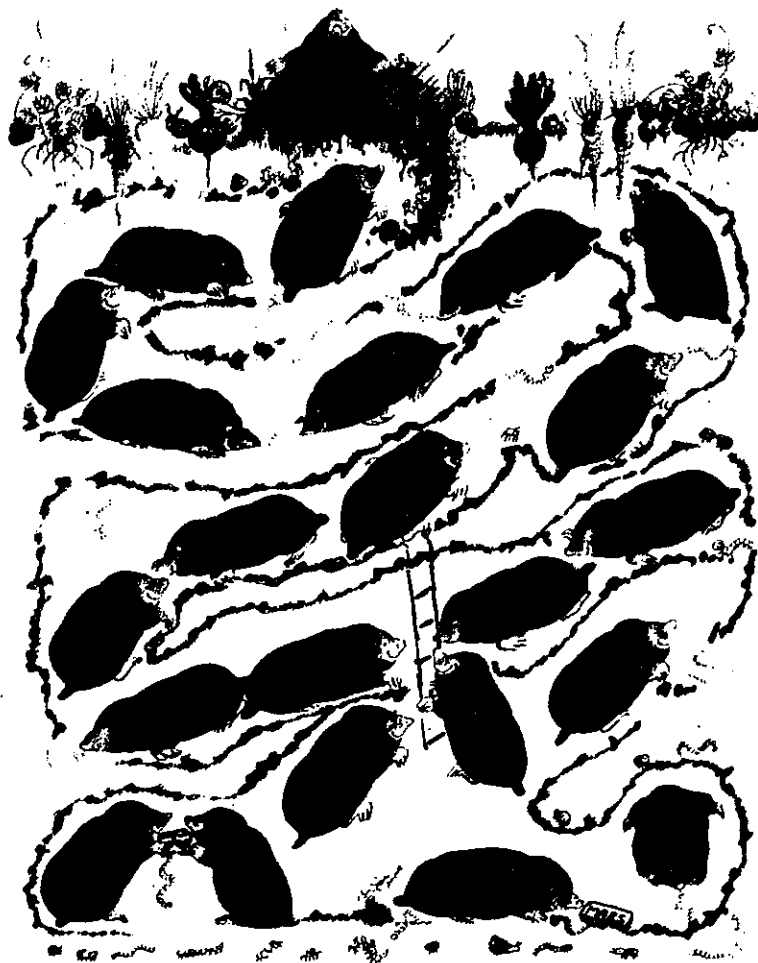




Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

February 1984

No. 169



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DON'T FORGET - YOUR MEMBERSHIP SUBS WERE DUE 1st JANUARY.

If you haven't paid yet, please send a cheque to the Treasurer NOW!

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

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CAVING ACCOMMODATION is available at the MCG Cottage on Mendip. The address is: Nordrach Cottage, Charthouse-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6XW
Map reference NGR 5147 5606 (OS 1:50000 first series sheet 182).
Bookings should be made with the Cottage Warden.

WEEKLY MEETINGS are held every Thursday at 8.30 pm onwards at:
The Fox and Hounds and Mawson Arms, Chiswick Lane South, London W4.

MCG MEET PROGRAMME 1984

Feb 18	Easgill	Greg Smith	NPC
Mar 3	Mendip	Bob Varley	MCG
Mar 17	OPD/DYO	Roger Wallington	SWCC
Apr 7	AGN		MCG
Apr 20-29	Inchnadamph	Geoff Barton	Grampian
May 5	Mendip	Clive Townsr	MCG
May 26	Devon	Arthur Spain	
Jun 2	Mendip Geology	Malcolm Cotter	MCG
Jun 16	Gower	Ian McKechnie	
Jul 7	Mendip	Mike Mintram	MCG
Jul 12-29	Ireland	John Miriam	

Those who have paid their 1984 subs will already have seen the above meet programme, published in full up to December in the Membership Card. Home meets have been set for the first weekend in each month, and an "organiser" has been appointed. Please contact the organiser to arrange transport, or beer if sufficient numbers are indicated. It is even possible to suggest the caves you'd like to visit, if you're readily determined!

