk down the road. A few fields, villages and churchyards later, we arrived. Mustn't grumble though, it stayed open until 12:30.*

*On Sunday, after getting up quite late, I went down Singing River Mine with Topher, Emily and Polly. It was quite muddy, but I didn't really mind as I was borrowing Tim's oversuit! About two hours was spent wandering around getting lost, with Topher saying, "I know there's a good bit around here somewhere."! I really enjoyed this cave. As Topher said, it is a bit like an adventure playground. We did eventually find some very pretty blue lakes - well worth seeing.*

*In the late afternoon, I had my first experience with SRT - what a disaster! Whilst I was halfway up the tree trying to work out how to put the descender on properly, the carabena became wedged open and I was left effectively hanging on a hook. Thankfully, Eve was there to rescue me from falling about fifteen feet to the ground.*

*We arrived back late Sunday evening, after an exciting and enjoyable weekend. I am now completely hooked, although most of my family and friends seem to think I'm a can or two short of a six-pack!*

**Ian Morley.**

*As if three hours down Swildons wasn't enough to dampen the enthusiasm of us Freshers, (pardon the pun), Sunday saw some more caving trips. I was in the party that was down for the "Andy Farrant guided tour of GB". Having heard about GB before and all its beautiful formations, I was keen to admire these for myself. However, I soon realised that my admiration of the cave was to be limited, as I had been given a duff lamp! But, despite my lack of light, I was able to see that GB is not your average Goatchurch Cavern. If you're into pretty-looking, long, dangley things, then this is the cave for you. Nice 'n big, precious few crawly bits and more Geology than an in A'level exam, especially if you go down there with Andy Farrant. Personally, I was impressed by being given a permit to cave, 'coz my caving mates back home haven't got one and now I can show off. Ha!*

**Simon Grace.**



## The Mysterious Allure of Caving

Much has been written on the subject of exactly why people go caving. "Why is it," asks your average member of the public, "that you choose of your own free will to venture underground, into one of the most alien and inhospitable environments on this earth?" Why, they wonder, do we take such pleasure in forcing our bodies through the most ludicrously small of gaps? Why do we expose ourselves to the risks of serious injury or death from such hazards as rockfalls, floods, falling hundreds of feet down pitches, or just plain exhaustion? Where is the fun in getting soaked through in freezing waterfalls and rivers? What pleasure is derived from screaming around in thick, viscous mud? And where on earth did any of you get the idea that turning your knees into a shapeless pulp of bruised flesh was enjoyable?

These questions, and many more, have often been asked, and just as often remain unanswered. When people do try to defend their hobby, (often elevated to the dizzying heights of a 'sport'), the answers they give are pisspoor at best. Challenge is a word that I hear often. Well, jumping off a building and flapping your arms in a vain attempt to fly is also a challenge, but not one that I see many people rushing to take up. Others claim that they go caving as a means of exercise. This one is almost believable, but sadly falls down when you consider how many caving trips end up, and often start, in the pub, thus negating all the effort you have just expended. Pretty things to look at is also a fairly limp reason to do anything - there are prettier things more accessible on the surface; well, probably.

So what exactly is it that makes seemingly normal and rational members of society (well, alright then, members of society) spend large chunks of their leisure time under the ground? I'll tell you. It's all to do with sexual deviance.

Yes, that's right. For a start, where else can you justifiably dress in such blatantly fetishist clothing? Gorgeous furry suits are nothing more than oversize babygrows - a clear manifestation of regressive tendencies. It is said that we would all return to our mothers' wombs if we could. Naturally, as reasonable people, we know that this is impossible (you wouldn't fit, for a start), so we do the next best thing and regress to the state of helpless infant. As if that wasn't enough, we then deck ourselves out in kinky PVC oversuits, and walk about in them in public. Just you try walking about dressed in PVC normally (go on, I dare you), and see what sort of looks you get; strange ones, I can tell you, and I speak as somebody who spent part of his Summer holidays running around the woods wrapped in clingfilm and plastic. True, you still get strange looks when you are wandering around in your oversuit, but when people realise that you are a caver, their look of astonishment turn to one of withering pity, and they continue on their way. Unusual clothing is permissible if it is for a discerned purpose, they think, no matter how silly they may find that self-same purpose. As for wet-suits; well, what could be more self-indulgent? There are many people, most of them Tory MPs, who would pay good money to be clothed in skin-tight rubber and dragged over sharp rocks. All we are doing, as cavers, is legitimising our deviant pleasures, by attaching a tag of respectability to them, claiming that such clothing is necessary for our hobby.

Apart from the clothing, one has only to examine the actual nature of caving to be confronted with a plethora of sexually digressive images. What exactly is it that we do when we go caving? I'll tell you. We plunge through cave entrances and proceed to poke about in their interiors. Thrusting our way through constricted, wet and slippery passages, through mud-encrusted holes, we emerge exhausted, spent and coated in filth. There is something undeniably orificial about the whole experience of caving, something that would have given Sigmund Freud enough material for several books and an international lecture tour.

Cavers are strange people. More than that, they are abnormal. To enjoy their 'sport', which is little more than an overblown sexual metaphor, sets them apart as the very lowest of the low. To dress as they do, and to act as they do, betrays their twisted psychologies. Scratch the veneer of respectability and see what horrors lie underneath. Cavers are shameless abominations; foul freaks of nature who, if there is any justice, will have their putrefying carcasses condemned to rot in the eternal fires of Hell.

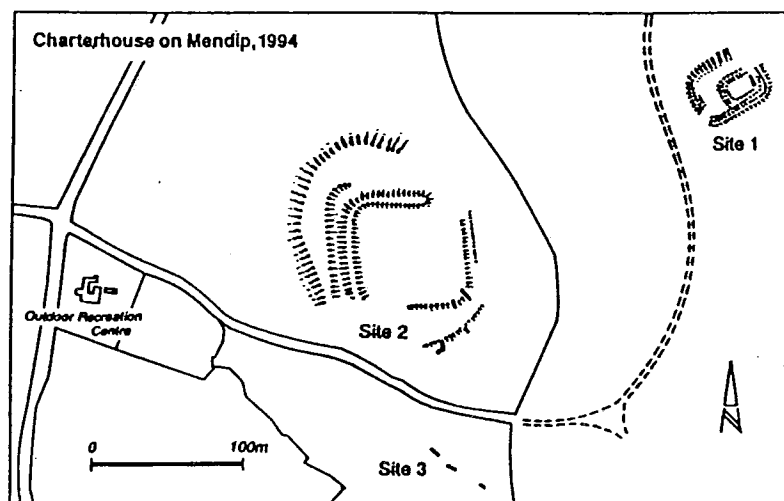
Deny it all you like. You are a caver, therefore, like it or not, admit it or not, you are a deviant member of society. Think on that. Sleep well, my cherubs, if sleep you can.

