

UBSS NEWSLETTER

CHRISTMAS 1999

Vol 16 No 1.

Welcome to this festive edition of the UBSS newsletter. Sorry I haven't been very active this term but I was sent to Cornwall after I got back from Australia so I haven't met everyone yet. Unfortunately I didn't get to do any caving but I did manage to get plenty of dives in on the Great Barrier Reef and I camped out with kangaroos. Hopefully I will be able to cave with everyone by the end of the year. The club seems to have tripled in size this term so there should be plenty of gossip around. Please feel free to dish the dirt on anything or anyone. As far as I'm aware UBSS has never been sued for libel so if you send it in I'll print it. Many thanks for all who have contributed including Andy Farrant, Arthur ApSimon, Andy Wallis and Haley. It wouldn't be possible without you. Merry Christmas and a happy new year.



Jez

H004



Caving- guaranteed to put a smile on your face!

Caving A New Dimension

I can remember the slight apprehension that began to creep into my consciousness as the car drew up to a halt. Before it had encroached the pit of my stomach, it was forced out into the chill of the October evening.

I don't think I really had any preconceptions and was really very aware that I could not imagine what lay ahead. Squelching through fields, it was refreshing to observe the abundance of stars amongst the peace of the countryside - the first example of what joining the caving club has made me appreciate is that there is so much more to this world than we ordinarily come into contact with on the world's surface. The next feeling I remember was the excitement as I lowered myself through a square opening and a degree of surprise at the narrow passages and crawls and the intriguing shapes of the surrounding surfaces. That, my first proper caving trip ignited something quite indescribable within me.

It is incredible that natural events can lead to the formation of such intricate, beautiful and characteristic things as are abundant throughout a cave. Perhaps it is their mysterious and secret formation that confers these properties. The passages and everything observed within them seem to have evolved naturally over a long period of time and my lack of geological knowledge adds to their appeal.

Once kited out it is possible to be anybody and having left the ground's surface to be anywhere at any time. Losing contact with normality is strangely liberating in the confines of a dark and narrow passage (!!! - Jez) which can be far less claustrophobic and confining than the real world at times. Time seems to stand still and all previous concerns can be left at the entrance from where they have often dispersed upon ones return.

Imagination is in its element; goblins and smooth friendly creatures could pop out at any moment (*what were you smoking Haley?*) and all reside comfortably in contented equilibrium, holding tight to the stalactites and sitting as they might on stalagmites.

Although often physically exhausting, caving is for me a revitalising experience. I may even go as far as to suggest that it can become an addiction and I'm sure that I get withdrawal symptoms if too much passes between doses! Enlightening in many more ways than one, it has led me to discover muscles that I had not appreciated after a year examining specimens in the dissecting room.

Caving has added a new dimension to my world. One I never dreamed could exist in its apparent form.
-Haley.

(Deep and profound stuff Haley. Glad You're enjoying yourself. Can't wait for the novel. - Jez)

Treasurer's Bit

As usual at this time of year, I need to plead with the last few reluctant souls to pay their subscriptions for the current session. Thankfully there are fewer of them than normal, but our cash flow is always improved when everyone pays up on time. Those who still need to send me money – and how much – are:

Phil Davies	⇒£12.00	Adam Goulding	⇒£12.00
Simon Grace	⇒£12.00	Marco Paganuzzi	⇒£12.00
Nick Patrick	⇒£10.00	Pete Simpson	⇒£24.00
Mike Thompson	⇒£12.00	Paul Turner	⇒£12.00
Andy Tyler	⇒£12.00	Martin Warren	⇒£12.00

On the other hand, the take-up of membership by new students has been extremely good this year, which of course improves our cash flow situation at this time of year as well. Much of this is down to sterling efforts by current Committee members, especially the Student Treasurer, keep up the good work John.

Applications for Grants from the Tratman Fund

This Fund originates from the bequest to the University by the late Prof. E.K. Tratman who died in 1978. 'Trat' had been a member of UBSS since 1919 and was our President from 1948 to 1972. In his lifetime he led numerous caving expeditions and archaeological excavations and was generous in encouraging exploration and research by younger members.

