

# Mendip Caving Group

# NEWS

EDITION 222

AUGUST 1992

## OBITUARY THE MARQUIS OF BATH

The 6th Marquess of Bath Henry Frederick Thynne Born 26 Jan 1905 died on the 30th of June 1992. He consented to become the Groups Patron in 1959.

The Marquess of Bath became involved with us as a result of our Hon. Secretary, Richard Woollacott, applying for permission to dig Coopers Hole Cheddar. On receiving permission we immediately got stuck into the task which was followed with interest by the Marquess.

In those days we had the cottage in the corner of Nether Wood and held informal summer parties there. Our clean up and carefully placed wild flowers gave the place an air of rustic charm. The Marquess accepted our invitation to attend and came along with his family. On learning of the pond nearby the Marchioness and her daughter went to have a look and in the course of tadpoling the young lady fell in. Back at the cottage the Marquess saw the incident as a joke remarking "What's that B--- child been up to now". Lord Bath and his party got on in any company and easily engaged in conversation, Coopers Hole being the theme of common interest. It was clear that they greatly enjoyed themselves and they stayed late. When his party eventually left the Marquess managed to get stuck in a ditch along the track which required us to push him out!

Lord Bath visited Coopers Hole to inspect our progress. On return to his Mercedes, after exploring below, he was rather muddy. He proceeded to open the car door and looked if he was about to enter, upon which Richard enquired if it was wise considering the state of his clothing. The Marquess replied humorously that since he employed a man to clean the car he may as well have a reasonable job to do!

The Coopers Hole dig progressed well but we were producing a great quantity of spoil which, by mid 1961, created a major disposal problem. When discussed with the Marquess he offered and subsequently arranged for a contractor to remove all the spoil we had accumulated. In addition the floor of the entrance was lowered to remove all recent road rubbish and litter in the form of old tins and broken bottles. A concrete retaining wall was also constructed at the cave entrance to hold back the car park and steps constructed to gain entry to the cave. By April 1962 the contractors work was largely completed and revealed a small horizontal space between mud and roof of which we were previously unaware. Don Searle exploited it and soon gained access to a flight of steps cut into the stalagmite floor. A tremendous digging effort from the top of the steps got us into a length of open cave by the August Bank Holiday (held at the beginning of August in those days). The party held just afterwards was one of celebration. The Marquess brought along his publicity officer and liquid refreshment and we all discussed the find.

The Marquess made a visit to inspect the new passage which has a very tight squeeze just before the enlargement. A large retinue of the press accompanied him but did not pass the squeeze. Bearing in mind he had a stiff leg, that he was not a young man or used to caving he did very well. His comment on entering the new chamber was "-- wont forget this in a hurry" As a result of Lord Bath passing the squeeze it was appropriately named after him "Thynne Squeeze"!

Compiled by Malcolm with thanks to Don and Richard for their advice.

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10 Enstone Road, Charlbury, Oxfordshire.

**Treasurer:** Martin Rowe Tel: 0252 872006  
10 Greenleas Close, Yateley, Camberly, Sy

**Meet Secretary:** J-P. Burch Tel: 0737 767738  
19 Raneleigh Road, Redhill, Sy. RH1 6BJ

**Cottage Warden:** Lee Hawkswell Tel: 0923 819103  
4a Hazel Tree Road, Nth Watford, Herts.

**Tacklemaster:** Kevin West Tel: 081 570 6624  
21 Wesley Avenue, Hounslow, Middlesex.

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69 Cheam Road, Ewell, Surrey. KT17 3EG

**Recorder:** Wayne Hiscox Tel: 0749 437540  
3 Keward, Glastonbury Road, Wells, Somerset

**Ordinary Member:** Arthur Spain Tel: 0749 679358  
Waitangi, Long Lane, Dinder, Wells.

**MCG Facts & Figures:**

**Meetings:** Mendip HQ Wed 7.00pm  
Egham Eclipse Inn, Egham Hill Thurs 9.00pm

**Cottage Fees:** Members, members children £1.00 nightly  
SWCC, NPC members £1.00 nightly  
Guest clubs, members guests £2.00 nightly

**Season Ticket:** Exemption from cottage fees,  
members only £10.00 year

**Subscription:** Full, probationary members £20.00 year  
Associate members £10.00 year

The Mendip Caving Group is a registered charity, no. 270088. The trustees are Ron Saunders, Malcolm Cotter, Pat Walsh and Peter Matthews.

