

U.B.S.S.

The University of Bristol Spelæological Society



Prof. Tratman & friend in Balcome's Pot, Coolagh River Cave

NEWSLETTER

Vol.13 No.1

March 1997

The Editors' Bit



A happy new year to you all. OK, so it may be the beginning of March, but hey, it's only polite. Welcome to this issue of the newsletter, and I hope it makes good reading. In other words, we'll try not to make any glaring editorial cock-ups this time.

Firstly I shall make another plea to those members who still haven't come along to the pub to show your faces - you're always welcome and we're not that scary. Honest. Next I'd again like to extend my thanks to anyone who wrote us something - sorry for being a bully, but these things would never get done if I didn't lean on you a bit. I'm sure there are some regular members out there who haven't yet put pen to paper, or digit to keyboard, so beware, we shall be seeking you out...

Still a dedicated non-caver myself, and no, I didn't make it down Peak Cavern, I am nonetheless glad to see so much activity amongst the fans of the underground - at the very least I should get an article or two out of it.

On the T-shirt front, I believe they are ready, so I expect Adam would quite like to be paid soon, so get your cheque books out and put him out of his misery.

Apologies for the lack of Gravel, but as it was clear to me that I would be Gravel, I made an executive decision to leave it out - oh, the privileges of being Editor!

No more to say so I'll leave you to read in peace.

Chris

UBSS Newsletter Vol.13 no.1 March 1997

Co-Editors - Christine Benn, Welsh Tim Davies

Contributors to this issue - Linda Wilson, Simon Grace, Ian Wheeler (I should hope so too), Graham Mullan, The bloke who writes Hagar, Adam Goulding, Pete Talling, Juliet Morse and Julian Todd

Disclaimer - The opinions expressed in this newsletter are not those of the committee or the editorial staff. Except for any bits about beards.

Hon. Sec's Bit

Well, I've managed to delegate most things but I suppose I should do something this year, so here goes:

We have had a fairly active and successful year so far with trips to Yorkshire, South Wales, Derbyshire and Ireland all of which I am sure you will read about in this fun packed issue.

To any members who have yet to turn up at the pub, we're all jolly friendly and caving gets you cold and wet so why not try it, or alternatively just turn up to the pub and drink beer as our esteemed co-editor does. Thanks to all the people who I have pestered, delegated to or generally annoyed so far this year much appreciated and it won't be long before there is someone new to do it.

There is apparently quite likely to be some sort of trip organised for this summer; ideas of France or Ireland are bouncing around at the moment. If anyone is interested then talk to people in the pub so that it gets organised rather than remaining a bouncing concept in a sea of bouncy things. (I know it doesn't quite flow but I never was any good at English and life is too short.....etc.)

LOVE AND KISSES,

JULIET

These sheep have kept me entertained for hours.

Christmas Shenanigans in the Middle of Nowhere

Life can be tough as a graduate, you know. Three years pass all too quickly when you haven't got much to do other than read frightening quantities of books and flit between occasional lectures. Then the real world comes along, and you find yourself unemployed, with accountancy firms making overtures in a (hopefully futile) attempt to ensnare you in their dull and tedious world. Occasionally, however, an oasis of indiscreet charm forms amidst the humdrum of daily plodding routing. If you're at all interested, I'll tell you about one such occasion.

Aware that I have now lost 75% of my audience, I shall begin. Mid-December, if you will, as the week draws to a close.

Completing a busy day's slog, hard at work lubricating the tiny cogs that constitute the lumbering machine of Government, I was sat at home, all packed and ready, waiting for the arrival of some transport to convey me from Sheffield to Monyash. In due course, Steve arrived, bringing Chris with him (hereafter referred to as t'bird, in an attempt to inject some

overt laddishness into my prose). After a quick cup of tea and a platter of festive cake, we sped away in the comfort of Steve's new van, and went to investigate the local village boozier.

Happily ensconced in said watering hole, we met up with a party already arrived from Bristol and chatted amiably to a few old friends while my throat happily docked with a pint of best. Speculation was rife at this point on the whereabouts of one Ian "Nosher" Morley, but he turned up eventually, having been delayed by the cake trolley at a passing motorway service station.

