

MCG NEWS

January 1987 No. 100

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

SUBS ARE NOW OVERDUE...

£15 for members

£7.50 for associate members

SPAIN '86

As you are probably aware, this years summer expedition took place in the Malaga region of Spain from 13th to 27th September. This region, whilst not as extensive as other areas of Spain, does have a number of large systems, the most notable being the SIMA G.E.S.M. @ - 1078 metres deep - but more significantly has great scope for further discoveries.

Eighteen members were present at the main caving base in the village of Benaolan just SW of Ronda, with a further five members on the coast. We were lucky enough to have the help of Victoria and Genaro - a local caver - for most of our stay and this proved an invaluable asset.

Accommodation was in the form of a small farm house and was ideal as a caving hut, having a large dining area, showers and a spacious upstairs room with a very comfortable floor suitable for between 1 and 20 people - depending on how friendly everyone was feeling.

The scenery was as you would expect, very dramatic, with peaks reaching heights of 1600 metres and over separated by deep vallies or large high-level plateaus. In all seven different caves were descended during our stay and many more surface exploration trips undertaken resulting in the discovery of at least two new entrances. The highlight of the trip however, was the descent of the SIMA GESM by three separate parties reaching depths of 200M, 500M and 950M respectively.

A full report of the SIMA GESM and all the other trips undertaken will be forthcoming in time, but for now a brief reume of the expeditions main events can be provided by condensed extracts from the logbook.

EXPEDITION MEMBERS

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1) Andy Beare | 10) Yvonne Ward |
| 2) Lesley Robbins | 11) Linda Gates |
| 3) Ian Parry | 12) Jonathen Roberts |
| 4) Martin Rowe | 13) Adrian Duckett |
| 5) Neil Hutchinson | 14) Grant Shephard |
| 6) Victoria Arbizu | 15) Mike Hazelden |
| 7) Genaro | 16) Sue Hazelden |
| 8) Alan Mellon | 17) Garry Pairaudeau |
| 9) Louise Curley | 18) Wendy |

STAYING AT THE COAST:

- 1) John Miriam
- 2) Helen Miriam
- 3) The Kempstons
- 4) The Bartons
- 5) The McKechnies

Cont on p3

SPELEODATE

1987 MEETS PROGRAMME

<u>DATE</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>CAVE</u>	<u>LEADER</u>	<u>TELEPHONE</u>
3 JAN	MENDIP	TYNING'S BARROWS	JON ROBERTS	01 575 6437
24 JAN	YORKSHIRE	PENYGHENT	ROGER WALLINGTON	0753 43384
7 FEB	MENDIP	THRUPE LANE	RICHARD STANSFIELD	0276 684983
21 FEB	WALES	D.Y.O.	IAN MCKECHNIE	0932 228292
7 MAR	MENDIP	RESCUE PRACTICE	ALAN DOUGHERTY	0934 863056
21 MAR	YORKSHIRE	JUNIPER GULF	MARTIN ROWE	0252 876783
4 APR	MENDIP	A.G.M. / DINNER	BOB SPELEO	-
18 APR	YORKSHIRE	S.R.T. TRAINING	ADRIAN DUCKETT	01 572 2374
2 MAY	SKYE	UAMH CINN GHLINN	JOHN MIRIAM	01 393 3955
23 MAY	YORKSHIRE	WEST KINGSDALE	ANDY BEARE	0734 790764
6 JUN	MENDIP	GEOLOGY WEEKEND	MALCOLM COTTER	07842 52643
20 JUN	WALES	TUNNEL CAVE	MIKE HAZELDEN	0703 464491
4 JUL	MENDIP	G.B. CAVE	YVONNE WARD	0252 876783
18 JUL	YORKSHIRE	GINGLING HOLE	MIKE LOVELL	0734 663747
1 AUG	MENDIP	BANWELL BONE CAVE	ROY KEMPSTON	0726 34338
15 AUG	WALES	O.F.D.	GEOFF BARTON	0923 49241
5 SEP	MENDIP	STOKE LANE SLOCKER	GORDON JISTER	01 579 3466
19 SEP	TURKEY	TAURUS	NEIL HUTCHINSON	01 267 1005
3 OCT	MENDIP	HALF YEARLY	-	-
17 OCT	YORKSHIRE	RIFT POT	PADDY NEWMAN	-
7 NOV	MENDIP	ST CUTHBERTS	BRIAN TERRY	0533 432533
21 NOV	WALES	DAREN CILAU	IAN PARRY	0296 87795
5 DEC	MENDIP	BLACKMOOR MASTER CAKE	HELEN MIRIAM	01 393 3955
19 DEC	MAJORCA	VARIETY	NEIL HUTCHINSON	01 267 1005

Note: Entry at 5 Dec does read cake, not cave.



