

The various duties were agreed for running the campsite and keeping account of underground activities. The planning system for descents and ascents, and for rigging and derigging the cave was explained (see Appendix 5.). The final Newsletter was then circulated to each member with all the details which had been agreed clearly presented. One minor panic occurred over the supply of hangers. Of the original hundred which had been manufactured earlier in the year, only fifty could be found! There was nothing for it but to purchase more and investigate the cause at a later date. A second minor panic occurred when Paul eventually took his dinghy down from his loft and found that it had perished! Several frantic phone calls later we established that we could borrow one from the Westminster club much to the relief of all and sundry.

July was the month for packing and departures. True to their promise, the A.C.A. collected the 'non-strategic' equipment for transport to La Chapelle en Vercors in their 'Four-ton' truck. Ralph packed the emergency supplies for Camp1 and Camp2, cut the ropes to size, and labelled and packed all the tackle into tackle bags for the rigging teams. The medical kits were made up, and last minute purchases of extra rope, Maillon Rapides, and other essential items were completed. We had chosen to travel on the weekend of the great flight South by the French holiday-makers, so various departure times were used depending on members ideas for avoiding traffic jams. Luckily the weather was fine, the Channel calm, and everyone had an accident-free journey down through France to La Molière, one on foot, one by train, one by motorbike, two by bus, and the rest by car.

#### Establishing Base Camp.

Among the first arrivals in the area were Brian Cowie and Russell Carter of the Orpheus who saved a day's work by travelling to La Chapelle en Vercors to see the A.C.A. about the gear which had been ferried out the week before. The A.C.A. were again most helpful and managed to move the gear up to La Molière, so that, when John and Liam arrived on Saturday 30th. July, fresh from sipping mint tea with the Mayor, they found Brian and Russell together with Rachael Clarke guarding an enormous pile of equipment amidst the glinting metal of the French tourists' cars. It transpired that Paul Bates and Dave Pike had also arrived, and that they had reconnoitred the route to the cave entrance before returning to Autrans to sample the local wine. As well as helping on guard duty against the marauding cows and tourists, Rachael had spoken to the local shepherd, who had been most unhelpful and aggravated when she asked him to unchain the barrier across the bridle-path to the plateau to enable the carloads of gear to be driven to a likely campsite. The shepherd's attitude, the milling tourists, the broiling sun, and a large notice warning that a deer had recently died of Rabies in the woods, did not help to establish a friendly environment to camp in. An additional worry was that water was in short supply and the only source was the piped spring-water feeding the cattle troughs not far from the carpark and the tourist hordes. We felt somewhat exposed, and a tour of the plateau looking for a campsite for fifty people made us feel even more concerned as the best spot seemed to be exactly where the shepherd did not want us to go. John and Liam went off to parley with the shepherd, who had retired in high dudgeon to his hut about half a mile away.

As John and Liam approached the fenced enclosure around the hut, several fierce dogs ran out barking and snarling. Mauvais chien! How does one tell a French dog to desist from gnawing one's ankles without resorting to a well aimed kick in its ribs? Luckily the shepherd, a surprisingly Nordic looking young man, called them off in the nick of time. This respite allowed John to open a conversation in French only a degree less hideous than Rachael's.