

summer 99

# *UBSS NEWSLETTER*

## IRISH STOP PRESS!!!!

### AROUND 2 KILOMETRES OF NEW PASSAGE FOUND IN POULNAGREE

Over several years work in Poulmagree, Western Knockauns Mountains, County Clare has yielded passage by by-passing sump1 and diving sump 2. This year having had a little bit more practice at cave diving Andrew and I (Steve Cottle) returned to join up with a larger UBSS group to push sump3 hopefully to its conclusion.

On Monday 31<sup>st</sup> May Andrew Atkinson and I entered the cave fairly late after having to drop off Andy's Van for repair. We went swiftly down the cave carrying a tackle bag of line reel, torches etc. (The 4 bottles had been taken in the previous day by

Clive, Julian and Tony) and worked our way to a point in between sumps 1 and 2 where we decided to kit up. Each carrying two bottles and a line reel we headed through sump two and on to the start of sump 3. The previous year I had entered this sump and pushed it to about 50 m passing a number of airbells on the way. Andrew set off with around 50 m of line and a bolting kit so that we could tie the line off in an airbell. I shortly followed the 40 m of laid line and found him up to his neck in water putting a bolt in. Tying my line to him I continued into the sump laying new line as I went. After a few awkward turns in very poor visibility (less than half a metre) and around 30m I surfaced in a

small pool rather than one of the numerous airbells. The entrance to sump three is a distinct change from the highly vadose passage of the majority of the cave by changing to a phreatic tunnel. On exiting the sump the passage again rose into the normal vadose canyon. I headed off down the passage still reeling out line in case the passage dropped into a sump again. After about 20m I left the line reel and continued on down the canyons, eventually reaching after about another 20m a larger area with an inlet coming in on the left. I de-kited and went back to the sump with a rock (the only one I had found since the sump!) to tie off the line. I had to wait at the sump for a little

while until Andrew had decided that I had either drowned or had actually found something so he thought he'd better follow.

Shortly after he de-kited we headed off down "Priory Streamway" to see what lay beyond. This we followed for quite some time occasionally noticing inlets (some with water, some as passages) entering, plus a good array of flow formations on the walls of the cave and some very nice mud formations including dip pockets. As the passage narrowed we said if it gets bigger again we had better go back as the sherpa team would be expecting us. It did get bigger and thus we turned back trying to pace the distance but the amount of cave was too great for us to total this in the head. We arrived back at sump 2 and de-kited but alas the shapers had already departed, due to diminishing light. Thankfully they left us a Clive, who carried out one of the two bags.

Thus two days later armed with another two full air tanks, compass and slates we went back to do a grade 2 survey and find out whose predictions of the cave were correct.

Grahams were

1. The overall trend would be SSW
2. The gradient will be gentle with no significant pitches
3. The overall length will be 1.5 km, not including inlets
4. The final end (not counting boulder chokes or sumps) will be that the main passage choking with mud and gravel with the stream going off right into impenetrable bedding

Linda's prediction was slightly more interesting (psychedelic)

5. And they will met a frog called Frederick, to them he will speak. And he will say "Welcome to Poulmagree 4, Priory Streamway welcomes careful cavers, N'oubliez-pas le Frog"

This time diving through Andrew attempted a survey of the sump and airbells, not an easy

task considering the poor visibility. On exiting the sumps we started a pace survey with compass. The first inlet was initially explored and included some very fine floor formations which looked a bit like white broccoli but the end stalks were red. This looks very much like crabs eyes on stalks, hence the name "Crab Inlet".. This also had a spectacular stalactite that indescribably twisted in and around itself. Both parts of the inlet ended in boulder chokes.

Thus we set off down Priory Streamway surveying as we went and noting the other inlets. The stream was wider now but still joint controlled, around 5-15m high and 1.5m wide. After 120 survey legs, some over 100 paces! We reached another inlet. Just before this the stream had started to cut more sharply into the vadose canyon and thus we had started traversing. Up in the keyhole part of the canyon the inlets and flow formations were

now becoming very pretty with moonmilk flows and small gours. The inlet coming in to the left was also very pretty with some superb crystal (moonmilk) pool formations tinged with red stal, but at this point we realised that once again we were going to be late out. We stopped surveying and continued on traversing (the stream was now getting very narrow and with plenty of boulders to choke the way) to find the end. After a further 300 odd paces we found ourselves in a chamber with superb formations. Twisted stalactites, flow covering the floor and drip pocketed stalagmites. "Number 31" as this area was name was very carefully looked into to search for the way but alas this was not the case. By now we had run out of time so we once again exited from Priory Streamway back through the sumps to de-kit and then took all the gear back to the other side of the horrendous crawls and squeezes that

allow entry to beyond sump 1. (From here the sherpa teams would carry out the gear).

Thus we exited up the main cave, for once not carrying much gear. In the crawl we did stop to talk a frog, though who did not actually speak had the look of a Frederick! Left cave dead on schedule of 7pm and headed back to O'Connors and cottage for copious quantities of Guinness, curry and more Guinness, with a side measure of typing in survey data and plotting the results. Total length of new survey is approximately 2 km (based on the calibrated Steve principal) trending WNW before heading back to SSW.

Our thanks go to the sherpas (who will probably expect the return favour when the grade V survey is carried out) and to the Tratman fund for its aid in the cave diving.

**Steve Cottle**

## **EDITOR's FOREWORD**

Thanks Steve. There you go, you made front page as promised. This is going to be a bumper issue of our rag as I've now got enough material to compile an encyclopaedia. Many thanks to all those who contributed: The president Arthur ApSimon, for his anniversary address, Graham Mullan for the accounts, Rachel, Andy, Bill, Arg and the rest. You know who you are.

Not everything that has happened this term is in the letter. I don't know whether this is by fault or by design but we all know what you've done. Some things are probably best left unsaid whilst others are simply too rude to publish. Anyway here's to happy summer caving.

**Jez**

## THE STATUS QUO IS NOT AN OPTION ANNIVERSARY ADDRESS, 13<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 1999<sup>1</sup>

Arthur ApSimon, President

The President (AMA) reminded members that on the following Friday, 19<sup>th</sup> March, the Society would be 80 years old. While he very much hoped to be around on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary to drink the Society's health in something worthwhile, he certainly wouldn't be President then, so he was going to take the liberty of giving them an anniversary address now.

