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Photo: "Chris Bennett by Swildons Sump2." :- Steve Cottle.

Newsletter
Vol. 8 N^o. 2

May 1992.

EDITORIAL

Welcome to yet another newsletter packed with news, scandal, gossip, and information. I have taken over the post of Newsletter editor again (fool, I hear you cry) from Bill, who will alas be leaving us soon. Bill has done a superb job, editing and improving the Newsletter. Many thanks Bill.

Lots of things have been happening, with loads of people going caving. There was even a weekend trip (expedition?) to Devon.

Please carry on writing articles and sending in any gossip, without it there would be no newsletter! They can be sent to the students Union, to me directly, at Crockers, 9.30 pm on Tuesdays or at Room G13n, Dept. of Geography, ext 3829, or you can even send it to me by e-mail at farrant@uk.ac.bristol.gma

Happy Caving!

Andy Farrant

All opinions expressed in this Newsletter are those of the individual authors, and not necessarily those of the committee:

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,
UNIVERSITY UNION,
QUEENS ROAD,
BRISTOL BS8 1LN.



Gravel

Steve has been doing extensive planning for his summer caving trip to France. Regions to be visited include Bordeaux, Cognac and Champagne. So alot of his time will be spent underground, but it will all be in cellars drinking wine. It may be an excuse for Steve to carry out the second part of his study of the effects alcohol has on cavers. In Ireland he experimented by gulping Whiskey before going caving.

Julian has finally worked out a use for a condom. While at Alisons house, he was being taught how to bake a cake. At the same time he mended Alisons leaky kettle with a condom. Next he will try chopping one up and putting into the cake to make nice little chewy bits.

.....Stop Press!.....

The condom holding Alison's kettle together broke, so Hannah bought an extra thick ultra safe one from the chemist. However, it probably wasn't a very good idea to try to explain to the chemist what she wanted it for. He seemed to think it was a very original excuse. I hate to think what is wrong with the kettle.

Despite persistant rumours, it is to be noted that the following topics will not be covered in this edition of Newsletter:

- 1) Rachel blowing kisses at Steve, in Pudseys during the annual dinner.
- 2) Rachel falling over numerous times outside Pudsey's.
- 3) Rachel attempting to take the Pudsey's noticeboard despite it being firmly chained to the wall.
- 4) Anything what-so-ever to do with Julian, barrels or wet kippers.

Bets are now being taken on how long the new Speleo Rooms floor will last. When looking for a journal, you now have to traverse around the wall. Any extra weight on the floor could produce a bit of a let down for someone.

Julian has been spotted in Goatchurch Cavern recently flaunting the latest thing in hi-tech caving gear - the new Daleswear Y-Fronts. No need to bother with wetsuits, oversuits or in fact, any clothes at all. All you need to go caving is a pair of these and a candle. Julian intends setting up in business soon, however the idea isn't likely to catch on.

Alisons latest fetish has been found out. Whilst at the hut recently, she seemed to take great pleasure in rubbing Peanut

Butter into Bill's back. Naturally Bill was powerless to avoid having this done to him, and what's more, seemed to be enjoying it. Could this be linked to the fact that Alison is also on the lookout for a new 'Bit of Fluff'...?

Talking of new bits of fluff, Flossie has got competition. The editor has been reliably informed that Alison has a large pin-up of Dan 'Sheep-Shagger' Harries in her bedroom. What's more, it has been rumoured that Tophers also has one! Flossies reaction to all this is as yet unknown.

On a recent trip over from Slovenia, Andrej Mihavic, a visiting academic, must have recieved a rather bad impression of British society. First he is in Tony's car when it gets deliberately rammed from behind, and then a few days later, Graham gets assaulted while Andrej is staying with him. This begs the question; Is Slovenia safer, or does it reflect upon the local inhabitants of 'Southmead-on-Trym'?

Miracles shall never cease. Finally after five years Fiona Whittaker has finally written up her Ph.D. thesis.

Yet another miracle. The Axbridge Caving Group find 800' of large passage on

Mendip, and after only two hours digging!

A.B. Doctor Writes.



Agoraphobia.

This well known complaint doesn't usually affect cavers. However it is prevalent in Mendip cavers when they visit places like Mulu.

The symptoms are a manic desire to insert ones body into the nearest small hole, and if there isn't a convenient hole available, to dig one. The symptoms of 'Geological Depression' have also been known to occur. The only known cure is a long rehabilitation programme on Mendip, preferably in the Hunter's Lodge.

Quote of the week from Bill. 'How many women can I get off with whilst Alison is away.'

Read this which way you like.

Ancient Chinese Proverb No 245.
The SRT descent.

It is not a wise man who descends a 300' pitch as fast as possible, claiming he is s**t scared, as this often leads to a hazardous ascent. A wiser man comes down slowly and rigs the pitch to avoid all the rub points, thus allowing the fool at the bottom to ascend.

Take note, Bill.

Arbuthnott has returned from Russia, looking even more emaciated than when he left. If anybody's got a tight squeeze that needs pushing, then Charlie's your man!

Paul Drewery kept up his usual reputation at the annual dinner wearing a dinner jacket and tights. At least he could have shaved his legs.

Andy Baker has flown off to the states to continue his latest piece of research. The results will be published in a later edition of Newsletter, entitled 'Squalid Holes of North America'. This is a sequel to his blockbuster on the squalid caves of Bristol.

Yet another splinter group of the UBSS has been formed. The UBSFS (Univ. of Bristol Sexually Frustrated Society) has been formed. The founder members, Hannah and Jim are seaching for new members. Julian and his lonely hearts club are rumoured to be thinking of joining.

HON SECS'S BIT

OPENING OF THE NEW ROOMS.

Now we are finally installed in 'The Stables', it has been suggested that we have an official 'opening'. Hopefully this will be one Friday evening between the end of the exams and the end of term (that means June for non-students!). However, there is still a lot of work to be done before then. Any help would be greatly appreciated - please phone Chris Hawkes on (0749) 870474.

The University security have agreed not to clamp any cars parked next to the rooms in the evenings, but leave a note in your windscreen to tell security that you are using the Library or Museum, or you will get clamped!

KEYS.

I am trying to track down all the keys people possess at the moment, be they hut keys, room keys, or tackle store keys. So please hunt out any keys you may have lurking around and tell me what they are. I can then publish a list of who has what, so members know who to hassle if they need to get in somewhere.

HUT.

The hut is in need of some maintenance, so we are thinking of spending a few days out at the hut, after the exams for a painting party. The date has yet to be decided, please see me or Tim if you are interested, otherwise we may have to 'persuade' you.

As regards hut bookings, from the end of term onwards, this will be Tim's problem, (not that he knows it yet!), so please hassle him and not me.

YORKSHIRE.

The following permits are (hopefully) available. Please check with me first though.

Sat	23rd May	Birks Fell Cave.
	31st May	Gingling Hole.
Sun	14th June	Birks Fell Cave.
	11th July	Magnetometer Pot.
	12th July	Gingling Hole.
	8th August	Lost Johns.
	3rd October	Lost Johns.

SESSIONAL MEETINGS.

The sessional meeting scheduled for May 14th has been cancelled, but three more have been arranged for next year. Details nearer the time.

P.S. If you are caving on Mendip, please make sure your valuables are safely locked away, or leave them at home, as there has been a spate of car thefts recently.

CALENDER FOR 1992.

5-14th June Post exam Yorkshire week. Depending on numbers, we will be staying in caravans at the weekends and at the NPC hut during the week.

20th June Wessex Challenge. 7.30pm til midnight. Held in Priddy, this years theme is 'Pirates', a general free for all 'race' between the Mendip caving clubs, with no rules, a 'Stomp', 'Sofa rugby' and lots of beer Tickets cost £4, tel (0275) 332401 for details

21st June Otter Hole. Preference will be given to those who havn't been down this spectacular cave, (or those not suffering too much from the Wessex Challenge!)