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ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBER: GORDON LISTER, 127 Seaford Rd., West Ealing, London, W13. 01-579-3466 (home).

From p1

LOG:

- SAT 13th - Arrive at Malaga after a truly grim flight at 5.00am to be met by Victoria and Genaro with a Landrover - a useful asset owing to the mountain of gear that needed transporting to the caving base. Arrive in Benaolan about 8.00am - stock fridge with local brew and retire to bed for rest of day.
- SUN 14th - NH, IP, AB, PN, MR - Cave hunting on plateau at foot of SIERRA DE MONTALATE Rest - various shopping activities and visits to Cueva de la Pileta show cave.
- MON 15th - AB, LR, PN, MR, NH - SIMA DE VILLALUENGA. A 200M deep vertical system mercifully close to the road in the village of Villaluenga del Rosario.
JR, AM, LC, GS, IP, YW, LG - CUEVA DEL GATTO. A brief trip around the entrance series, failing to find the less than obvious way on into the main stream passage.
- TUE 16th - IP, AB, LG, NH, GS, LC, AM, MR, MH, VA, GENARO - CUEVA DEL GATTO. All to about 1.5M in, then AB, IP, NH, MH to about 2.5M and start of wet section - make leisurely exit taking photos on the way.
MH, JR - investigate small entrances on hillside above Benaolan station, mostly small rock shelters but a couple being worth a second look.
- WED 17th - MH, AM, LC, GS, VA, GENARO - HUNDIDERO - GATTO THROUGH TRIP - a distance of about 4KM through the mountain, the first 1KM consisting of a series of deep pools passed with the aid of rubber dingies.
MR, IP, AB, LR, JR, GP, PN, NH - Locate CABO DE RONDA and spend afternoon prospecting surrounding area - plateau between SIERRA DE LIBAR and SIERRA PERALTO. IP and NH spend ½hr clearing vegetation from a small rift, but fail to find anything of any interest. After several hours everyone is about to give up when AB and NH nearly fall into a large vertical rift between boulders at CORTIJO DE LOS NUNEZ - a 10M drop leads to a series of mud filled passages with much scope for further extension.
- THU 18th - MH, SH, MR, PN, AM, LC - visit LA PILETA show cave.
GB, IM, RK, JM - visit entrance series of DEL GATTO.
NH, IP, AB, LR - Prospecting trip to SIERRA DEL PALO - find one possible site - explored to a depth of 15M by IP.
- FRI 19th - GB, IM, RK, JM, YW, LG - CUEVA DEL CHAPI - a fairly short but well decorated horizontal system.
JR - solo trip to Gibraltar.
- SAT 20th/SUN 21st - SIMA GESM - Almost everyone to cave entrance where two parties assemble for main trip of the expedition. MH, PEPE, IP, NH enter cave at 5.15pm Sat. followed ½hr later by MR, PN, GP, AB. PN and MR forced to turn back at 200M when PN injures arm - surface at about 11.00pm.
AB and GP get to 500M - exit at 3.30am Sun and promptly get lost whilst trying to locate GP's van!
MH, PEPE, IP and NH get to 950M before running out of rope and getting co-opted into the derigging party! Surface at 5.30pm Sun.
- MON 22nd - JM, GS, VA, GENARO - CUEVA LIBAR located at the end of the long valley between SIERRA DEL PALO and SIERRA DE LIBAR - a predominantly vertical cave.
MH, LR, MR, YW, PN, LG - DEL GATTO through trip.
AB, GP - DEL GATTO - photographic trip.
- TUE 23rd - GS, VA, GENARO - SIMA DE LA VENTANA - again a predominantly vertical system consisting of a series of parallel shafts.
MH, NH, AB - LR, JM, IP - MR, PN, GP - CABO DE RONDA - A large stream cave descending to a depth of 240M by a series of short pitches and traverses around deep pools.

