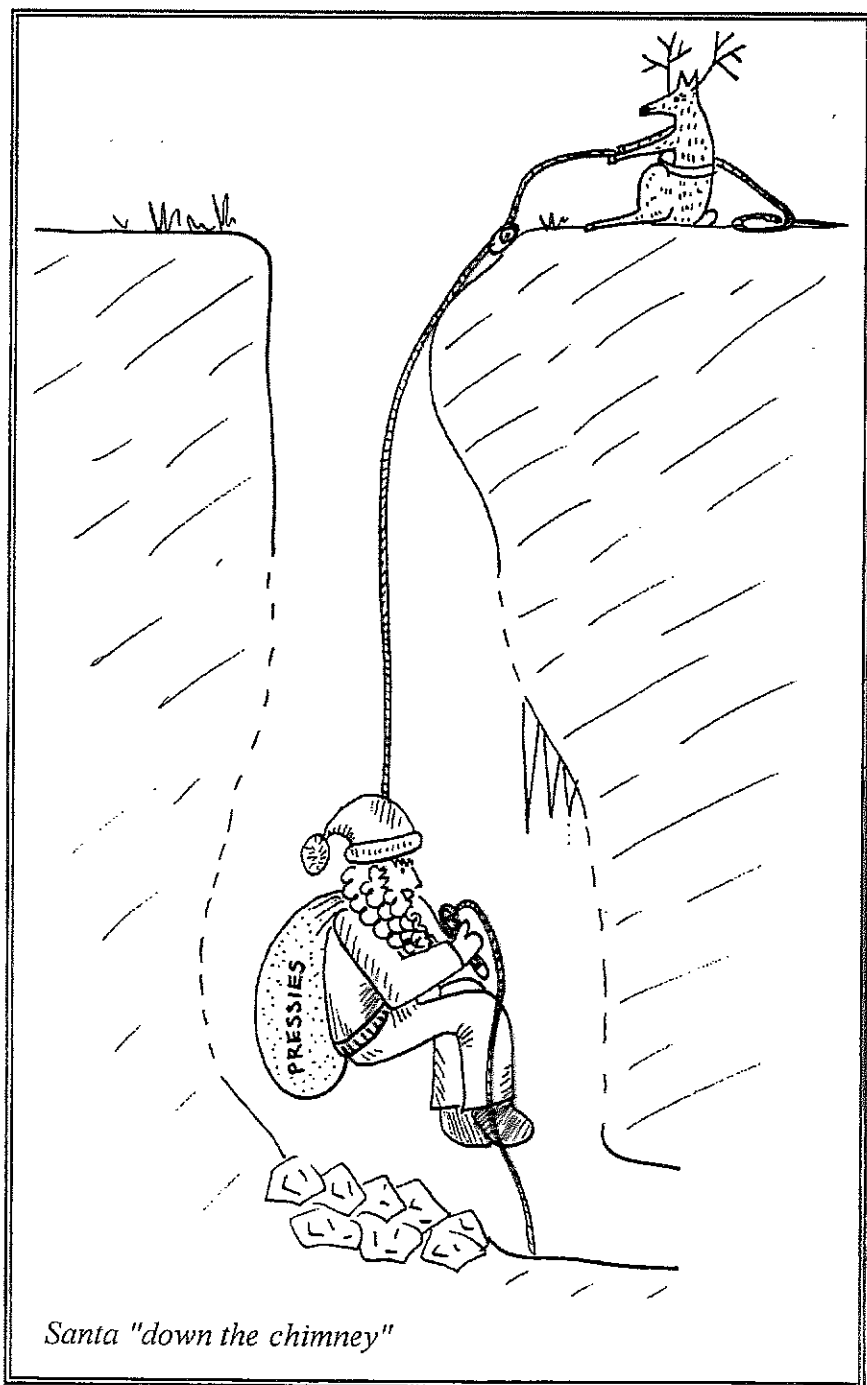


UBSS NEWSLETTER

December 2001 Vol. 18, No. 1

Hi folks, its that festive time of year again, and we were all reminded of this by the excellent and huge bonfire party last month - a great success! Many thanks to all those who helped out.



'Tis still a month until Christmas, and already I'm sick of the hype. Maybe it's the abundance of one-piece red suits I am surrounded by at the moment that have put me off the thought of Santa once and for all. I think we have a much better use for our caving suits than said fat bloke has for his own furry however!

Some of us will be escaping England completely this year, and clocking up some Christmas caving in Spain and France. Hopefully we will hear all about it in the Spring edition. I'm sure the less adventurous of us will continue to go underground closer to home - taking advantage of the lifted F&M restrictions!

In the meantime, happy caving - don't eat too much christmas pud, or you won't be fitting underground next year (New Year's Resolutions are no excuse!).

Oh, and if anyone's bored - spot the deliberate "cave-safety" mistakes in this pic. We'll publish them next issue!

The editor

New Members' First Impressions

Freshers' Weekend and Beyond

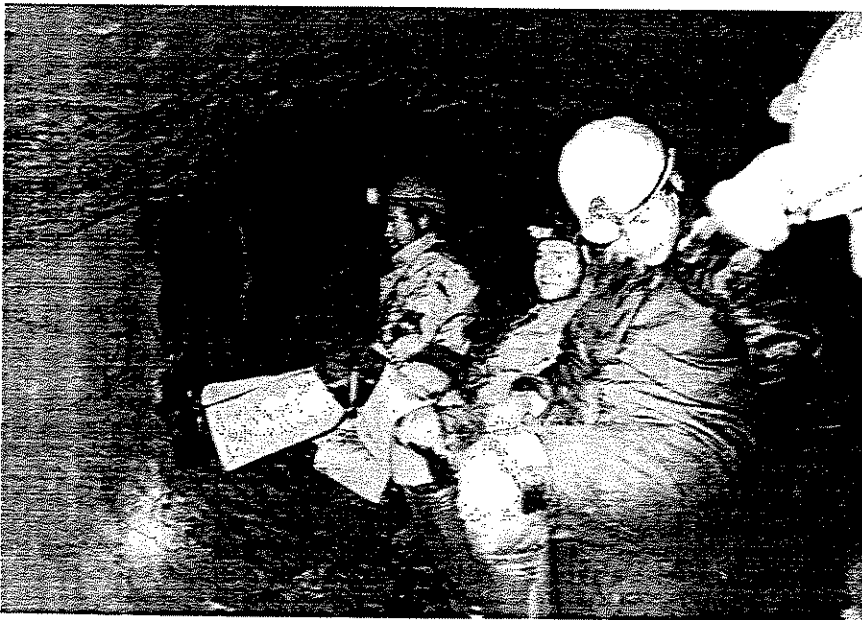
"Why do you want to do that"
"That's my idea of hell"
"I wouldn't do that if you paid me"
"Isn't it dark and cold"

