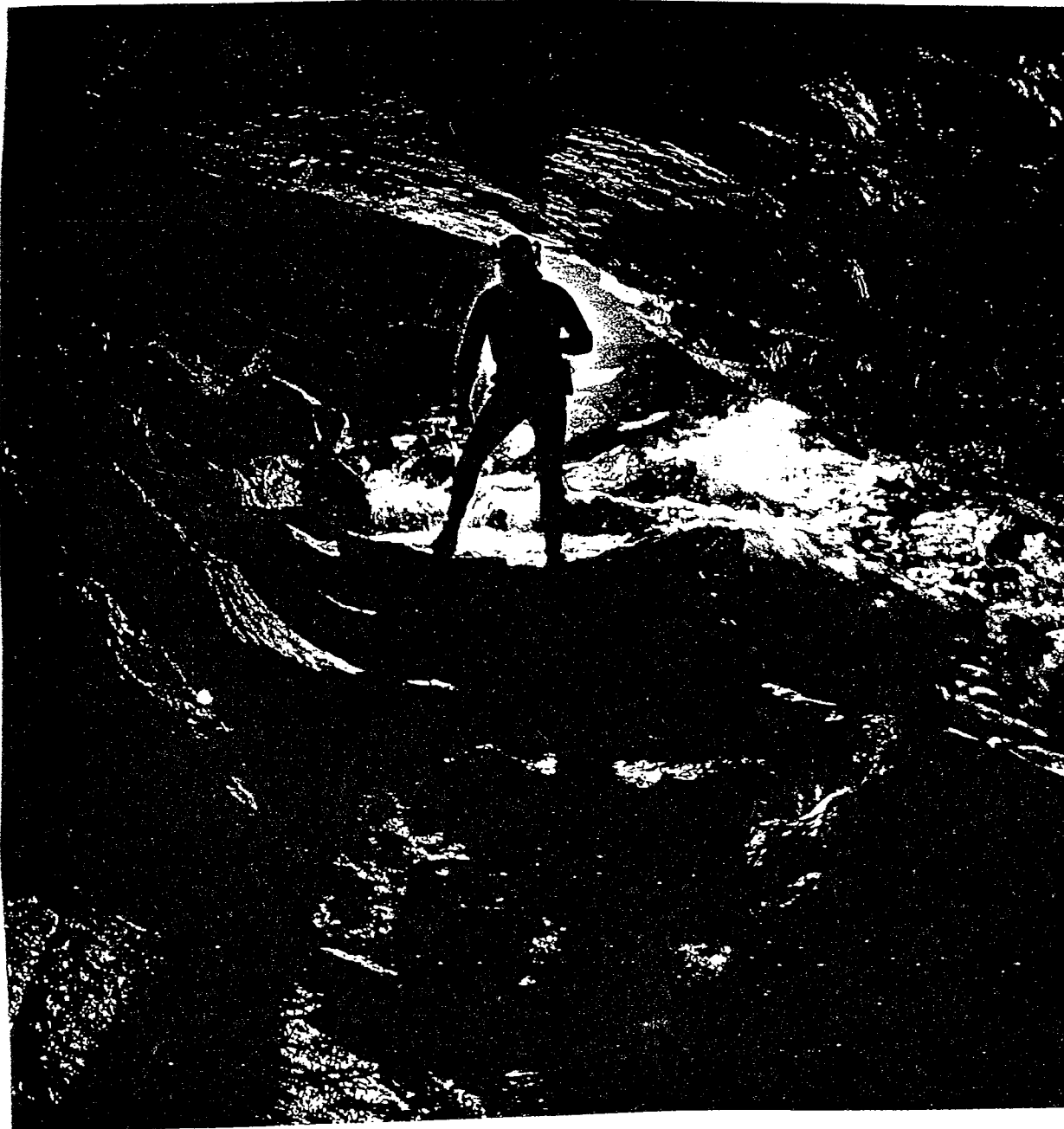


U.B.S.S.

University of Bristol Spelaeological Society



Newsletter

Vol. 6

no. 2

MAY 1990

Editorial

As some of you may have noticed, Newsletter has gone 'Green'. This is because the Union now uses recycled paper. On the subject of Environmental issues, the question is asked, 'How 'Green' are cavers?'. Judging by recent reports from the CSCC Conservation and Access Officer on the state of Goatchurch, and from seeing the mess left in some other caves, it seems that cavers aren't taking care of the caves they use. So next time you go caving, take heed, and look after the cave environment. A clean up of GB is being planned for the near future - any volunteers? On a different note, thanks to the people who contributed, and any snippets of information, gossip, scandal etc. will be gratefully received.

The next newsletter Deadline will be the 20th Oct 1990. Any articles should be sent to the Newsletter Editor, care of the Univ. of Bristol Speleo. Soc., Students Union, Queens Rd Bristol.

All opinions expressed in this newsletter, are those of the author, and not necessarily those of the Committee.

Andy Farrant

* Cover Photo - Sheppard's Crook, Goughs Cave
Taken by Gavin Newman.

Thatcherite Economics has reached the UBSS. A successful takeover bid has been made on Bowery Corner, a prime BEC dig. The UBSS managed to gain control



Gravel



A.B. Doctor writes

O'CONNORITIS.

This is a strange disease which occurs only in the vicinity of Doolin, Co Clare. It can be quite serious, the symptoms being, a feeling of nausea in the morning, a distinct lack of enthusiasm for caving, swelling of the beer gut, and severe weight loss in the pocket. The cure is quite simple, return to England immediately, or take a look at the Doctor, a classic case.

of 80% of the digging team. (including both secretaries and the student treasurer.) It is rumoured that takeover bids will be launched for the Twin T's dig, Welsh's Green, Wigmore and Lodmore Fm dig in the near future. Any queries, contact the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, care of the Editor.

The outbreak of Perestroika seems to be spreading. Both Charlie and Dick Willis both being severely afflicted. They spend most of their time talking Russian, and Dick has even been caught in possession of a Russian phrase book. Is there any hope left?

Linda Wilson's efforts of trying to teach Wig (Occasionally known as Dave Irwin) basic manners seem to be paying off. He offered a nameless student a cup of coffee without being prompted, within 5 minutes. Must be some kind of record!

The UBSS has got a new surveying team - trained to survey to unprecedented accuracy. Willing to survey anything and everything. (Well almost). They have even defined a new grading scale.