The away meets have been aimed at the third weekend in the month, and a particularly wide geographical spread is available. Contact the organisers early, as space is limited on some trips.

Any comments on the existing programme, or suggestions for the future, will be welcomed at the AGM.

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

PROBATIONARY MEMBERSHIP has been granted to the following:

Darren Bartlett, 15 Starling Close, Worle, Weston-super-Mare, Avon BS22 8SN
(Introduced by Martin Rowe, Adrian Duckett)
Jarrod Bartlett, 15 Starling Close, Worle, Weston-super-Mare, Avon BS22 8SN
(Introduced by Martin Rowe, Adrian Duckett)
David Farrow, 5 Mendip Rise, Locking, Weston-super-Mare, Avon.
(Introduced by Martin Rowe, Adrian Duckett)
Alan Dougherty, 3 The Cottages, Wrington, Nr Bristol.
(introduced by Steve Taylor and Tony Knibbs)
David Punter, 66 Roxborough Avenue, Isleworth, Middlesex. tel 01-568-1205
(introduced by Martin Rowe and Adrian Duckett)
Peter Haynes, 14 May's Road, Teddington, Middlesex. TW11 OSQ. tel 01-977-7914
(introduced by Adrian Duckett and Martin Rowe)

BILL DUCKLIN and PADDY NEWMAN were accepted as full members at the December committee meeting. Congratulations to both of them.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS have been notified by the following members:

Andy and Jo Tizzard, 6 Middle Park Avenue, Eltham, London SE9 5HP.
Denise Samuel, 85 Cavendish Avenue, W. Ealing, London W13 OJY. tel 01-997-2032
Lesley Robbins, 7 Blenheim Place, Aylesbury, Bucks.
Martin Rowe, 118a Lordship Lane, East Dulwich, London SE22
Tony Knibbs, 85 Cavendish Avenue, W. Ealing, London W13 OJY.

APOLOGIES to Mike Haselden, whose name is misspelt in the members list. Not only that - his phone number is given incorrectly. It should be Southampton (0703) 464491.

COTTAGE BOOKINGS

	April
February	7 Members weekend (AGM)
11	14
18 Kingston Poly (12)	21
25 Ealing College (12)	28
March	May
3 Members weekend	5 Members Weekend. (Bank Hol.)
10 Alan Mellon + 12 Rangers!	12
17 Ealing College	19
24	26
31	

COTTAGE CLEANING: there will be a "purge" on the weekend of 2nd June, coinciding with the geology weekend. That doesn't mean, of course, that you can't clean the cottage any other weekend.

OUR RELATIONSHIP with our neighbours, the Frys, has for many years been amicable, and we have benefited considerably from their kindness. Recently, however, we have as a group strained this relationship by our thoughtlessness and lack of consideration, and unless we do something about it quickly, we are likely to lose a good friend. The problem is, that children have been allowed to run free on the Fry's land, and damage has been done to property on at least one occasion. We will now, as soon as possible, have to erect a fence along the boundary - which will be most inconvenient for us, as the boundary is very close to the back of the cottage.

It's a great pity that a small minority of members allow their children to run riot when they are at the cottage. I can see that Fry's yard is a paradise for a child to play in, but in future they must be strictly banned if we are not to cause even more aggravation.

MONEY raises its ugly head again. The committee have done their sums for the next year, and have found that if the Group is to make ends meet, the following increases will be necessary:

-Increase member and guest Cottage Bed-night fees to £1.25 and £1.75 respectively, commencing 1st April 1984. This has been agreed by the committee.

-Increase the membership subscription from 1st January 1985, to £15 (associate members £7.50). This is subject to the agreement of the AGM.

These increases bring us back into line with inflation after several years without any increase. And the increased fees still compare favourably with the other major Mendip clubs.

