The background of the cover is a photograph of a cave interior. The walls are covered in large, layered, golden-brown rock formations that resemble stalactites or flowstone. A person wearing a red helmet and dark clothing is crouching in the lower center of the frame, looking towards the camera. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the rock.

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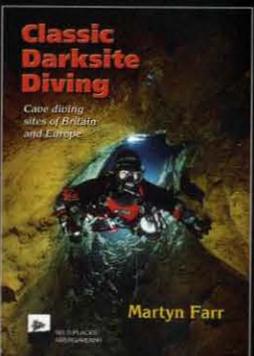
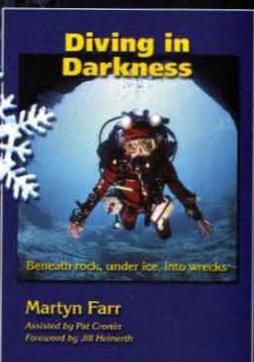
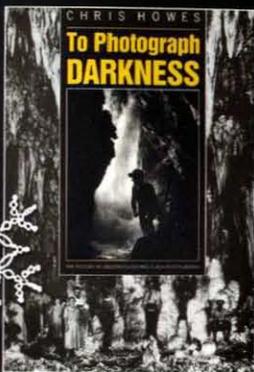
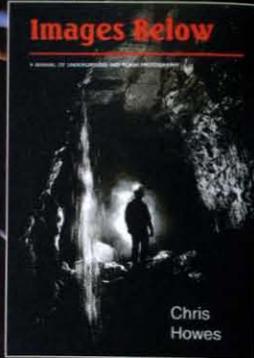
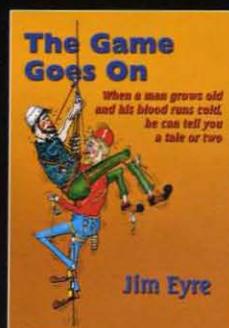
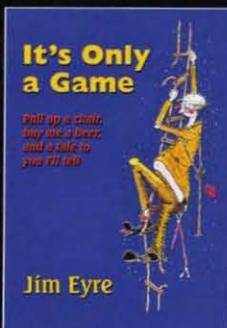
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COVER: Laura Trowbridge in Curtain Chamber, St Cuthbert's Swallet
PHOTO: Stu Gardiner
BACK COVER CAPTION: See p46

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features

Bottoming the Berger 20

Dave Gill was initiated into expedition caving in the Gouffre Berger by none other than the legendary Black Pearce. His reminiscences of those days in the 1960s and the accompanying images from the trip form a counterpoint to more modern techniques and photography, as we tackle the Berger on ladders.

The Final Curtain 28

They say that caves are where you find 'em, and nowhere more so than this discovery near the entrance to a much-frequented cave.

Of All Things Caving 30

The annual celebration of all things caving has taken place, this year in Monmouth. We report on the highs and (given the subject matter) lows of the 2013 Hidden Earth conference.

Caves and CRoW 36

The CRoW Act 2000 conferred rights of access to designated land, but not for all activities. It seemed time for an analysis of cave entrances, with some interesting statistics emerging for northern England.

A Mendip Caver with a Camera 40

Nick Barrington was perhaps best known for writing the first series of guidebooks covering Mendip caves. Here, we pay tribute to his work and photography of old.

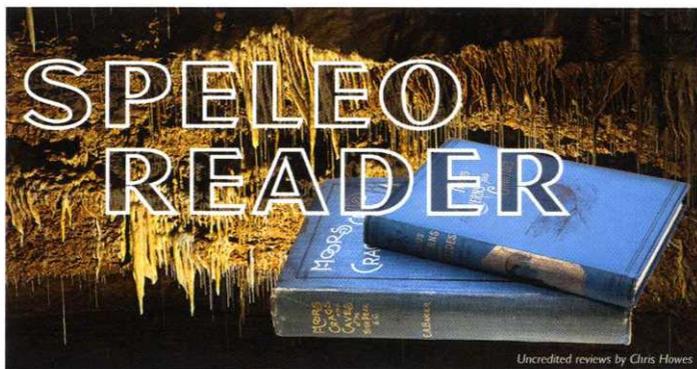
Gear Review Bamboo Base Layer 45

Base layer clothing is worn to keep you warm, so how might a fabric fare that was developed not from synthetics as are most, but from the natural fibres of bamboo?

