

U. B. S. S.

HERO



NEWSLETTER

VOL 8 NO 1

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EDITORIAL.

Happy New Year everybody. Hope you all had good holidays. This is a bumper packed newsletter, loads has been going on and this next year promises to be full of activity. There can be no better way to get rid of the Christmas pudding calories then going caving. The new rooms are starting to look super. We've got write ups on trips to all sorts of out of the way places including Ireland, China, last terms Yorkshire trip, a short detective story and of course there is the doctor who has made quite a name for himself. Many thanks to all of you who found the time to write. We always welcome any articles, jokes, mindless cartoons that are received and they can either be left in the porters office in the Students Union or handed to me at the weekly meeting in Crockers Tuesday 9.30pm.

Happy Caving

Bill Muncis

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All opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the committee.

GRAVEL



If you always thought that Ed 'by Gum' Bailey was the best pyromaniac around well he's been so inactive recently he's lost the title to Julian 'It's OK she's my sister' Todd when he did his best to remove 9 Brighton road from the map. (It would have given him an opportunity to try out his homemade tent). Unfortunately the neighbours, two fire engines and very nearly an axe through the front door saved him.

During the pub crawl last term there was dervish in our midst. Wielding a collecting tin for charity nobody was safe,. Dave started stopping cars in the street and by the end of the evening the tin weighed more than a sack-full of wet 100m rope.

Charlie sends a message from Russia. I don't mind queueing for the bread it's really quite nice. (this probably comes from lots of practice at the Swildons twenty)

If the demand is sufficient Andy Baker will happily lead trips to squalid places. (He may even go to a few caves.)

Nigle appeared to be running out of luck when trying to 'pull' this year, but he should be

alright for a while as he now has the undivided attention of the houses cat.

Andy Farrant didn't like it in Mulu. When underground he got fed up of not being able to see the walls of the passages.

Nilesh isn't having much luck. First his glasses are attacked by a stalagmite in Swildons. Then a corpse in the Medic's Revue (In which the large stew pot took a starring role.) decides to eat another pair. Then the other day he'd hardly started drinking when a parking meter maliciously jumped onto the pavement, assaulted him and another pair of glasses went to heaven.

We were in the G.B. dig complaining as usual and thinking of all the other places we could be. Bill: 'I want to be warm, dry and on the surface. I want to be finished.' Steve's reply: 'I want to be a Tomato.' This really got us started.

'I want to be home an hour ago.' etc. The most appropriate one for the dig was: 'I want to be a SLUG.' Apologies to the TV ad.

How to tell if Jim is excited. Ask Hannah.

You've heard of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Hero Turtles. Well the UBSS have got a Middle aged Balding Hero Doctor.

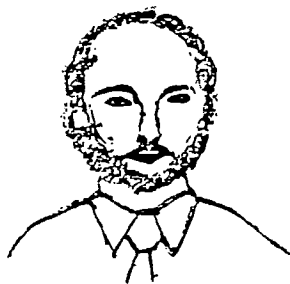
Then there's Andy Farrant who can tell you all about how quickly to grow a blotchy scraggy beard and then remove it

even quicker. How to spend weeks in a country of brilliant sunshine not get a tan but become a sort of dusty brown that washes off. How to grow interesting biological colonies between your toes. (wear the same socks for four weeks at 30 degrees)

And he's now so used to caving in the warmth that he wore a dry suit on an OFD streamway trip, said his wet suit would freeze when he came out of top entrance.

The spelaeo assault course starts at the tackle store. First try to find the new rooms. Having found then in the back of Woodland road take a last breath of fresh air before you fling open the ten ton doors. Sprint through the first room in pitch blackness as the dust starts to converge on you then wrestle with the lock on the next door. Into the adjacent room then prepare to ascend the grade 10 stairs at the top don't touch the rail as it will collapse. Watch out for the aggressive darlek with a twenty foot long nose (A sentry disguised as a vacuum cleaner placed by Major Bob) that will blow even more dust at you and try to electrocute you. Now due to the delicate nature of the floor you must tip toe, this also limits the quantity of dust flung up, but by now you've got silicosis anyway so another lung-full of fine powder won't do any worse. Yet another locked door and finally your at the top. Rather than repeat the trip back down and by now desperate for air you smash the skylight and climb onto the roof just as the security men turn up and surround the building with machine guns.

Alison is now looking for a new victim to try her surgical skills with a scissors on after Julian managed to get his hair cut before she could do it.



Egotism.

No nothing to do with Eggs this is all about being a Hero. It arises from being in contact with to many autograph hunters and being lauded in the National Press.

SYMPTOMS: Receiving free groceries and petrol, having a phone that won't stop ringing. People recognising you on the street.

TREATMENT: Go hide down a cave for two months.

WANTED

A brilliant job awaits the person with the correct talents. If you consider yourself to be literate, have 1st rate communication skills, posses a flair for creativity and wish to excel in a monopolistic media empire. There is a challenging multi-faceted job waiting for you to step into. You will have the satisfaction of being able to commission articles from a diverse pool of innovative writers all bubbling with ideas and stories. Then learn to follow a production process to produce a premier magazine which is eagerly snatched up by a devoted readership. The position will be held open to any candidates who need only express the slightest interest.

I AWAIT THE DELUGE OF APPLICATIONS.

FOR THE G.B. DIGGERS AN EXTRACT FROM THE BOOK "A CROWD IS NOT COMPANY" 2ND WORLD WAR ESCAPE.

One incident stands out like an oasis in this desert, fresh and clear and, by contrast with the surrounding time, magic and unnatural.

Lying on my stomach in the dark tunnel, smelling the earth and keeping touch with the heels of the man in front, I still could not believe that I was going to escape.

It was nearly four months before that we had begun this underground life, wriggling down through a lavatory seat and a hole cut in the brick foundations to hollow out a chamber and start a tunnel. Late autumn, midwinter, and now premature spring - in all weathers we had made the furtive journey to the large lavatory block and crawled in through the hole, or received the cans of earth for dispersal, pouring it down through the seats and ramming it into the filth with long poles, or stood about in the gloom, watching for the inside patrols and conversing with those prisoners who came and sat long on legitimate business. The routine had become part of us, and though we often hated it and grudged the time, we felt affectionate and possessive about it. There was something stimulating about the hours spent digging at the tiny face, tugging on the rope for the earth to be dragged away and receiving the faint answering tug from the other end, or squeezing backwards cursing to join the rope where it had snapped under the strain. When we came up to the familiar tea and the squalor and the faces it was as if we had spent the afternoon in another planet.

And very slowly, almost unnoticed, something had grown out of it all. The rope on the trolley became longer and the pull became harder. Soon it was necessary to station someone half way down the tunnel to help the man pulling

from the chamber, then two men at intervals. Unintentional deviations in the level became noticeable: the lamp carried by the workers at the face was no longer in sight from the chamber. People began to measure the amount of tunnel already dug, and as the weeks went by the imperceptible progress of each day consolidated in astonishing 'footage': thirty feet, fifty feet, seventy feet. People began to measure it the other way round: the amount of footage still to be dug. But it seemed impossible that it would ever lead to an escape. No-one really thought about that very much; it was all just a daily routine to be worked through. And then a mathematician went down with a set-square and a lead weight tied to a piece of string and found that the tunnel was fifteen feet deeper than it was meant to be. Nobody believed him so he did it all over again and got the same result. So the tunnel started to go upwards, while people stuck probing sticks up through the roof for safety. And one day one of these sticks came up above the ground and it was exactly where the mathematician had calculated it would be, many feet outside the wire.

A Mendip Caver's Ropework Guide?