As the pub made moves to expel us from the premises, we drove off in convoy to locate the Orpheus caving hut. Far more impressive than our own humble abode, the Orpheus boasted nothing less than a dead smart cottage, complete with running water, electricity and, most decadent of all, hot showers. Everyone seemed to be quite tired after their respective journeys, and after half an hour of exploring the cottage, we all turned in for the night, braving the squeaking, rocking conglomeration of bunk beds,

about which I refrain from making any further comment.

Saturday dawned in a really rather misty and unpleasant fashion. Scrabbling effortlessly out of bed, we pottered back into Monyash for a bite or two of breakfast. Having already decided to spend one day caving and the other walking, I opted for the Peak Cavern trip on the Sunday and went for a stroll. Breakfast being duly consumed and a large map wrestled with, we set off to Bakewell, home of famous tarts.

A quick stroll along the road took us to the head of a valley by the name of _____ Dale. (I can't remember it off the top of my head, but that's the benefit of having an editor, isn't it? They do the research I am too ~~slack~~ busy to do.) {*Lathgill, I think - Ed*}. From there, it was an easy and most pleasant meander into Bakewell itself, a town horribly packed with be-sweatered tourists and the sort of people who eat smoked salmon by the kilo.

Stopping just long enough to scoff down some tea and cake, we set off back to Monyash, this time deciding to head back via Cales Dale, or something of the sort. All was going well until we made a wrong turning at a junction and ended up a few miles off course. This in itself was not a problem. Then it went dark,

which was a distinct disadvantage as neither of us had thought to bring a torch. Not for nothing am I a leader of small boys, however, and with steady nerve and a little help from some neighbouring farm dwellers, we managed to get back to the Orpheus hut. By that stage, Chris had decided that gibbering was a much better option than rational thought, and when that failed, wailing for help from stony-faced farmers was the next-best thing. No motorised help was offered, however, and we had to do it on our own, leaving the helpful couple no doubt chuntering all the while to themselves about "damned city folk."

We didn't have time for more than half a dozen cups of tea when we got back before we were off once more, this time bound for Castleton and our Christmas meal. Our chosen hostel was once more The Peak Hotel, last ravaged by the UBSS two whole years ago. Thankfully, this year's dinner was much more civilised, due no doubt to the vastly reduced ratio of ragbag students to old people who no longer have the energy to behave like savages, mainly because they have to get up in the morning/work for more than ten minutes at a time/pay tax.

A very fine meal was admirably washed down with

a few more pints, and some fine gins and tonics, replete with specially acquired cherries on sticks. Eventually, we all staggered back out to Andy's truck and endured a boneshaking ride back to Monyash.

The traditional post-drinking cavers' games them ensued, with such perennial amusements as run around the room in response to inane questions, playing with the loop of wire and, my own personal favourite (but only because I am far too good at it), the crawling through the minuscule gaps in the table game. This frivolity did not peter out until about half past three, when we once more retired to endure the squeaking bed jungle. And if I say any more, the editor will simply excise it, so I'll just shut up instead. *{A wise choice - Ed}*

Sunday morning arrived with startling speed, about four hours after I finally fell asleep. Feeling if not quite like death then at least fairly like a terminal disease of some description, I fell into some clothes and lumbered downstairs for a nourishing breakfast of orange juice. Remember kids, only idiots and professionals are allowed to cave on an empty stomach. Peak cavern was on the cards for the day, and the trip was reckoned to be so easy that even t'bird considered

venturing underground for once, though she later bottled out citing some flimsy excuse that there weren't any lights that worked.

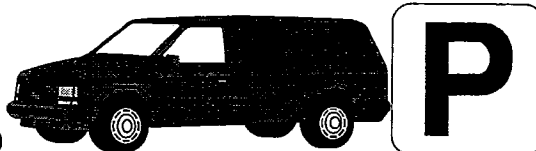
The Devil's Arse was its usual excellent self, and the trip passed with little event other than the now traditional mud-slinging, and a bizarre fit of the oopizooticks *{?-Ed}* from Rachel, again suffering from excess alcohol consumption, I have no doubt. Luckily, the lovely hands of Doctor Farrant combined with a Mars bar were enough to bring her to her senses (if that's not a contradiction in terms when used with reference to an arts student.)

