

U.B.S.S.

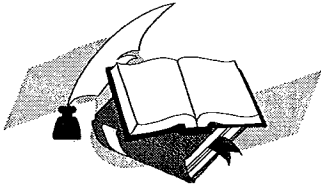
The University of Bristol Spelæological Society



NEWSLETTER
Vol.13 No.2

June 1997

The Editors' Bit



Hello to you all, and welcome to the third of our attempts to turn out a newsletter. I'm sorry it's so late, but us poor, hard-done by students have exams to do, and then I had some fun to have before I could sit down and thrash this thing out.

Heartfelt thanks once more to those who have written articles for us, and a thousand curses upon the heads of those who haven't. I hope this satisfies the 'more than 50% speleology' requirement for those who really want to read about all that stuff.

The lack of cartoon somewhat disturbs me, but as I haven't seen Mr. Grace since before the holidays I have not been able to apply the thumb screws/ankle vices (and other sundry torture devices) that I am so fond of, to induce him to write for me. I sincerely hope that the now familiar cartoon strip will be back next issue (won't it, Simon?)

Although activities have been somewhat limited for the students over the exam period, I'm sure things will get back to their usual pace next term. I'll make my usual plea here to all those who have only turned up once (or not at all) to rejoin next year and come along. We're a lovely bunch of people, really we are.

All that remains is for me to wish you a long, hot and happy summer, with as many trips underground as it takes to keep you from sanity. Have a good one!

Chris

UBSS Newsletter Vol.13 no.2 June 1997

Co-Editors - Christine Benn, Welsh Tim Davies

Contributors to this issue - Linda Wilson, Ian Wheeler (I should hope so too), Graham Mullan, Charlie Self, Dr. Farrant, Everybody who went to Ireland, Me

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

The AGM

Once again the AGM did not provide me with much to write about, but I shall have a go as I believe it was requested by some person or persons with more than their fair share of capital letters.

All that really implanted itself in my memory was the fact the for some reason we were crammed into a tiny little room barely big enough to swing a cat in, if anyone amongst us had been cruel-hearted enough to attempt the feat, which made the whole experience a trifle hot and crowded.

The minutes and Treasurer's reports and all that sort of stuff went off without any particular surprises, as did the election of officers, listed below. I was perhaps a little surprised to find that I had kindly volunteered to serve on the committee, but seeing as I shall be living within spitting distance of the library next year it won't be much of a hardship.

OFFICERS, 1997-98

President:

A.M. ApSIMON, M.A., F.S.A.

Vice Presidents:

D.T. DONOVAN, D.Sc., Ph.D.

C.J. HAWKES

R.J.G. SAVAGE, Ph.D.

M.G. ANDERSON, Ph.D.

Hon. Secretary: A. GOULDING and T. WILLIAMS

Hon. Treasurer: G.J. MULLAN

Student Treasurer: R. EDWARDS

Committee:

C. BENN; S.B. COTTLE, B.Sc.; T. DAVIES;

S.J. GRACE; I. MORLEY; L.J. WILSON, LL.B.

Soon the mundane stuff was brought to a somewhat abrupt end by the tunes of Star Wars and the dulcet tones of Darth Vader wafting in through the open window. Well I thought it was funny anyway.

Next we reorganised our little cupboard to allow Dr. F to give his talk, and a very good talk it was at that, with enough pretty pictures to keep even the most fidgety of us occupied. It almost made me want to get back underground again (but not quite). It is nice, however, to be reminded every now and again that there is more to the subterranean lands than Goatchurch cavern.

That was it really.

CB

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELÆOLOGICAL SOCIETY

RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDING 31ST JANUARY 1997

RECEIPTS

	£		£
Publications Grants: University of Bristol		700.00	
Members Subscriptions		1455.00	816.41
Student Members Subscriptions		318.00	401.68
Union Grants: Capital	390.26		200.18
Current	<u>300.00</u>		
Interest on Investments: Bank	536.26		
N.S.B.	<u>47.23</u>		168.20
Sales of Publications (not C. of C.C.)		1098.42	596.76
Sales of Shirts		4.00	90.25
Donations		142.00	354.96
Tax Refund on Covenants		267.34	8.00
Charterhouse C.C. permit sales		3.00	10.00
Surplus on 1996 Annual Dinner		3.05	
Treatman Grant for Foreign Travel		<u>300.00</u>	<u>300.00</u>

3191.55
2300.00
73.01
5564.56

PAYMENTS

L.N.R.C. Reprint	556.01	
Postage of Proc. 20.3	260.40	
Tools & Equipment	390.26	Capital
		Current
Library		<u>11.42</u>
Museum		
Sessional Meetings		
Postages		
Hon. Secs Petty Cash		
Stationery & Duplicating		
Rates & Taxes		
Insurances: Third Party	252.20	
Property	<u>344.56</u>	
Subscriptions & Licence		
Travel Money		
"Fresh"		
Donation To Mendip Rescue Organisation		
Treatman Grant for Foreign Travel		

Transfer to Printed Publications Fund
Excess of Receipts over Payments

"CAVES OF COUNTY CLARE"

Surplus Balance at 31 January 1997	278.84
	<u>278.84</u>

PUBLISHING ACCOUNT 1996/7
Sales of "Caves of County Clare"
Debit balance at 1 February 1996

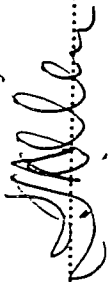
371.03
92.19
278.84

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BALANCE SHEET AT 31 JANUARY 1997

	£	£	£
<u>DUIT FUND</u>			
Balance at 1. 2. 96	3466.35		
Add net income	<u>313.34</u>		
		3779.69	
			14000.00
			<u>918.40</u>
			14918.40
<u>PRINTED PUBLICATIONS FUND</u>			
Balance at 1. 2. 96	2780.00		
Add Trf. from R & P a/c	<u>2300.00</u>		
		5080.00	
			2415.19
<u>LIBRARY FUND</u>			
Balance at 1. 2. 96	289.50		
Add net income	<u>10.00</u>		
		299.50	
			7.85
			<u>17.39</u>
			25.24
<u>EQUIPMENT HIRE ACCOUNT</u>			
Balance at 1. 2. 96	213.05		
Add net income	<u>66.87</u>		
		279.92	
<u>"CAVES OF CO. CLARE" RESERVE FUND</u>			
Advance for Publication	7000.00		
Add surplus balance on sales	<u>278.84</u>		
		7278.84	
<u>RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS ACCOUNT</u>			
Balance at 1. 2. 96	567.87		
Add net income	<u>73.01</u>		
		640.88	
			<u>17358.83</u>
			<u>17358.83</u>

HONORARY AUDITORS REPORT: I have examined the above Receipts and Payment Account for the year ended 31st January 1997, and the attached Balance Sheet as at that date and certify that they are in accordance with the Society's accounting records and explanations provided.


D.J. Allen C.I.P.F.A.

Treasurer's Report 1996-7

Graham Mullan

Yet another year passes in which the Society does not go bankrupt! There are a number of points that I can make about the Accounts at this stage:

Receipts and Payments Account:

There is no figure here for the cost of *Proceedings* 20.3, as the bill had not come in when the books closed. I have made contingency for this, therefore, by the transfer of £2,300 to the Printed Publications Fund, to cover it next year. This figure is the exact cost. With this in mind, it can be seen that a very small surplus was made on the year, meaning that we are happily keeping our head above water at present. It is worth noting at this stage that we are now paying about £2,000 per issue less than the highest price we have paid and are in fact paying about the same in cash terms (and therefore considerably less in real terms) than we were ten years ago. This is despite rises in the cost of paper and other materials and is down almost entirely to the efficient use of new technology.