OUTSTANDING COTTAGE WORK.

The Cottage Warden has prepared this list of outstanding cottage work, which we hope to complete before the summer is too far gone. Anyone can do any job they wish, at any time. However, it is suggested that you choose your task in advance, and check with the Cottage Warden whether any special materials are needed, or whether they have already been purchased, etc.

Exterior:

- Put up fence to side and rear of cottage.
- Build changing room extension.
- Fit translucent roof over area between back door and gas store.
- Landscape plot.
- Repair dry-stone wall.
- Repaint woodwork.
- Repair gas store door.
- Improve drainage near front door.

Kitchen:

- Fill hole in ceiling.
- Label shower booster switch.
- Make stand for urn.
- Paint panel at end of bar.
- Support centre of wall cupboard shelf.

Lounge:

- Move thermostat to left of window.
- Remove small storage heater.
- Fit better lampshades.
- Install clock power supply.
- Grout tiles around fireplace.
- Fill holes in wall and ceiling.
- Clean and varnish door.
- Fix door handles.
- Refit back door braces.

Library:

- Fit bar heater.
- Fit more shelves.
- Replace light fitting.

Entrance Hall:

- Fill holes in wall.
- Replace shoot bolt on door.
- Clear out cupboard under the stairs.

Changing Room & Showers:

- Fit bar heaters.
- Fit hooks near sinks.
- Repair cold tap.
- Supply waste bin.
- Fit shower head number 3.
- Improve ventilation in shower room.

Tackle Store & Charging Area:

- Improve clearance at bottom of rescue cupboard doors.
- Refit side door braces.
- Fit tool shelves.
- Fit high pegs for long ropes.

Foreman's Lounge:

- Secure centre bunks.
- Fill holes in ceiling.
- Fit foam rubber to low ceiling next to bunk no. 3.

Guest Room:

- Secure bunks to wall.
- Repair curtain rail.
- Fit better light fitting.

Small Room:

- Secure bunks to wall.
- Change taps over.
- Replace hook on door.

FROM OUR HIMALAYAN CORRESPONDENT.

The Editor has been passed a copy of a letter from Andy Beare, who gives his location as "Lilly Restaurant", Pokhara (Lakeside), Nepal." A copy of the letter has been on the cottage noticeboard, but here are a few extracts:

"At the back of this little restaurant you can see Machapuchcare (Fish Tail Mountain) and the Annapurna range stretching away into the distance..... I've been getting some good photos here as well; lots of the mountains. I hope people like mountain shots, because there are plenty of them....."

On the way out I'm going to visit some Holy caves which are about 5km from Pokhara. It says in the guide book that a lot of the cave passages and chambers are unexplored because the pilgrims only go to see the Ice Lingam at the entrance. So get digging down at Netherwood, and who knows, we might meet somewhere East of Turkey! (Remember - the BEC get everywhere, but the MCG get there first)".

We understand Andy's back soon, and already planning his next trip!

THE SHARPEYED will have noticed that this is newsletter 169, and the last one distributed, back in November, was number 167. Fear not - you haven't missed one - it's just that our special 30th anniversary edition was allocated 168, but has been delayed in printing, in no way due to a dispute between management and the NGA, and without any intervention from SOGAT 82.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1984

The Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, 7th April, at Nordrach. We hope to use Charterhouse Manor again; Otherwise it will be in the Cottage. Any member with a proposition to be considered at the meeting, should give it in writing to the Secretary at least 4 weeks before the meeting. Any nominations for the committee should similarly be given to the Secretary in writing, proposed and seconded by full members, as soon as possible.

THE ANNUAL DINNER will be at the Star, Wells, on the evening of 7th April. Tickets at £7 each may be reserved with the Secretary. A coach will be arranged between the cottage and Wells.

