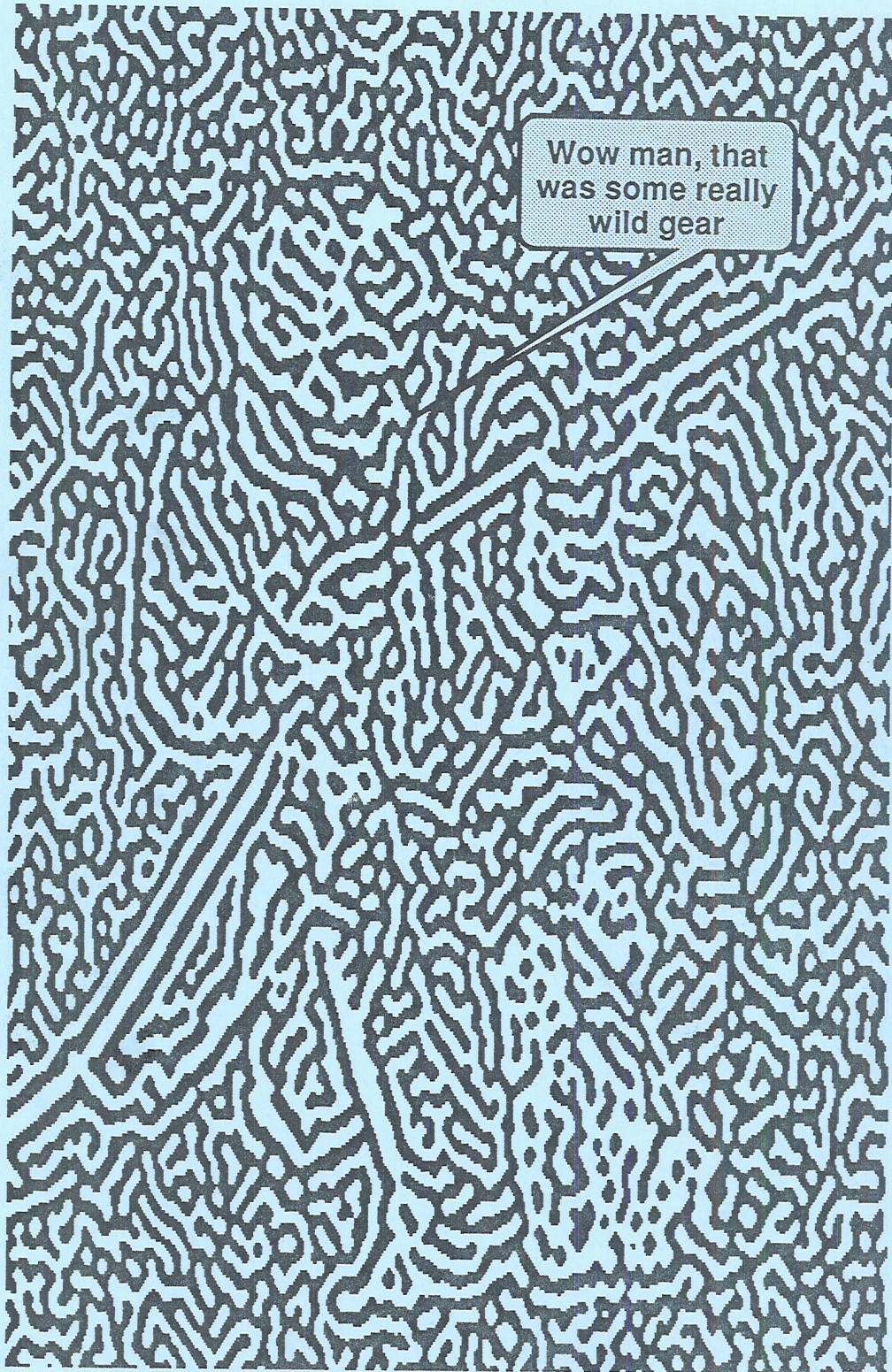


Imperial College Caving Club



Tana dell 'Uomo Selvatico, Italy

Newsletter No. 13 - Spring 1990 Issue

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT
VICE-PRESIDENT
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ROBERT CHADDOCK
HERMAN HERZ
SIMON LAWES
WENDY ROOKE
ROBERT KNELL
MONOGHAN TINDALE

Welcome to the second and final edition of the newsletter. It's a stormingly good edition thanks to all the help I have had with articles and compilation. I must just take this opportunity to thank, in particular, Clive for all his hard work in photocopying, Harry for all the contributions he has made and Dave for providing the covers, which I think you will agree were ingenious. I wonder how long it took you to work out this edition's cover.

This edition should reach you by the Dinnermeet and as I shan't be able to make it for that prestigious affair I would just like to wish Rob K. good luck next year as president. I don't know who the rest of the management will be but I wish them all the best. You may or may not know by now that I have given up my studies at Imperial so I will not be a full-time member of the club next year. However I hope to be in the London area so I should be caving quite regularly.

An interesting trip is being planned for the weekend of the twenty-fourth of June. It is a trip to the Mendips to visit the Glastonbury Festival and should prove to be quite a mellow weekend. We will probably be leaving on the Friday afternoon at latest and travel back on either the Sunday or Monday depending on how we feel at the time. I thoroughly recommend the weekend to everyone in the club. There really is something for everyone at Glastonbury and it is an event which must be experienced at least once in a lifetime. For more details contact Rob C. or me.

Thats it for now.

Yours lovingly

Simon
X

President's Report

Well the year kicked off to its usual start with the Fresher's fair and slide show attracting quite a lot of interest. The first two weekends were Yorkshire (NPC) and the Mendips (MNRC) and saw twenty people attend each. From here on freshers disappeared rapidly. Funny how "I really enjoyed it, see you next time" in fact seems to mean "God that was awful, I'm never going caving again" with some people. Perhaps it is epics like Dow-Providence through trips and getting back to London at 6:30 am on Monday that puts novices off.

Destinations for weekends through out the year were Mendip (3 times) and Yorkshire (6 times), although 1 Yorkshire weekend had to be cancelled due to lack of interest (chiefly a result of poverty and overwork). Unfortunately the Croydon double booked us for their in hut South Wales and the trip had to be aborted to the Mendips, which was a good weekend nonetheless with even some SRT done in Rhino Rift and Thrupe Lane.

The Bonfire weekend was successful again this year with a barrel of Brakspears (tasted awful, but still it is beer) and quite a few fireworks and crow scarers to liven things up. The NPC sacrificed the customary sofa to the great fire god ensuring that both it and the party raged for some time.

The Christmas and Easter tours were both to Yorkshire for a week, staying at the NPC both times. The Christmas Dinner was held at the New Inn in Clapham and was a fine feast attended by 11 festive folk. The suggestion has been made that to break the routine of tours to Yorkshire, we should perhaps go to Ireland at Christmas or Easter next year. Although this would be more expensive than the Dales, it would be something that the Club has not done for a long time (I think Chris can remember the last time...) and could be popular with those who cannot make summer tours due to other commitments.

This summer there is a Club tour to the Chartreuse region of France for three weeks shortly after the end of term. Anyone interested in some fine caving (and a visit to the home of the (in)famous liqueur) should see Dave for further details if they have not already.

There is also an expedition going away this summer. Nine of us are off to the Dominican Republic for six weeks. The depth record for this little explored country stands at 380m currently so hopefully we will be able to achieve some good results and maybe visit a few beaches as well (oops! gave away the real objective).

All in all not an earth shattering year, but an enjoyable one nonetheless. The caving achievements were somewhat limited by a lack of permits but hopefully this summer will see everyone doing something new and interesting.

Good luck to Simon who has taken the big step of giving up College - something I'm sure we have all considered at some time or another. I hope he continues caving with the club.

Dave's Piece

The following is primarily aimed at padding out a rather thin newsletter, so contains about 90% bulls*@t.

(a) Summer Tour

For those teeming millions who are coming on the Summer Tour, here are a few dates, etc.

Depart London : Tues 26th June, about 4pm

Return London : Sun 18th July (sometime)

Cost - probably £275 all inclusive (food, wine, travel, insurance...)

Deposit - £50 ASAP

It is worthwhile getting a copy of the DHSS booklet SA40, and sending off the enclosed form to get an E111, which gives discount on foreign medical treatment. Our insurance will cover this anyway, but an e11 can make things a bit easier.

(b) Cheap Caving Gear

Anyone wanting me to buy gear for them from Marbach's during the Summer Tour should let me know fairly soon. Items which are usually significantly cheaper in France are Laser headsets, carbide generators, Ecrin helmets, and Petzl SRT gear. I am not sure of exact prices, but virtually anything reasonably expensive (and French) is probably cheaper there.

(c) Cibachroming

If anyone requires Cibachromes made from slides, I am currently doing a batch every two or three months. The cost is essentially materials, and works out at about £1-20 per 10x8 sheet, assuming the slide is not too far from decent exposure. Smaller prints (5x4, 8x5) are also possible, at proportionately lower cost.

12x16s are a possibility for about £3-00 apiece, assuming I could get a sufficient number of orders, ie. 10, together since materials do not keep for long once opened.

(d) SRT ponderings

Since Whernside Manor is no more, and most of the Club's SRT books seem to have been 'borrowed', I wonder how much the current generation of college members knows about what to do when things go wrong, and how to tackle less common SRT problems. Could they, for example, answer the following questions.

- 1) How do you climb a rope with 1 jammer ?
- 2) How do you descend without a descender ?
- 3) How do you rescue an injured person from mid-rope and take them to the bottom of the pitch ?
- 4) How would you get them to the top ?
- 5) How do you make a Prussik loop ?
- 6) How do you descend a loaded rope ?
- 7) How do you change to descent in mid-rope if your hand jammer fails ?
- 8) How do you descend a severely angled rope, or downwards Tyrolean traverse ?