In doing so he was mindful that the Society's memories were becoming history. At the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary, there were still members who had joined in the first year of the Society's existence; a decade ago there were still Bruce Perry, Tom Hower and Leo Baker from the early 1920's; now there are only a few from before World War II. In this decade, we had tragically lost two student members, Joe Oates, killed in a road accident and Mick Sievers, lost on Mont Blanc; also geologist Francis Welch, archaeologist George Boon, physiologist Allan Rogers - secretary 60-odd years ago, and most recently, Molly Hall and our former president Bob Savage. We remembered them with affection for their friendship and their contribution to the Society.

Nevertheless our record over the decade had been one of solid achievement; in the last 10 years we had published 32 substantial papers on spelaeological or geological topics. Authors include Brazilian and Russian; spelaeological topics outside the Bristol area take in Devon, Wales, Northumbria, Ireland, Austria, Slovenia, Turkmenia and Brazil. Of 11 papers on archaeological topics, your president had been involved in authoring two, running to 107 pages. Thirty-four of these articles were on Mendip topics, totalling 475 pages with 140 illustrations!

The year had been shadowed for AMA by the deaths of old and dear friends and by memories of other members, alas no longer with us, revived by sorting through 30 years of UBSS records passed to him by Bob. Bob's letter of resignation suggested that the time had come to remind members of the existence of the **Oliver Lloyd Memorial Fund** which he was instrumental in setting up. This independent Trust Fund has as its main aim the support of our publications. Remembering the remarkably harmonious way - all things considered - that Bob and Oliver worked together as President and Treasurer/Editor, fresh contributions to the Fund (% The President<sup>2</sup>) would be a happy way to honour them both.

The year though had not been all bad; we have lots of active new student members, our Treasurer keeps us in a healthy financial state and our Editor has just produced for us an excellently varied number of *Proceedings*. It was a particular pleasure to hear of the appointment of Dr Pete Smart to a Personal Chair in Geography. The **County Clare Reunion**, last May, which you've read about in the *Newsletter*, was a happy occasion that many would like to repeat. Should we be thinking now of a 'get-together' for older members who didn't come to Co Clare? The friends - you can see many of them in the photo of Trat's 60th birthday party in *Proceedings*, 15, 2, - who have met for an annual lunch-party for nearly 40 years, certainly have an idea present students might like to copy.

Also last May, AMA, Lesley-Anne Kerr and Linda Wilson (*Valkyries*, not *Harpies*, Chris!) met with the Registrar - Mr Parry, the Dean of Arts - Mr Liversidge, and straight from *Red Dwarf* but definitely not a hologram, the Space Manager - Mr Griffiths, to discuss possible co-operation with the Archaeology Department over access to our library and museum for teaching and research. The meeting was cordial and constructive on both sides. We emphasised our continuing commitment to making our collections accessible to researchers, while at the same time making clear our independent status and our ownership of our collections; - the unsuitability of these for hands-on student teaching was accepted by all present.

Thorough preparation by members and excellent letters from Ian Longworth of the British Museum and Andy Currant of the Natural History Museum, helped in this satisfactory outcome. Members

<sup>1</sup> Pedants please note: this is an edited version, any resemblance to the spoken address is coincidental.

<sup>2</sup> Mansell Cottage, Swanmore Road, Swanmore, Hants. SO32 2QH



should be aware however, that while the only contact since has been an informal suggestion that a room labelled and kitted out as such in the old Baptist College to which the Archaeology Department was to move, would be an ideal home for our museum, the idea behind these and previous approaches was that Archaeology should take over our collections as a means of attracting outside sponsorship and funding.

UBSS was well represented at the seminar '*Towards an Archaeological and Historical Research Strategy for the Mendips*', organised by the Mendip AONB Heritage Group and held at the Charterhouse Centre in February. Jodie Lewis gave a paper on 'Geophysics and Prehistoric Landscapes', while notes on the 'Pleistocene archaeology and palaeontology of Mendip', circulated by Andy Currant and Roger Jacobi, helped us put down some useful markers on behalf of UBSS, and remind people that our professionally refereed *Proceedings* welcomes suitable papers on Mendip topics. Meanwhile, plans for the new Clare book are going ahead and there's even talk of a saleable CD-Rom of caving pics; our Collections Management Plan has been revised, we have a disaster plan and a disposal policy and agreement with Taunton Museum, should we ever need it.

Enough of the past and the present, we need to think for the future. Figureheads first, AMA is now at the age Trat was when he resigned the presidency and has no intention of going on presiding into ever deeper senility. However, assuming you still put up with him, he'll soldier on for the time being in the hope that by 2002 he'll be able to hand over to someone of a younger generation. The Society needs to make up its mind what sort of president - caver, archaeologist, etc. - it wants then. While a senior member of staff with a substantial reputation could give us a much needed voice in university politics, such a person is unlikely to take the job on unless UBSS is seen as having worthwhile aims and achievements.

So AMA can't afford to be just a caretaker - it's imperative that he leaves UBSS better able to thrive in an environment that's very different from 20 or even 10 years ago, and vigorously looking to contribute to spelaeological and archaeological research. For a start we need to make sure that our aims and objects remain relevant and that our Constitution reflects and makes them explicit. For example our Collections Policy considers the purpose of maintaining our museum collections is "to educate UBSS members". Our Constitution should spell out our Educational objective - to members, to the University, to the public at large.

The publishing of *Proceedings* and 'occasional publications' - like the Clare books, is one way of achieving that objective; our Constitution should do more than specify entitlement to receive the *Proceedings* when published. The Constitution mentions our museum and library, each *Proceedings* has a page headed 'Officers', listing:- *Museum Curator, Librarian, Editor*, officers needed to carry on the scientific and educative functions of UBSS, yet the Constitution makes no mention of them.