Dave Gill in the Gouffre Berger's Bourgin Hall in 1967 (see p20)
Photo: Jim Cunningham

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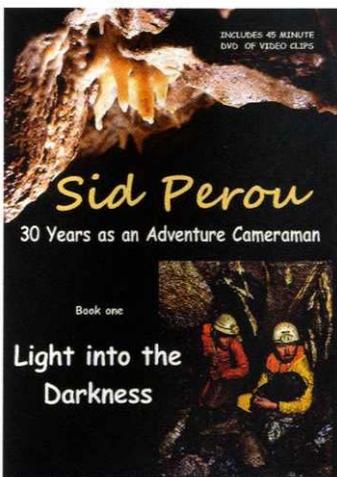
Light into the Darkness

Sid PEROU

Perou, Chiang Mai. 2013. 222pp, 62 b&w photographs, 3 diagrams, DVD of film clips. Softback, 146mm x 205mm. £18

No ISBN

SID Perou is a household name among cavers. I first encountered it shortly after I started caving, when *Sunday at Sunset Pot* was transmitted on television and told the story of the failed rescue of Eric Luckhurst in 1967. Years later, I was on a minibus to Cape Wrath in the



far north-west of Scotland one May and the driver well remembered carrying lights for Sid in Dow Cave for his films; he was memorable to all.

Sid is first and foremost a caver and this led him to acquire his expertise in underground cine photography. He has now self-published *Light into the Darkness*, Book One in a planned series of autobiographical tales of his life as a cameraman under an umbrella heading of *30 Years as an Adventure Cameraman* (with an included 45 minute DVD containing clips from the films described in the text). The problem is, unfortunately, the fact that it is self-published shows. I must warn you that some negative comments follow, but please don't let that put you off – keep reading!

The book has no ISBN number and the layout is rudimentary. The biggest difficulty is that it appears not to have been proofread properly: in my copy, typographical errors appear on every page and in some cases negatives have been left out,

altering the meaning of sentences, while in other places extra words have been inserted. As an example, in writing this review, I opened the book at random and immediately found duplicated words as well as errors of punctuation and layout.

These accumulated faults are distracting from a good story and they may not be perpetuated – this is a print-on-demand book and Sid is able to correct errors between each short-run printing (there are at least two versions out there already). However, and it is a massive 'however', the book is hard to put down – once you start, you have to finish. It reads like a whodunit, in that you must constantly keep reading to learn how Sid is going to get out of his latest scrape or raise funds for his next film. Readers will find some of the tales familiar, but others were completely unknown to me and there are several revelations within these pages. I wonder if some of the protagonists in Sid's films won't receive some surprises from this slim volume.

A keen cyclist, Sid was introduced to caving back in the late 1950s during a cycling holiday in the Lake District. He cycled from

London and en route visited the Yorkshire Dales, although apart from meeting the famous Bernie at Ingleton he didn't get underground. However, after a trip to South Wales he and his cousin ended up exploring caves on the Llangattock escarpment and Sid decided he wanted to do more – so off he cycled to the Dales to be taken into Ingleborough Cave and then, the next day, Disappointment Pot (it was a steep learning curve). Shortly afterwards Sid met Harry Long and his caving adventures in the Dales really took off. This part of the saga is dominated by tales of disintegrating vehicles, making his journeys north more of an adventure than some of the caving trips that followed.

Sid trained in electronics, but after completing his National Service as a meteorologist he thought filming might appeal to his creative instincts, so he joined the BBC as an assistant sound recordist (!). His big break came when the BBC decided to make a caving film and realised that their professional cameraman was completely unsuited to the conditions. Sid convinced his corporation bosses that he could do the job and the end result was *Sunday at Sunset Pot*. He never looked back, though he certainly tripped over a few times!

Sid's early career is described in a series of vignettes, from *What a Way to Spend a Sunday*, through *The Lost River of Gaping Gill* to *Beneath the Pennines*. In his company we visit the Pierre Saint-Martin and New Guinea, and are taken on a nightmare trip to Iran (this resonated powerfully for me), ending with the creation of *Speleogenesis* in 1978.