"Caves of County Clare" Publishing Account:

Some sixteen years after it was published, this book has at long last paid for itself. (As Charlie remarked at the AGM, seven years longer than promised but three years shorter than was predicted.) Sad to say this means that it is unlikely that we will be able to afford to publish a revised edition in the future, even with the technological advances that have kept the cost of *Proceedings* down.

Hut Fund:

Although this continues to look healthy, two factors will cause this to change over the coming year. The first is that a large part of the roof needs replacing which will be fairly expensive. The second is that we have ceased to let it to outside groups. This will naturally curtail the income considerably and will mean that the Committee will be taking pains to ensure that all members who use it pay the appropriate fee.

Investments:

Most of our money is held in the Capital Investment Account with the Bank. It is likely that I will transfer much of this to the National Savings Bank Account during the coming year. However, interest rates on all savings accounts are low at present and this will not bring about a great change in our level of investment income. The fact that there was such a large sum in the current account at the time is simply down to me being ready to pay the printing bill.

The overall picture is therefore fairly steady. I believe I have safeguarded most of our sources of income as well as I can and that our levels of expenditure should not change dramatically. However prices always go up, never down, and I can foresee the need for a rise in the subscription in the near future. The best way to stave this off would be for ALL members to be prompt in paying their subs, preferably by standing order, and for all those who are U.K. taxpayers to sign a Deed of Covenant This costs you nothing but five minutes of your time but is worth almost one third of your subscription. Forms for both purposes are available from me.

It is now twelve years since Oliver died and I took over this job. The Society in its time has had far fewer Treasurers than it has had Presidents. I have no burning desire to give it up, but if anyone else thinks they want to have a go...

The Hon. Secs' Bit

Greetings from your all-new secretarial consortium. I suspect that whilst reading this you may notice that it bears a striking resemblance to the style of a one Miss C. Benn, co-editor and all round non-caver. You will no doubt be overjoyed to hear that this is because the said Miss Benn is indeed writing this, as opposed to a sudden and rather worrying character transformation on the part of Tas or Adam.

As neither Tim nor I have made it to the pub in nigh on four weeks, I feel fully justified in stating that everything is going swimmingly thank you very much, and that the new Hon. Secs are positively revelling in their new-found power. The fact that I am not one of the secretaries also renders me unable to tell you anything about planned trips or anything useful. In fact I am merely making a point that the Hon. Secs' bit is indeed a more fruitful use of paper when written by the Hon. Secs.

One thing I do have to say in amongst the drivel is that there seems to be a dearth of keys for the library, which means I, and other current committee members, do not have access. It would be a great help if previous committee members and people no longer in the area/in need of the facilities often could return their keys to Graham Mullan. Failing this, dropping them into the library would be equally good. This would enable the current committee and editors to get on with their business unhindered.

Right, now I have said the only important thing I have to say I shall toddle off and do something useful with my time.



SPELEO COTSWOLDS

There was a time, not long ago, when the association of the two words of this title would have raised the same wry smiles as the idea of "English wine". How times can change. New grape varieties now thrive (survive?) in southern England and even produce enough quality fruit for commercial wineries.

No such miracle has changed the permeability of Cotswold limestone. It transmits water as freely as ever, through every possible crack and fissure. This prevents the development of master conduits, otherwise known as "caveable" caves. Thus the Cotswolds still don't even reach the bottom of the scale on the list of British karst caving regions.

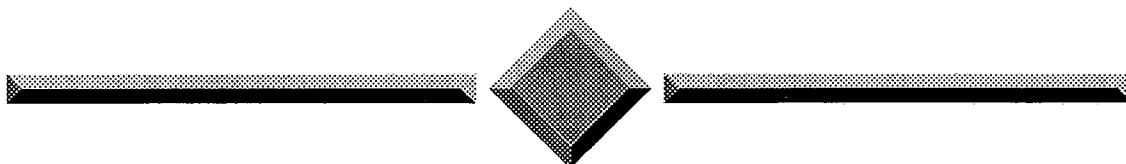
But all is not doom and gloom. The Cotswolds have some very fine stone mines, whose length can run into tens of kilometres. Browne's Folly and Box are the two most famous mines, and they can offer hours of entertainment to the navigationally challenged. Smaller mines such as Swan are also worth a visit, with well-preserved mining equipment still in place.

An even more esoteric pleasure is available in the form of landslip caves (also known as "gulls", if you are a geologist). They have never been popular with British cavers, but in the UBSS they gained an unusual notoriety. The cave responsible was Henry's Hole, surveyed in the early 1980's by Charlie Self and friends. Charlie soon ran out of friends and finished the survey partnered by a boulder wearing a Petzl headset. Perhaps he shouldn't have bothered, but the cave belonged to a friend, Ted Lloyd, who had found it at the bottom of his garden at Box Hill. Ted has now moved house, so the truth can be told without embellishment. Henry's Hole may hold some small interest for a very thin geologist, but not enough to be worth repeating here. To a caver of normal build and temperament it has no redeeming features.

Sadly the reputation of Henry's Hole spilled over onto other landslip caves and for more than a decade Charlie and his caves were as popular as a middle-aged man with a beard. This was really quite unfair as Sally's Rift, the longest and most complex cave yet found in the Cotswolds, is really rather nice. Three middle-aged men with beards have now combined forces to explore and survey all the known landslip caves of the Cotswolds. This project should keep them happy and hairy for at least another year, so anyone wanting a day out with a difference should talk to Tony Boycott, Charlie Self or Andy Tyler on a Tuesday night in the Red Lion.

In the next Newsletter, I will publish a check list of the known caves. In the meantime, if anyone has information about caves in the Cotswolds, please contact Charlie by e-mail (self@globalnet.co.uk) or letter (4 Tyne Street, Bristol BS2 9UA) or telephone (0117 954 1728).

CAS



MENDIP CAVE REGISTRY

Mendip Cave Bibliography
Compiled by Dave Irwin, with additional material
by Graham Price and Richard Witcombe.

AND

A catalogue of about 1800 newspaper references compiled by Dave Irwin

The Mendip Cave Registry was reformed two years ago and in an independent organisation whose members comprise interested and working cavers. The Registry is unaligned to any club, regional or national organisation and receives no financial help other than what it receives from its members. The above title is being published to order only and will not be available through the normal caving outlets.

Published June/July 1997 c.190pp, light card covers with clear plastic sheets and comb bound. Photocopied. PRICE £20 post paid, commercial and public institutions £100 post paid.

This massive work has been produced from a large database which was created in 1994 and has been continually added to since that time. It is an indispensable addition to Mendip Caving Literature and is the largest such publication ever to appear in the British Isles dealing with a single British caving region. It contains about 10,000 references related to the caves referred to in the text. Based initially on Ray Mansfield's card index of about 3,000 items it has been expanded to about 10,000 items. Non-cave specific topics have been collected together under relevant headings, archaeology, biology, hydrology, geomorphology etc. Typeset in Times Roman font 8 point to minimise the number of pages and yet not too small to prevent easy and casual browsing. It does not, at this point in time, displace other all other bibliographies and indexes such as Mendip Bibliography Part II by Trevor Shaw [1972] or the various indexes published by caving organisations [BCRA and CDG] or Descent Magazine. Neither do the compilers claim it to be complete for there are many caving / national magazine runs and newspapers still to be searched.

It is only available from the Mendip Cave Registry and will not be available in the caving retail outlets. It is also being published to order – there will be no spare stocks held after publication.

To order :

Send a note stating the number of copies required and a PO/cheque, payable to Mendip Cave Registry [drawn on a British bank] to cover the total cost to:

Mendip Cave Registry
c/o Dave Irwin,
Townsend Cottage,
Priddy,
Somerset. BA5 3BP.

All orders to be received by 15th June 1997. Copies will be dispatched within 28 days of the closing date.