Leaving the cave some three hours later, we paused only to pour scorn upon the crowd of tourists who were milling around the locked entrance, and returned to our respective vehicles to say our farewells. Thankfully, I was but half an hour away from a piping hot bath and a bed. Time was not wasted in seeking out either of them. Until next Christmas, then.

Ian Wheeler



SECURITY AT G.B. AND LONGWOOD



As everybody who has caved in the Charterhouse area over the last couple of years will know, the incidence of theft from cars has reached epic proportions.

In an attempt to alleviate this problem, the local residents are proving to be very helpful. When visiting **G.B.**, it is possible to park in the yard of the riding stables at Tynings Farm for a small fee. Just drive in to the yard, see Lynn, the owner and hand over a Pound and your car is as safe as it is going to be out there. Just don't turn up at 5.30 in the morning, as one caver apparently did, and start all the farm dogs barking!!

At Longwood, I am told that the farmer is quite happy for people to park well down the track from the old parking space, by the Water Co. compound. This is much further away from the highway, quite near the farm and should be much safer. On occasions, I believe, the farmer has even approached parties and told them to park in his yard and offered to let them change in a barn. This, however, is still only hearsay so please do not approach him, let him approach you.

Graham Mullan

The International Association of Geomorphologists; I.G.U. - Commission sustainable development and management of karst terrains; International Union of Speleology; I.H.A. - Karst Commission; and Karst Research Institute ZRC SAZU Postojna...

invite you to the symposium

CLASSICAL KARST August 24 - 28 1997 (First circular, Jan 1997)

Topics and goals The meeting will focus on karst morphology, hydrology and processes; on karst environments as containers of information of the past and on karst as vulnerable and difficult environment for human habitation. The meeting will be held in the heart of the classical karst area Kras and attention will also be paid to the history of karst science and to the evolution of ideas about karst. As new knowledge emerges about karst features; karst processes and time involved in morphogenesis in different karst regions of the world old terms and definitions must be questioned. Knowing the typical examples of karst forms is not only a question of terminology, but can also be the basis for new views to karst geomorphology.

Program of the meeting The meeting will include four half-day thematic sessions; invited lectures will be followed by discussion and short presentations on related papers. There are three different topics in the program:

- Development of ideas - past and future
- Karst hydrology and geomorphology
- Problems of karst resource management

In the afternoons there will be field trips to areas in the Classical karst, to hypogean and epigeal karst landforms, such as classical karst poljes, dlinas, blind valleys and caves. The last day will be spent travelling to Bologna with a stop at Montelo karst in Italy.

Papers and deadlines Extended abstract of on page A4 should be sent to the organising committee by May 15. The complete papers, maximum of 10 pages should be delivered at the conference. Papers will be published after the symposium in a special number of Acta Carsologica.

Technical information The symposium and accommodation will be at Lipica, W. Slovenia. Registration fee is 220 US\$. The fee includes abstracts of papers, a guide booklet, proceedings and excursions. Half this amount should be paid by May 15 and the remainder on arrival in Lipica. The second circular will be sent in June to those people who have replied by May 15. The excursion will cross the Slovenia-Italian border several times, for some participants visa is required. The cost for the accommodation in the Lipica Hotel will be about 35 US\$ per night. Participants may also camp.

Organiser Karst Research Institute ZRC sazu, Titov trg 2, SI 6230 Postojna, Slovenia.

Email: IZRK@ZRC-SAZU.SI Tel: (+386)67 27-781 or 22-457 Fax: (+386)67 23-965

AND THEN THERE WERE EIGHT.....!!

(The New Years Dinner 1996)

Linda Wilson

By the Saturday before New Years Eve, the count stood at approximately fifteen (even having discounted the number of people who were across the water in Co. Clare). About par for the course we thought.....On Sunday we lost Julian and Carol Walford to assorted ailments, on Monday, Bob Churcher to flu (which left Judith nursing a recalcitrant patient) and Galya Self to flu as well, Tuesday saw Chris Pepper succumb to a heavy cold and Dave Irwin to an entirely reasonable avoidance of the extreme cold that had come south from the Arctic Circle.

The rest of the survivors were determined that a tradition which commenced in 1919 and has continued each year ever since couldn't be lightly abandoned for anything less than complete white-out (and even then there was the final contingency plan, consisting of Clive and a Turkey sandwich).....

