

Third Series

Number 2

UBSS Newsletter

Spring 2006



Mulu - a paradise for cavers

Tired and emotional in Yorkshire - CHECC seminar 2005

Trips and slips - more sore knees in Lionel's

Scaling the heights of academe - conference reports

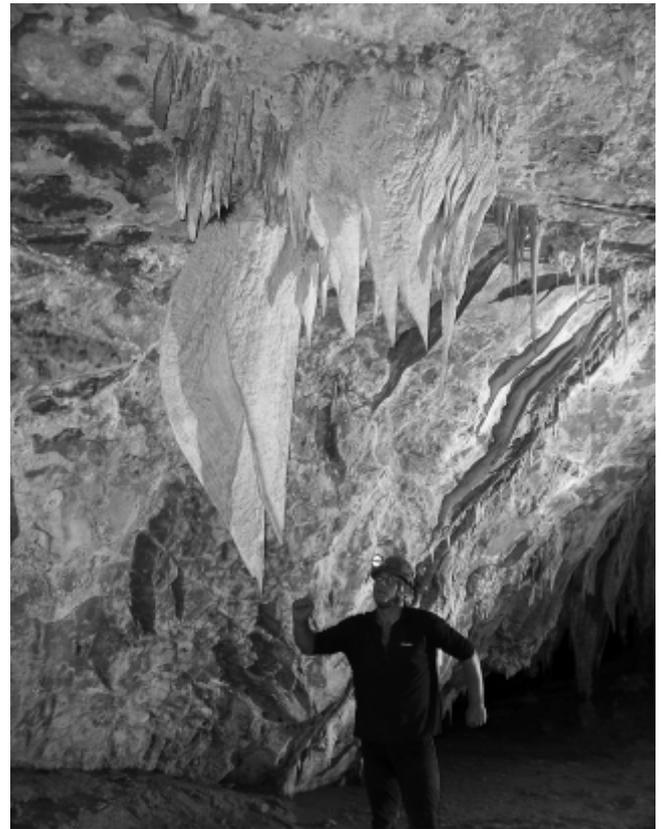
Mulu – a Caving Paradise

From when I started caving, the photographs of Mulu caves were inspiring. However the price and the politics meant that it was too hard to even try to get on the expedition. Then a couple of years ago people started to say that I should go to Mulu. Eventually the thought lodged in my brain: I had better try the cavers' paradise, so I sent an email.

This was how I found myself at Manchester airport very overloaded waiting for two people that I could not remember, after arriving back from a six week holiday expecting to have four days to get ready, to find an email from Dick telling me that I was leaving the next morning. It was a bit of a rush. I was in charge in coordinating the surveys for the trip and the ribbing about surveys and standards started straight away and continued as it would for the whole trip. I did not have to say anything, it was just assumed. Three flights later on progressively smaller aircraft, I found myself meeting the advanced party on a helipad with loads of food and equipment. The helicopter ride gave an excellent opportunity to gain an overview of the area, instantaneously putting together the surveys in my mind. It was a shame I could not have seen the whole area as I could have gained in 15 minutes what took me more than a month.

Camp 5 is a strange place. People trek 9 km in to walk up the pinnacles and then trek out again, generally after staying 2 nights. Three projects were to be started in the first week, the first up north on and around the Benerat Mountain. I went off on this with 3 others.

Forest walking (don't dare call it a jungle) is easy on the paths, stopping every now and then to pick the leaches off. However off the paths is pinnacled limestone where each gryke is several metres deep, covered in trees and foliage. Also it is impossible to tell whether the tree trunks are safe to use. Even with all the rain it is a wonderful place to be; three days of hacking that I thoroughly enjoyed.



**Mark Brown on his birthday.
Importance of being Idle, Moon Cave.**
©Andrew Atkinson

We returned to Camp 5 to find that both the other projects had found cave that was going well, each trip having found over a kilometre in a day. The first cave, Moon Cave, was 30m up a cliff into massive walking passage which in the main was linear, though one side passage did join onto Benerat caverns. The other main cave was Whiterock, which was a little more complex and connected to Blackrock, part of the Clearwater system, now 129km long. This cave was generally pushed on 3 day camping trips. The cave is generally big or massive, and entails walking along in as little kit as you think is safe to

protect your skin against very sharp rock, sweating too much every time you move. It is a wonderful sight and a pleasure to photograph, in short – paradise. I was bored after a couple of weeks, leaving lots of time to think about what is it that makes good caving, even though there is no doubt that this was dream passage.... Anyway enjoy the pictures, that is after all what Mulu is about.



**Cover Photo:
Insomnia Passage,
Whiterock Cave.**
©Andrew Atkinson



**Mark Brown.
Importance of being Idle, Moon Cave.**
©Andrew Atkinson

And because I was co-ordinating the surveys I had better say something about the surveying. One of my main aims of this trip was to have most of the survey completed in the field. Unfortunately the scanner did not arrive until the last week, plus the elevation software was not working. Luckily although the length of passage surveyed was far more than on most other expeditions, the amount of information collected

was less, therefore rapid drawing up of the surveys could be achieved, and on the final day a printout of all the new finds was handed to the local park warden, albeit with some detail missing and a few bits that needed tidying up.

Andrew Atkinson



**Rob Eavis and Dave Nixon (Moose).
Connection between Whiterock and
Blackrock Caves.
©Andrew Atkinson**

CHECC Seminar 2005

- tired and emotional in Yorkshire

After a long slow journey up the M6 we were finally in Yorkshire. This was confirmed as the roads got smaller and cavers were appearing out of the gloom. The cavers in question were sporting furry suits; one in particular grabbed our attention. A red sheep covered effort, it warranted a cry of 'nice furry!' as we drove past.

On our arrival at the YSS hut, we set about pitching the tent. Why is it that as soon as you want to pitch a tent the wind gets up? Soon we felt like we were holding on to a yacht in full sail. However we are determined types and besides the pub was calling, so we got it pitched and headed inside to socialise. The owner of the wonderful furry suit turned out to be Will from Manchester (one of the bearded nuns for those who were there last year). He was dressed as a flock of sheep, complete with sheep covered helmet (duly acquired and to remain in my possession from 10pm Friday until Sunday morning). The majority of the Manchester cavers were dressed up as various things. They have made it their tradition.