We really are missing a trick here in not emphasising the serious academic brownie-point-winning aspect of our Society. AMA therefore intends to present, in the *Newsletter*, proposals for amendment of our Constitution in the hope that these can come to the next AGM and the revised version serve as the basis for a public Mission Statement. This however is merely polishing our university and public image; we must also consider what changes we may need to make in the next decade to what we do and how we do it.

***Proceedings***: this is unquestionably one of our major assets, which we should take every opportunity to strengthen, as for example by offering its hospitality to papers about the Mendip AONB. We must make sure that selection of papers, refereeing and editing are kept to their present high standards and be prepared to change presentation and page size if that is what our customers demand.

**Our Archaeological Collections**: from a university point of view, the justification for our keeping these is that they serve as a resource for research in the University and potentially for particular modes of teaching, providing in turn much of the justification for our use of University accommodation. It is though, no secret that several senior members, AMA included, consider that the proper place for such collections is in a public museum where they can be freely seen by all, and with no disrespect to the devoted labours of Chris, Lesley-Anne and many helpers over the

years, be professionally curated. This view has clear implications for our disposal policy, for the retention of our premises and for cataloguing - we need to computerise and bring our museum catalogues into conformity with those of the public museums of the areas from which our collections come. We may also require a contingency plan to safeguard our **library and spelaeological archives**; our need now is to think how we can best help ourselves to overcome the challenges ahead.

AMA ended by quoting from a letter from John Pitts, our new Vice-President, about the early expeditions to Co. Clare: "... *Bob [Bendall] and I both felt that while the standard of the archaeological work of the Society was high, that of the caving side was low. We strove to raise that standard. Bob, in particular, did a huge amount of work to that end by introducing much more accurate surveying techniques which he demonstrated with John Crickmay, in his re-survey of GB cave. The Coolagh River gave us the opportunity to apply these techniques to a new cave that had not previously been surveyed. .... We had no idea that the consequence of our efforts would have such a long term impact on the Society. We also had a lot of fun. ...*"

Members would be delighted to hear that our Honorary Member, John Crickmay, who taught us most of what we ever knew about surveying, celebrated his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in the week previous to the AGM - and was out playing bridge when AMA rang to congratulate him.

The Society's vitality still depends on its student members having "*a lot of fun*" caving, combined with serious spelaeological and archaeological work. Long may this continue!

## **TREASURER'S REPORT TO THE 1999 AGM**

*Graham Mullan*

The year 1998/9 was another stunningly simple one for the Society, financially. The attached accounts show that the receipts and payments were fairly closely in balance. Within this year we (I) managed to pay for two copies of *Proceedings*, meaning that these accounts do, for a change, show an up-to-date position without an outstanding debt. Other points to be made about the Receipts and Payments Account are that we have managed to settle the *Proceedings* account without asking for a further grant from the University; that the donation to MRO was increased in line with the instruction from last year's AGM and that there is a miscellaneous receipt of £28.16. This last was due to a book keeping error by me. I apologised for this at the AGM and offered to resign. The Meeting politely ignored me (damn!).

A couple of comments can also be made about the Balance Sheet: The Hut Fund shows a small net expenditure. This has come about because the income has fallen since we stopped letting the Hut to outside groups. This does not stop the place needing maintenance, so I must exhort all members to ensure that they do pay the proper fees when they use it. The Caves of County Clare reserve fund looks very healthy now, sales have been extremely good this last couple of years. I must point out that we do not think that the publication of the new edition, when it is produced, will adversely affect this, as most of these sales are now to tourists, via Aillwee Cave.

**Finally, can I please ask all those members whose subscriptions are not paid by standing order to send their £12 to me as soon as possible. Or please consider making your payment this way. It really does save time and money. And please consider signing a Deed of Covenant. Last year we gained an extra £268 in income from this source. I am sure this could be substantially increased.**

# UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST JANUARY 1999

### RECEIPTS

	£		£
Publications Grants: University of Bristol		Proceedings Vol. 21.1	2670.00
Members Subscriptions		Proceedings Vol. 21.2	2142.00
Student Members Subscriptions		Reprint "Pen Park Hole"	20.80
Union Grants: Capital	256.97	Sales Postage	472.36
Current	<u>300.00</u>	Tools & Equipment	256.97
Interest on Investments: Bank	818.72		-
N.S.B.	<u>50.68</u>	Library	256.97
Sales of Publications (not C. of C.C.)		Museum	-
Donations		Sessional Meetings	-
Tax Refund on Covenants		Postages	138.71
Sale of CCC permits		Hon. Secs Petty Cash	-
Surplus on 1998 Annual Dinner		Stationery & Duplicating	242.40
Sale of sweat shirts		Rates & Taxes	38.30
Tratman Grant for Foreign Travel		Insurances: Third Party	273.00
Miscellaneous		Property	364.01
Transfer from Printed Publications Fund		Subscriptions & Licence	637.01
		Travel Money	121.25
		"Fresh"	105.00
		Donation To Mendip Rescue Organisation	20.00
		Tratman Grant for Foreign Travel	25.00
			<u>200.00</u>
		Excess of Receipts over Payments	7351.60
			178.39
			<u>7529.99</u>

### "CAVES OF COUNTY CLARE"

Surplus Balance at 31 January 1999	1316.76
	<u>1316.76</u>

### PUBLISHING ACCOUNT 1998/9

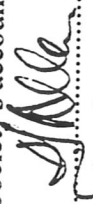
Sales of "Caves of County Clare"	715.92
Surplus balance at 1 February 1998	<u>600.84</u>
	<u>1316.76</u>

# UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

## BALANCE SHEET AT 31 JANUARY 1999

	£	£	£
<b><u>HUT FUND</u></b>			
Balance at 1. 2. 98	3915.69		
Less net expenditure	<u>86.92</u>		
			15000.00
			<u>1017.28</u>
			16017.28
<b><u>PRINTED PUBLICATIONS FUND</u></b>			
Balance at 1. 2. 98	5080.00		
Less transfer to R&P a/c	<u>2000.00</u>		
			898.33
<b><u>LIBRARY FUND</u></b>			
Balance at 1. 2. 98	299.50		
Add net income	<u>431.00</u>		
			730.50
<b><u>EQUIPMENT HIRE ACCOUNT</u></b>			
Balance at 1. 2. 98	289.92		
Add net income	<u>94.00</u>		
			383.92
<b><u>"CAVES OF CO. CLARE" RESERVE FUND</u></b>			
Advance for Publication	7000.00		
Add surplus balance on sales	<u>1316.76</u>		
			8316.76
<b><u>RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT</u></b>			
Balance at 1. 2. 98	484.29		
Add net income	<u>178.39</u>		
			<u>662.68</u>
			<u>17002.63</u>
			<u>17002.63</u>

**HONORARY AUDITORS REPORT:** I have examined the above Receipts and Payment Account for the year ended 31st January 1999, and the attached Balance Sheet as at that date and certify that they are in accordance with the Society's accounting records and explanations provided.

