

# MCG

Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

OCTOBER 1980

NO 134

## RON SAUNDERS' 60TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

It was Ron Saunders' 60th Birthday on Friday 19th September which he celebrated on the next day with a trip through Swildons Sump 1. This was followed by throwing a party for the whole Club in The Hunters that evening!

All this jollity helped to make that Saturday one of the most memorable for a long time. I am sure the Club will join me in saying Thanks Ron for such a Great Day. Ron has written me a letter which amply describes the events, which follows immediately below.

Editor

Dear M.C.G.,

This is my heartfelt Thank You to you all for giving me a really memorable 60th Birthday Party, and I'm not referring now to the one to which I invited you, delighted as I was that so many of you came - but to that other secret party in Swildons which you so successfully kept hidden from me until I stumbled into your midst.

For the benefit of those members who either couldn't make the trip or worse still couldn't come at all - just imagine being about three quarters of the way to Sump 1 and then quite unexpectedly coming upon some twenty of your friends looking intently in your direction, gathered round a table on which were a birthday cake with lighted candles, filled sherry glasses, plates and a knife (what no napkins!) and Don Vosper in a waiter's shirt, and then being joined by some ten more members from the rear. Do you think you wouldn't have had a lump in the throat, and a tear in the eye?

It was such an overwhelming surprise - fancy calling on me to make a speech in reply to Tony's toast. I doubt if any of you gave a thought to loosening boulders in the roof with your sturdy rendering of Happy Birthday.

And it didn't end there - there were

COTTAGE REBUILDING PROGRESS MEETING

RON SAUNDERS' 60TH BIRTHDAY DINNER

AUTUMN MEETS PROGRAMME

## COTTAGE REBUILDING PROGRESS MEETING

An Extraordinary Meeting of the Mendip Caving Group was called for 2.30 pm Sunday 24 August, to be chaired by the Group Secretary. As only a handful of Members had arrived by 4 pm and there was no tap for the barrel, that meeting was duly cancelled.

Since that date many members expressed a desire for another opportunity to discuss Cottage rebuilding progress. As a result a date was fixed for 4pm 20 September after Ron Saunders' 60th Birthday Subterranean Sherry Shindig, when many members would no doubt be in attendance. The Chairman would be Robbie Charnock.

The meeting started promptly at 4pm with 28 Full Members, 6 Probationary Members, 11 guests, and 2 barrels of Fullers.

Eric Dowley gave his report on the Group's financial status, following which Wayne reported on rebuilding policy. He pointed out that weather conditions had delayed the schedule by 5 weeks, but it is hoped that this could be made up.

Roger Wallington gave the Architects Report on a sheet handed around at the meeting, completion being 28 November. Members felt the Performance Band might not be needed so instructed Ron to move slowly on it. It was accepted that a Jetmaster type fire be installed, the cost of which would be absorbed within the rebuilding contract. Tony Knibbs asked how much money would be left when the cottage was completed? Eric Dowley replied, probably most of it would have been spent. Malcolm Cotter was in favour of members painting the cottage. Wayne replied that we now have a more acceptable quote for painting. Cost of materials alone would be £300 and Malcolm would have to organise a painting team.

more surprises for one at The Hunters- the Birthday Card signed by you all, but even more to be treasured, a signed copy of the limited edition of 'A Pictorial History of Swildons' and yet another Birthday Cake!

It wasn't just a smashing evening but an absolutely super day.

Thank you for your cards letters and good wishes,

Yours very sincerely  
Ron Saunders.

#### COTTAGE MEETING CONTINUED

Roger Wallington added that his idea was to buy the bunks in modular form into bunk units which we could then bolt together in any configuration we wanted. Ron Saunders enquired about mattresses we need 6' 3" x 2' 6" size. Dave Hodby said that the cost of these could be from 0 -£5 each.

Tony Knibbs offered some more aircraft seats for the New Cottage.

On water heating it was agreed that an Electric Storage System would best suit our needs. The cost will be included in the Contract Sum.

There was a lack of enthusiasm about having any more insurance than we have at present. Members should be responsible for themselves and their own property.

In Any Other Business it was agreed that it would be a good idea for someone to organise a Summer Expedition next year. Pete Mathews intends to book The Star for next year's Dinner, unless any one can come up with a better suggestion before December.

It was agreed that we negotiate the purchase of more land surrounding the site from Jim Fry. Ron Saunders said that we must act quickly and we would have to raise separate finance for the purpose.