The night was spent drinking and getting to know as many people as possible. This paid off for Fay and I as we were offered space in Sheffield's room (a mighty bonus as it was sub-zero outside).

Saturday started well as we were brought breakfast in bed by one of the Sheffield guys – mind you I did have to make the tea as promised the night before. When the others finally got up and ready we headed to Inglesport to spend money in Inglesport before heading returning to decide on a cave as Hannah was no longer able to come down due to mechanical issues.

We decided to do Jangling Pot as Christian had been before and it looked like good SRT practice. So ropes packed, we headed off to Kingsdale and parked in the convenient parking place approximately 600m from the woods. Having changed, we headed off up the hill and through the first gate, all enthusiastic and looking forward to getting underground out of the wind. Having not found the cave we thought maybe it was the wrong gate and went through the next one and the next

and the next. By now we were slightly less enthusiastic and were looking desperately for signs of the 2 trees that marked the entrance to the cave. After 3 hours of walking around and getting slowly colder, even Christian had to admit defeat (by this time the rest of us had been assessing the tackle to decide which would do the most damage to him – hangers looked promising). We negotiated our way back down the rocks and through the bracken to the cars and headed back to the hut dreaming of the BBQ.

Saturday evening is probably best described as piss up. I will tell you what I can remember and is clean enough to tell (yes it was worse than last year). I feel I did very well not to start drinking until the BBQ was ready, and then it was only cider. Having to tell people that we had failed to find Jangling and established that we had parked approximately 2 miles too far up the road, we decided to try to regain some self-respect through the noble sport of beer pong. Two teams were entered. The 1st team, Rob and Fay, took the sensible option, playing with beer and cider (a

combination which was to prove relatively successful), whilst the 2nd team Christian and I decided to repeat last year's strategy and drink vodka and cranberry. We were drawn against Kent in the 1st round (they knocked us out in the semis last year) and forced to pour rather larger measures of vodka than I would usually think sensible (I used the same amount in one round as I used in the whole competition last year). At 4-1 up it looked as though we couldn't lose but the strong vodka took its toll and lose we did. This left Fay and Rob to uphold Bristol's honour and they did a sterling job, making good progress through the rounds until they came up against our now arch nemesis, the Kent team. Try as they might they just couldn't overcome the might of a guy called Gimp and a girl in a tea cosy. So all chance of any respect gone out of the window, we set about losing our dignity and cheering on the remaining teams (loudly using football chants in my case), especially anyone drawn against Kent.

Kent made it to the final and were drawn against our friends from Sheffield. It came down to sudden death. One glass each. Kent shot. Missed. Sheffield shot, it went in and the crowd around their end of the table erupted. Beer pong was won.

Dancing and more drinking followed. However after a short time someone announced that some bloke from Reading (Bobby I think) was going naked swimming in the river. As the crowds began to gather, Christian decided that he 'was bored' and decided to do it too. This in my opinion is not the world's greatest excuse, but hey I wasn't the one plunging into very cold and evidently very shallow water. I still don't understand how Manchester's Mike didn't get more injured when he fell in from a 3rd floor window last year.

Swimming over, it was my turn to enter a daft event. In my case balloon wrestling – not as strange as it could be, it involves tying a balloon to your lower leg and fighting until your balloon is popped. This would have been a reasonable game excepting that I am small and female and all my competitors were large and male. I made it to the last 2 in my heat, mainly because I ran away and they probably didn't want to hurt me, before I got thrown to the floor bursting my balloon and incurring much bruising. By this point we were all quite wasted and my memory starts to fail. I remember topless dancing (we kept our bras on despite the best attempts to remove them), but after that I don't really know what was happening. I heard stories of some very drunken behaviour involving gaffer tape, chairs, bottles, nudity and cigarettes (I leave you to assume as you like but assure you that to the best of my knowledge UBSS was not involved).

We managed to stay inside on Saturday night as well, although we had to get up for breakfast. The hut was absolute carnage- I have never seen so many cans, bottles, plates and banana skins in one place. This cleaned up, we had breakfast - a bit of a mission given the delicate state of my stomach.

Tent down, map consulted, sheep helmet returned and kit collected, we decided to head to Jingling Pot again – we were going to do this cave if it killed us. This time we were successful, the cave was found. Christian set about rigging whilst the rest of us sat at the top in the freezing cold going through what to do at various points in the cave as Rob, Edith and Fay had never done SRT in a cave. By the time Rob had cleared the rope the three of us were freezing and Edith's hangover had kicked in with vengeance, causing her to 'do a

Superted' (going all the way to Yorkshire and not caving). Fay entered the cave leaving a shaking me at the top chatting to a guy from Cardiff who was walking as he had left his SRT kit behind.

Just as I had entered, a second group from Cardiff arrived to do a straight pitch and some photography. The cave was not particularly interesting, but provided good SRT practice and a short climb at the bottom before we headed out. I arrived at the top just after the first of the Cardiff group. It turned out that this was his first SRT trip and he didn't really know what he was doing to get out of the cave. He was clipped into our rope and wasn't sure how to climb out, so after head-butting his foot, I managed to help him out before climbing out myself. Both the others in the Cardiff party knew what they were doing, but being 60m below weren't a great help, but no harm was done and we were all safe and sound.