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

## MISSING FROM THE LIBRARY!

The following has been missing for some time, and the librarian would be very grateful for their return as they are both irreplaceable. Anonymous packages accepted!!

Shepton Mallet Caving Club: Bound journals Vols 5 & 6. Bright red, A4.

Tony Boycott

## FOR SALE Old style "GB" logo T-shirts and Sweat-shirts

### T-Shirts £5.00 each inc. postage

White	M x 2
Pink	XL
Orange	L x 3
Red	M, L, XL
Yellow	L, XL, XXL
Black	M x 2
Purple	L
Light Blue	M, XL
Turquoise	L
Green	M

### Sweat Shirts £10.00 each inc. postage

Yellow	L x 2, XL
Light Blue	XL
Black	M

## SECONDHAND BOOKS FOR SALE

Caves of North west Clare	E K Tratman.	£80.00
Troglodytes No 2 Summer 1920	Legible but "loose leaf"	£5.00

UBSS Proceedings, old and out of print issues. £10.00 each  
Vol 2 no 3, Vol 6 no 1 (2), Vol 6 no 2, Vol 6 no 3, Vol 8 no 1, Vol 12 no 1.

Also Volume 2, nos 1 - 3 bound, black and gold, good condition but cut down to size of Volume 1, no loss of text. £20.00

Orders to Tony Boycott, 14 Walton Rise, Westbury on Trym, Bristol, BS9 3EW  
0117 950 7336 e mail: ABDr@compuserve.com  
Please add £1.00 post, first come first served!



# OUTSTANDING



## SUBSCRIPTIONS

The following subscriptions are due

Adamson	12.00	M. Owen	4.00
M. Balister	12.00	M. Paganuzzi	12.00
A.P. Currant	4.00	A. N. Patrick	12.00
P. Davies	12.00	H. Pile	12.00
A. Goulding	12.00	P. Simpson	24.00
S. Grace	12.00	M.M. Thompson	12.00
T.Haines	12.00	P. Turner	12.00
H. Jackson	12.00	A. Tyler	12.00
P. Johnson	12.00	J.D. & C.M. Walford	6.00
T. Lyons	12.00	M.H. Warren	12.00

One of the above has paid, as I have an entry on the bank statement against a code I do not understand, that person will need to tell me the date on which it was paid and the code in order to be properly credited. I KNOW SEVERAL PEOPLE WHO IT DEFINITELY WAS NOT!

## Caving in Mallorca by Bill Miners

Steve Cottle, Andy Atkinson, Juliette Morse and Bill spent a week in Mallorca. 20th Feb 1999 to 27th Feb 1999.

This was the biggest cave we did on the trip it was also contained super stal formations. Cave Name: Covota de sa Penya Rotja.

To get to the cave This cave is up in the North East end of the Island of Mallorca, drive to the town of Alcudia and then follow the coast road round the southern side of the Pollenca bay, through Bon Aire, and all the posh boats. Continue to follow the road as it gets bumpy and potholed and arrive at a car park full of coaches and tourists at a place called Santuar de la Victoria or Ermita de la Victoria, depending on which map you use. Here a barrier prevents further driving the track beyond the barrier leads up through the trees. After ascending about 100 m, at the first major hairpin in the track a very clearly sign posted track with a rickety hand rail leads off to the left, sign posted to Penya Rotja (this may mean red cliff or hill?). The path follows the eastern side of the peninsular eventually passing below the distinctive red hill (don't be tempted up to the top of the hill by a right hand turn as I was!). The path then goes through a little turret on the face of the cliff and onto a stone ledge from which the whole of the Northern Peninsular can be seen. At this point we took a small path to the left of the ledge

descended down and then tracked back to the right, underneath the cliff below the stone ledge. Then descended until it was possible to track back around to the left following the base of the cliff so we ended up below where the turret had been on the cliff side. Carrying on back along the base of the cliff heading south west revealed the large maw like entrance to the cave (15m x 2m). I think it took us about an hour to walk to the cave from the car. (Or would have done if we hadn't spent lots of time route finding.) Andy was easily able to run there and back to the car in less than an hour.

The spelaeological babble: The main part of this cave was formed by the earth movements which formed the mountains to the west. The vertical range inside is 138 m. The cave represents an inverted pudding bowl, shaped by anticlinal folding. The top of the bowl is one chamber the Sala des Ossos which is largely filled with rubble and about 1 to 3 meters high covers an area of about 70 m x 50 m. with the edges being tight and small and descending down into the rest of the cave. We entered the cave from the right hand side middle of this bowl first went up to the top and then carried down to the bottom of the cave.