Cont on p4

From p3 The cave was descended in three separate groups with a fourth of JR, SH and Wendy staying on surface to warn of any approaching rain clouds as the cave is known to fill to almost half its depth in less than 40 minutes heavy rain!

WED 24th - VA, GS, GENARO - prospecting trip to SIERRA DE MONTALATE.
MR, NH, IP, AB, GP, JR - final HUNDIDERO - GATTO through trip.

THU 25th - Various tourist trips.

FRI 26th - depart for Malaga airport and UK.

I think all concerned would agree that the expedition was a resounding success. Caving of a serious nature in systems such as SIMA GESM as well as more straightforward - although no less dramatic - trips such as the HUNDIDERO - GATTO system, together with the dramatic terrain giving abundant walking / scrambling possibilities, not forgetting the serious sunbathing potential make this area of Spain well worth a return visit.

The greatest attraction of the area however must be its potential for further discoveries, as many mountain areas over 1200M remain for the most part unexplored, a further 1000M plus, deep system is by no means impossible.

Neil Hutchinson.

LONG HOLE - BEWARE!

The party consisted of Martin Rowe, Yvonne Ward, Peter Cattemull, Pete Bulling Don ? and Mick ?.

We parked in the car park by Cooper's Hole in Cheddar Gorge. We then took a very steep and slippery path that started on a spur above Cooper's Hole. After quite a long climb we came to a ridge under a cliff and following this to the right we came to Great Oones Hole. We had a quick look inside then tried to find Long Hole with some difficulty. There was no mistaking it when we found it - a very large imposing entrance with a terraced floor (covered in rabbit droppings).

Just inside on the right was a gated entrance to Gough's Cave. Straight on led to boulders and a stal slope after which we went from an upright walk to a crawl. Further on to the right was a passage with a dead-end and a supposed audible link with Gough's Cave.

Back on the main route and a bit further on was another passage on the right which led to a chamber with a 15ft free-climb into an aven and a route on. Having all reached the chamber, Martin suddenly noticed that the chamber entrance and walls were loose and crumbling. Quite large chunks were coming away with cracks everywhere.

About 2/3rds up the 15ft free-climb was a jammed boulder which had to be negotiated en-route but it also had a crack right down it which was about 1/2ins wide! Needless to say we didn't attempt it, in fact we couldn't get out of the chamber fast enough. Liz Price told us later that explosives had been used in part of Gough's Cave in the recent past and that this could be the cause.

Back on the main route again and almost immediately is an upward slope which leads to a scree-choked connection with the surface. The scree was very loose and had fallen down the slope making progress difficult and dangerous so at this point we all agreed that enough was enough and bid a hasty retreat.

Once out we found a more straightforward route back to the road albeit still steep and slippery. Instead of going back around the base of the cliff and down to Cooper's Hole, we went in a straight line down from the cliff which took us to the coach park just a short distance along from the cars.

If anyone has a burning desire to go down Long Hole, they should exercise extreme caution - don't cough, sneeze or fart!!!



Cottage

COTTAGE BOOKINGS:

10/11 JAN.	AVON ACF	(12)
19-23 JAN.	RNAS	(17)
2-6 FEB.	RNAS	(18)
9-13 FEB.	RNAS	(18)
14/15 FEB	S.CONQUEST	(10)
28F/1 MAR	EALING COLLEGE	(12)
9-13 MAR	RNAS	(18)
14/15 MAR	WOLVERHAMPTON MC	(12)
23-27 MAR	RNAS	(10)
30M-3 APR	RNAS	(10)
6-10 APR	RNAS	(9)

COTTAGE BOOKING SYSTEM:

The basic rules and guidelines are outlined on p4 of Newsletter 179. The only change has occurred with block bookings. In this respect block bookings for member groups / non-members / guest clubs etc must be made through the cottage warden.

Allocation of dates for non-members / guest clubs will generally be for the second and fourth weekends in the month. For all block bookings a cottage booking form will be issued which should be returned with a 25% deposit. This will then be entered in the master file and duplicated in the cottage file.

LOST LADDER:

Will somebody who used the ladder on 15/16 Nov. (i.e. the aluminium ladder usually left locked by the coal-bunker) please inform me as to its whereabouts. If I hear nothing we must assume it has been stolen and take the necessary action.

KEYS:

Probationary: On being welcomed to the club an S.A.E. will get you your cottage key.