10-12th July NCA Cavers Fair, to be held in the Forest of Dean. Details from the secretary or Linda

There may also be a Slaughter stream cave trip sometime, see Linda for details.

AUTUMN TERM.

11-13th Sept. BCRA National Caving Conference. Held this year at the Univ. of Bradford.

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| 1-2nd Oct | Freshers Squash - lots of help please! |
| 3-4th Oct | Freshers weekend at the hut. |
| 6th Oct & 4 subsequent Tuesdays (before Crockers) | Ladder & SRT practice in Woodland House. |
| 8th Oct. | Slide show, probably in the union. |
| 10th Oct. | Day trip to Mendip. |
| 16-18th Oct | Yorkshire weekend |
| 22nd Oct | Sessional meeting. To be arranged |
| 24th Oct | Day trip to S. Wales. |
| 6-8th Nov | Bonfire Weekend at the hut. |
| 20-22nd Nov | S. Wales weekend |
| 26th Nov. | Sessional Meeting. To be arranged. |
| 27-29th Nov | Derbyshire weekend. |

Most of the weekend have yet to be organised, but bear the dates in mind. We also hope to arrange SRT practise evenings at Woodland house during the autumn term.

Alison Garrard.

LATEST DISCOVERIES IN BRISTOL.

Tim Parrish

Fueled by rumours of vast passages and chambers under Churchill Hall, a group of cavers recently mounted a trip to this less well known caving area. The system has now been thoroughly explored, and can be added to your copy of Mendip underground! Simply cutout and paste into your book at the revelant section. (Please ask an adult for help.)

THE CHURCHILL CAVERNS

EC

Stoke Bishop, Bristol.

This unique set of caves are a real collectors piece, consisting of mainly level passage with a number of chambers, grottos and avens. To the unexperienced eye it can all look like one vast heating duct, and great care must be taken to avoid pulling at the formations on either wall, - otherwise rapid flooding will occur. The one good thing is that the chances of hypothermia is pretty minimal, while heat stroke, and asbestosis are the main dangers (breathing apparatus is recommended!).

There are a number of entrances to this system - the best being in 'A' block, due to disputes over access rights in the other blocks. The entrance is located in the floor to the right of the door. Take a pair of pliers, a spanner, and an old metal coat hanger to lift the lid, which leads to an easy 5 ft drop to the floor. South, the passage closes down to a terminal choke, a small chamber and an aven. This can provide a dodgy climb up through U bends and sewer pipes for over 20 ft.

Northwards, the passage continues over an old mattress until it slopes down to a junction. Around this area are a number of green metal doors set into the wall, which tend to open up into cleaning cupboards in K block. Turning right, two side passages are passed which can both be explored for about 30 ft, with a number of exits in the ceiling. In the nearest, a low squeeze below pipes enters into a rubbish strewn aven. Climbing this for 15 ft leads into a small chamber known as the Wardens Toilet.

Continuing along the passage, a low green door is encountered. This can be entered to gain access to the boiler room. Moving switches in this room is not to be recommended as there is a risk of either switching off all the heating, or else putting Churchill into orbit.

There are two other exits from here, - a crawl over rubbish leads to a dead end, while in the western corner another metal door leads into more passage. Above this is the Churchill bar, although no connection has been made despite extensive exploration.

Continuing along the winding passage a crossroads is eventually reached. To the left is the continuation of the very first passage, while straight ahead a fixed ladder leads to a

dead end. To the right, the passage passes a small chamber with a manhole cover in the roof exiting out into the quad. The passage continues on getting lower until a short drop is reached. From here it winds on, with a few short side passages, before ending at the terminal choke.

In order to complete the system, a trip to 'C' block is necessary. Enter the system in the same way. Unfortunately the passage closes down at either end after a short distance. Exploratory work is now being carried out in the Wills Hall area.

Survey: UBSS (1992) to BCRA Grade 0a.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Graham Mullan

As can be seen from the attached Account Sheet, 1991/2 was quite a good year. The slight excess of expenditure was only due to the late decision to buy SRT kit for hire. This will be self-financing in future, as are the hire lamps.

Most importantly, Proceedings 19.1 proved to be relatively inexpensive due both to a change in printer (this is now done for us by the University's own printing office) and more especially to the use of better technology. For the first time the type setter was given all the material on disc. As well as saving time, and our time in proof reading too, this probably saved over £1000, thus allowing for the lack of solicited donations this year.

All other items were roughly as expected, the usual things went up, insurance not as much as usual, and income remained steady. Thanks are due to the University for the grant towards the cost of Proceedings, and to the Union for grants towards running costs and tackle. My personal thanks are due to Mr. John Gunn, our auditor, without whom my life would be much more difficult.

The only item presently causing me concern for the coming year is the cost of fitting out the new Library and Museum, I have already had some £200 in donations, but need more to cover costs already incurred.

Finally, the Treasurer's annual plea for unpaid subscriptions to be sent in as soon as possible, and for those who don't to consider paying by Banker's order in future. This saves me time and the Society postage. Also, please consider Deeds of Covenant. These cost you nothing but two minutes of time, but bring in significant income from the Inland Revenue. Indeed for all you higher rate tax payers out there, they even save you some money!!

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations to Rich & Erica Barker on the birth of their son: Christopher John. His arrival, two weeks early, caused some problems, as his father's planned decorating schedule was thrown completely out!

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR YEAR ENDED 31ST JANUARY 1992

<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	£	£	<u>INCOME</u>	£	£
Proceedings 19.1	2911.57		Publications Grant - Univ. of Bristol		950.00
Offprints	465.00		Members' Subscriptions		1189.00
Postage of Proc. 19.1	<u>153.88</u>	3530.45	Student Members' Subscriptions		335.00
Tools - Equipment Capital	451.94		Union Grants: Capital	444.64	
Current	<u>18.13</u>	470.07	Current	<u>300.00</u>	744.64
Library			Interest of Investments: Bank	1070.35	
Sessional Meetings			P.O.	<u>67.96</u>	1138.31
Photography			Sales of Publications (not C of C.C.)		506.65
Postage			Sales of Shirts		36.50
Hon. Secs. Petty Cash			Donations		199.00
Stationery and Duplicating			Tax Refunds on Covenants		283.60
Rates and Taxes			Traitman Fund		<u>1250.00</u>
Insurances: Third Party	112.80		Excess of Expenditure over Income		6632.70
Property	<u>214.74</u>	327.54			<u>50.45</u>
Subscriptions - Licence		69.25			<u>6683.15</u>
Travel Money		243.80			
Traitman Fund		1250.00			
Fally		5.50			
Donations to Rescue Organisations		10.00			
Transfer to Equipment Hire Fund		<u>100.00</u>			
		<u>6683.15</u>			

'CAVES OF COUNTY CLARE' PUBLISHING ACCOUNT 1991/92

£	£		£
Balance at 1st February 1991	1833.39	Sales of 'Caves of County Clare'	348.73
		Debit balance at 31.1.92.	1484.66
	<u>1833.39</u>		<u>1833.39</u>

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL SPELAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

BALANCE SHEET AT 31ST JANUARY 1992

<u>HUT FUND</u>				
	£		£	
Balance at 1.2.91	1014.22			
Add: Net income	<u>374.15</u>			
		1388.37		
			£	
				11176.12
<u>PRINTED PUBLICATIONS FUND</u>				
Balance at 1.2.91.		3280.00		
<u>LIBRARY FUND</u>				
Balance at 1.2.91.	435.00			
Add: Net income	<u>15.00</u>			
		450.00		
			<u>CASH IN HAND</u>	
				Hon. Secs 6.17
				Hon. Treas. <u>19.25</u>
				25.42
<u>G.B. CAVE CAPITAL FUND</u>				
Balance at 1.2.91.	60.39			
Less: Net expenditure	<u>10.33</u>			
		50.06		
<u>EQUIPMENT HIRE ACCOUNT</u>				
Balance at 1.2.91.	58.42			
Less: Net expenditure	110.11			
Tf. from I & E account	<u>100.00</u> etc			
		48.31		
<u>CAVES OF COUNTY CLARE ACCOUNT</u>				
Advance for publication	7000.00			
Less: net expenditure not yet recovered	<u>1484.66</u>			
		5515.34		
<u>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT</u>				
Balance at 1.2.91.	781.54			
Less: Net expenditure	<u>50.45</u>			
		731.09		
				<u>11463.17</u>
				<u>11463.17</u>

HONORARY AUDITOR'S REPORT: I have examined the above Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31.1.1992 and the attached Balance Sheet as at that date in accordance with Auditing Standards. I confirm that they are in accordance with the books and records of the Society and give a true and fair view of the Society's affairs at 31st January 1992.



