

Another surprise followed when Jack Sheldon, of the Army Caving Association wrote to John for advice on obtaining permission for a descent in 1984. Jack was subsequently successful in his application and then asked if he could perform a reconnaissance whilst we had the system rigged. We agreed that this would be all right provided that he took out adequate insurance, and in response, Jack offered to arrange to ferry out some of our equipment as there was an A.C.A. group caving in the Vercors during the period of the expedition. A 'Four ton' truck would be used so we could send quite a weight of tackle if we wished. This was a Godsend for us as we were still in the throes of deciding exactly how to transport the increasingly growing weight of equipment and supplies. A few packing and weighing experiments were conducted and it was apparent that we could transport all the 'strategic' gear in John's Saab by stripping out the rear seats and only leaving room for two occupants. The 'non-strategic' and personal gear, weighing about 5cwt., could then be sent out with the A.C.A. The resultant savings in costs from not having to repair the club trailer, buy a towbar, cover extra ferry and insurance charges etc., were a welcome boost to the expedition budget.

Also during April, we gathered in supplies at discount prices or for free from our sponsors, additionally, Michel Lauga of the Ziloko Gizonak offered to purchase our carbide supplies for us as his contribution to the exchequer. A further Newsletter was despatched to the thirty seven paid-up members detailing all the current events, with an overall plan of campaign, advice on personal gear, and the dates of future practice meets. We had a practice meet at Gaping Ghyll, with descents of the Main Shaft and Flood Entrance. The Spring had sprung and we were now most certainly on the move into a Summer full of promise.

In May, the main physical event was a rather abortive practice meet in the Ogof Ffynnon Ddu system involving fourteen cavers. The original plan was for one team to rig Pendulum Passage, travel downstream to the Marble Showers and then traverse out over the upper series and then to O.F.D.3. Another team, entering at O.F.D.1 would travel upstream, ascend Pendulum Passage, and proceed to O.F.D.3, with all parties leaving the system through the Top Entrance. In the final event, the team travelling upstream had an affair with a falling boulder in Pendulum Passage and most of this group were unable to proceed past the Crevasse, so after some discussion everyone went out without visiting O.F.D.3 at all. Although the planning worked adequately several of the less experienced members learnt that their stamina needed building up; an important lesson for the final expedition.

Also in May, having paid the B.C.R.A. Insurance premiums, obtained First Aid certificates from the First-aiders, and listed the names of all the expedition members, a dossier was sent to the Mayor of Engins to finalise the authorisation of our descent. He did not reply, but a short phone call soon established that we were all clear and that there were no further formalities required. The Mayor invited us to call in and see him as we passed through Engins en route for La Molière, and wished us the best of luck.

June was a month in which many loose ends were tied up. The ferry bookings were confirmed and paid for, the final tackle items and supplies were bought, and we held a large scale practice meet in the Lancaster-Easegill-Pippikin system to try out the new personal gear. A final expedition meeting was held at 'The Bleeding Wolf' on 29th. June to check that Passports, holiday insurance, Francs, and personal gear had been obtained, and to arrange the rendezvous at La Molière.