Full member: As soon as you are confirmed send me your old key with an S.A.E. and I'll send you your coveted master key.

Lapsed member: If you are fed up with us please return your cottage key and we can say 'he/she wasn't so bad after all'.

UNCLAIMED GEAR:

... shaving bags, pants and other miscellaneous grot.

These are stored under the stairs for about three months / until something starts growing, whichever is the sooner. There are plenty of notices about so don't be surprised if your cherished gussetless undies that you left behind last Christmas have since gone.

EXTERNAL ERECTIONS:

By the time this goes to print a few modifications as indicated on the plan will be complete. (see p7) Initially it was intended to build a new extension on the southern side of the cottage. This had got as far as the planning stage and when I took over as the warden last April the retiring warden handed me all the bumpff and expressed a lack of interest from members to put 'spade to ground'.

Something was needed. We were in the process of purchasing the new land and the committee decided that a compromise was better than nothing at all happening. So, what's been done? :-

From p5

a) Dustbin stand.

A small blockwork enclosure on a solid base holds our two dustbins. This is situated outside of the front wall on the left hand side of the entrance gate. The bins are emptied usually on a Mon. Left untethered the empty bins would usually get blown halfway to Wells. The small enclosure ensures this does not happen.

b) New acquired frontage after land purchase.

When we purchased our new plot, we were contracted to supply the farmer with a new access gate and lay some solid form of access to it.

With other construction work within our boundary imminent our car parking facilities would be reduced. We have now laid limestone scalplings from the dustbin stand up to and including the new access gate, 35 tons of the stuff in fact. If you park sensibly there is room for at least 8 vehicles on this area, but please remember the access to the field is private.

c) Coal bunkers.

The existing bunkers were in the way once the new land was acquired. A new concrete path has been built from near the back door around to the north side of the cottage wher the bunkers are re-located.

d) New hosing down area / drying shed.

Remember you used to put your gear on the fence and cause a flood outside the back door? Hopefully this small construction will contain all the mess.

A slightly elevated concrete base (to allow run-off of water) is bounded on the N and W sides by one course of blockwork. The E and S sides are five courses high, the S side mainly for the protection of the shed.

We were hoping to have a standpipe in the enclosure, but that would have meant burying the pipework well underground and what about the frost etc - too much hassle. Instead the same old hosepipe will be run overhead to the enclosure and can be disconnected and drained off in cold weather.

The rope washing contraption is there and rope can be fed into a bucket to prevent it getting dirty again. The water runs into a gully along the back of the cottage into a soakaway. If

the gully becomes silted you can raise the slabs covering the gully, clean it out, and replace the slabs.

The drying shed, once fitted out is the place to store your wet/dry caving gear - not the changing room.

There is a power supply but we are still working out whether to instal a fan or heater or what?

The shed will be lockable and the key located on the back of the southern entrance door.

Finally, so you don't bring all the mud back indoors, some duckboards are laid for this purpose.

e) External lighting.

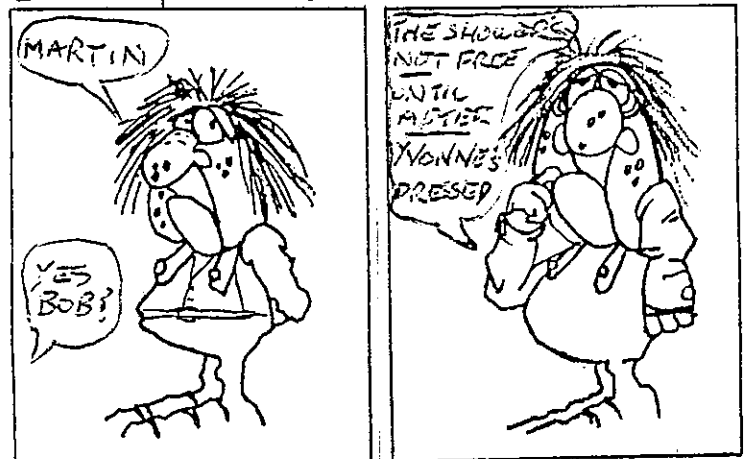
Two new halogen lights have been put up. One overlooking the hosing-down area, one overlooking the camping area. The switches are marked - please ensure they are not left on unnecessarily.

