

*Mendip Cave Bibliography and Newspaper Catalogue. 2nd Edition.* Compiled by Dave Irwin. 2005. Mendip Cave Registry Priddy. SB. 2 vols. 269 & 262pp. Price £25 ISBN 0 9531310 1 7.

The first edition of this work was published in 1997 and ran to 231 pages. This edition, which is stated to cover references culled from publications from 883 AD up to the end of 2004, plus a few from early 2005. Thus the number of references included has virtually doubled in only seven years; this does not represent a remarkable output of articles about Mendip caves recently, but rather stands as a tribute to the way in which Dave Irwin has assiduously searched books and journals for the most obscure possible references. The database now contains over 25,000 entries.

The amount of material included is phenomenal and makes this catalogue an important resource for anyone researching into these caves be they caver, archaeologist, karst scientist or indeed anyone else. However, much has changed since the first edition of this work was produced and it is important to look not just at what the catalogue contains but how usable it is. In 1994, the fact that the bibliography was available in a single list and a single sort order (*cave, author, date*) was taken for granted and anyone who wished to search all entries for a particular author, or a particular publication simply had to accept the need to hunt through the entire volume, but now researchers are accustomed to choosing their own search criteria and having the results appear virtually instantaneously. This data would be far, far more usable and thus more valuable if it was presented on a web site as a multidimensional database. Such a presentation would increase the use and usability of this data enormously; as one who has frequently to consult with such lists I look forward to the web version.

Having said that, there is a serious issue of data loss with web publishing. Many web sites are ephemeral, relying on a single enthusiastic individual to maintain them and to pay for them, quite apart from any issues of software obsolescence. On this basis one can quite understand why paper copies are being produced and this reviewer, at least is pleased to know that some libraries will have these and that the work will not be lost.

Criticisms? There are some minor errors, how could there not be in so many entries, and some duplicate entries. The print size also has this reviewer, at least, reaching for his magnifying glass; however these are minor matters in a work of this nature.

This work should be on the shelves of every serious caving, and indeed archaeological and palaeontological library, involved with work on Mendip.

Graham Mullan

*Alpine Caving Techniques. 3rd edition.* By George Marbach and Bernard Tourte, translated by Melanie Alspaugh. Speleo Projects, Caving Publications International, 2002 Price £22 ISBN 3 908495 10 5.

This is a translation of the French language *Techniques de la Spéléologie Alpine*, published in 2000. With 320 detailed pages of the methods used to go caving, I have not yet read it all, however from the items that I have dipped into it appears to cover the topics comprehensively with informative diagrams and text. It seems to cover all the techniques that an expedition or sporting caver requires, covering a multitude of methods. When describing a method it clearly identifies dangerous practice and strongly hints at the authors' preferred solution. A good book to have on the coffee table.

Andrew Atkinson