Tuesday also saw the arrival of snow, particularly in north Bristol. When Graham had checked the Hut the day before, the water the still running in the pipes, albeit sluggishly but gas was needed (and he forgot to look in the woodstore!). Another trip was needed! Mendip was bitter cold, but largely free of snow, if not ice, and there was no problem in getting a gas bottle out there. Adequate supplies of wood were also found. Eight o'clock saw Charlie lighting a fire and Tony and Clive puzzling over the oven. No gas was getting through, but the lights in the rest of the Hut were alight. I peered over their shoulders and announced, entirely seriously, "But it worked all right last year!" The problem was eventually solved by fiddling with the knob and my faith in the ancient grimy object (the cooker, not Graham) was restored.

At this stage the rest of us (me, Wanda and Helen) were milling around and setting the table with smart paper table cloth and napkins, very twee. And you have never seen such a motley collection of headgear in your life, but it was infernally cold! Nine o'clock saw the arrival of Adrian Wilkins (with young Corin and Robin), making eight adults and two children.

The usual roast turkey with all the trimmings followed, accompanied by a splendid selection of '70s "hit" records (courtesy of the CD ghetto blaster brought by Clive and Wanda). We were shortly to discover that it was impossible to eat Christmas pud to the delicate strains of the Sweet's "Little Willy" (who just wouldn't go home), as by then we were all in desperate hysterics (and trying to stop young Corin getting to the off-button). Did we really listen to stuff like that? Apparently so, proved by the fact that the entire audience (including Charlie, in spite of his protestations to the contrary) were still word-perfect in "American Pie". With complete justification, Corin categorised the rest of us as SAD!

Midnight saw the traditional collection of incomprehensible rituals (Hish, Hash, Hosh, the Old Crows and Auld Lang Syne, then we retreated back to the fire and in deference to Corin's sensibilities decided to sing caving songs instead. Hopefully, Corin doesn't have a good memory for verses as otherwise there might be ructions if some of the choicer ones are repeated in the playground!

An unusually select gathering but all in all, voted by everyone as probably the best and liveliest night we have spent out there for ages. Six hardy souls spent the night in the Hut in temperatures that reached minus 7 and the rest of us headed back to Bristol with the car echoing to the strains of "Little Willy" and the even more arcane and hopefully soon to be forgotten "Sylvia's Mother"!

P.S. Book now for the Millennium Dinner to avoid disappointment, the rest of us have.

IRELAND HO!

with Adam Goulding

ACT1 SCENE1

The Red Lion, a quaint but slightly seedy pub in Bristol.

Millie: So, are you coming to Ireland then?

Adam: No, I can't afford it.

Millie: There'll be plenty of Guinness...

Adam: I'll think about it.

ACT1 SCENE2

Two weeks later at White Walls, a hideously orange-coloured lounge, covered in survey maps of Draenen, somewhere in the foothills of South Wales, after pub chucking-out time.

Trousers: So are you coming to County Clare then Adam?

Adam: What? (hic)

Trousers: Pay your £10.

Adam: Hey what? Wattcha (hic) doing? Give that (hic) back.

Trousers: You've paid your deposit now, so you have to go.

Adam: I think I've been conned here (hic)

Overdraft time (hic)

Must take out a student loan (hic)

And so it came to pass that I went to Ireland, to follow wildebeest-like in the footsteps of UBSS legends.

Joining me on this perilous and foolhardy adventure were Juliet, Andy Trousers, Andy 'G-string' Cooke, Dr. Andy, Andy Tyler, Andy Jacket, Millie, Taz, Bill, Sharon, Pete and Steve. That's a hell of a lot of Andys, many of whom possess beards - enough to scare any sane person off the trip, but thankfully none of us fell into that category. So, full of post-Christmas spirit, we all headed off to Fishguard in Andy Tyler's transit.

On the ferry things started out as they were to continue - alcohol was imbibed, the conversation flowed and Taz met some dodgy people smoking illegal substances. As soon as we docked at Rosslare we drove off to Clare and arrived at Rainbow Hostel in the touristy village of Doolin.

