

At the end of February the Ghar Parau Committee interview for the British Sports Council awards took place in Castleton. This provided an interesting experience, but unfortunately the committee of well-known cavers considered our expedition was only a holiday excursion and unworthy of a grant. We were very disappointed and felt quite strongly that there should be more support for ordinary sporting activities underground as well as for the more esoteric research projects. We were advised to approach our local Sports Council for help which seemed quite promising at first as the initial contacts were helpful. Unfortunately however, the area in which we met and lived fell between the jurisdictions of several local Sports Councils who each in turn passed our request on in a circular route from which we gained nothing.

In March, a caving conference on expedition organisation was organised by the B.C.R.A. at Buxton. Several expedition members attended and although little was learned about expedition planning several useful contacts were made and an entertaining account of an early Gouffre Berger expedition was heard from Dave Allsop. Paul Ramsden provided details of his flood stricken trip to the Gouffre Berger in 1982 together the descent plans for three teams and the latest tackle list. He said that the cave was very cold and advised wearing furry suits and waterproof overalls, with a rubber 'Pontonière' for the canals. He also stressed the importance of each caver being self-sufficient for food and light as it was easy to become separated and trapped if a sudden storm occurred. The B.C.R.A. Insurance Officer, Geoff Wells was also there, and although he could not provide a firm insurance quotation before Easter, confirmed that the premium was likely to be double that of the previous year due to the recent heavy claims.

The first expedition practice meet was also held in March beneath Leck Fell in Notts Pot and Lost John's. Seventeen cavers turned up and a planning scheme devised by John to test out some of his ideas was used to enable teams to rig Notts and Lost John's simultaneously, swap over, and derig likewise. Both potholes were very wet, and the roaring torrent in the bottom of Lost John's swept a couple of cavers away, who luckily retrieved themselves without mishap. The exercise lasted from 9a.m. until 6p.m. with each team descending a total depth of about 250m. and covering a horizontal distance, including surface walking, of about 4 kilometres. It was a refreshing and enjoyable event which enabled expedition members to get to know each other as well as to get fit.

April was a month of surprises. The Mayor of Engins sent details of the teams before and after ours, and we discovered that an English team, The Black and Tans, from the Manchester area, had booked the fortnight after ours. Their leader, John Heginbotham, conferred with John Gillett about sharing various items of equipment to the mutual advantage of both expeditions and it was agreed that the rescue stretcher, telephone line, and First Aid kits would be left in place by our team. The team prior to ours was from Liège and John rang their leader, Pierre Casters, who was willing to leave his telephone line in place and some hand-lines. These arrangements could not have been bettered, and the amicable relations meant that the overlap periods between expeditions could be treated in a relaxed manner, especially if the weather presented delays in detackling to any team.