

Above: The new cottage nearing completion, December 1979
Below: A few hours after the gas explosion, 1 January 1980



Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO 130

MARCH 1980

EDITORIAL. First the good news: the MCG probably has the healthiest bank balance on Mendip. As reported elsewhere in the newsletter, Eagle Star agreed to pay to the full value of our insurance policy, and on the 14th February, Ron Saunders received this:-

EAGLE STAR GROUP

40-17-10

EAGLE STAR INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED AND ITS SUBSIDIARIES

13 FEB 1980

19

Midland Bank Limited

2 The Promenade Cheltenham Glos GL50 1LS

Pay MENDIP CAVING GROUP

or order

Not Negotiable

A/c Payee Only

THE SUM OF £30,000 AND 00

For and on behalf of EAGLE STAR GROUP 2A/c

⑈348566⑈ 40⑈1710⑈ 90323578⑈

Nice though it is to have £30,000 to spend, I'm sure most members would prefer to have the new cottage, rather than spend another year in the old one, and a cottage built by a contractor just won't seem the same as one we built ourselves.

Not many members were able to see the results of the gas explosion which occurred on January 1st, as Wayne and Ken Fry had demolished most of what was left by the 13th January. Just for the record, I have included several photos in this issue of what the cottage looked like the morning after the explosion. (My thanks to Bernard Reeves for lending them to me).

Now the bad news: with no building to do, members will have to return to caving. There are still one or two MCG digs on Mendip - with luck one of them might "go".

Now that would make a good story for an issue of the Newsletter!

EAGLE STAR HAND OVER £30000 After nearly two months of inspecting the damage to the cottage the insurance company finally handed a cheque for £30000 to Ron Saunders. at the end of February.

The estimated value of the building before the explosion was £43000. On Jan. 16, a quantity surveyor put the value of salvage at £5000. As the difference was more than £30000 and the policy was not subject to an "averaging clause" we received the full amount.

The total cost of bulding the cottage was £12,784.65 including the land purchase. The insurance money has been put on special deposite at the bank and is earning 17½% interest- tax free as the MCG is a charity.

NEW COTTAGE : WORK OUTSTANDING - Despite the explosion there is still work to do! The site needs to be cleaned, and some materials can still be salvaged. However, members should note that PEOPLE WORKING ON THE SITE ARE NOT INSURED FOR ACCIDENT. We are insured for accidents due to negligence by the group only. Anyone working on the site MUST COMPLETE AN INDEMNITY FORM.

Anyone who tries jumping off the roof in the hope of breaking an ankle and then claiming against the group will be disappointed (especially newsletter editors).

OLD COTTAGE IMPROVEMENTS - Now that we will remain in the old cottage for most of 1980, there are a few jobs to be done. Anyone looking for an excuse not to cave can try one of the following:-

Windows :	Glass to be fitted
Stove:	Seal at roof needs improving
Elsan:	to be emptied into cess pit when <u>half full</u>
Guttering:	Cleaning out and repairing
Womens room:	bunks ot be rebuilt

There are also plenty of general things to do. The cottage needs a good spring clean, especially the toilet. Wayne will provide cleaning materials and also paint for aspiring Michelangelos.

GROUP FINANCES - Eric Dowley has now submitted the claim for VAT, since the cottage is as complete as it ever will be. Members may be pleased to hear that reconstruction costs are zero rated!

Electricity (£40) and rent (£26) for the old cottage has been paid. leaving £168.71 in the hand Purchase Fund and £19.01 in the General Purposes Fund.

AGM AND DINNER - The dinner will be at the Hunters on April 19th. Numbers are limited to 50, so you'll need to buy your tickets soon. Cost is £5.00 for the meal, and tickets are available on a first come, first served basis, from Pete Mathews.

BEER FUND - Members have obviously been drinking heavily over Xmas and New Year. Bruce Dean's beer fund has brought in £79.00.

THE NEXT NEW COTTAGE Roger and Wayne have set the wheels in motion to begin the next cottage. A few minor changes have been made to the original plans.

Roger is looking into the possibility of having daylight on the stairs and separate male/female showers.

Other changes include improving the insulation (with cavity fill and more roof insulation) and using a flat roof tile which would be cheaper to lay.

Estimates are being sought from local builders. As we are limited to £30,000 Roger has asked for quotes for the whole job, including fixtures and fittings and will then work backwards to the figure of £30,000.