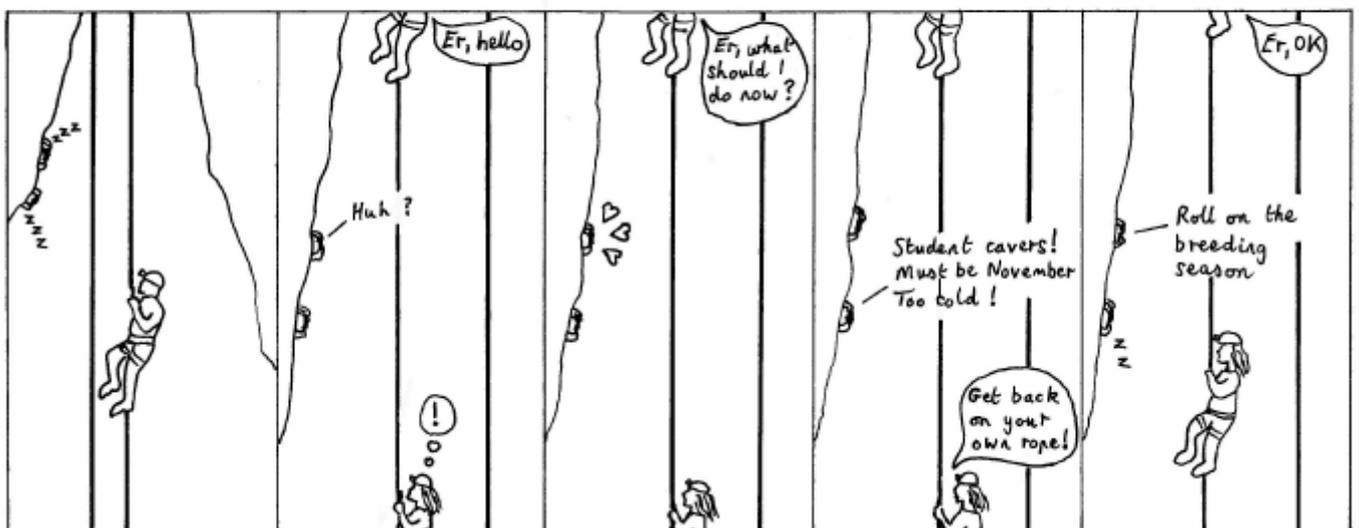
Whilst I ran down the hill to call Sally the others emerged and came to join me, still shaking from the cold, at the cars. Changed and packed up, we headed to Kirkby Lonsdale to find a curry house before hitting the motorways to trek back to Bristol.

We finally arrived back at around 2am anticipating warm baths and bed. It was just my luck to find my boiler broken, denying me this – at least at my house. However a great weekend was had by all and I for one am well up for going back next year. I would love to do more than one cave on a weekend in Yorkshire and we have to win beer pong.

Kayleigh Gilkes

CHECC = Council of Higher Education Caving Clubs

Troglobyte in Jingling Pot





The President's Piece

Tratman Fund Applications

The Tratman Fund, which is controlled by the University, gives small grants (£000's not £0000's) to help support caving expeditions or archaeological research by the members of the Society.

Applications have to be made to the President. Deadlines are:
15 November for Xmas and Easter
15 May for Summer period.

As the total sum available in any one year is not likely to be large and there may be others applying, you'll be wise to get your application in early. And don't delay putting in your application just because you haven't yet got all the details sorted. If we know in advance that an application is coming, we can take it into account. Delay and you may find that everyone has gone off to North Korea and cannot be contacted.

For full details of how to apply contact the Hon. Treasurer (Graham Mullan) or ask the Hon. Secs.

**Arthur ApSimon
President**

Public Indemnity Insurance 2006

As you all should now know, owing to events beyond our control, the Society's PI insurance cover is now supplied by the British Caving Association (BCA) instead of by the University. The main outcome of this change is that we now have to pay individual premiums on a named basis. However, the Society has managed to find funds to cover the student members and the *additional payments only need to be made by those members who have both declared themselves to be active cavers and are not paying their premium directly to the BCA or via another caving club*. I now have an (almost) complete database of who is doing what and I have notified those people who need to pay their premium to me of what they need to pay.

However, for the avoidance of doubt, on anybody's part: **if you consider yourself an active caver you must have paid me your premium by the end of January or you will not be insured.**

If anybody has any doubt about their specific situation, please contact me direct and I will explain it to you; there are a number of different categories and I do not intend to repeat reams of tedious small print here. My contact details are given below.

All of you will (eventually) receive a membership card from BCA, either from me or from another club or from BCA direct. This does, effectively, mean that you are each individual members of BCA though that endows no benefits save a vote at BCA annual meetings and the PI insurance unless you join BCA directly and pay an additional subscription. See <http://www.british-caving.org.uk/> for details.

I am sorry if this all seems confusing - and expensive - but much of the complication comes from efforts to keep costs down and, amazingly, the premium payable by each of us is actually less than last year.

**Graham Mullan
Hon Treasurer**

0117 9502556 or 07887637064

graham.mullan@wotcc.org.uk

TRIP REPORTS

Lionel's Hole - or 'Return of the Swollen Knees!'

Christian, Kayleigh and Jacqui
22/10/05

Background: previously to this trip my last caving trips were some rigging practice trips in Rhino's and Hunter's and a visit to Fairy caves, all at the end of March 2004.

I had got all my caving kit out for the previous weekend - Freshers Weekend, but ended up not going on that due to work commitments. On the Tuesday night, after Pete's Wales/Safety talk we were drinking in Micawber's and arranged a day trip to Lionel's and East Twin Swallet. During the week I, unfortunately, went down with a cold - but I wasn't going to let a second opportunity to get back into a cave get away. So on the Saturday I caught the bus down to Christian's and met him and Kayleigh there. We picked up some kit from the tackle store and then headed (via Paul's to get lights) out to Mendip. After a little detour into Burrington village, we went up to the layby near Lionel's. I had been to Lionel's twice previously and easily recognised the entrance - we confirmed this entrance and then wandered up a short wide track on the opposite side of the valley until we could hear water flowing. There we found a very obvious opening - east Twin Swallet. We had a closer look into the entrance, which the guidebook had said might require a hand-line (for novices) - and decided it wouldn't be a problem for any of us - even in an emergency rushed exit.