"At what height are we to say that danger starts?" The great French speleologist Norbert Casteret once said something like this in one of his books. He was criticizing the climbing of ladders without the use of a lifeline. And, of course, he was absolutely right - is a fall from twenty, fifteen, or ten feet any less dangerous than one from fifty? Of the two times I have seen someone break bones, one was a leg broken in four separate places caused by a fall from about six inches.

The normal reply to this is "well I'm not going to fall from a ten foot ladder am I?" I believe that this is wrong on two counts. Firstly, the likelihood of falling from a ladder does not seem to be well correlated with the length of the ladder. Personally, I can remember two close shaves with ladders - one at about sixty feet up (whilst lifelined), and one at about ten feet up (no lifeline). The latter was potentially far more serious. The second point is that ladders and belays can, and do, fail - not very often, but it happens.

So, having established that lifelines should be used on (virtually) all ladder pitches, how is this done? As Andy Sparrow says in the introduction to "A Mendip Caver's Ropework Guide," this has traditionally been a subject taught by the caving clubs. I hope that it still is - but speaking as someone who's been a member of only a university club, nobody ever taught me how to rig pitches and use lifelines. Which is perhaps just as well considering the potentially lethal practices I've seen.

And this is where the book comes in. It is an excellent guide for anyone wishing to develop their rigging skills. However good, though, it has to be said that it will never be a substitute for practice and learning from other people's experience. But on the other hand, the book is not perfect. For one thing, Sparrow is guilty of perpetuating two myths. One is that polyester is "acid resistant" and polyamide (nylon) is "alkali resistant." This may be true to a *limited* extent, but whatever the material, ropes, harnesses, *etc.*, should be kept well away from *all* acids, alkalis, greases, oils, petrol, and spent carbide (watch out at the bottom of Yorkshire pitches!) The second myth is that "rack" descenders are controlled by removing and adding bars - a common misconception amongst people who have not used them much. The primary method of controlling descent with a rack is to alter the *spacing* between the bars - something which takes a lot of practice.

I am quite used to being called all sorts of things for making comments like these. My point is this: is it fair to all those people in the pub to be dragged out on some winter night, to put on cold, wet gear and to come and rescue me or one of my group just because we were too *lazy* to use a lifeline on a pitch like the Swildon's Twenty? No, it is not for us to make such decisions. If we don't want the bother of carrying a rope to such a pitch, we shouldn't be caving. If the rescue organizations actually enjoy helping people who have done stupid things, then fine: if they let me know I'd be happy to change my opinion.

One final point. To use - or to allow to be used - a body belay from the top of a pitch whilst the lifeliner is not tied on, is for the suicidal and the insane. Let's have no more of it in this club!

Chris Bennett

Hon. Secs Bit

Relocation of the UBSS

Finally the Stables have been completed by the University and our thanks go to everybody who has helped to push the renovations to a useful conclusion. All that remains to be done is to prepare the rooms for their full use, ie put in carpets and paint a few walls (volunteers welcome). We then hope to move into the premises at the beginning of February during the course of a full weekend. Once everything is moved in the rooms will need to be prepared for a grand opening and for the visit of The Prehistoric Society. Anybody who would like to help with the museum or might like to find out more about the archeological aspects of the society should contact either the secretaries or Chris Hawkes, the museum curator on 0749 870474 As it is hoped to have some evening sessions in the museum as was held in the old rooms. The number of keyholders will be similar to those who previously had keys and it is hoped that by mid February that the rooms will be open most lunchtimes as they are so near to University that a keyholder will open them up for everybody's usage.

Gear Order.

An equipment order is being placed with Taunton Leisure to purchase gear. Anybody who would like to purchase gear should speak to Jim Walmsley on 701273 or W 0666 822861 for further details as he hopes to put the order in very soon.

Tratman Grants

The Tratman fund was set up after Prof Tratman died and awards for caving expedition purposes are available to all members. Application for this years awards should be made in writing to :-

The President c/o Hon. Treasurer, 38 Delvin Rd, Westbury-on-Trym, Bristol.

Annual General Meeting Saturday 7th March.

This years AGM starts at 4:00 in the Union (Probably MR4) and will be open to all members. Any motions should be sent to the Hon. Secretaries one month in advance of the meeting. At present the agenda is:-

- i) Secretaries Report
- ii) Treasurers Report
- iii) Election of Officers for 1992/93
- iv) Any Other Business.

Following the AGM there will be a talk, Speaker to be announced.

The Annual Dinner will be in Pudseys Restaurant and cost approx. £15. All are welcome and we will meet in The Clifton P.H. at 7:30 for pre-dinner drinks. If you would like to come please send a £5 deposit per person to the Hon. Secs. (payable to UBSS) by the end of February and hopefully we will be able to give you the menu choices nearer the time.

Finally our President John Thornes is leaving this year to take up a new post at Kings College. John has had one of the harder tasks in his time with the rearrangement of the rooms being an ongoing saga. I am sure that we all wish him the best and gratefully acknowledge the hard work that he has put in for the society.

Proceedings

As many of you will know proceedings has just been published, that is last years proceedings. Our thanks go to Dr. Pete Smart for taking over the job as editor for the year. The next issue is well on the way and is being co-ordinated by Graham Mullan until a new editor is appointed

Caving

Well this is what were here for:- Flower pot has recently been reopened (ED by Dave 'Tuska' Morrison CSCC's over active conservation and access officer, using a Hymac again) and now has a 20 ft entrance pitch. Permission and key can be obtained from Mr. H.Sheppard, Farmhouse, Priddy Hill Farm, Priddy.

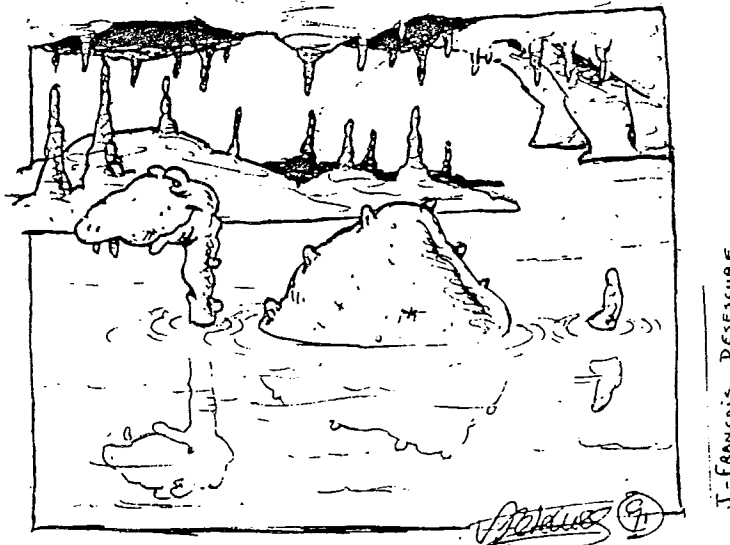
The club is acquiring 2 sets of hardware for SRT. it will be available for use from Steve Cottle at a charge of £5 per person/per trip. (Note it will not contain any harness or ropes as these will be deemed personal kit).

Some of the events listed below in the calender are definite dates and trips will be going. Thanks to Linda for arranging some of the trips.

Steve Cottle & Alison Garrard.

Calender for 1991/92

Fri. 24 th Jan	Trip to Reservoir Hole:- see Linda for details.
24/25/26 Jan	Trip to Yorkshire. We have a caravan:- See Steve on the Tuesday night before for full details of space availability and timings.
22/23 Feb.(p)	Weekend trip to S.Wales hopefully staying at the Croyden hut:- See Hon. Sec. for details.
Sat. 7 th March	AGM meeting Starting at 4:00 pm with speaker. Followed by The Annual Dinner at Pudseys:- see Hon. Secs bit.
Wed. 11 th March	Reservoir Hole Trip:- see Linda for details.
Sun. 15 th March	Slaughter Stream Cave. see Linda for places.
Wed. 8 th March	Reservoir Hole Trip:- see Linda for details.