A typical day in Ireland would start off with rising at 9 - 12am, depending on

a) the amount of Guinness consumed the previous night and

b) general laziness

Breakfast consisted of either large fry-ups or even larger fry-ups, a box of cornflakes being there purely for show, where it remained untouched until the final day of the holiday when I demolished bowls and bowls of it - well, I was sick of fry-ups. Consequently I am now sick of cornflakes, but such is life.

After about 3 hours of procrastination usually followed - which caves to do, who was going to do them etc. etc. At midday we drove off to whatever hole in the ground we had elected to do, the first of which was Polnagollem (probably spelt wrongly) *{don't ask me - Ed}*. It had a lovely sink hole entrance on the top of a hill, where Andy Cooke strained his groin, consequently earning himself the nickname Andy G-string. Lots of crab walking happened,

and I began to wonder if this was what the caves of County Clare were all about. Further subterranean forays were to prove that it was.

Emerging out of the cave we would amble off in the general direction of the vehicle, eventually finding it and changing into warm clothes in the wind/rain/cold etc., seeing who could whinge most about freezing to death in the wind chill factor of about -270°C.

After a pleasant drive back to Doolin we would sit around two tables, later joined into an L-shape, in the dining room and swap stories of caving endeavours, drinking prowess and the 'sportingness' of the various holes we had visited that day. Dinner usually consisted of a cauldron of stew, followed by everyone making appreciative Mmmmming sounds lest Andy Trousers took offence - yes, the food was great, especially that marinated thing and that chilli stew type thing.

Dinner was followed by a game of cards - nice round ones with Union Jacks on them. Obviously Steve's attempt to get us shot by militant Republicans. Incidentally, Juliet always seemed to lose at cards in a hideous manner. At around this time the alcoholics amongst us (i.e. everyone) would make their way to the pub. There were three to choose from, and invariably O'Connor's or M'Gann's would be first on the list, being the furthest away.

For the benefit of the musical Philistines out there, this part of Ireland is well known for its jolly traditional Irish music, each pub in the area having a musicians' corner, where musicians can play jolly traditional Irish music to their hearts' delight. Taz sang along with gusto and Dr Andy thumped a weird leather thing with an even weirder stick type thing.

Andy Tyler bought a couple of tapes of jolly traditional Irish music on the ferry and it was played constantly on the way to Doolin and anywhere else we travelled, e.g. to Uncle Seamus' house in County Mayo.

In the pub everybody consumed large amounts of Guinness, except Juliet who decided to quaff Smithwick's instead, Jacket who drank whisky and Millie who drank orange juice whilst surreptitiously ripping up any beer mats within arm's reach. Pete and Taz had a beer downing competition lasting a good five seconds, and all this was accompanied by the strains of jolly traditional Irish music.

I don't know about anyone else, but by the end of the trip I had developed a pathological hatred of jolly traditional Irish music and would quite cheerfully have killed any jolly traditional Irish musicians in sight.

New Year was celebrated in style at M'Gann's, everyone getting very merry - some more than others, such as Juliet going wild and snogging everyone in sight. I distinctly remember buying a round of 10 pints of Guinness and 2 pints of Smithwick's, and that is about all I *can* remember, except crowd surfing and losing my socks and shoes in the process - Taz seemed to have quite a lot to do with that, but I knocked her out later on in the night so that's OK. Trousers, being his usual charming self, managed to insult Millie in a manner unprintable in this newsletter - is this perhaps why she no longer turns up at the Red Lion?

One day we actually managed to do two caves, Cullaun 1 & 2, and got heartily sick of them, some more than others. Millie, myself and Andy Tyler emerged from the wrong entrance of Cullaun 1 and proceeded to get very lost in the pitch black, eventually retreating down the cave and coming out of the right entrance.

Doolin's was great fun, descending down Fisher Street Pot with Bill, Sharon and Steve, wading through murky water with the occasional eel or fish in it. We passed the others, who came in the bottom entrance, kindly clearing the spiders' webs away before we got there by walking through them.

Well, this article is getting to long now and I've got to type it up as the editor is getting angry (*rot - Ed*). I'm hungry and I can't remember anything else apart from spending a very cold night in a very cold van, surrounded by very warm people, but it was my fault for blithely assuring everyone that the ferry would dock at 2am. We drove to Cork, then to Rosslare ferry terminal. It was deserted, prompting Trousers to comment "I've seen busier ferry terminals". It was snowing, and the ferry didn't come. I was cold (Hell, we were all cold), then everyone else went to sleep in their nice warm sleeping bags except me, as Taz had stolen mine, so I shivered under a blanket all night. My punishment...?

