

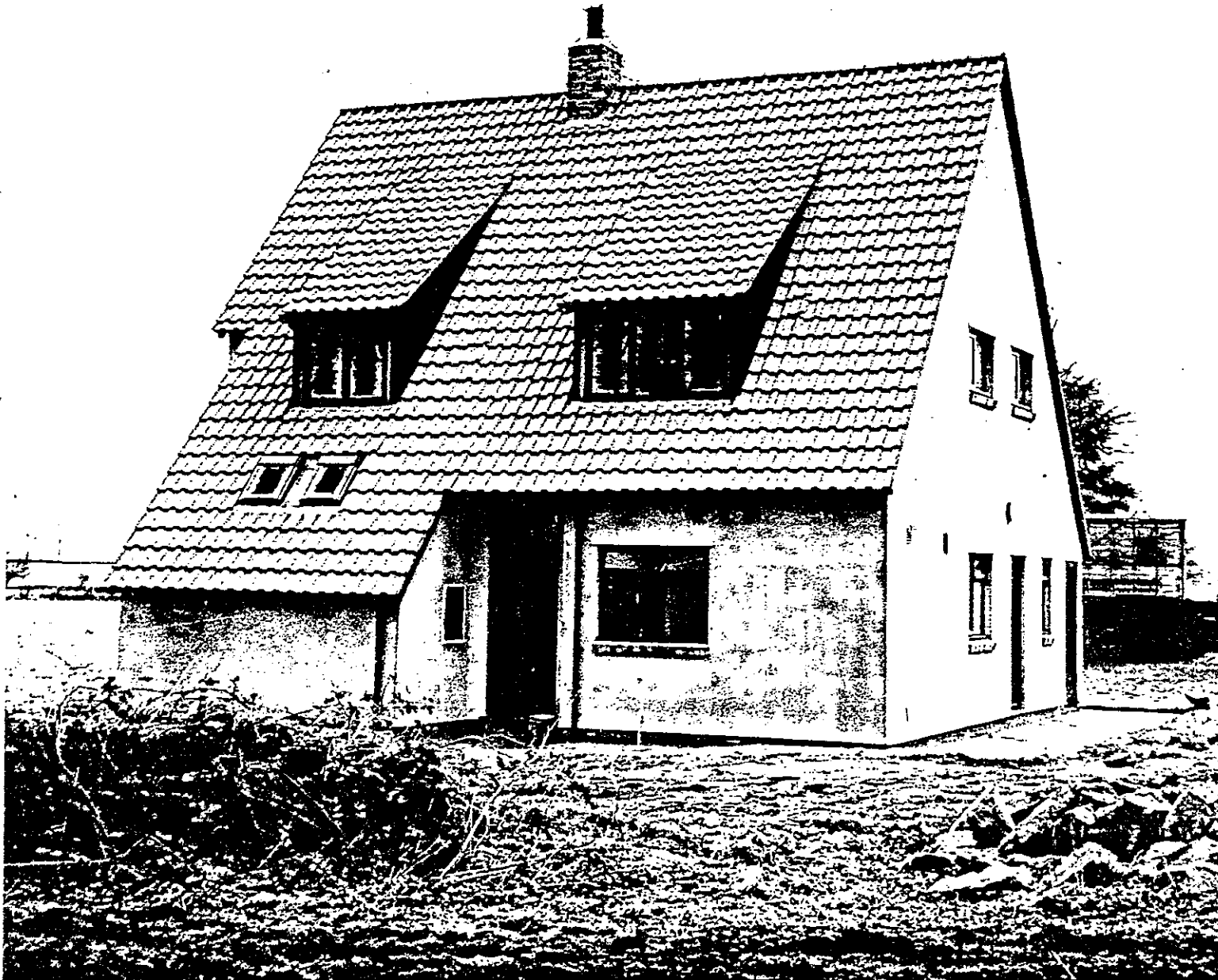


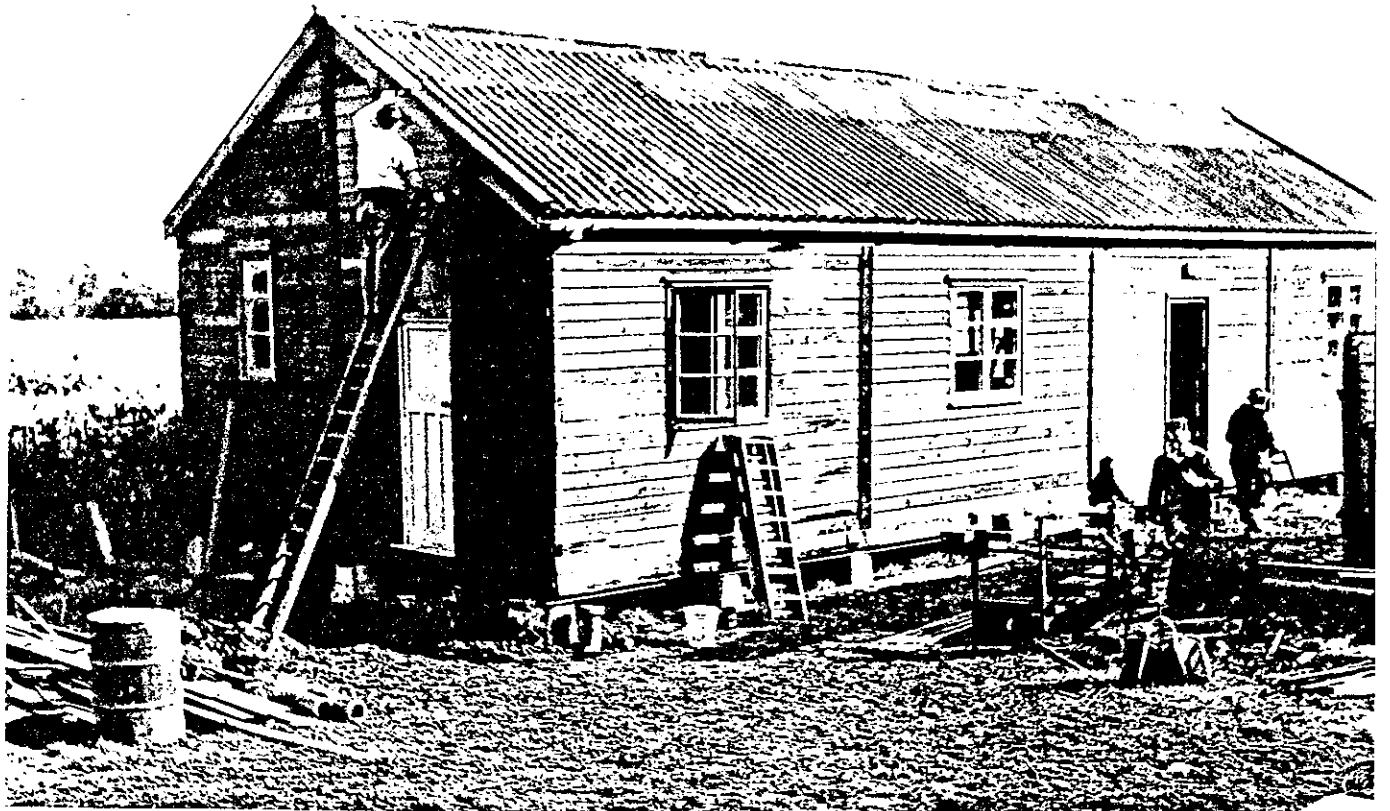
Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

APRIL 1981

NO. 139

THE NEW COTTAGE





THANK YOU

Do you remember who conceived the idea of building a new cottage or did it just evolve from our unsuccessful search for an old cottage which we could renovate and convert to our purpose? Do you remember who was on the original Cottage Sub-committee - Tony Knibbs, Roger Wallington, Rob Penn and myself.

It seems strange now that our indefatigable Wayne Hiscox, who has for so long set us the example of what to do and how to do it without asking us to do any thing he wouldn't do himself, was not on the Committee. It was I suppose inevitable with his enthusiasm and confidence that he'd become our Clerk of Works and how fortunate we were when he and Anne decided to live in Wells. So that we had the added advantage of having our practical handyman (what he didn't know he found out and applied with considerable aptitude) as an on-site Foreman.