RYDAL CAVE

An exercise in speleo detective work.

Graham Mullan

This story begins last February, when Linda and I spent a couple of days in Lancashire on holiday. Whilst looking around the second-hand book shop in Carnforth, we came upon a postcard showing the view out from what looked like a large cave entrance. The card is in the Images of Britain series and is labelled "Rydal Cave". Neither of us recognised the site, so we bought several copies of the card and off we went.

Rydal Water is in The Lake District so the obvious starting point was to look in the Northern Caves and Underground in Furness guide books, but neither had the name listed, nor anything else near Rydal Water, for that matter. The next step was to ask for help, as we had no time for a trip to The Lakes on this occasion. A copy was therefore posted to Trevor Shaw, who in turn passed a copy to Dave Irwin.

Suprisingly, Trevor did not know of the place and had to cast the net further afield for more assistance. He asked Ray Mansfield, who as editor of *Current Titles in Speleology* gets to hear of most things. But he hadn't heard of this one. Ray wrote to Martin Mills, who lives in the area. He took up the hunt and with assistance from the lady who runs the Cumbria Trust for Nature Conservation shop in Ambleside the site was located. In winter it is clearly visible from the A591. The entrance lies to the south of Rydal water at NGR NY355057, with mineral spoil tips in front.

In a letter to Ray, Martin gave the following description :-

"There are three openings (or caves). The E & W ones are large, the central one is shallow and not excavated as deeply as the others. The postcard is of the W one, it is perhaps 120ft deep. 60-80ft wide and 20ft to roof. Floor flooded (shallow) with seepage water. All in twilight zone. The E one had a couple of climbs to get up into it. It is of similar dimensions as the W one except at the rear l.h. corner an adit (about 7' x 7') goes off, however torch and office clothes (shoes) were insufficient for puddles. Echoes suggest further chambers beyond. All clearly mined for local stone and/or slates."

Meanwhile, as Dave Irwin hadn't heard of the place either he too set his northern contacts, Rick and Pat Halliwell this time, to the task. They came back with a similar story, and with the additional information that the site is described in the Wainwright guide to the central part of the Lakeland Fells.

This left just one loose end to be tidied up, the adit from the entrance chamber of the Eastern cave. So in late June, Linda and I (+dogs) went for a walk around Rydal Water. The

site is much as Martin described it, though I would have called the West cave "upper" and the East cave "lower". The climb up to the entrance is greasy, and too difficult for dogs, so Linda went in, closely followed by a family of children, and I went afterwards. The entrance chamber is about 1/3 the size of the upper cave, and the adit is about 4m long and leads into a further cavern just a little smaller than the entrance chamber and with no way on.

Next challenge please.

UNSOLICITED ADVERT

Towards the end of last year, the firm that I have used to do my book-binding developed a marked reluctance to deal with small-fry such as myself, and so I felt the need to look elsewhere.

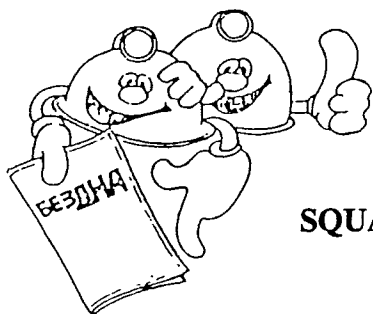
Bearing in mind the old adage that "One good turn deserves another", I approached **Period Bookbinders** of Bath, a firm who have in the past given several donations to us to help with the costs of *Proceedings*. To cut a long story short, I was impressed, especially with the restoration to useable form that they achieved with a badly water-damaged copy of *Proceedings* Vol. 1. I am taking this opportunity, therefore, to pay them back for their generosity to us by giving them a whole hearted recommendation.

Graham Mullan

The Spelæo Rooms Saga

The Committee's grateful thanks goes to all members who wrote in support of our efforts in securing the new accommodation for the Museum and Library. The University's workmen have now handed the buildings over to us in a satisfactory form. Some work of decoration and furnishing still needs to be done, however, to produce a complete finish. In particular, we wish to carpet the rooms and seal the walls, to maintain a cleaner, more comfortable, dust free, environment. This is quite an expensive undertaking, and so I am asking for any member (or other reader!) who feels able to help, to send donations to me, care of the Society.

Graham Mullan



SQUALID UNDERGROUND BRISTOL

Several factors prompted me to write this:

- 1) The publication of 'Secret Underground Bristol', popularising (if that is possible?) what goes on underground.
- 2) The fact that no cavers seem interested in the 'local grotty caves' (but isn't that the Mendips?)
- 3) Research has forced me down these places anyway, so I might as well make the best of it.
- 4) It would be useful to update the only serious work on the Bristol Region; 'Caves of the Bristol Region' (Mockford and Male, 1974), even though nobody else is probably interested.

So here goes...

BURWALLS CAVE (5638 7289)

Worth a visit if you like bats, dolomitic conglomerate or digging, it is easily the largest Avon Gorge caves (39m!!). Easily found after crossing the Suspension Bridge, jump over the left hand wall opposite the toll booth (subtly), and follow the top of the cliff until the obvious entrance is reached. Ideal for an afternoon stroll.

KINGWESTON QUARRY CAVES (5474 7740)

Previously unlocated by UBSS members (found them straight away Chris!), these gems are situated in the only quarry on Kingweston Ridge, below the radio mast. Cave 1 is full of leaves, dry and crawly and requires 10m of line unless you wish to trust the rusty railings that have been thrown down as a ladder. 30m long and only for masochists. Cave 2 is even more impressive, a 24m long crawl full of industrial spoil. Only for people who enjoyed cave 1. Cave 3 is 6m of industrial spoil, and even more impressive. For completists only.

LOWER CAVE (5652 7317)

Jump over the wall after the canopied section of the Portway, and in the cliff face you can find this cave. 18m long (bring a light for this one!), it has a grotto at the end, and an interesting dead-end climb. Several pretties in this cave may convince you that it was worth visiting (though I doubt it), it does contain

many deposits of scientific importance. Connects with U-hole, 15m higher and to the left of the cave, reachable by a scramble up the cliff face. Those incredibly bored could remove the boulders and rubble to try to connect down to Lower Cave.

RAVEN'S WELL (5993 7193)

Easy and very interesting 600 year old well system dug through mudstone and marl. Access is dicy, involving traversing along the top of the Avon and scrambling down the bank to the entrance (permanent hand line present). Once underground (via a narrow squeeze under the entrance arch), there's plenty of interest (flowstone and stal, springs, plant life, etc..). Connects with the stormwater system (if you fancy Veil's Disease) and with the railway line (if you like trespassing). Well worth a trip, but take wellies. And it's long (1000').

REDCLIFFE CAVES (5891 7233)

If you haven't done them, do it. Gate appears unlocked at moment (you can squeeze underneath anyway), there's a nice pub around the corner, and over 1km of sandstone mine is at your disposal. Surveyed by BEC, lots of wells, stalactites and foundations.

Finally, for the other person who has a copy of 'Caves of the Bristol Region', Bat Den, Dundry Quarry Caves, Rabbit Den, Twin Pot and Twin Cavern, all in the Dundry area, have been levelled and filled, so don't try to find them. I can only make one recommendation of the Bristol Caves, that they're no worse than the Mendips, so if you can dig in an airless, flooded crawl at the end of G.B. Cave, these may be for you.