The ferry eventually docked at 9am and we boarded. I went to thaw out in the bar with Taz, a couple of pints of Guinness and a game of poker, lost by Taz in true Juliet style.

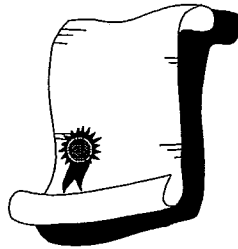
I believe the whole trip was a hideous ploy for us to buy a copy of the Caves of Co. Clare, thus reducing the stockpile in the Stables. I didn't buy one anyway...Did anyone? Has anyone? Ever? *{just what are you saying Adam? - Ed}*

T-Shirts

The T-shirts are now ready, so could anyone who has ordered one please contact me at the pub or email me : ag5524@bris.ac.uk for the price etc.

There are a few sweatshirts going spare if anyone wants to buy one, around £11 each.

Adam's Poetry Corner



The Deadly Effect of Alcohol and Andy Jacket on a Young Girl's Constitution

In the Plume young Rachel took a cup,
And said to the Landlord "fill her up".
When approached by that Jacket,
She moaned "I can't hack it",
And thought it more fun to throw up.

Simon Grace Age12

Thank you Simon for that valuable contribution to Adam's poetry corner. Let that be an example to all you budding poets out there to put pen to paper and write me a poem for the next issue. And remember kids, it doesn't have to be a limerick.

The Sleeping Stalactite

Last night I had a dream, and in this dream I knew a woman who owned some private land up on the hillside with a little cave in it. I was very interested in this cave, and over the years I pestered her and pestered her until one fine day she provisionally agreed to take me there and show me around.

Now this woman had some strange ideas about caving and, in spite of taking everything a little too personally at times, she didn't really know her way around. So when I followed her down past the entrance chamber, which was grand and very barren in an artistic sort of manner, we got lost.

Now I would say I've enjoyed going down a few caves in my time. Some are hard, and some are easy, and in some you risk falling a long way if you make a wrong move, but almost always it's a sociable occasion; as a team you balk at the difficult bits, run through the easy bits, and help each other up the tough climbs. This woman didn't share that sort of attitude. For example, I would be sliding headfirst down into a hole with mud at the bottom, get a face full of the stuff and then have to crush and wiggle my body round an unbelievably tight corner with water running down my neck. I'd naturally curse and swear at it as I went through and at the other side this woman would be saying things like: "I can tell you're not liking it, do you want to turn back?" I'd say, "No." And she'd say, "It doesn't sound like you want to be here. Wouldn't you rather be outside on the surface drinking cups of tea instead?" "Absolutely not," I'd reply, and then I'd stand up in the chamber and see the most amazing sights ahead of me in the dim flicker of my light. It would leave me speechless.

This woman would then lead me on into another even more difficult bit, and after slightly more of my usual cursing and swearing that I do when I am undergoing a certain amount of pain, I soon learned that it was better to bite my tongue and keep quiet, than have to say, "No, I don't want you to take me back out, I really really am enjoying it," all the time.

After a while this change in procedure got the better of my mood and I was more grim-faced and broody than I usually am in the situation.

Finally things got really hard and I found myself crawling into a duck with not a lot of airspace at the top. The water was extremely cold and her movements in the puddle beyond sent waves crashing over my face and nearly drowned me. I got through and shouted, "Jesus Christ, I only just got out of that one alive!"

"Well, don't blame me," she said testily. "You're the one who insisted on coming this far!"

"I'm not blaming you. I've just been through a very difficult section; I'm allowed to whinge about it. Sometimes," I said, "I don't think you've really got the idea of this whole thing. I mean, this is an excellent cave. I really do love

it. So what if there are some difficult bits. I wouldn't have it any other way. Without them you would have nothing but a dull dark hole even a school kid could go into. As it is, it's got a whole lot of character, and I really appreciate it." This woman didn't say a word. She just looked at me with a seedy expression.