It was Roger Wallington however, who carried the responsibility for designing our cottage, preparing plans, obtaining Planning Permission, and drawing up specifications with great care, considerable detailed paper work, and an everlasting patience towards those of us who were just novices in this new venture.

If we forgot anything (why did we have only one fireplace?) it was the responsibility of the Committee as a whole, and no one in particular. Our first Minutes were kept by Tony Knibbs with his usual precision and clarity, and when he resigned from the Sub-committee, once again it was Wayne who filled the breach.

And, just in case you have forgotten, it was John Miriam who first drew my attention to the fact that there was a special self build scheme for Charities which had as a legitimate target, the recovery of V.A.T. Our status as a charity was sought initially as a means to avoid paying Corporation Tax on our bank interest after it exceeded £15 per annum, but brought in its train, the unexpected bonuses of rate relief and saving of V.A.T. - Charity certainly begins at home!

Now that I am no longer the Group Treasurer I feel that I can express my admiration of and thanks to the other members of the Sub-committee who did so much for us, never forgetting that all the time Pete Mathews was lurking in the background urging and cajoling the rest of us, and negotiating so well and so tactfully with the Sports Council with out whose financial backing our task would have taken a great deal longer.

P.T.O.

Top Opposite The Original M.C.G. Cottage winter 1962.

Bottom Opposite Simon Creosoting the existing hut during construction 1965

Thank you to the late Jim Fry too, for his good humoured interest in our activities which ultimately lead to him selling us the land on which our new cottage stands, which is I think a fitting memorial to him. I hope that he'll still watch our comings and goings and frolickings with his usual wry smile.

Ron Saunders.

THE NEW COTTAGE FROM INCEPTION TO COMPLETION

The beginning was the resurrected Land Purchase Fund funded by weekly collections at club meetings from 1968 onwards.

During 1971 and 1972 the club began seriously looking round for a permanent site, and amongst other proposals (derelict barns etc.) there was one to approach Jim Fry about buying the piece of land around the old Axbrige hut. The local planners said there was no objection to us moving our hut onto the site with temporary permission, which seemed to suit our needs and pockets at the time.

After much deliberation and scouring of Mendip for alternatives it was decided to go ahead on Jim's site, but with a permanent building. A sub-committee was formed to deal with anything concerning the new cottage, and in October 1973, having worked out a suitable specification, an application was made for Outline Planning Permission (This approves the principals of development only, not the details.). The Local Authority kept stalling on a decision, and then finally informed us in March 1974 that because the site was in an area designated as 'of Outstanding Natural Beauty', nothing less than a fully detailed application would be considered.

This prompted swift action on negotiations over the land, and in July 1974 the size of the site was agreed at a price of £900 plus leaving our old club hut for Jim's use. Detailed plans were prepared and in October 1974 an application was made for Full Planning Permission, which was granted on 22 January 1975.

Meanwhile estimates hastily produced, indicated a cost of £4500 plus the cost of the land; this was later amended to £6325, with the Sports Council finally offering a grant of 50 per cent in November 1975.

The next stage was to seek Building Permission (choice of materials and construction details), which hit a big snag with the councils' refusal to accept our proposal for a septic tank (a small tank which by bacteriological action

and primary filtering removes most of the nasties, allowing natural filtering through the subsoil to complete the job). The^y said 'Can't have all that stuff sinking down they fissures and gettin' in the drinking water', and apart from sophisticated toilets which converted the stuff to humus (one model was called "The Chemikezi") the only alternative was an expensive and monstrous cesspit 12 feet deep - a formidable task for us. Permission was eventually recieved on 21st June 1976 and work began.

The construction of a two storey building the size of a large four bedroomed house is no mean feat, especially when done entirely by people with no skills related to building, mainly at weekends and in all weathers. A great proportion of the work was undertaken by a small core of established Members mercilessly driven on by Wayne with the aid of the plans, a couple of building textbooks and a Builders Merchant's catalogue. Many notable events occurred during the construction, such as the fund raising walks, the digging of the trench across Jim's yard, for the electricity main; pulling down the four huge beech trees, digging the cesspit and the 'warming' ceremony that followed therein; lifting the steel beams into position; and tiling the roof.