If not, it should be up to the more experienced members to do something about it. After all, you can't really blame people for not knowing something if they don't know that there is something of which they are ignorant. Next time you find yourself in the barn with time to kill during yet another fresher training session, remember that there's more to SRT than just going up and down, and maybe you could spend a bit of time learning (or demonstrating) the above techniques, as it could be too late to learn when you find you need them.

'89 SUMMER TOUR IN THE VERCORS, FRANCE

Wendy Remembers

I must admit that I wasn't completely convinced when a certain member of the club, referring to the three weeks caving in France, said, "It'll be the best holiday of your life Kid!". But as the tour proved, Hermans obviously know best! Unfortunately I was only able to stay for ten days (extended from seven days after I found myself enjoying it too much) since I had an Interail ticket due to commence a week after the tour began; as a result I can only recount a fraction of the caving that was done.

Despite the ritualistic navigational errors in the early hours in Reimes, the journey south to the Vercors was without major catastrophe. We reached Grenoble in time to do a raid on the hypermarket for all that is required to maintain the mean, tough caver - trolley loads of booze, chocolate, and bags of curry powder; with the odd baguette and bit of cheese thrown in to add a bit of local flavour. Harry 'Super Caver' Lock was lying in wait for us at the campsite after having spent a week roaming the mountains tout seul.

The first caves attempted were not too testing since for several of us, the most exercise our bodies had seen in the last few weeks of exams was walking to the nearest kettle for coffee. As president, responsibility for the 'F-TEAM' (the '89 intake of fledgling cavers) fell upon Dave who led us, sporting our embarrassingly shiny, new gear and 'jodies' krabs (Janet!) - courtesy of George Marbac - down 'Scialet de Trisou'. As I recall, the hardest part was finding the entrance in the dense undergrowth of the forest; although there was a passage where a bit of teamwork was required on the girlie front - including Janet using me as a human bridge, if memory serves me right! We didn't bottom the cave due to a shortage of rope owing to safe rigging tactics which had been employed to ensure the return to several cans of beer which had been left cooling at the entrance. Fortunately the second team, who we passed on their way down, hadn't discovered them.

L'Antre des Damnes which reached a maximum depth of -723m, and was situated in the mountains above our campsite, was designated as the 'Mega-Cave' of the tour. An entertaining time was had by all, marching up, down, and roundabout the mountainside in torrential rain on the first attempt at reaching the refuge which was to be used as a halfway point to the cave. After some "interesting" rally driving along non-accessible, rock strewn, overgrown forestry tracks (Richard!) adrenaline levels were sufficiently high to enable us to carry our supplies the rest of the way to the refuge. It was decided to tackle the cave in three waves, the first team doing all the rigging whilst the second team moved into the refuge. The third

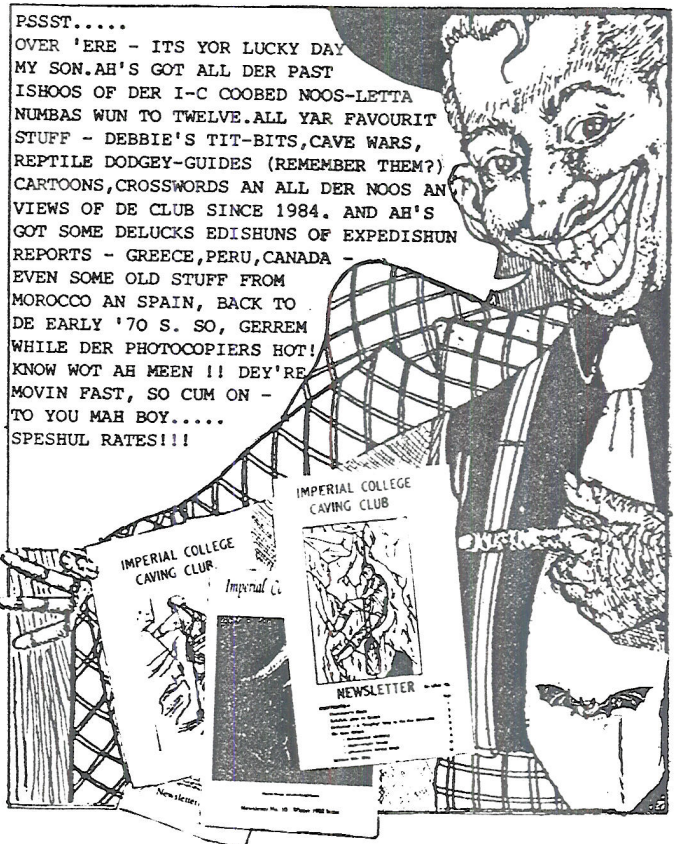
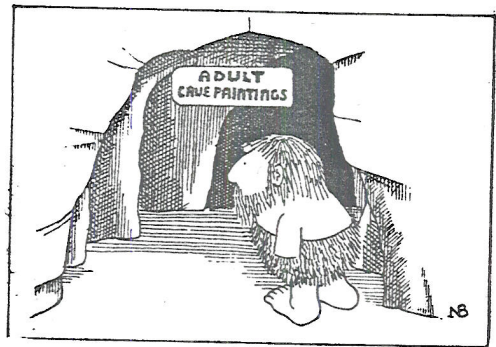
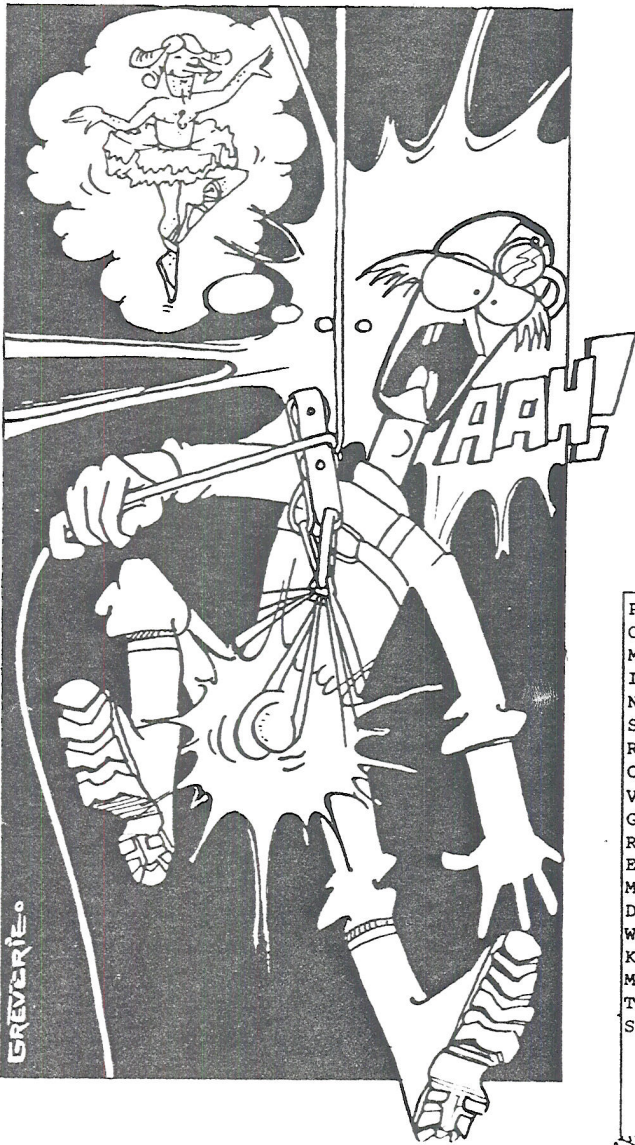
team lounged around the campsite (or local bars) in true 'F-TEAM' style waiting for our moment!

After arriving at the refuge well after midnight we didn't set off on the hike up to the cave entrance until mid-afternoon - always a good time to lug caving gear up mountains on a blazing hot day. It took about an hour to climb some fairly steep, rocky bits to the cave entrance. After going below ground at 5 p.m. my memories are a bit hazy i.e. all that I remember is going a long way down on a rope and a long way back up with very little, if anything, else in the way of traversing, crawling or free climbing besides. The descent was totally trouble free, marred only by the thought that what one has descended, one must ascend in order to see daylight again. Personally, having only ever experienced Yorkshire caves, the thought of ascending something like 700m was a bit daunting! Fortunately, as was the case in all the French caves, Antre des Damnes was fairly dry due to the low water levels at that time of year. We didn't bottom the system but actually had the chance to get our legs into walk mode rather than climb mode when we took the passage east towards the waterfall, shortly after which we turned back. That was the last I saw of Simon 'Born To Cave' Lawes and Monohan until I reached the surface, as I wasn't about to try sprinting up 700m of rope for anyone (apologies to long suffering Rich, who had the painful task of climbing up behind me). Inevitably the ascent was more tricky than the descent and a few technical hitches later I reached the sight beloved of all cavers - daylight shining through the entrance. Unfortunately I was so exhausted by that point that even the simple task of getting through the entrance squeeze proved to be too much! pride made me turn down the first kind offers of help. Several minutes later, when the offer of help was repeated when someone noticed that I still hadn't budged and that there was a lot of cursing and swearing coming from the entrance - I wasn't quite so quick to turn it down. It was an amazing experience coming out at 5 a.m. , after twelve hours underground, to see Monohan, Simon and Rich in the dawn mist warming themselves by a small fire (STARTED BY PISSING ON CARBIDE - ED.). The walk back to the refuge could only be described as magic, with spectacular views of the misty valley below, seeming all the more impressive for being on a post caving high. Apparently over the three weeks period of the tour several attempts to bottom Antre des Damnes were made and successfully executed.