My next article will catalogue all the under 5m long caves in the Avon Gorge if demand is high enough.

Andy Baker.

SALE

Size 2 Petzl Oversuit, only had it for two months in excellent condition. Need to sell as bought by mistake. (Size range of these oversuits is 1-5 with 5 being very large) any offers to Bill 291513.



Dick's Holiday in China

Even the name sounded nice; Caoba, the "C" pronounced with the tongue between the front teeth. We'd arrived late at night, knackered, been fed and crashed out. The doss was the usual Chinese base camp - a guest house; hard wooden beds with a thin cotton mattress, walls that had been painted once and, some way away (thank God) the communal latrine; reputedly a grade 2b.

Morning brought the usual rowdy fanfare of propoganda from a tinny speaker somewhere out of reach, somethings never change (unlike modes of dress, Kunming had been full of women in mini-skirts!) But the day was bright and already warm. Where was the thin drizzle I had come to expect from the two previous trips? Willis louses up the gear again... I had brought a sac full of thermals, the memories of seeping damp cold were still fresh after 4 years.

I sauntered off to the khazi to sample the 2b. Over our five expeditions to China we have developed a simple and clear grading system for the toilets, a necessary procedure to avoid insulting our hosts with exchanges such as, "What was that one like..?" "F*** awful, a hole in the floor and S*** up to your knees". Now we would simply smile and reply "3d", confident that our colleagues would be clear about the meaning. A grade 1 toilet has individual cubicles (like most UK ones) and the best grade 1's would have a sit-down loo, a grade 2 has low partitions between the slit-trenches, a grade 3 has no partitions between the trenches (a boon for early morning conversation) while a grade 4 has no trenches. The suffix A-D represents the level of cleanliness.

Grade 4D's are to be avoided unless you are equipped with waders.

The 2B was well up to standard and I joined my colleagues for breakfast. There's nothing I like better than a 2 kg plain steamed bun to start the day, although the glass of hot sweet milk did help.

We sorted our gear, charged the bottles and took stock of the area. Caoba was lovely. It was sunny and hot, the food was good, the people were friendly (we were only the second group of Euro's to appear since the 1940's), a 700 m limestone scarp loomed over us, beckoning us upward to sinks and shaft undiscovered: there was a bit of a problem with the railway shunting-yard 200 m away which seemed to operate at capacity at 03.00 hrs and the tonsillitic cockerel in the yard was heading for an early grave. Still, you can't have everything.

We pored over maps and Professor Zhu indicated the main features. Caoba was on the Mengzi County basin, a huge flat basin surrounded by high limestone plateaux. 30 years ago the area was a near desert but with irrigation it was now highly productive farmland. If they could improve the irrigation still further the farmers would be able to crop the entire year round.

That was where we came in... The water sinking on the plateau to the east was known to reappear at Nandong, a resurgence 40 km away below the hills to the north. It was too expensive to pump the water back up to the basin. However, judicious plotting of surface features, together with the evidence from a tracing experiment carried out in 1968 using 13 tons of salt (yes, that's right, 13 tons) suggested that the underground river ran through a narrow band of limestone just north of Nandong. If we could get into the cave system, we could survey it and provide data for the civil engineers who would raise the water table under the basin by damming the passages in the limestone band.

So, Objective 1 - lunch.

Lunch over, we planned the next move. Obviously the priority was to dive at Nandong. Our two huge crates contained lots of lovely diving gear in which we could dress Gavin Newman and Steve Jones and then fire them into the sump. Easy peasy. We could even drive to the entrance and get a cup of tea (it was a show cave). Divers went off to fettle gear. The rest of us studied the maps. The next objectives would be to try to get into the system from the top, so when we were ready we'd send a team up onto the plateau to examine the big sink and drop any shafts. We'd also send a group to the small hills in the middle of the basin to drop the shafts there. We fettled more gear.

Supper. Wander round town, look at the railway (built by the French, it was one of the supply routes to Vietnam during their war with the USA and was cut a few years ago during the last China-Vietnam fighting). Call in at the town disco for a few beers. "Hmmm. Things are looking up. Pity none of us can dance the foxtrot!"

Morning again. Another beautiful day. We piled gear into the bus and set off for Nandong. The driver took a short cut across the basin. Have you ever seen a 30 seater coach doing grasstrack racing? Bounce, bounce, bounce. A mere one and a half hours. Anyway back onto tarmac. past a convoy of 90 new army lorries ("Wonder where they're going") beautiful views, lots of wonderfully dressed ethnic minority people in colourful costumes, long, straight tree lined roads, vast pigs and (Oh God, I'd forgotten) Chinese driving.

We arrived at Nandong. People, a show cave entrance (a nice river cave with concrete crocodiles and pretty lights), more people, the Asian indifference to litter, rural fast food and the smells of local delicacies cooking (barbequed, fermented bean curd, I'd rather be in a 4C). Oh yes, and officialdom.

Dear reader, it is impossible to convey the intricacies of Chinese bureaucracy. We arrived, we waited. Our hosts (who deserve medals for their patient persistence) set out to speak to the appropriate individuals. Sedbo and I took over the show cave while we were waiting - noone seemed to object to two Europeans helping themselves to a boat and rowing through the cave). The guides thought it was hilarious.

We returned to daylight. Everyone else was waiting in the bus. "Problem?" I asked. Prof. Zhu looked embarrassed. "We have permission from Central Government and the Show Cave to be here, but we also need permission from the City Government. Dr. Wang is sorting it out. Now we must go back". Everyone smiled tolerantly, we bounced back to Caoba and supper.

Morning again. Breakfast, half a gallon of noodles soup today. Back in the bus, check the gear, off we go. Bounce, bounce, bounce. Aha! a variation on the shortcut, BOUNCE, BOUNCE, graunch. Back at Nandong. Everyone smiles, we kit up and set off for the cave. Dr. Wang appears, he has that tell-tale look of embarrassment... This time the problem is the Army. There's a military camp above Nandong and part of the main cave was used as a communications centre during the last war with Vietnam. It is restricted. Also, inside the cave are two main passages and one contains "military installations". We all look tolerant and fascinated. Zhu and Wang set off for discussions. Sedbo, Kath and I practise surveying the show cave in metal boats (spot the deliberate mistake).

Our hosts return. OK, we can go into the cave, but not into the military passage. Gav looks concerned and consults his sketch survey. Inevitably the military passage is the one with the main sump! We conference quickly. It is decided to go into the cave and up the other passage. At the junction Gav and Steve will plead exhaustion and sit down for a rest. The others will carry on up the No.2 passage with the Chinese. When they are out of sight the divers will sprint up the main drag and do a recce. Off we all go...

Inside the cave the reality of the "military installation" greets us. The entrance is a concrete corridor with rooms leading off; cave guides doss in one room and another is full of wrecked electrical equipment. Stairs lead down to the cave proper and lots of mud we wade through water alongside a collapsed walkway and onto a series of leaking dams - relics of an earlier attempt to raise the water-table. No. 2 passage leads off the plan swings into operation. Gav and Steve stop on a mud bank while we wander on.

They are just about to set off when lights approach. They wait, the lights grow closer. Two military policemen in uniform appear, one carrying an electric cattle prod. They don't speak English and our heroes don't speak Chinese but the meaning is clear. The diving party exits the cave...

A few days later we finally get the requisite combination of permits and return to Nandong. Sedbo, Kath and I complete our survey through the show cave and into the main cave. Glooping up a dismal river, walled with mudbanks, we find a pole and a tackle sac and realise we are at the junction of the main passages. Paul and Kath set off swimming while I have a little rest - I'm getting older now, you know. Sometime later there are noises. My party returns together with the others. They all complain of

funny vision, tingling fingers and shortage of breath and it is clear that the passage is full of bad air. One thing it is not full of is military secrets, unless an old cable and some cracked 20w bulbs can count.