0 Grade usually achieved when your compass is full of mud.

-1 Inaccurate, most readings out. Best to throw readings away, and do it from memory.

-2 Way out, mostly based on the surveyors artistic ability and imagination.

-3 Figment of the surveyors mind, depends on what he's been drinking.

-4 Total crap - Usually done with the eyes shut, or with total light failure.

-5 Done in the pub, usually after at least six pints, outcome depends on which moron knocked your elbow, and the shape of the person obstructing your way to the bar

Following late on the heels of the 1976 Little Neath River Cave Sherpas expedition to the Himalayas (they climbed seven new peaks) the Little Neath Divers launched their own Himalayan trip. A Veterans' expedition of Pete Standing, Chris Gilmore and Peter Kaye climbed Neva Peak, 21247 ft, south of Everest. With glee, Pete tells me that five other parties attempting the peak all failed because of the hard conditions, even though they were "much younger and fitter". I think perhaps youth and fitness are only relative assets when squared up against old Neath hands.

Mark Mortimer's popularity seems to of increased vastly in Badock Hall, especially amongst the female students, after a certain incident was reported in the Gravel column in the last Newsletter. I wonder why? Answers on a Postcard to the usual address.

Good news! "The Shuffler" is returning to Bristol. Steve Perry may have retired from caving, having done everything that's worth doing, but I'm sure his memory will be good enough to maintain a conversation in the pub.

More good news. Dr Wanda is also returning to Bristol.

Revenge at last on the indelicately spoken Martin Warren, scourge of the finer sensibilities. He has announced his sudden engagement to a new girlfriend so absolutely everyone is asking "Is it a shotgun job?"

(Editor's note: this is Martin's own traditional response to wedding announcements).

Hon Secretaries' Bit

At the AGM several changes were made to the committee. Firstly, our thanks go to Bob Savage for being the Society's President for twelve years and to Trevor Shaw for editing the last four issues of *Proceedings*.

Our new President is Professor John Thornes, Dean of Graduate Studies for the Science Faculty and former head of the University's Geography Department.

Hon. Secs.	Steve Cottle, Alison Garrard.
Treasurer	Graham Mullan.
Student Treasurer	Andy Farrant (Newsletter Editor).
Committee	Nigel Lester, Edward Bailey, William Miners, Hannah Bartholomew, Paul Harvey, Linda Wilson.
MiC Tackle & Equipment	Nigel Lester
MiC Photography	Chris Bennett

All other posts remain the same.

Tackle & Keys

Would those members borrowing Society tackle or cave keys *please* sign for them and return them promptly and clean.

Yorkshire Permits

Four permit dates have been arranged for Birks Fell Cave on the following dates: 26 May, 14 July, 22 July, 24 September.

If anyone wishes to go please contact either myself or Mike McHale for further details.

We also have the possibility of some permits for the Lost Johns System for further details please contact me.

Steve Cottle
0272 441239
(until 31-6-90)

TREASURER'S REPORT

Graham Mullan

Those of you who follow these reports will remember that in 1988/9 the Society had suffered a bad year financially, culminating in a 'loss' of just over £500 on the year. At the time this was attributed to the fact that our costs, especially printing costs, were rising faster than our income. As promised, things were kept better in check last year, costs were kept down, income held up and in consequence we ended up with a small surplus at the end of the year. The position remains slightly precarious and at the moment I would not like to predict what the next year will bring, although the additional income from subscriptions will help somewhat.

One item that had been causing me some concern was the effect on the rates we pay for the Hut of the new Uniform business rate. In fact for this year our rates bill has gone down from £38.54 to £19.07! In addition, I am applying for 100% relief on this for the future.

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st JANUARY 1990

EXPENDITURE		INCOME	
	£		£
Publications:		Publications:	
Proc. 18.3	3,943.00	Grant from University of Bristol	950.00
Postage	149.48	Other receipts	91.40
Cave Notes Reprint	200.00		1,041.40
		Members' Subscriptions	936.00
Tools and Equipment:		Student Members' Subscriptions	292.00
Capital	422.80	Union Grants: Capital	667.76
Current	10.85	Current	330.00
			997.76
Library		Interest on Investments: Bank	117.36
Sessional Meetings		Post Office	504.41
Photography			621.77
Postage (not Proc.)	88.34	Sales of Publications (not C. of C.Clare)	955.75
Hon. Secs. Petty Cash	16.05	Donations	1,126.60
Stationery and Duplicating	178.13	Tax Refunds on Covenants	253.40
Rates and Taxes	38.54	Treatman Fund	850.00
Insurances: Third Party	168.80	Sales of Shirts	149.63
Property	190.01		
Subscriptions and Licence	55.25		
Donations to Rescue Organisations	60.00		
Travel Money	232.94		
Treatman Fund	850.00		
Shirts			
Faffy	10.00		
	6,863.69		
	360.62		
	7,224.31		
Excess of Income over Expenditure			7,224.31
Balance at 1st February 1989	2,723.00	'CAVES OF COUNTY CLARE' PUBLISHING ACCOUNT 1989/90	
		Sales of 'Caves of County Clare'	515.06
		Debit Balance at 31.1.90	2,207.94
			2,723.00