Despite its faults, I cannot recommend *Light into the Darkness* too

highly and perhaps, in reprinting, the text and layout will be tidied up (though, in another sense, they are simply chaotic and Sid-like – or should that be Perouvian?). It is an often hilarious account of Sid's dogged determination to see his vision through, come hell or high water (and there was plenty of that). To obtain a copy, start with an e-mail to Sid (sidperou@btopenworld.com).
Pete Glanville

Mendip Underground

Alan GRAY, Rob TAVINER and Richard WITCOMBE (comp)

MCRA, Wells. 2013. 5th edn, 485pp, 119 colour photographs, 77 surveys, 21 diagrams, maps and topos. Hardback, 175mm x 247mm. £25

ISBN 978-0-9531310-5-1

PUBLICATION of any new caving guidebook is going to create interest: in the case of *Mendip Underground* that might better be described as *immense* interest! Let's face it, it's been fourteen years since the fourth edition by Dave 'Wig' Irwin and Tony 'J-Rat' Jarratt was published and an awful lot has happened since then. Local, avid cavers will no doubt have kept up with all the discoveries – major extensions in Upper Flood Swallet and Charterhouse Cave and the discovery of the huge Frozen Deep in Reservoir Hole, let alone new sites such as Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink – but everyone gains, local expert or peripatetic visiting caver, when all is documented anew.

The Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink was blasted open by veteran digger J-Rat himself, adding to Mendip's selection of caves now available for tourist trips and explorations, and of course it was J-Rat who bequeathed so much to the Mendip Cave Registry and Archive with the wish that his and Dave's work with *Mendip Underground* might continue. And it has, and in a manner that would have made both doyens proud. We all know guidebook formats of old: small enough to slip into a pocket, typically softback and encased in plastic to withstand mud and moisture, basic histories and terse descriptions with, sometimes, a blobby black survey to help you on your way.

Mendip Underground is not like that.

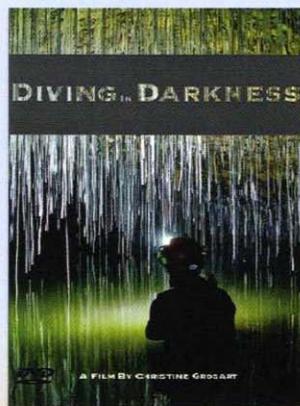
When you see and pick up the volume – this review is being written with an advance copy in hand, with the bulk arriving by sea sometime in mid-December – you will find that that the mould has been well and truly broken. The format has moved to a larger size in hardback, with stitched binding in recognition that, cavers being cavers, they will give any guide a hammering (and this time the pages should stay put!). Blob diagrams have gone, to be replaced by colour surveys – with smaller dimensions

Diving in Darkness

WITH her *Diving in Darkness* film about cave diving around the UK, Christine Grosart has succeeded in matching good footage with storyline for an entertaining 48 minutes. The DVD, which is professionally pressed and packaged, takes the viewer through sumps in Devon (Pridhamsleigh), Mendip (Swildon's Hole and Gough's Cave) and South Wales (OFD) to end with Yorkshire's Boreham Cave and the classic China Shop straws that adorn the cover.

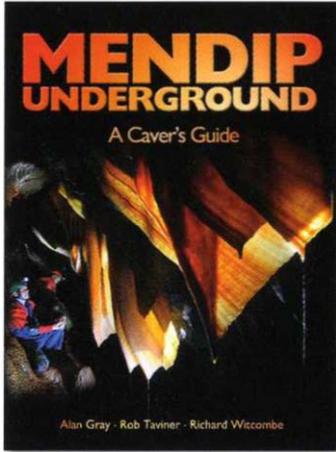
The theme is perfectly arranged with the narrative covering the history of exploration while footage shows us what is involved in reaching the sump, followed by sometimes crystal-clear water enticing divers onwards. It seems likely that two interviews – with Steve Thomas talking through the diving explorations that linked OFD 1 and 2, then Clive Westlake on Boreham – will also become historical records in their own right. At OFD in particular, Christine perfectly matched Steve's unscripted story with suitable underwater footage and an excellent match to music.

