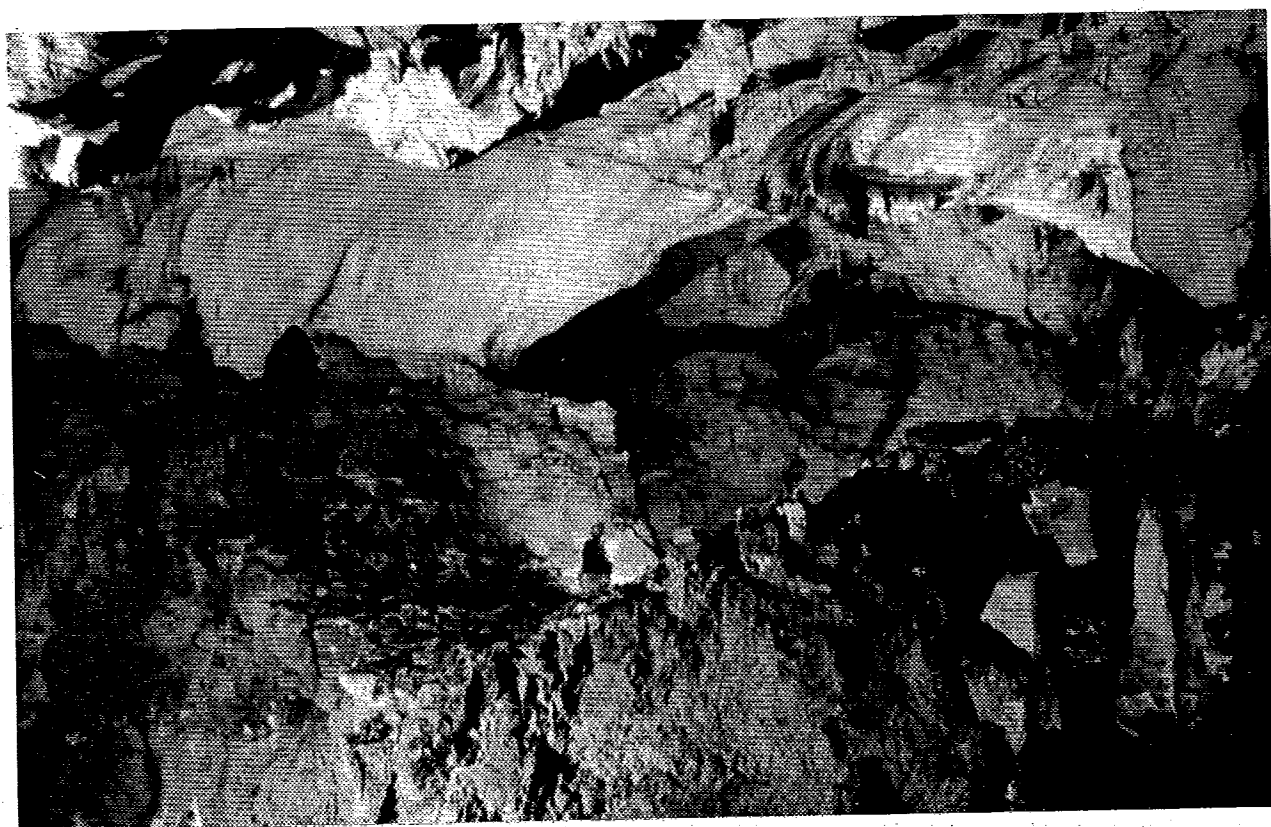


# U.B.S.S.

*University of Bristol Spelaeological Society*



NEWSLETTER  
Vol 9 No. 3

November 1993

## Editorial

## NEWSDESK

Welcome to this the first Newsletter of the new academic year. I would especially like to welcome all those new members of the club - you've made an excellent choice! If you haven't been caving yet and you want to try - its never too late to start!

This issue is packed full of the latest news, events, articles and scandal, but don't let that stop you from sending in more. Any article of interest, be it on your first trip down Goatchurch, or your exploits in the world's hardest caves, can be sent to me c/o University of Bristol Speleological Society Newsletter Editor, Students Union Queens Rd, Bristol, or to me at the Dept of Geography (pref. on disk, Word 5, or printed out). Any other bits of news, gossip or items of general interest, you can email me on: farrant@uk.ac.bristol.gma

Now the disclaimer. The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the committee.

Happy Caving!

*Andy Farrant*

Andy Farrant

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## Red Quar Swallet

Some of you may have heard about the latest extensions in this rather unusual cave. The Cotham caving Group have been digging here and recently broken through into about 100m of large passage including a chamber over 30m long. The cave is unusual in that it is formed in Triassic red marl and not limestone. The cave feeds into Wigmore Swallet to the north which is developed at the unconformity between the Triassic marl/conglomerate and the Old Red Sandstone. The water eventually resurges in Cheddar, 10 km away. It seems as if all the new major discoveries on Mendip are not in limestone - caves be where you find 'em!

## Bad air on Mendip

Over the summer, many caves on Mendip were affected by high levels of CO<sub>2</sub>. The caves affected were Swildons, Whitepit and Cuckoo Cleeves. Concentrations of up to 4% were recorded! Swildons has also been badly affected by diesel spillage. Fumes were noticeable all the way around the Round Trip and around Sump 1. The recent heavy rain has flushed much of the bad air out, but it is still inadvisable to free dive Sump 2, due to very bad air in the 'airbell', be warned - this may prove fatal.

## The GB dig

Unfortunately, due to the enforced absence of the clubs main insane diggers, not a lot of progress has been made. The recent wet weather has flooded both the dig and the side rift where the water was pumped to. People can breathe a sigh of relief! The whole of Ladder Dig is sumped off at the moment after water levels backed up into it during floods after Freshers weekend.

## Singing River Mine

There has been a rockfall in Singing River Mine, Shipham. A party were lucky to escape injury when part of a floor of 'deads' gave way. The 'deads' are referred too in Mendip Underground as those immediately prior to the East/West series T-junction. Several cubic feet of rock have moved, and a lot more is rather precarious. (report by Steve King via the cavers email forum).

## Mendip Underground

The latest issue of Mendip Underground is now out, with the latest additions. Several of the pictures are by Steve Cottle. See if you can recognise Chris Bennett, Julian Todd and Andy Cooke! And spot the deliberate spelling mistake on the front cover - if in doubt, ask Tony Jarratt (J'Rat)! It costs £10 and is available from all good caving shops.

## The Tackle Store

There is an increasingly large amount of peoples 'junk' accumulating in the tackle store of late. These include old TV sets, bits of bike, road signs and lots and lots of old bones. The only things which should be in the tackle store are tackle (!), caving gear and tools. We will have a general amnesty for people to get rid of their 'junk', or else it will get binned - very easy when the bins are just around the corner!