The arrangements for the Tratman Fund stem from proposals made in 1979 by the late Prof. Bob Savage, President in 1977-90 and by the late Dr Allan Rogers, Hon. Sec. in 1939-40 and a member for over 50 years. As modified in May 1996, these provide for one-tenth (previously it was one-fifth) of the annual income to come to the Speleological Society to make grants available to encourage speleology and cave archaeology within the University (the rest of the income goes to the Tratman Scholarship which funds a postgraduate studentship in Archaeology, Geology or Geography, with an emphasis on studies in the Bristol region).

Current Arrangements

Applications should be made to the Society's President, Mr ApSimon, either directly, or via the Hon Treasurer, Mr Graham Mullan.

Applications for grants for 'fieldwork' for the Christmas and Easter vacations and the intervening period should reach the President by **15 November**, those for the summer period by **1 April**.

Application for grants to assist publication in the Society's *Proceedings* of research by members should normally be made by **15 November**.

Applications for grants

These must be neatly typed and signed by the principal applicant(s). Applications for fieldwork grants should contain/cover the following aspects:

- a concise note of the relevant geographical, geological, speleological and/or archaeological features of the project area;
- its location (Lat. & Long. if outside the British Isles);
- names of principal caves or sites to be visited;
- description and aims of the proposed work;
- reference to previous work and relevant reports;
- names and relevant experience/qualifications of the leaders/organisers;
- names and membership status of persons taking part (undergraduate, postgrad, staff, senior, outside);
- a breakdown of the funding requested and whether other funding is available/is being sought;

For foreign expeditions we may ask for a reference (or name and address of a referee) from a UK based or locally based person or organisation covering:

- the potential value of the project;
- its feasibility without undue safety risks, given the experience and competence of the applicants and team;
- possible co-operation with and acceptability to local researchers.

As a **condition** of any grant, we ask for on completion:

- a short written report or informal note for publication in our *Newsletter* detailing the activities of the expedition/project and the results obtained;

- sight of the expedition log and appropriate documentation of expenditure.

Depending on results and conditions which may be imposed by other funding bodies we would expect that where appropriate a report suitable for publication in our *Proceedings* would be offered in due course.

Processing applications, arrangements for payment

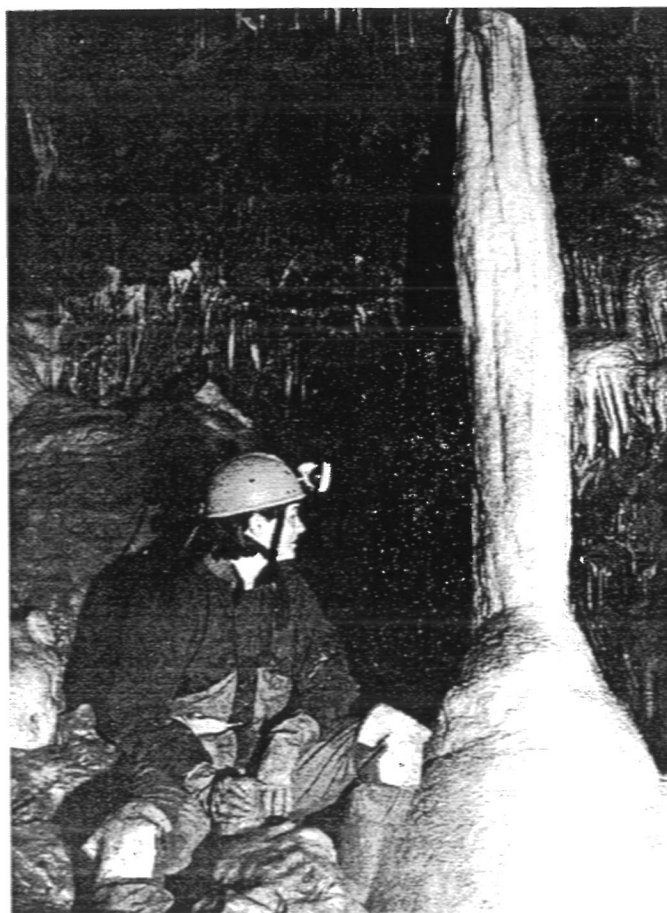
In considering applications, the President consults Senior Officers/members of the Society and external referees if necessary. Weight is given to the archaeological or speleological potential of the project. Other things being equal, preference will be given to applications from student members.