Later, I had a bash at learning to rig on the crag above Gour Fumant and down the first pitch, where I was surprised to see ice so near to the cave entrance. The day before I left to 'do' Europe by train, a bimbly trip down Grotte de la Luire was arranged. Grotte de la Luire is a showcave at the centre of which is a pitch rigged with ladders to a depth of -450m which tourists are not permitted to descend. It is basically a vertical cave with very little walking and having said it was a bimbly trip, the cave guide describes it as "extremement dangereuse", since in wet weather it has a tendency to flood faster than it is possible even for

an "A-TEAM" member to climb the ladders.

Simon (who had to go to England to work) and I both regretted having to leave early. I could quite happily have coped with two more weeks of sleeping under the stars; sunbathing; visiting local bars; swimming; listening to tall caving epics in drunken oblivion around the camp stove; catching Nick doing midnight raids on the chocolate stores; deciphering cave guides written in French; getting caught in thunderstorms trying to find cave entrances; not to mention experiencing continental caves. In fact the only thing I dont regret missing out on was the cheap French wine! Thanks everyone who had anything to do with the tour for the best holiday that I've ever had!!



PSST.....
 OVER 'ERE - ITS YOR LUCKY DAY
 MY SON.AH'S GOT ALL DER PAST
 ISHOOS OF DER I-C COOBED NOOS-LETTA
 NUMBAS WUN TO TWELVE.ALL YAR FAVOURIT
 STUFF - DEBBIE'S TIT-BITS,CAVE WARS,
 REPTILE DODGEY-GUIDES (REMEMBER THEM?)
 CARTOONS,CROSSWORDS AN ALL DER NOOS AN
 VIEWS OF DE CLUB SINCE 1984. AND AH'S
 GOT SOME DELUCKS EDISHUNS OF EXPEDISHUN
 REPORTS - GREECE,PERU,CANADA -
 EVEN SOME OLD STUFF FROM
 MOROCCO AN SPAIN, BACK TO
 DE EARLY '70 S. SO, GERREM
 WHILE DER PHOTOCOPIERS HOT!
 KNOW WOT AH MEEN !! DEY'RE
 MOVIN FAST, SO CUM ON -
 TO YOU MAH BOY.....
 SPESHUL RATES!!!



For back numbers of the IC³ Newsletter
 & copies of expedition reports contact
 Clive Orrock.

'89 SUMMER TOUR IN THE VERCORS, FRANCE (part II)

Into The Lair Of The Damned Harry Remembers

Members:	Andrew Backhouse	Simon Lawes
	Chris Birkhead	Harry Lock
	Richard Collicott	Clive Orrock
	Monoghan Tindale	Janet Cotter-Howells
	Tim Palmer	Dave Wilson
	Nicholas Wood	Wendy Rooke

The main aim this year emerged as Antre des Damnes - 723m , in the eastern area of the Vercors, high above Correncon. For this reason we camped in Villard de Lans for the whole three weeks, and found this to be a good location for the caves that were done. The weather during the first two weeks was rather unsettled, including two days of heavy rain. The final week saw an improvement, with good suntanning weather arriving.

After a couple of gear carrying visits to Antre des Damnes, the first rigging trip got underway. We were anxious not to repeat the Piaggia Bella epics of 1988, when all our efforts were concentrated into just a few long, overnight trips. Instead we aimed at several short, daytime trips, in order to preserve the 'body clock', and get more comfortable caving in. We used the Cabeza Muxa rigging technique, with small (3 person) overlapping rigging teams. The visits to the cave were all based at the nearby Cabane de Carette.

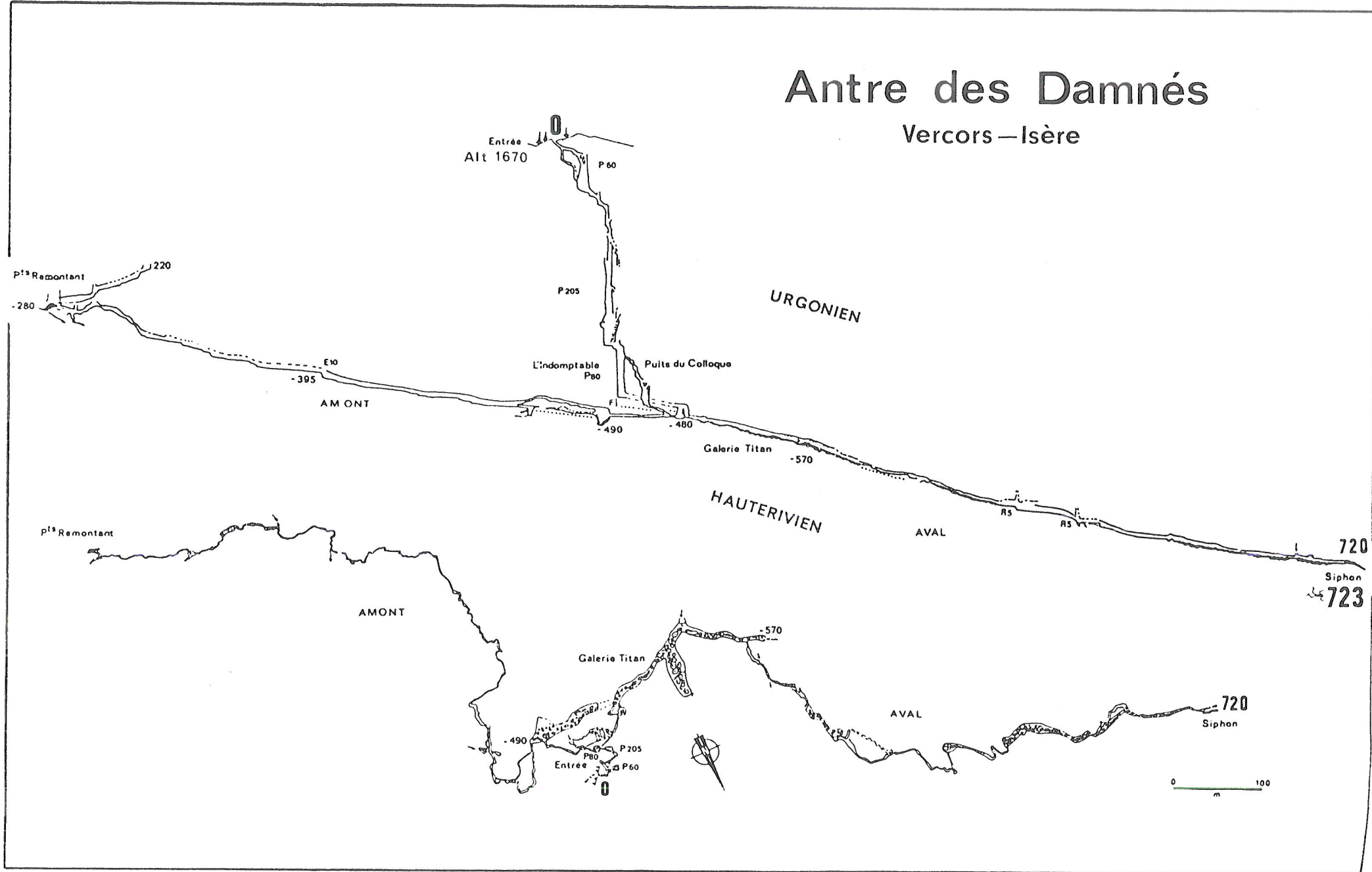
Chris, Andy and Harry rigged down to -40 on the 205m Puits Goudurix. On the second rigging trip, Dave, Andy and Harry got down the 205 and succeeding 80m "Indomptable, and carried on down to reach the Galerie Titan, at -480m. The Indomptable, a fine 80m hang right down the centre of a beautifully cylindrical shaft, can become wet , so an extra bag was left at its head to allow the dry Colloque pitches to be rigged as an alternative, if necessary. As the second rigging trip exited, they handed over to Chris, Tim and Nicholas, who were to sort out the lower section of the cave. After an excellent route finding effort, they turned back, unknowingly only a few hundred horizontal metres from the siphon, much to their later annoyance.

The fourth trip of Rich, Wendy, Janet, Monoghan and Simon was essentially down the shaft series and out again, allowing four of its members to notch up their first $\frac{1}{2}$ km of cave depth.

We now had the cave virtually entirely rigged, and were poised ready to bottom it. The general feeling, however, was that people wanted only one more trip down it, so that trip

Antre des Damnés

Vercors — Isère



would clearly have to be a derigging trip. It was decided to leave the cave rigged for just under a week, until Clive's arrival, and then bottom it en masse and derrig the whole cave in a oner (seven bags were in the cave, containing about 650m of rope and hangers)

There had already been a "warm-up" trip down Trisou during the initial days of Antre des damnés. We now set about to notch up a few more "day trip" caves. This week was one of the best of the tour. Lazy mornings, an afternoon caving, then a hot shower and meal in the evening. Caves done included:-

Trou qui Souffle. To the siphon at -220m.

Glaciere de Carri. Rigging to -110m.

Gour Fumant. Rigging to -100m and rigging wall above

Glaciere d'Autrans. 2 visits, but other groups down already

Grotte de la Luire. Down ladders to -200m.

Trou de l'Aygue. 165m through trip, from E1 to E2.

Scialet de Malaterre. 2 trips down to -120m.

The derigging of Antre des Damnés worked well. After a staggered start, all nine reached the bottom at more or less the same time (3½ hours down). On the way out, five people took three bags as they became available, and headed on out. Four people remained for the shaft series. Luckily, a French team had double rigged the cave, so while one pair derigged a pitch, the other pair derigged the pitch above, leaving the French ropes in place for the lower derigging pair to ascend. Simple eh? Well of course it wasn't entirely, since no tour is complete without an epic, albeit minor in this case. The exit and subsequent return to the refuge took slightly longer than expected!!