## New Years Eve Dinner

This traditional annual event is as usual going to be held at the hut on New Years Eve (as it has done for over 70 years!). If anyone wishes to go, please contact Linda Wilson on Bristol (0272) 502556.

## Ogof Fynnon Ddu 1 leaders

The club has several OFD 1 leaders, including Charlie Self, Tony Boycott and Adrian Wilkins. Adrian has said he is willing to take trips, and he often goes to South Wales, and has room for 1 extra person, or several if they bring a car. Adrian can be contacted at 'Apples', Scumbrum Lane, High Littleton, Bristol, BS18 5JH. Tel (0761) 470543

## Swildon's Hole Barn

The Swildons Hole Barn has been recently cleaned by members of the Cotham Caving Group, after someone had used it as a toilet. If cavers cannot keep the barn clean, then it is likely the use of it may be curtailed in future. Please don't leave any rubbish behind.

## Sweat Shirts

If there is enough interest, we will be putting in an order for a new batch of sweatshirts. If anyone has any good ideas for a new design, please send them to any member of the committee. The sender of the best entry may get a free T-shirt!

## BCRA Conference '93, Bristol.

This years BCRA conference, which was held in the Students Union was very successful, with lots of good talks. I would like to thank, on behalf of the BCRA, all those members of the UBSS who helped in any way. Much appreciated. For those who didn't go - you missed an excellent weekend!

Andy Farrant, BCRA Conference Facilities Co-ordinator.

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Cover Photo: Stone Horse Cave, Sarawak:  
Matt Kirby

## THE HQN SEC'S SLOT

Well I never expected to be writing for this corner of the newsletter, but here I am. As I'm sure many will agree 'Armchair Caver' to 'Honorary Secretary' must be promotion of the year. To try and understand why the position was given such a grand title I resorted to the Chambers Dictionary. Apparently I am 'honorary' as I hold the office without performing services or without reward. I am just beginning to realise which of these alternatives is most applicable. However even though I'm not as jovial, amiable or dashing handsome as the late Mr. Parish (and I'll never look half as good in a rubber suit!), I'll do my best and try not to cause too many problems.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Mike for agreeing to stay on as my other half and let him know that we all wish him well in the future.

Unfortunately the Slovenia expedition scheduled to take place this summer had to be called off due to lack of participant cavers. However Graham has heard of another very promising virgin area of beautiful Slovenian countryside, which is just screaming to be explored. If anyone at all is interested in this once in a lifetime chance to discover the world's largest, funkiest, most stalactite infested cave **AND** then name it after themselves, then let me know (please). There will also be the possibility to go down some excellent previously explored caves and experience UBT (underground boating technique).

Despite the lack of expeditions this summer much caving and other events did take place. These included a superb surfing trip and beach party on the Gower. Whilst later in June some of our members were seduced into deciding against caving by a rare glimpse of Sunday sunshine in the Yorkshire Dales and instead opted to throw themselves off Malham Cove on long pieces of wet, Liverpoolian rope. What is even more impressive is that most of them are still alive to tell the tale.

The 'Freshers' trips have all been a success so far (and I dare anyone to say otherwise) and we even seem to have found some keen, talented new members! I'd like to thank everyone that drove (or offered to drive) to Wales on 23rd Oct, without you the trip would not have been possible. By the way, did anyone leave a beach towel at the hut on the first weekend? If so let me know as it is now nicely laundered and desperately resisting the pull towards our bathroom.

For those of you who were otherwise occupied on Weds 20th Oct, you missed a very amusing afternoon of Quasar and bowling. I was horrified to find myself addicted to running around in the dark brandishing a laser gun and shooting anything that moved.

If you haven't yet braved a cave **IT IS NOT TOO LATE**, come along to Crockers on a Tuesday evening (9:30) and we'll organise a trip around your own personal specifications.

I think that is just about the end of my mindless drivel. So happy caving etc

## **UBSS CALENDER 1993-94**

- Dec 2nd  
(Thurs)                      **Sessional Meeting.** A talk on Kents Cavern, on of Britains premier archaeological sites. Union MR4 8pm. All welcome.
- Dec 3-5th  
(Fri-Sun)                    **Christmas Meal and Yorkshire Weekend.** We've hired a pub in Swaledale! Should be good. See Alison for details.
- Dec 11th                      **MRO Lecture.** Nick Williams on the Molephone. Hunters Lodge Inn, Priddy, 7.30 pm.
- Jan 21-23rd  
(Fri-Sun)                    **Derbyshire weekend.** Staying at the TSG hut in Castleton, with a Peak Cavern permit on Sunday.
- March 12th                   **AGM and Annual Dinner.** Details later, but keep this date free!

Please note that these are not the only caving events, people go caving every week, so come along to Crocker's whenever you feel the urge to head underground. Eve is currently organising a new load of trips and permits.

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### **NOTES FROM THE TREASURER.**

I have been asked by one of our ex-student members why we do not publish a full address list in the Newsletter, enabling people to keep in touch more. I feel that this is a good idea, and the Committee have agreed to do so, providing no-one objects. Consequently the next Newsletter will contain a full list, unless anyone writes to say that they would rather theirs was not on it!

In similar vein, many of our members are now contactable via e-mail, and I would like to collate a list of these addresses as well. If you have such an address, please let us know, either by snail-mail or more directly. I can be reached on 100276.2411@compuserve.com. I will happily accept all mail, and papers for *Proceedings*, this way, but not subscriptions!

Subscriptions for 1993/4 have still to be paid by the following:

M.G. Anderson	R. J. Barker
M.P. Bertenshaw	I. Butterfield
D. B. Harries	T.C. Lyons
C.S.C. Martyn	P. D. Moody
S.R. Perry	M. Simms
M.H. Warren	N. White

Please let me have your payments ASAP. I would also be grateful to receive back the remainder of the Covenant forms that I sent out earlier in the year. At a time when our income from investments has fallen with the fall in interest rates, I need to maximise our other sources of income, and this is one of the nicest, being totally painless to all but the Tax Man.

On the other hand, We have the pleasure of welcoming Steve McArdle back to the fold, after a brief absence playing rugby or some such, and Simon Shaw, on his return to Bristol.

## A SUMMER WEEKEND IN YORKSHIRE

with: Jim, Toph, Eve, Bill, Chris, Nilesh, Alison, Steve and Tim.

The Clapham Tearoom, conveniently situated on the way to Gaping Gill, was just the place to be on a foggy, cold Saturday morning. Half the group had already disappeared up the Mountain side to rig Flood entrance, which left Jim, Eve and myself drinking cups of tea and gazing out of misted windows. Eventually we summoned up the courage to leave, and began the walk up Ingleborough.