Summary:-

1. Use car parking facilities sensibly and if parking on new area leave the field-gate access free.
2. Use the hosing down enclosure, not the back of the cottage. It's there to contain the mess. Clean it regularly.
3. Use the shed for storage/drying not the changing room. Keep it locked when you use it.
4. Make sure the external lights are not left on when not needed - they use a lot of electricity.
5. Keep Nordrach tidy.

John Beauchamp.

Bob Speleo β



Spratt's Barn Shaft, Oxfordshire

Having failed twice to get on a Box Mines trip, I couldn't resist an opportunity to go down a Stonesfield Slate Mine in Oxfordshire.

Stonesfield slate is a very localised sandy development within the Jurassic Limestone (Great Oolite Series); it occurs under and around the village of Stonesfield near Oxford, and records show 20 known locations of old shafts and 24 possible shafts in and around the village. Spratt's Barn Shaft was the last mine to be worked, closing in 1911, and it has never been backfilled. I understand that another shaft has recently been reopened but I was unable to visit it.

For our visit to Spratt's Barn Shaft (which is to be found tucked away in the corner of a farmyard) three long builders' ladders had been lashed together. After our rather civilised descent of about 7.5 metres we found ourselves in a chamber approximately 3 metres in diameter with a gallery or adit leading off in a northerly direction. This passage gradually bears round to the left and after about 135 metres ends in a small chamber big enough for 3 or 4 people to sit.

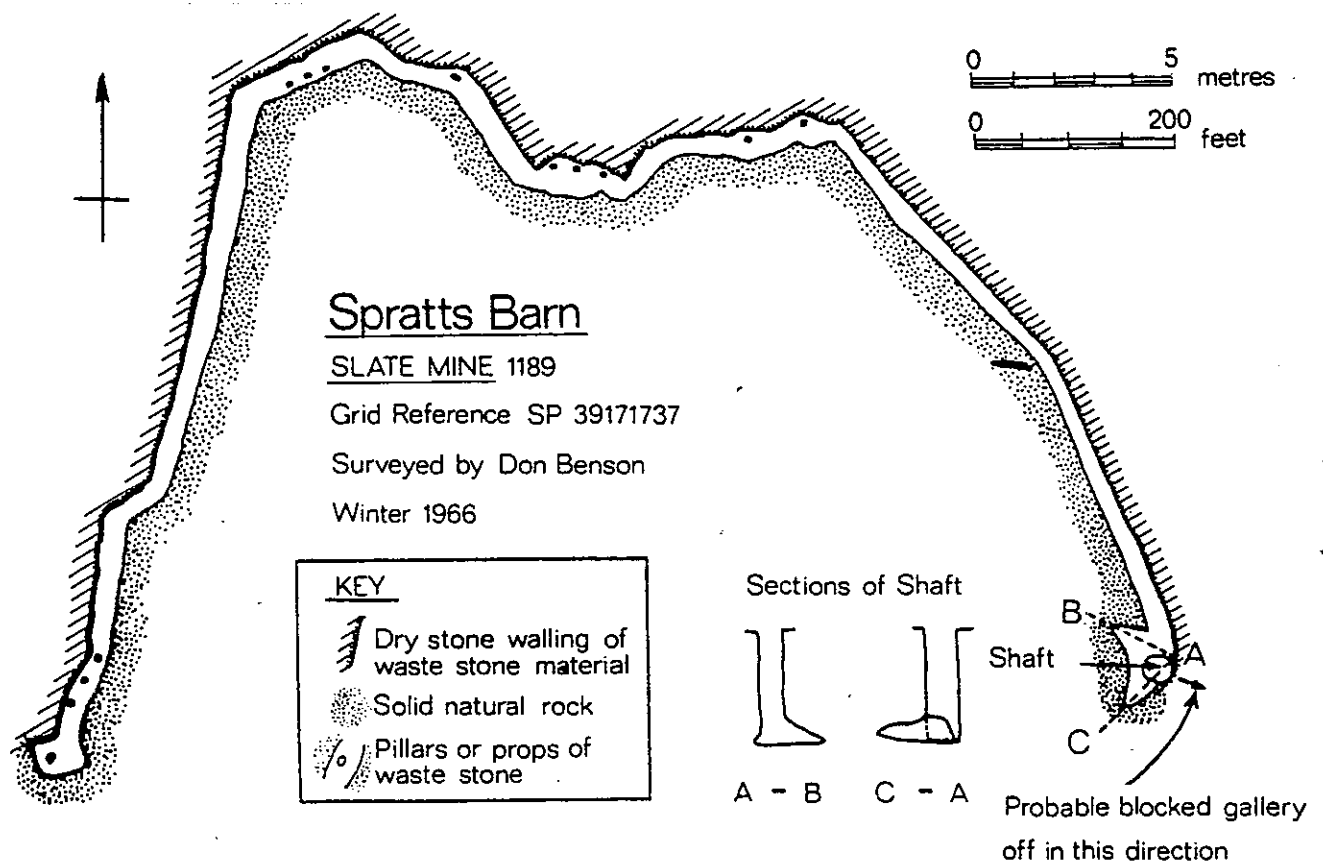
The whole of the left (western and southern) wall of the adit shows natural strata with marks from the miners picks still clearly visible. The right wall is of packed stone or 'deads'; it appears that the slate was worked from the left wall, good slate taken out, and the reject rock stacked on the right. How far the stacked stone extends is not known but the open part of the passage is 1.0 - 1.5 metres wide and 1.0 - 1.3 metres high.

