

Do the changes make it worth replacing your old map? Perhaps not from a purely caving point of view as most cavers will have drawn the cave locations themselves on to their old map, but, undoubtedly, yes if you want a document recording the rapid changes in this idiosyncratic landscape. These maps are invaluable to anyone with a deeper interest in landscape and the many facets that give an area its identity.

Colin Bunce

*Caves and Karst of the Brecon Beacons National Park, A Field Guide.* by Mike Simms. 1998. B.C.R.A. Cave Studies Series No. 7. 32pp. Price £2.50. ISBN 0 900265 20 5

This small volume is one of a series covering topics such as surveying or particular caving areas. They are intended both for sport cavers who are becoming interested in speleology and general readers with an interest in limestone scenery. Its author is an academic geologist with particular knowledge of the southeast Powys and Gwent portion of the outcrop and this is reflected in the distribution of the six excursions detailed.

The first quarter of the book provides an outline of the geology and geomorphology of the region. Generally this is well pitched relative to the intended readership, though the occasional technical term, such as glacial till, is left unexplained. It is interesting to see an absolute age of in excess of 780,000 years BP quoted in the context of cave formation, based on magnetic polarity reversal studies.

The remainder of the volume describes six circular walks. One each covers the Western Black Mountain; Sink y Giedd/Dan yr Ogof and the Hepste/Mellte/Neath basin. The other three deal with the Llangattock Escarpment; Clydach Gorge and Pwll Du/Blaenavon. Each excursion is divided into sites for which a grid reference is given and these cover the points of interest in the particular area fairly thoroughly, though the route between sites is left to the reader's map reading abilities, aided by good sketch maps, which also show the underlying plans of the larger cave systems. The topics considered are the immediate geology (referring back to the introductory section) drainage patterns and the relationship of the features noted to both of these. It is not intended as a cave guide and only the parts of caves accessible to the general public are described.

The coverage is on a sampling basis, not a complete description of the karst in the National Park. Ogof Fynnon Ddu, for example is only mentioned in passing. Indeed I think that there might have been some point in including a contrasting area such as Taff Fechan, where cave development is very restricted and commenting on why this might be. This is still karst scenery, even without the caves. In excursion 6, mention of Garn Ddyrys Iron Works could have made reference to the use of limestone as smelting flux as the reason for the existence of many of the quarries previously described. Despite these criticisms, I feel that a reasonable "taste" of the region is provided.

Production is in an attractive glossy A5 format, with excellent photographic quality. A couple of minor lapses were noted. The limestone stratigraphy diagram misspells Llangattock and the subheading "Pwll Du to Blaenavon" is missing its number "7". However, I believe the guide should succeed in encouraging its intended readers to move onto the more detailed works included in the short bibliography. For those who have already done so, it provides a useful aide memoire to what is there, in compact form.

Roy Musgrove