Flood entrance is a beautiful cave, nicely scalloped passages with the odd pitch and squeeze. With just one wrong turning, which necessitated reversing a rather tricky climb, we caught up with the rest of the group at the top of the 130ft pitch. The others were rather chilly by now, having waited over an hour for Bill and Alison to rig the numerous rebelay and deviations.

Another half hour passed; eventually Steve and Toph went down and there was much rejoicing. Chris followed, only to discover a particularly nasty rub point about 10m below the pitch head. Having rerigged this, he continued on. It was my turn. I gazed over the edge, watching the rope disappear into the blackness with what seemed like an inordinate number of rebelay and deviations. I reached the second rebelay, only to find there was not enough slack in the next rope to get my descender on. The choices were either to back prussik 15m and rerig, or go back up. I went up. By now those of us still at the top were particularly cold so we decided to leave.

Eventually the others came out, some having done the round trip through Henzlers Crawl. It was decided that we would camp for the night instead of using the NPC hut, so we headed off for the Hill Inn. Unfortunately, the local Hells Angels chapter had also decided to go on a camping trip, so the site was full of bikes, beards and leathers. Eve was keen to stay, but was in a minority, so it was on to the Ingleton campsite. This was the complete opposite - about two caravans and a long walk to the pub. Therefore, it was back to the NPC hut and a night in the New Inn. Late night entertainment was provided by some NPC members playing cricket with two diving weights wrapped in a caving sock - quite interesting if your sitting behind the batsman. Eventually the bat broke, so it was off to bed.

Sunday dawned bright and clear, so it was deemed too nice to go caving. Toph and Jim spoilt it by going off down some hole, but the rest of us headed towards Malham Cove for a day of sunbathing and abseiling. Being Malham, half the population of England was there, but we battled through the crowds to Janet's Foss. This is a stunning plunge pool and waterfall, with a small cave behind it - supposedly inhabited by Janet the Fairy. We climbed up to it, but Steve had obviously scared the fairy away. After a quick dip in the Foss, with Bill trying to kill himself by jumping off slippery rocks, we split up - Chris and Alison going up Goredale Scar, the rest of us set off for Malham Cove to abseil. Malham Cove is 100m high - we had a 50m, 30m and 25m ropes - time for a few knot passes we thought. Fortunately there was already a caving group there, trying to raise money for their expedition by prussiking and descending the height of Everest in a day. We therefore scrounged some descents off them. The view on the way down was truly spectacular - although the gentle hissing of hot aluminium against rope tends to focus your mind. In the end only Steve, Bill, Nilesh and I had time to get down - but we'll be back. All in all, rather a fine weekend.

Tim.

## UBSS PYROMANIA

Andy Farrant

As usual, it all started with a good hour of procrastination and general faffing at the tackle store, while sorting out transport, gear and who was going to pick up Eve with all the food. Finally, we got out to the hut, where there followed yet more faffing as people decided where they were going to go caving, who with and how (why break with an ancient UBSS tradition - faffing, not caving). It soon transpired that everyone wanted to go to Longwood, Swildons or Thrupe Lane, so eventually off we set.

We arranged to do two trips down Longwood, with Simon Shaw, Hugo, Ian, Rupert, Jo and Rob going down first and rig the pitches, followed later by myself, Henry, Dave and Sarah to derig. On arriving we found a large party at the entrance with lots of cave rescue gear strewn about. Oh no - not a rescue!? - luckily it transpired to be a cave rescue practice, the idea of having to haul someone out of Longwood was not a particularly nice one, let alone being the victim, eh- Kathy!

Eventually, at about 1.30 we got underground, and set off down August Hole, but not for long! After having got down the wet 'orrible bit, and getting soaked, no-one else appeared to follow. After five minutes I went back up, getting even more soaked to find Sarah had had light failure and was forced to make an exit from the cave, so out we went. Meanwhile, Simon and everyone else had continued to the bottom of the cave. Henry and Dave then decided to go back down and meet Simon... At least that was the plan.

Meanwhile, back at the hut, the bonfire was taking shape, Flossie was being roasted and the homemade fireworks being made. At about 5, Simon and the others returned, somewhat surprised to see us sitting in the hut. They thought we were still down Longwood and had consequently left the tackle down there - Henry and Dave opting to exit the cave 10 mins after us, as they didn't know the way back in the dark across Blackdown. Ooops. So Simon, as he had the van, and Rob went back over to Longwood to derig, muttering profanities and vowing to use Andy as the guy.

Finally, after much picking and prodding with knives and general Neanderthal-like behaviour (much malaligned these Neanderthals, some of them were quite decent chaps), the sheep was declared to be cooked, at least on the outside, and there ensued a mad survival-of-the-fittest type rush to get the food. Luckily, the scenes of three years ago, when it was a case of the biggest knife won were not repeated, and most people got some. Congratulations to Eve for making such an amazing salad - and lots of it.

The whole lot was washed down by gallons of cider (literally in Paul Drewerys case), and then the pyrotecnics began, accompanied by lots of tuneless singing. Who needs an organised firework party, when you can have a drunken disorganised one! The homemade cordite fireworks actually went up as designed this year, which was not half as exciting as last year where they went up, then sideways to explode at knee height in a completely unpredictable random fashion. Tims caving grundies, looking slightly worse for wear were ceremoniously draped over a particularly large rocket, and sent into orbit, well, they got about 2 feet up and then plummeted into the ground and exploded, whereupon they were cremated in the fire. Bill by this stage was getting severe pyromania and lobbing anything he could get his hands on the fire, and burning his eyebrows off in the process. Matt and a friend them showed everyone that holding a firework and igniting it at the same time was not a particularly good idea and spent the next hour with their hands in a bucket of cold water. More entertainment followed by the fire-walking, with the most whinging from Hugo 'I'll lose my balance' Pile. First prize (or rather the prize for being the most stupid) must go to Paul Drewery, who decided to outdo everyone by walking across the fire wearing nothing but a pair of walking boots. Singed eyebrows are one thing, but singed pubes?? Not a pretty sight - especially Pauls.

Morning dawned to a scene of devastation, the fire still smouldering, Bills eyebrows gone and burnholes in everyone's fleece jackets, but at least the hut was still standing. No one seemed to be in the mood for caving, an expedition to The Swan at Rowberrow seemed much the nicer option. After a lovely pub lunch (except for Bill, who was still looking a bit green and charred), any remaining pangs of guilt about not going caving were soon cured by

a trip down Rowberrow cavern. This didn't involve getting out of daylight, but was still underground, with the added bonus that you didn't get dirty. And then back to the hut, where Topher, Hugo and Ian, arts students the lot of them, had been sitting for the last 6 hours drinking cups of tea, before finally stirring to go down Singing River Mine.

After a cup of tea, kindly provided by Steph, the new armchair/social caver of the year with a Yorkshire accent almost as broad as Ed Bailey's, it was time to retire to Bristol. All in all, an excellent traditional UBSS bonfire weekend.