**A COPY WILL BE ON VIEW AT THE BCRA REGIONAL MEETING AT THE VILLAGE HALL,
PRIDDY, SOMERSET, ON 7TH JUNE**

UBSS IRISH LOG APRIL/MAY 1997

Friday/Saturday 18th/19th April 1997

Car No.1 containing Graham Mullan (GJM), Linda Wilson (LJW), Helen Wills (HCW) and Tony Boycott (AB) left Bristol at 8.00 pm heading for the Stena ferry. Disembarked at 7.00pm at Rosslare, to note the Irish Boat (Containing car no 2, Steve Cottle (SBC) and Rachel Privett (RP) was about half an hour behind them. Arrived in Ennistymon at 11.30 am (another record?) shopped and went down to Doolin to take up residence in the cottage. We unpacked & then car 2 arrived so we all went to O'Connors for a Guinness (or two). Then back to continue unpacking, eating, etc.

GJM & LJW then went for a sleep, AB & HCW for a walk & SBC & RP for a cycle ride and to do Poulsallagh on the way.

AB & HCW walked from the cottage up the dry Aille to the first bridge, along the road to Poulcraveen, and down the coast past Urchins (definitely needs a ladder now) to Hell. Saw two foreign Cave divers ? French about to dive. High tide.

AB

Sunday 20th April 1997

Up with the lark and the entire party were underground in Poulmagollum by 10.20am! Intent was a Branch Passage Gallery round trip, in very very low water, but managed to add some little bits en route. GJM went down a dug crawl to the right at the end of the muddy link. Went for about 30 metres, until too tight, still going but needs more digging. Don't know who has done this much. At the same time the others went off to look at Citric Series...

GJM

Not impressed by Citric Series, looks like an oxbow which is why I've not done it before. Followed it for 60m or so until it got boring. Back down Branch Passage Past 2 oxbows, then AB noticed a large choked passage on the left side about 20m beyond the lowest oxbow. A crawl along the downstream side of this lead to a two-way junction. At this point GJM arrived and said "It's RAF '55 series, you can follow it back to the streamway!" so I did and it didn't. 150m of crawling, turning right at two junctions past some fine straws and a decorated aven, led to a diggable shale choke, at which point I returned. On looking at the guidebook, RAF '55 series is all downstream of Muddy Link Passage. This passage has obviously been entered before, but not described or surveyed.

All carried on down BPG. The stal cleaning done last year is impressive and still clean. Down the pitch, and out via Shaft Gallery, cleaning some graffiti and unnecessary Out signs. Stream very dry. Back along the coast road, visiting Rob and his new Beagle Trousers en route.

Later AB, HCW, & LJW walked down to the harbour past Hell to Poll Ballaghaline. This could be opened easily with a crowbar, the shaft is not blocked. Carried on to Urchins and back.

AB

Monday 21st April 1997

Not quite such an early start, today. We divided into two parties for the caving. Party A, GJM, LJW, and HCW spurned any thought at digging and went to Gragan West. Entered by the Main Entrance, down to Cardpack Chamber, deciding that the crawl just before there would photograph really well. Then upstream merrily to Top Entrance. Exited covered with limonite.

As this spot is so hard to find, took GPS reading. It is N53 04' 19", W009 12' 19".

GJM

Poulnagrec, 21/4/97, SBC, AB, RJP. Went down to the dig, at the end of the streamway. The Cambridge had dug their way up to a cross rift which after a short, but awkward climb down leads to a sand dig.

The UBSS digging there was started in 1991 by AB SBC and Chris Bennet. The dig was sand with easy spoil removal. The UBSS New Year Trip this January also visited the dig where SBC and Andy Atkinson dug for another 10ft. A route over the sand was visible but more spoil needed to be removed. This trip started with AB digging and removing a number of (newly taken into the cave) skips back to the rift. SBC then dug up and was able to hear a very good echo straight ahead. Dripping water was also heard. To within a few feet of the end "rat-holing" began to make sure that SBC could get through. After a number of attempts to get through the squeeze into the cave now visible beyond I made it into my first piece of virgin cave. The rift continued for a short distance (7m) the rift descended back to the streamway. A deep pool (my 6v 10W bulb could not penetrate the full depth) was ahead. Traversing across the inlet stream comes in from the right. Following this for approx. 10m the upstream sump is reached. Continuing across the pool the passage turns left by an impressively pretty aven. The cave continued still by joint control for quite a long way before a COKE can was found. This was suspected of being washed in rather than human deposition. The cave continued further to a low crawl/ duck which may sump in wet weather. The cave continued for further after this still by joint control with the occasional formation in the roof, until the roof lowered and the imminent thought of a sump. Further, very cold inspection however revealed it to be a very low duck. Water draining/ flowing could easily be heard on the far side. But as the duck appeared to be both low and long it was decided to return better prepared to pass the duck another, hopefully dry day. Pacing the distance back to the deep pool revealed a total of around 200 metres of new cave. A very satisfying experience. Conversation then rose as to how we would break this to the other back at the cottage. Walking in and pouring a large whiskey was agreed upon, Plus the comment that there is now more data available! (previously raised by the slightly sceptical GJM about the digging prospects, that diggers say "it would go", geomorphologists say "not but would welcome more data").

7 hours in total spent caving, digging and exploring new passage.
SBC.

Comment by RP on the drive back. "I've just seen some funny animals on the rock over there, they look like a cross between sheep and deer." AB
"Might they be goats Rachel?" "Oh!" (Qualified vet!)

Tuesday 22 April 1997 (whole party)

To Co. Mayo to visit the Aille River Cave. Drove there in two and a quarter hours, almost as forecast by Autoroute Express, which hadn't allowed for an empty school bus who wouldn't let people past and Rachel's complete mastery of a herd of cows. Arrived to find a farmer doing some work by the roadside. It wasn't his land but he was quite happy to let us go caving and even unlocked the gate to the fields so the ladies didn't have to climb over it! He didn't seem to have seen any cavers since the Craven were first there (in 1968) and he certainly hadn't seen female ones. The prophecy of Saint Columbcille was quoted to us "And there will come a time when the women will be as bold as the men" and he seemed to think it had come true.

The river was very low but flood debris could be seen a long way up the bank. The cave is in the bottom of a deep shake hole and is accessed down through boulders which leads into the blackest streamway I have ever seen. Even four five cell lights plus two three cells made very little impression on it. The rock is superbly sculpted and the whole cave is very attractive in spite of Rachel's early claims of "bad karma". We went into Formation Chamber which was rather nice and then down the main stream. The canal at the end was very impressive, wide and still extremely black. Next to the sump pool at the end I looked into a small tube on the right which seemed to have already been entered for a few feet, but then the people marks stopped and I carried on along a low wet passage-for about seven metres to a small chamber. Beyond that was a duck (nobly passed by SBC) for five metres to a sump. From the chamber GJM went up an aven for about four metres to a very slippery slot beyond which the passage appeared to be too tight. On checking the survey it seemed that only the first two or three metres were marked. No-one else seemed very keen on my bit of passage, something to do with the liquid mud, I think.

Back up the main stream, all freeclimbed in to the passage at Telephone Corner and went as far as the Sheepdip. SBC went into it and out the other side, but declined to get into the cold canal as he thought he wouldn't get back out, and AB went up an old rope ladder which led up the Eleven foot pitch but he declined to use an even tattier and partially broken ladder which led down after about forty feet back into the cascading stream. He did however retrieve the ladder with a view to re-using the rungs. The whole trip took about two and a quarter hours and we came out as dirty as we went in and had to wash off in the lake. An excellent trip, well

worth a visit. Take a ladder next time for the pitch down, and a large empty tackle bag to remove some of the telephone wire!

LJW

AB found a "snot- gobbler" in the roof of the main drain. Have found these a lot in India, they are gossamer web threads hanging straight down from the ceiling about 8 cm, beaded every 1 - 2 cm, with a "worm" ? diptera larva? at the top. Took photos, but couldn't collect the larva as no collecting tubes.