.....
J.A. GUNN B.A., F.C.A.
.....

MULU CAVES '91 EXPEDITION.

Andy Farrant

This years annual expedition (or holiday, depending on your viewpoint) to Mulu took place in October. For those cavers who have not heard of Mulu (are there any?) or are just plain ignorant, Mulu is located in Sarawak, near the border with Brunei.

The Bristol contingent comprised Dick Willis, Pete Smart, Fiona Whittaker and myself. Pete, Fiona and I went as the scientific contingent. Five other cavers also took part in the expedition, Matt Kirby (the leader), Dave Gill, Tim Allen, Pete Boyes and Richard Chambers.

The aim of the expedition, apart from trying to find as much cave as possible in six weeks, was to try to connect Blackrock cave (~ 22 kms long) to Clearwater cave (~ 78 kms) to create the seventh longest cave system in the world, and the longest in Southeast Asia, and in the process take it over the 100 km mark. The scientific objectives were to date the caves and to work out the hydrology and geomorphology of the Mulu caves.

We arrived in Malaysia after all the usual last minute hassles over permits, lost baggage and over-zealous customs officials. The next two days were taken up by travelling up river, sweating a lot, and getting used to the heat and humidity and sweating a bit more. The boats for the first stage of the journey looked like airplanes without wings floating in the water, with two humongous engines attached to the rear. We decided to sit on top in the sun (after applying loads of factor 10000 sun cream), and holding onto our hats we set off with the boat roaring up the mighty Baram river at a great rate of knots.

Sarawak is being extensively logged at the moment and it was really disheartening to see huge barges full of timber and log trains over 100 m long make their way down the river to the sawmills. The scale of the operation is beyond belief. In the past four years most of Sarawak has been logged and only a few small isolated pockets are left intact in the national parks. Until you get out there and see it for yourself, it is difficult to comprehend the scale of the problem.

At long last the boat rounded a corner and the fabulous mist shrouded pinnacles and tower karst of Gunung Api appeared. We stopped off at Long Pala, a local tourist hostel which was to be our base for the first few days, as it was more convenient for access to Deer cave, and the southern end of Clearwater.

Our first trip was to Deer cave, so Fiona, Tim and I set off up river to the start of the trail leading to the entrance. Tim had made the mistake of coming along on a 'science' trip, and his illusions of science being exciting were soon dispelled, after waiting for an hour while Fiona and I counted pebbles! Deer cave is now a show cave, (and slightly more impressive than a certain show-cave in Cheddar I could mention!) You can't really miss it. It was a really *huge* gurt big ginormous passage, over 120 m high and 150 m wide, in fact, the biggest piece of passage in the world. It was also over two kilometres long and daylight shone the whole way through. No worries about claustrophobia in this cave. (And I thought G.B was big!), Far overhead you could hear the chatter of literally millions of bats, and a gentle rain of bat urine drifted down like raindrops.

Over the next few days we went into Simon's cave and Cave of the Winds, so called

because of the strong draught blowing out of the entrance. Inside is a large, if a little gloomy streamway, and a strong pervading odour of bat and swiftlet guano. It was here that I first got acquainted with the wildlife that inhabits the caves. The commonest inhabitant of the caves are the swiftlets which nest in the caves (one species of swiftlet builds the nests that are prized for birds nest soup), they are often found up to three kilometres inside the caves, finding their way around by echo-location, using a series of low pitched clicks. Bats are also fairly common, and both leave huge piles of guano often over knee deep, and crawling with bugs. The guano supports a whole range of creepy crawlies, from crickets to isopods, cave scorpions and poisonous millipedes. Preying on the crickets are the huge black, hairy poisonous Huntsman spiders which often grow to the size of your fist. What's more, they always seem to lurk on the best handholds, so progressing through the cave without putting your hand on one can be quite difficult.

The largest predator in the caves is the green Racer snake. They often lie in wait at the narrowest point of the passage and lunge out and catch swiftlets as they fly past. Crawling along a section of passage and coming face to face with a hissing poisonous snake six inches in front of your nose is rather disconcerting. It is at times like these you are really glad of a large carbide flame!

After a few days at Long Pala, we moved up river to our base camp. Unfortunately the river was very low, so we had to push the canoe up the rapids, which is very hard work, except for the person who sits in the canoe and bails out all the water. Our camp had been set up a few days earlier by some local guides, and consisted of a long line of hammocks under a camp sheet and a table. This was to be home for the next five weeks. The next day we went into Clearwater for the first time. The entrance was an hours hard slog through the rain forest. The size and diversity of the trees was awe-inspiring, as was the sound of millions of insects droning, clicking and buzzing. A steep scramble up an almost sheer cliff over razor sharp limestone pinnacles led to the entrance. Here we stopped to fill our carbides, pluck off any leeches and to slacken our thirst before entering the cave. This entrance was called Snake Track on account of the remarkable polished trails left by snakes.

The formations in this part of the cave were quite incredible, with large stal bosses and 'mites over 6 m high. The passage was a modest 8 m high and 20 m wide. This led into Sheer Delight, but a steep climb up a 40 m high boulder slope led into the start of Revival, a mind bogglingly big fossil conduit stretching away into a black void. The walls and roof disappeared out of sight, somewhere over 50 m away. A climb up more boulders led into a somewhat smaller passage and then down a 12 m pitch into a well decorated section of passage, the Dune series.

It was along this section of passage we almost lost Dave Gill, who slipped while traversing along a stal slope, and was only stopped from hurtling down a 30 m drop by one small stumpy stalagmite. However, a short way further along, just after a 40 m pitch, Pete fell after both the handhold and the footholds he was using fell away. Luckily he only fell a few feet, but suffered badly bruised ribs, which was bad enough to prevent him going caving the following day. Anyone who knows Pete will realise just how serious this was! It was a sobering thought to think that the nearest hospital was two days journey away.

Another short pitch led into the immensity of Great Wall Chamber, East passage and

Gnome Oxbow. It was very difficult to get a good impression of the place as your light was never quite powerful enough to light up the huge black void. More clambering over huge boulder piles led to the northern exit to Clearwater, a tight and very sharp flat out crawl, which was almost impossible to find. (Yes, even in Mulu you occasionally have to crawl!)

Over the next few days an assault on Blackrock Cave was made. Unfortunately I succumbed to the inevitable and very painful Mulu Foot, which is a fungal infection a bit like Trenchfoot. Meanwhile the rest of the team pushed leads towards Clearwater, discovering about 500 m of passage. I had to sit in camp knowing that everyone else was finding new stuff, which was annoying to say the least.

The team emerged after a few days without finding the connection, so they decided to try from the Clearwater side, via the Armistice series. I went along to get some samples. We set up camp at the Scumring Bivouac, a delightful chamber with a smooth flat floor and a small stream cascading into one corner. After a good nights sleep we set off. Three hours caving later after passing through some superb passage we arrived at the end of Armistice, where a previously overlooked hole was seen in the floor of the passage. The drop was quickly rigged and emerged into a large bedding plane passage heading steeply down dip, and decorated with some fantastic helictites. The passage just kept on going, about 3 m high and 30 m wide, occasionally narrowing at a sediment bank. Matt and I proceeded to dig through this to find the passage continued. Yes, Digging just has to be done, even in Mulu. Mendip habits die hard! Finally after about a kilometre, it ended up in a 30 m pitch which dropped back into the Clearwater river short of Sump 6, thus providing a useful shortcut to the river. The following day we left the cave and arrived back in camp to hear the news that Dick and Tim had found the connection between Blackrock and Clearwater. It was promptly christened 'No Justice', as it was no justice that Dick should have found it as he had been on none of the previous rigging trips. For once Dick had been in the right place at the right time. This meant that the combined length of the two caves was now approaching 100 kms, and elevated Clearwater to the 7th longest cave in the world.