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## SPELUNKING IN MINNESOTA

*Andy Farrant*

This summer I was fortunate enough(?) to be sent out to the States to do some lab work at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. For those who don't know where Minnesota is, it's near the source of the Mississippi River, not far from Lake Superior. Luckily for me, they have caves in Minnesota - not many, but a few. Over the email network, I contacted the Minnesota Speleological Survey, one of their local 'grottos' (clubs in Brit speak) and met up at one of their meetings. Now the American haven't quite got into the cave'n'pub culture we have here. Their idea of a meeting is to sit in a lecture theatre while someone gives a slide show, and then everyone in turn stand up and says what they have done in the past month.

No room for armchair cavers here!

Still, I managed to arrange a trip with a guy called Bill Wilson, who worked as a lorry driver and shot his neighbours dogs as a pastime!

Minnesota is not renowned for its magnificent scenery and mountains - it hasn't got any. Three hours of driving along wide boring freeways at 55mph (so slooow) and one rather disgusting McDonalds egg muffin later, we arrived in Spring Valley, and met up with the rest of our party. They turned out to be a part of 14 year old scouts, half of who were proto-couch potatoes! Arghhhh, not more novices!

So we got changed, me into my furry suit and oversuit, flash kneepads, FX2 and Petzel Ecrin helmet, everyone else into old clothes and homemade lights made out of bicycle lamps, and walked over to the entrance. The entrance was a piped shaft, very reminiscent of Mendip, in the middle of one of those typical Midwest flat, featureless corn fields, which dropped down about 10 m into a low passage. The cave had the shape and size of the upper smaller parts of Aggy, the plan of OFD, the rock texture of Slaughter Stream cave or Otter hole and the colour of Box stone mines, but not half as nice! After 2 hours of dragging scouts round not a lot of cave, we arrived back at the MSS caving hut.

The club hut is big, spacious and even has its own private cave entrance in the floor! Personally, I think every club hut should have its own cave. Perhaps we should relocate the UBSS hut over the GB entrance?!

This cave (Spring Valley 4) was much nicer, and used to be a show cave. A flight of steps led into an impressive high narrow canyon with some nice formations, and lots of side passages to explore. After about an hour we took the scouts out and went back in to do the further reaches of the system. The cave is over 7 kms long, and included some rather tight rifts and nice formations. After spending a few more hours poking about and generally getting knackered, we headed out, and drove back to Minneapolis, stopping off to eat the biggest, most unhealthy beefburger I've ever eaten at a bar en route. Shame about the beer though!

Thanks to Bill for a worthwhile interesting trip, if not a totally orthodox one! It sure beat the hell outa sitting in the lab!



### To Hell and Back, with Reverend Toffer

"Have you ever been caving before?" asked the slightly manic looking figure, who, I later discovered, was none other than the Reverend Doctor Toffer.

I confessed that I had.

"Longwood," he said cryptically, and scuttled off to find another victim.

Soon his recruitment campaign was over, and he had four more gullible companions to join his motley crew; Jenny, Hugo, Rupert and Pippa. A short car journey later we found ourselves contemplating the open lock house of Longwood cave. It looked inordinately wet, with what looked suspiciously like a large waterfall pouring down the entrance hole.

Making light of any potential minor hazards, such as death by drowning, Toffer wriggled down the entrance crack and invited us to follow him. Earlier suspicions about the amount of water pouring into the cave proved to have a horribly sound foundation. It was very, very wet and equally cold, and in relatively little time we were all soaked to the skin.

But never fear, Toffer's here, and he knows exactly where he's going, doesn't he? At the bottom of the entrance crack I was asked if I could see any way we might proceed into the cave, as Toffer couldn't remember quite which way he was supposed to go. Not the most confidence inspiring of starts, methinks.

Various uncomfortable crawls and a ladder pitch later saw us enter a large open cavern, down which a rather spectacular waterfall plummeted into the stygian depths. A simple bit of climbing took us through to our second ladder pitch, which involved another large waterfall and would clearly entail us getting horribly wet yet again.

Toffer, however, was at hand, with an excellent idea for a short cut that did not involve getting remotely wet or going down ladders. He led us back into the open cavern and began ferreting around in corners, searching for his short cut. Ten minutes later, he was forced to admit that this magical short cut did not, alas, exist anywhere outside of his fevered imagination.

Disheartened, we returned to the ladder pitch, and put a brave face on getting piss-wet through yet again.

Following this bit of fun, we pottered around up various passages, Toffer by now admitting he didn't actually know precisely where he was, and claiming it was a good introduction to 'expedition caving' and exploration. A quick trip down stream along a not unpleasingly decorated passage signalled the end of our descent into Longwood, and the beginning of our long trek back.

To keep spirits high, Hugo bravely entertained us with various poetry reading, Gallic songs, and, best of all, rousing excerpts from Verdi's Requiem, and in no time at all, we were ready to ascend the waterfall again.

I was last up the ladder, and was quite unnerved to find as I stood at the bottom that I appeared to be standing in the dark. A quick examination of my light revealed that the batteries had, with what can only be called bad timing, run down. From here, I was dependant on the good will of others shining their lamps for me, and the excellent light cast by Toffer's carbide lamp.

Further entertainment was still in store, though. Having re-crossed the waterfall cavern, Pippa found herself leading us out of the cave, with Toffer shouting 'helpful' directions from the back. Reaching what looked like a dead end, Toffer was consulted, and professed his conviction that the way forward was through a narrow gap in the rock in front. The hapless

Pippa was forced into said crawl, and spent the next few minutes trying to convince the reverend doctor that he was, in fact, horribly mistaken.

There is something sadistically entertaining about this scene whenever I recall it to mind:- Pippa's feet projecting from a rift in the wall, protesting that there is definitely no way forward, while Toffer blithely assures her that she's definitely going the right way, despite the fact that he was at the back and couldn't actually see where she was.

Eventually, he came forwards to have a look what all the fuss was about, only to deliver the immortal line, "What on earth are you doing down there, Pippa? You're supposed to be up here," at which he scrambled up a crack in the roof.

The one remaining object barring our escape to ground level was the ascent of the rift. Coming down, this had not been too bad; you just had to stop yourself from plummeting by jamming yourself with hips and elbows and other projecting parts of your anatomy. Coming up, however, was a different matter altogether. You couldn't see where you were going, because you couldn't look up without being pounded in the face by several gallons of water, all under the influence of indefatigable gravity, although all this made little difference to me, as my light, having worked for a few brief minutes on the pilot light, had now failed completely, meaning I had to do most of the climb by blind instinct.