We moved the car back down to the usual car park near the Burrington café and changed (trying hard to ignore dodgy-looking bloke reading paper in otherwise empty minibus). After some faffing re. mobile phones we set off up the road. On route on the left of the road we passed another (lower than Lionel's) obvious entrance in an area set back from the road. Christian explored while Kayleigh and I chilled out up top. He had suggested a five-minute call out - but it was clearly a moderately tight rift on the way in, during which he stayed in voice contact. When he returned it certainly sounded like a challenging outward climb - very hard work. Apparently after a small crawl he had found a muddy, recently active dig.

We identified the cave as Goon's, from the map.

Next we moved up to the entrance to Lionel's - from here we planned to phone Graham to arrange a call out. Unfortunately there was no signal in the gorge but across the road I got a single bar of signal and got thro' to Graham. Unfortunately we were cut off. After running around for a bit I gave up and suggested heading back down towards the café. Kayleigh offered to head up the side of the gorge. There she arranged the call out with Graham.

We hid the phone and headed into the cave - it was pretty much just as I remembered it. We climbed down a steep slope into a gently sloping chamber. Kayleigh got to the end and found no way on. I took a short route straight to the top one of two ways into the next chamber - Christian and Kayleigh took a wider lower rift route. Both routes converge - although there is a right turn just where the lower route joins the upper one. We ignored that turn and crawled across the narrow shelf - the idea was to find the boulder chamber, explore that for a bit, and then come back to one of the early right hand turns to go into the route to the furthest bit of the cave. I arrived at the drop into the boulder chamber. After noting the position of the foothold I reversed, turned around and carefully dropped feet first.

From that top first annex of the main boulder chamber, there's a small choke above, but below it opens out to become quite a big chamber (well it would be very big if it wasn't so bouldery!). Again there was an obvious right hand turn - but we ignored that and headed down to the bottom of the boulder chamber. I didn't remember this chamber at all well - and I still can't figure out where the mazy bit of boulders that I had explored with Jose-Louis and Pete previously was. We climbed across the boulders - at one point passing over one particularly deep hole ('This is very high - I don't think I should be here,' I said!). We were following polished looking rock - we dropped into a couple of polished holes at the bottom of the chamber. Christian explored down one

route that I thought looked promising, up to the point where it closed down and he got briefly stuck.

We were returning back up to the right hand turns noticed earlier when Christian called us back - he had found another polished looking route - it was directly behind where I had been crouching to talk to him while he'd been stuck (doh!). We all headed down there, Christian leading again. It joined up with the particularly deep hole I had noted earlier in the boulder chamber - this hole proved a quick route down for the tackle bag. This route was less bouldery/smoothen and I recalled that to get to the rest of the cave, we need to find a polished tunnel that lead to the traverse between two bedding planes. At a bend I waited and Kayleigh came back to that wider point too. Christian had got stuck again. We could see his helmet gradually rising out of a hole - then it slid back down again - however he did make it out of the hole before Kayleigh and I had finished debating which of us was stronger to go and help haul him out. From our turn in the shiny route there was a possible way on under and to the right. Sticking my head in there, I quickly determined it was undisturbed mud and choked. Above was a very polished near vertical tube. It had a couple of good-sized notches in it (the lower one of which was bum-sized) - on the second attempt I made it up there - (it'd be a much better route down than up!). We were now in a tunnel I recognised. I believed upwards was the join to the boulder chamber, or the turn before the 1.5 m drop into the boulder chamber, so we went down - this looked very familiar. I was last - I was describing the traverse we were looking for just as the others identified it. 'Up, up, up,' I called - however they had both gone too low to get up into it, so I went first.

A slightly awkward climb gained a region with a handy (or is that footy?) ledge on the opposite wall (or ceiling?) - there was also a slightly sharp high ledge for hands - acting somewhat fresher-like I wanted to be in contact with both so I ended up going across the traverse belly down - the foot ledge ended - normally

you just brace yourself across the gap using feet but I carried on shuffling along the hand ledge - bracing backwards with my feet. Perhaps I can blame the fact that I couldn't see anything - my crappy 'safety' glasses were completely steamed up - when I got rid of the glasses I could see so much better - I guess for caves on the scale of Burrington I generally should go without (or get over my fear of contacts?!).

We noted possible routes down to the labyrinth/east lower level (talked about in guidebook - not somewhere I'd visited) and also just above us a tight gap that might lead to 'Junction chamber' (the key chamber on the second leg of the round trip that may or may not still exist). We then gained another foot ledge - this one on the bedding plane below us - then hopping over a gap and up a sloped foot ledge I got to a secure gap between boulders. Here I knew was the next bit where we could potentially get lost (no plane crash required). We stopped briefly - I was looking for a letterbox-like hole under a boulder, which led to a drop between big boulders - the gap where it should have been did not look right - much more pointy. However, this being the only possible correct way on (ignoring the loose looking bit above and the deadend (?) I remember to the right), Kayleigh went on thro'. The drop between boulders almost caught both Kayleigh and I out - there is a good big foothold to prevent a big (ish - but definitely uncomfortable) drop directly after the letter box - but going feet first into the letter box makes it difficult to spot. So having avoided this potential disaster Kayleigh continued to explore - the guidebook mentioned a fork with lower left and lower right-hand turns. Kayleigh seemed to see this but when I followed her I never saw the second turn. Kayleigh went for the polished route left over a boulder and then down further - the next landmark I was describing was another rift between two bedding planes - the lower plane containing a body-sized notch in it - with a boulder jammed in that notch making a convenient (if perhaps slightly dodgy) foothold to then duck under and continue down to a damp pebbly bit. Kayleigh found this very fast and enthusiastically.

Christian meanwhile was observing carefully to ensure he could route-find his way back thro' this little boulder maze. At the damp bottom (sorry!) we ignored the polished tube on the far wall and headed into the duck. Figuring it would be drier if I let the others go first, I hung back - however because I have a side light on my helmet just at the wettest point my

GB Cave

Christian, Rob, Edith, Chris, Fay
06/11/05

I went with Edith, Christian, Rob and Fay to what turned out to be a roaring set of rapids cocooned in rock and set within the earth.

