

for the Lower Palaeolithic or for the important Later Upper Palaeolithic. Some finds are shown for the later prehistoric cultures, hardly any for the Roman and later periods. Too many of the illustrations of finds lack a scale.

While it is possible to find inconsistencies and gaps, the book is a good five quid's worth and is surely an essential possession for anyone at all interested in our local archaeology. Let us hope, however, that we do not have to wait another 50 years for the next comprehensive review.

D. T. Donovan

THE MAMMAL FAUNA OF THE EARLY MIDDLE PLEISTOCENE
CAVERN INFILL SITE OF WESTBURY-SUB-MENDIP, SOMERSET,
by M. J. BISHOP

Special Paper in Palaeontology No. 28; Palaeo. Assoc. 1982, 108 pp.,
47 text-figs., 6 pls., 50 tables.

In 1969 some students visiting the Westbury-sub-Mendip quarry found mammal bones in a fissure; at first they looked like those of cave bear and woolly rhino—late Pleistocene mammals so common in Mendip caves and rock shelters. However, within a few weeks Prof. Tratman produced the canine tooth of a sabretooth tiger; this was only the fourth such tooth to have been found in Britain, the others being from Kent's cavern in Devon, Dove Hole and Creswell Crags in Derbyshire. It soon after became clear that the bear was not a cave bear nor the rhino a woolly rhino. We had here an exciting and very rich fauna quite different from anything else in Somerset. During the early 1970's the Spelaeos under Tratman's direction made extensive collections at the site, but the quarry owners were less than helpful; they blasted the face containing the fissure and succeeded in destroying much of the fauna. A rescue operation was mounted and Mike Bishop began research on the collections then at Bristol University. In the course of time the British Museum (Natural History) succeeded in getting permission to excavate and have during the late 1970's made further collections.

The current monograph is the product of Mike Bishop's work over almost a decade and represents the most important contribution to the British Pleistocene mammal fauna for several decades. Bishop records the preservation of 48 species; he gives a description of each and supplements this with commentaries on their distribution in time and space. In the fissures there are three faunas, recognised on both lithological and ecological criteria. The first fauna is a derived woodland fauna recovered from the basal waterlaid sands and gravels; the assemblage may be mixed and is certainly very small. The taxa include the stratigraphically important Early Pleistocene vole *Mimomys*, lynx, hyaenid, beaver, small deer, primitive rhino and small bovid.

The main fauna which Bishop interprets as a carnivore lair is dominated by the presence of very large numbers of Deninger's bear (over 2,000 specimens representing not less than 65 individuals); this species is a probable ancestor of the cave bear. Along with the bear are

remains of bats, sabretooth tiger, panther, wolf, horse, deer, bison and voles. The third fauna is an accumulation of rodent remains, originating from the regurgitated food pellets of a predatory bird, probably an owl. This fauna is dominated by the remains of voles, with a few shrews and moles. Each fauna is considered to have lived in a temperate period of the Pleistocene Ice Age. The best correlations appear to be with the Cromerian Interglacial of the Middle Pleistocene, a stage known from faunas on the Norfolk coast (Westbury Fauna 1) and with a temperate stage between the Cromerian and the Hoxnian (Westbury Fauna 2 & 3).

The Westbury site has yielded the richest carnivore and rodent assemblage of any Pleistocene site in Britain, and the list includes eight species new to Britain. The sediments of the Westbury Fauna 2 have flints which may have been worked by man; if so they represent the earliest evidence of man in the British Isles. This monograph is a major contribution to the history of British Pleistocene mammal faunas and the Society may feel proud to be associated with the work.

R. J. G. Savage

PLEISTOCENE VERTEBRATES IN THE BRITISH ISLES,

by A. J. STUART

Longman, 1982, 212 pages, £16.50.

The scientific study of Pleistocene vertebrates dates back to the first half of the last century. Since then hundreds of sites have been excavated and millions of fossil teeth and bones recovered. An up-to-date review of the current state of knowledge was greatly needed, since the numerous changes in zoological nomenclature and the publication of results from many poorly excavated deposits, has made the vast literature virtually incomprehensible to all but the specialist. Anthony Stuart's book provides a timely, concise and well written summary of the stratified, British Pleistocene vertebrates, for he ignores most of the material from unstratified deposits.

After a brief introduction, the second chapter on the Pleistocene of the British Isles clearly describes the British Quaternary sequence and provides a framework within which the vertebrate remains can be interpreted. It should also allow readers with only a rudimentary knowledge of the Quaternary to make use of this book.

Chapters on Taxonomy and Identification, Taphonomy and Palaeoecology describe the methods and problems of identifying and interpreting Pleistocene vertebrate assemblages. The discussion of the new but important subject of Taphonomy is particularly illuminating since little useful palaeoenvironmental or ecological information can be gleaned from any fossiliferous deposit unless the bias introduced by the process of fossilization is understood. It is, however, unfortunate that no reference is made to the careful taphonomic work of Korth (1979) on microvertebrate assemblages, or to the life long work of Brain (e.g. 1981) on cave assemblages. Stuart's ideas on palaeoecology are well considered, avoiding the naive view that climate directly limits the