Diving in Nandong was a no-no. We knew the passage was about 2 km to the sump but people were seriously affected by bad air after only about 1 km. In addition the visibility was awful. Steve did another dive in similar water and, equipped with 4 aquaflashes and an FX2 he was invisible in only 10 cm of water. The Chinese were desperate for us to make the dive and promised boats, unlimited supplies of oxygen and soldiers to carry. Presumably the latter were classed as disposable. The dive was out of the question and both Steve and Gav rightly refused to make the attempt.

We never did get into the Nandon system although we tried very very hard. The shafts on the small hills were all choked, either with boulders or sediment. The main sink, a huge and beautiful cave, passed one sump and ended in another: a good diving prospect but requiring a level of logistical support we did not have. The shafts on the plateau were examined and some dropped, one to 208m, but these too were choked.

Eventually we ran out of time and went on a recce to Sizhuan where the caves are vast... But that will be another story.

Caoba is nice however, beautiful climate, nice people, and lovely scenery. And somewhere underneath is a system which carries 40 cumecs in the wet season, just sitting there and waiting...



A l'est : rien de nouveau (carte reçue de Russie)

YORKSHIRE CAVING WEEKEND.

BY TIM PARISH

Back in November a group of about 14 headed up to Yorkshire for the weekend. Most sensible people left in the early afternoon but Julian, Alison and myself left at around 9pm. we arrived at 2am after only a few stops to tighten up the accelerator cable - thereby disproving all the libellous comments made about Julian's car.

Judging by the accounts of others, previous trips had stayed in a caravan site under the viaduct in Ingleton. This time however the luxuries of the North Yorkshire Caving Hut beckoned and having discovered that filling a bottle or flushing the toilet set off a fairly major earthquake, we retired to bed.

Next morning we awoke to discover some mad buggers had already gone caving the previous night! Forsaking the pleasures of the Marton Arms they had trudged across some dismal moor to do an SRT trip! (ED Bill, Steve, Mark to JINGLING) Obviously some were taking this caving business too seriously, so it was down to Ingleton where we spent a good hour or so wandering around, sitting in cafes and deciding what to do. Eventually we split into two groups of four and one group of five.

One of the groups of four Bill, Steve, Mark and myself were to rig into Ireby Fell Cave while the other would derig out. Therefore we drove up and after a brief walk we were rigging Ding pitch. All was going well until we reached Pussy pitch where a shortage of ladder meant a five foot gap at the bottom. Eventually we reached the end sump and had lunch before moving back. We met the others Julian, Marcel, Annalette and Andy at Pussy pitch and were out by 5pm.

It was then onto the Marton Arms for some food and beer before meeting up with the others in Skipton here we learnt that while Andy was climbing down a fixed rope at the bottom of the cave it broke. Luckily he was only a foot from the floor and not 12 feet, but it meant coming back required acrobatics!

Next morning Julian and Alison went off to try some cave (don't know the name but it was long, wet and not worth doing) while Steve, Marcel, Bill and myself decided to go down Bar Pot to Gaping Gill. As I had never tried SRT before on the walk up Bill explained some of the basics (luckily the cave has no rebelay). Once there, another quick lesson in how to use the gear and then it was onto the first 30 foot pitch. The beginning was quite narrow but squeezing the lever on the descender in I was off and glided surprisingly smoothly to the bottom - much better than ladders.

At the next pitch head Steve was busy rigging and soon he was off over the 100 foot drop. Even faster he was back up - he had forgotten to tighten the bolts with his spanner (they were only hand tight). Soon it was my turn and I stepped out onto the pitch Steve and Marcel's lights were pin pricks below and trusting your lift to a single rope (ED that Steve had rigged) suddenly seemed rather silly! I descended in rather nerve racking stops and

starts eventually learning to relax and enjoy the view. Once at the bottom it was mainly walking and crawling until eventually a huge roaring signalled the main chamber was around the corner. This is an incredible sight 130 meters of water cascading over the edge, while high above a dim light revealed where Gaping Gill opened to the World. We sat with our lights off and ate lunch watching the amazing view, before reluctantly we had to set off back.

Once again we were at the 100 ft pitch and my first go at prusiking. This is great fun as unlike ladders, you can stop, rest and admire the view!

At the surface again after a few problems getting out of the entrance pitch, we walked back down the valley dodging over a wall to avoid the entrance fee and were back at the car by around 5pm. It was then on to the hut to split up for the journey home - arriving back in Bristol by 10.30pm.

All in all a brilliant weekend of caving and not a hint of 'Caving Matilda' was heard.

The Longwood Epic by Nilesch Chauhan.

It all started on a cold, misty December evening, as the fog was slowly collecting. It had been a normal day - nothing spectacular, nothing boring, people were just doing their normal things. However that evening was to be like no other for three unsuspecting, quite innocent cavers.

Tim was the first to arrive (as usual) at the tackle store, then came Nilesch with the transport and finally the woman with the Key - Alison. But where was Mat?? Wasn't he the only one who knew his way around the cave; but it was not to be - a message had been left: 'apologies from Mat, couldn't come as he had another expedition to attend to later that evening.

All three stood still..... what where we to do?.... 'who needs Mat anyway!... we can do it ourselves,' anyway Tim had been down the cave once before, he was sure he could find his way around, fine.... so the decision was made to go! But what equipment was needed? Luckily Nilesch just happened to have a Mendip Underground handy. But still unsure they took sufficient just to be on the safe side - armed with a tackle bag full of ladders, rope, belays etc, they were at last on the road. Though they had left a call out note; not only because they did not trust themselves; but also as a reassurance: 'Tim's leading.....arrgghhhhhh..... if were not back by 11pm - WE NEED HELP !!!!

Eventually they arrived. There was no changing room, it was a 'get changed at the side of the road cave!' And by now it was colder than ever. The frost was building up

heavily on the ground. - Well at least it would be warmer in the cave. So the long walk to the cave entrance began. Once there it was up to Tim to open the Padlock, as he'd seen it done before. It was quite tricky though, being a one handed job, through the small hole in the manhole cover, to get at the padlock inside. Next all they had to do was to lift the cover and get inside. But what is this?? - it won't budge!! Even the tremendous combined strength of these two (Herculean) men could not move it!! Oh no! - it had all seized up with ice But look. There's a de-icer can inside. Nilesch attempts to get it out, just reachable with his fingers, as he stretches to it - OOPS - he's dropped it !! Not to worry, there was another de-icer can in the car, which Nilesch goes marching back to get. Half an hour passes as all three attempt to open the cover, but even the de-icer was no use. They had just about given up when suddenly Nilesch has a wave of inspiration! The other two stand back as he picks up a large branch and places it in the hole, with the other end he attempts to lever the cover open CRACK the branch snaps!!! Well try and try again and you will succeed at last. So this time he takes an even bigger log and heaves at last 50 minutes later the entrance is open.

They make their way through the cave not really getting lost at all, in fact quite a pleasant trip. Tim was doing a good job. But as they make their way through the Christmas crawl - a narrow crawl indeed, Tim stops at the pitch to rig the ladder. Why is he taking so long?? The others wait anxiously in the most uncomfortable positions, Nilesch lying with his head down, feet hanging in the air and Alison not in any better position herself.

Eventually they get down - see the 'sites' and get back out to the freezing cold. Back at the car they decide to go for a quick swift half down the pub. After searching intensively (including Nilesch stopping inches away from colliding into some one else's car, while reversing) they find the Pub!