We slipped & scrambled up a steep muddy slope to see archaeological evidence of how our ancient ancestors traversed the land above - in Ford Anglias it seems! (*It's actually a Hillman Imp - Ed.*)

Coming down we followed the rapids for a while (which were unusually full & fast I'm told) gingerly stepping from stepping stone to the stepping stone. Soon we become adept and the pace quickened.

In one place, the way opened into a high arching cavern, like a snow-globe - only recently shaken to disturb the water - and sequestered once again deep beneath the earth to give a large domed ceiling in which water tumbles over jagged rocks as it tries to settle.

We edged along the side of the cavern along a path with a white marble-type floor. It was quite high up so a precipitous drop loomed beneath if you dared to peer over. And all the while the water roared as the stream cut out its path below. Occasional large white pillars hung down from the ceiling and dangled into the drop, preserved no doubt by their inaccessibility.

We left the stream from time to time, exploring side passages. The relentless humdrum of the water was now conspicuous by its absence but welcome, so the banter of the group could resume... although we were journeying with Christian so the muffling effects of the water were soon yearned for: P *ducks*.

Next came the Devil's Elbow. You crouch through a short crawl, the end of which is veiled by the falling of a full waterfall. As you approach, the noise becomes all encompassing. You then get enveloped by a torrent of cold refreshing water as you peer through the watery curtains to see what awaits. A tricky climb using both walls for support follows. The cold numbness of your hands are briefly forgotten as you look for the next hold, and is countered by the exertion of clinging on. Then at last, the ledge you are aiming for comes within range and you are safe. The water clatters deafeningly around the sides of the chute as it falls and disappears off around the bend far below.

Then alas we realized our call out time approached so stopped halfway up the Elbow and headed back through the caverns for the exit. We paused to see another way blocked by high water. The floor of the cavern that way was like a lake which extended off well beyond the range of our lights. The passages wind back, then the air tastes distinctly different - oh, so that's what fresh air is - and then - moonlight!

We trudge back across the field to our cars. The stars are out and carpet the sky completely. A bit of roadside entertainment for passing motorists follows as we change back into dry clothes. Hmm, dry clothes and a soft seat to sit on. You appreciate these simple luxuries so much. And to think they are available to you all the time! The world isn't such a bad place after all.

Next stop is the Hunter's Lodge for some renowned post-caving pasta bake and doorstops of bread. Soon we are basking in the warm glow of exertion & contented tiredness; kindled from within and sustained by the heat of the fire-place.

Chris

helmet got jammed - and as I wriggled I twisted my head - got a mouth full of water and knocked my main light off the helmet. I spluttered and cursed then turned my back-up (- that side light) on and continued on thro'. I was soaked! Ah well.

From the duck we could hear the streamway (it's not big and on one of my previous trips it had been completely dry). Kayleigh and Christian were discussing the route on. Kayleigh was

perched at the bottom of a small climb, which apparently had many fingerprints and footmarks. Christian was looking at the watery routes. From my position we noted the 'easily missed' left hand turn (to the first 'muddy sump' I think). Ducking under an arch (with bum in cold streamway) Christian found the second duck - altho' it was pretty much sumped (1-2 cm free airspace) - we didn't fancy this route - especially as it was unfamiliar and apparently tight. The stream was much higher than on my previous visits - this worried me slightly, especially as some rain was forecast - however the duck we had already been thro' lies higher than the second duck and the streamway so it wasn't really threatening. Before this second (sumpy) 'duck' was a second climb - this one, I knew, was the way on (Bishops bypass?). Kayleigh however tried her route until it got silly tight and then rejoined us (I think Kayleigh's route was the one that certain folk sent Si Lee up to get him stuck in on one trip). Christian headed up the bypass, followed by Kayleigh and then me. This climb included three really quite tight bits - I made a real mess of the whole lot and stopped halfway up for a breather - lots of cursing the belt pack went on! I remembered this route had been tiring previously - the squeeze bits can really catch you out - on my first Lionel's trip I got to one 'safe' foothold and got my knee jammed in it.

We were still between two bedding planes - at the top of the tight climb across a slippery bit to a very shiny step on the upper wall we stopped for chocolate. Below led down to the far side of the second duck - above leads to the final chamber (big boulders again) of the old round trip - I know beyond there is a muddy route to the final sump and 'stuck-in-the-mud' passage. And from this final chamber, what many folk never find, is the tight exit that leads into the return half of the round trip - I've no idea where it is - and anyway it may now be irrelevant, as there's word that the trip no longer exists due to boulder movement/instability - certainly last time I was in Lionel's (trip with Ju, pre-AGM, year before last) - we'd been looking for it when, as I was standing still, pebbles started to fall - we got out of there pretty smoothly and quickly!

Christian and Kayleigh popped up to visit that final chamber - I stayed eating chocolate - a fantastic ancient well-caved Mars bar found in my oversuit's inner pocket - the nougat bit had no little bubbles in it anymore - it was totally moulded to fit snugly in that pocket thro' all squeezes

necessary! It tasted fine (I did inspect it carefully first tho') - I guess Mars bars contain so much sugar that bugs and mould can't survive - I don't think the wrapper had burst either, which always helps. When C & K returned we decided to head back (it was < 3 hrs 'til call-out and there was potential for getting lost). I went feet first into the squeeze climb - I almost got jammed a couple of times (and I wasn't the only one) as there wasn't space to see the route down, so I had to feel and remember the way back. I dropped down the last bit back into the streamway (still flowing well - but hadn't risen), caught the tackle bag and then ducked under the arch (wet bum again) and went up into the duck. I didn't get a mouthful this time but did get very wet again. I've no idea how I'd get thro' there without at least one wet ear/cheek.