## RECENT EXCAVATIONS AT CHARTERHOUSE ON MENDIP

The existence of a Roman settlement at Charterhouse on Mendip, concerned with the exploitation of the local lead-silver orefields, has been known since the early 1800s. In the last century many Roman artifacts were recovered during mining activities and the indiscriminate digging by antiquaries, especially the Reverend John Skinner. There have been many chance finds since, including a large quantity of Roman pottery exposed by the 1968 floods, but the only controlled excavation was of the 'amphitheatre' in 1909, which was inconclusive. In the 1950s there were some limited excavations in the vicinity of the grid pattern of the 'town' site (best seen from the air), and of a nearby mediaeval enclosure, but the excavators left scant information for others to publish some years later. Other earthwork enclosures in the area have been recorded by survey, but only the supposed 'fortlet' with rounded corners appeared to be Roman. In 1970 a single sherd of Claudian decorated Samian ware was picked up from the freshly ploughed surface of this enclosure, which gave a hint of first century AD Roman occupation. Tangible evidence of the Roman lead-mining industry, initially under military control, comes from the well-attested Roman road between Charterhouse and Old Sarum, and Roman lead pigs found on Mendip and elsewhere. The lead pig found near the Roman port of Bitterne is firmly dated 60 AD, which indicates that the Mendip lead-silver industry was certainly underway by then and had probably started earlier. The inscription of on a lead (?commemorative) panel found at Wookey in the 16th century but since lost (RIB 2404.1) has been dated AD 49, but this has been called into question by some.

Roman sites at Green Ore and Priddy (St Cuthbert's and Swildon's Hole) have in the 1950-60s been subject of limited excavation proving that they were concerned with lead-silver extraction. Charterhouse on Mendip did not receive such attention but this gap has now been filled by Professor Malcolm Todd of the University of Exeter, Department of History and Archaeology, who in July 1993 and July 1994, led excavations at three sites in this area. These will be continued in 1995, but have already revealed important, and in fact quite dramatic, evidence of the early Roman occupation, and the first evidence of Roman mine-workings on Mendip. The following resume has been compiled from the published interim reports by Professor Todd.

### SITE PLAN OF EXCAVATIONS



### SITE 1. THE EARTHWORK COMPLEX.

This is a two phase earthwork, the earlier phase being represented by an enclosure 40 metres by 20 metres, with rounded corners, surrounded by a bank and an internal ditch. Pottery from this bank places it in the mediaeval period, probably after 1300. In the interior lay a mass of loose stones, possibly the remains of dry-stone shelters. There was abundant evidence for metalworking amongst and under the stone layer. Later, but still in the mediaeval period, a smaller earthwork of a low bank and slight external ditch was constructed in the north-east sector of the larger enclosure. Beneath the mediaeval levels there was slight evidence of Roman activity in the form of fine black burnished pottery. The earliest land surface produced an interesting assemblage of Mesolithic flint implements and cores.

### SITE 2. THE ROMAN FORTLET.

Excavations have revealed two phases of construction, both in the first century of the Roman period. The ditch of the first phase was examined at two points on the east side of the fortlet. An immense amount of early Roman pottery was recovered from the filling of this ditch, including Claudian terra sigillata (Samian ware), Gallo-Belgic ware, other imported wares, amphorae and a strikingly small proportion of coarse wares. From the same deposits also came four Claudian coins ('asses'), belt-fittings, fine glass sherds, several iron objects and a late La Tene bronze fibula. The ditch of the second phase on the east side of the fortlet, along with the front of an accompanying bank, was examined at two points. The ditch was cut into natural rock and the lower and middle layers of the fill contained first century and a few Iron Age sherds (but probably from the Roman period). Professor Todd claimed that occupation at Charterhouse in the late forties and early fifties it is now supported by a substantial body of pottery and, less significantly, by the four Claudian coins. Quantities of typically Bronze Age flintwork, including barbed and tanged arrowheads and a fine knife blade, have been found in and beneath the Roman levels,

### SITE 3. ROMAN MINING SITE.

Immediately SE of the fortlet is an area pitted with the remains of mining of several periods. Professor Todd considered that a number of linear grooves or 'rakes' were similar in character to mining remains in several parts of Europe, where Roman mining was concerned with extracting ore-bodies lying close to the surface. Three trenches were cut across one of the longest rakes and immediately below the modern surface a well defined groove was determined, cut into the rock to a great depth; the width varying between only 45-50 cm in Trench 1 to 1.5 m in Trench 3. In Trench 2 the ancient miners had cut into a substantial natural cave system and a cavern. One fissure remained open but was too narrow to enter. A halogen beam revealed its visible depth to be over 7 metres from the modern surface; it is almost certainly much deeper. He states that a cave system had long been suspected on this site [the entrance of Waterwheel Swallet

lies about 50 metres to the south-east]. Professor Todd thought it likely that these natural fissures first revealed the presence of galena to the original miners. The date at which this mineral lode was extracted could be firmly placed in the first century AD. Below the modern topsoil, no material later than the first fifty years of Roman occupation was recovered. Throughout the depth of the rake, Roman pottery was recorded, most of it south Gaulish terra sigillata, flagons and fine wares. As at the fortlet ditches, coarse wares were present in unusually small quantities. Fragments of three Iron Age vessels were also recovered from the rake, all being types represented at Glastonbury and Mere, especially the latter site. Professor Todd said that these could easily have remained in use into the Roman period and thus cannot be used to support late Iron Age mining in this rake. But pre-Roman location and extraction of galena at this point would have been an easy matter and cannot be reasonably excluded from consideration. The rake had been deliberately back-filled within the first century AD, or very shortly after.

Professor Todd hopes that future work will reveal more evidence of early occupation and mining, and he considers that it will be important to consider the economic relationship between the Mendips and the adjacent lowland, most notably the Somerset Levels and Sedgemoor. We look forward to hearing the results of future investigations.

**BOB WILLIAMS**

## **CALENDER FOR SPRING TERM 1995.**

**26th Jan:** SESSIONAL MEETING.

"Caving in Russia", by Andy Farrant.

**28th/29th Jan:** Possible WALES WEEKEND.

Come and meet the Mad Axeman of the Croyden Caving Club.

**12th/13th Feb:** YORKSHIRE WEEKEND.

**11th March:** AGM and ANNUAL DINNER - an event not to be missed!

Venue: Anthem Restaurant, St. Michael's Hill.

***N.B. Furthur details of the above events will be posted on the noticeboard in the union nearer the time and more information can also be obtained from either of the Hon. Secs.***

# THE ANNUAL DINNER

Saturday 11th March

COST - £11.50



This year, Hilary will be glad to hear, we are not returning to Vitners Wine Bar. Instead, the annual dinner will be held in **ANTHEM RESTAURANT, 27-29 St.Michaels Hill** (at the bottom, opposite 'The Scotsman and his Pack'). The reason I am giving such advance warning is that the

restaurant needs to know everyone's menu choices **3 weeks in advance** (i.e.by the 19th February). We also have to pay a £5 deposit per person by the same date.

Listed below are the various choices for the starter and main course. I'm not sure what the pudding choice is yet - I've had to type this up quickly in order to get it into the news letter - but I'll let you know. However, if anybody is feeling particularly keen and organised they can fill in the slip at the bottom and return it to me. More details will be given as and when I get them.

(Bottle of House Wine - £6.50. They also serve Smiles bitter etc.)

## STARTERS

### A) GRAVADLAX

Swedish style cured salmon with dill and black pepper, finely sliced and served with a seasonal potato salad.

### B) COUNTRY STYLE MUSHROOMS

Button mushrooms cooked with garlic, olive oil, white wine, and lemon zest, served with crisp corn pancake and dressed salad.

### C) ANTHEM SALAD

Avocado salad dressed and served with chargrilled chicken with mixed herbs and lemon juice

## MAIN COURSE

### A) INDIAN LAMB

Lamb cooked with cloves, cardamom, garlic, cinnamon, ginger and coriander, finished with cream and served with steamed rice

### B) CHICKEN SATAY

Chargrilled marinated boneless chicken served with a spicy peanut sauce, and seasoned rice.