After the customary rest day, we were back into daytrip caving again:-

Grotte de Bournillion. -65m.

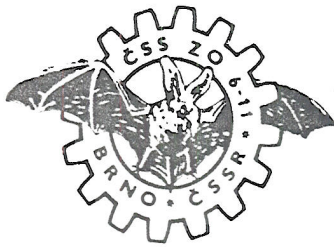
Puits san Fond. -40m.

Gour Fumant Solo rigging to -100m.

Scialet de l'Appel. Siphon at -105m.

Glaciere d'Autrans. -180m.

During the tour, we had a couple of excellent club meals at the Auberge de Furon in Meandre. The end of the tour was marked by two very hot days when we sun-bathed, got the beers in, swam and walked (God it was hard!) Leaving the Vercors mid-afternoon, we drove back overnight and caught the first ferry from Dunkerque, back to an overheating London.



CAVING CLUB ZO 3-01
"MACARÁT" PLZEŇ



THE CZECH VISIT, AUGUST 1989

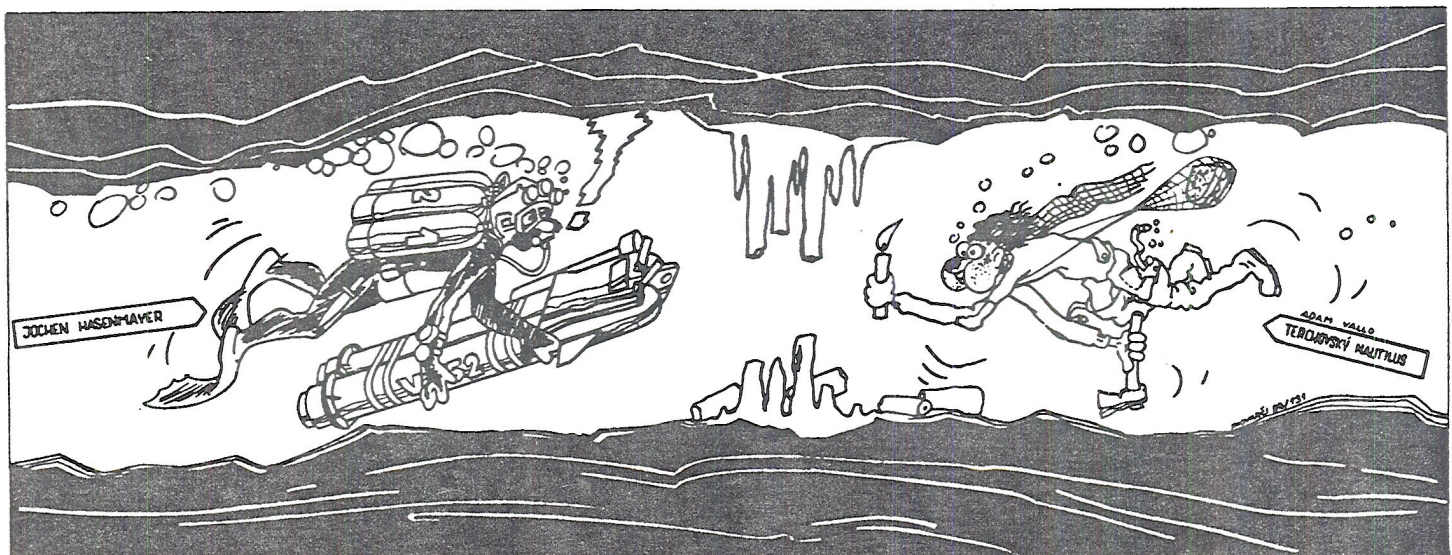
This August, a group of 16 Czech cavers from Brno and Plsen, visited Great Britain, as guests of Newcastle University CC, the host club. This was the reciprocal visit, following a successful trip to Czechoslovakia by N.U.C.C. last year. They spent about two weeks caving in Yorkshire and South Wales, as well as various tourist attractions, before spending a final weekend in London, before departure.

I.C. played host during this weekend. The Czechs and Newcastle cavers were accomodated in the Union Building, which was also the scene for two huge evening feasts, where the Czechs, most of whom seemed to be about 6' tall, ate an unimaginable quantity of food and beer, at an equally unimaginable rate. Sainsburys in the Cromwell Road certainly did well out of the weekend.

The Czechs were taken on a guided tour of London, including all the usual grockle spots such as Buck House and Trafalgar Square. The aspects which seemed to interest them most were Speakers Corner, feeding the pigeons, the mounted police guarding guardsmen, and shopping in Selfridges. Macdonalds in the Strand didn't seem too good at serving a 25 strong party, mostly of East European origin!

Our involvement was worthwhile in that useful contacts were made and invitations for a visit made. Overall the Czechs seemed to have had an enjoyable time in Britain, and they all left at the end of the weekend clutching bags with "SELFRIDGES" and "HARRODS" on the side!

Harry Lock



TAJOMSTVO BLAUTOPFU

CHRISTMAS VISIT TO THE JURA 1990

Chris Birkhead, Dewi Lloyd and Harry Lock visited the Doubs region of the French Jura over the Christmas period. After extremely heavy rain and high winds on the journey down, we established ourselves in the tiny village of Nans sans Saint Anne, staying at the local Gite d'Etape ("Le Lison"). The nearest town for food supplies is Salins les Bains (approx 20Km), and the nearest city is Besaçon.

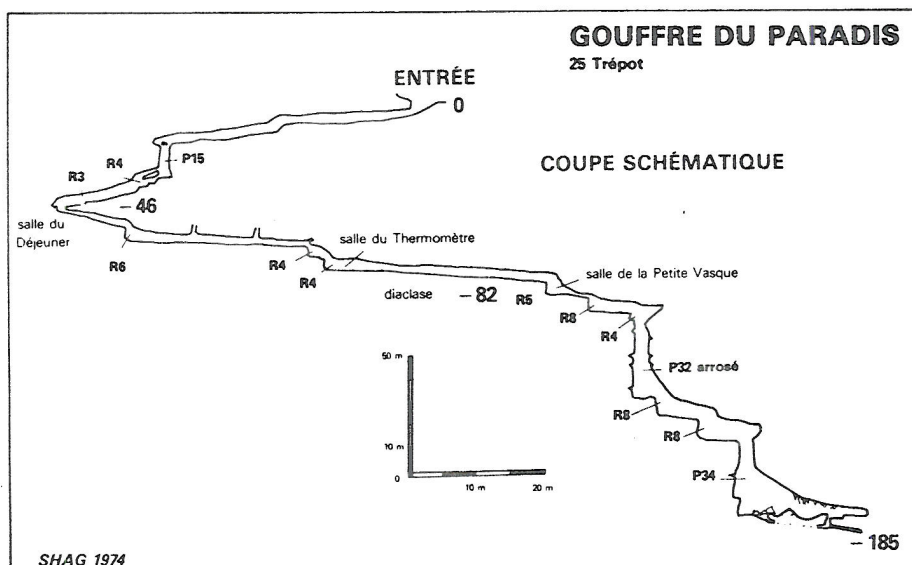
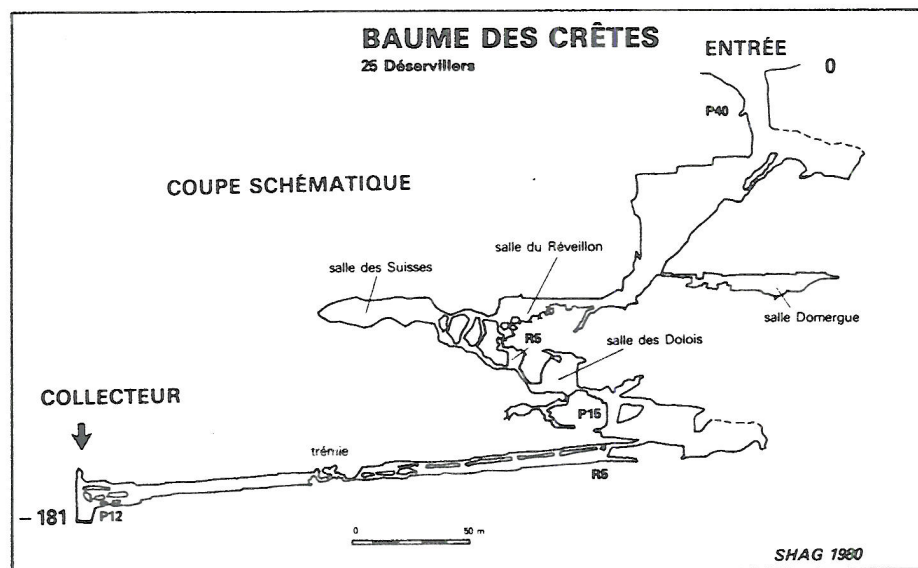
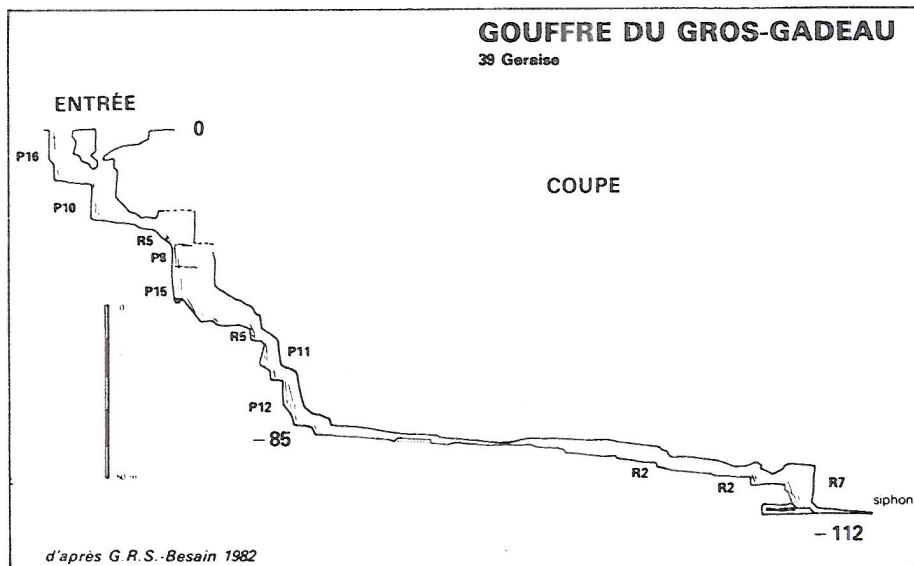
The area is one of low lying rolling hills and plateau, mostly agricultural land and forestry. Access to all caves is extremely easy - the longest walk in was 20 minutes; most are by the road. The weather was ideal - an anticyclone over the French Alps giving very cold nights but sunny days. We encountered no snow. We had intended doing the Verneau system traverse (Gouffre de Biefs Boussets to Grotte Baudin) but it became clear early on that this was not going to be possible as water had backed up behind the resurgence sump to block off the Baudin exit as well (see survey). We ended up doing the Gros-Gadeau, the Grotte Baudin, the Gouffre de Biefs Boussets, the Baume des Crêtes, the Gouffre du Paradis and the Grotte de Sarazine. Highlights of the visit were the "ambiance aquatique" of Gros Gadeau, the deep pools and cascades of the Verneau Collecteur, the appalling mud and tightness of the Paradis, and Chris' daring 15m "escalade" in the Sarazine.