I was pretty knackered at this point - I guess lack of cave fitness and cold combined - my energy levels plummeted. I've experienced this before - but don't recall it in such a small cave - the worst time was definitely that 11 hr Draenen trip with the knackered knees - the way to get passed this, I've learned, is to keep moving slowly but surely - stop briefly before each tricky section - gather yourself mentally and then persuade your body to do your bidding. Strangely my bad back didn't prove troublesome at all - I guess I'm just a fair bit less fit than before the injury. In the past, when energy has been a problem, it has been one that's appeared and become apparent slowly - this time it was much faster - I didn't seem to have the many levels of reserve energy that I'd explored in my previous caving. Anyway I've learnt now - Burrington little caves only for me 'til I get cave-fit again - it's a really good job I was sensible enough to predict a slow and gentle return to caving would be needed. Maybe this is what some of those freshers, at the Freshers' weekend, who never return to caving, experience? If so - know that it does get better - if you enjoy the caving and the company keep caving and you'll find yourself getting fitter before you even notice it. I hope for me it was mainly just the cold/virus that made it hit so fast.

We decided that going the most direct route out was sensible. I had wanted to see 'Junction Chamber' but maybe next time. Christian negotiated his way back thro' the boulders to the start of the traverse very well - his route-finding is clearly pretty good. Sitting there before the traverse I stocked up on my second ancient moulded Mars bar. The traverse seemed much shorter on the way back. In the

tunnel before the traverse we noted the slippery steep route we had climbed up out of before but continued on passed it - at a comfy seat we saw some muddy words stuck onto a rock '1st wilt scouts 28' (?) - or something like that - bad people. We followed the tunnel/route up through some flat out bits to a squeeze upward bit (my ribs got stuck briefly, until I remembered to breath out - then I cursed the belt pack again) - there we found ourselves in the main boulder chamber again. Christian was up ahead and took one route leftish - Kayleigh and I went slightly right and then up lots. We recognised the 1.5 m drop into boulder chamber and (me slowly) clambered back up it onto the narrow shelf. On thro' the gap we were back in the front chamber of the cave - we promptly returned to the surface - I was very glad to spot the first blades of grass, bugs (?) and dead leaves (not so pleased to find a thorn in my hand). I was shattered - I sat down flat legged. Kayleigh ran back up to halfway up/down the gorge to phone Graham re. call out. Unfortunately my battery was low so we couldn't tell Graham much about the trip (- here's the news Graham!). Christian and Kayleigh went on to do East Twin Swallet - I being their call out. (Apparently I didn't miss much - but see Christian's write-up). Kayleigh took my watch (for timing) and I headed back down to the car - that walk seemed so long on the way back! I must have spent a good 20-30 minutes changing and then picked up some papers (PhD reading) and headed into the café for some very welcome soup, bread and coffee!!

That's about it (rather epic writing I'm afraid - but then my old Biochem degree course rules did have to get rewritten after I'd handed in a final year project weighing more than twice everyone else's!). Today I am so bruised and stiff - but so glad to be able to be active again - can't wait for the next (little) trip! - It's amazing how great being this bruised can feel (for those who don't know arnica cream + ibuprofen is the best medicine I've found). Psychologically this trip has been so important for me - until you've been there you've little idea how it feels to struggle to be able to participate at work, let alone have a social life - a big thank you to Christian and Kayleigh for making this trip possible and so enjoyable!

Jacqui

CONFERENCE

The 2005 Conference Season

New student members are often puzzled to find a group of middle-aged men with beards actively involved in the running of the club. It is clearly a long time since they were student members and they don't even work in the University, so what are they doing still hanging around with students? The answer lies in the name *University of Bristol Speleological Society*, speleology being the scientific study of caves. We may be student caving club, but we are also a nationally and internationally respected cave research group with our own scientific journal which we have published since 1919. This makes us one of the earliest speleological institutions in the world.

We maintain our profile in the caving community by our publications and by attending conferences, either as delegates or as lecturers. The national UK conference for cavers is known as "Hidden Earth" and is run by the British Caving Association. It is a popular event, mostly given over to exploration reports, either of caves in Britain or British expeditions abroad. This year it was held at Churchill, not far from the club hut, so we should have had a good UBSS presence. However, many of the members who would normally have been there were themselves away on expeditions.

The main scientific conference in the UK is the Cave Science Symposium, held this year in Birmingham. It is a relatively small meeting where university-based researchers and scientifically-minded cavers come together. As usual, the UBSS and the University of Bristol Geography Department were represented. In 2006, the Symposium will be held in Bristol (on the same day as our AGM and Annual Dinner).

It is also usual for the UBSS to attend the Speleological Union of Ireland Symposium. This year, five members drove from Bristol to join others who live in Ireland. The UBSS has held annual expeditions to Co Clare since 1948 and we have published three books on the area.

The UBSS has always been interested in pre-historic archaeology. The reason for this is that the earliest research of the society was

archaeological excavation of the caves of Burrington Combe. Our recent discovery of mesolithic rock art in Aveline's Hole has given us a chance to raise our profile within the archaeology community. The British Rock Art Group held their annual meeting in Bristol's Archaeology Department this year and Graham Mullan and Linda Wilson gave a lecture on their Aveline's discovery. Several other UBSS members attended this meeting. Graham and Linda also addressed the annual Palaeolithic/Mesolithic meeting of the British Museum in London.

On the international scene, the Postojna Karstological School is an annual event held in Slovenia comprising cave science presentations and field trips. The theme this year was "karst in various rocks" and Charlie Self presented a lecture on the quartzitic sandstone karst of Northumberland.

The Union Internationale de Speleologie holds a Congress every four years, always in a different venue, and this time Greece was the host. The UIS Congress is the most important event on the speleological calendar, with a week of lectures plus pre- and post-congress excursions. It is the international showcase of cave research and delegates come from around the world. Trish Beddows (who is now back in Canada) gave two lectures, one on the hydrology of the Yucatan peninsular in Mexico, the other on stable isotope studies of fluid inclusions in speleothems. Charlie also gave two lectures, on the physical and geometric aspects of crystal growth in speleothems. Augusto Auler came from Brazil to lecture on primary paragenesis in the caves of his homeland.

Attending conferences is not just about keeping up to date with what is happening in cave research. There is also a very active social side: it is a great way to meet interesting people and to renew old friendships.