### C) THAI STIR FRIED VEGETABLES

Seasonal vegetables stir fried with black eye beans, cashew nuts, coconut, lime leaf and ginger, served on basamati rice with a spicy fruit chutney

*(All main courses served with a selection of fresh vegetables)*

If you don't live in Bristol, or don't come to our Tuesday meetings, then you can return the form below and I will get in contact with you over the choice of dessert and the time of the meal. **Remember, you must contact me by the 19th February!**

	NAME	STARTER	MAIN COURSE	NAME:
1				TEL. NO.
2				Yes, by jove, I'm an organised sort of person so I am returning this form forthwith. I also enclose a cheque for £11.50 <u>per person</u> . (made payable to 'UBSS')
3				
4				
PLEASE WRITE YOUR ADDRESS ON THE BACK. THANKS!				
PLEASE RETURN TO: Tim Parish, Flat 19, Northwell House, 4-6 Cromwell Rd., Bristol				

ANY QUESTIONS PHONE TIM PARISH ON (0272) 427268 (FLAT 19)

## The New Year's Dinner

This annual event, probably the longest running of the Society's many traditions – and certainly the longest running of its three (!) annual dinners will take place this year as usual. The organisers and cooks, however, have become alarmed at its recent surge in popularity which has threatened to outgrow the space available in the Hut for a sit-down type of meal. For this reason, therefore, we are placing a numbers limit this year. Places will be allocated, more or less on a first come first served basis, but priority will always be given to Members over outsider guests.

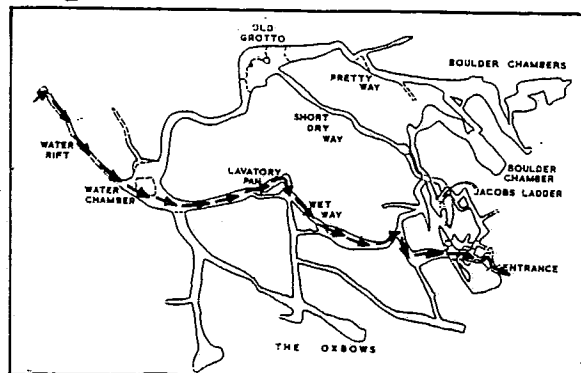
To book your place, contact Linda Wilson (0272 502556) or Wanda Owen (0272 732433)

NEW SERIES!

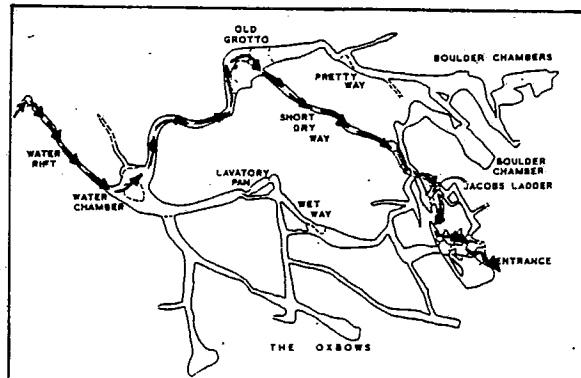
## A BANNER GUIDE TO SWIDONS HOLE

THIS ISSUE:  
REACHING THE EXIT  
FROM THE 20FT PIT

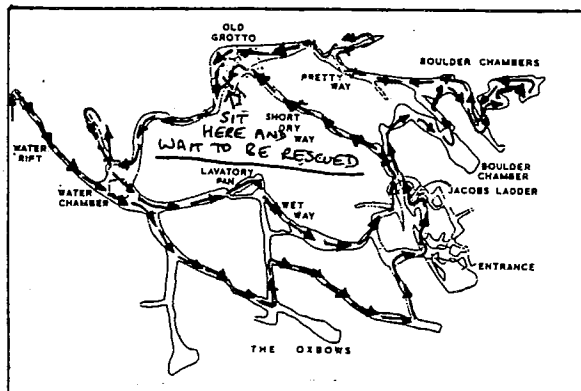
No. 1:  
THE "WET" WAY



No. 2:  
THE "DRY" WAY



No. 3:  
THE "EVE PLEYDELL" WAY



NEXT ISSUE:  
A GUIDE TO SUMP DIVING  
IN A T-SHIRT.  
BY JAMES SUGG

## CANYONNING MADE EASY.

To cut a long story short, fourteen old lags more or less associated with the Cambridge University Caving Club, showed up on a gravel track on the side of a hill near Laruns in the French Pyrenees on one dark and windy night in the first week in August. The lack of youngsters was not intentional.

The cars divided up roughly in the following way: Me, Wookey and Tess in a solar powered oven on wheels, I mean red Citroen van. We arrived early and had to wait for a while, unsure that we had the right place. Then Francois and Jean-Francois showed up. Francois is the french guy who owns this well equipped establishment which has no electricity, no phone, no gas, no light, no central heating, no showers and no toilets. Thankfully none of us are sad enough to carry a portable phone, so it was worth it. Jean-Francois works as a pharmacist somewhere in the north of France, I believe. (Well, you have to do something, he said during one of our long late night sessions whinging about the states of our careers.) Francois is some sort of academic in the university. He's been canyonning here many times.

Two cars arrived later containing Jeremy and Chris, Tony and Gill, Becka, Mark and Clive. Later on in the night Andy and Olly arrived after a horrendous journey direct from expo in Austria. On the way Olly had taken Andy's car into a ditch and it was not now in a fit state to drive, as the breakdown man back in Cambridge said after I had gotten it all the way back across the continent at the end of the holiday and Andy had shown up later and wanted to save himself some petrol in getting it back home to Southampton. It was quite battered and the gearbox didn't feel very well tied down when you held onto the gearstick.

Francois's barn has two floors, both on ground level because it's on a slope. There were lots of smeggy mattresses on the top floor just like in a caving club hut, and downstairs was a cooker and one small window which looked out into the forest. It could be unbelievably bright and sunny in the middle of the day outside, but in the kitchen area it was so dark you still could not see your hand in front of your face, or even if your plate was clean or dirty without a headtorch. It was a good quality life style. I slept downstairs to be away from all the people and because there was no light in the morning.

The next morning we went into town and Jean-Francois rented a wetsuit because he had left his behind in Bordeaux accidentally. The sport of canyonning has become so popular that you can have an entire shop devoted to it. Outside there were a couple of local policemen in uniform packing some wetsuits into the back of their police car. Francois said that one policeman was killed in a canyon last year. They're not known for safety.

The first canyon was just up the hill on the other side of the valley from home. We did some car shuffling to get one at the bottom and the rest of us with gear at the top. There were about thirty school kids in the carpark all in wetsuits getting a bit impatient while Francois yakked with their instructor in french for what seemed like hours. We got a bit impatient too, but because we are old lags who know a thing or two we did not even start to think about changing into anything until Francois, our leader, had.

All fourteen of us walked down to a flowing stream in the woods and pratted around for a bit. As I looked around, I saw that I was responsible for an extraordinary amount of the neoprene that was being worn there. I had made hoods for a number of people, given my old caving wetsuit away to Gill and the two parts of my diving wetsuit was being worn by Mark and Wookey between them. Mark wore just the long johns and a T-shirt underneath because he was too fat; he had the zip in the front undone most of the time so that his belly and cavernous belly hole could flop out in comfort.

We splashed down the stream, picking our way around fallen tree branches and slipping on moss covered stones. Soon we got to some swimmy bits and then there were a couple of excellent water chutes. One usually sent someone to climb down them first to feel around for the depth before anyone else followed. This was a common exercise. Once in a while in other canyons the deep enough spot in the pool would be found quite far away and you'd have to try and aim for it when you jumped.