Bought a survey tape in Ballinrobe for tomorrow. The UBSS needs two sets of survey kit on the same day in Ireland Shock Horror!!

AB

Wednesday 23rd April 1997 (GJM's Birthday.)

For the first time in many years 2 UBSS survey parties headed off to deal with previously unrecorded cave. The A team, GJM, LJW & HCW set off back to Branch Passage Gallery to investigate the passage seen by AB on Sunday.

The passage started about 30 metres upstream of Muddy Link junction where a short crawl & squeeze led into a low chamber. LJW went left & quickly started exclaiming "I don't believe it!!!". However the stream passage that she had entered was, of course, BPG again. This process repeated itself twice, leaving us with one further lead. This, however, went for some distance, past some nice straws and a very pretty aven until petering out in wide flat beddings filled with shale that LJW failed to dig with her nose. We surveyed back from there to the ox-bows and tied our data to survey point 37, in yellow chalk, back in BPG. Surveyed length just on 100m, probably the ox-bows if they haven't already been done properly, would add another 50 - 60 metres.

Exited with copious quantities of mud to find it had been raining. Retired to cottage to wash & have a late lunch.

GJM

AB, RJP, SBC to Poulmagree to survey the new extensions. Did spot heights with Casio watch at road junction, entrance shakehole, sump 1 and sump? 2 (see survey data). Surveyed from Sump 1 to inlet sump, up Cambridge Tube to rift, through dig, Nagi Passage (Steve's dead Rabbit) while SBC put a bolt in the top of the greasy rift (helps a bit) Needs a 3m ladder.

Surveyed on down to the duck and through to Sump 2. Total surveyed 300m, 250m from the dig breakthrough point.

AB donned hood and looked at the duck, but was too cold to do it justice. It is at least 10 ft long, minimum airspace 2 cm in passage 1m to 0.5m high, very wide. You can hear water trickling away. I reckon it needs diving kit. Exit taking photos, saw a frog at sump 1 downstream. tacklebag disintegrated half way up streamway, lost crowbar somewhere, exit knackered. 7 hrs

AB

Whilst waiting for the B team to return, GJM phoned Colin Bunce. He has been digging above Mill Sink, but only got in a couple of body lengths before it deteriorated into tight rifts. He agreed that the main sink is the only real bet.

Joined in the Pub by Carl Wright and Rob Don'tknow. After many pints, persuaded Carl that the best potential show cave in the area is Fanore Cave and that we would chip in to help pay for the JCB if he squared it with the landowner.

GJM

Thursday 24th April 1997

Rest Day. All up late. AB, GJM, HCW, LJW off to Ennistymon for shopping, then Kilfenora for craft shops and Lahinch for Sweatshirts RJP & SBC did nothing.

Friday 25th April 1997

It rained quite heavily overnight which gave rise to much indecision as to what to do. In the end, GJM, LJW, HCW & AB headed north. We stopped first at the Whitethorn Centre to fail to sell them some CoCC and then headed into the Gort lowlands. The intention was to investigate Pollonora Holes of which we had received a hopeful report, via Dave Drew.

We started off at a farmhouse, just above Tom Murray's Sink, the main sink for the Coole River after the bridge. Friendly farmer gave us some directions & said we could park in his yard. Wot we found was:

Pollonora 1: A low arch underground leads into the next depression after about 4-5 metres.

Pollonora 2: "The Next Depression", also has a completely choked passage leading north.

Pollonora 3: Choked depression

Pollonora 4: Just below the farmer's pump house is an arch from where he draws his water. passage closes down ahead (North) but a sump leaves under the left (west) wall.

Pollonora 5: A depression appears to have been artificially infilled with boulders. No passage.

Pollonora 6: A north/south rift which we couldn't free climb. A possible sump pool at the south end, open passage could be seen heading north for 7-8 metres.

Pollonora 7: A collapse into cave passage, sumped to north and south, total length about 8 metres. The north end is used as a water supply.

Pollonora 8: Similar to 7. A small but definite flow of water, south/north could be seen between the two ends.

Pollonora 9: This is the site marked on the 6" map as "Pollonora Holes". At the north end it is completely choked with rubbish, and a sump pool full of floating bottles. At the south end a hole under boulders drops into water about 3m below. Not entered, will probably need a rope to get out. All sites are in Td Coole Demesne, apart from No 9 which is in Td. Kiltartan

AB & GJM

Whilst the others potted around finding yet more new caves, RP and SBC headed seaward to explore an old haunt in the form of Urchin's Cave. We had been well informed that the lowest tide would be at 1.30 pm and at 12.30 were to be found descending a ladder over the side of the cliff onto the rather treacherously seaweed-lined rocks below. We left the sound of crashing waves behind us and crawled into the low bedding plane that forms the entrance passage. Several metres inside, the roof rose and we found ourselves standing ankle-deep in water, in a rather charming passage whose walls were lined with hundreds of sleeping anemones of all colours from blood red to mucous green. They clung to the rock amidst a mini-forest of arborous seaweed, whose tiny branches reached out to us as we meandered past. Further into the depths of this underwater world, we stumbled across our first urchin, clutching the wall just above the water line. As we set about attempting to photograph him, we noticed another, much larger, lurking like a huge paper-weight between two boulders on the floor, half hidden by fronds of seaweed that parted with each caress of the tide to reveal his sheer beauty. We continued, the walls becoming progressively more urchin-lined and with each step our lights revealing the multi-coloured tentacles of thousands of waving anemones. A fat sea-slug lurked, his body straddling a rock as he sea-bathed, and several shrimps paddled past, their red eyes phosphorescent in our bright lights. Then, as we rounded a corner, the cold water lapping around our armpits, we spied an enormous lobster, dozing in the shallows beneath the wall. His antennae waved, as he was jerked from his reverie by our sudden appearance and he hoisted himself up onto the nearest rock, his huge claws signalling a warning to us, before he trundled away. We too, decided it was time to tundle, the terrific din of the waves crashing on the rocks outside reminding us that the tide would soon be turning and then we would rapidly be drowned.

RJP

Saturday 26 April 1997

After a major bout of apathy from everyone, probably due to the rain, RJP was eventually persuaded by everyone else that she should accompany me (SBC) down Pol-an-Ionain. The first time I came to Clare the cave was shut due to show cave proposals and we failed to find the farmer at new year. This time we were told that Pat didn't mind cavers going down. I had a little trouble finding the entrance due to a mass of water flowing onto the square metal lid that was 4" under water! Having eventually got this open and releasing a torrent of water into the cave we proceeded down the streamway which although wet was very sporting and enjoyable. Some formations were present along the stream but the spectacular sight as you climb through the boulders to see the Great Stalactite was well worth the trip. We spent a little while looking around the chamber before returning up the streamway looking at a large number of fossils, shrimps and larvae as we went. The sun had reappeared since we had been underground and the day looked to be good.
SBC.

In the meantime, LJW, HCW & GJM went to Ennistymon to pick up some shopping. Then back to have a farewell pint with SBC & RJP before they left for the ferry.

By now the weather had improved again so we took advantage of this and went to Pollsalagh bay for a sleep in the sun. Splendid!
GJM

Sunday 27th April 1997

Having been totally pathetic yesterday, when we found reasonable weather this morning we had to go caving. Cullaun 5 was decided upon and a C5b - C5d exchange trip would have been done if we thought we could have found C5d easily. Instead the whole party descended C5b and ambled down as far as the Bedding Cave. Here we had a look round for inlets that might connect with Poll Cahermacnaghten. At the start of the Bedding Cave, a low bedding comes in from the east but is too low to follow far. Upstream of here, below the C5d passage junction are two stream inlets. The upstream one is probably the water in C5d before it sinks away in the floor and the downstream one, which at that moment was about twice the size of the other, could possibly be the Cahermacnaghten water. Then upstream up the C5d passage. The first mutiny was quelled when we reached the walking (crab-walking) sized passage above where 2nd roof passage goes off. The second mutiny was quelled when we actually heard the waterfall at the pitch. This is a fine pitch but would not be free-climbable. So we went back out, AB free-climbing the pitch just to prove he still could. Shortly before exiting, GJM said to AB, "Isn't it wetter here?" Then LJW hit daylight and said "Its pissing down". So we had a very wet change & high-tailed it back to cottage for warmth & heat.
GJM

Andy Farrant arrived in the evening. Much Guinness consumed, aided by Carl Wright.