The Jura has lots of caves, but if you just want to do the best ones you will have to travel quite long distances as it is quite a large region.

The Jura would be ideal as an introductory continental area, where the reasonably experienced cavers could tackle the best caves. It would be an ideal venue if the club was short of old lags one year, as it is a good area for the less experienced to "find their own feet" rather than following behind an old lag learning very little. Nevertheless, apart from the Verneau collecteur, all of the potholes can be surpassed in quality in Yorkshire - this was the opinion we came to at the time.

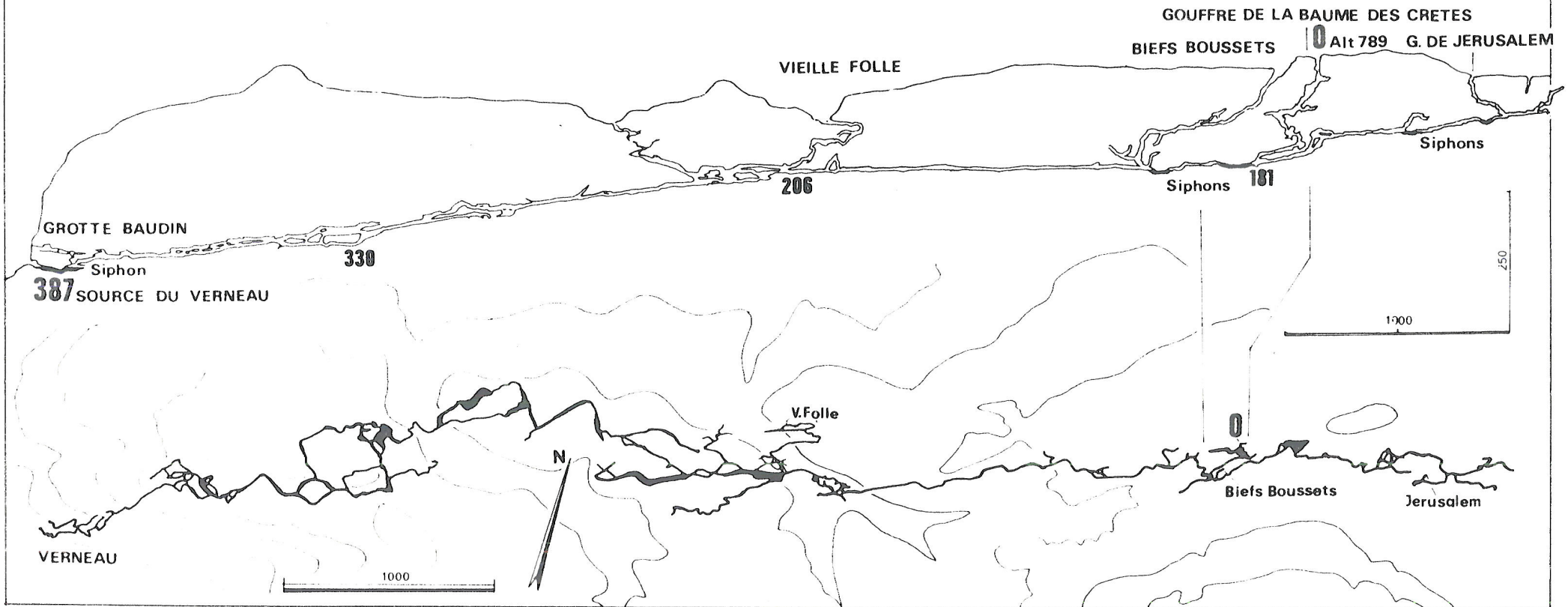


Harry.



RESEAU DU VERNEAU

NANS-SOUS-STE-ANNE (DOUBS)



The Library

As I am sure most of you are aware, the IC³ library is now situated in the wooden cupboard in the alcove in the back part of Stores. The library contains periodicals such as Caves and Caving, Cave Science and Descent, guides to the main caving areas of Britain and France as well as other parts of the world, caving manuals, general texts, old news letters (both IC³'s and other club's) old log books (always good for a reminisce about the "good old days"), maps and surveys (most of these are under the cupboard).

At present there are very few books in the library, and to be honest, I'm not too sure what there should be. If you are one of the people who has some of the Club's books, or even any caving books you are not too sure the origin of, please could you return them so a catalogue can be made of what we have. Hopefully this will be published in the next news letter so more Club members are aware of what the Club has in the library, and use it.

Recent purchases have been the English (or rather American), updated edition of "Grandes Cavitees..." - the encyclopedia of the caves of the world, the second ULSA exploration journal, the history of the Lancaster-Easegill system and replacement guide books including yet another Mendip Underground (where do they all go?).

The suggestion has been made that we subscribe to foreign journals to keep the Club in touch with speleological happenings around the world. If you have any suggestions as to which journals to subscribe to, and also which books to buy in the future, then let the librarian (currently me) know.

If you have any books, magazines, maps or surveys lying around at home unused, then donate them to the library, they will be much appreciated.

Rob.

THE ITALIAN CONTACT

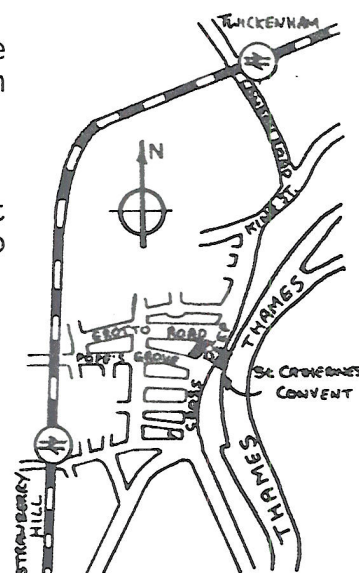
We have had a letter from a club that we met in the Margureis (Piaggia Bella) last year, asking to exchange publications, and possibly "caving experiences" (which presumably means a visit). Reading through various journals, and from our own experiences, I get the impression that many Italian clubs are very interested in exchanges and joint ventures, with British cavers, much more so than French clubs. What with 1992, and East Europe progressively dismantling its Communist system, the time could never be more right for foreign exchanges of all kinds.

Harry Lock

IN SEARCH OF THE LOST FORMATIONS OF WOOKEY

Shortly after describing the fate of the stalactites taken from Wookey Hole to Alexander Pope's London garden in issue 12 (What's in a name - part 2), I came upon a Youngs pub in Twickenham called "Pope's Grotto". Purely in the interests of spelaeological research, I went in for a pint of Winterwarmer. An avid discussion with the landlord and assorted locals ensued during which it was established that Pope's Grotto (the pub) had indeed been flattened by a bomb in 1942, but that Pope's Grotto in the garden was thought to have survived. Several pints later I finally tottered out on the quest to find the lost formations of Wookey.

Judging by the street names it appeared that what had been Pope's home and garden were now occupied by St. Catherine's Convent School for Girls. I wandered round the back of the playground peeking through the fence to see if I could get a look into the grounds. However the suspicious twitchings of the neighbours' net-curtains warned me that I'd better move on. A beery; "I'm looking for the Pope's grotto", wouldn't sound too convincing if caught peeping into a Catholic school for young girlies!!



I retreated to Twickenham Public Library for some research:

Tho' several translations of Mr Pope's Verses on his grotto have already appear'd, we hope that the following attempt, which, we are assured, was the casual amusement of half an hour, during several solicitations to proceed, will neither be unacceptable to our readers, nor (these circumstances consider'd) disbonour the persons concern'd by a hasty publication.

VERSES IN A GROTTTO by the River Thames at Twickenham, compos'd of Marbles, Spars, and Minerals. By Mr POPE.

Thou who shalt stop, where Thames' translucent wave

Shines a broad mirror thro' the shadowy cave;
Where lingering drops from mineral roofs distill,
And pointed crystals break the sparkling rill,
Unpolish'd gems no ray on pride bestow,
And latent metals innocently glow;
Approach. Great nature studiously behold!
And eye the mine without a wish for gold.
Approach. But awful! Lo! th' Egerian grott,
Where nobly-pensive, St JOHN sat and thought;
Where British sighs from dying Wyndham stole,
And the bright flame, was shut thro' Maribon's
Let such, such only tread this sacred floor,
'Who dare to love their country and be poor.