In places the roof is supported by pillars built from reject stone, and near the entrance are grooves in the floor made by the barrows used to transport the slate material to the base of the shaft.

Splitting the slates required frost action, and the stone had to be kept wet until sufficiently hard frosts occurred. This was done either by storing the stone underground until winter, or by wetting the stone, covering it with straw and burying it in earth clamps. When a hard frost was expected the stone would be dug up and spread out on the fields for the frost to act. Then it was up to the slatters (slatemakers) to trim the thin slabs into finished slates for roofing.

The shaft is owned by the farmer but is maintained under the guidance of the Nature Conservancy - dare I mention the words!

Ref. Stonesfield Slate, M.A. Aston, Oxfordshire C. Council Department of Museum Services, Publication No.5, 1974. by Joan Goddard



“..... because it might be there”

Here are a few comments made by cavers about caving, from an article by Charles Nevin in the Daily Telegraph on 26-5-86.

Nick Geh - "It's exercise, it's a challenge, pitting yourself against something. It teaches you your limitations and how to stay within them. You know the Mallory quote 'because it's there', well, with caving it's because it might be there. It's the thrill of discovery".

Julia Rees - "It's a different world. You lose all track of time, what day it is. I come from London and it's marvellous to get away from it all".

Nick Geh - "You look at the gap and you think about the best way to approach it. If you get stuck, you mustn't panic".

Vaughan Clark - "A minute and a half of lying still is worth an hour of effort. I rely on my colleagues if I get in trouble. It creates a bonding relationship between people".

Ivan Walton - "Just mud undisturbed is a sight".

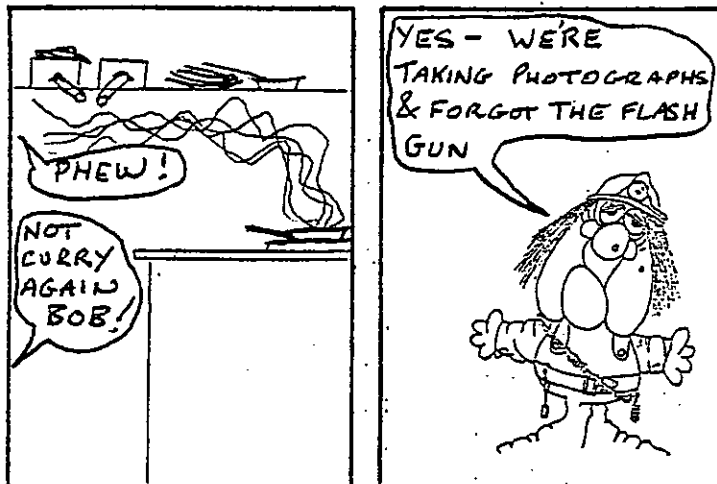
Karen Sinyard - "After a nice hot shower you feel fantastic. I think a lot of women are put off by the mud. Some of the caves are nice and clean though. Caving has more to do with people who prefer cooperation to competition".

Haydn Rees - "I did try going down to the beach for a holiday but the whole place stank of Ambre Solaire. Couldn't stand it. You give me underground any time".