Monday 28th April

A lousy weather day, again. Set off for Gort Lowlands to investigate sites noted by Drew, etc. Found Leeches cave, NGR38160,09700, in a rocky hollow behind the bungalow, down lane. Straight on is small crack with twin reservoirs, not enterable, to right in overgrown hollow is old pumphouse and deep reservoir with 3m by 1m cave passage visible below water level. Visited approx. 2 hrs after high tide.

Failed to find cave site at 41740,12210 near Killeen church. Area appears to be mostly drift. Then to Caherglassaun to look for cave sites in the silver mines. Found three infilled mineshafts, one with 10m of horizontal passage and a small section of natural passage but failed to find the cave sites.

Then AB, GJM & ARF to Pollonora Holes. Descended hole number 6 with 5m ladder, twin sumps upstream immediately, and 10m of passage downstream with 1m of mud and 10 cm of water to sump. Disgusting, needs snow shoes or crawling. AB attempted to break his leg by half falling down a hole on the way out.

Then AB & ARF to Pollonora 9. This is a narrow rift about 3 m deep to water and partially infilled with rubbish and bulldozed. Hence it is extremely unstable, and almost certainly sumped. Hence we wimped out of it.

Following that abortive trip, AB and ARF went over to Coole Cave. The last time AB was in there, there was much brown gunk and slime on the walls. Two years later, most of the gunk was still there, although in places some of it had been calcited over. Very dark and gloomy.

ARF

Tuesday 29th April 1997

Dull, overcast morning. Off to Ennistymon to shop first thing. GJM phoned Crag Cave to arrange tomorrow's trip. Then we went to Peeling Onions to show Andy the Soggy Dishcloth. Very nice. Andy is of the opinion that there is a choked pre-glacial passage roughly parallel to the streamway which is occasionally intersected, I agree.

On exiting we were forced to get changed under the gaze of the enormous traffic jam that formed behind the road-menders' lorry! Mr Woods drove past while we were doing this and waved. He is obviously quite relaxed about cavers using the cave at the moment.

GJM

After lunch AB & ARF to Poll Ballaghaline. Crowbarred some boulders out of the entrance, but could not squeeze past. The shaft looks clear, but needs lifting gear or sledgehammer to make it large enough. Then to Urchins. Too rough to enter, entrance still in wave zone 30 mins before low tide.

AB

Wednesday 30th April 1997

A record early start allowed us to leave the cottage at 8.45 and catch the 10.00 Killimer ferry. Arrived at Crag Cave in glorious sunshine. The party was joined by Margaret, the owners' daughter for our trip into the cave. We showed her around most of the undeveloped part of this most beautiful cave. On exit, received much hospitality from them and then left. The glorious weather continued so we detoured via Banna strand for a paddle before catching the ferry back to Clare.

Spent the evening in Clarecastle with Colin & Shelia Bunce.

GJM

Thursday 1st May

A second glorious day, so we all took a day off. Touristed, walked, shopped, laid in the sun & went for a gossip at Ailwee. Mike Simms arrived this evening.

GJM.

Friday 2nd May

Up until 4 AM listening to the election results so too knackered to cave. Walked around Glencurran area and did the entrance passage in Glencurran cave. The badgers appear to have left. Mike says that the scalloping shows flow outwards through both arms of the entrance passage, from the crawls. Then looked at Lough Alleenaun and AB went down Poulmagree to try to retrieve lost crowbar - failed to find it. ARF & Mike Simms walked around Coskeam area. Supper in O'Connors, then walked to Hell, and Urchins to watch the sunset. Inserted Simms in Poll Ballaghaline. Got down the shaft, but the squeeze is choked. Back to O'Connors to endure bank holiday crowd.

AB

Saturday 3rd May

Packed up left the cottage. Dr's Simms and Farrant last seen heading south whilst the remainder went to O'Connors for a farewell pint.

On the way back to the ferry we stopped off to do Michelstown Show Cave. This remains a very pretty, clean cave, but the fittings are showing their age and are in need of repair and replacement while the Guide's talk is now positively stone-age, being little more than a list of whimsical names for the formations with minimal real information being put across.

Arrived in Rosslare in time to transfer to the Sea-Cat, so got back early. I think that Doolin to Bristol in 11 hours and 10 minutes must be a record!

GJM

The Annual Dinner

Hello. Noshor Morley here, with my indispensable guide to the 1997 Annual Dinner. You can forget the AGM - that was as dull and tedious as it always is and it had something to with speleology - certainly not a mistake I intend to make here.

This year's feast was once again held at *Anthem*, the 3rd year in succession that I have been happy to endorse their menu. Before all that started however, there was a rendezvous at the house of Welsh Tim for a pint or two of wine. My namesake, lovely Mr. Wheeler, was there, along with Chris the Caped Crusader and a very slovenly looking Rupert, who evidently can't be bothered to tart himself up and look respectable now that he is living in London. The only other invite to our pre-dining soirée was, of course the Welsh one, who was as full of the lovely boyo green valleys sentiment as always, and who conspired to look smarter than the rest of the party put together.

A couple of bottles of wine and some jovial banter then ensued, with Ian's home made morello wine slipping down my throat like so much oiled taffeta. Rich and luxurious, there was a firm yet subtle aftertaste which could not fail to suggest the feeling of being stalked through a wood by a young man intent on the rough handling of your buttocks. All in all, very fine indeed, and a suitable prelude to the important eating which lay ahead.

As I said earlier, *Anthem* was our venue for the night, and I was happy to go along with the choice, even though my own personal recommendation of *The Butter Tub* had yet again been passed over at preceding committee meetings. If you haven't been yet, I heartily recommend it. No less than 38 butter (or margarine for those of you who like to appear in a more healthy light) based dishes are on offer, along with an exciting range of high quality suet and dripping desserts. Their lardy cake with hydrogenated oil topping is an experience second only to their novel starter of buttered hot crumpet.

Before arriving at *Anthem*, there was the obligatory (dare I mention it) beer drinking to be had across the road in the pub. Obviously I hesitate to bring this up as it clearly has no place in a newsletter devoted to speleology, and it upsets the older members. You'll notice that nobody ever complains that there is a distinct lack of beer mentioned in *Proceedings*, a fact which renders the younger and more virile members of the society quite inconsolable with grief. Still, as none of us is in possession of a surname which rather greedily contains two capital letters, I dare say our views aren't worth spit.

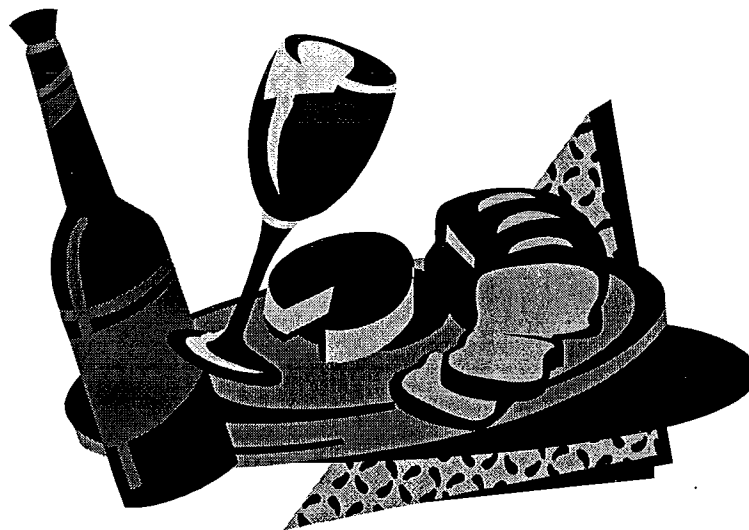
Ranting aside, and without mentioning the fact the every time Ian has a drink these days he ends up kissing Simon Shaw, I shall proceed to the more pleasurable topic of food. As ever, this was excellent, with my meat salad starter being quickly pursued into my rapidly bloating stomach by a quite superb plate of Indian lamb. Just as the speedy was the ensuing dessert of mango sorbet, which I polished off before strolling around the restaurant putting paid to any spare bits of food which other

tables had shamefully failed to consume. All of the above was naturally washed down with a generous quantity of wine before I considered myself sated for the night.