Were a few of the remarks made by my friends as I set off on my first caving weekend. On the Saturday of Freshers' week we met outside the union at an allegedly necessarily early time. My hangover was unaided by somewhat daring driving in the Geography department's minibus as we headed out to Burrington. On arrival I was quickly equipped with the appropriate paraphernalia, at this point I was somewhat confused as to what I had let myself in for. My confusion was furthered when I was invited to climb up a tree on a ladder. However later that day I found myself enjoying sliding down the 'Lobster Pot', although the exit was considerably more challenging. The weekend went by in a blur of exhaustion and hunger - with a few drinks! I returned to Bristol on the Sunday bruised, tired and with a renewed appreciation of food – and eagerly anticipating my next caving trip. Two weeks later I set off to Derbyshire, the highlight for



Kebabs and Butcombe beer, UBSS bonfire, 3rd Nov

me was definitely 'Peak', where I actually found myself able to stand up in a cave throughout most of the trip- except 'Cadbury Crawl' were the mud was of an excellent consistency for the inevitable mud fight! Since Derbyshire I have returned to Burrington on Bonfire weekend, and endured the traumas of ladder & SRT training. I look forward to future club trips in the New Year.



Resting in Peak Cavern - Derbyshire weekend

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Helen Dewar

Bonfire Weekend

John Tardrew

I first heard about caving in my middle school - my 'wacky' science teacher was telling the class horrible stories about brave men who had travelled pretty much to the centre of the Earth with only a torch and a Mars bar. Then they got stuck in a tunnel and it rained and they drowned. 'hmmm...' I thought, 'this caving lark sounds horrible! I'm never doing that!'

A month or so ago I wandered into the garden of our house to find Charlotte stuffing a pair of overalls with newspaper (?). 'what you up to Charlotte?' I wonder. "Oh I'm just getting ready for the Caving Freshers' fair stall." "Caving?" Images of skeletons trapped underground, still wearing a helmet pop into my head. "Isn't that kind of dangerous?" "Oh no, it's great fun!".

Well I figure I'm twenty years old, it's time to confront my fear. Or 'slight apprehension' as I shall call it. So, on the 3rd November I find myself standing at the mouth of a black hole in the ground, grinning at me as if to say "come on John, it'll be fun! I won't hurt you...much." A couple of my new found friends disappear down Rod's pot's mouth, their gleeful laughs and jokes getting quieter as their lights fade out of view. "oh well, f**k it!" I think, and follow them down. As



The bonfire and the "Burrington Witch"

soon as I get out of the sunlight, I find that Charlotte was right! It's great fun! We scramble down and down, over slimy, slippery rocks, over great black chasms where you can't see the bottom, slide down slopes of rock made smooth by many a cavers bum, through puddles, up over boulders, through little holes that I could have sworn I couldn't fit through! We arrive at the bottom, sit down and I pull out my Snickers bar (which is now thinner than Ally McBeal) and contemplate getting back out again. I am knackered already. Still, the show must go on and we rise to the challenge.

Rob decides to be a little unconventional and climb up the face of the rock instead of using the ladder. I was one of those kids who used to (and still does) love climbing, and fancy myself as a bit of a monkey boy, so decide to follow him up. I think it was the first time I have been climbing in wellies, but that didn't stop me. I felt like Spiderman, it was great (I'm scaling this wall just as easily as I can walk! I'm like some giant, human... spider!!!). Then I get to the top (only about 10m but far enough - I've fallen from higher than that before and don't want to do it again) and realise I'm kind of stuck. I can't seem to find a handhold, my legs are in knots and one of them (unfortunately the one that's holding all my weight) is slowly but surely turning to jelly. Um. The

adrenaline rush begins. I start to get scared. 'I don't want to fall off, everyone's gonna think I'm a dick! And...I might hurt myself.' So one final heave and oh, I seem to be safe. WOOHOO! A minute to get the cramp out of my bum (I never knew it was possible) and we carry on up.

That was the first cave, and after we'd got back to base camp and had some munch we were off again. Sidcup Swallow (*Sidcot Swallet, but I prefer John's version, so I'll leave it!. ed.*) this time (that swallow hole was a nightmare!), possibly a bit longer, with a pool of clay and water at the bottom. If anyone's down been down there since, they may have noticed a little man made out of clay watching them from his pedestal. His name's Fred by the way, I moulded him into being with my very own hands. I didn't breath life into him though 'cos he was all slimy.

Eventually we get back, as the sun is setting. I get changed, grab a beer and the evening festivities begin! Excellent... I have a few choice memories from that evening - the food (oh it was soooo nice, respect to Eddy and his crew once again for making my belly so happy), the witch with her bizarre condom like hands, the rope swing, that dude with the chainsaw (I have a picture so I know I didn't imagine it), and lying by the fire at 5am as the sun started to come up covered in bin bags to keep the rain off. It reminded me so much of Glastonbury, and was one of the best days I've had at Uni. I had to scarper off Sunday morning to go to work, but unfortunately got home and spent the next six hours in bed instead of at work. Oh well, I needed it. Phew! I'll be back next term for more caving shenanigans, when I don't have to go to work!



The hoard grabbing food outside the hut "burger stand"



A "few" of the kebabs awaiting their turn on the BBQ

Quotes

"Well, if they caved together, they'll die together" (referring to the lights belonging to two associated members of the club...honest!)

Emma, Derbyshire

"I've got no idea where we are. I think we're in the Labyrinth" ...uh oh!

Eddy, OFD (actually it wasn't 'the Labyrinth', but it might as well have been!)

"When I woke up in the morning, Charlotte was beneath me"

Eddy, regarding sleeping arrangements in Yorkshire, November

Wet and Wild in Derbyshire

Emma Todd

In early November, the club ventured to Derbyshire, on its first trip to the Peak District for a long while. Our main motivation was the fact that much of the caving area had remained open throughout 'foot and mouth', but it was also a chance to see some new caving territory for many of us. The week before we left, debates raged about the quality of Derbyshire caving. The opinion was split - 50:50 for terrible vs. great. There was only one way to find out for sure!

We arrived at the 'Orpheus' hut in a swirling veil of thick fog - apparently the meteorological mean for that area. Indeed, Andy Farrant informed us that he had only ever seen the view from the cottage once in all his visits there! Still, the hut was warm, cosy and friendly - if a little far from the pub. We were awoken by Charlotte near the crack of dawn - far too used to waking up at 5am, she can't shake her habit - even when we are all determined to sleep in! It's worth getting motivated early though, as you end up in the pub before last orders after you leave the cave!