The gear bit!! While Andy was tastefully attired in t shirt, shorts, knee and elbow pads, Juliette and Steve wore matching one piece boiler suits in a tasteful shade of brown. I was wearing an old Gortex top and long trousers. All of us carried our SRT kits for the first bit of the trip, putting the kit on when the descent into the bottom bit of the cave required it. The cave was very warm and we really should have taken some water in with us. Rope required for what we did: 50 or 60 m and some slings, this could be in two bits for the via Antiga. Then at least 30 m for the descent into the Galeria de Roma requiring some crabs, another sling and ideally a rope protector for the lip but we used a cunningly placed tackle bag. It would be possible to do this with ladders (as I know that Mendip people prefer them!!) The trip From the entrance ascend up the slope to the right, through a slight narrowing into a long chamber which proceeds into the cliffside there is then a tricky metre descent. Carry on along the chamber keeping to the higher passage. At this point we investigated a nice little chamber high up on the left hand wall which contains a dried out pool. At the end there are some impressive stal columns, which required a lot of photography and beyond these is a small chamber the Vestibule chamber, from which is a very narrow horizontal slot at floor level descends with the aid of some handy boss foot holds to the continuation of the passage. A stooping walk takes you then into the Sala Central Chamber, which is a widening of the passage. We left our SRT kits in this chamber as we climbed up to the left of the passage over some breakdown blocks through a slot in the roof, up through another small chamber following the occasional scratched sign through a narrow slot and a horizontal slide into the Sala des Ossos. At this point you are about 30 m above the Sala Central. This chamber at the top of the cave is meant to be full of very rare fossils of extinct animals. However we failed to find any!! Just got sore backs from moving around the chamber crouched over to avoid the roof.

At this point there was much grumbling from some people who wanted to get on with the real business of doing some SRT!! Then back to the Sala Central and we headed off down the Via Antiga (to the lowest part of the cave) This sounds like an impressive roadway but it turned out not to be! What happens is that the downslope part of the chamber gets narrower and steeper. We tackled the descent by going to the end of the chamber and used about 60 m of rope tied to various columns to slide down the increasingly narrow slot with a handy rebelay to another column about half way down. The bottom of the slot is a horizontal passage but I had descended the slot too far to the left and it was b\*\*\*\*d tight at the end. Requiring me to ascend about ten meters and redescend to the passage. The horizontal passage leads in a few meters to a lip overlooking the Galeria de Roma. This is a very impressive take off with loads of stal around and rather impressive large but corroded metal anchor for one arm of the y hang. The descent of 25 m is superb with ones feet clanging on huge stal. In fact words fail me for how impressive this chamber was. I've never abseiled down the side of such a huge stal boss. One needs to be so careful with ones feet dangling against the stal making lots of impressing clanging noise.

Once at the bottom it is possible to get all excited and charge off to the North (I had a compass but it was rather obvious) scrambling first down to the side of the chamber then

along before needing to climb over a 6 m flowstone barrier called the El pas de Berener. There then follows a series of beautiful small chambers all surpassing the next in the amount of stal, the length of the straws and the glittering dried out gour pools. It was the best decorated passage I have ever seen. Finishing all too quickly before one has to turn around and reverse the route back out. There is one other way to descend into the Galeria de Roma from the Vestibule chamber it is called the via Malfieners. But we did not investigate this route.

## Andy Wallis



## Down On The Farm

It was a beautiful day. The sun was shining, the ropes were packed and Si Flower and myself were all set to play with the new eco hangers in Rhino Rift. Of course these trips never go quite to plan and so it was that as we turned off towards Charterhouse, Si casually announced that he had forgotten the key!

After much cursing and deliberation, we decided that as we were right next to Manor Farm Swallet, we should go down there instead. The cave seemed particularly dry on the way down, not even a droplet of water flowing anywhere in the main stream (something that Si was very disappointed by).

After examining every sewage filled nook and cranny of this glorious cave and commenting on the huge number of shrimps that seemed to be swimming everywhere, we finally made it down to the bottom where a series of dig sites lead off in various squalid directions. After examining every possible lead and marvelling at just how dodgy the terminal boulder ruckle is, we decided to head out.

As we walked up the streamway, we could hear a distant rumble. We both looked at each other as we simultaneously thought "what the f--- is that?". It couldn't be water after all as the cave was bone dry.

Arriving at a relatively straightforward 15 foot climb up a calcite pot, the rumble appeared to be growing louder. Si climbed first. As he reached the top I heard him shout "Andy, get the fuck up here now!". Deciding that this seemed a good plan I quickly scrambled up the slope. Just as I reached the top an enormous dirty brown wave of water rushed towards me and literally flew over the pot I had just climbed. If you have never witnessed a flood pulse close up, you cannot imagine what it looks like. A previously bone dry cave turned into a raging torrent in the space of a couple of seconds. Neither of us had ever seen anything like it.

We quickly headed upwards towards the cave entrance. It was always in the back of my mind that we might struggle to pass the flood due to the other climbs and crawls in the streamway. As we reached Albert's Eye, a small squeeze in the streambed I stopped to think about whether or not we should just stop and wait for the flood pulse to pass. All this was irrelevant as I saw Si dive through the squeeze like a greased ferret! Having little choice but to follow him I headed through the squeeze myself, a not altogether comfortable proposition given the wall of water that was rapidly building up in my face!

We continued on up the streamway. By this time all the excitement was making me tired so I shouted to Si, "Stop! I need to get my breath back". Si, meanwhile, heard this as "Stop, I need to get my bread back". He started shouting back to me "What bread? What are you on about? Let's get out of here now!". As we approached the start of the streamway, I shouted to Si to tell him that the normal stream path that flows through some tight squeezes through a side passage was most likely underwater and that we should instead attempt the awkward climb up into Curtain Chamber that had been dry when we came down. As we reached the climb we were horrified to see that not only was the

usual route completely full but that the stream was gushing over the top of the climb. Again I told Si that I needed to get my breath back before attempting the climb. Unconcerned about the possible whereabouts of my sandwiches, he continued climbing anyway.

All the decent handholds were under the flow of the water so it was quite an effort to climb against the water flow. Upon reaching the top I then slipped on the slope and the streamway took several large boulders over the edge with it. I was stunned at the top to discover that the stream flowing over the climb was not simply an overflow from the normal stream route. It was an entirely new stream flowing from the direction of the entrance. This area has always been dry whenever I've been down before even when the weather was bad. When we reached the handline climb down September Rift, we were relieved to see that the water was flowing from the boulders just beyond, and thankfully not down the rift itself. The rift is an awkward climb at the best of times. Had the water been flowing down it, I think we may have been screwed!

Eventually we reached the entrance shaft and prussiked out to daylight. As if to add further to our worries, Si then asked if I thought that SRT ear made good lightning conductors! Changing by the roadside in a pissing storm wasn't even slightly unpleasant. We were just relieved to have made it out of the cave. Si as so happy that he danced in his underwear for the passing motorists. As they tooted their horns we knew that they had appreciated the show!