Soon we passed the group of thirty or so children with one leader trying desperately to shovel them across obstacles a grown caver just steps over. Their progress went at the rate of a novice caver dragging three tackle sacks on the end of a long rope.

We arrived at the pitch. Even ourselves, fourteen highly trained and experienced cavers took forever to rig this drop as a mere pull through. The other party caught us up and rigged their rope much faster than we could and let some of us go down it to get us out of their way.

From there on the canyon continued nicely until it entered a town and we clambered out. We found some shelter to change in because it had started to rain. Then we headed back to the barn to cook, eat and drink cheap french wine.

The food groups divided themselves up in terms of quality. I was in a low quality one and there was lots of friction about when to start doing things each evening. Who's washing up? Why don't we leave it all and fester with this nice cheap bottle of wine instead? I cooked a good meal one day, and then a bad one the next, and then did nothing the day after that and people complained. We stepped on each others feet, forgot to buy bread while the other groups did. The bread got sorted out though. Jeremy went off and bought a horseman's load one morning and we all ate it communally from then on. This was a good move because it solves half the bickering and avoids the sad situation of one group going hungry while the other is hoarding up bread that eventually goes stale the next day.

I woke up early on the next morning (9 am) and tried to get everybody up and out of bed. I took tea and coffee up to them. Olly spotted me carrying his mug to somebody and demanded to have it. He didn't care if it was tea or coffee or piss that was in it, just as long as he possessed 'his mug' to drink out of. Trying to get people up and off to the canyon as early as possible was stupid, I soon discovered, because canyons take in general three hours to do, so you might as well take your time.

Today we had 'Bidet Inferior' on the itinerary. A good one, according to Francois. It ends down by the road where you park your cars and you have to do a hot slog up a forestry track in your wetsuit to get to the top. Unbelievably sweaty it was too. Writing this now as the winter is drawing in it's hard to remember and describe how hot it was. The only heat I can understand now is when I spill a fresh cup of tea over my lap. That's burning. It's not the same as this real, all over, intense, continual heat which reddens your forehead, saturates your eyebrows and drips salt water into your eyes.

We got to the top and dunked ourselves into the water which was oh so cold and flowing very fast. There was an attempt to split into two parties to make the trips more manageable than fourteen useless bodies all piling down at once. Francois lead the first one, and we trolled down the river till we reached the first pitch.

Francois whinged about how important (sic) the water was today. The water was too high to go down the middle of the pitch so we had to belay the rope round a tree on the side. He abseiled down and encountered the full force of the water which he didn't like, so he prussicked back up on one jammer and one bare ankle. The area of rope burn on his skin became swollen during the week and festered so badly he had to go to the doctor and get some antibiotics. We climbed back out of the river onto the track feeling a bit disappointed.

All was not lost, Francois said. There was always 'Bidet Superior' further up the hill. We had walked very far up the track to get here at the start of 'Bidet Inferior'. It was the same distance again further up to get to the foot of 'Bidet Superior'. It's the same stream, but it doesn't form a canyon inbetween. Jeremy obligingly ran down the hill, fetched his car and ferried us up to it. It was an even further slog to get from the bottom of 'Bidet Superior' to the top. I cannot tell you the heat that we experienced to get up that path. We trudged up a steep trail in the woods and then forever across a vibrant green grassy field. The mountains shimmered. The neoprene melted and oozed down my legs. It dripped off my arms. My boots became buckets of tar.



The water in 'Bidet Superior' was less than knee deep for most of the way. There was a bit of canyon in the middle which the first party decided to waste time on and bang a couple of bolts into because they were too scared to use the rusty pitons that were already there. The pitches and parties were spaced out just right so that by the time the first party got itself down one pitch, the second would arrive at the top and could lob their tacklesack over the edge.

Down at the bottom the rocks were broken up horrendously and formed the most fragmented and dangerous looking boulder stack I have ever seen. I may certainly have climbed through ones that were worse, but they were in the dark, so I didn't see them. All I could do when I was at the bottom was look back up and cringe as other people picked their way down and set off little avalanches.

Back at the barn there was more messing up the kitchen and festering to be done, drinking wine and sprawling out under the stars to look at the satellites. That night the squirrels that infested the barn were in truly good form. They raided the kitchen and clung to the ceiling screeching at the tops of their voices like car alarms. I got up and tried to shut them up by poking them with the blunt end of a broomstick. One got among the shelves of food in the tall cupboard. It knocked a super large jar of coffee onto the floor where it broke and became instantly invisible in the dark.

Since there were hills in the Pyrenees, more so than in East Anglia, I had brought my hang-glider. The hang-gliding was done in the next valley over from our one, so I persuaded everybody to go to a canyon over there and drop me off on the top of a hill. The canyon was quite good, I was told. Meanwhile I waited for an hour at the top of the hill, then flew down through a cluster of circling vultures, and successfully landed in the small field at the bottom where I had to wait for about five more hours before being picked up again.

Canyoning, according to Francois and Jean-Francois, had become an unfeasably popular sport in the past ten years. Given the amount of actual physical space that a canyon takes up - as opposed to a cave which uses hardly any - there are a phenomenal number of them. Canyoning first took off in a region just across the border in the Spanish Pyrenees, and all the French would go over there and clog up the canyons like in the rush hour. There really was a rush hour between ten and eleven in the morning when all the keen people woke up, had breakfast and walked up the hills at the same time. Entire towns like ski resorts had been formed on the trade of these tourists. Where we were we often met other parties, and all the pitch heads had pitons and dodgy bits of tat to hang your ropes off. Canyons normally took under four hours to do, but there were some in the book that were more serious. Up to twenty hours perhaps. I did a canyon in Majorca called Sa Fosca once. It was one of the worst experiences in my life. It was cold and endless. We didn't know how long it was going to be or whether we'd find a pitch that our ropes were not long enough to reach. It became narrow and was so deep you really could not see the sky at all. There was not the slightest chance of escape and we were all tired and scared the whole time.

These French canyons were nothing like that, being all open and sunny and beautiful to look at and be in. We did Francois's favourite canyon the next day. It was called Souissons. Even the walk up was good enough to justify it as it was along a path hollowed out in the side of a sheer cliff. Through the trees you could see a big open space and the sun on the cliffs on the other side.

The canyon itself was very pleasant and had lots of water slides - one of its main attractions. The pitches were pretty exciting being full of water and slippery on account of the moss. Our technique of two parties with leapfrogging bundles of rope worked perfectly. There were some pretty good jumps into pools that were deep enough, but some of them weren't and you had to check. According to Francois's estimates, waist deep is enough to land in if you have to fall three metres or so, but the rest of us were not impressed. Another tricky obstical you had to cross on the way in these canyons were log jams. Dead trees had fallen into these rivers and been washed down into great wooden chokes during the floods. There were no twigs, branches or leaves left on them, just dark rotting wood the diameter of telephone poles. There was no way around them. You had to climb through them and they were as slippery as ice.

The canyon ended suddenly and entered a picnic area. One minute you were abseiling, jumping and swimming through this canyon, and the next you were walking ankle deep in a little stream where children were paddling with their mothers. We went back to the car.

Back in town we went and booked to go hydrospeeding on a later date. Hydrospeeding is a most excellent sport which Wookey and Jeremy did during a big tour across Europe many years ago, so they knew the idea was that you jump in a rapid river with a pair of fins on your feet and a float which you hold tightly and lean your chest on and paddle like mad while your legs get bashed apart by the rocks and you can't see anything for the spray. There were two hydrospeeding outfits in operation according to the local brochure, one which was dangerous and one which was tame. We phoned up the dangerous one--which was three times more expensive--and they were out of business because they nearly killed someone the year before. Damn. Sounded like they actually might have been good. We reluctantly booked all of us into the tame one.