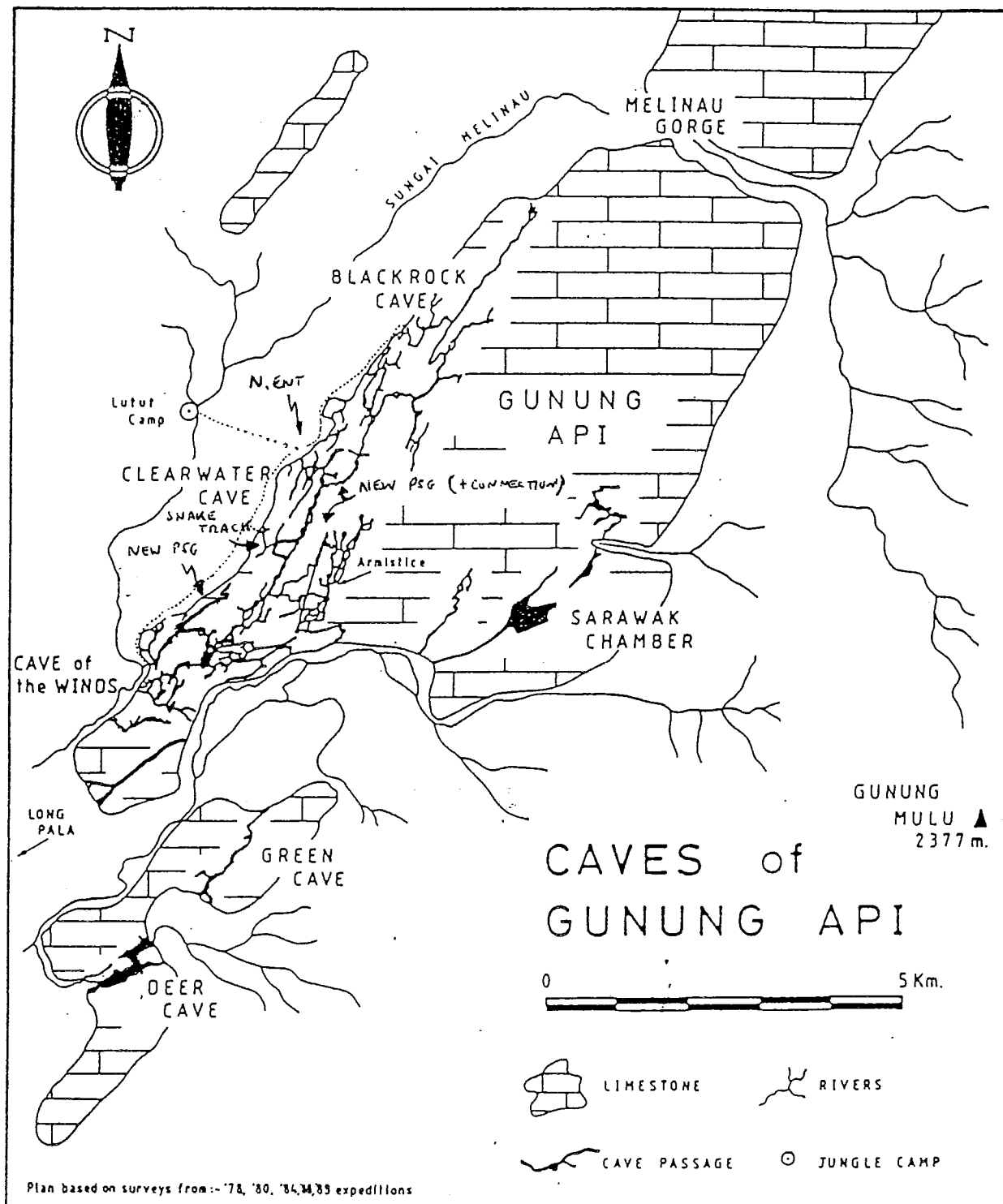
After a days rest, Pete and I headed back into Clearwater for a five day camp, sorting out the geomorphology of the lower parts of the cave. Caving soon becomes hard work when you have to carry five days supplies with you, plus extra carbide, cooking gear and sampling equipment. It was two knackered cavers who emerged five days later, to find everyone else had moved camp and headed back downriver to Long Pala.

The final few days were spent clearing up the loose ends, surveying Stone Horse cave, another discovery by the expedition, with over 2 kms of typical Mulu sized passage, with good potential. The almost on the last day Pete decided to have a 'jolly' and find a bit of cave for himself. An obvious lead off the Clearwater River just a few hundred metres from the entrance led into 1.6 kms of passage averaging 10 m high and 20 m across. At times the passage got ridiculous. One side passage was less than a metre high, but over 30 m wide with no walls in sight! Richard's passage, as it was named after our guide, ended in a choke very close to the surface. This pushed Clearwater over the 100 km mark.

The final day was spent partially recovering from the end of expedition party, at which vast quantities of Tuac and Arak, the local rice wine was drunk, or rather forced down your throat, and

also a trip up to Sago Palm cave, another one of the expeditions discoveries, which entailed a 200 m climb up a nearly sheer and very jagged sharp limestone cliff in the 90 degree heat, to get our last mud samples.

A week later, after completing all the formalities with all the Sarawak authorities and press conferences, we finally touched down in Heathrow on a freezing cold November day. Thanks to our sponsors, including Alexandra Workwear and M.A.S. and especially to the Tratman fund for helping us with the cost of the trip. Mulu still has a lot to offer, but the rewards are getting harder to reap. If anyone's interested, I know of this really good dig site...!



LIBRARY NEWS

Tony Boycott

The Library has now been moved into the Stables and is now in usable order. The main bookcases containing bound caving journals and caving books British and Foreign are downstairs and the stack room containing boxed journals and bound archaeological journals is upstairs. A new map cabinet has been obtained and replaces the old rickety cabinets. I am trying to stocktake and check the catalogue and would be grateful if members could return all loaned library books and journals, whether signed out or not, as soon as possible.

LIBRARY RULES

1. ALL LOANS MUST BE SIGNED OUT AND BACK IN THE LOANS BOOK
2. BOOKS MAY BE BORROWED FOR UP TO ONE MONTH
3. BOUND AND BOXED JOURNALS MAY BE BORROWED BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE LIBRARIAN
4. BOOKS ON THE CONFINED SHELF MAY NOT BE BORROWED
5. GUIDEBOOKS MUST NOT BE TAKEN UNDERGROUND!!!
6. PLEASE REPORT ANY LOSS OR DAMAGE TO THE LIBRARIAN

LAYOUT DOWNSTAIRS (CLOCKWISE)

BOOKCASE 1 BOUND BRITISH JOURNALS

BOOKCASE 2 GUIDEBOOKS AND CAVING BOOKS

BOOKCASE 3 ARCHAEOLOGY & FOREIGN CAVING BOOKS, BOUND BIBLIOGRAPHIES

BOOKCASE 4 BOUND JOURNALS BRITISH & FOREIGN

CUPBOARDS UNBOUND FOREIGN JOURNALS MAP CABINET

LAYOUT UPSTAIRS (CLOCKWISE)

UNBOUND FOREIGN JOURNALS SALES STOCK

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THE CAVES OF THE SOUTH EASTERN OUTCROP AND CAVES AND MINES IN THE FOREST OF DEAN	TONY OLDHAM & KEITH JONES		1992
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DEVON 92