**MCG Journal**

"Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are; nay they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them."  
John Milton 1608-1674

Contributions to me by end of November at the latest please, preferably typed, illustrations black ink only. Please phone me if you have any questions.

**Half Yearly Forum**

The half yearly meeting will take place on the first Saturday in November, details to follow.

**Upper Flood Leaders**

Kevin West and Martin Rowe are also leaders, but were unfortunately omitted from the leader list in the last newsletter.



### Rescue Practise

Congratulations to John Crowsley on taking on the onerous task of rescue warden. Many thanks to his predecessor, Brian Murlis For his sterling service.

There will be a rescue practice in GB on Saturday September 5th. Please contact John or Joan Goddard if you are available. Also many members are aware that Phil Ingold suffers from Multiple Sclerosis thus we are taking the opportunity to raise money for MS.

### Shower Matters

The thermostat on the showers must on no account be tampered with. If adjusted then a person may be scalded when the hot water tank refills, not nice. Any complaints about the water temperature to the cottage warden. If the showers are cold when you return from caving, either wait for them to warm up, or have a cold shower.

### Kitchen Matters

Could people please remove their food boxes at the end of the weekend, as we are short of storage space there. Locked, named ammo boxes can be left in the shed at owner's risk.

### SRT Workshop. by Kevin West

There will be a CIC led SRT workshop in Mendip on Saturday 19th September. The cost of this is £10 per member. On Sunday caves will be rigged for practice by members. Please send cheques payable to 'MCG' to myself by september 5th at the latest, thank you.

( It was decided by a majority at a committee meeting that those wishing to use the SRT rope need attend the workshop. A 200m reel of 10mm Superstatic has been ordered. If anyone cannot make this date then additional dates will be added as required. - ed.)

### Cave Fatality

In the Daily Telegraph on 18th June it was reported that Lance Corporal Amanda Stead 26, of 243 Signals Squadron drowned in Porth-yr-Ogof whilst on a two week 'adventurous training' summer camp. The death is being investigated by the army.

**Emmer Green Chalk Mines, by Geoff Beale**

On the last weekend in September (26 / 27) Berkshire Scouts who control access to one of the chalk mines at Emmer Green are holding an open day for family and friends.

They would like MCG members who are interested in visiting the mine on this weekend to provide caving expertise in taking small parties of visitors around the mine; pointing out the historical dates / names and underground shelters built by Reading Council for the safe storage of archives and documents during the last war.

Those MCG members who have previously visited the mine will be aware of the brick lined 70' entrance shaft. The scouts intend to rig a petrol driven winch to haul visitors up and down the shaft. SRT ropes will also be rigged as an alternative for those who wish to use SRT.

Any member interested in helping out for one or both days should contact me for further details. If anyone wishes to camp there the facilities at the well appointed scout hut are excellent, and also free. Please give this your support.

**Hanover Court Chalk Mine, by Geoff Beale**

This interesting mine is next door and is separated by 200 metres. At present access is controlled by myself and Dan Miles on behalf of the land owners. We are still actively digging in a large collapsed passage searching for an extension of the mine which we are sure lies between the entrance and the two mines by the scout hut.

The dig has now reached 36' in length and is still going strong. Anyone interested in joining us on Friday nights should contact either Dan Miles or myself.

Geoff Beale 0734-724074  
Dan Miles 0734-722510

**Applications for Membership**

**Probationary:**

Michael Pittman 36 Manor Way 0784-437540  
Egham  
Surrey

Prop. by Geoff Beale Sec. by Joel Corrigan

Graham Old Newholme 0734-723433  
Chalkhouse Green Road  
Kidmore End  
Reading RG4 9AS

Prop. by Geoff Beale Sec. by Yvonne Rowe

**Associate:**

Ann Pittman 36 Manor Way 0784-437540  
Egham  
Surrey

Prop. by Joan Goddard Sec. by Geoff Beale

Congratulations to James Allen and Richard Carey who have been accepted as full members. Richard has recently moved and his new address is: 502 Bath Road, Brislington, Bristol, BS4 3JY.

## Mendip Hills and Gorge Walk, by Arthur Spain

Want a challenge? An active day out without venturing underground and an opportunity to test your stamina as many of us did back in 1976. Then it was a question of raising as much money as we could by any means (short of the obvious of course!), jumble sales, personal loans, and sponsored events to match a sports council grant to enable the club to build the shell of our present cottage - or to be more truthful its predecessor, the original having expired in a mighty bang on New Years Eve 1979. Thanks to our then prudent Treasurer, Ron Saunders, it was insured so rebuilding took place a few months afterwards.