BALANCE SHEET AT 31st JANUARY 1990

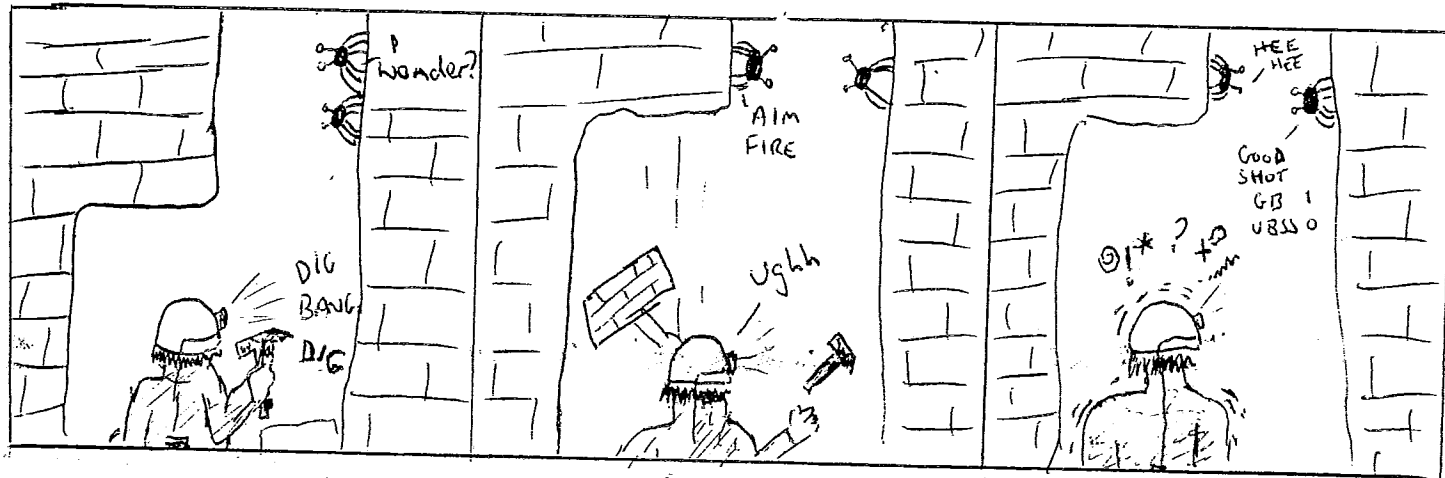
7,449.31

J. A. GUNN, B. A., F. C. A.

Calender for 1990-91.

- 16/17 June BCRA "Study Caves Weekend." Meeting in MR1 of the Union Building with speakers on Spelæology (£2). Barbecue on the Saturday evening, caving on the Sunday.
- 4/5 Oct. FAFFY. our annual attempt to entice the sane into caving. Any volunteers! See the secretaries.
- 6/7 Oct. Freshers Mendip weekend.
- Tue. 9th Oct. Showing of E.K.Tratmans 1937 cine films of early caving. 8 p.m. Spelæo Rooms.
- 13 Oct. Freshers day trip to Mendip.
- Tue. 23 Oct. (p) A short talk by the Mendip Rescue Organisation on their history and how they rescue people from caves. Spelæo Rooms, 8 p.m.
- Wed. 31 Oct. Sessional meeting. With the eagerly awaited report due on one of Mendips longest caves due out soon Dave Irwin will be speaking on "The Exploration of St.Cuthberts Swallet." 8 p.m. Spelæo Rooms.
- 3/4 Nov. Bonfire party at the hut (plus caving?).
- 17/18 Nov. South Wales Weekend.
- Wed 5 Dec. (p) Sessional meeting "New Mexico 1990 including the Carlsbad Caverns " by Chris Howes.
- Sat 8 Dec. Christmas Dinner.
- 27 Jan. (p) Yorkshire trip.
- Wed 13 Feb. Sessional meeting. With further attempts being made to extend Goughs Cave, Rob Palmer will be speaking on "Cave Diving Beneath the Cheddar Gorge."
- Sat. 9 March AGM 4 p.m. followed by the Annual Dinner

Troglobite



Mendip News

Several things have happened over the past few months, most of them depressing.....

After repeated acts of vandalism against the lock and gate of RESERVOIR HOLE, these were replaced with a temporary gate in the form of large rocks and cement, to the consequent detriment of access. It is believed that a new gate will be fixed in September and that access can be resumed, but whether this will continue depends on whether 'person or persons unknown' can curb their enthusiasm for more unorthodox methods of entry. The same problem has occurred in FAIRY CAVE QUARRY, where most of the cave gates were removed recently. These have now been replaced, but the vandalism and the numerous illicit trips into the caves have obviously done nothing to improve the already strained relationship between cavers and the landowner and there is no hope for the foreseeable future of any successful access negotiations.

The depressions containing the entrances of both COW HOLE and UBLEY POT have been filled in by the farmer, with the loss of both the caves, but as the entrances were piped it is possible that these could be reopened, but it is not yet known whether this can be arranged.

On a more hopeful note, however, it is rumoured that on occasion, the owner of LAMB LEER has been allowing cavers access. Nothing is official, but there's no harm in asking. NINE BARROWS and SLUDGE PIT remain closed and in this case it is pointless approaching the landowner.

Lastly, when visiting EASTWATER, please ensure that you call at the farm first and pay the small goodwill fee, as there have been several complaints that parties have failed to do so. Don't put good relations at risk by ignoring this common courtesy.

Linda Wilson.

WESTROPP CHAMBER AND ITS INSCRIPTIONS

Poulnagollum, Co. Clare

Graham Mullan

There have been several mentions in caving journals recently of the "Signature Stone" in Poulnagollum. Whilst many people will know of this as a landmark within the cave, I suspect that few are aware of its history and of the significance of some of the inscriptions that it contains.

The stone is a large boulder situated on a ledge a couple of metres above stream level in the Westropp Chamber, a meander pseudo-oxbow, part way along the Main Streamway between the First Waterfall and the Main Junction. It is significant in that, it contains, or contained, the earliest known written sources for the history of the exploration of this system.

We do not know who originally explored Poulnagollum. In 1870 W.H.S. Westropp described the adventures of, in his words, "Some foolhardy individuals" who attempted to explore the caves "at Sliab Elva and Kilcorney" but who they were, when this occurred and even whether this meant Poulnagollum at all, we do not know. The geologist F.J. Foot (1863) describes himself as "searching almost every known cave", but again whether this means he descended this cave is unclear. However, on 7th. October 1880 W.H.S. Westropp, along with two others, J.H. Christy and W.R. Joyce, made the first authenticated visit to the system; descending Shaft Gallery and exploring down to Main Junction and part of Branch Passage. We know of this visit partly through a secondary source, the writing of T.J. Westropp (1900); but it seems that there is only one known record made by the explorers themselves, the inscription that they left in the cave:

7

This inscription could still be read in entirety as late as the early sixties (Collingridge, 1962) but unfortunately much of it has now been defaced by later graffiti and all that can be read (May 1990) is:

CHRISTY
1880

From the same source we can learn that Westropp's group made more than one descent, indeed they tried again the following day for also inscribed on the stone is:

JOHN CHRISTY
Age 12
8 Oct 80

Fortunately this inscription has not been overwritten and probably looks as clear and fresh as the day it was made.