Tony Knibbs asked that tackle be available on Mendip. It was agreed to repair the Tackle Cupboard and re stock it. All members would be issued with a key to it but some tackle was still to be held by the Tacklemaster in London for away meets which would be available on request.

The Editor said that there had not been a September Newsletter due to a lack of contributions, and he was worried that club members were not being kept up to date with current developments. The Meeting recommended that there should be greater collaboration between the Editor and the Recorder.

There was great enthusiasm for an

Autumn Meet Programme. The agreed programme is published further on in this Newsletter.

Finally the Meeting recorded a vote of thanks to Pete Mathews (Pete was not at the meeting) and closed at 6.30.

#### WITCHES BREW

When the majority of our members were entertaining me down Swildons Hole on the 20th of September, five of our ladies, Margaret Saunders, Maribel Penn, Joan Dowley, Julie Burton and Anne Saunders were left to roam the Priddy countryside.

Oh calamity! Look at the screaming headlines of the next day's Sunday Express- Where did they go? What did they do? They were together!

#### WHAT WERE FIVE NAKED WOMEN UP TO IN THE WOOD?

Over the years Mr Kenneth Sharples and his yellow labrador Graip had enjoyed many a sight during their regular walks through Stock Hill Wood. The 59 year old bachelor and his dog wandered between the pines of the Mendip Hills in Somerset watching the seasons come and go.

The spring brought the buds for Mr Sharples to delight in, and the squirrels for Graip to chase if he felt like it. The summer slowed their pace while bringing its own pleasure, and come autumn there were fallen leaves for Graip to roll in, and colours for Mr Sharples to marvel at.

Every thing over the years was invariably in order. Nature it seemed forever went her own way.

But then, one day at dusk, Mr Sharples and his dog came face to face with something completely different.

As they strode into a leafy glade in the heart of Stock Hill Wood, near the village of Priddy, they happened across five naked women and five men dressed in white cloaks.

Within minutes what had struck Mr Sharples as bizarre turned into farce. He followed Graip into the clearing; one of the men pointed a stick at Graip and the dog went up to him, grabbed the stick and brought it back to Mr Sharples dropping it at his feet. Graip then ran to one of the nude women, jumped up at her and pinned her against a tree Mr Sharples called him off. The dog then

went back to the man who pointed the stick at him, grabbed his cape and tore the bottom off it. Graip returned to his owner barking, then picked up the stick, a kind of polished cane, but Mr Sharples called him off and he dropped it. During all this these people never spoke a word. The women were middle aged, anyway they were not young

Mr Sharples said he had read about things like this before but he had never come across anything like it. They must have thought they were completely on their own. And they soon were as Mr Sharples and Graip took themselves off.

"It was a little bit scary, but my biggest trouble was trying to keep my face straight. They were standing in a circle and there was a case in the middle which was not open". He continued "I think my accidental intrusion must have spoiled what they planned to do. I have no idea what they had in mind but Graip seemed to take the attitude that everything was not as it should be. The wood is quite a popular picnic spot but you don't take your clothes off to have a picnic do you? Well most people don't."

The next

The next time I'm on Mendip, I'll visit Stock Hill Wood. Anyone coming?  
Ron Saunders

#### WITCH OF WOKEY

Deep in a drear and dismal cell  
which seemed and was ycleped hell  
A Blear-eyed hag did hide  
Nine wicked elves as legends sayne she  
chose to form her guardian train  
And kennel near her side  
Here scrooching owls oft made their  
nest while wolves ibs craggy sides  
possessed  
Night-howling through the rock  
No wholesome herb could here be found  
she blasted every plant around  
And blistered every flock

From Wookey Hole this witch would  
prowl  
and curse from noath her death black  
cowl

The land both far and near  
Her Haggard face was foul to see her  
mouth unmeet a mouth to be  
Her eyne of deadly leer  
The country round did trembling creep  
for fear til one chill winter deep  
Theirsouls could no more bear  
Then three they journeyed all forlorn  
to Glaston shrine of winters thorn  
And here their suit declare

In Glaston dwelt a saintly wright who  
hearing of her fell despite  
Gave to Our Lord a prayer  
Thus strengthened for these peoples sake  
did ask and though their hearts did quake  
They led him to her lair  
The hag perceiving well this sage did  
curse and spell incant and rage  
The air with evil howls  
And sliming black the sreamlets run  
and bitter glows the sun  
The blood-dark night wolf growls