After another late night the squirrels were out again chirruping and thieving. I found I could deal with them by making a water pistol out of a plastic lemonade bottle with a hole in the top and squirting it at them.

The last canyon we all did together was quite a small one which went along the road just this side of the Spanish border. Before going to it we drove over to the border and had lunch. It was evident where the taxes were cheaper: there was over a dozen large establishments selling exotic boozes, port and red wine out of the barrel, real salamis, bric-a-brac and garlic ropes on the Spanish side, and one small caravan selling soft tasteless cheeses on the French side. We put together a wonderful picnic.

The canyon was pretty. It was very sunny and the water was sometimes deep enough that you had to swim. There were a couple of very nice pitches, but there were also long stretches where the canyon turned into a little flowing stream with grassy banks and you felt a tad overdressed in your wetsuit, helmet, kneepads and SRT harness.

Hydrospeeding was to be done the following day at about five in the afternoon. Because it was going to be such an exhausting activity, everyone decided that they'd have to fester the entire day in order to have enough energy to do it. Andy and I were the only ones who thought otherwise. We wanted to go canyoning some more, but without the local knowledge of Francois as our guide and our inability to read French with confidence (it's a hell of a long walk up a hill to find you're in the wrong place), we were reduced to doing a canyon we had done before.

Or there was always 'Bidet Inferior'. No don't do it, Francois said, the water levels will not have gone down. Two people is not enough. Nonsense, we said and cleared off the next morning before anyone had gotten up. When we walked up the water was probably a little higher than the last time. You've also got to worry about the flood pulse warnings that are in all the guide books when you read them. You don't get floods from the rain because the weather is so nice in the summer; you get them from the hydro-electric projects that are everywhere in case they'd like to open their gates and let all their water out. I wonder if they are competent enough to stick a sign out on the day they are going to do it.

The first pitch is always the hardest to do because once you've done it you have no choice about the rest. We chose a tree well away from the waterfall and had second thoughts about whether it was a good idea until a disorganized party of six French people arrived behind us.

This was the way to do it: just two people and no excess gear. We moved through the canyon fast, jumping a lot of the pitches without bothering to test them. We'd stand on the top of a two metre drop, say, and look to see if it was deep enough. You couldn't see through the white foaming water that was closest to you, you'd have to look farther out where it had settled and become transparent, and jump to that point if it looked alright. This felt kind of suicidal and we took turns for who jumped first at each pitch. There'd be a

difficult one, and then an easy one, and then another difficult one and you'd sit there arguing about how it wasn't fair.

The big pitch in the canyon was only forty metres, but it felt like the biggest thing I had ever done because it was all lit up with sunlight and I was descending between these two great parallel walls which went a long way down with a raging pillar of white water just behind me.

Further down, wedged in a tight log choke, was a fetid sheep carcass whose smell was carried hundreds of metres down the streamway. Andy claimed that this is what made him violently ill for the following week when he and Wookey went to the Picos and joined the Oxford expedition, so he didn't have to do any of their horrible caves.

Further down there was a peculiar roofed section and then a pitch where I found a figure 8 in the water. This is the descending device of choice for most canyonners because it's light and easy to use as long as you don't drop it. As a result canyonners have discovered a different way to rig their 8s by threading the rope through their crab instead of round the back of the neck of the 8. I still can't see why they don't slide uncontrollably to the floor when they step off the ledge above a pitch.

We got out, went back to Francois's barn, had a crap in the woods, munched on some stale bread and went hydrospeeding. It was a bit of a disappointment. We had to try and stand on our floats to keep our interest up as we drifted slowly downstream. The idea is supposed to be that you have to cling on to your float for dear life and you die if you become separated from it.

The last day we were there was a very long one for me. It started with Andy and me trying to get Francois to take us to a difficult canyon. Becka joined our party making us three. Most of the rest went and did Souissons again. Meanwhile Francois took us over to a canyon whose name I can't remember. He couldn't come with us because the rope burn on his ankle was now exploding with pus and Jean-Francois had bandaged it up for him. This canyon was certainly very technical. It was very tiny with walls just high enough so you could not climb out of it. The water was clearly at flood level, so it was difficult to make yourself heard above its noise. You could not escape its force because you always had to stand in it. We had to rope ourselves up and jump from one eddy to the next to avoid getting washed away.

At the halfway point was the single escape route, and I got outvoted two to one. As a consolation, they drove me over to the other valley and took me flying. I did badly 'til I crossed the town and glided in the turbulent air on the side of a wooded mountain feeling airsick for an hour 'til I was up among the spiny backed ridges at the top. Nothing much was going on there except for some paragliders and vultures. I came down for a nice stylish landing in a crop of eight foot high sweetcorn plants. I flattened 155 square feet of it (that's why my glider is called a Magic IV 155), unhooked myself and went to get some help. Out of an entire landing field full of people, only Andy and Becka, beered as they were, came down in the field after me.

Back at the barn we packed Andy's car to the gills, and then piled things high on the roofrack. Olly, Tess and myself squeezed into it at 6 o'clock and we drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and drove and arrived eleven hours early for our ferry at Calais. We pestered the man at the gate and after six hours we got let through onto the boat.

I dropped Tess off at her house and went round to my house. The driveway was full, so I parked on the road and got sworn at by the neighbour for making his life a misery by parking my ugly car outside his window where he'd have to see it, and if our landlord knew of the kinds of things we get up to in his house he'd have us thrown out immediately, you have no right to be here, blah blah blah. All and all, he's a total wanker.

*Julian Todd.*

# Pen-y-Ghent Pot

**W**e were busy changing into our caving gear at Bradford Pothole Club - outside, the mist still swirled around the sides of Pen-y-ghent; the raging thunderstorms of last night having petered out. Just as I was pulling on a particularly fine pair of caving grundies, into the room wandered an old codger, obviously still suffering from the night before. He stopped, swaying slightly, and fixed me with a beady stare. I smiled back, waiting for a few words of wisdom gleaned from a life time of caving. "If you buggers are too soft to change outside", he said, "then there's no way you're going to bottom Pen-y-ghent."



Pen-y-ghent pot has been a major stumbling block in this club for some time. Hardly a trip to Yorkshire seemed to go by without some group disappearing off up the side of the mountain, only to return many hours later with wild, staring eyes and mumbling about long crawls, icy water and heavy tackle sacks.

Therefore, it wasn't a particularly confident group of cavers that turned up at the BPC hut one Saturday morning towards the end of June. As mentioned before, heavy thunderstorms had been lashing the side of pen-y-ghent, and 'isolated heavy showers' were predicted for the afternoon. To make the trip faster we had split into two teams - Steve, Bill, Wookey and I rigging in, while Toph, Paul, Eve and Lawrence rigged out. Eventually we departed, the encouraging words of "Don't you dare make your callout before closing time!" ringing in our ears. After about twenty minutes of climbing into the tumbling clouds, we stood looking down a narrow shaft held together by a motley collection of scaffold bars and bits of timber. The muffled sound of large, cold streamways echoed up to us from the depths below.

Funnily enough, after all the horrific tales about the long crawl it didn't appear all that bad. The water was about a foot deep and quite swift flowing, so dragging tackle bags in was no problem, while the floor was reasonably smooth. The last bit was quite horrible, being flat out, but fortunately the water was a lot lower here, and we were soon at the edge of the first pitch.