By the end of 1979 bunks were being installed, kitchen fitted out, and save for some floor tiling it was virtually ready for occupation, when it was partially destroyed by a gas explosion on New Years Eve. What remained upright had to be pulled down as it was so dangerous, and so sadly those who helped build it quickly took up the task of levelling it. Luckily the ground floor slab and the construction below it including drainage was undamaged, but that was all there was to show for a cost of about £11000 and much sweat.

The insurance company paid up without much fuss and we set about rebuilding only this time by other peoples efforts. Of the four estimates submitted the lowest was within our new financial limits, was accepted, and work started on 23rd June 1980.

The building is now complete as far as the builders work is concerned and formally passed into our hands on 14th February 1981, and even if we didn't finish the building ourselves we should remember that the club alone is responsible for the underground part, which I feel is quite appropriate.

Roger Wallington

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

'I don't go down caves I don't know improperly dressed'. Denise Samuel.

THE MENDIP COTTAGEBUILDING GROUP

Well this is the finale of our fourth, yes fourth cottage building saga, and this one is the acme of all caving cottages.

The first one was a derelict cottage on Farmer Tuckers land in Velvet Bottom, which he let the Group renovate in 1958 under the direction of Pete Goddard and material assistance from Jim Fry. (Our Provident Angel Pete called him then.) The rent was £1 per annum and a large bottle of whisky. Malcolm was concerned that we should raise money to purchase the land and cottage, but when asked about a price Tucker would always reply 'arrrr you'll be alright,' . Alas that was not to be so, he sold out to a Mr Clarke, who then started the Country Club and evicted us in March 1964, saying he wanted the cottage for his wife.

A hut was purchased on Salisbury Plain and Jim Fry again very graciously helped by giving us permission to erect it at the back of his yard. Pat Walsh directed construction in 1964/65 and in 1966 the £25 donation given in memory of Barry Ottewill our late Editor by his parents was spent on the construction of the Tackle Room as the Groups memorial to him. He was killed one Sunday night returning from Mendip when his mini van was forced into the back of a stationary lorry I believe.

The move to Jim's Yard was always considered a temporary measure while we looked for a suitable cottage to purchase and renovate. With this objective in mind the Land Purchase Fund was restarted, and we went looking for land and or cottages, but nothing materialised. However Jim Fry was to come to our rescue yet again! Selling us the site on which we built our New Cottage and which Pat Bryne the Builder rebuilt throughout 1980.

Now that the cottage is all but complete we must make our caving reputation match that which we have for fine cottages and sherry.

Bryan Pittman

A-PRESENT FOR THE NEW COTTAGE

The 3rd Osterley Scouts have very kindly given the M.C.G. a new four slice electric toaster for the New Cottage, which will be much appreciated, thankyou very much 3rd Osterley.

COTTAGE BOOKINGS APRIL - DECEMBER 1981

APRIL

FRIDAY 3 A.G.M. & DINNER
FRIDAY 10 Kingston Poly 12
FRIDAY 17 N.P.C. 6 as guests of Greg Smith
FRIDAY 25 Dave Gibson 12

MAY

FRIDAY 1 MEMBERS WEEKEND and Graham Sutcliffe's Stag Do all Members invited
THIS IS THE LAST WEEKEND IN THE OLD HUT. Further arrangements to be
given at A.G.M.

MAY) NO GUEST BOOKINGS DURING
JUNE) MOVE TO NEW COTTAGE
JULY)

AUGUST

FRIDAY 7 MEMBERS WEEKEND
FRIDAY 14
FRIDAY 21 MEMBERS WEEKEND
FRIDAY 28

SEPTEMBER

FRIDAY 4 MEMBERS WEEKEND
FRIDAY 11
FRIDAY 18 MEMBERS WEEKEND Pete Lingwood's Stag Do General invitation to Members
FRIDAY 25

ADDRESS CHANGE

Steve Conquest,
113 Lincoln Road,
Bush Hill Park,
Enfield
Middlesex.

WARNING

VA LUBBIES ARE BEING STOLEN FROM PARKED CARS ON MENDIP.
DO NOT LEAVE VALUABLES IN CARS WHILST CAVING!

RETIRING COMMITTEE

The following addresses are of the retiring Committee.