The Hon. Treasurer distributes grants to the principal applicant(s) who is/are responsible for allocation in accordance with the terms of the grant.

Since the total sum available in any one year is not large members should be prepared to get only a proportion or even none of the sums applied for.

*Arthur ApSimon
President
September 1999*

Caption Competition - A pint for anyone who can tell me what Rachel is doing! I'll print both caption competition results in the next issue - Jez



Andy Looses His Air

Having been an avid diver since the age of 14, I had always wondered about cave diving – the so called “most dangerous sport in the world”. After I took up caving in general my interest in squeezing into small dark holes in the open water seemed to increase. As well as the enhanced sense of exploration gained by swimming deeper into wrecks, I began to find the experience genuinely exciting. A holiday in Menorca where I spent a whole week exploring sea caverns only inspired me further.



Until recently, the club has not really had a particularly active cave diving membership with Clive and Tony being the only experienced members. This began to change a couple of years ago when a club dig in Ireland led Steve and Andy to an undived sump which was sufficient motivation for them to take up the sport as well. With all this new cave diving activity I decided it was about time I had a go myself.

And so it was that myself and Steve found ourselves at Little Neath River cave one July afternoon fully kitted and raring to go.

The plan was to enter through Bridge cave and five through to Little Neath and then on through sumps 2, 3 and 4 into what was known as the New World passage. Steve assured me that this passage was spectacular and had only been visited by around 30 or so people before ever. Filled with the excitement of stepping into such an unknown world, I was a little disappointed when two more divers turned up with the same plans just after we started getting changed (I thought you said it wasn't visited often Steve!).

Kitted out with two tackle bags for all the assortment of additional gear we needed we headed off into Bridge cave. Bridge starts off as a hands and knees crawl and then leads into an awkward boulder choke. This is not particularly ideal for carrying diving cylinders (good job we only had two small 3 litre cylinders each) but it is a preferable entrance to Little Neath itself which starts as a low and awkward wet crawl.

Fortunately the entrance crawl was not particularly long and despite being knackered 200 metres into the cave, we found ourselves wandering down the large main passage of Bridge and down to the sump where we stopped to get kitted.

The first problem I encountered was that either Andy (whose harness I had borrowed) was built like a rake or I had had too many roast beef dinners as I could only just do up the harness. I decided holding my stomach in might be the order of the day.

Steve then introduced me to the concept of snoopy loops. This is a rather handy way of making sure you always know where your air gauges are by attaching them to your wrists. The downside of this is that you then feel a complete plonker trying to crawl through a low streamway to get to the sump with hoses and gauges flopping about everywhere. Still, style isn't really the most important factor in cave diving now is it!

Steve entered the sump first – I was to follow a minute later. After giving Steve enough chance to get out of the way I dipped my face into the water and got ready to pass the sump. At first the visibility was best described as crap. However, this was only where Steve had been standing in the sump pool. As soon as I passed the silt cloud I was greeted with the sight of a very clear passage with trout swimming around – pretty stupid place to live if you ask me! The sump was only about eighteen metres long and so it didn't take long to rise into the passageway of Little Neath where Steve was already dekitting.

The next sumps were several hundred metres down the passage and so we decided to put away our fins and regulators in the tackle bags and continue down the passage with the cylinders strapped to our sides.

Little Neath seemed like a nice big easy cave until a couple of metres later when we arrived at the canal. The canal is basically a wide bedding plane about 18 inches to two feet high and continues in that vein for around 150 metres – bugger! Ordinarily the easiest way to pass this obstacle would be to lie on your back and float down the passage with your nose in the airspace. Unfortunately there was only about two inches of water in the passage so we had to crawl dragging the tackle bags behind us and with the cylinders sadly out of the water making them heavier – damn these hot summers!