THE MENDIP CAVERS CHALLENGE will take place in the Priddy Village Hall on Sat. 3rd March. Organised by the Wessex Cave Club, this is the beginning of what is expected to be an annual event. It will take place during the 'Balch and Before' fancy dress disco. (Tickets £2 each, food provided, Mobile Hunters in attendance.) If you would like to take part or just go along, contact Jon Roberts for further details.

PETE BULLING now lives at 22, Canterbury Road, Worthing, W. Sussex.

A TOUCH OF WIND

In June, Martin Rowe reported opening a small tube at roof level at the end of Upper Flood. While working up front, during that extremely hot weather in July, I noticed a draught on the right of my face. I was pleased to discover that this was coming from the hole in the roof. Although not very strong, it was quite obvious, and everyone present felt it in turn. The small hole in the entrance lid also had an outward air current. On subsequent visits, the air flow has been very weak or absent. Sometimes it fluctuates by blowing and subsiding over a period of about 1/4 minute.

The other interesting feature at the end of the cave concerns the direction of water flow. Last winter during wet conditions, Geoff Barton and I noticed water flowing towards us from a crack on the left of the face. In November, following a dry spell, Martin Rowe lowered the level of the end pool, and again noted water coming towards him. The outlet for the water is thus not known. If a tool is pushed down into the floor, bubbles arise.

The big haul of 22nd October. As part of the celebrations of 30 years of the Group, a large digging party was arranged for Upper Flood. The object was to form a continuous chain from the end to the entrance, to allow more elbow room. Fortunately, the long term volunteers were joined by an equal number of late arrivals, and a party of 18 assembled throughout the cave. Although more material was moved out than in any previous work session, the system failed to achieve outstanding results. This was mainly caused by thin cover in some difficult sections, and shortage of rope in others. We generally concluded that we would have done better if we had each looked after a load all the way. In all, a great effort has been expended over the last 18 months in avoiding dumping within the cave. Conservation is extracting its price!

COVENANTS should be completed and returned with your subs, please. Blank forms may be obtained from the Treasurer or the Editor.

DID YOU KNOW that the 'in' place to hold a party if you live in Paris, is in the sewers. BBC 'Nationwide' (or equivalent) did a report recently on this trend. It seems that the Paris sewers are based on ancient chalk mines, and include some sizeable caverns. So the revellers simply take a few crates of wine some boxes of food, a petrol generator and disco equipment, and disappear into a manhole in the road. The main danger, apparently, is the Gendarmes who patrol the tunnels, but on the night the cameras were there, they did not turn up!

Saturday, the day of the rescue, dawned dull and misty, an ideal day for caving. Discussion the previous evening had finalised the plan to start the rescue at the foot of fault chamber pitch (swing pitch), through Christmas Crawl, up the Main Chamber pitch and finally ending at the foot of the 10ft pitc to the Entrance series.

Despite extensive advertising, the final party was rather too small to undertake the correct procedure; in retrospect it was just as well that the the original plan of a Rhino Rift rescue was abandoned. However, the final teams went like this; our victim (casualty) was Christine Martin, who stoutly volunteered a month previously and who must be praised for not uttering a word of complaint, despite being "man-handled" in tight spots (I'm sorry, I'll read that again) and being left dangling at the foot of the pitch in main chamber for some considerable time while the bugs were being ironed out of the hauling procedure. Tony Knibbs and Denise Samuel went in earlier to ladder the 10ft, rig a handline over the traverse, and ladder Swing Pitch. Martin Rowe and Bob Varley accompanied them but their job was to position bolts and hangers in the most suitable locations for attaching pulleys, to haul the stretcher up the pitches.

The main party included Pete Bulling, Pat Newman, Bill Ducklin, Mick Woodham (guest), myself and Chris. Three others followed about an hour later; Ian McKechnie, Pete Dymont, and Jon Roberts. At this point it should be noted that our tame rescue warden Brian Terry was conspicuous by his absence underground, having succumbed to the dreaded gastric flu a few days earlier. However, he was full of apologies/excuses, and provided extensive moral support from above.