A sponsored walk was the chosen event, 30 miles of beautiful Mendip scenery, taking in Black Down, Sanford (Banwell, Loxton, Crook Peak), Shute Shelve Hill, Tynings Gate, Cheddar, and finally Priddy Green. The object was to get people to sponsor individual club members for as much as possible per mile. In this way a sum of £900 was raised (worth more than it is now), bearing in mind that the total needed to build was under £20,000) which helped considerably towards the MCG cottage building fund.

However this is where you all come in. The self same walk is being arranged for Saturday 3rd October, so that you too can match the trials and tribulations that were experienced in 1976. The event is not sponsored but will be run on similar grounds to the original. That is marshalls with cars will be stationed at pre-arranged points throughout the route to assist those who feel they have had enough. A copied map with instructions will be issued to each person, but carrying OS 182 Weston Super Mare would be an advantage.

This is not an all male affair, so how about it girls - lets see what you can do!!!

A shortened route of 20 miles is available, details on the day. A packed lunch, blister repair kit, hiking boots or shoes and waterproofs should be worn / carried. (A word of advice: wear the boots, don't carry them!!! - ed.)

Departure time is 8:30 am from the cottage, and ETA Priddy for the 30 milers is 6:00 pm, the 20 milers 3:30 pm.

Names to me please by 1st weekend in September, little cost involved, just £1 per person to cover admin. costs and marshalling, excess to charity.

Also needed are marshals, some of whom will need their own vehicles, to man 6-7 points on the walk. Two persons per post should suffice. The job is not onerous, just to monitor walkers going through a given point and administer first aid and drinks as needed, and also the ferrying of casualties to the cottage if necessary. Please phone me on 0749-679358 if you can assist.

See you there!!!

### BCRA National Caving Conference

This will be in the Richmond Building, University of Bradford on the weekend of 11-13 September.

On the Friday evening there is a late bar and entertainment in the Communal Building, and at the same place on Saturday evening there is a late bar, ceilidh, and stomp!

The emphasis this year is on photography, films and videos. There will also be an SRT race, rope stuff, blindfold carbide assembly, etc. etc.

Accommodation will be available in halls of residence, and the organisers are trying to book some cheap floor space. There are many curry houses nearby, and you can get a curry for around 3 quid! See caving press for more details.

**Tackle Master's Report, by Kevin West**

Hello everyone! It's time for some ramblings from the tackle jail (noticed the new bars yet?) just to let you know whats happening.

All in all we are missing one ladder, one thirty foot rope - although it's rumoured to be on holiday in G.B. two fixed cheek pulleys, a couple of spreaders and short tethers. We have got eleven tackle sacks though, so no excuse for not carrying the rope in a bag. Remember dynamic rope needs a lot of care and consideration underground as it's not designed to be there. It should be kept as clean and dry as possible in use and always washed properly, not just a quick hose down because it looks clean. Also please be aware that although the rope in the store is climbing (dynamic) rope it must not be used for climbing as it will not hold a leader's fall, as the rope has been used underground. However, it is adequate for top roping, i.e. lifelining ladder pitches and climbs from above. Please take into consideration the stretch in the rope, even on a tight line a fallen climber will generate a load which will cause the rope to stretch and the climber to bounce, so watch out for loose boulders or sharp flakes.

Going back to the tackle sacks I've been asked to put drain holes in the bottom of the bags without them. Although drain holes let water out, they also let it in, and dynamic rope does not like muddy cave water; so let me know what you want. In the meantime just carry the bags upside down to drain the water out.

What was all that about bars then? Well I'm afraid its got nothing to do with beer: we've got some nice new bars up at the tackle store windows, cos it's not just cars that are being broken into on Mendip. So if you leave stuff at the cottage from one weekend to the next, be careful!! Many thanks to Lee (Gecko) Hawkswell for supplying the bars and to Geoff Beale for installing them.

Future projects include new brushes in the rope washer, or maybe a new one, any volunteers? Also the ladders will be colour coded for easy selection e.g. 20' yellow, 30' blue. No don't worry, not the whole ladder, just a rung or two.

Worked out where you're going on holiday or expedition yet? Well if you need any ladders, ropes, or carbide lamps, just let me know or any handy committed, sorry, committee member, and we'll get it arranged for you. It will be first come first served so get in early to avoid disappointment.