This was followed by a long passage which forced you to stoop over while carrying a heavy sack - far worse than the crawl. Thankfully there were places you could stand up - bliss! - and so onto the large pitch - awesome. There then followed pitch after pitch, all interspersed with some fine sporting rifts. Sometimes it was hard to tell what was a pitch and what wasn't, so we actually ended up carrying more gear than we needed.

After around 9 or 10 pitches we eventually exited into a large chamber.

Ignoring the flood debris covering the walls for over 30 feet above our heads, we dived down into the most annoying stream way I have ever encountered. The floor consisted of sharp rocky ridges, which you couldn't see through the muddy water - therefore every other step meant falling in. This seemed to go on for ever - the stream way diving lower and lower, the walls black and dripping. Trying desperately not to think about large volumes of water, we eventually reached the terminal sump - not particularly impressive. At this point Steve yelled "Flood Pulse!" in my ear and ran off down the passage - what a bastard.

Just above the large chamber we met the others on their way in. Lawrence decided to turn back with us (sensible chap), leaving three people to derig - Bill earned himself an A-class hero point by volunteering to carry out a tackle bag for the others - sadly demoted to B-class for ungalantly nicking Eve's gloves just above the first pitch. Half a twix bar each, and then back through the chilly waters of the long crawl. Eventually we climbed out after around 8 hours underground.

The guide book describes Pen-y-ghent pot as "...the finest stream pot in the country.." - hmmm, maybe I was too knackered too appreciate its finer points - it certainly does have its fair share of first-rate streamways, along with some of the most sporting caving I've done, but the finest in the country? Whatever - I'm on for a return trip, any takers?

The next day, most people opted out of caving. Wookey had done the entire cave yesterday with no kneepads and a threadbare oversuit - his knees were consequently a bit of a mess. Bill and I decided on a pull through down Long Churns, followed by a prussik up Alum Pot - everyone else choosing a Wendy's outing to the limestone pavements and then onto the Hill Inn. All in all, rather a fine weekend.



*Eve's new caving outfit caused quite a stir at the BPC club...*



## ANOTHER SUNNY DAY IN WESTERN SIBERIA

*(Or Andy's vodka drinking holiday to the back end of nowhere)*

*Andy Farrant*

Why Siberia? Why not I thought. Its different - not many people can say they've been caving in Siberia. The aim of the trip was to look at some unusual caves in quartz veins in the Pre-polar Urals, and then sail on a catamaran for 300 km down the Schugor River looking at caves en route. So it was I found myself at Terminal 2 at Heathrow at six am on the 5th August, boarding the Air France flight to Moscow. Four of us went out from England - myself, Alex Wade, his girlfriend Helena Brint, and Dave Savage (an ex LUSS member). As seems usual on these foreign caving expo's I met Dave for the first time at the check-in desk.

Six hours later we flew into the photochemical smog that blanketed Moscow and touched down. So this was Russia - looks a bit drab I thought. The terminal building made the students union in Bristol look positively appealing. Trying not to look too furtive at immigration, our visas were checked by some very bored looking Russian soldiers, and our currency was checked by officious looking officials, but as it turned out it was far less traumatic than American Immigration. Outside we were met by a local caver from Moscow who took us to their University caving club hut - a room in the basement of one of their student halls of residence. Never again will I complain about the quality of Hiatt Baker or UH. At least Hiatt Baker had hot water, decent lighting and clean toilets. Student accommodation in Moscow was less than salubrious, it would probably be deemed unfit for habitation here. We did the Moscow touristy bit the following day - Red Square, The Kremlin, Lenin's mausoleum - Lenin wasn't looking too healthy, apparently his ear fell off a few weeks ago - and did a bit of shopping before catching the metro to the station to catch our train - part of the 'Trans-Siberian Express' to Perm.

The journey to Perm took 24 hours (1500 km, two time zones and an awful lot of birch trees), and we arrived less than a minute late - if nothing else the Russians can operate a decent rail service. Railtrack et al. take note!. Suffering a little from train lag, we were met at the station by russian contingent of the expo team, Slava, the team leader and geologist (Russia's answer to Indiana Jones), Ivan, who bore more than a passing resemblance to Freddie Mercury and Igor. Igor was quite an amazing chap. He seemed a quiet shy bloke, and looked like a shorter, scruffier and more fanatical version of Pete Smart, but he changed completely when within a 10 km radius of a limestone area. His eyes would light up and unending torrents of cave/karst drivel would pour from his mouth. Underground he could out do any self respecting ferret and would probably feel quite at home in the Hunters, he even got married underground!

We were taken to Kungur (another two hours by train) where we were met by the Karst Research Institute truck (and Sergei the driver) - it was basically a caving hut on wheels. There was sleeping room in the back for 7 people (including 3 hammocks), and a stove and gear store. Fuel consumption was about 5 km a gallon! It made Tim's Landrover look positively puny. We spent the next few days in Kungur sorting out gear and doing the touristy bits, which included a visit to the Kungur Ice Cave. The cave is developed in Permian gypsum and dolomite on the banks of the local river, and extends for about 5 km in a series of big unstable collapse chambers. The entrance area is decorated with incredible ice formations - individual crystals 4 cm across, and wall to wall icicles, ice 'mites and 'tites, and ice flows. There were quite a few gypsum formations too.

It was also in Kungur that we were first acquainted with Russian drinking habits. We were each given a small glass in which was poured a generous measure of Vodka (a Russian measure is about 500 ml - ie a lot) and then had down it in one. After 4 or 5 glasses Alex was

out for the count (he's only a small chap), so it was left to me and Dave to keep the British flag flying. 2 hours and 4 bottles later (between 6 of us), after shouting Nazdarovya (or something like that) which was Russian for good health umpteen times it degenerated into a very drunken game of table tennis, which we lost, but I thought we were doing well even to hit the ball...

We also were treated to a Russian sauna in Kungur. One of Ivan's friends had a private dacha/sauna, so in we went. Ivans friend seemed to have rather warped sense of humour as he turned up the heat specially for us. A few minutes in the sauna were enough before we had to peg it out the door and into the cold pool, and then back into the sauna. Then out came the birch! The Russian custom is to whip each other with birch twigs in the sauna. Nothing like a good bit of birch flagellation to pep you up, especially when some one like Ivan's wife is doing the beating!. It feels even better after a few measures of vodka. Nuff said...!

The next morning (late) we caught, or rather literally fought our way onto, the overnight train to Ekaterinburg. This time we were in 4th class which meant you couldn't book seats/beds and got no bedding, which is why you had to fight to make sure you got a seat (36 hours is a long time to stand in a train...). Unfortunately, Russian trains are not designed for people over six foot tall, so I was constantly kept awake by people walking into my feet which protruded out into the corridor - the bed being too narrow to curl up. We arrived in Ekaterinburg at 6 am in a thunderstorm (after having crossed the Urals into Asia overnight) where we met Sasha - (who looks like Mr Chechov off Star Trek), the last member of the team, and then travelled on up to Priobjye on the banks of the Ob, 1500 km to the north.

Priobjye - literally the end of the line, was little more than an industrial wasteland, with a muddy track leading to the 'ferry port'. Here we boarded the hydrofoil which took us down the Ob. The Ob is a BIG river, the main channel is over 5 km wide and 30 m deep. We stopped off in a little village called Priobegobny or something, and were about to pitch tent when a local Russian said we could stay in his dacha. He even gave us a lift on his motorbike and side-car in the village. Out then came the vodka, then his boss turned up with more vodka, and then Slava produced our expedition vodka - 96% proof - smelt and tasted like lab alcohol! It could be used to drink, for fuel, as an antiseptic and for bribing people, strong stuff indeed. Then, at 2 am, two fishermen who had been fishing on the Ob turned up with the biggest Pike I have ever seen - it was at least 3' long, and they gutted it in the middle of the room, and out popped a smaller pike which it had just eaten! The rest is a hazy vodka soaked recollection of fish, tea, pine nuts and lots of cries of 'Nazdarovya' and 'moi anglichaneen drook' (Russian for 'my English friends'). Breakfast the next day was fish washed down with vodka!