The next explorers of whom there are records were E.A. Baker and H.E. Kentish in 1912 and they too made their mark upon this stone:

H E KENTISH
E A BAKER
12/9/12

as did the Yorkshire Ramblers on 1/8/36. Other notable explorers of the system also left their record here, including the doyen of Irish cavers, Jack Coleman along with Dunnington and Cotter in 1942.

Unfortunately the majority of inscriptions have been made subsequent to the 1950's and as well as having no value in terms of the ~~historical record~~ have served in some cases to obscure or obliterate the early ones.

In these more enlightened times, it is to be expected that no-one else will now follow their example and write either here or on the walls of any cave. However, before we criticise them too harshly, we must remember that attitudes were different then and consider that men such as Ernest Baker or Jack Coleman would have been shocked to think they could be accused of damaging a cave. Thus, whilst hoping that this technique is not used in the future, let us accept Westropp Chamber for what it is: a unique and valuable record of early cave exploration in Co. Clare.

References

- Collingridge, B. R. *et al*, 1962 Poulmagollum-Poulelva Caves, Slieve Elva, Co. Clare, Eire. *Proc. Univ. Bristol Spelæol. Soc.* 9.3 pp212-71.
- Foot, F. J., 1863, Natural History notes on the Mammalia of the West Coast of Co. Clare, *Proc. Nat. Hist. Soc. of Dublin*, Vol. 3 for 1859-1862, p104.
- Westropp, T. J., 1901, Excursions of the Society, *Jour. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, Vol. 30 (for 1900) p306.

SPELÆO TOURISM IN EUROPE, PART 2.

by Linda Wilson.

The last article (Newsletter, Vol.6. No.1) dealt solely with the Belgian part of our 1989 showcave extravaganza. This will conclude the saga and give details of the caves we visited in Austria, Slovenia and Italy. In Austria, we were based in Salzburg; there are numerous caves within easy reach of the city, several of which are listed in the tourist leaflets provided by the Salzburg Tourist information Board, but we only had time to visit two sites. Eisriesenwelt was an obvious must and for the other we chose a salt mine at Hallein.

We moved on from Salzburg and drove into Slovenia in the most appalling rain, but luckily the weather took a turn for the better the following day. For the second year running we stayed in the Hotel Jama in Postojna. This area contains several showcaves and many more abandoned ones. Details of all the caves we visited are given here, show or otherwise. As before, we were greatly assisted by friends at the Karst Institute in Postojna, notably Andrej and Maja Kranjc and Andrej Mihevc and also by Daniel Rojsek, an old friend of the Society's as in 1972 at the age of 15 he was one of the guides for the student expedition to the area. Daniel works for the Slovenian version of the Nature Conservancy.

We made a brief foray into Italy, to visit the Grotta Gigante, near Trieste, notable for amazing formations and miserable guides. Also well worth a visit near there is the stud farm at Lipica, where the famous horses of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna are bred.

EISRIESENWELT (The World of the Ice Giants)

Werfen, Austria.

According to the guide book, these are the largest accessible ice caves in the world. The entrance is located 3280ft above the valley of the Salach river in the Hochkogel peak of the Tennengebirge. The road up from the valley to the parking space is steep (18%) and is followed by a 15 minute walk through the trees to the cable car station. A 5 minute cable car ride is included in the cost of the ticket and saves an arduous 70 minute walk. After this comes another 15 minute walk to the entrance. In my opinion, you need to be quite robust to get this far ! The views from here must be magnificent in clear weather, but unfortunately, all we saw were a few chinks in the cloud.

The entrance is 20m wide, 22m high and leads to an explored length of passage of about 30 miles. The section covered by the tourist route takes about 1½-2 hours to visit, depending on the state of the ice, as when it is melting the further chambers become inaccessible due to the water streaming down the walls and floor. Tourists are issued with carbide lamps, about one between three and the guides also carry magnesium flares which they use in some places to give extra light, to good dramatic effect.

The tourist path is made of wooden slats on the floor, together with metal handrails and wooden and metal steps. The entrance series is enormous and shows to best advantage with one party a long way in front and another one behind, as that is really the only way to get a true impression of the scale of the cave. The steps climb steeply up the Great Ice Wall, first climbed in 1913. From here a series of passages leads to various halls,

surrounded by superb ice formations, like the purest and most translucent white stal. The only main improvement from a conservation viewpoint that could be achieved is the removal of the spent magnesium from the guides' flares that have been left in unsightly grey piles near some of the most attractive ice flows, many of which are illuminated from the inside, or from behind by the guides, as there is no permanent lighting within the cave.

Strong shoes/boots and warm clothes are recommended and gloves are a must! Even so, we had walked up some of the way in a fine drizzle and the cave really was very cold, so in consequence, I caught one.

Details : Open May to early Oct. Tel. (0 662) 42 6 90. £6, inc. cable fare.

BAD DURRNBERG SALT MINES

Hallein, Austria.

The town of Hallein, 15km south of Salzburg owes its development to the rich salt deposits of the Durrnberg, worked from the Neolithic age to present day. Prehistoric mining reached its height with the Celtic inhabitants of the area, about 500 BC. Their drift mines amounted to about 4260m of passage and the lowest depth which can be proved is 200m. There have been many underground discoveries from this period, including pine torches, pickaxes, leather belts, pelt baskets and fur hoods.

Visitors to the mine are taken in groups of up to 50 at a time and are issued with white overalls. The mine is entered through the Obersteinberg drift, opened in 1450 and an electric train takes the tourists through the concrete lined drift where, after a distance of 326m the salt limit is reached and from here the drift is lined with a frame timbering. After 500m, visitors arrive at the 'station' and from here the tour is continued on foot. The trip is punctuated by various displays, the first of which explains the geology of the saliferous rocks and shows plans of the system, which demonstrate that the salt deposit has a longitudinal range of 1400 to 1700m and an average width of 1000 to 1200m, with a thickness of up to 400m. About 70% of the deposit entered from Bad Durrnberg in fact lies underneath German territory, so Salt Conventions were entered into in 1829 and 1957, giving Austria the right to win mineral salt and brine, beneath German soil in a mining area about 3.66sq.km. This mine and its neighbouring mine at Berchtesgaden win salt and brine from the same deposits. (The latter is also open to tourists in much the same manner.)