The final comment from Charles Nevin - "It entailed moving over slippery limestone rocks and boulders which insisted on presenting their sharp edges to wellingtons, traversing across drops with hands and feet distributed on opposite sides, walking through streams which insisted on entering wellingtons, executing what are called 'controlled slithers' down inclines and squeezing through a narrow gap named - most aptly, in the case of the Daily Telegraph Duo - 'Fat Man's Horror'. While emptying wellingtons it was possible to look at the odd stalactite and stalagmite".

Charles Nevin and his photographer were taken down Ogof Ffynnon Ddu by SWCC. They didn't say if they enjoyed it!!

BOB SPELIO.β



FOR SALE: AN OLDHAM TYPE 'R' LEAD ACID BATTERY WITH BELAY BELT, SPARE BULBS AND FUSES. £30 - CONTACT PAT NEWMAN.

WELCOME to two new members:

Paul Botting of 8 Worcester Gdns, Nailsea, Bristol, Avon. Tel. 0272 853345 and Dale Jefferies of 17 Friendship Road, Nailsea, Bristol, Avon. Tel. 0272 855539. Both proposed by J. Beauchamp and A. Thomas.

'Logbook'

11/1/86 MINOR MENDIP CAVES MEET.

Goatchurch - Brian Snell, Roy Kempston,
Henryk Gromodsh, Lesley
Benjamin, Johan Denekamp.

First time caving for the two novices. Fine, loved every minute of it until we decided to go out roy's own exit. Quite a tight squeeze before apparently a mini 'devils elbow'. Eventually I got through (5-10 mins) but the near panic was apparently noticeable to others and almost as bad for Lesley as it was for me.

Sidcot Swallet - Even though this seemed a more sporting cave, certainly the entrance was a good feet-first descent. After the near jam in the first cave I was more than happy to end the day relatively unassisted in exiting the cave. A first, and for the moment, the last visit I feel for now. Johan.

Minor caves of Burrington Combe -
Ian Mc, Yvonne W, Gill Warren, Linda
Gates, Grant S.

We explored some of the little caves mentioned in 'Mendip Underground' - 8 in all (Lionels, Avelines, Foxes, Sidcot, East Twin Swallet and 3 I dont remember the name of). Trip highlights - 'Robbie' the friendly robin outside Sidcot, a quick bunk-up and roll in the straw in Foxes Hole. Following in the tradition of the Home Guard we left Foxes Hole heavily camouflaged using straw covering the cave floor - much to the amusement of passing motorists. Linda.

SUMMARY-

1. Avelines Hole (All 10 persons)
2. Goatchurch (Roy's party)
3. Lionel's Hole (Ian's party). Met Alison Moody and others digging at lower end of cave. They are hoping to get into East Twin Swallet streamway and were stopped by a large suspended boulder which needs banging. They are close to where they believe the streamway should be. Very muddy!
4. Elephant Hole: a small hole on LH side of gorge, with a through trip to about 30' higher up the gorge below tree roots.
5. Toads Hole: a large square shaft high above the road, on RH side of gorge, below bushes. Looked down it to a depth of about 30', where it appeared to end.
6. Foxes Hole: see above.
7. Sidcot Swallet: Roy's party (see above). Ian's party started to go down but turned back near entrance on conservation grounds (straw).
8. Goonies Hols: (not in 'Caves of Mendip')- a small hole at roadside on RH side of gorge, about 30m down gorge from East Twin valley. Entrance partly blocked by loose stones from gorge above.
9. East Twin Swallet: (Ian's party, Roy, Brian, Henryk). Having spoken to Alison Moody, we went in beyond the dig in East Twin to try and find link with Lionel's. Leaving stream at left fork, a short crawl leads to a descending dig. Note to Upper Flood diggers: they have a dexion monorail hanging from the ceiling, with a rope winch, for removing spoil. (Diagram in cottage log book). Halfway down dig on right, an ascending crawl leads to a small wood-buttressed chamber. Descent down boulders leads to a bear pit, with a small crawl at floor level into larger passage. Followed passage down, past digging tools at l.fork, to ascending mud slope and tight crawl. Z-bend at end of crawl led to sound of water and more large, open chambers and passages leading in all directions. Lots more scope for link to Lionel's but we were getting hungry so turned back. Character of cave here is very similar to Lionel's, and according to Alison it's also close on the survey. (I haven't checked yet!). A good day's caving and a numerical record?
Note: section after the squeeze is all part of the Spar Pot system, which was re-entered from East Twin Swallet - Alan Dougherty.