Talking about disappointment, would you please let me know before you take any large amounts of tackle for more than a day, it is only fair.

I've just had my head chewed off because every 8mm bend twist and ring hanger we've got has gone missing. Also missing are our climbing chocks and nuts. They have not been signed out either, which is just as well judging by the complainer's mood.

One last gripe. Some of you still aren't filling out the tackle log properly, if at all. The ladders and ropes are marked so could you please use the relevant identification letter / number respectively. See below:

33-12-92	B. R. COIKINSTAL	B	F	S	1	12			16' TEATHER SPREADER
	_____ to _____								
	THE CAVE								

TACKLE BAG 3 PULLEY 1 PULLEY 4	BR COIKINSTAL	OH WHO- SPLENDID TACKLE WE HAVE!
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REMARKS  
←

Finally, if you find any damaged or suspect tackle, please don't throw it away: just put it in the loft or library with a note attached and either phone me or leave a note for me in the tackle store, or on the notice board.

Thanks awfully.

**North Wales Update, by Tim Francis**

In a recent newsletter (no.220) I wrote an article which mentioned, as an aside, the lack of information on the North Wales caving scene. However, over the Easter holiday I was fortunate enough to go on a couple of trips with one of the local clubs. The Grosvenor Caving Club, with approximately thirty members, is the smaller of the two North Wales clubs; (the other is North Wales Caving Club (NWCC)). As well as the usual weekend meets they have regular digging and caving trips on Wednesday evenings to local caves and mines. At present the mining fraternity seems to hold sway, an area in which they have been quite successful in recent years. Afterwards they retire to a pub in loggerheads.

In response to my letter Jerry Dobby, their secretary, wrote, "it's a pity that your stay in wales is not longer, the diggers in the club already have you booked!" As a result my first trip was to help out with a spot of digging in a small mine. Unusually this mine is located in a golf course. It appears that the local golf club lost one of their greens a few years back, and are quite keen to know the extent of the tunnels underneath their course. The original shaft is in very good condition with only a little engineering needed. Hauling is aided by the use of a brilliant winch constructed from an old cement mixer. Digging was only hampered by the odd snow flurry. It appears that the prospects for a large mine series are quite good. I would not be surprised if they hit natural cave passage as well, for a large dry valley lies close by.

After extracting my car from a particularly muddy bit of ground, we retired to the pub. Most of the club also turned up - a comment was made that there were more down the pub than at the last AGM! Many of the others had been braving the climbing wall in Liverpool, preferring this to a pleasant evenings dig in the elements. The following week we went for a quick trip down O.H.F ( see newsletter 220 for details of the cave). Waterlevels were fairly low, although the downstream series was still exciting. In return for this trip I was able to show some of the younger members a few of the more horrible squitty extensions of which they were not aware. A good grounding in Mendip techniques comes in handy here. It was also very interesting talking to some of the original discoverers of the Alyn caves. The background to O.H.F.'s other name, 'Poacher's Cave', would fill a page in itself!

In summary the Grosvenor are an extremely friendly bunch, so if you are in the area make sure you get in touch. A newsletter exchange is being set up, and there is more information in the library.

For more information contact:

Jerry Dobby, 47 Talwrn Road, Coedpoeth, Wrexham, Clwydd  
Tel: 0978 750339

# MCS

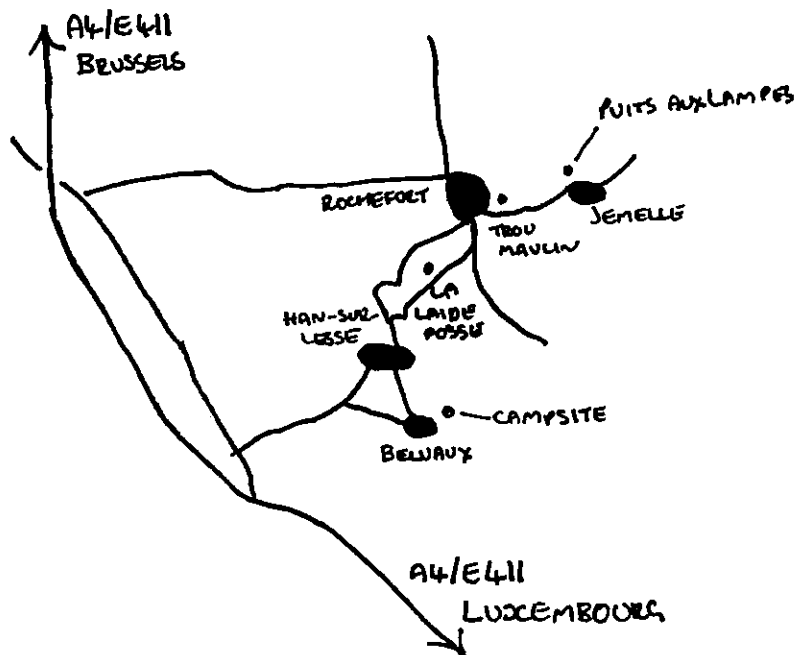
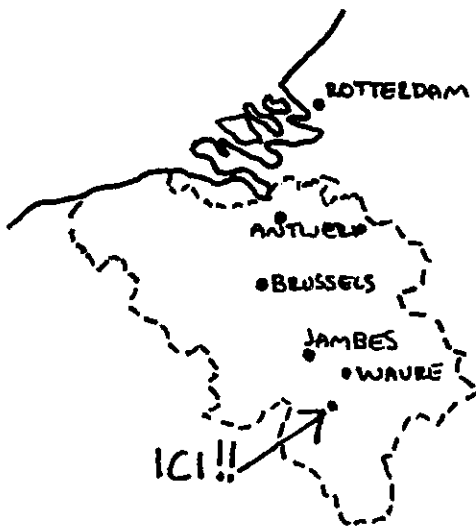
## Abroad

**BELGIUM '92** by Charlie Allison

On Saturday 23rd May, horribly early in the morning, myself Tim Francis and Ralph Diment left for a reconnaissance trip to the grottes and gouffres of Belgium. It must be said that the party was leaving in an air of mystery, as available information in the UK seems a bit thin to say the least. Despite lots of letter writing, phone calls, faxes, and many hours piecing together the patchy info, I still didn't really have a clue what to expect. Well, we had obtained permission for Puits aux Lampes, we did have a campsite booked, and we did have a meeting with a caving club at a place called Jemelle...

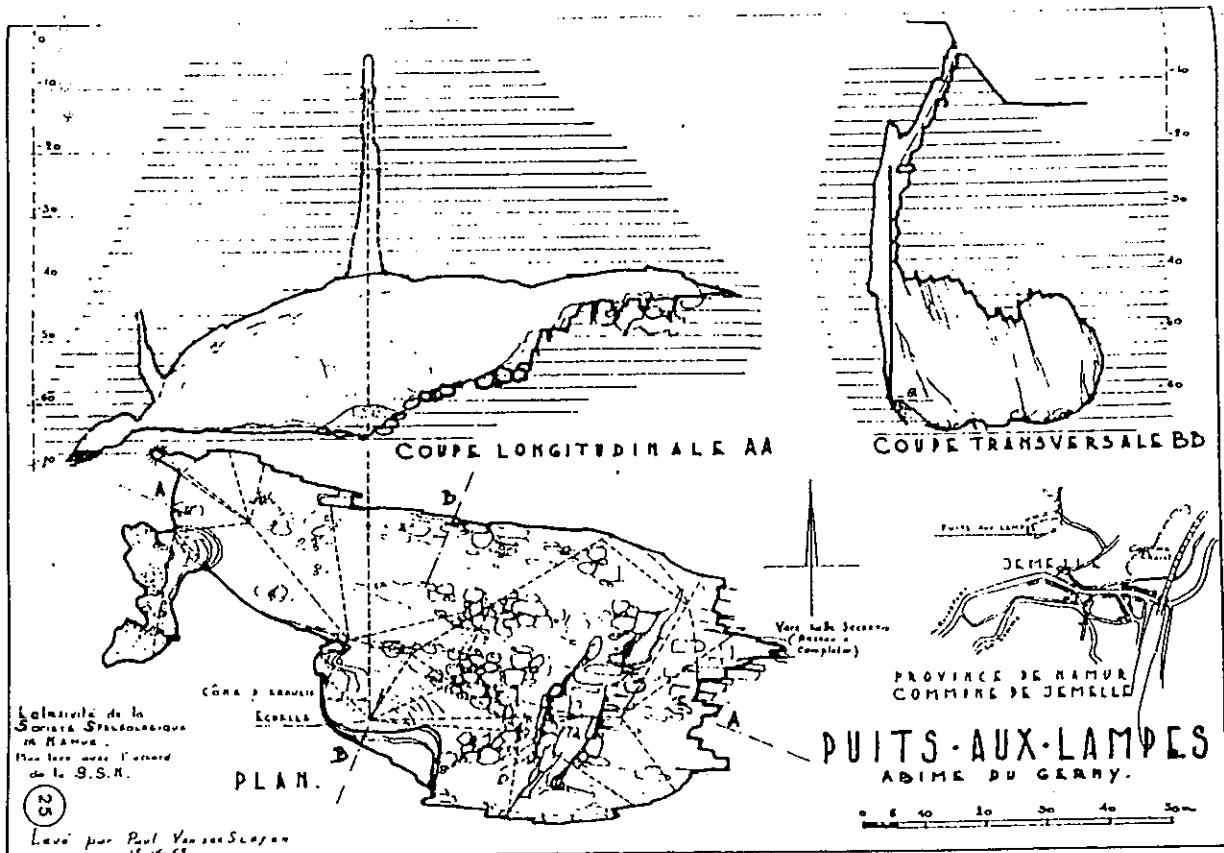
It was action, excitement and adventure from the moment we boarded the Stena Britannica bound for Hoek van Holland. From only a two beer warm up young Mr. Diment led the way with a super severe solo traverse of Perrier-Jouet NV and St. Emilion Grand Cru, culminating in a desperate scaling of Comatose Aven! We reached Holland and Ralph was enticed from his solo adventure, and in a fit of Euro-generosity he proffered his home pickled gerkins to all and sundry on car deck 3B.