But fate was not to let go that easily: on their way back home Nilesch, being the safe, 'cool' driver that he is, begins to pull out onto the main road from a very hilly side road. Although at this time it is late at night, no street lights and heavy dense fog. He slips and the car goes rolling back SMACK ... into a wall!

And so ends this 'Longwood Epic'..... or does it??

New Years Eve Dinner.

Was well attended by twenty two members and four guests. Slight panic when turkey was found to be taking slightly longer than anticipated to cook in Westbury-Sub-Mendip (cooked by Chris Hawkes) but was ready by 10pm. An excellent evening and thanks to everyone who helped.

True Stories

All in the beautiful month of May, while the birds sang clear at the break of day, the sun was driving the clouds away and the dew on the daisies like silver lay.....

Springtime. The sap rises, young girls think of pretty dresses and young men think of pretty girls. But this is not our story. Our heroes are past the springtime of their youth and the sap takes longer to rise. The month is not May but September.

But what an extraordinary September. One wedding may be regarded as a chance occurrence, statistically of neither high nor low probability. Two is sufficiently unusual to suggest a coincidence. Three strains the bounds of credulity and makes one suspicious. Four in the same month beggars belief.

When these four are of the age and experience of Charlie Self, Steve Perry, Martin Warren and Bob Churcher the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the mythical elixir d'amour has been re-invented and that one of the students has been conducting an experiment. The plausibility of this explanation may be judged by the worried expressions on the faces of Mark, Marco, Jim and Tony, who must see themselves as potential candidates for phase two of the experiment.

Of all the weddings the one to attend was definitely the first, and not just because it was held locally. Charlie's registry office wedding was commendably short (they do a nice ceremony in Bristol) and then we all retired to Clive and Wanda's back garden for the wedding feast. The weather was brilliant, Wanda's cooking magnificent, even the wines had been pre-selected at a private tasting arranged by the best man. As the sun went down we staggered over to Crockers upper bar, opened specially for us, for yet more drinks and a chance to heckle Charlie as he gave a slide show of his expeditions in the Soviet Union.

Steve was marrying into a Birmingham Catholic tribe so his was very much a family wedding, even though he and his RAF colleagues were in uniform. Incidentally, he assures me that his decision to wear uniform was prompted by a desire to avoid the cost of hiring a morning suit, and not just because Jane's family had requested it. Plus ca change..... Family weddings can be a bit tough on guests who are not relatives, but this family like to enjoy themselves and the reception slid effortlessly into a disco and dance.

Martin elected to wear top hat and tails, a combination which seemed to neutralise his normally playful nature. More surprisingly, I have heard no reports of bad behaviour by any of the guests (car crashes on the way home don't count). I do hope "the Animal" isn't going to grow old gracefully.

Poor Bob. Having now retired from the army, he was unable to have a proper military wedding, with number ones, crossed swords and all the paraphernalia. Fortunately, the bride's relatives came to the rescue and though Bob had planned a very quiet wedding, perhaps even a delay until Christmas, the sounds of merry shotgun blasts broadcast the news over field and fen. The sounds of celebration could even be heard in Bristol!

Best wishes to Charlie and Galya, Steve and Jane, Martin and Wendy, Bob and Judith.

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GP crawls four miles in pothole rescue

Wreck cars in giant blaze

By ANTONY DORE

MORE than 50 firemen were fighting a blaze at a scrapyard in Bristol this afternoon.

Flames leapt 25ft as more than 200 cars ready for breaking caught fire at the yard at Novers Hill, Knowle.

Ten fire engines went to the scrapyard and Bristol Water was asked to increase the pressure from the mains.

Firemen sprayed tens of thousands of gallons of water on the cars in a bid

DOGGTODOR IS GAVE HER

A BRISTOL doctor was at the centre of a dramatic mission to rescue an injured woman potholer trapped 2,000 feet underground.

GP Tony Boycott spent eight hours crawling through four miles of tunnels to reach her.

She had spent more than 18 hours there after dislocating her shoulder in a fall.

Today Dr Boycott, aged 40, of Malago Surgery in St John's Road, Bedminster, was recovering at home in Bristol.

He crawled through a labyrinth of narrow tunnels in treacherous conditions.

And he squeezed through gaps no more than 18 inches wide in the Ogof-y-Daren-Cilau Caves near Llangatlock in Powys, Wales.

He was one of a rescue team that battled to reach 32-year-old Sarah McDonald yesterday.

Lucky

"By the time we got to her we were completely exhausted," said Dr Boycott, of Walton Rise, Westbury-on-Trym.

"She was extremely lucky. She fell off quite a high rise but by the time we got to her, her shoulder had gone back in.

"A lot of the trip back was crawling on hands and knees but she coped with that very well.

"If her shoulder had still been dislocated it would have made it much more tricky.

"I'm completely exhausted!"

By KARL NEWMAN
and JEREMY TAYLOR

Dr Boycott, who has been a caver for 20 years, had only just returned from London where he had spent Christmas when he was called out on Saturday night.

The alarm came after the injured potholer's colleagues had scrambled back to the surface.

Ms McDonald was one of six potholers intending to spend several nights underground in the cave system — at 16 miles, one of the longest in Europe.

Today, back above ground, the injured potholer was said to be in "good spirits".

Dr Judith Jones, a partner at his Bedminster surgery, said Dr Boycott was "very brave".

"It's typical of him to be first at the scene where he is needed," she said.

"He frequently spends his off-duty time potholing."

Gwent Cave Rescue Team incident coordinator Steve Pedrazzoli said: "My team has been superb, a real bunch of heroes. Everyone of them deserves a medal."



MERCY MISSION: Cave rescue doctor Tony Boycott after his ordeal today Picture: RICHARD MITCHELL

to stop the blaze.

They were hampered by noxious fumes that billowed from the mass of twisted metal as plastic from the cars caught fire.

Scrapyard worker Don Wassell, aged 57, from Hartcliffe, said the fire started when a small amount of petrol leaked into the cars.

He said a spark, probably from a welding torch, set the petrol ablaze just after 11am.

"Flames were leaping 25ft in the air and then there was a big plume of smoke."

Damage was estimated at more than £1,500.

Snarl up at sales

TRAFFIC ground to a halt in the centre of Bristol today as bargain-hunters flocked to the sales.

Streets around the Broadmead area were blocked by midday with queues stretching back more than a half a mile in places.

Police said there was a solid line of cars from Broadmead to the Lawrence Hill roundabout, Easton.

"They urged people not to travel into the city centre by car but to use the park and ride system.

"This seems to be the big day after Christmas when everyone is coming into town for the sales or to change presents," said a spokesman.

The Doctor of Daren

For Dr Tony Boycott, the Daren Cilau rescue of December 1991 was only the beginning. A girl quietly having lunch at McDonald's in the far reaches of Ogof Daren Cilau choked on her fillet of bat, fell off her dropped up rock chair clutching at her throat, slipped down a crevasse, through the ceiling onto Hamburger Choke and landed on her head. Fortunately she was wearing a helmet, but this didn't stop her from receiving a really awful headache.

That evening Dr Boycott had gone to bed with his clothes on, but was awakened 15 seconds later by his authentic, handmade bat radio replica as promoted by the famous Bruce Wayne of the TV series. It had once been a nice piece of equipment until somebody took it down a cave so now it was junk.

"Boycott...screeeeee. Boycott," it squawked like a talking scrambled egg. "Buggerham...Hambirring. Choke Beefburger. That flat bat fillet had a bone in it. Emergency emergency 999. Daren Cilau. Come immediately. Bring your gear. The police are here."

Dr Boycott jumped out of bed, yanked his SRT kit off the charger and fished his wetsocks out of the bucket where they had been soaking overnight in an opium-nicotine derivative solution to give him that extra spring in his step. He threw it all in the car, himself included, and hit the road.