We had the usual sort of greasy fry-up for breakfast, then split into two groups - one to visit Carlsward Cavern, and one (me included) to take a look at Giant's. The downside of this arrangement, was that Juliet, me, Charlotte and Ed Hodge ended up going into a cave we had no prior knowledge of...other than Farrant's quickly scrawled map, carefully protected by a plastic bag! The map proved entertaining at the very least - all of us were to say; "what's that?" whilst gesticulating at the strange diagrams, more than once during the visit!

The cave has a pretty entrance - a nice hole at ground level, with sparkling water running inside. This was where I discovered with great displeasure that the rubber gremlin had eaten a substantial section of my welly...very refreshing!

Everything went fine until we reached the top of the ladder pitch. Actually it was quite an inspiring sight at first - about ten people all lined up, elbows on knees, waiting to descend. It appeared as if the god-of-cave-formation had purposefully placed a handy bench at the top of the pitch. Like some sort of doctor's waiting room, everyone was sitting quietly, with mixed expressions of hope and trepidation. We joined the queue, and it was almost an hour before we had our chance to untangle the spider's web of rigging, left by at least five groups before us, and climb down to the start of the 'crabwalk'.

Until you've been there yourself, you might not quite be able to visualise what a 'crabwalk' entails. It was not, as we had imagined, a stooped sideways shuffle, but an upright-and-outstretched scissor motion that carried us through the tall, narrow meander passage. Many a time I chuckled as Ed, in front of me, demonstrated a classic 'crustacean manoeuvre' before disappearing round the next bend. The passage was about 30cm wide and 10m (?) tall, opening out at the top into a wider tube. We were at the base - following the water as it snaked its way along the scalloped tunnel. The stream was only shallow, but fast flowing, and in places it sputtered and splashed its way

down steps and hollows in the floor. After a while, Ed and I caught up with Charlotte, and asked what was going on. Juliet was on the fixed ladder. This didn't seem like any sort of an issue until I got onto it myself! Gripping the iron rungs, you climb down over a drop of about 2m, and around quarter of the way, you suddenly find yourself with a river in your lap! Its very much a case of holding your breath and hanging on, as the water piles over and smacks you first in the legs, then lap, and finally hits your chest like a high-power hose. Needless to say, by the time your feet touch the ground, you are invigorated, sopping wet, and very, very clean. Who needs a jetwash!?

We continued our way down a number of damp obstacles, eventually emerging from the 'crabwalk', only to find ourselves a little disorientated. We found one sump before meeting with another group, who pointed us in the right direction - upwards. We were doing a round trip - aiming to intersect with the 'crabwalk' at height and traverse our way above it. Our plans worked out, and after a few climbs, we came out in a roundish tube with no floor. Looking down into the meandering passage below, we could see the green glow of a light stick carried by someone beneath us. It was quite surreal - traversing above the other cavers in the passage, and scary to hear the water roaring beneath. Soon we reached a small section of floor - where we knew we were meant to climb down into the 'crabwalk'. We were dubious - it looked a long way down, and the traverse so far had been easy, if a little intimidating. Ed carried on at high-level, but shortly emitted an unhappy noise and returned to solid (suspended) ground - down was our only option! Juliet went first - slipping into the narrow slot, and snaking her way downwards. It was high, but there were plenty of jagged footholds, and the walls almost held you in place without having to hang on. In no time we were back in the water, and making our way back to the ladder pitch.

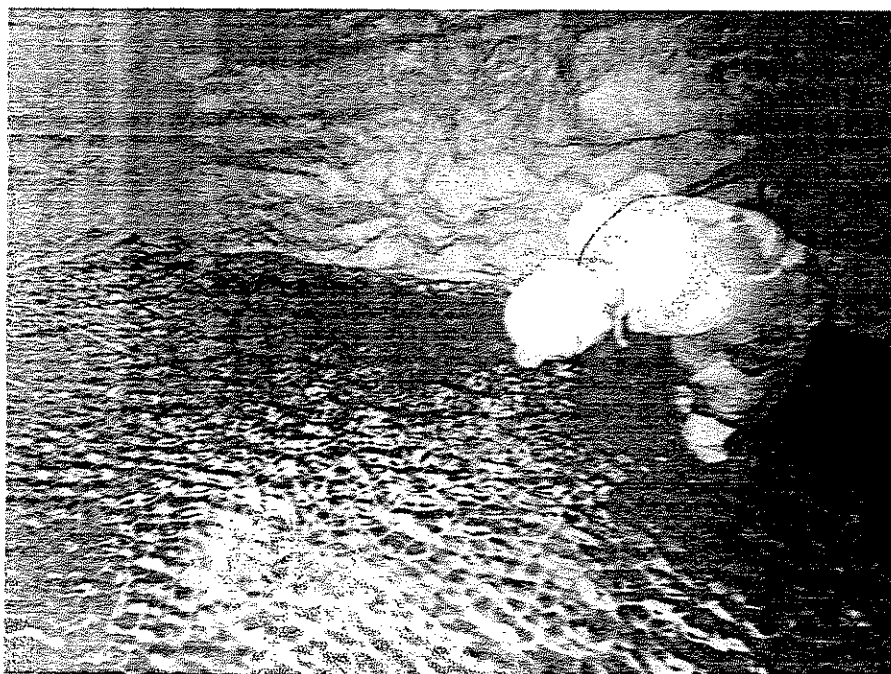


Queuing for the ladder pitch, Giant's

I think its worth having to deal with rope-knitting at least once in your caving life, because untangling the mess of rope at the bottom of the ladder gave us all a good insight into how NOT to set up a lifeline, and gave us a better idea of how to make our way safely up a ladder - this including the re-tying of the overhand knot left for us, in place of a figure-of-eight by a previous party! Overall it was a short, sporting and exciting trip - well worth doing once!

Peak Cavern the next day was less inspiring. We met in the village at a pre-arranged time, and were herded like sheep to the spectacular show-cave entrance. It was interesting, and exciting - being the largest cave entrance in the UK, but we were subjected to so many rules and regulations, that we felt more like naughty children than daring adventurers! One thing to note though, was that while the other caving groups enduring the lecture were all male, our party was more than 50% female. Is this a Bristol revolution?