It was here we first became intimately acquainted with the Russian mossies. Slava had assured us that there would be no mosquitos in August. Hah, maybe not by Russian standards, but by English standards there were millions. Going for a crap in the woods turned into a high speed contortionist effort to get everything over with as fast as possible before you got too many bites in the more delicate parts. God help you if you had the shits. Not even 100% DEET repelled these buggers.

We finally left after lots of bear hugs by the overfriendly natives and carried on down river to Berezova, where we were due to catch a helicopter to Saranpaul, a geological research station some 800 km away in the Urals. To cut a long story short, due to the financial crisis, and the rather poor state of Aeroflot helicopters, there was only 1 flight every 3 weeks, instead of every other day, and we had missed it. We tried bribing our way onto an local government flight, but the local chief was pissed already (at 10 am), and there wouldn't be enough room anyway as he was taking his personal entourage of female companions! As

we didn't have \$2500 cash we couldn't pay for a special flight, so after four warm sunny days stuck in a -4 star hotel (no bathroom or hot water) with nothing to do except drink vodka, kill mosquitos, and collect mushrooms and pine nuts, we decided to adopt plan B and head back south to another limestone area in the Urals. This meant our trip down the Schugor River had to be abandoned.

Back down the Ob and another 12 hour train journey saw us in Eveden, where we were able to bribe a local geologist (with Dave's coveted bottle of single malt whiskey) to drive us into the mountains in a truck. The plan was to sail downriver on catamarans the 100 or so km back to Eveden looking at caves en route. It was here that we found out that we had to build our own catamarans from birch trees and two inflatable canvas sausages! Sailing downriver was excellent fun, down a narrow birch and conifer lined valley through the Urals. After two days (and two weeks after leaving England) we spotted our first limestone outcrop! Igor started foaming at the mouth. We spent a day in the area scouting the forest and examining what turned out to be the wettest 'dry' valley I've ever seen. The dry valley marked on the map had a river in it! No luck apart from one small cave about 10 m long, so we carried on down and looked at another site, a spring bigger than Wookey Hole. Alas, lots of water cliffs and mosquitos, but no caves. However, we were told of a cave nearby by the geologist which we found and explored. The entrance chamber had wonderful ice formations and the skeleton of a bear. A small hole behind the ice led into another big chamber, where some determined ferreting by Igor found another 200 m of small squalid bedding plane anastomosis type passage.

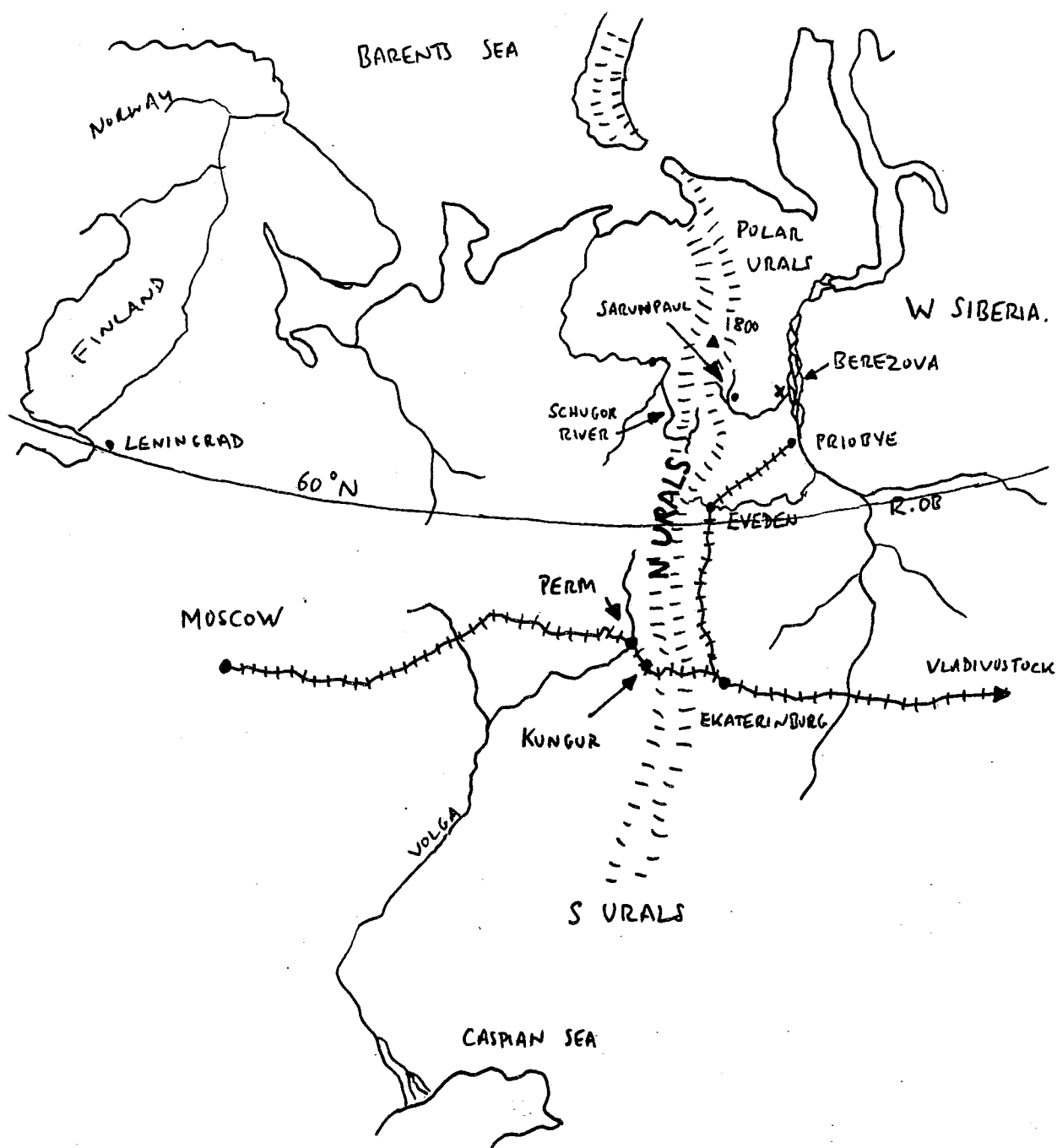
After surveying and photographing the place, we carried on downstream, finally arriving in Eveden two days later. The river cut through some impressive gorges, with the potential for some superb climbing, but alas, very little in the way of caves. It was while sailing down river that Helena started to get abdominal pains, so she was taken to the doctor in Ekaterinburg three days later where she was diagnosed as having an intestinal infection. She was still bad by the time we got back to Kungur 12 hours later so we took her to the hospital where she was diagnosed as having appendicitis. Had we been on the Schugor river as planned, then odds on she would have died. She spent the next two weeks seriously ill in a Russian hospital, most of the time on strong antibiotics. Alex stayed in Kungur while myself, Dave, Ivan, Sasha and Igor spent two days looking at some caves 300 km to the north.