In Newport he stopped off and bought 7 pickaxes, 5 shovels, a loaf of wholemeal dynamite--freshly sliced--and a bat-bar (the three pronged articulated derivative of the humble crow-bar).

"Why are you bringing all that?" Pendralozzi asked when he reached the entrance lobby of the cave. "Have you come to bury the patient?"

"It's needed for Hamburger Choke. We will be needing all this gear if we ever stand a chance of unblocking anything in that area. There are boulders bigger than a cave diver's ego in there."

"So?" said Pendralozzi, picking his nose. Then he added. "You really are serious about burying her? For heaven's sake she's only got a headache and a bat metatarsal bone in her throat."

"Who has a headache?"

Pendralozzi explained. Clearly and concisely he said that you do not remove bat toe bones from people's throats with the use of six shovels. What would the press think.

"They're not here yet," Tony said. "Thank god. Anyways, we might as well take this stuff and go digging while we're there."

"If you insist, Doctor," Pendralozzi sighed. He turned over the sign that hung from a bolt above the entrance. It read: "The Doctor is IN"

Sixteen hours later he reached the casualty who was tucked up in bed under two sleeping bags with a pillow and a hot water bottle. The doctor examined her.

"What do you think?" Pendralozzi asked.

"It's pretty bad," he said, removing his spectacles and scratching his forehead. "This is a type beta plus headache. If it was anything below a type gamma minus I could cure her by letting her suck on one of my wetsocks."

"Urrr-ugh!" said Pendralozzi.

"Absolutely," said Tony, as usual. "Normally only people in Scotland get headaches this bad on the fifth or sixth of January in conjunction with

their hang-over. See how her face flinches each time her heart-beats? We can't take her out."

"What do you mean we can't take her out?"

"I mean that I have had reports on my bat radio from which I judge that it would be unsafe to remove her from the cave. In fact it is actually fortunate that we are so far away from the surface."

"Why, what's the problem?"

"There are reporters. I fear that with a headache of this magnitude would cause this poor lady's head would explode if she were exposed to the camera flash guns."

"We could wrap a stretcher around her head."

"I'm saying no."

"You're just afraid of the reporters, aren't you? That's it! You know they will have you for dinner. You know you will be cut up into little bits and those bits will be transported around in cold storage and have embarrassing pictures taken of them by media experts who will publish them worldwide."

"Absolutely. Stop it, absolutely. Look, if you are not with me, I'll give her two aspirins, let her sleep it off and you can escort her out of the cave while I tactically have an accident to delay myself until they've all gone away."

"No, no," Pendralozzi said. "You can't do that. You know what will happen. Some 'helpful' reporter will call in another middle-age mutant hero doctor with a beard to come in and rescue you. Imagine what that poor fellow will have to put up with. We know you will get away with it, you can be locked safely in the ambulance. But that poor sucker will get it doubly worse, having rescued the doctor who rescued the patient."

"Absolutely," said Tony. "Are you with me?"

"Yep. What do we do?"

"Here's a shovel. We have enough supplies. We dig our way through Hamburger Choke and out the other side of the country."

It is worth noting that the papers reported the next day that the two of them, Dr Boycott and Pendralozzi, got lost somewhere in the 2000 foot entrance crawl and had to back out and get even more irrecoverably lost. The reporter suggested that this might have been because Daren is a 16 mile long complex of cave passages and tunnels that has taken hundreds of years to explore. Dr Boycott's admirers, however, pointed out that this is a total load of balls because Tony has never been known to get lost in any cave passage regardless of what was at either end. This is like saying you are more likely to get lost finding your way out of your own car if it is parked in the carpark of Hampton Court Maze. Besides, the only time Tony gets lost in his life is on his way to work in Bedminster, especially when he falls asleep in the car. All other reports are maliciously spread by the ruthless Dr J.J. who has on occasion caused rocks to fall, hurricanes to spin and sumps to silt up to the visibility of used Diesel engine oil.

With respect, when Pendralozzi and Tony and the headache girl escaped out of the mountain, they were on the other side of The Time Machine. No one had ever before in history been through that chamber and not come back the same way. No one knew before why it was known by that name despite there having been small but subtle clues as to its nature, such as the way people's diurnal cycles were slightly out of synch after having spent a night or two in the other side. When the two of them dug through Hamburger Choke, they did not return for a some time.

COUNTY CLARE, MAY 1991

Graham Mullan

This year's early season Clare trip was far more of a holiday than usual, in that absolutely no original exploration was done (except a bit of diving by Marco, but he wasn't really with us!). However quite a lot of caving was done and some things of note were recorded.

The party this year consisted of myself, Linda Wilson, Tony Boycott, Helen Wills, and for part of the time, Bob Churcher and Kirsten Hopkins, the latter making her family's first trip over since her father helped Jack Coleman survey Poulelva in 1949!

Besides our completing tourist trips of Poulmagree, Faunarooska, Coolagh, Poulelva-Poulmagollum, Cullaun 2 and Urchins Cave, we learnt the following, which may be of interest:

Last winter's storms have moved a lot of rock around on the coast near Doolin. Poll Ballaghaline is now completely blocked, the Dig beyond Hell has refilled, and the climb down to Urchins Cave is considerably more difficult.

A trip to the Aran Islands, on one of the hottest days (see AB's sunburnt head for details) proved little more than the fact that one day is insufficient to see anything above the barest minimum. The hill forts on the southern cliffs of Inishmore are well worth seeing, and the cliffs themselves are spectacular.

Needing to visit Ennis, we took the opportunity to see Poulmagollor, near Inch. A very pretty little cave well worth a visit. The Croydon caving Club, in 1973, surveyed the caves of this area, and argued for them being pre-glacial in origin. After a cursory examination, I would say that the system is a relatively young (i.e. post-glacial) phreatic maze cave that has been very recently drained, most probably by the effects of quarrying, and is now undergoing a period of deposition, of mud and shale debris in the streamway, and of hard calcite over older, softer deposits in the upper levels. There is no need to postulate a history that is more complicated than this. The system seems quite similar to the submerged system on the Moyree river that we discovered in 1989, except that the latter has not been drained.

It was our intention to help Colin Bunce and Brian Judd to survey and push Colin's new extension to Cullaun 1, but the parties became separated and they lost us. Colin did manage to connect this crawl, from the streamway below the third pitch, back to his previous extension to Gaffer's Gulch Old Streamway, however.

An evening visit was made to Pol-an-Ionain, with Dermot MacKinney and Mike Scanlon from Ennis, to discuss the proposed

showcave. We have since learnt that the planning application has been approved, subject to some quite tight conditions, but the Speleological Union of Ireland is, none the less, appealing and the final result will not be known for some time yet.

One fine afternoon was spent walking on northern Slieve Elva, looking for a hole that I *thought* that I had seen some years ago. Needless to say I was mistaken and no hole was found. On coming back down we stopped for a chat with Mr. Cosgrove at Caherbullog farm. Amongst other things, he told us the correct derivation of Tobar an Athar Calbach. This is the Holy well on the green road around the northern edge of the mountain, that we have always followed OCL in calling the Hag's well. Wrong. It seems that it is actually the well of Father Callou, a priest who blessed the site after watering his horse there during a severe drought in the mid eighteenth century. The site has recently been 'refurbished' by Mr. Cosgrove and others, and an opening ceremony was held last year, to which everybody present had forgotten to bring a camera! Incidentally, I believe that they have actually got the wrong spot, and that the well was originally the next opening to the east.