Further displays explain clearly the two main mechanisms by which salt and brine are won: the salt lake leaching plant method and the borehole brine method. The display is situated in a low wide chamber left behind by the removal of the salt deposit by means of the first method. The guide gives the talk in German, but provided an English tape for us, to go with the excellent model displays. (He had other language tapes available as well.)

Level changes are achieved by means of the miners slides, polished wooden runners, which you sit astride, normally in pairs and descend rapidly. On this tour there are two slides, the longest has an inclined length of 42m and a vertical height of 19m. A rapid descent and a warm bottom are most noticeable ! (In Berchtesgaden mines, which I visited about 10 years ago, the slides are even longer and steeper, but you are issued with leather aprons to wear over your rear to ease the descent - most necessary.)

The raw brine from the saltworks is piped to the boiling plant in Hallein, where it is processed into salt, for a wide variety of uses, both domestic and industrial.

All the underground displays are very well set out and as well as those already mentioned, others include one of monuments and votive pictures of important people connected with the mine including a marble relief of St. Rupertus, who was involved in the rebuilding of Salzburg cathedral and is the patron saint of the country and of the salt miners. There is also a display of prehistoric mining. The route then returns to the underground station and visitors are taken back to the surface on the train.

Details : Open Easter - Oct. £2.50.

KRIZNA JAMA.

Bloska Polica, Slovenia.

The cave is located near the village of Bloska Polica and it is possible to drive right to the entrance and park by an old building near the entrance which obviously used to serve as the ticket office for the showcave when it was open to visitors. The windows still contain a display of the old showcave material; a survey, some photos and descriptions, together with details of the bear bones found in the cave. At the time of our visit, the water levels were somewhat high, due to the recent rains, so we did not risk crossing the lakes and therefore missed the most beautiful part of the cave. However, we still had a most enjoyable amble around the first part of the cave, a worthwhile visit in itself.

The entrance passage is huge and it takes so long for your eyes to get accustomed to the darkness that it's easy to feel somewhat agoraphobic at first, when you have lost contact with both sides of the passage. The tourists must have been fairly robust, as the path is not deliberately constructed but is simply a well-trodden way. This leads to an impressive river passage which can be skirted on ledges., but it is not possible to get past the second lake without swimming. There are three boats left just before the lake: one of the old wooden "Russian" boats, one of fibreglass and a rubber inflatable contraption, made of two huge tyre inner tubes fastened together into a giant figure of eight. (According to Andrej Mihecv, all three need bailing and are not at all reliable.) We then went into the Bear Gallery (Medvedji Rov), to look for two things described by Andrej, neither of which we would have found without his directions. The first is the lower half of a bear's jawbone, embedded underneath an undercut in a large stal flow on the left hand side of the passage. This is most impressive as the teeth including the massive canine are all intact. The second is a little way further on, where some rock projections have been rubbed perfectly smooth by generations of itchy bears. Here, above a wide, flat shelf, certain corners of the rock are totally smooth, in complete contrast to the rough surrounding rock.

There are countless bone fragments scattered everywhere in the gallery and apparantly, when this area was originally excavated, bones from about 2000 bears were discovered, from which, two complete skeletons were assembled and are now in the Natural History Museum of Vienna. The really amazing thing is that the bears penetrated so far into the cave, at least 500m in total darkness.

Details : Open only by prior arrangement with Troha Alojz, known as "Lojze", who lives at Bloska Polica 7, and keeps the key. A guide will be arranged and the lakes can only be crossed if the water is low enough. The entrance series contains about 800m of passage and can be visited in ordinary clothes if a little care is exercised.

PLANINSKA JAMA

Planina, Slovenia.

This is another ex-showcave and normally, only the first 300m can be visited to the point where the roof lowers and the passage is gated, barely out of reach of daylight. The entrance passage is, however, well worth a visit as it is enormous, 25m high and 50m wide situated at the base of a towering cliff. A river flows out of the cave and there is often a high wisp of cloud in the entrance passage which lends the arch a most surreal quality.

Details : Park near the tower, just outside the village. The entrance passage is ungated.

SKOCJANSKA JAMA

Matavun, Slovenia.

The cave was opened to the public in 1885, after nearly 50 years of systematic exploration. It is now entered through a 140m artificial tunnel made in 1933. Visitors first encounter the huge, imposing and very beautiful formations in the dry upper series known as the Silent Cave. The cave has suffered remarkably little damage in the area, probably due to the sheer size of the stal, there is also hardly any growth of algae. This area of the cave alone would probably make it one of the most impressive show caves in Europe, however, once the subterranean canyon of the river Reka is reached, this cave moves into a league of its own. The canyon is 100m high and 60m wide with almost vertical walls; at one of its narrower points, it is spanned by the Hanke Bridge, built in 1933 to replace a hair-raising 'cat-walk', some 20m higher, almost in the roof of the canyon. The remains of this original construction and many other remnants of both the explorer's routes (iron stakes and almost impossibly small steps cut into the rock) and the early tourist paths can still be seen. The cave floods frequently, with an enormously destructive force of water which has led to all the visitors paths at lower levels being abandoned, until the present path height at almost halfway up the gorge was reached.

The tourist route ends in the Schmidl Hall, after a trip lasting in the region of 1½ hours, where daylight enters from the Velika Dolina, a picturesque collapsed valley with a depth of 160m. A cable car returns visitors to the surface and the entrance buildings provide all necessary facilities. This cave is an absolute must for anyone in the area and it really is worth travelling a long way to see.

Details : Open June, July, Aug, Sept with tours at 10am, 11.30am, 1, 2 & 3.30pm. Apr, May, Oct with tours at 10am, 1pm & 3.30pm. Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb & Mar, tours are at 10am & 3pm on Sundays only. £8.

LA GROTTA GIGANTE

Trieste, Italy.

Numerous steps spiral down from the entrance to the bottom of the vast entrance chamber, some 107m high, 35m wide and 130m long. The cave was first opened to the public in 1908 and was illuminated originally with millions of candles. Much of the central area of the chamber is given over to the apparatus for various scientific experiments, including two pendulums hanging in plastic sleeves from the surface to the floor.

The roof is covered with a profusion of stalactites, however, it is the stalagmites that are the most distinctive. The chamber contains hundreds of vast stal pillars with strange flattened tops, which have grown like a series of plates, piled onto each other: this is caused by the fact that the water drops which form them have fallen from such a great height that they splatter on impact, causing the stal to spread and take on the characteristic "cauliflower" look.