Pope built the grotto under the Teddington Road initially to link his villa with the riverside gardens on the far side of the highway. Over many years the grotto was gradually extended to comprise several chambers, and eventually becoming a major garden feature in its own right. After the tastes of the time it was embellished throughout by pieces of coloured glass, shells, semi-precious stones, minerals, and as the inventory stated:

"Some fine and very uncommon Petrifications from Okey-Hole in Somersetshire".

In the subterranean solitude of his grotto, Pope used to work composing his poems such as the verses (left) - copied from The Gentleman's Magazine of October 1743.

Pope himself always stated that he preferred fame as a gardener and not as a poet (hardly surprising considering the effort given above), and was particularly pleased to have people visit his garden and grotto. This openness to the general public became the garden's undoing. In 1807, half a century after his death, the house and gardens were bought by Lady Howe. She soon got so fed up with people calling at all hours and traipsing over the garden, that she had the villa flattened and in the garden, all memorials to the previous owner destroyed - an action that earned her the sobriquet of the Vandal of Twickenham. The grotto, although plundered of much of its decoration, alone survived.

The site of Pope's Villa and gardens are now occupied by St. Catherine's Convent School, and the grotto, although much spoilt by 250 years of vandalism, rebuilding and damp, can still be visited.

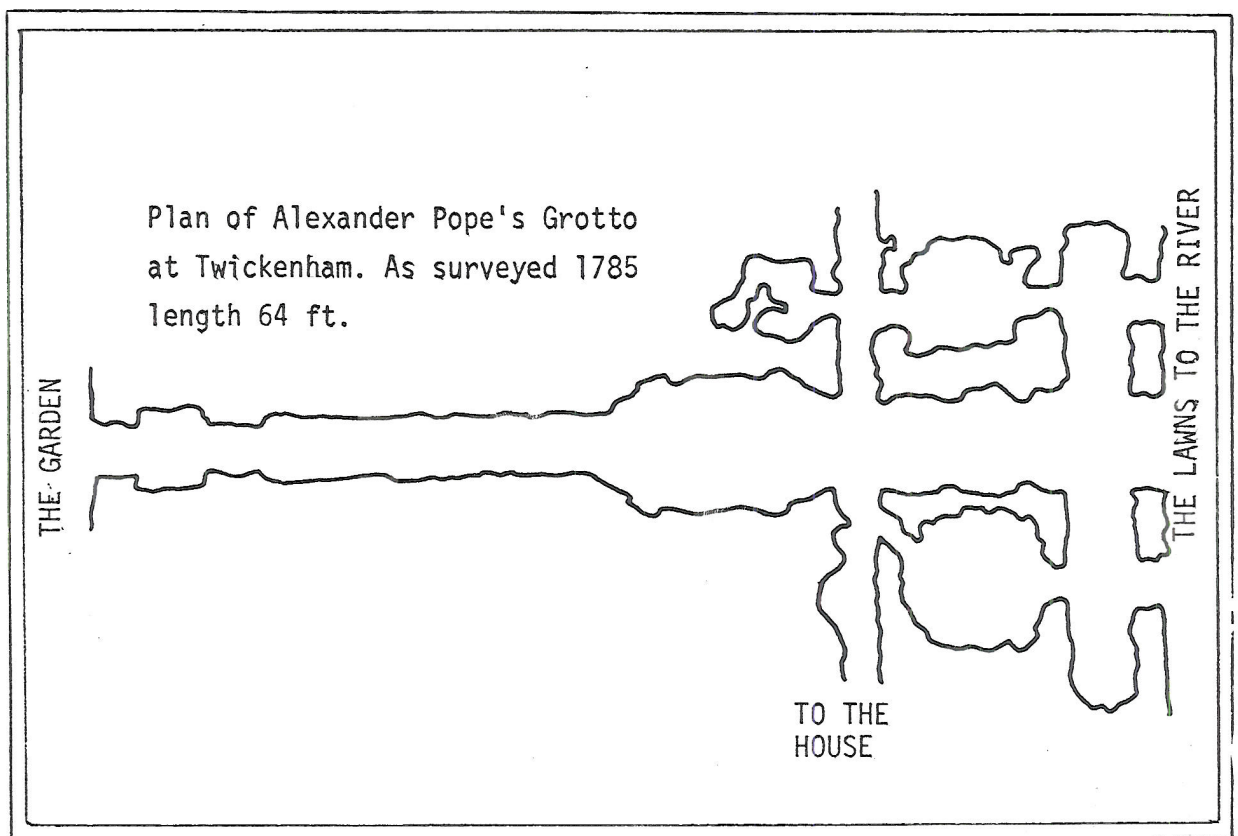
I contacted Sister Mary Michael, and a few weeks later presented myself at the small door of the present "Pope's Villa". I was received by the ancient but lively Sister who ushered me through the convent and out onto the terrace overlooking the Thames. Clutching a massive torch she led the way down to the gated entrance of the Grotto.

"It was a thing of great beauty then", she explained, somewhat apologetically, "Oh dear, there's another piece coming loose". It was all a bit decayed, mildewed and crumbly. Of the stalactites from Wookey I don't think much remains - 250 years of souvenir hunters have stripped the grotto almost as clean as Pope himself plundered the cave. A few bits of grubby flowstone seemed to be all that was left of Wookey's once pristine formations.

Nevertheless the grotto itself has survived despite all odds. While the buildings about suffered from the same stick of bombs that took out the pub, Pope's grotto stood firm being used as an air-raid shelter for the convent, as Sister M well remembered:

"We would bring the blessed Sacraments down here to protect them during the raids. Bombs went off all round but we were saved thanks to Mr. Pope".

Squeals echoed from down the main passage and suddenly a torrent of curls and cries hurtled past - the grotto still provides a convenient subway for the school. Alexander Pope would have approved.



Coincidentally, prior to Pope's move out to Twickenham (being a Catholic he was barred from owning property within 12 miles of London) he had lived with his parents in the corner house of "Dr. Matthias Mawson's New Buildings" in Chiswick Lane. This house is now the "Mawson Arms" next to the Fullers Brewery and is the weekly meeting place of the Mendip Caving Group. How many of the MCG realise that they meet in the front room of one of the Mendips' most famous cave vandals ?

CAVERNS, CHASMS, HOLLOWES & HOLES

Once again, can you identify these fictional troglodytic characters? In which books do they appear and who are the authors?

1. Who went with his uncle and Hans the guide to find a very deep system with an entrance in an Icelandic volcano:

"...it was a hundred feet in diameter. I leaned over a projecting rock and looked down. My hair stood on end. The fascination of the void took hold of me. I felt my centre of gravity moving and vertigo rising to my head like intoxication. There is nothing more overwhelming than the intoxication of the abyss. I was on the point of falling when a hand pulled me back".

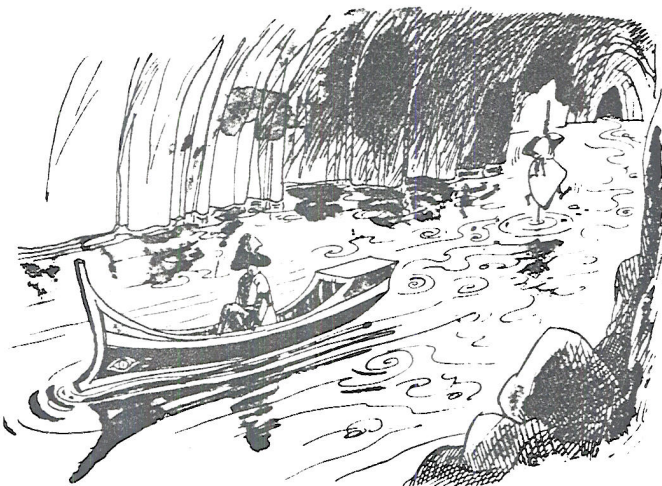
2. Who, with his knights, lies in enchanted sleep deep in a cave somewhere in England, "until a day will come - and come it will - when England shall be in direst peril, and England's mothers weep. Then out from the hill they must ride and in a battle - thrice lost, thrice won, on the plain - drive the enemy into the sea".

3. Who went on a picnic, and with the other youngsters of a Mississippi village went into McDougal's Cave, Alabama but unlike the others, met some bats:

"....The bats chased the children a good distance, and the fugitives plunged into every new passage that offered, and at last got rid of the perilous things. They found a subterranean lake, shortly, which stretched its dim length away until its shape was lost in shadows. Now for the first time the deep stillness of the place laid a clammy hand upon the spirits of the childrenLost!"
They were found some days later.



4. Whose spaceship landed in a giant ice cave - "Hey, caves are cool. Let's get out and relate to it" - which on closer inspection turns out to be an enormous plastic cup, floating in the air, held up "by Art"?



5. Who was the ferryman who conveyed souls along the underground River Styx, and down to Hades? Usually with more success than pictured by the cartoonist, left.

6. Canoeing in search of a rumoured great white race, this man and his companions were sucked into a large subterranean river. Underground, the rock became red hot and a gas jet of white flame shot up to the roof, falling back down in sheets of fire in the shape of rose petals.

7. Marooned for three years on Skeleton Island, this man had lived in a cave surrounded by Capt. Flint's treasure, and craving just "a piece of cheese!"

8. Who, having recovered the magical gem Firefrost, escaped from the pursuing Svarts through a labyrinth of caverns and tunnels underneath Alderney Edge in Cheshire?

The lowest levels were the worst....."....the tunnel was so heavily silted that it was almost beyond the children to move at all.They lay full length, walls, floor, and roof fitting them like a second skin.... The only way to advance was to pull with the fingertips, and push with the toes as it was impossible to flex the legs at all. He thought of the hundreds of feet of rock above and the miles of rock below, and of himself wedged into a nine-inch high gap between.