The first cave we looked at which Igor had discovered a few months before was called Bear cave, as it had the remains of over 200 cave bears in the entrance chambers. Igor showed us a skull over a foot long. The rest of the cave was a bit like Pridhamsleigh, mazy with occasional big chambers, and some nice stal. Unfortunately, our promising dig site at the bottom only revealed another 5 m of passage before closing down. The second cave, Geology 1, was far more impressive, with over 3 km of passage, big chambers and a nice streamway. The area has huge potential as the main streamway has not yet been found and the water resurges over 5 km away 200 m lower. A area nearby had similar potential, except that one of the swallet streams draining a nearby coal mine has a pH of 1, the spring has a pH of 4-5! Active cave development here!

By this time our time had run out, so we returned to Kungur, where Helena was better, but by no means well. Dave and I returned to England via Moscow, while Alex stayed an extra week in Russia until Helena was well enough to travel (after having lots of trouble and paying massive fines for having to extend their visas). On returning to England, Helena had to spend another week in the BRI!

So, although we didn't find much new cave, we saw alot of interesting karst, and examined three areas for possible future expeditions. I'd like to thank the Tratman Fund, the Ghar Parau and Sports Council for grants. Thanks to Dick Willis and Alex for setting up the trip. Anyone fancy a trip to the huge gypsum caves of the western Ukraine next year?!





Location Map for the Russia '94 Expo.

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**\*\*\*\* STOP PRESS \*\*\*\***

Helena finally had her appendix out in October after spending another four weeks in hospital. For those curious medics, they didn't operate sooner as the appendix had become stuck to the lower colon - if they had removed it, half the lower colon would have come out with it!

**\*\*\*\* LATE NEWS \*\*\*\***

Reports are coming in of a major new find in Wales. Ogof Draenan (sp?), on the south side of the Clydach Gorge near Abergavenny, which has been dug for a while has 'gone'. Initially about 4 km of Aggy type streamway were found. Latest estimates put the total passage length, much of it large, in excess of 15 km.

*Andy Farrant*

### GEOFFREY BOND - an obituary

Those who knew him will be sad to hear that Geoffrey, who joined the University and the Society in 1955, died quietly in May 1994, at the Branton Leonard Cheshire Home for the Disabled, near his home town of Barnstaple, Devon, after a very long illness.

Born February 1936, he failed his "11+", but never the less, worked his way into Grammar school - a difficult task - and went up to Bristol in 1955, where he obtained a B.Sc in Chemistry. As a Fresher, he at once developed a love for caving. He lived most of his weekends under Mendip, emerging only for the dash to the Plume of Feathers (in those days, a simple country pub, where us foreigners from the city were given a back room to ourselves to avoid upsetting the locals), followed by the wobbly climb up the Rock of Ages for an extended carouse around a roaring fire at the hut. Only thus could we face - or ignore - the pain of putting on Saturday's wet cave clothes on Sunday; this was, after all, before the soft days of wet suits!

It was after just such an evening that the name of Bond first emerged into the prominence it was to maintain. Geoffrey had absented himself from that strange Hall of Residence across the Bridge - Burwalls - without signing out. The hall ran a spot check, (they did things like that in those days) and raised the alarm. As a result, the Blagdon Policeman was hauled from his bed in the early hours of Sunday and pushed his bike all the way up the hut track. The first we knew, was being awoken from our dreams - stupor? - at 3am by a booming voice demanding, "Is there anyone called Bond in here?". The man was seriously not happy. Geoffrey later avoided this particular difficulty with authority by getting a flat; well, more like an open house. If all of us that slept on that floor were to be given £1 for each time we had done that, the number of retired Speleos would rise dramatically. Anyway, suffice to say that Bond stories are legion - many not repeatable in print (!) - but I do wonder how many of the 1957 Polballiny survey team remember, like me, how Geoffrey dealt with us after many cold hours, when we were up to our necks in the near-sump arguing whether to carry on with the survey? (See Caves of North-West Care, 1st edition, editor, the grand old Tratman, p140, fig29a, cross-section 0.)

He graduated in 1958 and was called up for his National Service; he must have been one of the last. He was placed in REME and was sent to Arborfield for his technical training; I have often wondered what his feelings were on finding that I was his Platoon and Drill Sergeant, a role that I have to admit I thoroughly enjoyed. A recent conversation with his brother David suggests strongly that he never forgot it! Forgive me, Geoffrey. Actually, the first that I knew of the situation was, on storming into my platoon's room at 5am to raise them in my normal, gentle, sweet manner, I heard a familiar voice emerge from a blanket saying, "Ah Chris, got a fag?". CHRIS??? and me a full SERGEANT?!!!

He, as many of us, travelled back to Mendip whenever the Army left us free. It was during one of these visits that, returning from a GB trip with Garry Witts on his pillion, he had a disastrous accident that fractured his skull - and left Garry without any memory of the event. Is it possible that this started his later problems?

Discharged from the Army, he went to work first for British Cellophane, Bridgewater, and then for British Nylon Spinners, Pontypool. Here, he was a frequent visitor to Sheila and Angus Watkins (also 50's Speleos), who had just set up house in Cwmbran. But this was not to last.

On a trip to Clare, he felt ill and could not drive. He was carried back to his home in Barnstaple and was diagnosed as having Multiple Sclerosis. This was reasonably under control during the 70's, but became worse in the 80's. In about 1987, his father arranged for him to enter the Branton Cheshire Home, where he spent the rest of his life; sadly, his father died as soon as he had completed the arrangements, so he never saw what a superb gift he, and Leonard Cheshire, had given his unfortunate son.

However, I did. Early in 1994, I was told where Geoffrey was living, not far from where my wife Kath (also a Speleo from the Frightening Fifties) and I live in mid-Devon. Together with Angus and Sheila, we went to see him. Having, sadly, previous experiences of meeting damaged people under these circumstances, Kath and I had selfishly schooled ourselves to have neutral feelings. We need not have worried.

As is normal in a Cheshire Home, we were welcomed with kindness and sympathy. But hardly had the greetings ended when that familiar - even after all those years - voice boomed out, "Tell them to come on in.". "My God", said Angus, "that must be Geoff". And it was. And he really had not changed; dammit, he had not even had the good grace to go grey like the rest of us, and the cigarette was still hanging from his lip

threatening to burn his Devon-pirate's black beard. But, of course, he had altered; his high-tech wheelchair and computers demonstrated that. However, he was totally lucid, with a perfect memory and had no false illusions about his illness. A potentially awkward situation was saved by his awareness and by the mass of caving memorabilia and caving books in his room; we all of us had, suddenly, a common focus and the reminiscences flowed freely and with great pleasure.

He died quietly and peacefully a few weeks later. I am sure that I speak for all of us when I say that I am grateful it happened without the final suffering that can occur with MS.

I cannot finish without a reference to nick-names; well, we all had one - usually unflattering and often vaguely insulting. Of course, Geoffrey went better; he had two. The minor one - Mustafah - derived quite obviously from his oft-repeated cry of, "Must 'ave a fag!". But the reasons for the major name of Goat, a name he often used of himself, are not so clear. Was it the shape of his original jutting black beard? Was it a double pun, in his accent, on the cider advertisement, "Goats comes up from Baa-nstaple"? Was it because he, above any Bristol Speleo of the time, could - and would - eat vast amounts of food, good or bad, over-heated or over-curried, in approximately zero time? And, he did carry - unusual then - that great rucksack covered in some sort of long hairy thing. All of these, or none? There is no definitive answer. But for all of us who knew Geoffrey Bond for all these things, I say,

rest in peace, our friend.

Kit Ineson, Exbourne, Devon.  
September 1994.



GEOFFREY BOND  
1960  
ALUM POT.