A very wet few minutes later, a delicate silver tracery of sunlight seeped slowly into view. It's amazing how much more you appreciate light like that after five hours stuck in the murk, and today, after five hours stuck in the murk with Toffer, it looked more beautiful than ever.

Once out, the last few hours caught up with us - the fatigue, the bruises and, most of all, the marrow chilling cold. Shivering uncontrollably, and with skin turning distinctly blue, we forsook Longwood cave for pastures warmer.

*IAN WHEELER*

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## **OBITUARY**

It is sad to record the death of AUDREY BAINES at the age of only 66. She read History at Bristol, graduating in 1949, but her interest in archeology led her to join the Spelaeos and she became Librarian for the session 1949/50. She then went on to study archeology in London and joined the staff of the old Guildhall Museum (now merged into the Museum of London), working on postwar rescue excavations. In 1950 she married another archeologist, Ivor Noel Hume, and in 1957 they emigrated to the USA where they became director and curator of Colonial Williamsburg, where she died last August.

Audrey became an authority on post-medieval archaeology and ceramics. She may have been the only spelaeo to publish books on her pet reptiles.

A detailed account of her life and achievements appeared in the Independent for 1st September 1993

D.T.D

## THE WESSEX CHALLENGE '93

For those new among us, the Wessex Challenge is an annual Chariot race held on Mendip between all the local caving clubs. It is usually an excuse for mindless violence and blatant cheating - which is odd, as the winning prize is the honour of hosting it the next year. The afternoon race is then followed by a food and beer session at Priddy Village Hall, with the digestion aided by a live band.

Owing to Bill's keenness, and the fact our chariot was the only one to float, we accidentally won last year's challenge. Despite efforts to throw the winning ticket back into the pond, we ended up with having to host this years challenge. It therefore fell on Andy's head to book the Village Hall and band - a date was set for Saturday 10th July.

Every challenge has a theme upon which the race and team's chariots is based. After much thought, the theme was decided to be 'The Knights of the Round Table'. Therefore one Wednesday in June found Alison, Toph, Eve and I out at the hut desperately trying to think up a suitable course for the race. The final idea would take too long to explain (and I can't remember half of it), but it involved King Arthur, Guinevere, assorted knights, a chariot, Merlin, a Lady of the Lake, Chastity belts, Excalibur, the Holy Grail, rough cider, the holy number six, and a Holy permit. A death slide was considered, but as Toph almost wiped out the hut roof attempting one from about 40ft up a tree, we decided it would be too dangerous.

Having this all worked out meant we could begin selling tickets for the stomp in the evening. Mat did a superb job designing the tickets and posters, and 4 weeks before the challenge they were on sale in the Hunters, Bat Products and various caving clubs. Unfortunately, the 10th July was also when a large caving conference in Derbyshire was taking place - 4 days before the challenge the Hunters had sold precisely one ticket.

Never the less, the morning of Thursday 8th found Bill and I desperately scouring Bristol for a welding kit and something to weld together for our chariot. Eventually a kit was tracked down in the motoring club - but we still had nothing to weld, despite searching scrap heaps all day. However, as always, the Union had a large collection of Shopping trolleys around it, so on Friday Mat began welding two of these together, with bolts from a Senate House skip adding a bit of strength.

There also remained the large problem of catering for around 150 people. Alison tackled this problem with great success. 150 baked potatoes were ordered from Spud-u-like for the Saturday evening - that solved one problem. Wanda kindly offered to provide the salads at a cheap price. It was then off to the cash'n'carry with Graham, where he pretended to be Linda to get in on her card. Sarah very kindly offered her kitchen for the day, so Alison, Sarah and Maria spent Friday cooking vast quantities of chilli. Food containers ran so short that even the dirty nappy bucket was commandeered.

Sometime around here the band 'Snakes Alive' cancelled - one of their members was pregnant. Fortunately an alternative was suggested with the slightly dodgy name of 'Inspector Snatch', who were promptly booked.

While the chariot was being built, various markers, arrows and notices were being fixed to poles to guide people around the course, excaliburs were being built and holy grails sought. Andy had also arranged for a friend of his to lend us some scaffolding with which to build some obstacles for the chariots, so Hilary, Bill and I picked up as much as we could in the Rover and dumped it at the hut. Then it was off to the Hunters for a bit of ticket selling - we sold one.

Saturday morning we loaded up everything we needed with the chariot sitting proudly on the roofrack. It was then off to the Charity shop to buy a pink nightie and wedding veil for Bill - he was going to be Guinevere, while Alison was King Arthur. Up at the hut construction of various scaffolding obstacles was got underway, with helpers turning up throughout the morning. An hour before the start, Mike, Nikki, Hilary, Mat and I went off to set up the rest of the course with various markers. This completed we returned to the hut to find around 70 people had turned up with 5 teams entered - a truly amazing sight after all the worries about ticket sales. Merlin Mullen and the Lady of the Lake (Linda) were dispatched to their places around the course - and after a fair amount of confusion the race was started.

As usual, all the rules and notices were ignored, and the cliff face outside Reeds cavern soon echoed to the sound of teams attempting to bring their chariots down an exceptionally narrow path, only marginally shallower than the actual cliff. Eventually after more than enough exertion, violence and cheating the Wessex Caving Club were pronounced winners (I think) - more importantly we came in last - yippee ! The chariot survived the course - a real testament to the quality of Sainsburys Trolleys.

A quick round of photos, some cups of tea and then dismantling the course began. Once the hut was back to normal we all headed off for the village hall to prepare for the evenings entertainment. The hall was cleared, kitchen readied, and the booze turned up courtesy of the Hunters. Eventually, the band arrived - and after an impromptu game of rounders it was time to open for business. In the end over 100 people turned up, which was more than enough to break even. The band was a sort of Blues/Rock combination - excellent stuff for stomping. The food went down well, the bar dished out gallons of Butcombe (thanks to all who helped serve), and the whole thing was a real success.

The next day consisted of clearing the hall, moving scaffolding and attempting to eat the rest of the Chilli over at Jim's house. Many thanks to everyone who took part - hopefully the club can continue losing for the next few years.

Tim.

## **The Tynings Great Swallet Dig**

On Wednesday Oct. 27, this dig was restarted after an effective gap of two years. Given the gloomy prognostications of dangerous loose impenetrable boulder chokes that had been the order of the day when work ceased there, we were pleasantly surprised at the good progress that has been made on the first couple of trips.

The strong draught has been confirmed as coming up through the choke alongside the west wall, and it seems possible that this wall can be followed downwards, at least for a while, without disturbing the main choke too much.

To work the dig effectively needs a party of seven (including the now mandatory car-sitter) so we are keen to recruit additional helpers. The team will hopefully now be digging every wednesday evening, meeting at the Tackle Store at 6.30 p.m. or at the cave by 7.30p.m. So if you, too, want the glory of breaking new ground, don't mind a bit of hard graft, but were always put off by the liquid mud in the Bat Passage dig (ours is virtually dry!) come along. Or, for more information see Graham in the Pub.

