

Stomping out past Camp1, we were waylaid by Duncan's party, and waited two hours till Dave Pike was resuscitated sufficiently to return with us. Paul slept, while I paced about, ate, and held conversations with imaginary people...a problem of sleep-deprivation, since I'd only had ten hours rest in the previous four days. Eventually we set off out and wearily dragged ourselves to the surface. Paul and I had clocked up 26hrs. underground, and it felt like it on the walk back to base camp. Paul went to bed immediately, but I wanted to break my night-shift routine, so downed a bottle of wine and sun-bathed instead!

The Surface Telephone Station.

(By Jenny Potts)

On Monday I set off with Terry and Co. to rig up the telephone from the surface. There is a useful sheltered ledge above the South side of the entrance and someone had already rigged a plastic sheet bivouac here. We knew that there would be lots of tourists wandering around so we took some trouble to rig the wire out of their way, and also rigged it to the opposite side of the entrance to the ladders to keep it clear of heavy-footed cavers, looping it through the trees overhead.

The following day we went to connect the hand-sets which had been unaccountably taken down the cave and could not be found! It was a pretty frustrating day, enlivened by a couple of quick thunderstorms, which made it quite clear that we would have to do better than a leaky plastic sheet for protection on the surface. It was also disturbing to have no direct communication with the main campsite except for a 'runner'.

On Wednesday, Andy Ive and Bill Brooks arrived to rig their handsets to the cable run out by Terry. Bill also produced a tent before setting off down, leaving me with a handset which had been checked out in working order.

No sooner had I started to pitch the tent than there was a bout of typical 'Berger weather'... a violent hailstorm accompanied by thunder and lightning which stopped after twenty minutes or so leaving the ground looking as if it had been snowing! I unearthed the tent from under a drift of hailstones and eventually rigged it by dint of tying guylines to boulders, tree roots and a few shaky pegs. It stood up well to several more hailstorms and we were delighted to find the telephone working well at our half-hourly rendezvous calls as Andy and Bill worked their way down to Camp1.

Sadly, after working well for some hours, the phone packed up again, probably as someone had pulled a connection adrift on the older cable left in for us... certainly the new cable put in by Terry and Bill worked well.

For the next few days the tent was used as a surface base and store, as well as providing somewhere snug for the telephonist. It is worth remembering that there is room on the ledge for only a small tent, and it is no good expecting an exact emplacement as the ground is so uneven and rocky. It is best to use a tent with few poles and long guy-lines which can be tied to rocks etc.

As the Berger is a popular tourist walk, the telephonist also has to act as 'watchman'. The tourists did no purposeful harm but did wander on to the ledge once or twice, tripping on the guy-lines with gay abandon. One day a tourist was stopped halfway down the entrance pitch; an heroic father, anxious to impress his small son, but with no idea of exactly what he was doing!