The film is in two distinct halves, with diving locations followed by an enjoyable 'how it was made' section within which Christine pays credit to those who helped her during the two-year project (and closes with the fun of a few out-takes). Not all the reproduction quality is perfect (some shots suffer from compression artefacts, for example) and the DVD plays better on a computer than a TV screen, but it is readily worth the £10 plus £1.50 p&p price tag (see www.cavediving.org.uk for further details) – you are certain to be both informed and impressed.



than the originals, perhaps, but in reality these *are* the original surveys rather than something simplified for a basic description.

Given the increased use of SRT on Mendip, a handful of topos are slipped in alongside relevant descriptions (how good to find all such information kept together, such as at Thrupe Lane Swallet and Rhino Rift). Colour photos are scattered throughout the text, in the main commissioned for the purpose (read 'you cave photographer, you, we need...') so let's pay tribute to the likes of Stu Gardiner and Steve Sharp, as well as Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley who also shouldered the task of completing the layout and dealing with all the



last-minute additions, corrections and changes to the text. The result is a clean, open feel to the volume even though the pages are packed, with good attention to detail – having full cave names in headers makes them easy to locate without needing to consult the index (a frustration in the old book).

All in all, it is easy to see why the change in format was required, to fit in all the new information. The authors revisited every cave and, where required, improved on or rewrote the entry (in particular for major systems such as Eastwater Cavern and Swildon's Hole). With the addition of 34 entirely new descriptions (extended sites such as Bath Swallet and Spider Hole, rediscovered caves such as Loxton Cavern, and others such as Banwell Ochre Caves and Sally's Rift that were omitted from the previous guide), the size is fully justified.

Each entry, which is in alphabetical order (far preferable to a region-by-region listing for anyone who does not know the area well enough to know which section to consult), bears subtitles for location, access and description, with histories and references within the latter. Where interesting minor sites lie nearby, these are detailed so that connoisseurs can pay a visit and, perhaps, start a dig; they are readily located through the index. If you are of the opposite mind and would have preferred area groupings, never mind: the maps solve that problem.

A few surprises remain. If you are a devotee of the stone quarries at Bath and the surrounding area and fancy an amble through the underground workings, you will find

only basic information in *Mendip Underground*. Even with 485 pages to play with, there were limits and full descriptions and surveys of these sites have been removed. This is not to say that the mines are considered unimportant to sporting interests – instead, they will appear in a forthcoming title, *Wiltshire and Bath Underground – An explorer's guide*. It's not the only project on the go, as MCRA is also looking at long-term plans to produce a new *History of Mendip Caving* (which would have kept Wig happy for years), in photos as well as text, and coverage of the Redcliffe Caves in Bristol (which nevertheless also appear here).

Mendip Underground is the culmination of a monumental effort by the authors and many others who checked descriptions or contributed along the way; it has taken over three years to complete and probably involved many late night meetings and discussions. The result is nothing short of stunning and it is obvious that the (no doubt long-suffering) authors deemed that the content should override any thoughts of keeping the volume, and therefore the cost, smaller.

The cost? There's another surprise, as the non-profit MCRA has kept this to £25 and any income will be ploughed back into funding the next book, as well as a proportion of proceeds going to charity in keeping with J-Rat's bequest). Not only that, the pre-publication offer of £20 has been extended until the end of the year, so you have no excuse

in not making a purchase right now, before you forget: the website is at www.mendipunderground.co.uk.

You will not be disappointed, whether you cave on Mendip or not: this is, simply put, a fine book indeed.

A Bedside Book for Older Cavers

John GILLETT

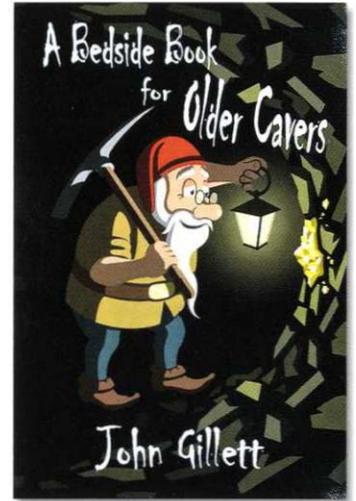
Mirador, Langport. 2013. 142pp, 17 b&w illustrations. Softback, 152mm x 229mm. £8.99

ISBN 978-1-909220-75-1

JOHN Gillett's first book, *Of Caves and Caving* (see *Descent* 168 and 201), saw him detail his life story – at least, the part of it that relates to caving and this produced his subtitle: *A way and a life*. In essence, John wrote a series of cameos covering significant events or caving trips in a manner that would appeal to any caver. The book did well and the original 2002 printing went into a second edition in 2007.