After what seemed like an age of monotony, we escaped the confines of the canal and headed on down the passage. Little Neath is a fantastic cave and I recommend you all go there (through the non-divers entrance). For the most part the passage is easy walking and scrambling and is relatively horizontal (a good thing with all the gear).

Some time later we arrived at sump two, which is really where the proper cave diving begins. Sumps two, three and four come straight after each other with very little passage in between them and are around 37, 57 and 38 metres long respectively. Whilst by serious cave diving standards these are not particularly long, it is worth remembering that they are effectively beyond the reach of free diving.

Sump two began with a sight that will be familiar to many a fresher who has been to the Swildons sump – cave foam and lots of it. It doesn't seem to matter how clear a cave is, foam just likes to build up around sump pools. Again Steve went first with me following behind. This sump was quite a bit clearer than the previous one with visibility effectively a far as my light could see (not normal cave diving conditions!).

I started off following the line with my left hand only to see the line disappear around the right hand wall a few metres later. In the process of changing to the other side of the line so that I could continue, I managed to tangle up just about every dangling piece of equipment that I had and had to spend a few moments untangling it all. I also discovered the folly of wearing my oversuit over the top of my wetsuit (which I had done to cover the growing hole in the backside of my wetsuit) as it simply trapped lots of air which resulted in me having to kick the ceiling to get anywhere until the air had all leaked out.

These three sumps were all very similar and seemed to take the form of wide and tall passages meandering through the sumps. Again there were loads of trout swimming around. It is quite hard to imagine how unnerving it can be to be swimming through a dark passage when all of a sudden a trout swims into your light beam. We also passed a large bloated dead frog lying in its last resting place. I initially mistook this for a mole until Steve pointed out that (a) moles don't live in sumps and (b) moles don't have webbed feet.

After we emerged from sump four, we dekked and took a quick rest before exploring the New World Passage. I pointed out to Steve that as we were now 150 metres of water away from the entrance, not dying was probably a good idea. Steve agreed. He then proceeded to show me the entrance to the passage. It commenced as a steep climb up an avalanching boulder slope followed by an extremely slippery knotted rope climb at the edge of the aforementioned slope. This was then followed by another precarious rope climb and a low uphill crawl over a deep rift before the passage became pleasant again. This was not the sort of caving I generally feel safe about when I don't have to contend with the notion that rescue would be bloody difficult. Still, having come this far, we had to go on.

The New World Passage itself is stunning. It is a huge dry passageway with virtually pristine mud banks everywhere and the finest collection of mud needles I have ever

seen. I know that mud isn't usually something to get excited about but it really was nice mud! The passage was so nice Steve and I were at a loss as to where to walk. There were very few footprints and it seemed there was virtually nowhere that you could go without damaging the perfect floor. Then came the biggest surprise of all when I saw a large collection of scaffold bars in the passage. Clearly some unscrupulous property developer had noticed how nice the passage was and decided to build on it. I'm just glad that I wasn't on the team that had to bring the scaffolding through the sumps and climbs.

Eventually we decided to exit the cave. It was a huge relief to return to the sump and find that not only was our gear still there but that it still worked as well! This time, because the sumps were quite large we both went though together. I couldn't help thinking that this would be a good place to have a play with my underwater camera.

We surfaced from sump two to be greeted by a collection of normal cavers and stopped for a quick chat while we dekked. The trip out of the cave was relatively uneventful apart from my losing my compass somewhere in the passage when it fell off my wrist and floated down the stream. Once through Bridge sump I decided that I really couldn't be bothered to take off my cylinders and try to squeeze them back into the bag as we had done on the way in. This resulted in me becoming uncomfortably wedged as I tried to pass the boulder choke on the way out. I also managed to knock one of the cylinder valves which promptly emptied half the contents of the cylinder in the time it took me to switch it off – good job I didn't do that on the way in!

All in all it was a bloody good trip and one that I shall have to repeat sometime. It was also bloody knackered and I can't see me doing any seriously long cave diving trips for a while yet. The caving club is now starting to take over the university diving club with the number of members we have in both and I have no doubt that our cave diving numbers will continue to increase. After all – there's bound to be at least one fresher amongst this year's huge intake who's daft enough to want to carry all that

gear! 