The main impact on the cave environment comes from the amount of floor space in the chamber given over to the experiments and there are even sheds constructed down there. Otherwise, the lighting is good and the paths are not too obtrusive. The tour is fairly short, in the region of 30-45 minutes.

Details : Believed to be open all year, but always closed on Mondays and between 12.30 and 2pm each day. No cameras are allowed in the cave. Tours are only given in Italian but the guides can provide a tape in English for the "speaking post" in the cave. £3. Access beyond the showcave can be arranged via the Societa Alpina della Giulie, C.A.I. Trieste, Via N. Machiavelli, 17-34132 Trieste. Tel. (040)60317.

VELIKA LEDENA JAMA V PARADANI

Nr. Predmeja, Slovenia.

At least one exercise in "Spelæo Alpinism" was thought necessary to slightly redeem our dyed-in-the-wool spelæo tourist image, so we set off with Andrej Mihevc to visit "The Big Ice Cave in Paradana". The entrance is at the bottom of a steep sided doline and in icier conditions a rope would be useful on the descent. The first main ice slope, about 7m deep which leads into the cave itself needs a rope to aid both descent and ascent. This drops into a chamber with an ice floor. According to Andrej, this part of the cave is different on every visit, as often the ice will recede and reveal passages it has previously blocked. On this occasion various passages were visible for the first time in several years and we were able to enter a new chamber left in the ice itself, where we found and removed one crampon (and wondered for a while whether we would find a one legged caver entombed down there).

The cave descends in a series of steeply sloping passages, with one 8m ladder pitch and numerous climbs to a depth of 200m, after which a lot more tackle is needed to reach the bottom of the cave. The rock is mostly very dry and it's as well to keep out of draughts as the air is extremely cold. Most of the sloping chambers need care to descend to prevent a landslide of shattered rock descending at the same time. In several places the route skirts around the side of chambers with a long drop below and a lot of space above, one such traverse along a ledge was particularly nerve racking. The original route down most of the cave was vertical and various blind pots were descended before alternative routes were found.

The final entertainment before returning to daylight was the ascent of the first ice wall with the aid of crampons (genuine First World War vintage, originally owned by Andrej's grandfather). A most intriguing experience. The trick appears to be to lean back, hold the rope and attempt to walk up the ice, trying to keep the spikey soles firmly on the surface. Much easier said than done !

An excellent cave, very well worth a visit.

ALI JAMA POD PEČINO

Nr. Lokvica, Slovenia.

The visit was arranged by Daniel, who wanted to check on the state of the formations in the cave, which are particularly spectacular. The entrance pitch spirals down for 20m and then breaks out into the roof of the main passage and the last 10m hangs free. The passage is almost totally covered in stal, mainly a glossy brick red colour but with some white showing. There are numerous columns and curtains and some remarkable helictites, several at least 40cm long. In the Leopard Chamber, named because of the skeleton found there when the cave was first entered, there is a straw, 2m long which four years ago only measured 1m 20cm., thus demonstrating a rapid rate of deposition.

The cave is currently under threat from two different directions. A local quarry is seeking permission to extend its blasting permission towards the cave, which would undoubtedly cause damage to the formations; this proposal is being opposed by the Slovenian Nature Conservancy. The other threat comes from irresponsible use of the cave by a local club who have some form of control over access but have been causing damage through their use of the cave. If the cave continues to be abused it is likely that access will be denied altogether, although Daniel would prefer to resolve the situation amicably if possible.

It is highly unlikely that foreign cavers would be able to arrange a visit to the cave due to the restricted nature of the access. We were lucky.

Whilst waiting for Graham and Daniel on the surface, as I was suffering from a stinking cold, courtesy of the Eisriesenwelt, I'd lazed in the sun for a while, but then a low, intense wind started, bringing with it an all-pervading sense of unease. This was followed by an intense electric storm, but this was actually preferable to the horrible feeling brought first by the unnatural stillness that preceeded the wind and then made worse by the wind itself. On his return to the surface, Daniel identified this as the Bora, the wind that blows at certain times of the year in that area causing the loss of many roofs as well as a rise in the suicide rate. This explained one thing that had puzzled us as we drove through that area: all the house roofs were covered with rocks of varying sizes in fact placed there in an attempt to keep the tiles in place when the Bora blows.

Thus concludes the saga.

It was an excellent holiday and we paid for it all ourselves.

Cave Surveying

"I told you you'd have to lick the compass!"

"I'm going surveying in Gough's on Sunday," says Andy.

"Oh, can I come?" says I, "I've never been surveying before."

"Nor have any of us," says Steve, "but I have read a book about it."

So there we were on Sunday morning, trying to look as impressive as possible in front of the tourists. The three of us, along with Chris Castle ("adventure" caving leader at Gough's, known for his affinity to slumping mud), were to survey the link to Lloyd Hall. Linda and Wig had the tough job of noting passage details in the main show cave, a job made harder due to the need to avoid contact with the numerous large mammals which roam around this particular cave. There was a tense moment when one member of the especially dangerous species *Touristicus americanus* approached the intrepid explorers and screamed "Gee, are you what are called spelunkers?"

Meanwhile, the rest of us had started to survey the Lloyd Hall link, well away from the dazzling lights, wild animals, green/grey/blue/black* slime, and fungal spores. The trip was not without its difficulties though. The decision as to where to site the second survey station took at least a quarter of an hour, followed by half an hour deciding which was left and which was right. It seems that although both Steve and Andy had read Bryan Ellis' "Cave Surveying", they had each formed a different opinion as to how it is actually done.

The fifth survey station was a straw in the roof. Unfortunately, half way through taking measurements, we forgot which straw it was that we were using. After this, things were beginning to get a bit easier, and went fairly smoothly until Makin' Progress:

"ONE-FOUR-SEVEN-DEGREES," shouts Andy.

"Is that compass or clino?" asks Steve. Never mind Steve, go back to sleep.

The next job was to survey the nearly connecting digs off Makin' Progress and Sand Chamber. Chris Castle and Andy rushed into the Makin' Progress dig and started shouting back measurements. At this point, Steve, who was recording details, threw a tantrum:

"I'm not writing anything down until you tell me where you're going to and where from."

"Just shut up and write it down before I forget."

"No! Look, you can't just start surveying in the middle of nowhere. You've got to reference it back to one of the stations," moaned Steve, who was sulking badly by this stage.