I said, "Well, if you'll excuse me I'll just carry on a bit further." I went round the next corner and saw a sight of such splendour I had not dreamed could have existed before. Bright formations were stacked up on top of each other to the ceiling on like melons on an overblown fruit stall. There were waterfalls, and stalactites and crystalline minerals growing like cabbages off the floor. Unfortunately in the way was a deep dark hole. And then my light went out.

I scrambled back down the passage behind me and met her again, me with my now dead light. She said with a note of apology, "It had to happen eventually. It was never destined to last."

"What are you talking about?" I cried. "This light could have gone on another six hours if I'd charged properly. And I would still be going on if I had remembered to bring a backup light. The fact that it has gone out now is irrelevant. It has no meaning."

Her blue eyes stared and burnt holes through my imagination, and she said something, but I couldn't hear it because my dream world started to clear away like smoke from a firecracker. I could not hold onto it for one moment longer, and I was rapidly left alone, lying in my bed at 5:30am.

One side of me said comfortingly, "Don't worry, it's only a dream." But the other, more canny side said, "It's a dream: everything in it is significant."

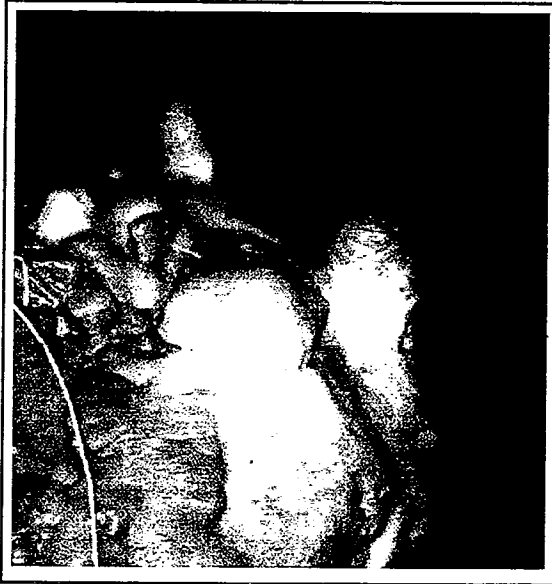
Julian Todd. 22/2/97



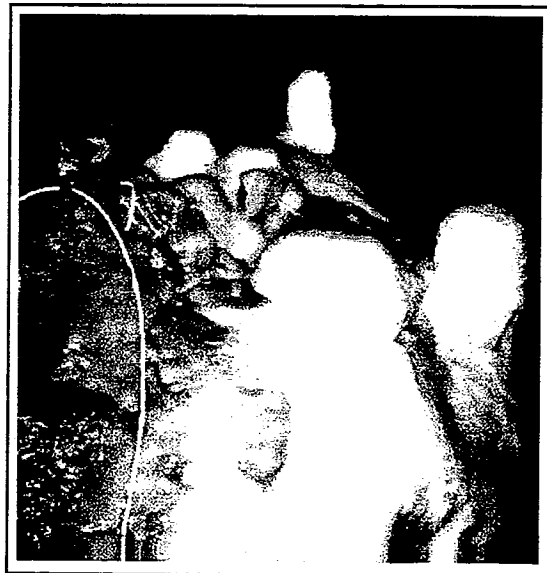
CONSERVATION IN ACTION

Graham Mullan

A number of cavers have been heard to comment recently about the poor state of the calcite formations in Great Chamber, in G.B. Cave. This is now, of course, the subject of a proper Conservation Plan agreed between the Charterhouse Caving Co. Ltd and English Nature. So whilst other clubs have been complaining about the ease of access to this part of the cave and the need for leadership systems (yes, really) UBSS members, under the watchful eye of the CCC Ltd. Conservation Officer, Linda Wilson, have been quietly getting on with useful work. The annual review of the cave has shown that there has been little actual damage to the formations in this part of the cave, but quite a lot of muddying. We have therefore been improving the taping in the Chamber and cleaning the stal where necessary.



BEFORE



AFTER

The cleaning has been done with a 5 litre garden spray, at a reasonable pressure, does not require any brushing and so the surface of the stal remains untouched and undamaged. This work requires the transport of large quantities of water around the cave (we only use cave water to avoid any possible contamination) and thanks are due to Carol and Julian Walford and Clive Owen for their assistance.