Hopefully, we could be in the new new cottage by next Xmas. Modifications to the gas supply should prevent 1981 starting with a bang though!

Wayne has negotiated a deal with Jim Fry to remove what's left of the new cottage and clear the site.

Anyone who wants to buy materials should therefore see Jim.

JUMBLE SALE. Peter Spain is organising yet another Jumble Sale. It will take place on Saturday 15th March in the Church Hall, Bell Road, Hounslow, beginning at 2.30. Members are asked to start collecting jumble now and to bring it along on the day.

CONGRATULATIONS to Wendy and Peter Spain on the birth of their daughter, Rosalyn Claire, on the 17th January.

MCG CAVING SHOP. Phil Ingold is currently negotiating discounts on all types of caving gear (The interest on £30,000 should provide some money for purchasing group tackle!). I'm sure Phil would be willing to include orders for individual members.

CUTHBERTS LEADERS - The group is looking for members to become leaders for St. Cuthberts. The recent lack of caving by the group probably means there can't be many of us who have done the necessary ten trips down Cuthberts (or alternatively if they have ten free weekends) then please contact Wayne Hiscox.

1980 SUBS - One or two members have not yet paid subs for this year. Eric Dowley will still accept subs, and at the same time will give you a covenant form, if you haven't completed one already.

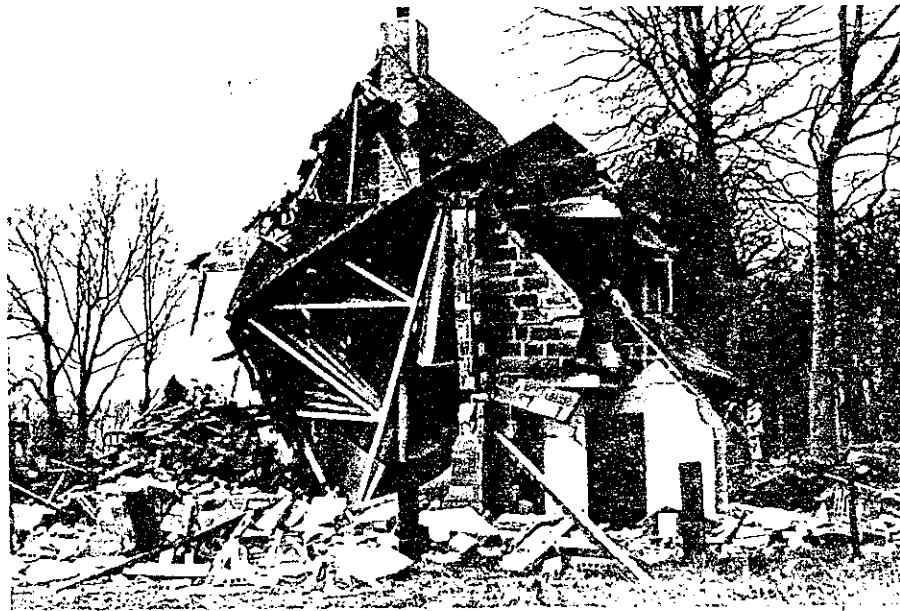
MEMBERSHIP NEWS - Joan Goddard is now a full member again. Jane Carson's address is now - Flat 11, Cheverton House, Yeovil District Hospital, Yeovil, Somerset. June has also asked for Jess to be considered for spouse membership.

1980 : THE YEAR THAT BEGAN WITH A BANG.

Well, if youre going to blow up a cottage I suppose you might as well do it properly. After all, they do say things go better with gas.

Seriously, though: the explosion on New Years Eve was a major set-back for the group. Fortunately we were fully insured - I dread to think what the group would have done if Eagle Star had not paid out the full value of the insurance. Our thanks must go to Ron Saunders and Wayne Hiscox for dealing with the claim in such an efficient manner.

Anyone who has been on Mendip recently will know that Ken Fry has done an excellent job of clearing the site. In fact, the work was done quickly that only a few members had a chance to see the results of the explosion. The photos on this page were taken by Bernard Reeves on the morning of Jan 1 only a few hours after the explosion and give a very good idea of the amount of damage. For an idea of what the cottage looked like before the event, see the Newsletter cover.



Many members will obviously be dissatisfied that several years work has been in vain. It will probably be next Winter before the cottage can be rebuilt, by a contractor. In the meantime, we will have to resort to caving (!) and console ourselves with the knowledge that the hard work put into building the cottage did at least result in turning £12,000 worth of materials into a building worth over £40 000, even if it was used only once for a brew up. As they say, "thats the beauty of gas" !