The moral of the story is of course to look at the weather forecast before descending the cave. If I had done this I would have noticed the ceefax headline "Storms: West battles against weather". A valuable lesson was learnt by both of us. That is that if you are going to descend a stream cave on a day when thunderstorms are predicted, pick one with less sewage!

## Stefan's Underground Cake - by Arj

I opened my eyes, but not too wide because of all that light around. A chair, clothes, smelly shoes, gear... Close my eyes again, don't want to know about it...yet. I like the free movies they always project on the back of my eyelids. I drifted back to Bristol, to this big party. The house was so packed that people had gone to socialise in the street. I felt tired. All the interesting people seemed to have disappeared, so I just pondered around on my own in the fine drizzle. I saw a girl sitting on a stone wall in front of one of the houses, all on her own. She looked up to me as I approached her. Some girls look at your face, then gaze down to your shoes and back. They assess you. This girl just looked at my face and smiled at me. "Hello" she said with a French accent. "Hi." Her clothes were neither sexy, nor alternative or of any particular style whatsoever. "Having a good time?" I asked. "A good time? Yes, I 'avuhh really good time! Do you like this party?" "Yes I do, have you been inside? They're playing drum and bass." "Yes, I have been in the house, but I'm afraid I don't like the music." She now leaned over to one side to grab something out of her back pocket. It was a cigarette. Guys would put the thing in their mouth and dangle it up and down while mumbling "f--- my ligh'er", tapping all of their pockets. She didn't put the cigarette in her mouth. She kept it in between her fingers and reached for the pocket again with the same hand. She then put the cigarette in her mouth and lit it, facing down to the pavement. She looked up to me again as it was lit. I didn't think it made her look more mature. "You're French, aren't you?" I asked. "Yes, can you hear that?" She was genuinely surprised. I saw that her woollen sweater was covered with tiny droplets, from the drizzle. Her hair was wet as well. She made a scratching movement with her thumb over the edge of her mouth, again holding the cigarette in between her fingers. The gesture wasn't intended to put on a certain air, it was merely unintentionally copied and internalised, I reckoned. A voice was shouting, but it was not in Bristol...I couldn't understand the words, because I was listening in the wrong format. It was Dutch, with a strong Utrecht-accent. "F----- shit, that's Ted Braun, the landlord" my brother moaned from under his blankets "I hope my bloody door is locked because I've got some gear in here he'd better not see." "So who are you?" Ted's voice went on in the corridor. "Mohammed..." a hesitant voice replied. "So, is that Mohammed Adam, is that you mate?" "Yes sir." "So, who's this other chap then, the one who just walked out of your room to hit the shower eh?" "He is a guest." "Is he? A guest, blimey! I take it you know fuck all about that room next to you when it comes to knowing who's forced his bloody way into

it and what on earth's happened in there, do you?" "No sir." "You don't...right...another point worth bringing to your attention dear, is that God-forsaken kitchen in this flat. What a cancer-clutter<sup>1</sup> you people turned it in to!"

What a way of waking up, always happens during the best of dreams. My brother yawned. "I suggest we eat a bit and then head off to the mines, have you still got those free train tickets I nicked for you from the Association of War Veterans?" "Yeah, got them here." We were having some food in the kitchen when Stefan walked in. "Do any of you have a screwdriver?" "No." "Because I want to fix my door, you see, I heard Ted shouting and I thought 'f---' he might open my door and see my indoor weed garden, 'bad news', so I rushed to my door to lock it but I accidentally pulled the door handle off." "That's pretty scrotum<sup>2</sup> for you." My brother said.

Some time later we were on an EU<sup>+</sup> train with toilets for handicapped people and video rooms for children. "This country has become fucking rich while I was away." "Yeah, we're booming." "So, do you want to stay here?" "No, once you've started travelling, you always want to pick it up again, I'm only working here to pay my way out of this country, the further out the better." "Have you packed in the bolt cropper as well?" "Yep." A friend joined us further down south. He talked about diving and his girlfriend possessing the magic gift of not taking offence at him farting whilst both lying in the same sleeping bag. You have to have smelled his farts to realise just how magic this gift is. We soon arrived in Maastricht and met another guy as well, named Vince (all of the other names are unpronounceable). Half of Maastricht and surrounding villages were built from limestone, and guess where they got it from. Tonight's objective was to force an entrance into the Bondsdael-mine. This mine was used by the Germans during the second world war. All of the mines in the area contain about 5000 bats whose numbers have been counted from the second world war onwards. Population trends in different species have been followed over the past 50 years, which is exceptionally long for any animal to be followed. Some kids died in a mine, a couple of years ago and the government decided to seal off a number of mines that were thought to be dangerous or to be prone to vandalism. But, basically, they just took all these measures because they're wankers. We became friends because we felt that counting had to be continued *no matter what measures would be taken* and also because the dutch government are wankers. We are still friends and the government are still wankers, but the bats have been counted every winter since.