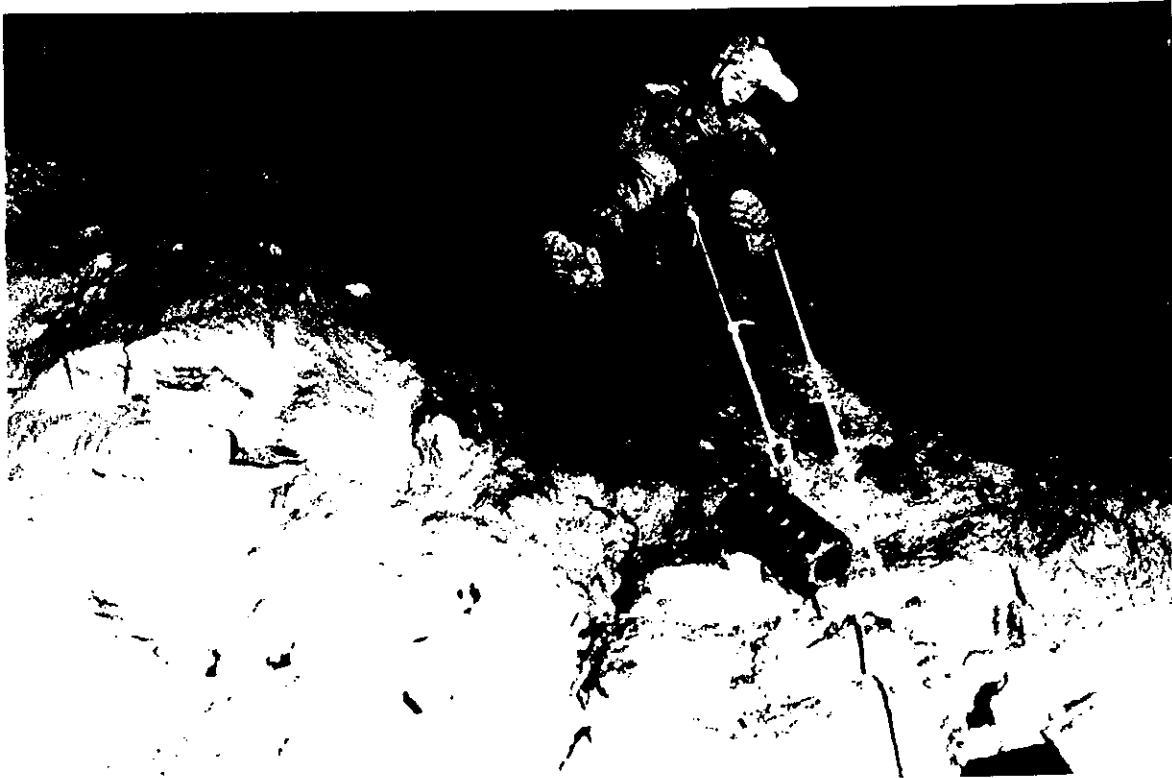
Dutch road signs do not cater for English drivers, and after a false start we were off towards Rotterdam and thence the autoroute to Belgium. With a severe deficit of traffic we sprinted the 181 miles to the campsite in only 2hrs 10minutes. Mr. Man at the campsite was quite friendly, and spoke good English, which was rather useful as we don't speak good French. We therefore settled down to a curry, washed down by Joseph Perrier NV and Moreau Chablis.