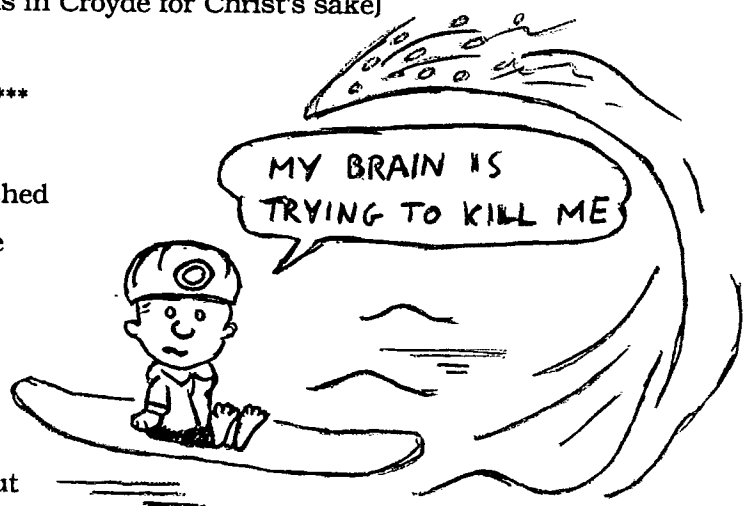
Friday 7th to Sunday 9th February BILL

*****THE FINE ART OF DEPARTING*****

Leaving Bristol at 11 o'clock on Friday Bill, Chris and Tim did the obligatory faffing around until we all had lights, gear and enough money to last the weekend. I had not managed to con the Surfing club into giving us some boards so we were just going to go walk on Dartmoor, but we travelled down so fast in Chris's incredible mean machine that it was decided to go to Croyde and see if we could hire boards. We found all the shops, but one, closed. Having convinced him that we would not run off with the boards and endured his talking for ages. We were to drop off the boards at his home 'Sol e mar' which he triumphantly announced means 'sun and sea' and was modeled on a Spanish Villa with a south facing veranda. (And this was in Croyde for Christ's sake)

*****THE FINE ART OF SURFING*****

So with the Beach Boys blaring in our ears and the Surf boards squashed into the car and down our necks we roared down to the beach. Leaped into our wetsuits and ran down the beach to the water, its very difficult to run with a surf board and so we soon gave up and as the tide was out



it took us about ten minutes to walk to the water. The sand was rocky and cold and wind was freezing, hardly ideal swimming weather. Well the waves looked good there were even some other surfy dudes out there. Well we would soon show them a thing our two. Chris was the expert and he wasn't giving us any advice so strap the tether to your ankle and plunge out. VERY COLD. After fifteen minutes of effort none of us could make it out beyond the break, distinctly uncool but by now **VEERRY COLD**. The waves were enormous six footers and as soon as you got out of your depth these things would be crashing over your head and you were unable to push out any further. We then practiced in the shallow water just trying to stand up on the slippery boards or finding that difficult just try to kneel on them. After half an hour of this and having swallowed enough detergent, oil and sewage to qualify for disaster relief and lost all feeling in our feet we came out and stood on our boards on the beach shivering at each other.

That evening we found Buckfastleigh Village which has a chippy that doesn't do very large portions. The 'Devon Spelaeological Society' building was very nice. Gas, Electricity, Shower, lacked a fire place but it did have seven tin openers, none of which worked and as usual on UBSS trips none of us had any matches. In the past year nineteen groups had visited this hut (Well that's probably more use than our hut gets) What could they all be

doing? There can't be that much demand for caving in Devon. When we looked at the log book it soon became obvious. Most trips were along the lines of: Bakers Pit - Sun Pub- Watermans Pub- Globe Pub or 'Went for a trip on the Chu-Chu Train '. This sort of itinerary was understandable as it was only fifteen meters to the Watermans Pub where we spent a pleasant evening with a fair selection of beer and a decent fire. Julian, Alison and Richard turned up at about midnight then in the morning Tony, Graham, Linda, Steve, Andy Farrant and Andy Cook arrived.

*****THE FINE ART OF SPELUNKING*****

We all twelve went down Bakers Pit a real convoy with lots of singing by Bill and Steve and bumping into two other groups. Spent about two hours underground and I doubt if there is a single square inch of that cave that hasn't had a UBSS body pushed over it. While the others then retired to ' YE OLDE TEA SHOPPE '. Bill, Tim, Julian and Andy Cook all felt rich enough to wander up the road to pay the farmer 30p each for the privilege of wandering off in totally the wrong direction across his land till we found the 'Girt Big Ginormous' entrance to Pridamsleigh. Now if you've seen the school kids packed into Goatchurch you've got the idea of this cave. At the same time as we four were under there were 3 other parties all with about twelve kids or more in them, thought that it was an **outrage** and you should never allow such large groups down (forgetting Bakers Pit of course). Anyway we sent Julian across a 15 ft deep bear pit and he didn't mind, so we then directed him down the most muddy slippery dead end passage in the cave and he came back smiling. Next he was sent to swim across the lake but he made it back so we then stuffed him along a REALLY squid series of ducks and despite all our prayers he made it back.

*****THE FINE ART OF DRINKING*****

Five people left that afternoon so the remaining seven did the Sun - Globe - Chippy - Waterman series in the evening with Julian having a scramble bear footed under the bridge in the village while we ate our chips. Back to the hut and a bit of table traversing, twisting around broomsticks and picking match boxes off the floor with your mouth from a chair which only Rich was sober enough to be able to perform.

Next day we set off to look at these vast mine tunnels that Julian had seen while canoeing on the river Dart. Alison went for a walk and she didn't miss much as there were three tunnels all 6ft tall going about 50 meters into the hill. They were all full of really glutinous red mud that poured into your wellies and only Tim and Bill were silly enough to go to the end of them all. There were bats in the ends of two of them.

Lunch in the Watermans then drive down to the coast south of Teignmouth where Mr Oldman's book said we could find some sea caves. Eventually found them and wandered into a few, crawling length about 30m along joints in red conglomerate that the sea had enlarged. Back to Bristol and the delight of not having to wash any gear as the caves are so civilised as to make ladders redundant.

CAVE RADON AND EARTHQUAKES

Radiation studies in Geophyzicheskaya, part of the Cupp-Coutunn system of caves in Soviet central Asia, provide an unusual anecdote that may merit wider circulation. Earlier this year a sudden increase in radiation levels were recorded in the cave. Further tests were made to distinguish between gaseous phase (i.e. radon) and particulate matter as the source of this radiation. (There is a small, quite localised occurrence of Tyuyamunite - a uranium/vanadium mineral - in one part of the cave and the possibility of contamination by dust from the cavers' clothes had to be considered.) The radiation proved to be entirely due to radon gas, which is thought to enter these ancient, dry caves from small faults.

But why should the radon suddenly increase? The local researchers in Turkmenia had no answer, but a visiting cave scientist from Moscow (V Maltsev) confidently predicted an earthquake. A few months later a major earthquake did occur (Richter 6.5) with an epicentre about 20km north of the caves. Two villages were seriously damaged.

POSTSCRIPT: Since his successful prediction, Maltsev tells me that the Turkmenians have gone one better and predicted the next earthquake in the year 2021. From the written records it appears that major earthquakes in this region are all due to one basement fault, which moves regularly every 30 years (plus or minus one year).

Charlie Self

(Moscow)

AUSTRIA EXPEDITION

As some people may know, the UBSS will be returning to Austria this summer to continue the exploration of Organhöhle, a cave we discovered in 1990. So far it has reached a depth of over 300m, and we hope that there may be as much as 200m more to descend. We are intending on being in Austria for the last two weeks in August and the first week in September (from around 17.8.92-5.9.92). Although some commitment is essential, it is not necessary to come along for the whole three weeks, and there will probably be some people travelling out and back at different times. So if you are a competent caver and want the satisfaction of abseiling a completely unknown pitch or being the first person to explore an undiscovered passage, then come along, you never know what might happen! You could even get your photo in the caving press, and what more could anyone want?