"Arj, this mine's a real bastard, I've tried to dig my way into it from an adjacent system and I actually found a narrow passage-way after breaking down a wall, dead end though, and no way I could dig any further; all concrete" my brother said. "So the only option is to saw that steel beam in half, where the bats' entrance is?" "I'm afraid so, and it may be a bit trickier than the grille we did last night." That grille we had dealt with the night before was surely a laugh. The grille, consisting of massive steel spokes, covered the shaft leading to a mine which best translates as 'Snake-mountain'. It only took about three quarters of an hour of sawing in turns before the situation was under control. The difference now was, with the Bondsdael entrance, that some sort of railway had been bolted against the wall on the inside, narrowing the small holes in the wall even further. Another source of inconvenience was a busy road and a warden's house nearby. Luckily, some sawing had already been undertaken during preparatory weekends. Using the lower flight-holes as footholds, a saw could be brought through the big flight hole where the endless sawing job was to be completed with only the left hand. At the same time, people would be out on the watch, as dictated by a rota. Martijn and I were on the lookout. It was 4am and everything appeared quiet. "Be good to publish some counting results, that increase in Natterer's bats really does look exponential." "Yeah." "Did you hear Speleo Club Avalon were on at a completely new system last summer in Indonesia or so?" "No?" "Miles of passage, the bastards!" "Think it's started to rain again, shall we do a bit of sawing?" We managed to get the beam in half as it was becoming light, then we went back to our sleeping-mine. The notch-eared bat was still hanging above us as we crawled into our sleeping bags. Some time later I opened my eyes and stared into the black. "What time is it?" a voice asked. "It's two o'clock." "Is that am or pm?" "Dunno..." "You have to look at the letters, if you see a p and an m it means pm..." "It's only got pointers, tosser!" "Fuck, you really do sound like a German with that southern scheiß-accent of yours, when will you make a start solving that problem?" "Vince, make us a thingy...a cheeseburger and eggs and stuff with that super-fryer of yours." We took it easy and had a carnivorous breakfast until 4, probably in the afternoon. "So, do you reckon we could do the entire Bondsdael in one night?" "Yeah, just a matter of planning the trip efficiently, I'll show you the map" my brother said. "So where are we on this map?" "¿Uhuuh, soi un poco stupido, no lo comprendo; wakey, wakey, not us is on zze map, arsehole, we're in a shite cavern way off the map, just about where that Rambo-knife lies." A couple of hours later we were on the move, fully geared and camouflaged, up for action. Automatically, one was on the



lookout, one working his way in and the others hiding, ready to swap positions at a sign. Shortly after this we were inside and decided to quickly follow the corridor, using dim light, to start looking for bats somewhat further away from the entrance zone. I was map reading and told the squaddies which passages to check out. It was good larding<sup>3</sup> with a free hanging pond bat and more Myotid-variety. Martijn had brought some music as well. It was a German band singing about a concentration camp or so, but it was a bit slow because of the batteries being exhausted. "Why do you get those Jew-stars on the wall, and what does the number below it mean?" someone asked. "The number denotes the quantity of jews being gassed in this particular section." We walked on. "My God, they must have gassed loads, look 25 here, and look, another 32 here, just keeps on going." "Whiskered bat here in the crack" "OK, got that." "I'm hungry" someone complained. "I can see that, we've only had 6 burgers each, a bit of custard, couple of sandwiches, biscuits and bounties...luckily I brought some mini-cakes Stefan has made from his own harvest, I'll give you a half to start with." We all took the cakes which tasted of cardboard. "I'm thirsty now." "Shut up and find some bats instead." We walked past another star, labelled 45. "Have you been to the 'It' lately?" "No, you can't do that anymore, they're making sure only gays make it in nowadays." "How do they do that?" "You need a gay pass." "How do you get one?" "Dunno, you have to be gay I guess." "That's a bummer." "Yes, it is, a long-eared here on the ceiling." Miles deeper in the hill we found a fairly unstable looking section of the mine, with lots of loose rocks in the pillars. "If those wankers from the university were here, they would go: 'this section well deserves to be silently trodden indeed, negating the immanent peril of collapse that we would rather not invoke on ourselves', arseholes. Do you know what my answer is? This." One of the guys now headed towards one of the pillars, pivoting gracefully with one of his massively sized feet swerving high up in the air to clash with stones in it. Stones thudded out of the pillar, which was a sign for the others to join in. "Wow, did you hear that cracking noise? We're all gonna die, let's invoke some serious damage here." We went on after the damage was done. "There're really no bats this far in the mine, are there?" "No..." "Jesus man, I've got this hardhouse music in my head thumping like mad...it's so good." "You're not looking for bats, you two go round the block here and Vince and I will meet you round the back." "A mate of mine's got this terrordome cd full of spanking hard tracks, as cool as arse<sup>4</sup>." "OK, just one corridor left to do, see where the others are." When we came round the corner we saw the others writing texts on the wall. "I got this idea, you know, about Tina Turner giving a concert here...you know, no one here to watch her, I've written it all down, it's really funny." "Oh, it has her signature as well I see." "I am so thirsty, you know, I would really like to drink loads of water, so thirsty." "You can have the water and I'll go for the beer, we've finished, haven't we?" "Yeah, I think it's time to go back." We started to walk back to the exit. "Do we have beer then?" "Yeah, and bounties and burgers and the whole hog." "My God, I'm desperate to get back to our nice cosy little cavern." I stepped up the pace, and wouldn't even allow for a short laugh, holding on firmly to the map. I knew fighting it would be imperative, were we to find our way out again. At last, the long tunnel towards the exit. "My God, we made it." "Yeah" someone said. I could see lights outside through the flight holes. Jesus, it took ages for Martijn to make a move, just that fidgeting without actually doing anything. Still fidgeting -and the lights outside were also still there. Nothing happened. I couldn't see what was going on because it was so dark. "Martijn, are you making your way out?" "No, are you?" "No." "Is anyone?" Silence. "I have this proposal, shall we make a start climbing out?" "Yeah..." "It's always me who's gotta go first." I heard mumbling and more fidgeting somewhere above me. "It's much more difficult to get out than it was to get in, it's just...the angle's become so awkward." "Has it?" "Yeah, for f---'s sake, gonna drop on my fucking head on the other side." Someone laughed. "On his fucking head." Others joined in with the laughing. "I made it" a weak voice sounded on the other side. "I can't get through, my belt is stuck, oh no, can you take it off please?" the next guy asked. I undid his belt. "Yeah, that's better, like grease now, hello world...born again...whooh, it's really deep here, so high up...no good for my fucking head." I'm not going to expand on my 15 minute journey through the rusty passageway when it was finally my call. I found a real world outside, from the shadows sheering along besides me, to their casters, making our way into Plato's ultimacy. We could even see stars and other planets in the sky, suggesting yet another stage beyond our scope. In his letter to his secret friend, Thyranosides, a famous painter from the old Greece, describes Plato as a wholehearted companion and a dedicated caver. As we all know, Plato's final trip was diving the depths of Atlantis when an idle attempt to switch to trimix at -60m proved fatal. We made it to our cavern! There was beer and food and more food. We went through the two day stock in ten minutes. "This bounty-bar" someone started to speak "is so tasty, the taste of that chocolate, you really experience it all through your mouth, here, try it man." "Does anyone want wine?" I took a swig of this promising looking Rioja-bouquet. "My God, blimey, this taste is really