Time has continued apace and John is now over seventy years old – but he remains active and, as his new title suggests, *A Bedside Book for Older Cavers* is intended to give all aging cavers something to read in their armchairs. More than that, his theme threading throughout the

thirty stories is that everyone faces a daily challenge at some level and, no matter your age and ability, you should get out there, get on with it and *do* what you most desire. You might be surprised, after all, at what you can achieve and each of John's trips, from the lava tubes of Lanzarote to Giant's Hole, and from Sell Gill Holes to the huge French chamber of La Verne, were undertaken as a septuagenarian.



Along the way, John explores ideas such as what it means to be 'experienced', how risk might be quantified, the value of keeping a diary (and reading widely, including *Descent*), how to encourage folk of his age to take up the sport, what the loss of pubs means to our

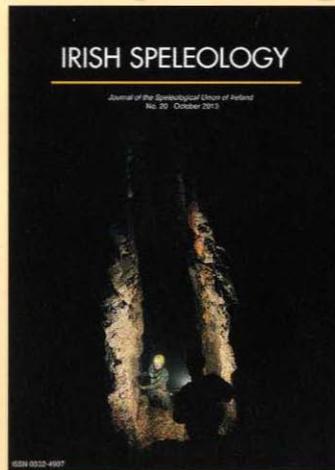
Irish Speleology

THE publication of *Irish Speleology* used to be pretty erratic with random periods between issues, but the current editorial team (Petie Barry and Alasdair Kennedy) has committed to bringing forth information on Irish cave exploration and research on a regular basis, this year in time for the SUICRO symposium.

So, with another symposium behind us, a freshly minted issue of *Irish Speleology* (20) sits before us – and an interesting and exciting treasure trove of Irish speleological information it is too. Containing six articles and, unfortunately but necessarily, a couple of obituaries, the twentieth issue of this long-lived journal covers some interesting and vital areas.

The Largy region on the Truskmore massif on the Sligo-Leitrim county boundary has intrigued cavers for many decades, but the bleak and featureless uplands have defeated many who tried to unravel the mysteries of this area and locate sites previously recorded, mostly by the late Donal Gilhuys. Fortunately, the advent of GPS and the Shannon Group have led to a programme of entrance logging, exploration and surveying which has produced accurate locations, surveys and descriptions of the known sites and several new pots. Well-presented and described, the journal opens with an excellent article detailing what is known and, more importantly, what might remain to be found.

Following on, Petie recounts full details of the caves of a less-well-known region, but one that he hails from: South Tipperary. A good outline of



Mitchelstown Caves. Pollskeheen-arinky and a myriad of lesser sites will be of interest to anyone seeking to find new passages in this outlier area.

Marion Dowd details the extensive collection of cave books, journals and personal notes left behind by Donal and Jack Coleman, which have returned or been gifted to the SUI library by Donal. Deep digging in this collection would surely lead to deeper discoveries in the field and further discoveries.

Petie has done Irish caving a great service by researching the plethora of anarchic to well-organised Irish caving groups, with

an almost definitive list of the various clubs, their histories and significant personalities since the end of the Second World War. The papers are completed with two articles describing discoveries and digs in an area of great current interest, the High Burren (Eastern Burren) of Co. Clare. Then, the issue wraps up by recording the sad passing of recent Irish caving and cave diving protégée Artur Kozłowski (1977–2011) and Donal Gilhuys (1920–2012).

All in all, with 54 high-quality, colour pages, card cover and some exceptional content, *Irish Speleology* (20) is an invaluable necessity for anyone looking for a well-researched and written account of caving in Ireland. Published by the Speleological Union of Ireland for €10 (plus €2.50 p&p), *Irish Speleology* (20) and other publications may be found in the SUI online shop at: www.caving.ie/sui-shop-2.