Nice one Andy. When are you going to take me cave diving? Jez

BOOKS

Club members interested in the Mendip Hills may be keen to know that the latest in the BCRA's 'Cave Studies Series', has just been published. The book, 'Walks around the Caves and Karst of the Mendip Hills', written by Andy Farrant details a series of surface walks around Mendip. Each of the six excursions around Burrington, Cheddar, Priddy, Charterhouse, Wookey and Stoke St. Michael, details points on route of caving or karstic significance. At only £2.50 from all good caving shops, this A5 softback book shouldn't break the bank of even the most impecunious student. So, next time your at the hut, nursing a hangover and don't want to put on soggy wet caving gear, bring a book and go for a walk! Copies are also available direct from Andy Farrant. To order either email <A.Farrant@bgs.ac.uk> or phone (0115) 9140895.

Speleo-engineering and the GB Dig

Andy Farrant

Whilst wandering aimlessly over the chalky expanses of Salisbury Plain this autumn, and following a recent trip down Willie Stanton's epic dig at Grebe Swallet, my mind began thinking about applying the same 'Stantonian' principles down at the GB dig. For those who have yet to savour the esoteric delights of a Stantonised cave such as Reservoir Hole or Grebe Swallet, they are feats of hydro- and speleo-engineering.

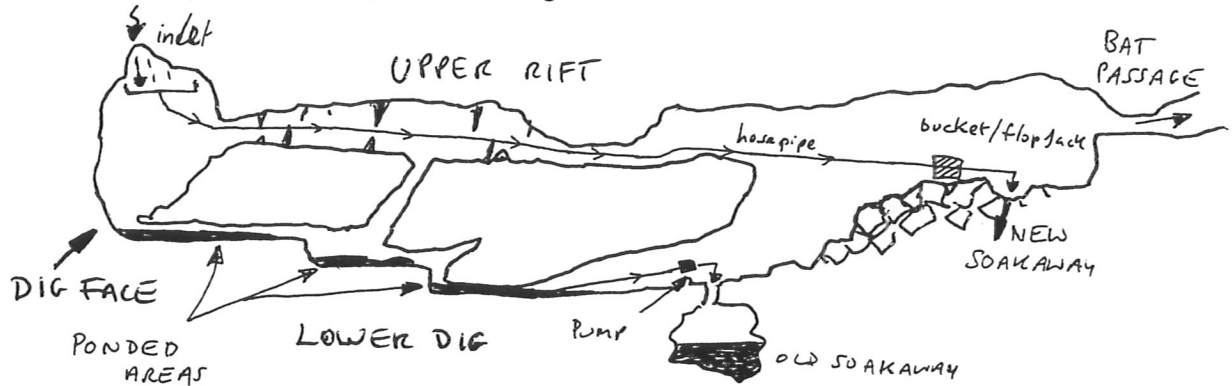
Not only has he engineered the cave to be very user friendly, and generally large enough for those more senior members of the club (aka the 'old codgers' in student parlance), but an impressive network of hose-pipes, buckets and funnels has enabled him to channel water away from dig faces and to wash away spoil heaps and sediment chokes using ingenious 'flopjaks'. In essence, these work by collecting water from percolation inlets and drips, which feed into a bucket which slowly fills with water, until it reaches a certain level and then they flip over, releasing all their water in one go, either to wash a spoil tip away or gradually remove sediment to enlarge the passage. In effect a dig which enlarges a passage even when your not around! The gravel and sand left behind can then be used for cement to grout any unstable boulder chokes.

Now, for those new students who don't know what the hell I'm going on about, the club has been digging at the bottom end of GB Cavern for several (many) years in the hope of breaking through to caverns measureless to man as yet untouched and unseen by man. The main problem in the GB Dig has always been the liberal quantities of mud and the problem of a water ponding up during the winter. Up to now this has been dealt with by using a siphon and pumping system. This seemed to work fine during the drought years of the late 80's and early 90's, but a more permanent system would appear to be desirable.