The main party arrived at the bottom of Swing Pitch, where Christine duly broke her tibia and fibula as planned. Unfortunately, the inflatable leg splint wouldn't, so ingenuity was used to strap the damaged leg to the good one. Then came the saga of securing Chris to the stretcher. Some surface practice is necessary to understand the best method of attaining this, bearing in mind that not only is the patient being carried horizontally, but often vertically (preferably head upwards), and the feet must be secured by some method to the stretcher. A figure of eight loop around the ankles, through the stretcher foot ropes, and around the feet was found best. This was finally secured by a krab to prevent the knot from undoing.

Another failing of our system was in not securing the arms across the body inside the stretcher and roping around the whole. However this was soon rectified, Emphasis was placed on reassuring the patient as much as possible, and to handle her gently bearing in mind her injuries, very difficult in places. Fortunately at least two of us had had first aid training, so knew the procedure.

The haul up Swing Pitch was accomplished using two lines, one as a hauling rope and the other as a safety line. The latter was rove through a pulley attached to a bolt and through a Petzl jammer, the other as a straightforward hauling rope. This system worked well, the jammer taking the strain during the slack periods.

Christmas Crawl squeeze came next. Three or four of the party went through first, the remainder in line ahead (with one in the squeeze acting as a mattress) slowly fed Chris through, and she emerged from the other side like a cork from a bottle.

It was decided that the traverse across the great chamber would be too risky, so we descended to near the bottom with a short traverse to where the lower part of the previously rigged ladder touched the rocky platform.

Martin and Bob had gone ahead after rigging Swing Pitch (Tony and Denise had left earlier) to attach a hauling line above the Great Chamber ladder. This particular obstacle proved to be one that kept us busy for over an hour. Firstly, because of

the noise of cascading water, difficulty was experienced in communicating with those at the top. However we managed using a relay man at the upper traverse. Secondly - the major problem - it proved impossible to haul the patient up from below with the line rigged as it was. The hauling line passed through a line belayed at the top to the only area of sound rock available. But the pulley was too small for the long haul, and the rope haul was over a rocky outcrop, so causing more friction. Attempts to alter the pulley position were to no avail. Eventually, by hauling on the safety rope (which was kept taut through a safety jammer) as well as the hauling rope from the traverse position, Chris slowly ascended to the head of the pitch. She came over the top, being dragged over the bodies of willing volunteers to make it as comfortable as possible for her. It was noted that several rescuers (including myself) were not belayed at this point, which could have complicated the situation seriously if one of us had slipped. Something to be noted for future occasions.

A welcome break was taken at this stage, getting back our strength with Mars bars. Unfortunately, the casualty had to survive on a couple of bites. Although tired, we decided to continue as planned to the 10ft pitch. The upward squeeze towards the showerbath proved to be another struggle, as the passage would only accommodate one person in line ahead, and in some places no-one. So four persons went through the squeeze taking a hauling rope, the rest passing Chris from one to another. She did eventually arrive in the wider passage above the squeeze, but only after much struggling, pushing, and pulling, the persons behind unable to help. On to the showerbath, and smartly through - there was a lot of water. Up the rocky passage with some difficulty to the chamber, a final vertical pull to the foot of the pitch, and our objective was reached. Chris was freed, and with much groaning managed to sit, then stand, up. Brave girl.

It was some time before we all emerged with the rescue equipment to sunny daylight and a welcome cold drink from the Terry and Pittman families. And so ended another practice rescue, with, I hope a few lessons learnt:

1. Ensure all equipment is in first class working order all the time, and not just in the cave. First aid box was damaged, space blanket unusable, split burst, etc.
2. Knowledge of the best procedure to secure the casualty to the stretcher, bearing in mind the injuries and the nature of the cave.
3. Improved pulley hauling system using perhaps a two to one mechanical advantage, and suspended from well above the top of the pitch. The lifeline should also run over a pulley if necessary, and be protected with a jammer (as was done).
4. The size of our party was too small, albeit split to achieve the best results rigging pitches, equipment distribution, etc. It is very necessary to have fresh bearers to relieve the first team.