MEETS PROGRAM Now that there is no longer any excuse not to go caving, John MacMillan is arranging a full meets program. The following trips are planned:

29 March	South Wales- OFD and Dan yr Ogof. Accomodation, SWCC
19 April	Mendip- St Cuthberts. (AGM weekend)
31 May	Yorkshire- Easegill
21 June	South Wales- OFD, DYO
19 July	Yorkshire- Stream Passage
26 July	Yorkshire- Lost Johns
4 Oct	South Wales- OFD, DYO.

PIPPIKIN RESCUES. Two major rescues occurred in Pippikin recently. At the end of January a party of cavers from Kingstons Poly. became stranded in Rat Bag Inlet after entering the system from Link Pot. They had misinterpreted a survey in Bull Pot Farm, and thought that a connection to Easy Street in Link was possible from Rat Bag.

A week later, seven cavers from Lancaster University also had to be rescued from Pippikin. Newspaper reports of the incident suggest that they had become lost in the system.

CAVE RESCUES - The MRO was extremely active just before Xmas, with call outs almost every weekend. Rescues were carried out in Thrupe Lane, Manor Farm and Swildons.

The Thrupe rescue was the most serious. Apparently, the person involved fell down the lower part of Atlas Pot when considerable slack was allowed in his lifeline, and sustained serious injuries.

In Manor Farm, a caver fell partway down the entrance pitch.

In Swildons, a caver in dry clothing coming out the wet way was found to be suffering from exposure. In Swildon a few weeks later, a party was cut off beyond the Forty by high stream level, and had to wait a few hours for the water to fall.

QUOTABLE QUOTES "I cursed the cottage blowing up 'cos its messed things up a bit"

"We have more experience of gas than anyone else on Mendip"

FRIENDS IN NEED...The Committee, on behalf of the members of the MCG, would like to thank the following people for their generous assistance and offers of help over the New Year:

Robbie Charnock, Oliver Lloyd, Mike Brace,
the Mendip Canving Clubs and expecially
Ken Fry.

We desparately need to replace some of the furniture in the cottage, as several of the old armchairs are being used as nests for mice. Can members therefore look out for second-hand furniture (preferably mouse-proof). In the meantime, beware of mouse traps.

KINGSTON POLY ORDER. Apologies to all those who asked to be included in this order but did not receive the goods. Unfortunately, their order was sent off before items for the MCG could be added.

However, for anyone who wants to re-order at the same price as before, there is a form attached at the back of the Newsletter.

BONE HOLE. Remember the "unusual object" Bernard found in Bone Hole? He reckons it is probably a candle holder. (As no-one wrote in with the correct answer, or even a near miss, the free booze has been claimed by the Editor).

BEEHIVE LECTURES The next lecture in this series will be on March 20 when Mark Tringham of UBSS will be talking about Otter Hole.

QUOTE OF THE MONTH - "There's nothing much been happening at all recently".
Heard at a committee meeting after the cottage blew up.

CONGRATULATIONS and best wishes to Trisha and Pete who have announced that they will be married on April 12.

Pete has also told me that he will be getting a Beehive for his birthday!

NEW ADDRESS Please note that Martin Rowe's new address is:
262 Ashburnham Road, Ham, surrey.

GROUP ORGANISATION

COMMITTEE

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- Editor (co-opted) - MARTIN ROWE, ~~7 St Andrews Square~~
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WEEKLY MEETINGS of the Group are held every Thursday evening
at the BEEHIVE HOTEL, 227 High Street, Brentford,
Middlesex.

CAVING ACCOMMODATION is available at the Group's Mendip
headquarters cottage:
The Stirrup Cup, Nordrach-on-Mendip,
Blagdon, Somerset. (NGR ST55/5150.5605).

29 beds are available, together with cooking
facilities and other amenities including
caving library. Guest bookings must be made
to the Cottage Warden.

KPSS ORDER (ALL NEWSLETTER)

I WOULD LIKE TO REORDER THE FOLLOWING
ITEMS AT THE ORIGINAL PRICE.

NAME

ADDRESS

(PLEASE NOTE: DO NOT SEND MONEY WITH ORDER)

POST OR GIVE TO:

M. ROWE

% KPSS

KINGSTON POLY STUDENTS UNION

PENRHYN ROAD

KINGSTON

SURREY