There locked in battle good and ill  
the saint fast stands serene and still  
While round the storm bolt sears  
Then with the force of good he strives  
to quell the evil free the lives  
Of those whose cause he bears  
The more than earthly powers sway from  
crow dark night to brass bright day  
These two in combat lock  
Til slowly eldritch curses fade and  
ghostly quiet fills the glade  
And silence laps the rock

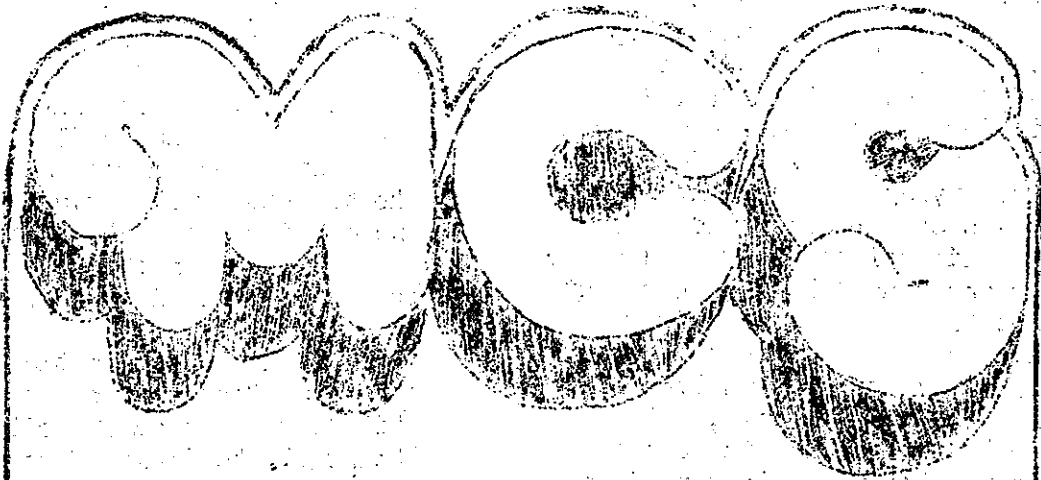
The witch her fearful power spent  
will not of evil still repent  
Defiant meets his eye  
The saint whose good has conquered all  
gives thanks to God that from his thral  
The land now free does lie  
He chanted out his godly book he crossed  
the water blessed brook  
Then pater noster done  
The ghastly hag he sprinkled o'er when  
to where stood a hag before  
Now stood a ghastly stone  
Full well 'tis told and to this day with  
limed hair and rimed with clay  
Still stands that ghastly stone

Part of the 'Strawhead' group reper  
toire and dates from probably the late  
1500's or early 1600's

#### NEW M.C.G. NAME?

After hearing the comments upon the halt, the sick, the lame, the wounded and the aged members of the M.C.G. who achieved in quite extraordinary circumstances the descent and ascent of Swildons on 20th September, and after making due allowances for their general behaviour before during and after the said trip, may I propose that this Charity be renamed and hence forth more appropriately called the Merry Caving Geriatrics

Ron Saunders



BULK PURCHASE AMAZING VALUE  
DOUBLE SKINNED 4'x3' 4MM NEOPRENE SHEETS £7.50.  
CONTACT MALCOLM COTTER

READY MADE BLACK ONE OR TWO PIECE 4MM WETSUITS £37.50.  
CONTACT PHILLIP INGOLD

CAVING BOOKS CONTACT MALCOLM COTTER  
THE DARKNESS BECKONS. BY MARTIN FARR.  
(AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF CAVE DIVING)

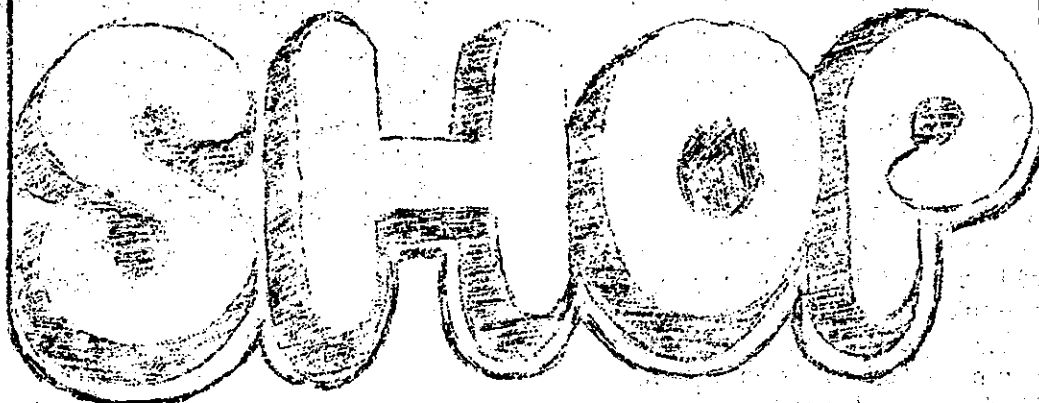
CAVING GUIDES  
MENDIP UNDERGROUND. BY IRWIN & KNIBBS  
DAIESMAN CAVING GUIDES (AS AVAILABLE)