(Editor's comment on 3: I query the benefit of a mechanical advantage; our problem was due to friction of rope on rock, and a mechanical advantage could have caused a rope failure. Solution is in finding a good location for the pulley (difficult on this pitch) or keeping the rope clear manually (as we did). The lifeline should not be on a pulley unless necessary; it is an additional source of failure in the event of a fall.)

THE TACKLE STORE DOOR should be locked at all times; it has often been found open after a guest club has been there. It's up to you, the member, to ensure you lock the door as soon as you have been in there.

ST. CUTHBERTS SWALLET is available to us all, not only on arranged meets. Tony Knibbs, who is a leader, says he is always pleased to take members down, just contact him and arrange a suitable date.

CAVES BE WHERE YOU PUT 'EM...

compiled by Jonathan Roberts

from MCG newsletter, No 163:

"BREAKTHROUGH ON MCG DIG - Late in March, a party of six MCG members broke into a cave system after only 45 minutes digging, at a site they had been investigating for some time. The system comprised several hundred feet of passage, in the form of large chambers joined by short crawls. Some signs of human and animal habitation were found. Until the entrance is made safe and the cave properly explored, the site is being kept secret. More news as it becomes available !"

from Descent magazine, No 54:

"FOCUS ON MENDIP... NEW CAVES... The third cave was found by the MCG last March and they are still keeping it strictly under wraps. The only information released is 'several hundred feet of passage, in the form of large chambers joined by short crawls'. More next issue ?"

from MCG newsletter, No 164:

"YOU MAY REMEMBER a reference in the April newsletter to a 'breakthrough on MCG dig'. This was, in fact, a whimsical description of a clandestine visit to some sandstone caverns below London Road, Reigate. Entry was effected by digging down through rubble on a demolition site. A fairly extensive network of chambers was apparently connected to the cellars of the houses in the road. One area of the cavern is bricked up - and a surface survey showed that this corresponded with the site next-door of one 'Scutts Cave Wine Bar'. As there was an access problem (outside opening hours) we resolved to make a return trip to complete the survey. Any volunteers ??...."

from Descent magazine, No 55:

FOCUS ON MENDIP... One should never jump to conclusions... The April edition of the MCG Newsletter carried a news snippet about a cave system discovered the previous month by some of their members. I duly reported it in this column, only to read in May that the cave was in fact a mine near London ! I am glad to hear that the MCG now have a genuine Mendip find, somewhere in Longwood Swallet..."

from Cerberus Speleological Society journal, Volume 13 No 5:

"NEW MCG FIND - For some months now the MCG have had everyone speculating as to the location of the new cave they had found. After having been very secretive about this and winding everybody up it transpires that the site is located in Yorkshire."

Britons take on untamed river

By Martin Wainwright

A TEAM of British potholers, including two bricklayers and a maths teacher, is preparing to explore one of the most inaccessible underground rivers in the world.

The Nare torrent plunges from an unknown source to an unknown destination, a thousand feet below the rain forest of New Guinea.

The Untamed River Expedition will spend three months next autumn working from an underground base camp at the only known point where the Nare can be reached. This is a bell-shaped cavern 1,000ft high with a hole in the top where part of the rock roof has collapsed.

Supplies for up to eight potholers will be lowered through this hole by rope and winch before the attempt to trace the Nare to its mouth begins. The river runs across the cavern floor before disappearing into a cave system at a rate of 20 tons of water a second.

The channel was explored for 1½ miles by a French expedition in 1980, but rapids at a place which they christened Apocalypse Now barred further progress.

Mr Stephen Gough, an economics teacher from Sheffield, said that the greatest known problem was crossing the Nare.

He went on: "If the going gets impossible on one side, we'll need to go over, but the torrent is so fast that anyone trying to cross it on a line would be dragged under and drowned."

The negotiation of the channel will also take place in continuous noise.