beautiful, no honestly, I swear, my God, it's the best wine I've ever drunk in my entire life, here, have a go." I passed the bottle on and let go when I felt a hand grabbing it. A couple of seconds later I heard the sound of a liquid gurgling into someone's throat. "Jesus, this wine, really is good, that taste is unique!" "Let me have it, I want to taste that as well!" a voice cried in the dark. A headtorch was now switched on and in this sudden light I saw this brief scene in which my brother snatched the bottle away until the light was switched off again. I couldn't tell what happened after that. "My God, have you tasted this wine, it's really, really good, Vince, I think you should try this." "No thanks, my head is so heavy, I can hardly carry it." I heard a sound of someone munching up crisps. I could tell the hunger from the way they were frantically wrenched out of the bag. "Ohoho Jesus, all exploding" someone broke the silent regurgitating. I knew I was sitting, I knew that, but how was I sitting? It was only in my head, where it all came down to. The platform broke loose from the others and started twisting around in the air. I was on my own to do my stuff, solely me now, ready to undergo the upcoming raving brainwash that was all part of this deal. It was accompanied by trance music, fading in from the dark; opae magnaie suiting the episode of imagery. My mind crossed the sea, I wasn't here any more. I saw myself climbing on cliffs, high above the sea, abseiling along waterfalls underground, a thousand streetlights flashing by, gliding over hills, views of the city, an audience listening to what richness I was suddenly empowered to convey in my new language, that weird American girl who suddenly dragged me on the dancefloor, and how nice some people I had met actually were, always failed to realise that...why can I never see? The image rate increased, it was all chronological, as in a movie, forcefully telepathised...could hardly cope. I noticed I was drooling in all this concentration. The platform slowly rotated back to the ground. "So, did you say Stefan would take three of these cakes...drie van die cakejes bedoel ik?" "Yeah, he's a nutter" a voice answered from the dark. I tried to make my way to my sleeping bag under the notch-eared bat. I crawled into it and closed my eyes. I may have thought of a very nice French girl I once met.

#### Glossary of terms

<sup>1</sup> (kankerzooi): horrendous mess

<sup>2</sup> (klote): shit

<sup>3</sup> (spekken): cool colloq. 'inflow of goodies'

<sup>4</sup> (retegaaf): wicked (a word only used in subtitling by tacky broadcasting corporations)

*You're weird Arj - Jez*

## Caption Competition

I'll buy a pint for whoever comes up with the funniest caption for this - Jez



## SRT – “Strung-up Rachel Technique”

I didn't think I was the kind of person to get strung up on SRT. I'm sensible about checking my equipment and organizing it neatly so it hadn't crossed my mind that it would happen to me – twice (in two weeks)!!

In Bull Pot, in Yorkshire, I became stuck beneath a deviation that was too tight to undo from the rope. I was cursing Jon severely for his shoddy rigging, whilst I tried various insane methods (ask Andy) to lift my weight off the rope (no foot or hand holds anywhere). Later I discovered Steve had rigged that bit – he made excuses about short slings / lack of slings, or something! (Jon, sorry for my lack of respect for your rigging).

Meanwhile Steve was yelling instructions from below, and Andy Jacket from above. Unfortunately with several thousand gallons of water also in the shaft, I couldn't hear. Little did I know (being an SRT beginner) that I could have treated it like a re-belay. Some kind of inherent fear of removing metal work from the rope stopped that idea entering my head!

So it was mid-air rescue time. Steve managed to shimmy up to me in no time at all and pass me (interesting position – thighs across face style – me pinned against the wall!). Using his superb initiative he rigged a device, using his foot loops, for both of us to lift our weight off the rope and pass the deviation.

I was later greatly reassured to discover that even Jon had found the deviation nasty, and had to do a one-arm pull – up to get passed (big muscles!).

More recently, Roland and I went to Hunter's Hole with Clive for some more SRT training. This time descending passed a hanging re-belay was rather traumatic. Thankfully we both had problems so I'm confident it's not just me being totally defective!

The multifactorial problem was something to do with too short safety cords on foot loops, not enough slack on the top rope, and perhaps I might add, inexperience! No amounts of shuffling up and down seemed to help get the short carustail off so it was mid-air rescues all round! Thanks Clive.

Roland and I are now working on our one-arm pull-up technique! Definitely need more SRT practice – any volunteers to help out?

## **A Night to Remember in Goatchurch**

**By Rachel**

For some bizzare reason I decided it would be wise to wake up in a cave on my 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday! I also managed to convince Morvan, Dicken , Jez , Arj and Jon to join me in my celebrations. Apparently Rob also came to Goatchurch but we weren't there so he slept halfway up the Mendips?!

Once I'd recovered from my previous night's hangover we set out to The Crown (my local near Langford) and "warmed up" for the trek across the Mendips – which it certainly turned out to be! I really do know my way around the entire Mendips but somehow managed to miss the vital turning (something to do with too many pints of Old Tossers) and drag everyone about 6 miles to Goatchurch (without sufficient lighting). Jon was the least impressed since he was virtually disabled by a footballing knee injury!

Thankfully Dicken had had the bright idea to leave the car with all the gear in it by Burrington Café so at least we didn't have to carry all that. We finally found our resting place in the entrance of Goatchurch at about 1 am. Much to our disappointment there seemed to be a lot less space in there than we all remembered. Once settled with candles and sleeping bags Morvan and Dicken produced a wondrous birthday cake – hugely appreciated after the hike!

Despite the angle of my bed area I actually managed to sleep quite well until 7 am when the cold and damp and hard rock bit in! Jon had rather a tendency to slide downwards into the depths of the cave, and Arj had the right idea by sleeping right by the entrance on a very flat bit!

Needless to say we were too wrecked to do any form of proper caving in the morning!

It was definitely an experience and I look back and laugh – I'll never forget my 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday but I don't think we'll do it again in a hurry.

Cheers guys for joining me in my madness!