Sunday the 24th dawned reasonably warm, the campsite was in Rue du Gouffre, we had a meeting at 11 am with the Speleo Club de Gerny, the omens had to be good! Off to Jemelle. Unfortunately we spent the next hour wandering up and down the appointed avenue to no avail, wondering if my French was worse than I thought and had got the address completely wrong! However a nearby shop-keeper directed us behind one of the houses, and lo! a knackered wooden shack. We had found the Speleo Club de Gerny! Trouble is the bods I spoke to had forgotten to tell the chappie there that we were coming. The man at the hut showed us to the entrance of Puits aux Lampes, and we proceeded to explore. Basically the cave is a 180 foot pitch, the last 130 being a free hang in to a whoppingly huge chamber. It was now horribly hot and I was about to earn the "meathead of the expedition" award for only having brought my wetsuit, and Ralph had "all the hangovers I should have had years ago rolled into one". Needless to say motion was not very rapid! The first 50' we (well Tim) installed 4 re-belays; the Belgians seem to prefer none and there were many fine examples of shockingly suicidal rope-grooves, even in an iron pipe that served as a rather good re-belay. Despite the vast dimensions of the cavern Tim and Ralph managed to find a tight muddy bit for a good wallow. We then left a contact address at the club, and returned to the campsite where we started to wash the gear and then started to get rained on. It rained a lot that night with some amazing thunder storms, and Leffe and Ciney beers are rather good.



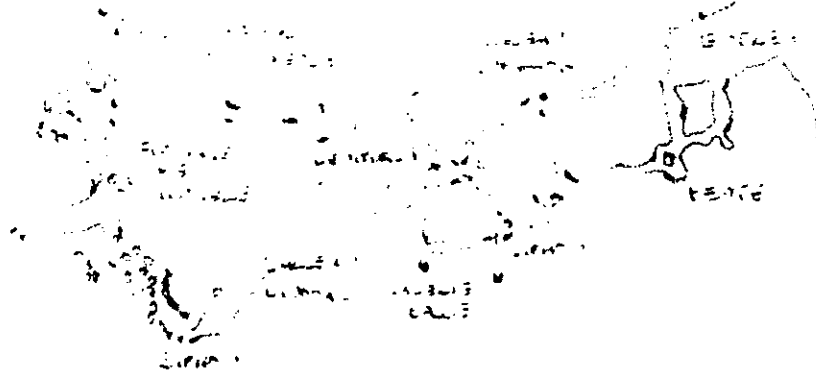


Ralph Diment on the free-hang, Puits aux Lampes.  
Photo: Charlie Allison.

Monday 25th was again bright and sunny, and our objective for the day was to be Trou Maulin (a cave, not a local wine!) However first we had to go to the caving shop as Tim was desperate to spend some money. We stopped off in Han-sur-Lesse for a look and to get the obligatory postcards, then we were off to Sport Nature in Jambes. There was a slight problem though, it was closed on Mondays! Still the Cotes du Rousillon and the pate at lunch time was rather nice. Thus we drove back again and found the Trou Maulin with no difficulty what-so-ever, hardly surprising really as it is signposted from the road. The next bit is rather embarrassing 'cos I had a large amount of hassle getting up a slippery tube, and eventually got hauled up by Ralph and Tim. To add insult to injury I almost immediately found a rather simpler by-pass, aargh! Feeling rather cheesed off I strolled round the Upper series, while Ralph and Tim strolled round the lower series. Our next task was to jump in the river to remove the muddy exo-skeleton and to go to the local Spar for the obligatory Belgian chocolate and some more wine. That night we dined on chilli and some nice vin de pays that I can't remember the name of. A visit to Mr. Man at the campsite cafe was decided upon and we made sure that the Super Mario Bros. and Gauntlet games were working. However Mr. Man was having lots of hassle with a couple of drunken yobs and gave us lots of free beer to hang around as witnesses for when the police turned up. And so to bed.