The expedition will be led by Mr Mike Boon, a veteran of 25 years' caving including recent explorations of river caves in Mexico and Guatemala.

Members have undertaken to pay £3,000 each towards the total cost, budgeted at £30,000.

The last big British caving foray to Papua New Guinea, a British Speleological Association expedition in 1975, made several discoveries of caverns, fossils and wildlife.

The potholers also hope to trace the unexplored course of the neighbouring Ora river, which emerges as a 150ft waterfall in a cliff face.

Magical cave opens

The Shuilian (Water Screen) Cave, in Lianyungang City, Jiangsu Province, has opened to the public after four years' preparation work, Jiefang Ribao (Liberation Daily) reports.

The paper said that Shuilian Cave is believed to be the former home of the "Monkey King", hero of the classic novel, Pilgrimage to the West.

Under the sponsorship of the People's Government of Lianyungang City, the local authorities repaired most of scenic spots nestled within the ancient

pinus and bamboo groves around the cave.

The stones originally lying in the cave have been moved away and the space within it has been doubled.

Now that the mire in a well in the cave has been cleared away, its water is so clear that people can see their images in it.

More than 100 metres above the cave, a pool with a capacity of 300 cubic metres has been built, forming an artificial water screen, which keeps the cascade running over the entrance to the cave during the dry season.

Tunnel to the past

GUARDIAN 4.1.84

By a Correspondent

ENGINEERS will start work early this year on cutting the first canal tunnel to be built in Britain since 1850.

It will be driven into the side of Castle Hill, Dudley, at a cost of £225,000 with a grant from the Department of Environment's urban aid programme.

The Dudley Canal Turst, which put forward the scheme, believes that more than 150,000 tourists a year will take boat trips through the tunnel to view a massive cavern created and left by limestone miners in the last century.

The tunnel, 200 yards long, is a replacement for an original tunnel linking to an underground canal across the cavern floor.

This original tunnel is

blocked by rubble and engineers say the new one is a cheaper way of getting to the cavern.

Nearly 200 yards long by 50 feet wide and 60 feet high, the cavern is supported by five pillars of natural rock. Part of the money will be used to further strengthen the roof. It is claimed the tunnel has spectacular frozen waterfalls of calcite.

Eventually it is hoped to open up neighbouring and bigger caverns for viewing from the same underground canal.

About 90,000 people take canal trips every year part of the way towards the cavern, starting from the Black Country museum, where an old industrial village is being recreated by moving and erecting original buildings.



MENDIP MOVES CLOSER STILL
by your Transport Correspondent

Yet another road scheme has been approved for the M3/A303 route by the Secretary of State for Transport. Members heading for Mendip from the south-western side of London will no doubt be pleased to learn they're about to have a faster journey from the end of the Andover bypass (which is to gain a grade separated junction) as far as Thruxton village, bypassing the wiggly bit of road past the 'alien space-ship' roundabout at Weyhill - you know the one I mean. The new road will also bypass the pubs at Weyhill, currently a favoured stopping point on Sunday evening. So hungry/thirsty cavers will need to be alert for the turn-off once the new road is open.

The scheme is for a new 4.8 mile dual carriageway road, costing £8.2 million (November 1982 prices). A start on construction is programmed for before April 1985, so watch out for construction lorries bringing crushed Mendip for you to drive on. Will they recreate the caves inside the new road formation, though? A further scheme is in the reserve list for April 1985 to March 1987, for the section beyond Thruxton as far as Boscombe Down airbase where it would join the Amesbury bypass. That would involve more dual carriageway (another 4.8 miles) and cost £7.6m at November 1982 prices. Drivers would then have a high speed route from south-west London almost as far as Stonehenge. Perhaps that venerated monument was really a chariotway service area run by Trust Hut Forte?

By the way, the M3 and A303 would be commandeered by the military in the event of major hostilities, so you'll have to plan a different route just in case...

Bob Speleo B



Bob Speleo B