The exit to St. Paul's (in the show cave) is always fun because you appear in the middle of a group of "formations". It was a very surprised group of *T. brittannicus* who witnessed four extremely muddy cavers emerging from apparently solid rock, holding a tape measure and shouting numbers at each other!

From here we walked through the show cave to Black Cat Chamber, watching the tourists scatter as we came near them. The Sand Chamber dig did not go well:

"I can't see a thing through this compass," whined Andy, "the eyepiece is full of mud, and I can't clean it because my hands are filthy."

"Lick it!" someone suggested.

Needless to say, the survey was abandoned.

*Delete as appropriate.

CAVING WITH THE RUSSIANS

This short article is being written during a UBSS committee meeting, hence the somewhat abrupt style. I have just come back from spending sixteen days in the Cupp-Conturn cave system in Turkmenia, Soviet central Asia. One caving trip! If I had more time (the newsletter deadline is tonight) I would tell you about how this is the longest limestone cave in the USSR (at 52 kms), about how it is fantastically and beautifully mineralised, and what it is like to live in a cave with six Russians and I've forgotten how many sacks of terrible dehydrated food. But time is pressing so you'll have to wait for the next Newsletter.

If you can't wait for the next Newsletter, two Russian-mineralogists are joining the UBSS summer expedition to Spain. The dates of the expedition are the 1st - 21st September 1990. Our aim is to study the mineralogy of a few nice caves (N.B. no nasty ones) in the Picos de Europa and Matienzo areas, a bit of pleasure caving and lots of good food and wine. The expedition is open, anyone is welcome, whether for a few days, or for the full three weeks. At present the team is mainly of active ex-students, though we do have some students also. If interested, contact Charlie Self, 0272 541728.

This article was taken from a recent edition of the Bristol Evening Post. No prizes for spotting the Russian Phrasebook. It is interesting to notice that the other award winners include Letter carvers, policemen, and a carpenter who wants to study Timber buildings in Scandinavia.

Just goes to show, that if you apply for sponsorship, you may actually get some reward for it.

JOINING THE RUSSIAN UNDERGROUND

Dick's going down in the world!

AWARD winner Dick Willis will explore some of the deepest caves in the world when he heads out to one of the Soviet Union's troubled provinces.

Mr Willis is one of several Bristolians to scoop top travel prizes, and the chance to study special projects abroad.

More than 1,500 people across the country applied for the annual Churchill Travelling Fellowships this year.

Deepest

Lecturer Mr Willis — one of 111 prizewinners — will lead a caving expedition in the Pamirs in the Soviet republic of Uzbekistan, where nationalists are currently campaigning for freedom from Moscow.

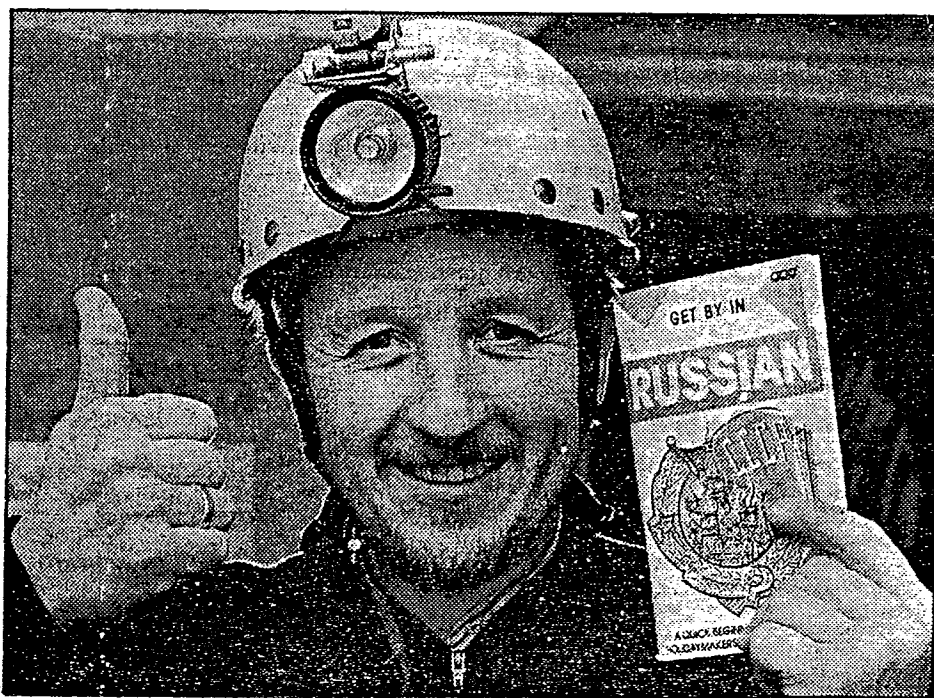
And thanks to his prize he can look forward to up to

£2,000 in sponsorship.

"There could be some of the deepest caves in the world there," said Dick, aged 37, from Windmill Hill.

"We'll be working with scientists to set up a programme of exploration and research."

He flies out in July with fellow Bristol cavers Angus



Using his head... Local caver Dick Willis will not be lost for words when he travels to the USSR — he's bought himself a book on how to get by in Russian!

Tillotson and Rob Parker. Other winners include policeman Michael Handy, aged 38, from St Andrews Close in Weston-super-Mare.

He will travel to the United States for a course.

Letter carver Sarah More, of Elmdale Road, Bedminster, is looking forward to some calligraphy and letter carving in

West Germany, while carpenter David Saville, of Sussex Place, Montpellier, Bristol, will research timber building in Scandinavia.

British Aerospace administrator Rex Meaden, from Sea Mills Lane in Stoke Bishop, Bristol, is off to Scandinavia for Scout leadership training.

From the Log

or

The Subterranean Adventures of The A-Team

24-09-88 Sell Gill Holes Pre-academic year trip for the hard-men of the A-team. Long walk, rather less long cave.

25-09-88 Dow Cave After yesterday's mega-trip, the team took it easy.

19-11-88 Ireby Fell Cavern Successful trip - until the team got lost trying to find the car.

26-11-88 Pippikin Pot The thin-men of the team tackle this notorious hole. Main-streamway discovered to be a sideways shuffle. Did not continue to dry bits.

27-11-88 Borrins Moor Cave, Long Churns Well, what else could be better for that day-after-the-night-before feeling?