THE CAVE

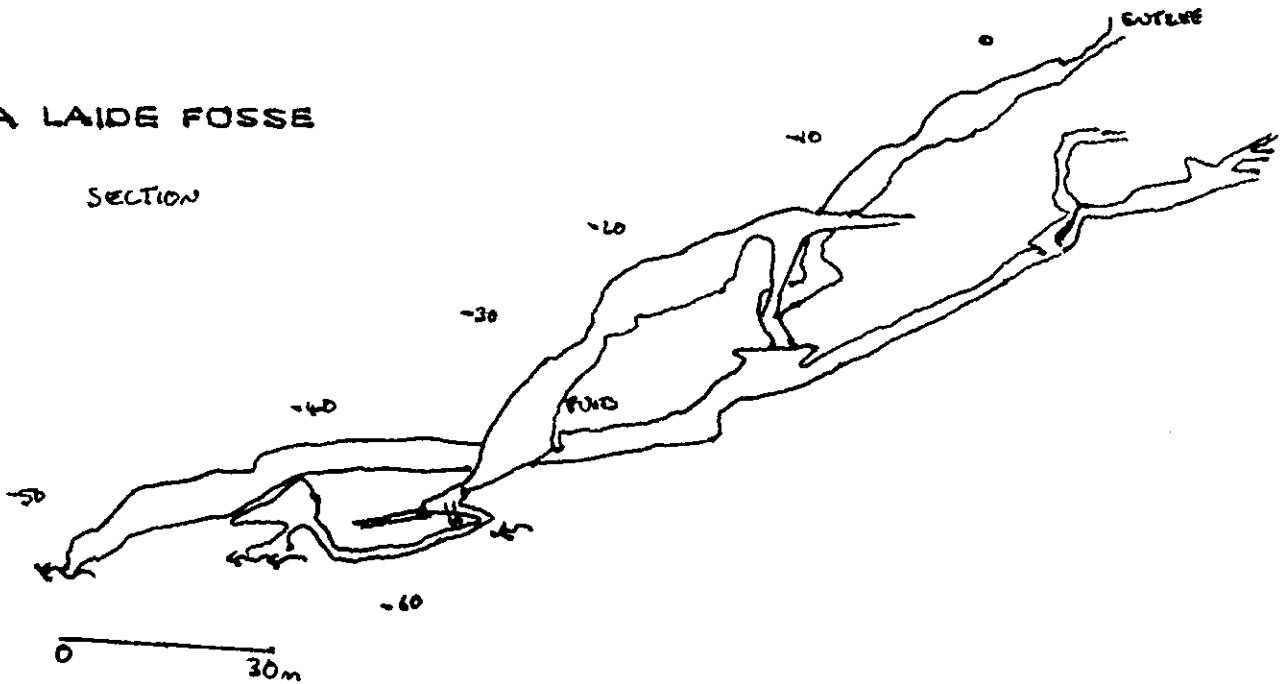
PLAN



Tuesday 25th was believe it or not nice and sunny! Today we were off to La Laide Fosse, via Han-sur-Lesse for some more shopping. The cave is very Mendippy in style and rather good fun, with a short pitch and a few climbs. A pose for the team photo and then off to Jambes to visit the caving shop, which this time was open. Interestingly there was very little stuff on Belgian caves, the vast majority of the stuff being on France. But we did find a couple of Journals, and at last I found a map of the area, pity we were on our way back to the ferry! Leaving Jambes was rather entertaining as the Belgian riot police seemed to be having a day out. There were lots of buses blocking the roads, and in one side road there were at least twenty vans of riot police plus the odd water cannon and armoured personnel carrier. After several moments deliberation we decided to visit the supermarket in Wavre instead. The drive back to the ferry was uneventful, apart from a death burger in Wavre, until we hit Antwerp. By some strange turn of events I found myself negotiating the rush hour traffic, rather than skirting around the city on the autoroute, a most disconcerting experience. On the ferry there was a poor excuse of a curry, and an even poorer excuse for beer, then off to our cabins, and back to Blighty at a quarter to seven in the morning

# LA LAIDE FOSSE

SECTION



Well was it all worth it? Of course it was! There are still quite a few interesting caves to be done, and its dead easy to get to the caving areas: easier than Yorkshire is from London. We now have a few contacts in Belgium and will return for another visit. The landscape is very picturesque, the people are fairly helpful and friendly, the beer's good, but the wine is better in France!

A considerably more detailed version will appear in the journal, but I must thank Tim Stratford, Jean Marc Mattlet, and Michel Druine for their help and advice in making the trip run very smoothly, RHBNC Caving Club for the loan of the SRT rope and tackle, and me for organising it all !!!