Most of the water flowing into the lower dig face appear to be entering from the roof of the final chamber, which Andy Atkinson and I connected with the lower dig a few years ago. With a bit of polythene sheeting or a bit of mud and a few hose-pipes, this water may be diverted via the upper rift back towards Bat Passage (see Fig 1) and then to a new soak-away at the base of the two metre climb at the end of Bat Passage. Water washed onto the floor here from the stal pools above appears to disappeared into the floor. A few buckets here may also provide useful washing facilities for muddy diggers before going back into Bat Passage. Flopjacks in this area may also help clean up this part of the cave which has got a little muddy in recent years.

The diversion of this water may help to keep the lower dig face dry and allow more regular access to the dig face, which still has some of the best potential on Mendip I might add; 'it looks promising...', and help keep the cave clean. Any volunteers (Bill).....?

Sketch Survey (cross section) of the GB Dig.



Access on Mendip & South Wales – A Freshers Guide.

For those who have recently joined the club (and for some who joined ages ago), you may be wondering what esoteric rites you have to go through to get permits, keys and leaders for some caves. Many caves are gated or controlled by individual or consortiums of caving clubs, often at the request of the landowner. The largest of these is the Charterhouse Caving Company (CCC), of which the UBSS is a member, originally set up as the Charterhouse Caving Committee, at the request of Bristol Water to administer access to the caves on their land.

The caves include GB, Longwood-August, Reservoir Hole and Charterhouse Swallet. When the land was finally sold off a few years ago, access agreements were maintained at the request of the new landowners including the Somerset Wildlife Trust. Many of these caves are gated to prevent any animals or members of the general public from coming to grief. In addition, many are SSSI's (Special Sites of Scientific Interest). So here's a list of some of the more popular caves on Mendip & South Wales with their (hopefully) current access agreements and the reasons behind them. (Note, Some access arrangements may have changed.)

Mendip

GB Cave and Charterhouse Cave.

Both these caves are situated on land formerly owned by Bristol Water and thus falls under the jurisdiction of the CCC. The land is currently owned by the Somerset Wildlife Trust and the CCC have negotiated an lease for access for member clubs under a permit system to prevent damage to the fine formations in the cave. As the UBSS is a member of the CCC, permits and keys are available from the committee via the tackle store. The trip limit for GB is 6 people, and no novices or carbide lights are allowed. In the case of Charterhouse, because of the pristine nature of the formations a leader scheme operates. Tony Boycott and Graham Mullan are the current UBSS leaders who can take up to three other people.

Longwood-August and Rhino Rift.

Again both these caves were originally on land owned by Bristol Water and thus controlled by the CCC. Sited in a nature reserve and next to a popular footpath, both entrances is gated for safety and conservation reasons. A key and CCC permit are required, available from a committee member via the tackle store. No carbide lights or novices.

Tynings Barrows Cave.

Gated at the request of the landowner. Key is available from the landowner at Pinelea, near Green Ore, unfortunately half way across the other side of Mendip, although this situation may change in the future. Goodwill fee payable to farmer.

Swildon's Hole.

Access is over farmers land in Priddy. This cave is not gated, but a goodwill fee of 50p each is payable at the house across the road from the gate en route to the cave. Also has a changing barn, so consequently very popular. Please park tidily on the green or preferably by the church.

St Cuthbert's Swallet.

Magnificent system controlled by the Bristol Exploration Club. They operate a leader system to both protect the many formations, but also to prevent numerous rescues from a very complex and potentially difficult cave, and to make sure the dam system at the entrance operates. The UBSS has several members who also belong to the BEC, of which Tony Boycott is a Cuthbert's leader. Contact him or the BEC direct.

Eastwater Cavern, Manor Farm Swallet & Thrupe Lane Swallet.,

All these caves are open but call at the farm for permission. A good will fee is payable for Eastwater Cavern (50p each) and Manor Farm (£1).

Reservoir Hole and Grebe Swallet.

Both these caves were dug open by Willie Stanton who administers access, primarily for conservation reasons. Both are operated on a leadership system, so contact either Linda Wilson or Willie Stanton. Grebe Swallet has a trip limit of leader plus two, and Reservoir, leader plus five, although check with Linda for details. As Reservoir Hole is located in Cheddar Gorge, it is closed during the busy summer months. Carbide is not allowed in either cave and as both caves contain very fragile features, they are not recommended for 'sporting' trips.