Anybody interested in coming to Austria should get in touch with Topher Martyn (541024) for a list of gear needed and for further information.

A WEEKEND IN WALES

Rachel Privett.

Our weekend in Ystradfellte began in style with Julian's car choking up large quantities of milky pink froth and breathing it's last just as we drew up into the car park after a relatively trouble free journey from Bristol. (We had previously only broken down once on the side of a mountain!). Not wanting to be defeated at this late stage, Julian lept out and began tinkering around with the engine by the light of his 'zoom', but to no avail and Richard and I soon ended up pushing the car the last few metres with smoke pouring out from under the bonnet and a very pungent aroma of leaking petrol.

Having been beaten to our destination by Chris in his highly superior motor, we found the others seated around the fire in the hut, making polite conversation with our hosts for the weekend, the Mad Monk Axeman of Croyden Caving Club and his duo of disciples. We exchanged formalities and settled down for a mug of tea at which point it was decided that the rather stern atmosphere in the room that seemed to be exuding from the Mad Monk Axeman himself could possibly be dispelled by playing Andy Farrant's new U2 album on Julian's tape-recorder. As the dulcet tones of 'The Fly' rang out above the noise of the rather restrained conversation, the Mad Monk Axeman of Croyden unfolded his bean-pole legs and rose to his feet. Scowling beneath sinister black bushy eye-brows and a perfect pudding-bowl haircut, he rumbled, 'No music allowed', and wielding his axe, disappeared out of the front door. We decided it was time for the pub!

We were woken up late the next morning by the sound of metal on wood. The Mad Monk Axeman had been up since five o'clock and was burning off his breakfast of lentils by chopping wood and glaring at Tim, who had made the mistake of also rising at the crack of dawn.

After a huge breakfast and a telling-off for Alison, (who had committed the crime of charging her light in the kitchen), we divided into two groups; Julian, Tim and I heading for the Little Neath River Cave, and everyone else to O.F.D. Having spent a large part of the previous evening reading accounts in the hut log-book of parties trapped in Little Neath by floods, I wasn't too happy about my choice of destination. 'You'll be alright as long as it doesn't rain.' Chris said, but as we left the hut, there was a force nine gale blowing and huge black clouds were rolling in from the west. I said a fond farewell to my Teddy-Bear before leaving the hut.

We parked and changed in a six inch deep muddy puddle at the bottom of a one-in-two hill and then headed off to the cave. 'You're only supposed to go into the cave if there's no water flowing under the bridge.', Julian announced as we neared the river. It was a statement he had to rapidly retract two minutes later and as we stepped onto the bridge, Tim and I tried not to notice the huge torrent of water flowing at our feet.

The entrance was a small hole in the riverbank down which water was gushing at a great rate of knots and I was having serious second thoughts as first Julian and then Tim lay down in the river and disappeared from sight. However, once inside the entrance passage, almost completely covered by fast flowing-water, there was no turning back and it wasn't long before the narrow passage opened up into a large chamber and dry land was in sight. A little further on, we found a pile of emergency supplies; blankets, candles, matches, a telephone and most importantly (as far as I'm concerned), plenty of food! From then onwards, the prospect of being flooded in didn't seem quite so bad

A few hours later, we once again negotiated the entrance passage and emerged into daylight, to find it was drizzling hard. After a quick Snickers bar stop in the middle of the river, we decided to walk downstream through the gorge and explore some of the nearby caves. Here we discovered the hazards of trying to walk on algae-covered rocks. Standing on two feet quickly became an impossibility and we resorted to slithering along on our stomachs for an hour, pausing every now and then to investigate a cave or dive into one of the many deep pools of water lying amongst the rocks.

Exhaustion set in eventually and Tim and I decided that we'd seen enough algae to last a lifetime and attempted an E9 climb up the cliff face to the top of the gorge. (Well, it wasn't quite that bad, but there were a couple of moments when I discovered the hazards of using tree roots as hand holds and nearly made a rapid descent to the foot of the gorge!)

Back at the hut, the others had not yet returned from O.F.D. and so we devoured a pound of bacon and a whole box of eggs and then set about preparing the evening meal - veggie slop. We took full advantage of the fact that the Mad Monk Axeman wasn't around and danced round the kitchen chopping turnips with the radio on full volume.

Supper was followed by a drinking contest in the bar between Tim, Richard and a third participant who shall remain nameless, (I wonder who that could be Rachel?- Ed) but who undoubtedly won the contest with a lead of five pints! (Does that include the two pints that got spilt on the floor? - Ed). The drinking came to an abrupt end however when the simultaneous spillage of two pints of cider sent a huge tidal wave across the table and onto the laps of everyone present and the floor and brought the now unfriendly barman running with a bucket and mop! This was followed by a rather loud, unrepeatable exclamation from the winning (!) participant in the drinking contest, which raised the eyebrows of a large number of locals, upset the barman even more and caused the Mad Monk Axeman from the Croyden Caving Club to wield his axe with even more brute force that night than had been previously observed. For obvious reasons, on returning to the hut that evening, we decided to abandon our earlier plans of playing traverse the table, and retired to bed instead.

We packed and left the hut early the next morning after a fond farewell to the Croyden Caving Club and spent a comparatively uneventful, but nonetheless enjoyable day in Aggie, before returning to Bristol.

CAVING IN THE DORDOGNE

Linda Wilson.

Yet again, we ended up taking our "Summer Holiday" in October & after a great deal of indecision, settled on the Dordogne region of France. This seemed to offer a good range of caves, with the "Painted Caves" to provide added interest. The caves seemed to be grouped into two relatively distinct areas, so to cut down on the travelling we decided on a week in the sleepy little village of Alvignac, near Padirac in Lot-et-Garonne, followed by a week in Le Bugue, to the west of the prehistoric centre of Les Eyzies.

We took the overnight ferry from Southampton to Cherbourg, arriving at 8.45am. The route is straightforward, on good roads with comparatively little traffic, so it didn't seem worth taking the toll motorways, which are expensive and not as direct. A good route is through Avranches, Fougères, Angers, Poitiers, Limoges & Brive-la-Gaillarde. We arrived in Alvignac at about 7.30pm after a day of solid driving. By then, the weather had deteriorated into rain & mist and we seemed to have run out of hotels, somewhat alarming given the tendency of French hotels & cafes to close early. We based ourselves at the Nouvel Hotel, reasonably priced & offering private parking around the back (some degree of security for a car full of caving gear). A double room with toilet & shower was 175F per night, bed & breakfast. Our hotel for the second week, Le Cigne in Le Bugue was slightly more expensive at 410F per night, full board, but again it was good value & their food was particularly fine offering many of the regional specialities.

Anyone intending to visit the show-caves in this area can save themselves some money by contacting Graham & obtaining a specially produced U.B.S.S. membership card, which we found worked very well in getting reduced entrance rates to many of the caves.

The caves we visited, in order of appearance were :-

PADIRAC

Padirac, Lot.

The village of the same name is without a doubt the Cheddar of the region & consists of nothing but gift shops & car parks. The best tour to take is the first one of the day, which is usually a lot quieter. This was the first showing for our membership cards & to my amazement my "Deux billets pour les Speleologues Anglais" routine worked a treat and we got a reduction of 7F each.

Visitors are given a choice of descending into the cave down the stairs or via a lift. The former bring you out into the side of the huge entrance shaft, 103m deep & 20m wide. From the bottom you enter a tall, discreetly lit canyon passage, the only section of the cave where photography is allowed. After the canyon, visitors are taken in boats across some deep, clear stretches of water into a nicely decorated chamber where the walking part of the tour begins. The pathways are concrete, with metal handrails & there is little in the way of protection for the formations, although the visitors are given some protection in places from the worst of the overhead showers by sections of plastic sheeting.

The chambers are large, very well decorated and most impressive. Despite the enormous throughput of people, the length of time the cave has been open to the public & the fact that the lights are on all day, the cave is in surprisingly good condition. There are some bad patches of algae in need

of cleaning, but the overall impression from a conservation viewpoint is relatively favourable. Don't be put off by reports of over-commercialisation, the cave is very well worth a visit.