"I'm a living fossil! Suppose I stick here,that'll make the archaeologists sit up!".'

9. Who left his castle and peaceful land to travel to the Hot-Water Valley beyond the Glass Mountains, where he met a dragon (right) who was unable to sleep because of the mysterious fires in his cave (below)? As usual Nogbad the Bad was behind the trouble.

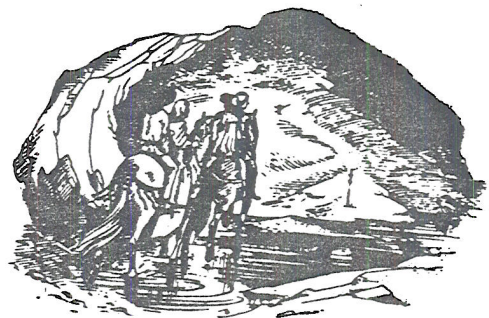


10. Who was found by wolves and brought back to their cave in the nick of time, because just then:
"...The moonlight was blocked out of the mouth of the cave, for Shere Khan's great head and shoulders were thrust into the entrance. Tabaqui behind him was squeaking. "My Lord, My Lord, it went in here!"

11. Who is describing the exploration of which system?

"Brunesceau had hardly entered the underground network when eight of his twenty workers refused to go further....Progress was slow. It happened not infrequently that the ladders sank into three feet of slime. Lanterns flickered and died in the poisonous air, and from time to time a fainting man had to be carried out. There were pit-falls at certain places where the floor had collapsed and the sewer became a bottomless pit;one man suddenly disappeared and they had great difficulty in rescuing him."

12. Fleeing the Giants of Harfang, they accidentally found their way down to the subterranean Kingdom of Underland. After a journey of many days across a vast underground sea they finally found, and rescued the Prince from the Witch Queen, and beat a hasty retreat back to the surface as the caverns rapidly flooded. (See right).



13. Who was taken by the Selenites to meet the Grand Lunar: a journey down deep shafts and tunnels, and finally across an underground sea, all lit by a strange luminous blue liquid?
14. Who sought and killed the dreaded Minotaur in the labyrinth of tunnels under the palace of the King of Crete?
15. Who got lost in a cave?
"You should have kept her in sight, it was your duty," said Aziz severely.
"Here are twelve caves at least.How am I to know which contains my guest ? Which is the cave I was in myself?"...."Merciful Heavens, she is lost".

The Duties of the Club's Officers

I thought it might be useful for the club as a whole, and next years incumbents in particular, to know what the responsibilities of the Club officers are through the year. I'll start with the post of Vice-President as it is a post that I think needs some definition, having in recent years become something of a CV filling title only. There is most comment on VP and Secretary since I have held both posts, and also because both have been lacking this year. Past treasurers and Tackle Officers might like to pass on useful hints to their successors.

Vice President

1. Transport Book all transport throughout the year, be it vans, ferries, cars or rollerskates.
2. Food Make sure the food is bought on a Friday and sort out the food left in stores before the sausages bought last month rot. Also food and drink for special events e.g. wine and cheese for the slide show, a barrel of beer for bonfire night.
3. Library Keep a check on the where-abouts of the Club's books, buy new books and reports, make sure the (relevant) guide books get taken away at the weekend, keep the logbook up to date.
4. General supporting role to aid President.

Secretary

1. Huts Once the location of the trips through the year has been decided the huts should be booked, preferably the right weekend in the right area.
2. Permits Permits are, I think, absolutely essential to a successful years caving. They open up so much of the Dales which is otherwise out of bounds and give direction to a weekend. They prevent the endless hours of alcohol assisted indecision in the morning and can attract people on to the trip who want to get that cave "ticked off". Permits and huts are best sorted out before the beginning of the year so a reliable meets list can be sent to members out of College.
3. Newsletter Cajole people into writing for the newsletter, not just articles, but also letters, news of what they are doing if they have left College, cartoons and any other information that needs communicating to the club as a whole.
4. Contact Send meets lists, newsletters and invitations to dinners to members. Update the address list when necessary. Foster links with other clubs by sending newsletters.

5. Dinners Book the Christmas dinner and Dinner Meet.

Treasurer

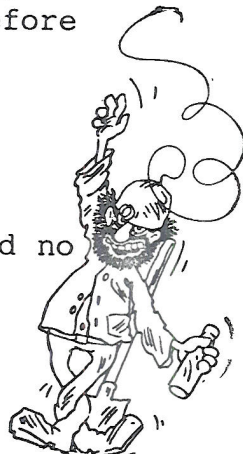
1. R.C.C. Since R.C.C. provides us with so much money throughout the year, an appreciation of how to get that money is necessary. For details of devious techniques and useful fiddles see Dave. R.C.C. treasurers meeting are during Wednesday lunch times and this is when money should be claimed back/ paid in (however rarely this happens)
2. Weekends At the end of the weekend, the hut bill needs to be paid (if we are ever to use the hut again), money needs to be collected from people, petrol receipts and others should be collected. The van bill should be paid on Monday morning.
3. Membership Perhaps the Treasurer should be equipped with a big stick for this duty. Membership needs to be collected without remorse from as many people as possible since if we do not meet the requirements set by R.C.C. our grant is frozen.

Tackle Officer(s)

1. Stores Try and keep stores in a reasonable condition and castigate (not too painful if you catch them early enough, though they might squeal a bit) people who scatter coke cans, fag ends, and other rubbish around the place.
2. Lamps Make sure the lamps are charged before the weekend and that the bulbs are not blown. Keep a note of lamps which have a short life and weed them out. Not being able to see does tend to diminish ones enjoyment of a trip.
3. Ropes Drag people down to stores on a Wednesday afternoon to sort out the ropes they used last weekend and have left in the bags with the hangers on and covered in mud.
4. Weekends Make sure that little things like the rigging gear, carbide and lamps get taken away at the weekend. They do make things easier. Sort out wellies, oversuits, furry suits and so on before the freshers' trips and make sure things are dried out afterwards.

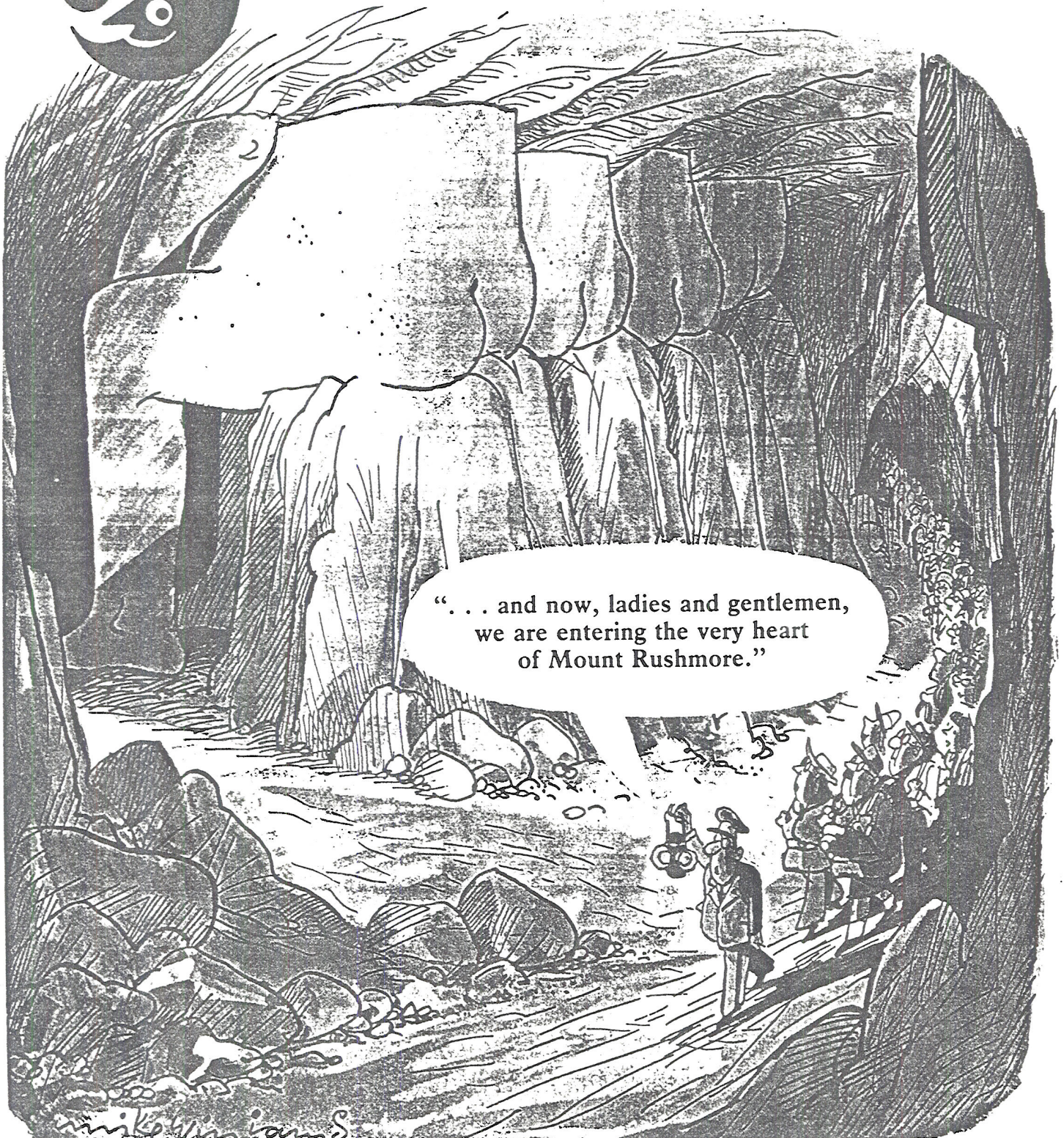
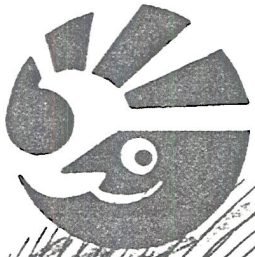
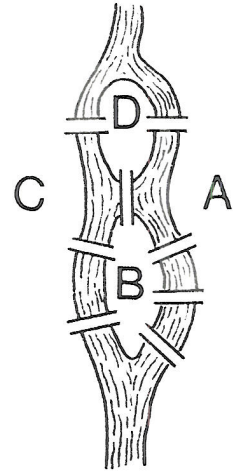
President

1. Everything When the treasurer runs away with the money, stores explodes, there are no vans booked and no huts to stay in anyway, its all your fault.