*"The Diggers"*

# MAKING A BIVI BAG

Bivi bags are pretty useful things, especially on caving expeditions - however they are around £120 in the shops. Fear not, the pattern shown below can be made for around £45, so next summer you too can freeze without getting wet. There are plenty of people in our club who have made their own bivi bag, so it ain't that difficult. I'm no seamstress, so if I can do it, anyone can. All you need for this pattern is approximately:

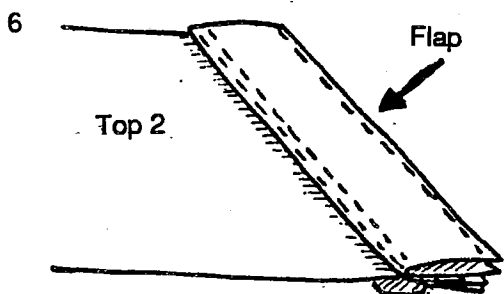
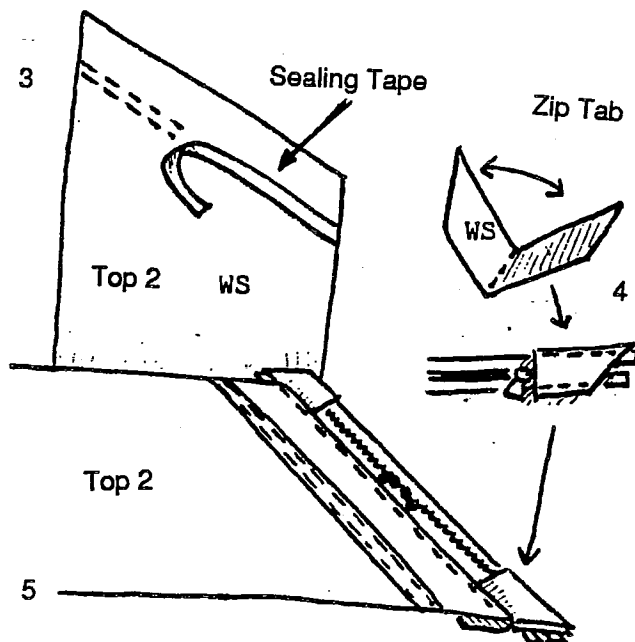
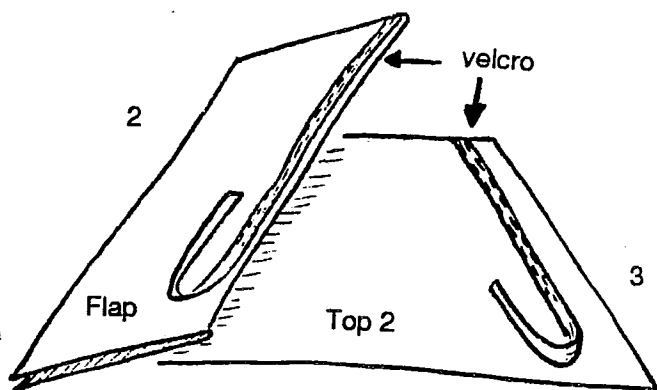
- 4.6metres "Breathable" fabric (1.5m wide)
- 1 x 140cm Heavy duty zip with two reversible pullers set to open from the centre
- 10 metres Iron-on seam sealing tape or a tube of seam sealant
- 1.5 metres Velcro

All this stuff can be bought from PENNINE OUTDOOR, Hard Knott, Holmbridge, Huddersfield, W.Yorkshire (TEL:0484 689100/689101). Ask them to send you their catalogue, and samples of their breathable fabrics. Don't bother with Goretex, its about £20 for a square metre and doesn't work too well when dirty - I made mine out of stuff called P34A (Technique XP), which is breathable (but I wouldn't close the zip up completely), is cheap and very tough. So, now all you need is a sewing machine, strong thread (like Koban 75), and a bit of time. First off, make a mock-up of the patterns from an old bedsheet before using expensive materials. This enables you to check the size is right, practice the pattern and make all your mistakes. The pattern will give you a medium sized 220 x 80cm bivi bag with a zip running from left ear to right thigh, protected by a 10cm deep velcro fastened flap - if any extra length is needed the pattern can be extended at the foot of the bag without any extra taper on the base part. Use plain seams (straight forward sewing). Top stitch the seams, if you can, so the seam lies flat, thus making seam taping easier; but its not that important, and its quite fiddly.

Right, on with the instructions:

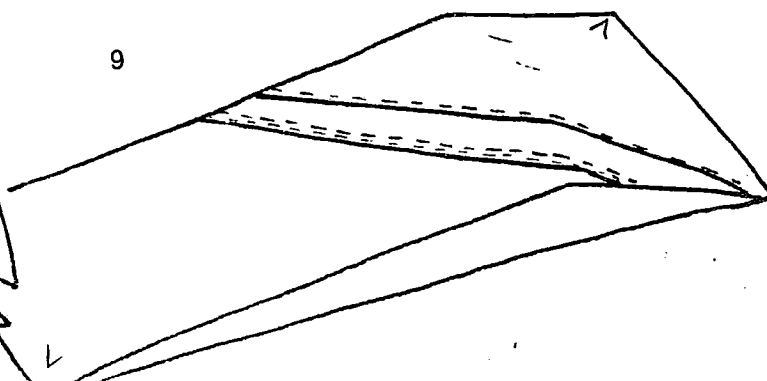
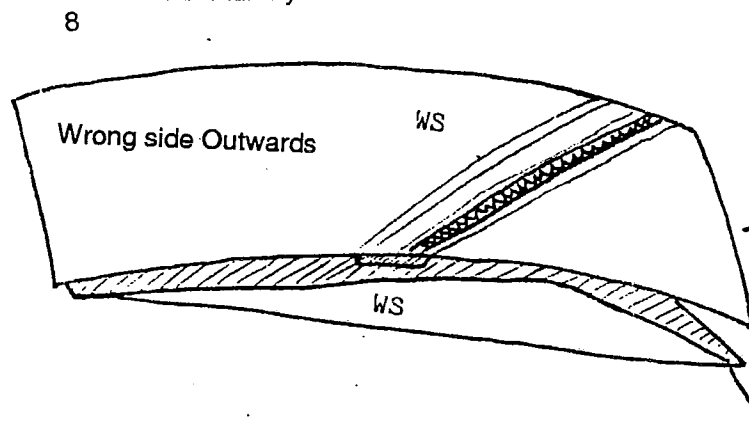
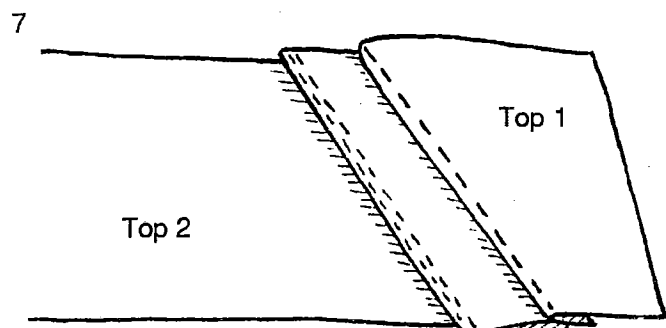
(Oh yeah, 'wrong side' means the inner shiny side, obviously the tougher nylon side goes outside)