Singing River Mine, Cuckoo Cleaves and Coral Cave.

These three caves are gated with the standard CCC key which can be obtained from committee members or via the tackle store. Change discretely for Singing River as you are next to houses!

Wookey Hole and Cheddar Caves (Gough's Cave).

Both are commercially owned show-caves, but access to the passages beyond the show-cave can be obtained by writing in advance to the cave management in both instances.

Box Mines and Browne's Folly Mine.

Currently open with no access limitations, but take a survey! The entrances are periodically gated so check the latest Mendip Underground. Moves are afoot to gate the caves so watch this space...

As at the time of writing, both entrances to Box (Jack's & Lady Hamiltons II) were open.

Pen Park Hole.

Access controlled on behalf of Bristol City Council by the UBSS, BEC and WCC, as the entrance is in the middle of a housing estate in Southmead. Access is by a leader system so contact Graham Mullan or Steve Cottle for further information.

Burrington Caves.

All these caves have open access, although technically the UBSS is the only club with express permission to enter and dig in any of the caves on Burrington Common.

South Wales

Ogof Draenen.

Access controlled on behalf of the landowner by the Pwll Ddu Cave Management Group. Cave locked with a combination lock. To obtain the combination contact the PDCMG or for further information ask either Andy Farrant or Lou Maurice. No carbide lights and a trip limit of six.

Ogof Daren Cilau.

Open access, but has its own natural access restrictions!

Ogof Craig a Ffynnon.

Operates on a leadership system. Key and leader required, party size limited to 6. Check 'Caves of South Wales' or Cambrian Caving Council for current address to write to.

Agen Allwedd.

Access controlled by the Llangattock Cave Management Advisory Group who administer keys. Need to write in advance, party size limit & no carbide as it is a major summer bat roost. Check Cambrian Caving Council or Caving Press for up to date contact address.

Little Neath Cave.

Call at Blaen Nedd Isaf Farm to request permission. A goodwill fee may be payable. Access often impassable when wet.

Ogof Ffynnon Ddu.

Controlled by the South Wales Caving Club as the cave lies within in a National Nature Reserve. The UBSS has an annual permit, so call into the SWCC Hut at Penwyllt, find the duty officer and fill out the green chit and pick up the key. Party size limited to 6. Access to OFD 1 is by a leader system only. UBSS leaders are Clive Owen, Graham Mullan, Charlie Self, Tony Boycott and Adrian Wilkins.

Dan yr Ogof.

A commercial show-cave, but access administered and keys held by the SWCC. A leader scheme operates with Identity cards held by the leaders. Entry and exit via the River entrance may be required when the show-cave is closed. Dan Yr Ogof leaders are Graham Mullan, Clive Owen, Tony Boycott or as a last extreme resort Andy Farrant.

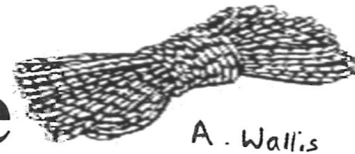
Otter Hole.

Leadership scheme, usually booked up months in advance. Locked to preserve best formations in Britain and to make sure no-one drowns in the tidal sump. Access only at low tide and usually flooded all winter. Check caving press for up to date contact address. Was closed due to diesel pollution and bad air.

For the latest access arrangements, check the latest editions of 'Mendip Underground' or 'Caves of South Wales', or ask one of the old lags in the pub. Many older UBSS members are also members of other caving clubs and may be able to advise on access arrangements elsewhere. Happy Caving and have a merry Millennium.

Andy Farrant

SRT rescue course



SRT (single rope technique to the uninitiated) is one of the more technical areas of caving technique, as anyone who has tried it will no doubt agree. The training sessions that have been held in the union stairwell have always provided a good basis for our first SRT trips but has never really provided any opportunity to practice rescue techniques. Recognising the almost limitless potential to get strung up on SRT (having been strung up many times myself), I figured it was about time I went on a rescue course.