Charlie Self

REPORTS

BRITISH ROCK ART GROUP CONFERENCE DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY, BRISTOL 23rd & 24th APRIL 2005

The second British Rock Art conference was held this year in Bristol, hosted by the Archaeology Department and organised by Dr George Nash (also a UBSS member). George started the talks with a presentation on the cup marks discovered on a rock outcrop close to the Bryn Celli Dhu chambered tomb and discussed the possible significance of their positioning in the landscape. Arun Maxell followed, with a description of the work which went into the production of the website based on the Stan Beckinsall archive, developed to display Northumberland rock carvings on line. The site can be found at <http://rockart.ncl.ac.uk/> and is very well worth a visit.

Alistair Pike, another UBSS member, then spoke about the verification of certain of the figures at Creswell Crags by Uranium Thorium dating. His talk was notable both for his ability to make complex science comprehensible and his even more impressive ability to repeatedly deliver the phrase "*intimate female body part*" with a straight face. This arose from a recent interview in the Daily Telegraph in which he was banned from using the word "*vulva*". (It would never happen in France!!) Alistair presented the dates which have been obtained from three of the figures in the cave: the "notches" in the wall, near to the ibex/deer at >12,600; the "birds/female" figures in the rear of the cave at >12,800 and finally the "*intimate female body part/vulva*" at >7,300. Alistair wishes it to be known that futures samples from the area are likely to be contaminated by his blood, as he left a lot of it behind, in his attempts to obtain suitable scrapings from the stal.

Michael Rainsbury presented preliminary results from 3D laser scanning at Castlerigg Stone Circle in Cumbria. The results are so far very equivocal, but a degree of amusement was caused when the omission of one stone, for "technical reasons" we were

told, was queried Clive Waddington. It seems that a previous photo, obtained some while ago to clearly show some markings which have not been seen since and Clive felt that in view of this it would certainly repay further attempts with the laser scanner. Conspiracy theorists naturally had a field day!

Amanda Wintcher then spoke about the Sacred Homes of the Animal Spirits: Ethnographic Analogy and Quadrupeds in Southeast Colorado. After the lunch break, George Nash took the stand, this time on the subject of Restricted Visual Access: the Ritual Organisation of the British Passage Grave Tradition and he was followed by Margarita Diaz-Andreu who returned to the subject of 3D laser scanning, with examples from Ilkley Moor and Lordenshaws. Clive Waddington then presented a paper entitled Neolithic Rock Art in the British Isles: Retrospect and Prospect.

After that, Graham and I gave a second airing to the Aveline's Hole engravings, with the same presentation last seen at the British Museum in March, but fortunately, there was little or no overlap with that audience. The next sessions of the afternoon were Cupmarks and Cairn Fields by Philip Deakin; Living Rock Art Landscapes by Tertia Barnett from Northumberland County Council who spoke well and interestingly (in spite of the unfortunate loss of her presentation from a USB stick) about the Northumberland and Durham Rock Art Project, in which teams of 50 volunteers have been specially trained to deal with a massive recording project in these two counties.

The final talk of the day was given by Cornelia Kleinitz from Berlin who gave a fascinating account of the Rock Art Landscapes of the Fourth Nile Cataract Region of Sudan. If any one is interested in a recording project in this area, Cornelia states volunteers are welcome, but it appears you have to be able to

withstand a combination of massive spiders (the size of rabbits), biting black flies, fierce heat and, after the creation of a dam, which will result in the flooding of a large part of the area very soon, an unwelcome influx of crocodiles. At that point, my enthusiasm for a visit went into reverse!

The field trip on Sunday was to Aveline's Hole and we were pleased to discover that, with a degree of organisation, and the use of ropes on the (very) slippery slope, it was possible to get 26 people safely in and out to see the engravings. The UBSS were out in force for "guiding and guarding". George and Graham were stationed by the engraving and are to be complimented on giving the same spiel 13 times in 2 hours without flagging too noticeably. Paula Gardener and Abby George did an excellent job of organisation outside the cave and had fun using radios for communication with the staging post in the car park (to reduce milling around outside the cave), so I only had 4 people, in pairs, to contend with underground at any one time. Tony Boycott and John Swann provided lighting and assistance on the slope. Many thanks as well to Andy Farrant who turned up early to take a look and was promptly pressed into service underground for an hour or so. Ropes and radios may sound extreme for a visit to Aveline's but believe me, the slope was quite difficult for non-cavers after the recent rain, and the proximity to a busy road all added to the interest! One lady in her seventies who had never been underground before (and who was also very short) was a particularly impressive novice caver.

The conference was excellent value for money at only £5 per person. The venue for next year is Durham and field trips to sites in that area are likely to be arranged.

Linda Wilson

spelaeotours

Specialists in Palaeolithic parietal and portable rock art

Trip code: ABRI

DECORATED CAVES AND ROCK
SHELTERS OF THE DORDOGNE

Issue Date:
Sept 2005

An intensive 11 day introduction to the rock art of the Dordogne.

Highlights include:

- 10 nights in a classic French country hotel
- 17 organised visits to caves and rock shelters exemplifying the best preserved art of the Palaeolithic period in the Dordogne
- the opportunity to sample the best of regional cuisine: confit of duck, duck gizzard salad, duck scratchings, duck liver paté

Itinerary

Day 1 Fly from Bristol to Bergerac. Transfer to hotel L'Auberge de la Musée in Les Eyzies by luxury limousine. Familiarisation visit to the Bar Central which will be an essential facility offering the chance to unwind and relax at the end of each day.

Day 2 Early start at Bar Central which will be an essential facility offering breakfast daily. Visit the site of future UBSS Field HQ in the Dordogne at Coly. Carry out preliminary survey of field and woodland, assessing sight lines and estimating coppicing potential. Afternoon visit to Grotte de la Marie at Teyjat, meeting charming local guide Mme Cecile Giscardin. Call in at Grotte de Villars on way back to Les Eyzies.

Day 3 Rendezvous with Cecile to visit Grotte de Poisson with its astonishing life size engraving of a salmon. Picnic lunch followed by trips round Grotte de Sous Grand Lac and Grotte de Bernifal.