ANSWERS - To the show cave owner's problem in issue No. 12 .

This is essentially the famous topographical problem of the Bridges of Königsburg, and as such it is impossible to pass along all the passages (bridges) once only and return to the starting point, as proved by Euler in 1736. However in the cave problem we are in three dimensions. If the shaft is dug at the point where chambers C and D overlap, it is possible to go out from the lift into chamber D, traverse all the passages and arrive back at the lift, one level up in chamber C. This is of course a perfectly practical option, and in effect adds another passage/bridge. It is not possible to do the same where chambers C and A overlap.



Brits on the Piss Tour '89 (or, The Last Great Caving Adventure).

During the merry months of June/July, the Imperial College Caving Club embarked on the Summer Tour. A collection of competent Cavers and other assorted randoms gathered amid the gloom of failed exams and smelly caving gear to tackle the last great frontier of the Vercours, France.

For myself, this was my first foray from the shores of Britain into a foreign country (small town or what ?) and being unprepared and slightly afraid I consequently used the Monaghan approach to a problem: get pissed and stay pissed. This seemed to work adequately.

The gear slowly migrated towards the van and began to evolve into a new life form. There wasn't enough room for the comfy mattresses so we threw carry-mats over the gear to prevent killing any of the poor sods that were travelling in it. Richard was armed with his trusty car complete with those vital luxury accessories: dents. And then we were off to boldly go etc.

A quick blast down to the ferry and across to Calais with Dave 'Rally' Wilson at the wheel. All the addicts of the Club were happy clutching their bundles of duty-free fags and booze in the back of the van. The hack down to the Vercours involved working up the necessary escape velocity for Reims and avoiding paying on any of the toll roads by making the route as complicated as possible. Eventually we arrived in Villard De Lans which was to be our base of operations for the whole tour. The few minor initial problems were soon overcome, such as locating 'Arry after his week of meditation and finding a suitable campsite for a band of mean, hard and tough Brit Cavers.

The campsite we centred on appeared to have adequate facilities for that essential after cave relaxation: showers, near to the bars and a cool stream to dump all the beers in. The campsite seemed very quiet and empty when we arrived, however, little did we know that the site would soon be covered in a swarm of French Kiddies off for their Summer Break the next week. I had forgotten how bad an 8 year old learning to play the Violin could sound and how absolutely dreadful Kyllie Minogue sounds early in the morning.

After a short period of doing nothing in particular, the actual caving began. The first caves were all around the 250-300m mark as we couldn't do any 'Mega Death Bastards' until the club as a whole got rid of the fat slob London syndrome. This period saw the formation of three distinct teams being The A Team (hard, fit, mental cases with a death wish), The F Team (random slobs more concerned with eating all the cheese in the morning and seeing how much beer they could consume without actually moving from one spot) and the Stash Tin Team. The last team had the tendency to go wandering about and hide for days to avoid work when required.

The caving itself was a good introduction to the Tour; about the right size and generally near to the road so there was none of this mind and body killing hunting for the entrance four billion miles in a wood that would defy access by a mouse. The caves could be described as similar to those found in North Yorkshire except on a much greater scale. Being at about 1500m the ambient temperature throughout the year is quite low and the entrances of the caves are only free of snow for around 5 months a year. In one of the caves, the entrance series contained ice. However, in true Herman style, I have no idea as to what it was called.

During this period, the newer, less experienced cavers of the group were instructed in the rudiments of rigging and how not to kill themselves. At least that is how they saw it: it was more evident to me that they were all trying to kill me off, especially Simon and Dave as I don't think they appreciated my efforts to demonstrate farting as a new art form. However, I did manage to learn all my knots and techniques like a good boy and since I haven't managed yet to kill anyone by poor rigging, I assume that I learnt them well.

The second week saw the assault on the main cave of the tour. This cave had been planned extensively before the Tour began and all the necessary gear had been acquired, such as the 200m single rope. The Entrance of the Damned: a name to breed fear into any soul. The format of the cave was an entrance at around 1750m up a large hill in a valley so covered with shattered limestone that it appeared as if it was covered in snow, with a very short entrance series containing around 500m of ropework. The longest pitch was 205m with 14 rebays. After the drops, the cave continued down through a series of massive breakdown chambers to reach a sump at a total depth of 780m (I think). A couple of squeezes and some fine formations broke the repetitiveness of the lower part of the cave. All good stuff.

The cave was rigged over three days by members of the A Team: Dave, 'Arry, Andy and Chris. 'Arry carried the 200m rope to the entrance of the cave (more fool him). The F Team was content to descend after all the hard work had been done and even then we were unable to find the way on after the drops of the entrance series. The climb out proved arduous for the more mortal cavers and some of us experienced problems during the mind numbing 205m pitch (Wendy got hung up at a rebelay, leaving Rich to hurl abuse from lower down as his legs went to sleep). I recall being desperately thirsty at one point and traversing across the wall to suck water off a shitty surface to quench the thirst. Eventually we all got out to greet the dawn.

A couple of days rest in the Refuge being mellow sorted me out enough to continue caving. All the gear was left in the cave for a future trip when Clive arrived in the final week. The rest of the second week saw the return of the 250-300m caves which now seemed a piece of piss.

Due to the fact I haven't got a guide book of the area I can't say as to any of the names of the caves now, but one sticks in the mind. This cave involved rigging off a walkway across an open shaft. The visible depth of the shaft was around 60m but it was possible to fall all the way down to twice that depth. Janet practiced her rigging for this one and I'm glad she did it and not myself. It was a long way down and she must have felt very exposed. After the shaft, the rest of the cave was a bit of a letdown and we couldn't be bothered to bottom it.

Another cave that I remember (again no name) was a cave that had been converted to a show cave. Apparently the French Resistance used parts of the entrance series as a base of operations during WW2. All of the cave was laddered with permanent Iron ladders that made the drops far easier to cope with. The cave itself showed signs of violent flooding and some of the passages obviously spent most of the year completely flooded. Upon exit, Dave was informed that the caven can chuck out around 40m³ of water during the snow melt. Certainly a hell of a lot of water.

The end of the second week saw the departure of Wendy Inter-railing and Simon off to a job somewhere to try and sort out his overdraft.

Clive arrived to be confronted with the Entrance of the Damned. We had saved the derigging of the cave until he had arrived. The final assault on the cave was now underway.

We had decided to put two teams down the cave, a total of ten people. This required a staggered departure so that no hold ups were experienced. Well, that was the theory. We managed to get everyone down to the sump which wasn't worth all the hassel of getting there: a poxy passage that gradually lowered until the water met the roof. Nick decided that he wanted to fill his Carbide and succeeded in dropping the base into the sump. Eventually he retrieved it and fished about for the lumps of fizzing Carbide. Nick was not the most co-ordinated of people.

Again, the climb out was a bastard. Unfortunately, Clive had not had the chance to improve his fitness, so, straight from London, this cave proved a bit too much. Upon exit, he collapsed from exhaustion and had to spend the night out on the mountain accompanied by 'Arry and Andy. I knew exactly how he felt.

I had to take another couple of days off from caving to give myself a chance to recover from the trip. Dave was also pretty knackered, but he had more reason to be as four tins of Mackrel Fillets in Olive Oil is enough to put anyone out of action for a while. He has sworn that he will never go down a cave again without a choc' stash.

After all the gear had been taken out, there wasn't too much planned for the rest of the tour. I attempted my first solo trip down one of the caves that I had ventured into with Simon and Dave in the first week of the tour. This was certainly an experience that I won't forget. The feeling of being alone in a cave is difficult to describe: simultaneously enjoyable and fucking awful. With no-one to complain to, I pondered the meaning of life and how buggered I would be if I had an accident (Chris being on my mind). There is also a great feeling of elation when exiting; a thank God that's over feeling.

The last few days were spent adjusting to the idea of going home and sampling some of the French nosh complete with an attack of the Mega Beer Consumption. There seemed to be an undercurrent of depression over the group: perhaps from the idea of going home or perhaps from the fact that nerves were getting frayed.

The gear got packed back into the van with the usual caving finess: slung in. The journey back was very subdued but rapid and we caught an early ferry even though the Reims problem raised its ugly head once more. The van sunk a few inches lower under the extra weight of bulk booze and fags, the quantity of which got a few sniggers from the other randoms on the ferry.

Upon return to London, all the gear got dumped in stores and left to get the particularly unpleasant smell that we all know and love. Farewells said, each departed to other lives.

As anyone connected with caving will say, one of the best aspects of this sport is the development of friendships and the general closeness of the Club. This was definitely present in France. I also gained a great deal of respect for the people I was with. On the other hand, I also pissed a lot of people off; but thats life folks.

So, to conclude, a note to the new members of the Club. The Summer Tour is an excellent laugh: jollifications and party time combined with lots of wonderful views and essential beer. Of course, there's some of that nasty caving as well. You'll love it.