The Council of Southern Caving Clubs (in conjunction with that caving god Andy Sparrow) recently held a number of training sessions at the new climbing wall at the Blue School in Wells. Si Flower, Jon Telling and myself signed up for the SRT rigging and rescue sessions.

The day started ominously when Jon arrived a few minutes late looking like he had just crawled out of a sewer. Apparently he had just come back from a big night out on the beer and curry. Proving to us just how bad he felt by releasing the foulest smell on the planet (or anywhere else in the universe for that matter), Si and I spent much of the journey to Wells with our heads hanging out the windows.

We spent the morning demonstrating our quality rigging techniques on the climbing wall, which sadly being around 5 metres high didn't provide much opportunity to do any seriously complex rigging. However, the wall has been specifically designed with cavers in mind and they have included such delights as small dark holes inside the wall that you can abseil inside. Being in a school, all the handholds have been designed in the shape of numbers and letters so you can practice your spelling while you mess around on the wall.

The rigging course provided a valuable opportunity to learn some of the more awkward rigging manoeuvres but the real reason we had come was for the rescue session in the afternoon. Jon was looking much more healthy after our break for lunch and so we had high hopes for him when Andy Sparrow asked him and Si to demonstrate changeovers in the dark (or with eyes closed as we couldn't be bothered to turn out the lights). All this seemed a bit much for Jon who was still trying to untangle himself 15 minutes later after bleeding all over the rope.

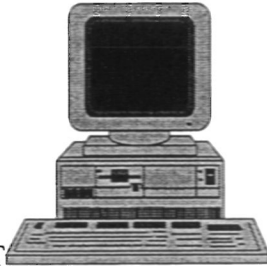
We then went through various techniques for assisting tired people by improvising pulley systems, using as many descenders and jammers as possible to create the most overcomplicated system that we could. After practising these techniques for a while we then moved onto the serious stuff – rescue of an unconscious casualty in mid air.

The obvious useful technique that was taught here involved back-prussiking down the rope to the casualty, attaching them to your harness, releasing their jammers and then doing a change over to lower them down to the bottom of the pitch. Whilst this involved much face in groin amusement, we had far more fun with the alternative technique – rope cutting.

In an emergency when you want to get someone to the bottom of the pitch as quickly as possible why not cut the rope that their life is hanging on? The actual techniques involved securing the casualty to another rope that could be easily lowered down before you cut the main rope. Volunteering as a victim for Jon to demonstrate, I suddenly realised that as he had

spent fifteen minutes making a cock up of a simple move earlier, letting him cut the rope I was hanging on was not the safest position I had ever been in. After a few minutes of shouting "not that rope!" at a knife wielding Jon, I was relieved to not fall and injure myself.

The course was extremely useful and we intend to continue promoting the club's safety policy through a few more rescue training sessions for everybody next term. Perhaps the most obvious lesson learnt on the day, however, was learnt by Ki, Si Lee and Nick who were there to learn some intermediate SRT skills. I don't know if they learnt anything useful on their course but they certainly learnt that if they see Jon, Si or myself wielding knives they should run as far as they can in the opposite direction!



UBSS WEB MAILING LIST

The Society Web Page has a contact list attached to it which includes telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. This already includes all (all?) the student membership and also a number of others. If your name is not on that list but you would wish it to be, please let the Senior Treasurer, GrahamMullan <graham.mullan@breathemail.net> or Tel: 0117 9502556 or 07887 637064 know and he will arrange for your details to be included in future. Be warned, however, that if your e-mail address gets included on the general Society mailing list then you will receive all sorts of day to day messages that you might not want, so please make sure that you let us know whether or not you want it to go on that list. (But please let Graham have it anyway!)

Down On My Knees Begging

Well there you are, one newsletter edited, stapled and delivered. Please keep that caving stuff pouring in rather than trickling because I tend to panic a bit as the end of term draws near! email it to jn5454@bristol.ac.uk or send it to 1 Sir John's Lane, Eastville, Bristol if I'm not at the pub- Jez

Log Book

Please can everybody write up their trips in the log book after caving as most recent entries seem to be mine but I have been away for a long time?