The cave itself was impressive - wet in all the right places, and containing some excellent gloopy mud. In fact there is a small chamber, looking much like a bowl of melted chocolate, that makes for Olympic-standard mud fighting. Even extended bathing, and mutual back-scrubbing in the 'mucky ducks' on the way out, could not scrape away the clay embedded in our oversuits. We had been instructed to remove any dirt before exhibiting



Charlotte considering getting wet just for the sake of it

ourselves to the tourists in the showcave, so it was rather amusing to see their eyes goggling at the sight of walking pottery, although we may not have been popular with the management! The consensus was that self-led trips are much more fun, regardless of the pretties, or the scale of the passage. UBSS members prefer exploration!

So will we return? Well, Derbyshire caves may not be in quite the same league as Yorkshire, but everyone deserves to get a good dose of radon once in a while, and Giant's really was fun! ☺

Details of Mendip Rescue Organisation Lectures/workshops

Friday 18th January

First Aid – Medications + Oxygen (provisional title) => Hunters Lodge 8pm

Saturday 16th February

Cave Rescue and the Law (by Tony Rich) => Hunters Lodge 7.30pm

Saturday 20th April

Workshop at GB – underground workshop with demonstrations of commonly used equipment and rescue techniques. Hauling practice and debrief.

Please email Leila lf9683@bris.ac.uk if you wish to attend any of these events.

TREASURER'S BIT (Graham Mullan)

Your long-suffering Treasurer needs to inform the following that they have still to pay their subscription (£12) for the current year:

Ruth Charles
Heather Jackson
Ian Standing

Andy Currant (£2 only)
Tim Lyons
Roy Vbranch

Simon Grace
Hugo Pile
Andy Wallis

Please get cheques to me ASAP. Thank you.

Black Hole 2: SRT with SCUBA!

Jon Telling (*Present holder of UBSS Lemming Award*) recounts his version of events surrounding "Black Hole", UBSS Thailand expedition, Christmas 2000

"Jon, can you grab it!!!!!!?"

A camera, with film of the expedition so far, was rolling with increasing velocity down a steep slope into the 'Black Hole' -a 60m vertical pitch we'd just found in Thailand. It bounced awkwardly and, not being tied on to anything myself, I had to watch as it disappeared down into the black abyss.

Eddy has already described the initial rigging of the pitch in the Spring edition of the newsletter, and his nerve-racking experience with bad air near the bottom of it. This is the account of our later exploits, to try to relocate the camera and explore new passages never seen before.

The next day, the plan was for Eddy to go down and rig the cave again, and Sam (who has a lot of SCUBA experience) to follow afterwards to explore (and hunt for her camera). What actually happened is that Eddy tried to rig the cave, but failed to find the correct position for the chock for the first deviation, so with the day drawing on the only solution was for me to go down and rig the cave while carrying scuba equipment. I was a bit concerned about the amount of equipment I was carrying; full SRT rig, harness and scuba tank on my back, full set of climbing chocks, survey kit, numerous slings and rope protectors, tackle bag with 60m rope.....still, I'd kitted up so I might as well give it a go.....

Down I went. First deviation. Put the chock and sling in, crab on the rope, perfect, a good inch space between the two potential rub-points. Looks very scary, if it came out..... Look at it again, and try to put a 'psychological' rope-protector on the rope as well just in case the deviation gave way. Shit! Dropped it. Down with the camera now. Take another one (I certainly had no shortage of gear on me!!) and put it on the rope. Still looks very scary.

Down to the second deviation. Rig that, find a natural to put another deviation in just below it (the pitch was opening up below and it would have rubbed badly otherwise, as Eddy had found the previous day). At this point, I was already developing a nasty headache - the bad air from below must have been stirred up by Eddy's epic. But hey, I had SCUBA this time! Put the regulator in, breathe in, breathe out, down I go!

20m later I hit the bottom, to find the yellow rope protector I'd dropped earlier was by my feet. But I feel very bad - nauseous and weak. I'm also dripping with sweat; it's like a sauna down there. My breathing sounds like Darth Vader with bronchitis; is the regulator going to pack up? I'm suddenly very aware that I'm a 20m prusik from breathable air with only one air source, and a very dodgy deviation 40m above me. This isn't smart. I stay attached to the rope, and bend down to pick up the rope protector - and then feel VERY bad, like I'm going to keel over. I now have only one thought in my head; "get out of the cave NOW" So I leave the rope protector (finding somewhere to clip it onto me with all the junk I already had on didn't seem worth the risk), changed over and started to prusik slowly up the rope, still breathing through the screeching regulator. After what seemed a very long time later, I made it to the lower deviations, and felt a slight breeze from above; breathable air.

Lessons I learned.....for future expeditions??????? If you're daft enough to want to cave in 'bad air' (high CO₂) caves, use a full face mask or at least clamp your nose else you might stay down there an awfully long time.....and a second air source (pony bottle or something) and regulator would be a smart move.

UBSS – idiots guide to caving safely

THINGS ALL MEMBERS SHOULD DO: Before each trip...

- ◆ Make sure you have a working light, helmet and appropriate clothing / footwear.
- ☞ Leaders must be informed about any **medical condition** that may affect caving performance (e.g. asthma), if you have any medication tell the leader where it is kept & times / dosages for administration.
- ★ Nobody should cave when drunk / very hungover.
- ☺ Find out **what the trip involves** & what is expected of you. Tell leaders if you have any **uncertainties** about procedures or use of equipment (e.g. ladders, SRT), before the trip.

THINGS LEADERS SHOULD DO / CHECK BEFORE TRIPS

- ◆ **Weather Forecast** - obvious really, you don't want to get caught in a flooding cave.
- ☎ **Callout Procedure** - No excuses! lots of us have mobile phones! Leave the **following details with someone responsible** who will call emergency services (999, then ask for cave rescue) to get you & your party rescued, if you don't return from the trip when expected.
 - Number in party
 - Where you are going (i.e. cave name, area & expected route)
 - Car type and numberplate
 - Time you are due out
 - What time to call emergency services.

So you've told your mum, or whoever, that you're going down Swildon's hole in Mendip with 5 other people, for a quick trip to sump 1 and back, and you should be out by 4:30pm, & to do emergency callout if she doesn't hear from you (that you're back) by 6:00pm. Its 5:45 & you've just **made it out**, tried to phone mum & **can't get through**. **You can phone Emergency Services** yourself to tell them you are safe & not to send rescue if there is a callout.

✚ **Plan route** - identify known hazards. Novices should be aware of any sumps/ tricky traverses etc.

- ☺ Ensure **each** member has **the Knowledge, Abilities, Skill & Equipment** to safely attempt the cave.
- ☞ **Check all equipment** is in good working order.
- ◆ **During the trip** - keep a **close eye on novices** to make sure they aren't cold / really hungry / lost!