BOULDERS: A SPECIAL REPORT FROM OUR WELSH CORRESPONDENT

Boulders are one of the most exciting aspects of caving, and the study of boulders currently at the forefront of cave geomorphology. On a recent club trip to Ogof y Drainpipe we were shocked by the high quality of boulders presented during our seven hour frolic through the cave. This field site offers exciting possibilities.

1.) Boulder arranging.....it can be very therapeutic to bring together pleasing clumps of boulders in meaningful arrangements. (using these arrangements to get out of the cave is of course cheating)

2.) Boulder balancing.....finding the pointiest and generally most excitingly shaped boulder to stand on (tiptoe) is also a fun way to spend a spare moment. Be careful of overbalancing and wrapping your nether regions around the pointy bits like Taz did....such unprovoked acts can prove very disturbing to old fashioned shy and retiring boulders. Only skilled exponents of this art, who can stand on a numbers of boulders placed on top of each other, can hope to circumvent GB's notorious ladder pitch.

3.) Throwing the boulder...useful for stopping people remove bolts from caves (adjust size of boulder used as the occasion demands)

4.) Boulder trundling.....very difficult in Welsh caves due to the monotonous gradients of the cave floor. In Yorkshire however.....

5.) Boulder hopping....newly recognised as an Olympic sport and shortly to appear on Gladiators.

6.) Boulder wallowing (for the experienced only). This is similar to mud wallowing but involves more bruises and cuts...an acquired taste.

7.) Upsetting the boulder choke. A similar game to jenga (in which wooden blocks are progressively removed until the looser causes the stack of blocks to collapse) which really sets the heart racing. Realising the boulders around you have just started to move is one of life's really interesting experiences.

8.) Boulder trials.....similar to sheep trials in that you try to herd the boulders through marked gates (usually takes several days due to the sluggish nature of many boulders)

A true appreciation of how cute boulders really are takes many years in large Welsh caves. Vadose boulders can be recognised by their sharp edges whilst phreatic boulders are altogether rounder. Each passage in Drynunn had a unique character to its boulders which clearly set it apart from the previous 5 hours of cave. The colours of the boulders were ever-changing resplendent and grey. The talus slopes had wild and wonderful angles of repose. The composition of the boulders fluctuated between both limestone and limestone.

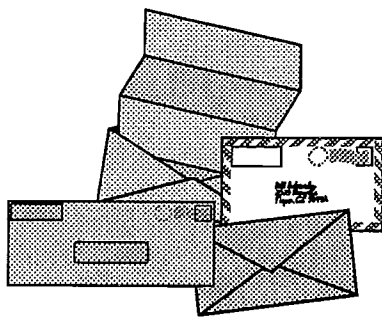
The character of boulders changes the world over. Yorkshire boulders are dour and grim. Mendip boulders are laid back whilst the most annoying and biggest boulders are always American. Italian boulders are poorly organised, excitable but very friendly.

So next time you are 6 hours round Drynnnn, remember how lucky you are to have seen the spiritual home of the boulder. Sit with them and ponder how boulders fit into the great scheme of things before picking your way out to the fresh air many feet above.....

Dr. Pete Talling

The readership will no doubt be pleased to hear that Dr. Talling is currently in therapy to cure his boulder fetish. And incidentally, Dr. F., I have noticed the misspelling of Draenen throughout, but I thought it was probably there for 'comic' effect so I've left it unchanged - Ed

A Cartoon That I Quite Liked (with thanks to the person who left the News of the World on the train so I could read it)



LETTER TO THE EDITORS

Dr. (you can tell by the writing) M.C. Norton
Steeple Morden
Hertfordshire

Hi there cavers,

Having read the Newsletter two things occur to me
(no, three things):

- 1) Delighted my name not on debtors list.
- 2) Who could possibly call Manor Farm a sewer? (I didn't bang away for 2 years to have my hole called a sewer!!).
- 3) You remember difference between stalagtites/mites by the simple mnemonic "figs come down, mites crawl up".
- 4) Sorry, four things. Why liken caving to sex - are you so hyped up that you have to implicitly apologise for not bonking {his word, honest - Ed} all the time. Why not have caving and sex?? Many have!!

OK you're not convinced - so why not. Cavers do it for hours and hours.....and hours (optional extra - and then you get stuck!).

Cheers you Freshers and not so Freshers,

Mike Norton