Feeling rather porcine, I joined the mass exodus to the pub over the road, where there was just time for something else to drink before everyone formed into their cliques and sorted out some further entertainment for the night. I was invited back to Chris' house for tea and further quantities of alcoholic sustenance. Ian, Rupert, Tim and Rachel were also in attendance, and so the evening steadily deteriorated into a great big blur. Rachel was obviously severely affected, as she attempted to redecorate every carpet in the room with Amaretto stains and inflicted U2 on all those present. With the same song on repeat play, it was anybody's guess just how many times she was going to tell us that she hadn't heard this song for ages and sing along tunelessly. Still, of such things are annual dinner anecdotes made, provided anyone can remember them the next morning.

As the early hours of Sunday morning turned to the not quite so early hours of Sunday morning, it was decided to call it a night. As I left the house, pausing only to eat a couple of slices of pie out of the fridge, I looked back over the evening and thought to myself just how rare such pleasant times really are. And to think I nearly ponced off to the Red Sea on my holidays and missed such fun - I should have kicked myself silly and never held my head up more. Until next year, then, I shall bid you all farewell.

Ian Morley



I do apologise for the lack of imagination in the title of this fine piece of literature, but Ian sent it to me untitled and my brain, too addled by exams and gratuitous fun-having, just couldn't come up with anything better - Ed

Karst Wars or The UBSS empire strikes back....

The year is 1999. It's been over 2 years since the infamous karst wars of the 1980's and early 90's and relative peace has descended on Britain's limestone outcrops since the Geological Conservation Review document was written and agreed between the warring factions in late 1996. It all started back in the 1970's when the infamous brigade of academic UBSS renegades, known to millions of terrified cavers and academics across the country as the 'karst police' began to carve up Britain's karst landscapes and lay academic claim to it in the name of Bristol and the UBSS.

For those initiates unfamiliar with the history of the academic karst wars, the empire was 'built' over the last 20 years by the El Presidente; known only as 'Trat'. Since his death, he has been succeeded by the two UBSS karst 'Godfathers'. One is known to many as 'The Atkinswine'¹. He is an ex-Mendip UBSS renegade, who long since taken up residence in an Ivory Tower known only by its acronym, UEA. From here, he conducts his battle plan to take over Britain's Carboniferous Limestone outcrop, aided by his faithful General Rowe. Meanwhile in Bristol, the other Godfather, the infamous Dr. Smart, whose mere name strikes terror into many an undergraduate, reigns from the ancient Castle Geography. From here, his armies of postgrads and staff (including many of the elite 'Goldfish Bowl' residents who formed the Karst Research Group, together with the infamous Steve Hobbs) have taken over, piled with the latest palaeoclimatic and dating weaponry and armed with major research grants.

Many of England's northern territories were held by the Sheriff of Nottingham Trent, A.4. Waltham, otherwise known as the 'Laughing Skull'. Not content with expanding his publishing empire, he had taken over Yorkshire following the eradication of the notorious Oxford based Sweeting Brigade. Alas, Sweeting's faithful handbag and walking stick were no match for Waltham's publishing deals. The region is still predominantly in opposition hands, although 'Golden Balls' Baker accomplished a few commando style reconnaissance forays into Lancaster Hole and Stumps Cross Cavern. Further south, much of the White Peak had been ruled by the Gunnjy, a short smooth-tongued hairy beast, who used to reside in Manchester, and his crack(ed) Limestone Research Group troopers, Hardwick, Hyland and 'Deej' Inception-Lowe. The entire White Peak was carved up between him and T.D. Ious-Ford, who controlled much of the northern part of Derbyshire from his advance base in Castleton. The rest of the scattered karstic limestones were uncharted territory.

The Battle of Eldon (1994-7) proved a decisive turning point in the war in Derbyshire. The first UBSS foray into enemy territory came in the south with the take-over of the Manifold valley in 1984 by the Atkinswine through a classic paper on Elder Bush cave. This was followed with the annexation of the Creswell Crags, by the Atkinswine's General Rowe. This proved a major strategic and archaeological outpost on the Permian Magnesian Limestone. The main battle took place in Eldon Hill Quarry, after academics were allowed into the quarry following the discovery of a rich research seam. The three main factions, led by Smart (under the Bristol flag), Gunnjy and John Beck fought for 3 days in severe blizzards, which ended up with the Gunnjy taking severe injuries (a broken thumb) and Smart and his elite(?) stormtroopers Dr Andy and Simms only just making it back to Bristol following the closure of the M5 and M6. A continuous presence and useful strategic base in the TSG hut in Castleton has been secured by Cara Allison. Since then, a fruitful coalition with allies in Leeds has proved crucial in the final take-over of Derbyshire. Simon Bottrell, affectionately known as 'Botts', aided by a Smart postdoc, the legendary Dave 'incorrigible' Richards, took over the Buxton Hot springs using sulphur isotope weaponry and now have their eyes set on the rest of Derbyshire including Peak Cavern, using the latest in hi-tech mass-spectrometric U-Pb dating. Gunnjy subsequently moved from Manchester to a new cash strapped castle at Huddersfield, and since

attaining Prof. status has retreated across the Irish Sea to Fermanagh, a yet uncharted land where Guinness runs free and swallets have yet to be traced, and now has colonial ambitions in Ethiopia.

Meanwhile, down south, the UBSS stronghold in Mendip is still holding firm since the departure of D.C. Ford in the early '70's. Since Trat's early conquests in the Burrington area, multitudes of postgrads have been trained in karst warfare in the G.B. battlefield simulation zone and have since conquered much of Mendip starting in Longwood (1967), Charterhouse Swallet (1984) Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet (1985), Rhino Rift, (1972) Manor Farm (1974), Gough's Cave (1985-91) and Wookey Hole (1996). St Cuthbert's was annexed through a partnership with the BEC.

Devon was conquered with little fuss following the strategic appointment of the Smart prodigy Andy 'Golden-Balls' Baker to Exeter, following excellent groundwork by yet another Smart postgrad, Chris Proctor. However, the celtic fringe of South Wales has proved a somewhat more remote and hostile land. Llangattock was secured early by Sweeting Brigade using palaeomagnetic and electron microscopy (Bull, 1971) In-roads to this area have been made by the Smart following a lightning 12 hr blitzkrieg down Daren Cilau with Clive Gardener. A similar attack with Noel Christopher took care of OFD, (Limestones and Caves of Wales, 1989) although this still remains part of the front line. The recent discovery of Ogof Draenen was secured by indomitable 'Team Draenen' partnership of Dr Andy and Simms, a move which has proved of considerable strategic importance and may yet prove decisive in the battle of the North Crop. Further west, the wild treacherous expanse of the Black Mountain has yet to be conquered, and at Pant-y-llyn, the Gunnjy still has a stronghold.