SOME SENSIBLE THINGS TO CARRY

- ⚡ Extra light source -e.g. petzl + spare bulb + batteries or snaplight
- ★ Map & Compass for finding cave entrances
- ★ Whistle, Penknife, Sling
- ★ Water, Chocolate bar / glucose tablets
- ★ Survival Bag – could stop you / someone else dying of hypothermia
- ★ Rope – depends on cave.

Don't carry alcohol & don't give it to anyone whose cold. IT WON'T WARM THEM UP. It dilates blood vessels in the skin making the person lose heat faster.

A **G**enerous **R**ound of **A**trociously **V**icious **E**xposés - **L**ovely!

The Chilli Incident

On the club trip to Derbyshire in October, a number of UBSS members had returned to the 'Orpheus Hut' after a long visit to the local pub. During the subsequent gathering in the kitchen, a bottle of "Dave's 'Insanity' Chilli Sauce" was spotted and commandeered by Ed Hodge, who had beer munchies. Observers awaited with trepidation, while his chilli-laden cheese-on-toast grilled slowly, placing bets on how many bites he would manage, then all held their breath as he paused before biting. His face was set like stone as he munched his way through the first slice, but he then admitted that he could not eat the second. At this point, Charlotte (self-proclaimed loather of chilli), grabbed the toast and took a huge bite. Moments later she could not be seen for dust as she hurtled across the kitchen and immersed her entire head under the cold tap, then proceeded to down a litre of milk in an attempt to soothe the burn. All was going well, until she cut a healing slice of cheese *with the chilli knife*. As might be expected, she was soon under the tap again!

Meanwhile Andy F, and Trevor were finishing the toast - each engaged in a battle of self-control - neither wishing to reveal their pain as they chewed nonchalantly. The watery eyes gave them away!

Charlotte's mouth still burned the next day. We'll leave the rest to your imagination...

A Doubting Brewer

On the morning of the UBSS bonfire in November, Jon and Emma went to collect three "firkins" of Butcombe beer from the brewery in Mendip. While the money was being handed over, the brewer (a sweet old man) asked "how many people are coming to your party, this is a lot of alcohol you know?", to which the reply was "oh, about sixty, so that's about four pints each". Mr Butcombe looked doubtful "and how many of those are girls?"...."about half". The brewer's eyes goggled; "have you EVER seen a girl drink FOUR pints?". Jon and Emma exchanged glances and laughed...."oh YES!"....

The Purple Poison

Later that night, it became apparent that Eddy Hill had secreted a hip flask of Spanish "purple poison" to the fireside. The purpleness of it was never confirmed, for the only way to survive it was an eyes-closed, nose-pinched approach. The poison part, however, is certainly true - it had the ability to totally disable one's limbs, and reduce one's mental age to that of a blabbering three year old. Quite unusual.

Castaway - in Priddy

In November, Eddy and Juliet were dutifully taking some new members down recently-reopened 'Swildon's Hole'. All went well, until they came to drive home. Juliet had put the steering-lock on her car, but the keys were nowhere to be found! Facing a night stranded in Priddy, the brave party ventured to the pub, where they were able to telephone their callout for help. The callout and his friend (two well-respected members of the club, and Juliet's most trusted housemates) were unfortunately blind drunk, and unable to drive. Luckily for everyone, Clive had returned from Chile and was able to save the day, by valiantly driving out to Mendip to return the lost key - which had been abandoned in Juliet's driveway. This tale just highlights the importance of reliable callouts....hmm....

Travelling in style

With the number of "caving vans" possessed by club members steadily increasing year-by-year, all were astounded this term, when Steve traded his infamous 'pink' van for a more stylish BMW. To be fair, Steve has been very cooperative in allowing stinking caving gear to be carried in his boot, but it is certainly a phenomenon - the sight of dripping, muddy cavers congregating around such a high-class vehicle. We've heard that it goes down well with the ladies though!

Christmas Dinner

This most sober of affairs was perturbed only by the intensity of Charlie's shirt. This year he refrained from collecting plastic combs from crackers in his beard, but dazzled everyone instead with his gold and maroon swirly shirt. Very theatrical! The mince pies were also deemed good enough to eat, and in contrast to last year, did not become ammunition for the food fight...well one or two might have slipped by...



Christmas Dinner at "Pumphouse" in Hotwells, 1st December 2001

The Survey of Poulmagollum

Graham Mullan

The First Survey, 1925.

Although not the first cave to be surveyed in Ireland, both Mitchelstown and Marble Arch having been mapped at the turn of the century, Poulmagollum (Slieve Elva) was the first cave in Co. Clare to be surveyed. The first survey was carried out by Dr Freiderich Oedl and Miss Poldi Fürich in August 1925 during a visit with Dr. Baker and C.G. Barton and was published by Baker in the journal of the Wells Natural History and Archaeological society and in his book "Caving" (Baker, 1925, 1932).

This first survey is a curious document in many ways. The published drawing (Baker, 1932, pp190-1) shows Shaft Gallery, Gunman's cave, the main streamway for about 50 m beyond Main Junction and Branch Passage as far as the waterfall. Despite this, Baker maintains (p196) that the survey was carried out "to a point well beyond the junction" and that they "also followed up and surveyed, though not in such minute detail, a number of subsidiary passages, and found that these made a total extent of five miles". Such an extent would not be claimed again for this cave until the 1960's. In the same chapter, Baker repeats his belief that the waterfall in Branch Passage was that falling down Poulelva (there called Poulmaelva, I have used the usual modern spellings throughout). This clearly demonstrates that Baker did not study his own book. The plan shows that waterfall to be about 400-450 m south of Poulmagollum and yet the accompanying map shows Poulmagollum and Poulelva as being nearly a mile (approx. 1,600 m) apart! The interesting juxtaposition of miles and metres in the same diagram is the type of situation that can still be found in Ireland today.

The Second Survey, 1944.

Subsequent to Baker's visits, the next major explorations in Co. Clare were those carried out by Pick and Balcombe's parties in the years immediately preceding the War; however these groups did only a little work in Poulmagollum and appear to have carried out no survey work at all.

During the war, the cave became the main focus of the work carried out by Jack Coleman and Norman Dunnington and their 1944 paper includes a brand new survey of the cave as then known, including most of Upper Poulmagollum. Despite the addition of Upper Poulmagollum, whose length they gave as being 7,349 feet (1.4 miles, 2,240 m), Coleman and Dunnington quote the total length of the system at "nearly 3 _ miles" or "17,391 feet" (5,300 m). Even though they admit that this figure could be increased by the addition of "unexplored feeder-stream passages etc." it is still very short of Baker's five miles.