- 1) Draw out the shapes on the material - leave 2cm around each piece as the seam and hem allowance. Be careful, as the length of material is exact, so draw both tops and the bottom as close together as possible. Cut out all the pieces.
- 2) Fold the flap in half along the fold, wrong sides together and sew velcro hooks into position
- 3) Sew the velcro fur into position on top 2. Best to do this with two lines of stitching. Iron on sealing tape over stitching on the wrong side.
- 4) Fold the zip tags in half along the fold line, wrong sides together, and tack over the zip ends.
- 5) Fold the seam allowance of diagonal side of top 2 to wrong side and sew to zip.
- 6) Position flap over zip matching velcro to velcro and seam allowance to zip tape. Sew flap onto the zip.
- 7) Fold seam allowance of diagonal edge of top 1 to wrong side and sew to flap and zip to minimise leakage. Try to get the stitch lines to match the flap/zip stitching - it looks neater. Trim excess seam allowance. The top of the bivi bag is now ready.



8) Sew top assembly to base, right sides together. Trim excess seam allowance. Iron on seam tape to seams on wrong side, or use seam sealant.

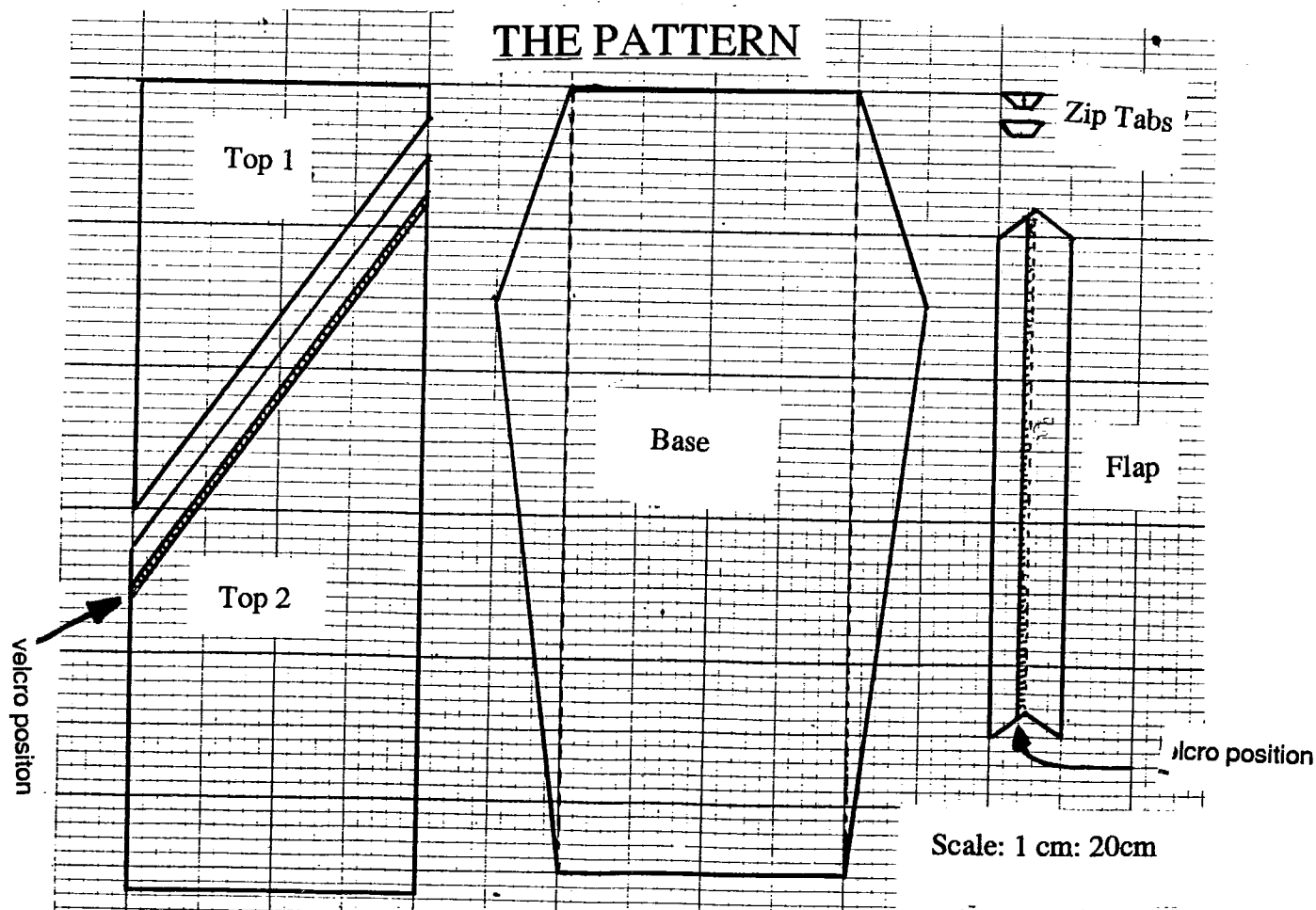
9) Turn the bivi bag right side out through the zip - et voila, a bivi bag of your own. Providing you haven't accidentally sewed the zip up, get in and bask in the sheer luxury.



All pretty simple, eh? Here are some helpful tips:

- 1) Masking tape and "Prittstick" glue are useful for holding fabric without using pins, as pin holes cause leaks. Maybe try staples in the outside of the seam allowance to hold it together.
- 2) Suggested needle size - No.14. Suggested threads per inch - 10. When sewing, hold the material taut but do not push or pull through the machine. Always practice on scraps of material before sewing the bag. Adjust thread tension to get perfect stitch. Try tissue paper beneath pressure foot if any difficulty in sewing. Back stitch 5 stitches to strengthen end of seam.
- 3) Be careful when applying sealing tape - a hot iron can destroy the waterproof coating around the tape. Mask off surrounding area. I used tape behind the velcro and zips, but seam sealant elsewhere. Tape can be hard to apply unless seams are top stitched.