Closer to home, and of increasing strategic importance is the Forest of Dean, held by DeeJ Lowe and the Gunnjy empire. Here, only Otter Hole has been conquered by UBSS karst-stormtroopers using U-series dating methods; the Slaughter area still remains in 'enemy hands'. The archaeological sites were captured following the alliance forged between the British Museum and the UBSS archaeological division, led by Hawkes, Current, Barton, Proctor and Jacobi. In an attempt to infiltrate the Gunnjy empire, the UBSS 007 secret agent, Dr. Andy has been deployed as a mole in DeeJ's stronghold at the British Geological Survey, primarily to wrest control of Cave and Karst Science and bring it under the UBSS sphere of influence.

Overseas; western Ireland was first claimed for Bristol by the legendary Tratman in the days of yore. The masterly D.P. Drew has from the Irish HQ in Trinity College, Dublin and advance bases in County Clare (O'Connors, McGanns and Ballynalacken Castle), aided by the Mullan Brigade and the student masses, advanced over much of the rest of the republic, with a few exceptions in the Crag area of Kerry and the troublesome north. Here, the strategic deployment of Mike Simms in Belfast may prove useful. Overseas, colonial outposts of the UBSS empire were established in the Bahamas, Sarawak (Mulu), Brazil and Turkey and Australasia. Where next? Can the UBSS take over the Britain, the World? Perhaps there are caves for the taking on Mars? Or will internal power struggles between the two Godfathers yet prove to be the downfall of the empire?

Although the above is a satirical comment on what some see as the 'Bristol Mafia', it is interesting to note the large proportion of karst and cave scientists who are members of, or had some connection with the UBSS.

Anon (but no prizes for guessing the author....!)

¹ Atkinswine - an old Wessex alias for Tim Atkinson, who learnt his karst ways as part of the 'Sidcot School' in the 1960's. Other members of this UBSS sub-faction include Willie Stanton.

P.S. Arthur Ap; is this scientific enough? - I left all the bonking, drinking, sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll stuff out...

THE UBSS IN THE LOT AND THE DORDOGNE 1996

Linda Wilson

Weeks of planning and preparation saw the arrival in Portsmouth in two separate cars of the expedition holiday to France, consisting of Julian and Carol Walford, Graham and I, Tony Boycott and Helen Wills. An early disaster was avoided by pointing out to Carol the night before that we were not sailing from Southampton, however, an attempted rendez-vous in the car park of the ferry terminal failed but we did manage to track each other down in the departure compound queue.

The channel crossing and the drive down through France was largely uneventful. A possible meeting for breakfast in a cafe south of Le Mans failed because Car 1 (JDW, CMW & AB) failed to see beyond the "ferme" sign and didn't try the door. Car 2 arrived some ten minutes later and ignored the sign, which the proprietor had failed to turn around! Our first destination was the small, picturesque village of Alvignac in the Department of the Lot, near the showcave of Padirac, where we had booked a cottage owned by an English couple which we found through "Chez Nous". It provided excellent accommodation for the six of us with a vast number of outbuildings for storing cars and caving gear. It was no wonder the owners had sounded amused on the phone when I had asked them if there was a shed we could keep and dry out caving gear in. We gave the Walfords the huge bedroom, but more of that later.....

Our objectives in the area were simple. Caves, showcaves, food and drink, not necessarily in that order. They were all accomplished to our entire satisfaction. Julian took to the dual role of "Breakfast and Beer Monitor" like a duck to water and produced, every day without fail for a fortnight, a magnificent cooked breakfast (which always included fried bread, bacon or sausages and sometimes even chips to go with it). And every day, as soon as the sun was over the yardarm (or even in its general direction) he started "chambreing" the wine and breaking open the beer, to the extent that we need to make trips to the local bottle bank at least every other day to prevent the cottage being overrun with the empties.

The "wild" caves we visited in the area were as follows:-

GOUFFRE DU SAUT DE LA PUCELLE

Debate raged for a couple of nights over the origin of the name. I thought it was "Pucelle" as in "virgin" (c.f. Jeanne d'Arc = La Pucelle), versus Carol's idea of "Puce" = "flea". A choice between "Virgins Leap" or the more prosaic but harder to fathom "Fleas Leap". We enlisted the help of the local bar-owner, who consulted one of his customers. Her version was that a local lady of untarnished reputation flung herself over the cliff rather than succumb to the unwanted attentions of the forces of occupation. We hazarded a guess that the story might have arisen from the Wars of Religion but she seemed to think it might have been the Second World War. It would be interesting to try and find out when the name first appeared on maps.

La Pucelle is an entirely excellent cave, consisting of big bits, pretty bits, a sporting streamway and lots of short pitches. Graham, Helen and myself had visited the cave before, on separate trips a few years ago but even our collected memories of the amount of tackle required did not tally and it is almost impossible to work out what is needed from published accounts (we had copies of accounts published in Wessex, MCG and BEC publications). We ended up taking more than we needed, so the following is a list of what we used:-

First pitch: Sloping climb into pool, fixed bolt belay, 10 m rope required

Second pitch: Vertical climb down onto a flake, fixed bolts 5 m rope or possibly ladder.

Third pitch: Climb into deep pool, sling and very short ladder

Fourth pitch: 7 m ladder, spreader, belay is 8 mm spit, hanger required.

Fifth pitch: Climb over stal obstruction; 5 m rope for climb up, for climb down: 5 m ladder, spreader, belay is 8 mm spit, hanger required.

Sixth pitch: 10 m ladder, spreader, belay is 8 mm spits, hangers required.

We reached what we thought was the final pitch (subsequent re reading of the published descriptions proved us to be correct), but by then some of us were getting a bit cold and tired and the pitch was more technical and a damn sight wetter than the others so by mutual assent we called it a day. Our trip took five and a half hours and was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

A wet suit is essential as there are pools to be swum, low wet bits to be negotiated and lots of wet climbs. The new combination furry-wetsuits "Neo-Fleeces" manufactured by Warmbac and available from Bat Products in Wells were worn by three of us and were absolutely brilliant.

GOUFFRE DE ROC DE COR

Graham and I had also visited this cave in 1991 and it is described in N/L Volume 8.2 p 25. On this occasion the water was much lower and Julian found that the sump at our previous far point had broken revealing a short section of passage leading to a pitch! Unfortunately time did not allow us to return and descend this. We later found that one Mendip party had had the same experience – except that they had carried diving tackle there as well.

GOUFFRE DE REVEILLON

This cave is also described in the report of our 1991 trip. Two additions can be made to that description, however: The second pitch can either be done by the broken route we then described, on the right of the passage, or by a free-hang on the left (spits are in place for either). I preferred the broken route but everyone else wanted to do the free-hang, guess which we did? (And they all complained for ages afterwards.) We also managed to follow the route through to the Grand Salle. This is well worth seeing as it is definitely "Grande", even "Vaste". The route is fairly straightforward, take a passage on the right just back from the terminal sump/choke, then at the top of a 3 m drop with a large lump of wood at the bottom follow a right hand passage, not down the drop, upwards to the left then at the bottom of a sloping 15 m climb up ascend using the fixed handline. It is not as slippery as it looks. The Grand Salle is a short distance from the top of this climb. It is actually a section of an enormous fossil stream passage and can be followed both downstream and upstream for a short distance. Downstream leads into a boulder choke, upstream leads past a constriction that can either be climbed over or squeezed under into a further section of passage leading to a further choke. This section is quite nicely decorated.

PERTE DE THEMINES

This splendid cave has a somewhat complicated ground plan and several different trips could be done here. Our objective was a fossil passage said to be well decorated with gours which leads to a short pitch into a far streamway. We eventually found it, by taking many twists and turns on the way, but took so long in doing so that we did not have time to reach the pitch. On the way back, Julian discovered the correct route, which would have saved us a great deal of time. This is actually quite straightforward when you know it and we intend to return at some time and finish the trip. From the entrance, a short section of passage leads to a short pitch. A major stream passage is reached very quickly after this pitch. To find the Gour passage, follow the streamway for 35 m and then turn left into a tube. At the end of the tube climb all the way to the top (half

way up is another route, the one by which we arrived there) this leads into a larger passage. The obvious route from here leads straight into the gour passage.