John Kelly

culture and, back to the theme of every caver taking on a personal goal, how ascending six floors on foot might be a personal Everest to overcome. In this, younger cavers might learn much – including, for some, a better understanding of the limitations of age; those more mature are more likely to nod, knowingly. His comparison of geriatric cavers with old banger cars forms a lovely anecdote, complete with a plea for anyone seeing an aged one struggle under a load, to please help him out.

As with *Of Caves and Caving*, delightful pencil drawings are scattered through the pages of what is produced by print-on-demand publishing, so while these are perfectly acceptable they are not reproduced at the highest quality, but it does mean that the book is attractively priced. The Kindle edition is even less at a shade over £3, complete with an amusing bit of legalese which does not appear in the paper edition: 'Any reference to real names and places are purely fictional and are constructs of the author'. Yes, right!

For some light reading (including a few fictional stories), to dip into and out while relaxing by a fire, John has filled a niche that hitherto has lain empty. As he says, 'older folk

... are time-machines for visiting the past' (so younger cavers, ask and ye shall learn) and 'if you are long in the tooth, caver, or non-caver, you can still be young at heart.'

One piece of text by John's seven-year-old granddaughter Clare, written after a trip to Thistle Cave, says much: 'My Grandad likes to go into caves. He goes into lots of caves. Granny says he is too old to go in caves now but she says it keeps him happy.' Having described her sojourn underground, Clare ends with: 'It was good fun. I love caving.'

Get 'em while they're young, eh? Keep on caving, John.
Chris Howes

Still to come

CAVE historian Trevor Shaw has produced another book of note, this comprising a facsimile of John Oliver's manuscript, *Postojnska jama* of 1856, with a detailed introduction by Trevor. As to be expected, the information is both detailed and fascinating, given that the manuscript was at one time thought lost. You don't have to await the review in the next *Descent* to learn more, however, as the 185 page e-book is available as a free pdf download from: <http://tinyurl.com/o5kjctn>.

Publications

THE October 2013 edition of the *Grampian SG Bulletin* Vol. 5 (5) brings the fourth series to a close, complete with an updated index and, as well as many articles (not least those covering sea caves around Scotland), an editorial and report on two important themes. First is the problem of how to conserve historic caving equipment for the future and, second, the difficulties that clubs and societies are facing around the world with maintaining journal publications and exchanges. Cost, not least for postage, is a real issue.

A report on p4 covers the anniversary of Geoff Workman's world record stay in Stump Cross Caverns in 1963, and it is fascinating to read his own memories of the 105 days he spent underground in the *Craven PC Record* (111). Speleohistory continues as a theme in the following issue, with the life and times of a remarkable man, Charles Wingfield. The name might be familiar from reference to Wingfield Ledge in Gaping Gill, a necky piece of exploration from

1913. One thing is for sure, Wingfield and his many exploits deserve to be better known.

The *Shepton Mallet CC Journal* Series 13 (1) continues the club's love affair with Iceland, but also visits Fairy Cave Quarry with a previously unpublished survey produced between 1969 and 1973, which will certainly be of interest to Mendip cavers.

The *NSS News* Vol. 71 (7) contains two articles of specific interest. One concerns Savannah Cave in West Virginia, where extreme digging has used a mechanical excavator to open a route into 900m of passage; it seems that Mendip techniques have reached the USA. The second article is by John Woods and looks at ergonomic tests in SRT; *Descent* readers may recall his article on Typecasting the Vertical Caver in issue (222), which investigated efficiency in SRT for cavers of different body shapes. The theme is continued here.

A lack of space precludes coverage of more journals this month, with apologies to those clubs missing from this round-up.

Gear review

BAMBOO BASE LAYER



AS CAVERS, we know what base layer clothing is: the first layer of clothing worn next to the skin, where successive layers have different functions. In caving, for example, layers might be an outer shell (waterproof oversuit for protection), mid-layer (fleece for warmth) and base layer. The idea here is to use a material which feels comfortable and will wick moisture (sweat) away from the skin.