## THE PATTERN



## *Mendip Weekend*

*Ian Wheeler*

When I joined the UBSS at the Freshers fayre, I was rather surprised to be told that they were going away over the coming weekend, and did I want to come thank you that will be six pounds please and you'll have no free Saturdays for the next year, but never mind your not here to work are you?

And so it came to pass that at 0930 a couple of days later I was clambering aboard a minibus outside Hiatt Baker Hall. Original signs were apparently not good. There was only me there, apart from some strange French woman who was going sailing. Undeterred, we sped to the Students Union, where hearts were warmed by the multitude of potential cavers that were there gathered.

Forty-five minutes of chaos then ensued as various people set about pondering what tackle should be removed from storage and who should go in which car. Eventually however, we were ready for the off, and in the blinking of an eye (artistic licence, or was it the way Alison drove?) we were at the UBSS hut in the Mendips.

We were then put into groups, depending on people's differing abilities. Having had previous caving experience, I was placed in a group with Hugo and Geraint (I don't know if that is spelt correctly, and I don't suppose it really matters, because from here on I'm going to refer to him as the Welsh Git) and the group was assigned to go down GB under the estimable leadership talents of Andy and Mike.

I don't really know that there's much I can say about GB, except that it was lovely. There were plenty of pretty things to look at and things to go 'Oooh' and 'Ahh' at, and everyone was happy. Aye, very nice.

Emerging from GB, we walked back across the hills to the hut and pondered our next objective over a cup of tea. In the end we decided to go down Goatchurch, which was full of horrible screaming girl guides and plump little children. One further pleasure in store for us was the discovery that one of these miscreants had seen fit to vent their bladder into one of the crawls in the cave. Severely unimpressed at this, we departed from the area of the cave known as the drainpipe, and went to find other, less polluted, bits to scroam around in.

Returning to the hut sometime later, we whiled away the hours before supper was served, chatting and regaling each other with tales of the day's adventures. We also had eight gallons of cider to drink (between us, not each in case you were wondering) which had been picked up for £2.50 a gallon. Someone pointed out that this was the same price as petrol. Alas, the comparisons between the two did not stop at price, but extended to smell and taste as well, and the vile stuff was unanimously pronounced to be as rough as old kegs.

Tea finally made it out of the cooking pot and was an excellent stew. Following which we donned our coats and piled down to the pub for a few pints, and a few games of Thrimbles and Dimbles. For the uninitiated amongst you, this involved shoving a playing piece called a Thrimble, by means of a highly skilled palm inflexion, until it slides across the game board to land in a Dimble. However care should be taken to keep your Thrimbles out of your Drimbles out of the Nimbles ( a Nimble is an outlying Dimble) because if you get two Thrimble sin a Nimble, one of your tits will fall off, or so Hugo reliably informs me (gullible these 1st years - Ed). Those of you who are slightly less gullible than the rest may prefer to call this game 'Shove Ha'penny'.

Next morning we split up again, with Hugo, Rachel, the Welsh Git and myself going down Swildons Hole with Mark, Alison and Simon. Whilst GB and Goatchurch had been

(more or less) dry experiences, Swildons was anything but.

Again it was a very scenic cave, with plenty to look at, with the added bonus of being able to clamber up and down waterfalls, and generally scroam around in the wet. Of course there is also the ladder pitch, caving ladders being an object that personally I don't mind, but others seem to loathe them. Hugo, in particular took a marked dislike to them and voiced his opinion of them by cursing and swearing fluently for several minutes.

Going down Swildons as far as Sump One, only Hugo was daft enough to want to go through it, so he and Simon disappeared into the murky water, the rest of the party turned around and set off back to the entrance.

Some twenty minutes later, Simon caught up with us, unfortunately with Hugo in tow, having completely failed to drown him in the sump as I had anticipated. Following a long wait at the ladder for everyone to negotiate the obstacle, we were soon out of the cave, and into glorious Sunday afternoon sunshine - with the weather so good it seemed almost criminal that we had spent the last few hours underground.

And that, as they say in all the best houses, was very much that. As I can't think of any other way I'd rather spend the weekend than crawling about in the mud tearing the flesh from my limbs and getting soaked to the skin, I dare say I'll be back for more in due course.

## ON THE SARTORIAL ELEGANCE OF CAVE MEN

by Graham Mullan

Twice this year I have spent a day in the field, in Burrington Combe, acting as a location consultant for film crews who have been producing pieces about our cave-dwelling ancestors. The first occasion was for a children's T.V. piece and, for that reason, I didn't really think about the way in which it was done but the second piece was for a fairly major short series for American T.V. and gave me some pause for thought about how non-experts view the past.

Both times, the somewhat long-suffering actors were dressed up in a variety of pieces of rabbit fur, or old fur coats cut up and exhorted to apply "more mud" to their pale and pasty twentieth century bodies. Their seemed to be two assumptions here, firstly that all our ancestors had the hygienic principles of the average first year student after a particularly good party at the Hut, and secondly that they were grossly incompetent at tailoring.

Having little knowledge of human paleo-anthropology, and knowing that both programmes had high powered consultants working for them, I said nothing, but I would certainly question both assumptions: from what I know of the behaviour of other primates, and from what I have gleaned from other sources, all primates spent quite long periods involved in grooming each other, and always seem, for want of a better phrase "well turned-out". Secondly, I would doubt that any creature that is bright enough to utilise second hand animal skins for clothing would not also be bright enough to make a halfway decent job of it and would produce something that was warm, without finding himself tripping over the loose ends all the time!

I would therefore ask this question of any experts who might accidentally read this journal: at what stage in human evolutionary history did we start wearing "clothes" and what, if any, evidence might there be for the form that these early garments took?



## THE ANNUAL DINNER CAPTION COMPETITION



These are the entries to the Annual Dinner caption competition in the last Newsletter.

*And Steve said to Hilary...*

'..If your a good girl Uncle Stevie will show you his neoprene jockstrap.'  
'..I may not have Andy's hands, but he does not possess my seductive moustache.'  
'..Let's run off and do the Organ Hohle together'.  
'.. Your lips are sweeter than the rose,  
Your eyes are clearer than crystal,  
Your voice lures me to unknown pastures  
How my moustache doth quiver with my love for you..'  
'..That's a delightful pair of nipple expressors you're wearing'  
'..Little girlie would you like to see my pet guinea pig...'  
'..You look wonderful tonight Rachel..'  
'..Lets be blunt. You want me, I want you and Rachel is throwing up in the toilet..'

*And Hilary said to Steve...*

'..Oh my, what big eyes you have, and Oh, and what a big....'  
'..Say, is that moustache real, or are you just pleased to see me..'  
'..Come with me and we'll run away together in Tim's Landrover..'  
'..Wot you staring at..?'  
'..I think I'm going to be sick..'

The winner wishes to remain anonymous, however, the editor is willing for the usual fee to assure Eve that her identity will be kept secret.