

## IN THE BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS OF VIRGINIA

During this summer's holiday, we managed to persuade the rest of the party that a visit to a show cave or two was essential. The main area of caves close to our route was the Blue Ridge National Park, Virginia. From names like Shenandoah Caverns, Smoke Hole Caverns, Forbidden Caverns, Onondaga Cave, we chose Luray Caverns and Skyline Caverns.

Luray Caverns lie at shallow depth in 'Cave Hill' a short distance west of the town of Luray. The cave is entered on the west side of the hill by a stairway leading down from the entrance lodge. The cave lies beneath the central part of the hill, extending almost all the way underneath to the northwest side where one of the rooms misses a connection with a sink hole on the surface probably by less than a dozen feet. The caverns are well decorated, and the main tourist attraction is a 'stalagmite organ' in which stalagmites in a large chamber have been tuned to act as resonators for an electronic organ. For anyone interested in a detailed description of the system we have a copy of 'Geology of Luray Caverns, Virginia' Hack and Durloo (1972), Virginia Division of Mineral Resources.

The second cave we visited was Skyline Caverns, Front Royal, which were discovered in 1937 following surface surveys. The main attraction (apart from the guide) were the Anthodite formations - similar to clumps of calcite grass (to be shown in a forthcoming slide evening).

Neither cave seemed to be part of a known large system, the show cave covering around half the passages in each case. This seemed to be typical of the area. Both were worth a visit, though.

Ian McKechnie, and Geoff Barton.