Coleman and Dunnington continued working in the cave in 1948, assisted by members of the UBSS and a party from the Wiltshire Cave Club (led by Kirsten Hopkins' father, Adrian). Additional parts surveyed included Pollismorahaun, Lower Poulelva and High and Low Roads. This work brought the surveyed length of the cave, including Poulelva, up to 22,821 feet (6,955 m) but it is believed that no updated version of the plan was ever published.

The Third Survey, 1962 and after.

The next major increase in the known length of Poulmagollum came with the discovery in 1952 of Poi Ardua and Branch passage gallery by the RAF potholing section. Although this group were not averse to survey work, having produced the first plan of Faunarooska, on the other side of Slieve Elva, this find was not surveyed by them; indeed part of their discovery was not mapped until 1987! Instead the job was undertaken by the UBSS, in 1955. This particular data-set was used as

the basis of their complete survey of the cave first published in 1962 (Collingridge, 1962) and in all subsequent plans to date.

The UBSS was, by the late 1950s, undertaking a comprehensive study of the cave; they had at first intended to use Coleman and Dunnington's map as the basis of their own but detailed checks revealed some errors in the data for the main streamway and so it was decided to completely re-survey the entire known cave. This was carried out mainly in 1958 and 1959 and was published in 1962, as noted above, and, slightly revised, in 1969 (Tratman, 1969). At this point Tratman (1969, p166) quotes a total length of 39,151 feet (7.4 miles, 11,933 m). Although the inclusion of Poulelva could by this time be justified as a sight connection had been made in 1959, followed by a passable one in 1965, he also included 3,000 feet for the E2 cave, which has still to be connected to the main system even now. However, the cave was, at last, at least as long as Baker had claimed back in 1925.

In the following ten years, more, though relatively minor, extensions were made to the cave, notably to Long Gallery in Upper Poulmagollum (pushed through to the surface at swallet E3), to Branch Passage Gallery's West Extension and to East Tunnel. Some, though not all of these were included on the plan published by Self (1981), but he does include them all in the revised length of the cave of 12,100 m (not including E2 cave).

Future Developments.

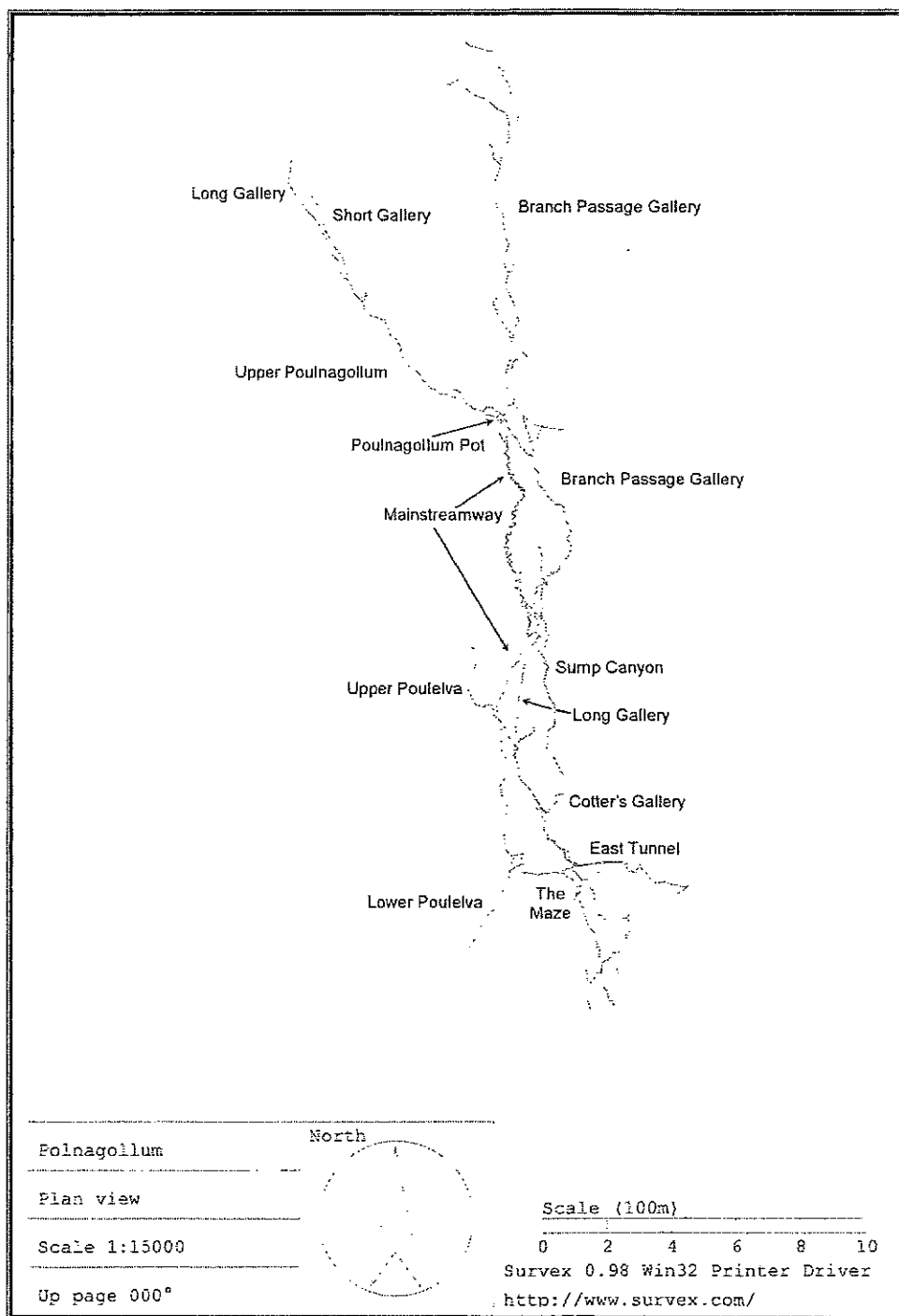
Even in 1981, it was known that there was more to the cave than had been shown on any one plan and finds of significant lengths of passage continued to mount up, particularly Colin Bunce's discoveries in the Maze area. At various times proposals to undertake a complete re-survey of the cave were put forward, but nothing ever became of them. By the late 1990s, however, the 1981 plan was obviously inadequate to fully describe the cave and the need for a new plan became even more pressing as one would be needed by the UBSS for inclusion in their updated third book on the Clare caves.

We decided, therefore, to attempt to computerise all the existing data to see whether a working model of the cave could be produced and whether this would show what additional work and/or re-surveying was necessary.