Details: Open; Easter - 2nd Sunday in October. Tour time; 1½ hours. Cost; 33F (Reduced to 26F).

GROTTE DE PRESQUE

Saint-Cere, Lot.

The cave is short but profusely decorated and very clean. The paths and handrails have been kept to a minimum and the cave is nicely lit, albeit slightly over-bright in places. Its centre-piece is a group of very fine pillar stal about 5m tall, which presents a very attractive sight. The guide did not object to photography and carried a taped commentary for English visitors.

Details: Open; Easter - 10th October. Tour time; ¼ hour. Cost; 16F (student rate).

PECH-MERLE

Cabrerets, Lot.

According to the signs at the entrance, entry is limited to 700 people per day, with no more than 25 in a party, so it is worth arriving early, especially in high season. The cave visit plus tickets for the museum and a short film was 40F each, with no reductions available. The museum has some interesting exhibits, including various pieces of decorated bone. We were both surprised at how small these engravings were; one tiny horse, perfectly carved, was no bigger than a thumbnail.

Our first sight of the cave paintings was unforgettable. We were in a well decorated/ roomy gallery, looking around at the cave, when the guide pointed to the rock wall at the rear and revealed a large frieze of animals, mainly mammoths drawn in black outline. The painting were strong and well defined, looking remarkably fresh. They had tremendous impact and needed very little explanation to compliment the visual display. Also from the same gallery we were able to look a long way across the passage to the famous spotted horses, a most impressive sight.

The guide did a good job of pointing out the various paintings, many of which were in obscure positions, all too easy to miss. The cave itself would be worth a visit, even without the paintings, simply to view its large beautifully decorated and sculpted passages, but the art is certainly an added bonus that makes the cave quite perfect. The whole place is almost completely free of algae and obviously has a carefully controlled environment, which seems to have done an excellent job of preserving the paintings. If you are anywhere within reach of this area, don't under any circumstances miss a visit, it's wonderful!

Details: Open; Easter - 31st October. Tour time; 1 hour.

GOUFFRE DE REVEILLON

Alvignac, Lot

Our first "wild" caving trip. The entrance is huge and impossible to miss, located close to the turning to Alvignac from the Brive to Gramat road. Turn off the main road, then take the next track on the left. The track/small road goes down into a dip, park there on the verge and follow

the obvious path to the right. The entrance depression is on the right of that and a fairly easy descent can be made, which gives a good view of the entrance, 50m high and the same wide, the second largest in France. One word of warning, don't linger in the entrance area as it suffers frequent rock falls from the roof. This area lowers and narrows after about 10m and the remains of an old gate can be seen together with a mass of flood debris at the narrowest point. No water was in evidence there when we visited the cave, but there is a very real flood risk and it should only be visited in dry, settled weather.

The first section leads down a series of short slopes and across some fairly deep pools, which can be skirted around the outside and then down a final slope with the remains of some angle-iron bolted to it and into a muddy section, from which you exit up a slope. After this, follow the right hand branch of the passage to the first pitch, a 3m drop needing a ladder. There are several bolts in place, but take your own hangers. The second pitch follows quickly and again there are bolts in place. This is made up of a 4m drop to a ledge. then a 5m drop down a sheer wall. It is meant to be a 12m pitch, but we rigged it with a 10m ladder which was only about 1m short and did not cause any problems. After this, an awkward 3m drop is reached quite quickly, but this can be bypassed by climbing around a stal boss to the left and down an easier climb.

The last section got muddy again and as the cave as a whole was very dry we think we found the terminal mud choke/sump. A passage to the right leads into a small chamber, then round the corner to another 3m drop that would have been improved by a handline. We gave up here, having achieved our objective of reaching the bottom (we had also run out of tackle). From reading various descriptions later, it seems that the climb requires either a ladder or a handline and leads via another mud climb to the Grande Salle, the largest chamber in the cave.

An excellent trip, with some nice old formations. Perfectly suitable for dry gear and a good warm-up trip. Time, about two hours. Tackle, 2 x 10m ladders, 2 bolts and hangers, 2 spreaders and 1 sling for the top of the first pitch. We used a lifeline to check the length of ladder on the second pitch, but neither pitch was at all difficult.

GROTTE DE LACAVE

Rocamadour, Lot.

The cave has been heavily criticised in some other articles, but we found the complaints of over-commercialisation to be largely unfounded. It's an excellent cave, well protected, well lit and also very clean. The management obviously take good care of their asset. The paths are well laid, but without the destruction of the whole floor area and the wire protection around the formations is relatively unobtrusive.

The advertisements in the area referring to "black light" had puzzled us until we realised it referred to a section of chambers lit only via ultra violet light, in which the tourists walk cautiously along, looking at the blue glowing stal. A harmless and interesting gimmick. The cave has some artificial gour pools, obviously placed to satisfy a presumed desire for water to throw coins into, but these don't detract much from the appearance of the cave. The train ride in is also good fun. Overall, the visit is value for money. We paid 23F each, a reduction of 6F from the usual price.

Details: Open; 1st April - 1st November. Tour time 1½ hours.

GROTTE DES MERVEILLES

Rocamadour, Lot.

The membership cards got a really good reception here. We were the only people on the first tour of the afternoon and were allowed in free, as well as being given a free set of postcards. The guide spoke no English but took a lot of trouble to explain as much as she could, slowly and simply. This is a good example of making the most of a limited resource. Much of the stal was broken when the cave was used as a refuge by the villagers during the Wars of Religion and the few paintings in the cave have also suffered, mainly due to stal deposition obscuring them. The paintings are thought to be Aurignacian and include stencilled hands and black line drawings of animals. They are not all easy to make out, but the guide took a lot of trouble to make things as clear as she could for us and one point of interest she showed us, not noted in most of the books is a series of red dots, first grouped horizontally, then followed by a horizontal line and a triangle. A possible explanation, according to the guide was that these formed a route marker, as the triangle is almost directly below the original way into the cave, up a climb. An interesting and unusually practical theory.

The cave certainly wasn't as marvelous as the name suggested and it is not comparable to the wonders of Pech-Merle, but it has its own merits.

Details: Open; Easter - 31st October. Tour time; ½ hour.

GOUFFRE DE LA FAGE

Noailles, Corrèze.

This was the first self guided show cave we visited in the area and it was undoubtedly in the worst state of preservation. The lights are obviously left on all day and the algae has been allowed to run riot, in consequence, a once pleasant cave is now in a disgusting mess in many places. A lot of stal was obviously destroyed a long time ago, but the rubbish littering the cave is recent and much of it, rotting wooden props and old planks comes from the building of the concrete paths and should have been removed a long time ago. In places there was a strong and not at all pleasant smell of rotting wood. This was a strange contrast to the care that had been taken in other places where the paths had been raised to prevent damage to the floor and where sections of the paths had been cut away around low level formations. An odd mixture of neglect and care. The cave as a whole deserves a good clean up, which would improve matters no end.

Whilst we were in the cave, the lights went out twice. On the first occasion they came back on quite quickly but the second time, they stayed out and we finished our tour on a Mitylite!

Details: Open; June - 31st October. Tour time; as long as you want. Price; 18F, reduced to 15F.

GROTTE DE COGNAC

Gourdon, Lot.

The entrance price of 22F each covers both the painted cave and the stalactite cave. Both caves are very well decorated, but the former is particularly fine; it is not very large and in many places the stal hangs nearly to head height. The roof is absolutely covered in straws, with a forest of pillars and columns all around. Even allowing for the damage that has been done, firstly by the prehistoric painters and secondly by souvenir hunters, the cave is still a wonderful sight.