Day 4 Private guided tour of Font de Gaume, one of the real high points of the trip. Hasty lunch followed by private guided tour of Les Combarelles, viewing recently discovered female figures. Evening meal at Italian restaurant by roundabout in Les Eyzies complete with entertainment provided by confused motorists orbiting road furniture.

Day 5 Early start to take underground railway excursion in Rouffignac. Here we will see mammoths with anal opercula. Visit colourful local market at Le Bugue where we can buy artisanal products of the region: duck terrine, duck liver paté, confit of duck. Afternoon visit to Bara Bahau followed by early evening forest walk to rock shelter of La Grèze to see its bison with horns in twisted perspective.

Day 6 Cultural encounter with local farmer and his children at Grande Grotte de Saint Front who have in their care a very impressive bas relief mammoth. Also a dove cote doubling as a cave: the Grotte de Pigeonnier. Afternoon visit to the Roc de Cazelle with its prehistoric zoo and the Grotte Nancy (if the owner can find the key).

Day 7 A quiet day: a morning of academic study in the museum of prehistory at Les Eyzies and after lunch a chance to see a modern artist's brilliant reproduction of some of the most impressive prehistoric art at Lascaux II.

Day 8 Heading westward for the day, we travel to Pair-non-Pair near Bordeaux to view engravings dated to the Aurignacian phase. An optional extra excursion takes us to the Grottes de Maxange,



Charming local guides assist our expert trip leaders to reveal and explain the fabulous paintings and engravings.



Engraved bison at La Grèze.

Practical Information

Travel from UK: Flybe flies direct from Bristol to Bergerac.

Passports and Visas: passports required, no visas necessary for British citizens.

Accommodation: twin or double rooms with own facilities in 2 star hotel in the centre of Les Eyzies next to the Museum of Prehistory.

Additional Accommodation: several gites available for self catering, UBSS HQ will soon be under construction with full facilities including nearby chateau restaurant

Food: meals taken in local restaurants and hostelrys – pay as you go. Picnic lunch ingredients obtainable at local markets for those who enjoy duck.

Extra Expenses and Spending Money: allow funds for drinks, souvenirs and wine for sending home with friendly driving staff.

Local Payment: group expenses divided pro-rata. Currency: Euros.

Optional Activities: early morning runs up to 8 miles may ease the conscience after indulgence in the local cuisine the previous evening.

Group, Staff and Support: leaders Graham and Linda, friendly chauffeur Tony, group Jayne, Wanda and Clive.

Transport: Tony with his Golf, hired Toyota Avensis from Bergerac airport.

Weather: why worry when you're caving? For the record: generally settled and bright but expect at least one day's heavy rain and be prepared for frost when out before breakfast.

Essential Equipment and Clothing: nothing special, except LED lights. Optional running gear for those who wish to take advantage of the wonderful hills and woodlands.

Responsible Cave Tourism Policy: we don't touch art or formations. No molesting tour guides.

discovered in 2000, with a fantastic concentration of helectites.

Day 9 An alpine start to reach Peche Merle for a special tour focussed purely on the art (the site is also a popular show cave). We will be able to appreciate how the cave may have been used to provide an early multi-media experience. Afternoon visit to Cougnac.

Day 10 Final day of the study tour. This morning we will see the beautifully sculpted frieze of horses at the Abri de Cap Blanc, a fitting finale to trip packed with activity and spectacle. Afternoon for collecting thoughts.

Day 11 A quiet morning with the opportunity for some last minute shopping for regional specialities (you can guess what) before boarding our flight for Bristol.



A Woolly Mammoth - star attraction at the Roc de Cazelle's prehistoric zoo.

AGM AND ANNUAL DINNER

The AGM will be at 4pm on 4th March and will be followed by a talk by Dick Willis entitled *'Holes to Swallow Mendip'*

The annual dinner will be the same evening at Manor Hall from around 7.30 (I will confirm times nearer the time).

The menu will be:

Soup or pate

Chicken in a sauce (nature to be decided nearer the time)

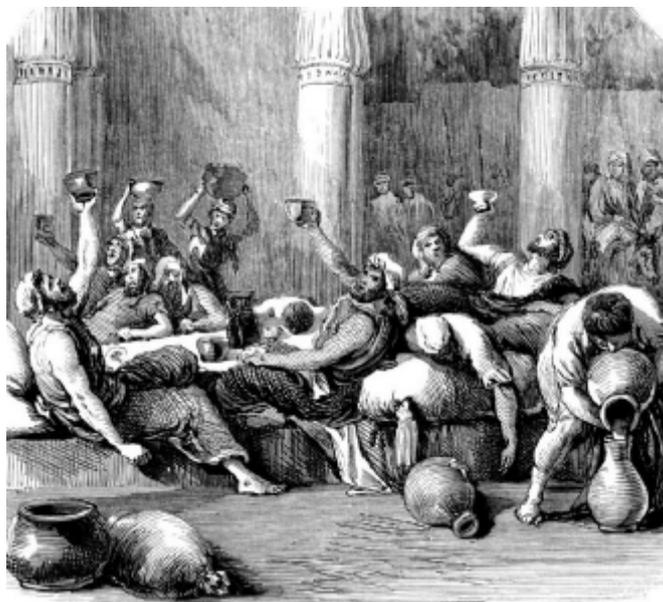
Potatoes

Vegetables

Veggie option

Chocolate meringue roulade

Bring your own wine, glasses provided.



Kayleigh says:

Price of the annual dinner will be a maximum of £20 but the more people we have the cheaper it becomes.

The caterers are not the same as last year. (*Hurrah!* - Ed.)

I need to have numbers by 27th Feb as I have to tell the caterers on the 28th.

ANYONE WHO FAILS TO TELL ME BY 27th FEB WILL NOT BE FED!!!

🌸 Notes From The Editor 🌸

I hope you have enjoyed reading this edition of the Newsletter. Do you think it was too wordy? Would you like more pictures? Let me know your thoughts and please do send me any good pics you may have (everyone has a camera phone now, don't they?). Many thanks to all the contributors.

Clive Owen
editor@ubss.org.uk