It was decided to use "Survex" for this task, as, although in some respects this program is difficult to use, as it has no easy "Windows" style front end, it is much more flexible than most in dealing with complex data-sets produced over a long period of years by different surveyors working in different ways and in "nesting" various parts of a cave together to produce a coherent whole. Andrew Atkinson undertook the job of overseeing this project and various UBSS undergraduates were sent away with books of survey data to type into computer files. Andrew then modified these into the correct form to be read by the program and outputted as line plots. All this took time and it was three years before we could start stitching the pieces of cave together. This task is now well under way and we now have a, still incomplete, plan of the cave and a list of tasks that need carrying out. Fortunately, it seems that only one set of survey data has actually been completely lost (and that not by UBSS), necessitating a new survey Long Gallery through to swallet E3.

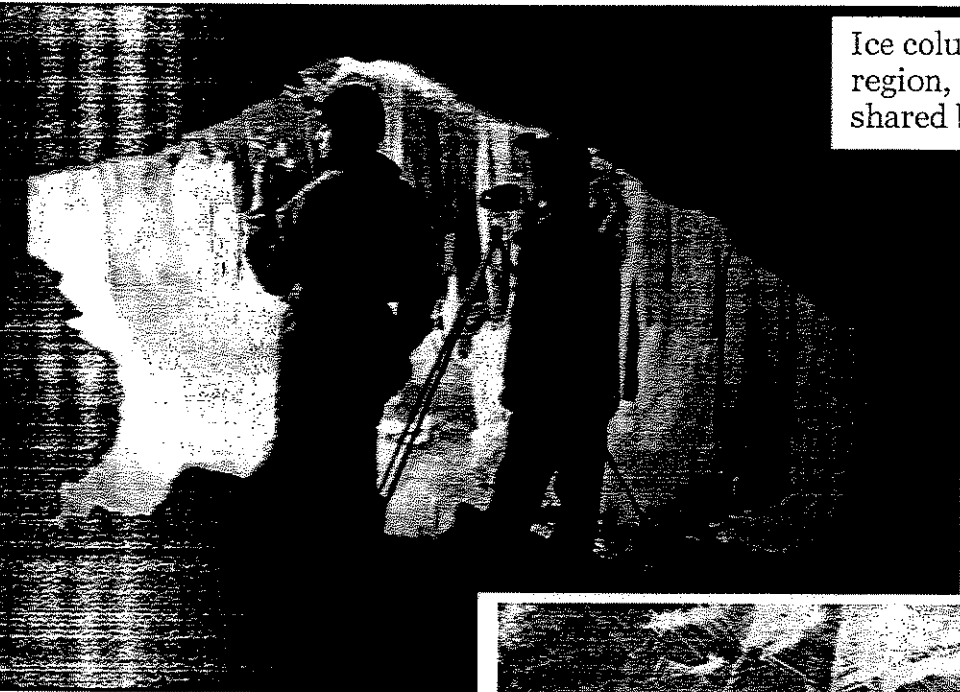
We are still modifying the data set and adjusting our model, for example the lack of inclination data for most of the cave means that some very strange things happen to it when viewed in long-section, but having incorporated all the known information into one program means that we can undertake partial re-surveys to improve matters as time allows, without the daunting prospect of having to start completely from scratch.

And at last we can begin to quote an up-to-date length for the cave. We cannot yet be certain, but it looks like there is now about 15,000 m of known passage.



References

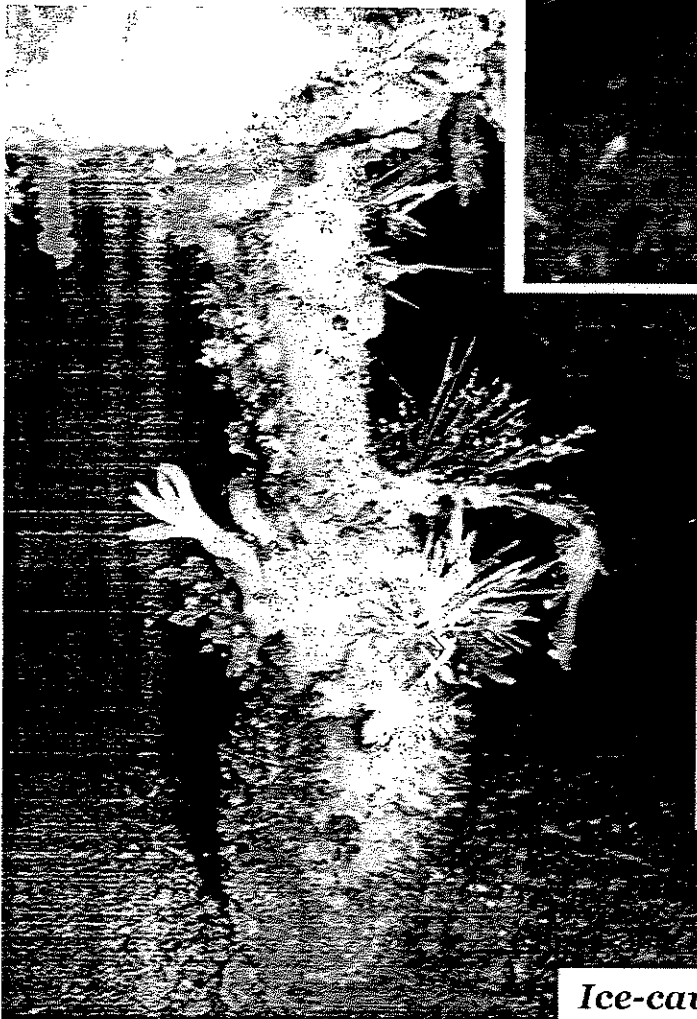
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Ice columns in a cave in Pinega region, northern Russia. One flash shared between three cameras.



Ice crystals on a cave roof in Pinega region, northern Russia. They grow by condensation/ sublimation of a quasi-liquid film.



Cupp-Coutunn cave, Turkmenistan. For those of you who have worked out the difference between stalactites and stalagmites: try multicorallites, pseudostalactites and helicto-spathites.

Ice-cave photographs courtesy of Charlie Self

The Annual Armchair Caving Fest - BCRA Conference 2001

This year's annual armchair caving fest was held in Buxton Community College, with a stones throw from Poole's Cavern, a showcave in the heart of the Peak District. For those who don't know about the BCRA conferences, it is *the* annual gathering of UK cavers. A whole series of lectures, workshops, talks about new discoveries, expedition reports, videos, audio-visual displays, SRT and photographic competitions, coupled with trade stands, a bar and loads of old friends make it an excellent weekend to talk about caves and caving without the need to get wet, cold or muddy...