30-12-88 Meregill Hole During pre-trip pint in the Hill Inn, enthusiasm waned and the team decided to tackle Long Churns instead.

01-01-89 Meregill Hole; Black Shiver Pot The team went for a walk.

02-01-89 Meregill Hole The team went to the café, and then returned to Bristol.

21-01-89 Swildon's Hole After considerable thought, the team decided to tackle this, the longest cave on Mendip. All went well until a point was reached where the ferocious river plunged over a *twenty* foot drop. Decided to return to surface.

27-01-89 Alum Pot Due to the enormous quantities of tackle required to bottom this infamous pot, the team was unable to complete the descent.

28-01-89 West Kingsdale Master Cave Valley Entrance The team abandoned ropes and ladders and ventured into a horizontal cave - discovered to be hard work.

12-02-89 Eastwater Cavern Trip planned to West End Series but didn't make it that far, nor to the pub.

10-06-89 Bar Pot Got as far as the entrance and gave up.

11-06-89 Diccan Pot A certain member of the team, known for his proficiency at electing members to the Cave Flying Group, nearly became eligible himself after abseiling the first pitch with no knot in the end of the rope - the *wrong* rope.

12-06-89 Rowten Pot Continuing this weekend's theme, two team members failed to bottom the pot due to a mysteriously shrinking rope.

21-10-89 to 22-10-89 Tackle left in Bristol due to team members being illiterate. Managed Alum Pot (...again), Long Churns (...again), Calf Holes, Great Douk, West Kingsdale Master Cave Valley Entrance, *Jingling Caves*, *Rowten Caves*, Bull Pot (first pitch only). Total time spent out of daylight during weekend estimated to be 3 minutes 52 seconds.

12-11-89 Nick Pot In the best traditions of the team, the rope was too short to descend the big pitch. Two of the team got lost on the walk back and ended up in Clapham.

25-11-89 Swinsto-Simpson's Exchange Swinsto team rigged down to bottom and waited. And waited. And waited. Eventually decided to exit *via* Valley Entrance. Simpson's team had given up before bottom.

26-11-89 Swinsto Hole Derigging trip.

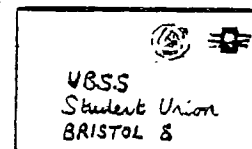
Penyghent Pot Successful trip to first pitch. One team member made solo exit without light.

04-02-90 Swildon's Hole After passing the limit of 21-01-89, the team watched helplessly as a tackle bag was washed over the pitch.

05-02-90 Swildon's Hole Trip to recover tackle lost on previous day.

A competition is being run to decide the true meaning of the "A" in "A-Team". Answers can only be accepted on a post-card or the back of a stuck-down envelope, and should be sent to the editor at the usual address.

Letters



OPEN LETTER TO MEMBERS OF THE UBSS

I would like to thank all members of the UBSS who so generously contributed to the presentation of a case of wines made to me at the AGM in March on my retirement from the presidency. It was totally unexpected and I am most deeply touched by your kindness. The selection was chosen with great erudition by UBSS connoisseurs -- I had no idea we had such expertise in the society. I was most deeply touched and am greatly enjoying savouring the contents.

It was been an exciting 12 years that I have been privileged to be at the helm of the society's activities. There have been many changes during that period, but the UBSS has shown itself able to adapt to those changes, and therein lies the secret of its survival. My part has merely been to keep the boat on an even keel when storms blew, steer it through rock strewn waters, prevent it from sinking and head it in the forward direction.

In stepping down I would ask you to warmly welcome your new President, John Thornes, Professor of Physical Geography. John has a keen interest in the activities of the society (his own son is a student caver) and he looks forward to getting to know you and to hearing more of your caving ventures.

Finally I wish most sincerely to thank all members of the UBSS for their support over the past 12 years. Without their backing, nothing would have been possible. My thanks go to the members of the Committee over the years, to the senior members of the society who have given me the benefit of their experience and wisdom, and in particular to the officers - the student secretaries, the curator, the librarian, and above all the treasurer and editor. For their loyalty and devotion I and the society are deeply indebted.

May the UBSS long continue to prosper,

Rob Savage

R. J. G. Savage
Past President, UBSS

*** STOP PRESS ***

The Lost Cave Exploration Dive took place last weekend, at Gough's Cave. Sump Three was dived beyond it's previous limit, when Richard Stevenson had to turn back due to Bouyancy problems. Rob Palmer then continued, until a Boulder choke was met at -19m. He then turned back, but it is possible that the main way on has been missed, and prospects appear reasonably good. It was a good team effort with over thirty backup cavers, and lots of free beer. A full report shall appear in the next newsletter.

Andy Farrant.



Swildons Hole. Tratman's Temple. South end. 1921.

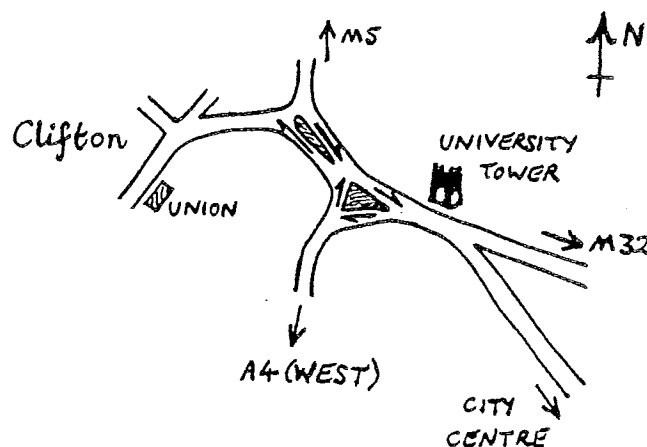
A series of talks, slide shows plus some caving (on Sunday) aimed at cavers who would like to know a bit more about caves, but don't want to be cave scientists. Cost £2.

BCRA

STUDY CAVES WEEKEND

16-17th June

Students Union
Queens Road
Bristol



Saturday. Start 10.30 am in the students union. Topics include: How caves are formed, What are the scientists up to, Cave surveying, Photography, Techniques for vertical caving, Accidents and cave rescue.

Sunday. Caving on Mendip.

Accommodation is available at the UBSS hut on Mendip.

For further information, or to reserve a bunk, contact Charlie Self on 0272 541728.