The showcaves we visited were Peche Merle, famous for its Palaeolithic painting including the magnificent spotted horses, definitely at the top of the "must visit" list for anyone in the area; Cougnac, with its stal cave and its painted cave, also highly recommended; Padirac, notable for massive chambers and impressive flowstone (and the recent underwater connection to its resurgence in the Dordogne valley); La Cave, which has a ride in on a train and a long tour through a series of impressively decorated chambers including one displayed entirely by ultra-violet light, which just shows how inventive a showcave owner can be when they have an awful lot of chambers to play with.

In addition we did some very pleasant walking in the area and spent several nights in the local bar in Alvignac. Everyone we had dealings with was very friendly, the bar owner provided a round of drinks on the house on our last night and always took an interest in our activities. English is not widely spoken in the area (and Carol's French left the rest of us far behind), but visitors are made welcome and even halting attempts at the language aren't sneered at. There do not appear to be any local access problems. The "No Entry" signs at Reveillon have apparently been there for years and are entirely ignored, the signs at Roc de Cor do not appear to be a problem and the site is clearly frequently visited by both cavers and climbers. five years ago, Graham and I tracked the owner down to a local farmhouse and were given permission for our trip, the "Privee/Defense d'Entre" signs having apparently been erected to stop people walking up the track, leaving the gates open and letting the sheep out on the road. Somewhat to our surprise, there were no signs of this nature at all at Perte de Themines, in spite of the fact that the cave is virtually in the middle of the village.



Paleolithic Art, Bouquetin in the Grotte de Bernifal

Photo by AB (Dr)

For the second week of our stay we moved to a small hamlet called Les Ans, a couple of kilometres from Montignac This, again, was to accommodation that we had found through "Chez Nous". in this case, however, we knew what to expect as Graham and I had stayed here the previous year, when visiting Lascaux. packing for the move was straightforward for most of us, but the Walfords needed all the spare space in their car's roof pod to fit in the enormous stock of walnuts that they had collected and which had been drying out on their bedroom floor. During the second week we were also joined by Tony's parents and this enlargement of the party by one third probably increased the wine consumption by about half!

Our objectives were the same as before, caves, food and drink and some walking. all duly accomplished. It was in this area, though, that we met with our only access problem: we tried to visit La Riviere Souterrrain de La Reille, which Graham and I had done with Andy Kay, an English ex-patriate and Wessex member who lives locally, on our previous visit. Andy had told us that although the landowner was not keen on cavers, he was very aged, lived some distance away, never came near and the tenant farmer didn't mind at all. This did not allow for the nosy little old lady across the road (French access is always controlled by les Vieilles Dames). When she offered to telephone the landowner for us, we left. We did manage a couple of good trips on Andy's recommendations, however:

LE PETIT HOMME

This cave was a relatively recent find for Andy's local club, after a short dig, and had still to be completely explored. The entrance, which we would never have found without local knowledge, leads quickly to the head of a 12 m pitch, (belayed to 8mm spits in the roof) landing in a tall canyon passage, much like those in Co. Clare. Upstream could be followed until it split into a number of small tributaries close to the sink and was quite well decorated. Downstream the passage, a meandering canyon lower down with a wider area and some breakdown nearer the roof, was followed until we simply got too hot and tired. We had been warned to carry plenty of drinking water and we certainly needed it. The cave apparently ends in low crawls that have not been properly explored, although they are quite close to the resurgence.

GROTTE DE LA POIRIER/LA PLANSONNIE

This was another of Andy's recommendations, he must really like mud! The cave is entered by a low wide hole into a large fossil passage. This soon ends at a large collapse, but just before the choke a small hole was dug out in the left wall to reach a pitch down into a stream passage which had been previously explored from a well some distance away. The pitch is about 12 m, belayed back through the hole to 8mm spits. It is broken and a pig to climb when muddy - which of course we all were on the way out. The mud is a problem because we had been warned not to muddy the stream as the well was still used as a source of domestic water and any pollution would lead to the cave being blocked. We were therefore very careful to stay out of the tiny stream by clambering on muddy ledges. By the time we reached the well we were knackered and disgustingly filthy and learnt that the tiny stream we had been avoiding didn't actually feed the well anyway, in those water conditions (It would if the water had been much higher). Actually the cave was well decorated in places, especially up an aven near the well and was certainly worth a visit, especially as it is likely that by now it has been gated and further access denied. This trip was also notable for the number of small fat bats that we saw.

LES GROTTES DE LA FORGE

We were taken to these caves by Tom Lawrence, the owner of the house we were staying in. There were three of them at the end of a blind valley above a mill in the next valley over from Les Ans. All were fossil



Small Bat in la Forge Caves
Photo by AB (Dr)

phreatic passages with numerous bats and several potential digs (ask Julian). The second of them also had a chapel just inside its entrance and the path between them was marked with cast images depicting the Stations of the Cross. I gather that an archaeological dig had been carried out in the first cave, finding evidence of Palaeolithic occupation, but do not have any further details.

The show caves visited in this area were Rouffignac, Villars, Bara Bahau, Bernifal and Grand Roc. All except the last being Palaeolithic painted caves. Villars was new to us, is very pretty and the artwork was much easier to make out than I had expected. The guide here was very good. At Rouffignac, we noticed that a fairly comprehensive restoration of the Grand Plafond has been carried out, removing much of the more modern graffiti. Grand Roc has also needed some restoration, the "Cross" one of the most outstanding formations in this profusely decorated cave had been damaged by vandals a couple of years before but has been expertly repaired. I always get the impression that the French take the care of their caves much more seriously than we do.

A certain amount of walking was also achieved along the very pretty Vezere valley and a quite ludicrous amount of eating and drinking. A favourite proved to be the enormous trout at 10F each from Tom & Lynne, the cottages owners, own small trout farm and caught for us by their four year old son, Herbie. We also ate a vast quantity of Swiss chard from their vegetable garden and it was certainly fortuitous that their potatoes were available considering the amount we ate. This was a very successful trip and so this year we are going again, this time to the Jura – but only if Julian promises to bring his deep-fat fryer!

FOR SALE

Warmbac two piece wetsuit. In reasonably good condition, Size: slightly smaller than the Hon. Senior Treasurer; Price: affordable by a student (We sold Linda's recently to a similarly impecunious soul). Contact Graham Mullan, Tel: 0117 9502556; e-mail Graham_Mullan@compuserve.com or in the pub most Tuesdays.

News from Charterhouse

About a week before Easter, a small collapse occurred in the Gruffy Field, about 50 metres west of the entrance to Charterhouse Cave, just over the ruined wall. This was brought to our attention during the following week, but we thought that probably someone had re-discovered Rabbit Mine yet again. However Linda pointed out that as the Charterhouse Caving Company AGM was about to take place, it would be wise to check it out. We did and much to our surprise there really was a new hole. We then kicked ourselves for not bringing a light and headed off to the pub.

On the Saturday afternoon, of 5th April, following the Company meeting we headed back over, this time with kit and accompanied by about half the Charterhouse Company Reps.

The New Hole is about 3-3.5 metres deep and has one of the nicest examples of dry stone ginging around its southern side that I have seen under Mendip. At the bottom a low crawl leads off towards the south but is choked after no more than 2 metres. The choke is quite loose, however, and draughts gently.

It was generally agreed that the site needed to be made safe quite quickly and this will be done in conjunction with the Somerset Wildlife Trust, who own the surface, but that it will then need proper investigation. It was felt that such a fortuitous find could not be claimed by any one club and so this will be done by a consortium under the umbrella of the Company. That way all those who are interested can be involved.

The first investigations will take place on the weekend of 10/11 May. Everyone welcome. Watch this space.

Graham Mullan