I arrived on Friday afternoon for John Gunn's hydrogeology and dye tracing workshop in Poole's Cavern, (much to John's initial dismay as he mistakenly thought I had done my PhD on dye-tracing!). A whistle stop tour of the sinks and springs in the area proved quite entertaining if not terribly enlightening. It ended up as usual in the bar, where I met Lou Maurice and Tim, plus lots of Chelsea SS members.

Saturday dawned warm and sunny - quite amazing for Buxton in October. On arriving I had the usual problem of trying to work out which talk to go to. With so much choice, it was hard to pick ones which didn't clash, and still get time to chat to old friends I hadn't seen since last years conference. However, for me the highlight was the series of Mulu expedition talks by Dick Willis, Dave Gill and especially the 3D slide show by Andy Eavis. To see awesome photographs of some of the best (and largest) passages on the planet in 3D was mind blowing. It was almost better than being there. Mulu always seems to look better in photographs; my naff carbide never did quite light up the huge passages to much effect...

Not content with just attending talks, the BCRA stomp in the evening is always a must. Copious quantities of alcohol that would (and has) put the Union bar to shame, plus an excellent band made for a good night. A new sport of bin-racing was invented (imagine a sack-race but with a plastic dustbin occupied by a pissed caver around a slalom course of traffic cones... and you get some idea of what was involved). The only casualty of the evening was (true to form) Taz, who ended up being carted off in an ambulance after accidentally head-butting the stage for some reason.

Sunday morning was a bit hazy after the previous night's stomp, bin race and drinking excesses, but more so because we had to be up early as the UBSS Thailand expedition talk was scheduled for the graveyard slot at 9.30 am. To compound things, the remote control wasn't working on the projector, so we had to improvise. Sam did an excellent job in trying circumstances to enthuse a rather hung-over crowd (even if she did mention my lack of SRT prowess...). Later, both Trish and Sam gave excellent talks on their work on the diving and the hydrology of the immense underwater caves in the Yucatan peninsula, Mexico. Given that their work in Mexico is probably one of the most technically demanding and extreme caving expeditions being undertaken by UK based cavers this year, and is also research to boot, it was surprising that the talks were scheduled for one of the smaller lecture theatres. Those who didn't see it missed a treat.

All good things come to a close, with Dick Willis doing his usual excellent job of hosting the closing ceremony with a audio-visual miscellany of some of the best slides you'll see from a whole host of cave photographers. An awesome and fitting display to end the weekend. All in all it was as usual an excellent conference, with a lot of hard work put in by the organisers. Roll on next year's conference in the Forest of Dean...!

Andy Farrant

Forthcoming Events

Burns' Night

Next year we are hoping to pioneer a "Burns' Night" celebration at the hut. This is in honour of Charlotte, our Scottish member, and also its just seemed like another good excuse to drink loads of beer and burn stuff. Many UBSS members have commented previously on the appeal of black pudding, and along similar lines, haggis. Therefore, we are to celebrate in true Scots fashion, and get our hands on some authentic haggis, neaps and tatties. You may hear of this occasion affectionately referred to as "offal night" in the future. Please don't let this put you off! ☺ More details will be circulated nearer the date.

AGM and Annual Dinner 2002

The Annual General Meeting will be held in the Student's Union at 3.00 p.m. on 3rd March 2002. It will be followed by a talk by Miss Sam Smith on work being undertaken in the flooded cave systems of the Yucatan peninsula, Mexico.

Those who have attended the Annual Dinner for the last few years will have realised that it has become more and more difficult to book less and less satisfactory surroundings for the Society's Annual Dinner in March. This year, therefore, the Committee decided that it was time for a change and we have booked a firm of outside caterers and the main dining room at **Manor Hall**, for the evening of the 3rd March 2002. The Menu is:

It is hoped that, in doing this and in giving much more warning we will be able to entice many more members to attend, especially those who have not graced us with their presence for some time. The price of the meal will be £15 per head and menu choices (for the 1st two courses) (and payments) will need to be with the Hon. Secretaries by Friday 15th February at the very latest (No exceptions, using outside caterers is NOT like adding "just one more" to a restaurant booking.

WITH THIS MUCH NOTICE WE EXPECT
A REALLY GOOD TURN OUT.

Graham Mullan

**Smoked Mackerel
Egg Mayonnaise
Melon with Grapes**

**Half of Duck served with Orange
Sauce
Ostrich Stroganoff
Stuffed Tomatoes (2002)**

**Baby New Potatoes with Mint
Chef's Selection of Fresh Vegetables
Mange Tout
Carrots
Petite Pois**

**Fresh Cream Gateau Selection
Fruit Salad**

**Freshly Percolated Coffee with Cream
Tea**

English and Continental Cheeseboard

New Year's Eve Dinner

This event, probably the most long-standing of our traditions will take place at the usual place and the usual time! Spaces are limited so would those wishing to attend please call Wanda Owen (0117 9732433) or Linda Wilson (0117 9502556) to confirm attendance and find out what they should bring.

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Sad News

Departed friends,

I recently attended the funerals of two members who are both remembered in the names of caves in our own patch around Blackdown.

Charles Barker was cremated on 13th July at Cheltenham where he had retired from his career as a chemistry lecturer at Hull University. He was the "B" of GB Cave. John Pitts and I represented the Society. There was a good crowd of friends and neighbours. After the ceremony we all retired to Charles' home where we were entertained by his wife Margaret, a botanist, and his sons. John and I had a good gossip about old times with Margaret. John has written an extended obituary of Charles, which will appear in the next issue of Proceedings.

The second funeral was of Rodney Pearce, at the West Wiltshire Crematorium, Semington, Wilts. on 29th October. He discovered Rod's Pot, one of the nearest caves to the Hut, in April, 1944 (Proceedings vol. 5 no. 3, p. 191). He was a committee member from 1940, a long-serving Hon. Secretary, from 1941 to 1945, and remained on the committee for a further year. This length of service arose from the fact that he was a medical student (as were a number of members at that time). After graduation he became a GP in Trowbridge, Wiltshire, but retired at a relatively early age in the 1970s. Rodney's family were brought up as cavers and I had a chat afterwards with his daughter Tessa who has worked on the extension(?) of GB. His wife died some time ago. Unfortunately his death just missed the next issue of Proceedings, but I hope that an account of his life and work can be written for the following number.

Desmond Donovan

Website

As ever, our UBSS website is chocked full of silly pictures and other useful information, so do take a look at the latest additions:

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/Depts/Union/UBSS/Home/Home.html>

Thanks to Si Lee for maintaining the site, and updating the mailing list (ubss-mail@bris.ac.uk). Do keep him posted with new photos and stories!