

REVIEWS

LOWE, D. AND WALTHAM, A. 1995. A Dictionary of Karst and Caves. *British Cave Research Association Cave Studies Series*. 6. 40pp. Price £2.50 ISBN 0 900265 19 1.
(Reviewed by Graham Mullan)

Cave and Karst literature contains an immense number of terms that can prove extremely confusing to the newcomer to the subject, especially as the majority of them have been borrowed, on a slightly *ad hoc* basis, from a number of different disciplines and languages. There has long been a need, therefore, for a comprehensive glossary covering them and this one especially as it is aimed at the newcomer and the non-specialist is a welcome arrival.

The booklet has been produced in the now standard A5 format of this series and is cleanly printed on matt art paper. There are a number of minor typos, most notably the confusion between Sof Omar (text) and Sef Omar (caption) on page 28, and many of the photographs have been reproduced at a rather a small size, for this reviewer's taste at any rate, though this is of course a problem of cost as much as anything else. The diagrams are generally clear and understandable only the position of the "vadose inlet" in the cross section on page 8 being a little obscure. Most newcomers will also find the annotated stratigraphical column on the inside back cover very useful.

As a glossary, especially for its target audience, it works quite well. It makes no attempt to give the etymology of most words, save for the occasional reference to a foreign origin, but gives good illustrative examples of many terms. This has given rise to one slightly bizarre misreading in that the text on pages 6/7 under "Bridge" would lead readers to turn to the front cover expecting a photograph of G.B. Cavern, not the Chinese feature actually shown. There are a number of other inconsistencies and irritations in the text: On page 21, rundkarren are about 200 mm wide whereas on page 31 they are 50 – 500 mm deep and wide. Given the, quite correct, stress placed on the differences in process involved in the formation of rillenkarrren and rundkarren there was probably no need to quote these slightly misleading different sizes at all. On page 34, the great stalactite in Pol (not Poll, as stated) an Ionain is quoted as *not* being the world's longest – without saying what is! More seriously, on page 31, under "Sandstone caves", the authors talk about *true caves* without indicating what they mean by this. The entry under "Cave" on page 8 does not really help.

The authors state quite clearly that this dictionary is not exhaustive and that it is aimed mainly at British readers. This was the correct approach to take, as a comprehensive worldwide encyclopaedia of terms would have been quite a different beast and of much less use to their target audience. Probably the only terms that I would have liked to see included are "Cutter" and "Pinnacle", American equivalents to "Grike" and "Clint" and that mainly because of their use by W.B. White in his 1988 textbook which is one of the main references that the newcomer is likely to come across.

REFERENCE

WHITE, W.B. 1988. *Geomorphology and Hydrology of Karst Terrains*. New York. Oxford University Press. 464 pp.