Traditional base layer materials are made from synthetics such as polyester, which are non-absorbent and transfer moisture well but may pick up body odours after even minimal use, or natural fibres such as wool (which may not feel comfortable or be hard wearing) or cotton (which feels comfortable, but does absorb sweat rather than wicking it away, therefore remaining damp while worn).

Enter the world of 'technical' clothing to solve specific problems and, in this case, the strange concept of a base layer made from bamboo. Next enter BAM, an ethical UK company that plants a tree for every order, which has based its product line-up on garments manufactured mostly from bamboo fibres instead of cotton (though a percentage of the latter is still used). There are several advantages: bamboo grows quickly, is easy to harvest and yields ten times more fibre per acre than cotton and, it turns out, is a perfect base layer material because it is breathable (too hot and it allows heat to escape, too cold and as a base layer it traps air for warmth), wicks extremely well and is naturally antimicrobial – so it doesn't tend to pong even

after successive days of wearing for caving. Well, to a point ...

BAM supplied several differently sized garments for testing by two people and, it must be said, they performed extremely well underground. Both leggings and full-cover T-shirts drained quickly after wading in water and the comfort level was excellent even when wet. Some attention has been given to design, for example in the zip and collar where a fold of the fabric at the top of the zip prevents it from rubbing your skin even when pulled up tight to the neck. Both reviewers gained a very positive first impression – the garments felt very pleasant to handle and wear with a cosy feeling unlike that gleaned from synthetics. Leggings were easy to pull on and so comfortable that avoidance tactics set in when it was time to take them off, even after caving.

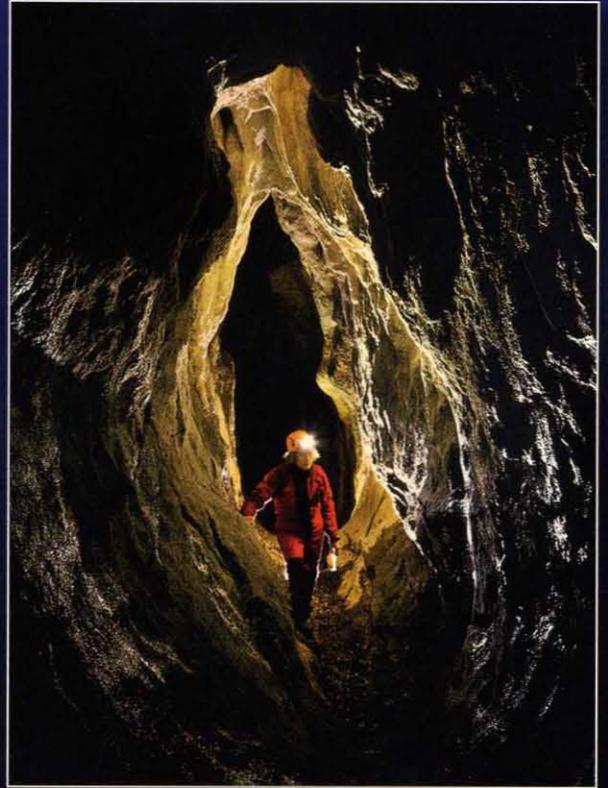
BAM offers a range of styles. Leggings are fairly straightforward, but upper body garments are varied by male and female cuts, colours and designs – sleeves short or long (some with thumb grips, as in the photograph, which turned out not to be a problem as they can be rolled onto the wrist), coloured 'fashion' panels (you might find you start wearing the comfortable tops as T-shirts all the time) and so on. Peruse www.bamboo-clothing.co.uk and you will discover lots of options (don't be misled by the photos – the kit really is aimed at sport), though being technical items of clothing they are not cheap if compared with cotton or other products –

T-shirts cost £23, leggings £28, long-sleeved tops £30 and adding a zip takes these up to £45; packs of socks cost £15 (though these were not tested).

Don't forget – base layers are intended to be tight to the skin, so don't order something too large because you normally like loose-fitting clothing (though returns are free in the UK, it's better to get things right at the start). If you normally wear old clothing as a base layer, or even don't bother in favour of a fleece next to the skin, you might be surprised at how well these garments work and what a difference they make.
Chris Howes



CAVES OF FERMANAGH



Descent

PHOTOGRAPHY: TIM & PAM FOGG