At the same time that we were over, two diving expeditions arrived, One with Marco Paganuzzi and Brian Judd, and the other lead by Martyn Farr. Their findings have already appeared elsewhere in print, notably Brian's solo trips and 250 odd metre extension to Pol na gCèim.

Lastly, one rumour that I heard was that, contrary to opinion, Jacko McGann was *not* the first person to enter Ailwee Cave, and that four gunmen had hidden there during the Troubles. A true story or merely a garbled old tale, I wonder.

Pothole rescuers defy maze

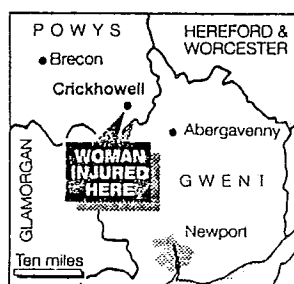
By BILL FROST

RESCUERS carrying an injured potholer were last night edging their way through a labyrinth of narrow passages and partially flooded caves three miles underground in a dangerous operation which began on Saturday.

The woman fell and dislocated her shoulder while negotiating the White Walls system at Llangattock, Powys, central Wales, on Saturday. Team members moved her to a warm, dry underground camp seven travelling hours from the surface as a rescue operation was launched.

Tony Boycott, a Bristol doctor who knows the cave system well, was among 70 potholers to take part in the rescue. He negotiated the 16-mile system of caves and tunnels to treat the woman.

Last night rescuers thought it unlikely that the woman,



part of a five-member team mapping the previously uncharted caves for the Chelsea Speleological Society, could be brought to the surface before late this morning. The potholer, who has not been named, is believed to come from the Northeast.

A spokesman for the rescue team said: "The dislocation in itself is not serious but such an injury is painful and a tremendous handicap so far underground. There are a couple of places on the way out of the system where she will have to be pulled up or

down on ropes to negotiate 70ft drops. It is going to be a long, hard haul, but luckily there is plenty of food and professional help on hand."

Cavers who accompanied the woman took seven hours to reach the surface to raise the alarm. One then returned below ground to lead the doctor.

Lesley Walker, a caver whose husband is a member of one of the rescue teams involved, said: "It is a very complex system indeed and horrendously tricky in places. Not many people have been down that far and then only experienced cavers. I myself would not go in there."

Almost three years ago a party of cavers was trapped elsewhere in the same system for nearly 24 hours. Rescue attempts were hampered by surges of flood water. Ten years earlier two people died in the White Walls caves under similar circumstances.



Underneath Bristol in a Canoe

(or)

Bill, Mat and Julian's Excellent Adventure!!

by Mat Wood

Deep beneath Bristol (well, not that deep really!) lies the mostly forgotten, usually ignored River Frome. Second cousin of the River Avon, it was buried by man at some stage to make way for what is now Broadmead ("What a good idea!" I hear you cry!) and the 'circus' in front of the Hippodrome. Hundreds of years ago, this area was in fact a flourishing port, but as ships became larger, (and the Avon Gorge didn't) this area lost its usage. So, what has this got to do with the story? Everything in fact, because in the true spirit of adventure (and an extreme moment of madness), the above named chaps decided to borrow (eh Hm) some canoes from the canoe club ("Oh yes, we're only going to use them for canoeing!"), and attempt to canoe through the length of the tunnel. This is the story. (Sounds like a cheap film doesn't it?)

By inspection of maps (both old and new), the position of the entrance was worked out as being just next to the M32, on the other side from St. Pauls, however where, if anywhere, did the other end come out? Some said it was next to the Watershed, others say it was in the floating harbour, others say into the Avon. So who was right? We intended to find out. Bill and Julian did a recky to the entrance, Julian even plucking enough courage up to wade in amongst the rats and cobwebs, and returned with the decision that "It could be done if you really wanted to!". It is at this point that the rumours began: "It's illegal to go there!", "Drug dealers meet down there!" etc etc yawn yawn. So it was decided to perform the evil deed in the dead of night! (Yet another great idea!!)

So with enthusiasm dwindling by the minute, we met up after closing time on the last Thursday of last term and sat in Julian's flat pretending we wanted to do it. It is best to point out to those of you who do not remember the end of last term (Quite likely I hope if the Christmas parties were anything to go by!) the temperature was about -10 degrees and getting colder, and everything was freezing to everything else. Donning our wetsuits, furry suits etc etc, we all enthusiastically (honest!) jumped into Julian's car and spend to the launch site with canoes upon the roof rack!

The canoes were launched with the minimum of fuss (considering they had to go down a twenty foot vertical drop!), and we bobbed off into the gloom.

It was at this point that I said gleefully "Gosh, I haven't done this since I was ten!".

"Done what?" said Bill.

"Canoeed!".

"Oh my God! You haven't canoed for twelve years, and here we are going into the unknown? Oh well, you had better remember quickly!"

But only the cold was going to dampen my enthusiasm (along with the rats swimming beside us!), so off we went. A worrying moment occurred as we passed beneath the entrance when we all ground out, whilst trying desperately not be seen! A quick shove was all that was needed. The tunnel began with a recent concrete-beamed roof and a very wide river bed (about 30 ft wide and 20ft high) and did not smell as bad as we thought it might. After about 200ft, the passage changed into an older brick-arched passage, and narrowed slightly. We nearly lost Bill

as he investigated a side passage and found he couldn't turn round, but otherwise the going was smooth. It was very eerie, because of noises from street level above, along with roosting birds and strange distant splashes; poor old Julian almost couldn't hack it (but we offered him a Scooby Snack and he decided to stick with it!). Another moment of excitement was when we discovered small white plastic bags stuffed in inlet pipes and left on ledges. We thought we had found a drug dealers stash, however it turned out to be rat poison (although I suppose our earlier theory could still be true!).

Onwards and inwards, passing much smaller side passages, we observed grubby stall hanging from the ceiling, obviously formed from calcite in the concrete above. We then came across a closed lock gate with a side passage next to it, and realised that we could see light at the end of the tunnel (cliche but in case more than appropriate). We decided that the side passage was much more interesting (True Troglodytes!) so off we went. This was a much smaller passage than before with the roof only about 5ft high, but it soon came out at a T-junction into a bigger passage. Bill explored to the right, and came back saying he had found a huge pile of sh*t, but we decided that the left passage was a better choice!

This was a strange passage with pipes appearing and disappearing through the wall, and odd intrusions of concrete structures. The other feature of this passage was a steadily increasing booming noise of heavy machinery. This worried us for a while, until after reaching a crescendo, began to die away again. We were obviously still only just below street level because we could see frozen manhole covers every so often. The passage seemed to go on and on, and we began yearning for our beds, considering it was about 2am by this time. We then came across another lock this time, but with no light ahead, and since we were not sure where we were, we decided to turn back. This was a shame because after later investigations, that lock turned out to be just under the 'circus'; and had we gone another couple of hundred feet, we would have come out at the Watershed.

On arriving back at the first lock, Julian found more bravery than he had earlier on, and climbed over the gates to paddle to the entrance whilst Bill and I waited for him. He returned, covered in cobwebs and other unpleasant things, saying he had seen some swans! He managed to persuade us what else he had seen, and it turned out that he had been out into the floating dock, adjacent to Bristol Bridge, but that the passage closed down to about 2ft (hence explaining his state. He helped him back over the gates and in thanks, he made his light fail! "Time for bed" said Zebedee, and we (uneventfully) returned to the entrance, and thence to the car. Paranoid that we were going to get arrested (why?), we had to reload the canoes in silence, and drive off at speed! We went to the floating harbour to inspect the exit, and there were indeed swans! Then, off home we went to a heroes' welcome (well, a cup of tea anyway!).

"What an excellent adventure!" we all said, "Lets do it again some time!" (but not now!).