The path winds amongst the formations which are mostly completely unprotected, but in fact its difficult to see how effective protection could be given in this context, other than by a wire tunnel, which would definitely spoil the visual effect. Its best protection seems to be the vigilance of the guides. The lights are mostly well placed and are shielded with bits of broken stal, which actually doesn't look as bad as it sounds. The cables are somewhat obtrusive in places, but there is no algae in evidence at all. For conservation reasons, tours are limited to spending ten minutes only in the painted chamber and if the tour is slow, the guide will deliberately miss some of the painting to reduce the time. The main painted wall is particularly impressive, with some excellently drawn ibex and a large megaceros. Also of unusual interest are some human figures pierced with spears. It's advisable to take a good description of the art with you in this case, as well as a torch, so that you can pick out the rest of the paintings if the guide is shortening the tour, as you do pass them, it's just that he doesn't switch the relevant lights on.

The second cave contains formations only and photography is allowed. There are more wonderful straw roofs and another ultra violet light display, which seems to be the in-thing in the area at the moment. The guide gave a good tour in both caves and was obviously very concerned about the conservation aspects of the cave management. The lights were turned off in each section as the tour passed through the cave. Very good value for money and not to be missed.

Details: Open; Easter - 31st October. Tour time; 1½ hours. Price; 22F

GOUFFRE DU SAUT DE LA PUCELLE

Gramat, Lot.

There are various descriptions of the cave, all slightly different and it's difficult to work out what tackle to take. The best solution is probably to take 4 or 5 ladders, plus assorted short lengths of rope and various tethers and slings and distribute these as you think necessary. Carrying the tackle is no problem with a larger party, but for two it was a bit of an effort, so we took as much as we could easily carry and agreed that we were just going as far as possible.

The entrance is at the base of a cliff, with a dry stream bed leading to it. It seems this only flows in very wet weather and the cave should then be treated with great care. Park in a lay-by between Gramat and Alvignac, next to the main road and follow the obvious track into the valley. The entrance is marked on the map and its the fourth lay-by north of Gramat).

Route finding in the cave is not difficult; the entrance passage ends in a duck, which can be by-passed via an up-and-over climb on the left into a very large passage. Take the obvious route to the right, through a short muddy section, then left at the end through a low arch and eventually to the streamway. This can be followed down a series of drops/pitches, many of which end in deep pools, requiring a variety of combined tactics plus an odd assortment of tackle. Be warned, many of the pools are deceptively difficult to exit from on the return. We managed about five of the climbs, distributing tackle where we felt necessary, until we stopped after about two hours at a 7m pitch. It would probably take about 3½ hours to bottom the cave.

A good, fun, sporting trip, highly recommended. Wetsuits are essential for enjoyment! In essence, Pucelle is a longer and more entertaining version of Swildons to Sump 1.

The last of our wild caves in the Padirac area. The entrance is marked on the maps, but when we arrived at the relevant point, large signs were visible from the road saying "Private Property, No Entry" (in French), and the track was blocked with a fence and piles of brushwood. In view of this we decided to look for the owner. To find the right farmhouse, take the road from Alvignac (the D20), by-passing Miers and onto the D11. After the unmanned railway crossing, the road forks, take the right hand fork and stop at the first farm on the left, after the railway bridge. The farm is about 1½ miles from the fork.

This was my first attempt at asking permission for access in French. After a confusing conversation, I think I elicited the information that the "prive" signs had been put up after visitors had left the gates open and the "mouton" had strayed onto the road, but it also seems that there is some sort of right of way to the entrance. As far as I could tell, the lady of the house didn't object to our proposed visit, but it seemed safer to ask rather than risk upsetting the landowners. We parted on good terms even if there hadn't been a great deal of comprehension on either side! (We also decided to mug up on the French for "The lady at the farm down the road said it was O.K.", just in case we were challenged by an irate Frenchman with a shotgun.)

Park in the obvious place by the verge where the road forks, and follow the track which runs parallel to the railway line. After about ¼ mile the doline is reached, 50m in diameter and almost sheer on three sides. Follow the same path down the slope, the descent is steep and the last 10m is a somewhat awkward scramble, where a rope would be useful if the ground was wet. A path to the right at the bottom leads to a low, wide bedding plane entrance. In wet weather it obviously takes a great deal of water and will fill to the roof. After a short section of crawling and stooping, a large passage is reached which meanders for about 500m to the terminal chamber with a large attractive sump pool. Along the way is a lot of old stal, with some fine flowstone, brightly coloured by iron deposits. The high water line can easily be seen in the passage and about three sections will be sumped when a stream is flowing. An enjoyable trip, requiring no tackle and taking about an hour.

Thus ended the first part of our holiday. We had covered everything that was open in the vicinity. The only show caves we were unable to visit were two smaller stalactite caves to the south, Froissac and Bellevue, for which the season had ended about two weeks earlier. Time to move to another area!

Further Reading: Grottes et Canyons (Pierre Minivelle)

Cavernes en Perigord (Pierre Vidal)

odds and s^ods

CURRENT COMMITTEE.

Here's a list of your fresh (well almost) committee.

Secretary	Alison Garrard.
	Tim Parrish.
Treasurer	Graham Mullan.
Student Treasurer	Nilesh Chauhan.
MiC.Tackle	Steve Cottle.
MiC.Photography	Matt Wood.
Newsletter Editor	Andy Farrant.
Hut Warden	Paul Harvey
Librarian	Tony Boycott
Museum Monitor	Rachel Privett
Museum Curator	Chris Hawkes
Committee posts	Eve Pleydell
	Richard Swann
	Linda Wilson.
	Hannah Bartholemew

IF YOU NEED A BREAK FROM EXAMS

S	T	A	L	A	G	M	I	T	E	C	N	S	W
C	U	R	K	N	I	S	P	R	I	R	I	P	A
J	U	G	I	R	L	C	A	V	E	Y	P	R	T
O	Z	R	M	T	L	W	A	T	E	S	H	I	E
E	N	O	T	S	E	M	I	L	N	T	K	N	R
T	H	A	C	A	L	C	I	T	E	A	I	G	F
I	S	P	R	U	I	H	A	R	D	L	T	L	A
T	O	P	Y	N	U	N	A	V	Z	O	O	E	L
C	R	O	M	M	L	U	S	T	E	O	F	G	L
A	I	O	S	U	O	T	A	H	D	R	Y	A	K
L	V	M	T	L	S	Q	P	T	A	W	N	S	I
A	E	V	P	O	T	H	O	L	E	F	I	S	H
T	R	I	O	C	L	I	O	U	T	S	T	A	Y
S	T	R	A	W	A	T	L	D	E	E	R	P	S

Stalagmite
Stalactite
Calcite
Column
Spring
Straw
Passage
Waterfall
Sump
Sink
Curtain
Pothole
Cavern
Cave
Limestone
Pool
Crystal
Gill
Shaft
Flood
River

TRY THIS!

GEAR ORDER

The Austria expedition will be putting in an order for tackle and supplies such as carbide and duracells. We expect to be able to get quite a good price, but anyone who wants to add anything to the order would be most welcome, as the more we want to buy, the bigger the discount (hopefully!). We will be approaching several shops, most of which sell more than just caving kit, so if you want to buy a tent or climbing kit, or anything similar, then get in touch. There is no need to commit yourself firmly to anything at this stage. However, I am hoping to get this order in before too long, so please get in touch as soon as possible. Telephone me, Topher Martyn, on 541024, for further details.

If anybody is interested in having a Russian Penfriend, then this may be of some interest. The *Barrier* club is a group of students and Postgrads at the Moscow Physical-Technical Institute who are interested in caving, hiking and generally having a good time. They are looking for friends abroad, so if you are interested in going to Russia, then try getting in touch.

The address is

Grigory M. Sigalov,

USSR, 141700, Moscow region

Dolgoprudny-1, a/ya 41,

Speleoclub Barrier

or Fax: (095) 2926511 attn:3745 Barrier.

For more details, please contact Charlie Self.

JULIAN



AND HIS

AMAZING UNDERPANTS

AMAZINGLY
MUDDY

(WITH APPOLOGIES TO VIZ)