GEOLOGY  
GEOLOGY EXPLAINED IN THE PEAK DISTRICT.  
BY WOLVERTON COPE

MAGAZINES  
BACK NUMBERS OF BRITISH CAVER  
CAVING INTERNATIONAL  
SPELEOLOGIST

SURVEYS  
WE HAVE SURVEYS OF THE MAJOR MENDIP CAVES AVAILABLE

WALL POSTERS  
WE HAVE A FINE POSTER OF THE COLUMNS O.F.D. 50p



MEET PROGRAMME

- 18/19 October Tynings Barrow Swallet + 2 Barrels + 4 Birthdays  
Trip Leader Wayne
- 7/8 November Northwest Stream Passage + Members weekend  
Trip Leader Tony Knibbs
- 14/15 November Tony Snell & Musicians + 12
- 21/22 November Swildons Trip Leader: Jonathan Roberts
- 28/29 November Tony Snell +10
- 5/6 December Trape Lane + Barrel  
Trip Leader Pat Walsh
- 19/20 December Trip to be announced later see Wayne

ADDRESS CHANGES

Allan Rarity Berrylands 37 Effingham Road, Surbiton, Surrey  
Mike Lovell 4 Settrington Close, Mill Green, Lower Early, Reading, BERKS.

NEW ADDITIONS

Congratulations to Mike & Elaine Brace on the birth of their son Mathew on 21 st. August.

CAVES AND KARST

November 14 - 16 1980

A weekend course for the amateur geologist. Includes underground visits and surface walks. Evening Talks by Dr T.D.Ford, & Dr A.C.Waltham.

Further details can be obtained from Peter Townsend, Principal, Peak National Park Study Centre, Lesehill Hall, Castleton, Derbyshire.

### COTTAGE RULES

1. AT THE END OF ANY COTTAGE MEET THE FOLLOWING INSTRUCTIONS MUST BE EXECUTED.

1. TURN OFF GAS AT CYLINDER
2. TURN OFF ELECTRICITY AT SWITCH BOARD
3. BETWEEN OCTOBER AND APRIL TURN OFF WATER AT STOP COCK UNDER COTTAGE
4. RUBBISH SHOULD BE LEFT NEAR THE ROAD IN PLASTIC SACKS OR BOXES FOR COLLECTION ON MONDAY MORNING
5. EMPTY ELSAN INTO CESSPIT NEAR NEW BUILDING. LIFTERS ARE PROVIDED FOR REMOVAL AND REPLACEMENT OF THE MANHOLE COVER. THE ELSAN MUST BE EMPTIED WHETHER FULL OR NOT.  
NOTE IT IS BETTER TO EMPTY THE ELSAN WHEN IT IS ONLY HALF FULL DUE TO THE DISTANCE TO THE CESS PIT. IT MUST ALWAYS BE REFILLED USING ELSAN FLUID.
6. IF ANY ESSENTIAL ITEMS ARE NOT AVAILIABLE IN THE COTTAGE E.G. WASHING UP LIQUID, TOILET ROLLS, ELSAN FLUID, ETC. THEY MAY BE PURCHASED AND DEDUCTED FROM COTTAGE FEES. THE NEAREST STORES IS IN WEST HARPTREE

## GROUP ORGANISATION

### COMMITTEE

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Editor	Bryan Pittman	36 Manor Way, Egham, Surrey
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WEEKLY MEETINGS These are held every Thursday evening at the BEEHIVE HOTEL  
227 High Street, Brentford, Middlesex.

### CAVING ACCOMMODATION

This is available at the M.C.G. Cottage, The Stirrup Cup,  
Nordrach-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Somerset.  
ING.R. ST55/5150.5605

29 beds are available, together with cooking facilities and other amenities, including Caving Library. Guest bookings must be made with the cottage Warden.