

MCG NEWS



SEPTEMBER 1984 No. 173

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

TONY KNIBBS:

NEW BROOM

AS REGULAR READERS of Descent Magazine will know, there is a conservation-related outbreak of cave adoption disease. Each irregular issue of Descent (Ed: can you have regular readers of an irregular publication?) features a listing of clubs and the caves they have adopted. The next issue will probably record our intention of acting in loco parentis to Longwood/August.

There has been a traditional and almost unbroken Group interest in this system. From our original camp-site in Velvet Bottom, Longwood Swallet was the nearest (10 minutes walk) cave of any size to which beginners and experienced members made frequent visits. In the 1950s August Hole was not often visited; Christmas Crawl had not yet been discovered and the relatively constricted stream passage formed a barrier which gave the more distant reaches a rather remote atmosphere.

The MCG survey of the cave was started in early 1960 and continued through to late '61. During this time those of us who worked on the project increased our knowledge of the system and gained a deep respect for its dangers and difficulties. Dragging a tripod and a bag of tackle up through the entrance passages usually managed to drain whatever energy a day's surveying had left.

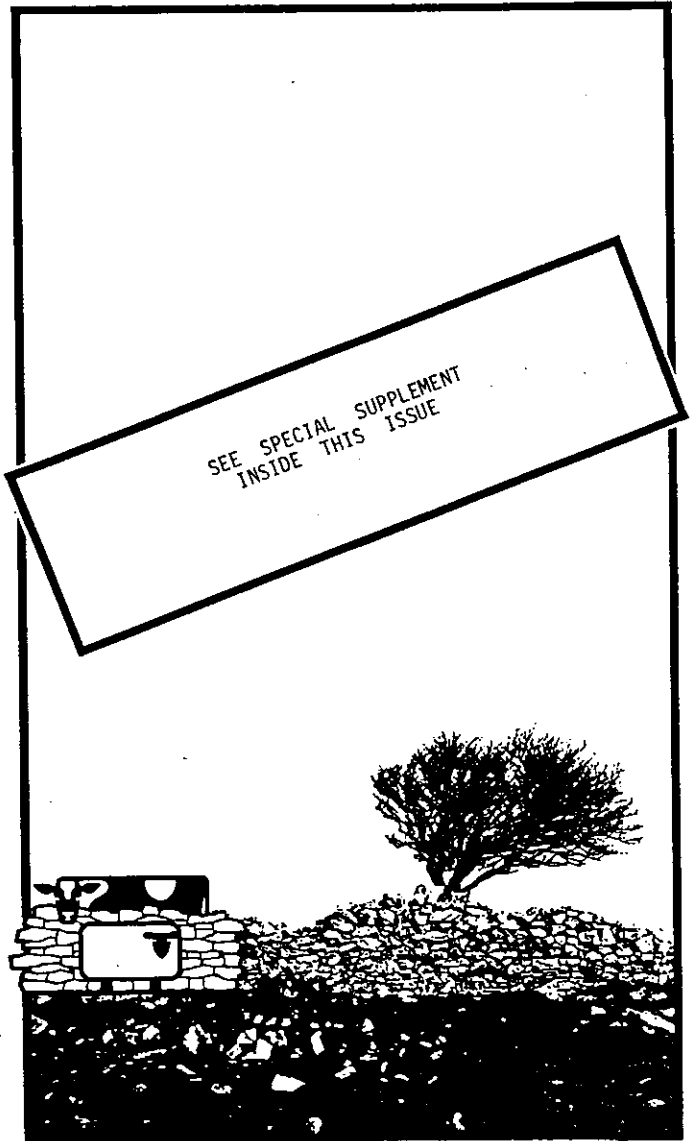
Although no major discovery ever resulted - apart from the magic short-cut of Christmas Crawl - the Group has done a fair amount of digging in various parts of the system. Work is still continuing in fits and starts, and the missing mile or so of Longwood/August is still there to be found. We hope to publish soon an updated survey of the current known extent of the cave, including Speleo Rhal's work near Great Chamber, the Wessex's superb push of Reynold's Passage, and our own meanderings.

For two - or was it three - years in succession during the 1960s the Group held an annual clean-up session when varying amounts of litter were collected and a scrubbing brush was applied to muddied formations.

MENDIP HILLS LOCAL PLAN

WRITTEN STATEMENT

Draft for
Consultation



Somerset County Council

We have probably visited this fine system more than most other clubs during the past 30 years, so it is fitting that we take a practical interest in its well-being, and minister to its access ailments when that small but irrepressible band of malcontents decide to use a crowbar rather than a key. We are an organic part of CCC and the cave is on our doorstep, so we are in a unique position to deal with the problems.

Collection of litter in and around the cave will provide a good starting point

for our custodianship. This will take place during the Half-Yearly Forum weekend of 6th-7th October.

Other beneficial activities will no doubt become apparent; a nyphargus cull in the Lower August streamway could be fun; as would be the wall-papering of Longwood Great Chamber. And we need a handrail on the traverse...

The adoption of the Longwood/August system is, of course, seen as a serious undertaking and I would be interested to hear any suggestions aimed at giving this responsibility maximum effect.



Lots more space in this month's issue... and lots more news, too.

LESLEY ROBBINS is on the move, again! Andy Beare has persuaded her of the merits of visiting the Indian sub-continent, so your last chance to buy her a drink (and vice versa) for six months, will be on Thursday September 13th at the Mawson Arms.

PAUL MERRON asks members to note any shortages of household materials, on the back of the booking-in sheet, when you are staying at the cottage. Arthur Spain will then pass on the news to Paul, when he receives the booking form and cottage fees. Better still, replace the item yourself and deduct the money from cottage fees due.

IT'S ALWAYS SAD to say goodbye to familiar faces - but we may still see some at the cottage and Chiswick from time to time. Members who did not renew for 1984 are:
 Doug Anderson, Bruce Dean, Barbara Dewdney, Richard Dominey, John Felton, Judy MacMillan, Jerry Roberts, Roger Saunders, Julie Spain, Pete Turcan.

DOES ANYONE, pleads the Hon. Recorder, have a magazine rack they don't want, which could be used in the cottage lounge? We usually have piles of lounge copies of publications, resting on chairs and tables, and being sat on and used as table-mats. It would be useful for them to have a home of their own.

AS COMMITTEE MEMBER WITHOUT PORTFOLIO, the rest of the Committee felt John Pudduck was a bit naked, so we have clothed him with all our unsold sweatshirts. Members who wish to peel them off him are requested to contact JP, at 01.764.8454 (alias 9 Windermere Road, London SW16) and offer him £6. We still have plenty of every size, every colour. And don't forget, it isn't long to winter, when that sweatshirt will come in very comfy indeed.

MORE ON the MCG-2020 SRT and party fund. Jon Roberts has done some lightning calculations about that bank account Alan Mellon's asking for. There are 36 years to go. We retain all the interest paid on our bank deposits. If we assume bank interest keeps 3% ahead of inflation, year by year (possibly a conservative assumption), then the spending power of £1 invested now in the '2020' account will be worth £2.90 in 2020. And if £10 is covenanted over the next ten years (i.e. £1 a year), then we can claim back the tax as well. At a 30% basic tax rate, the first £1 would be worth £4.14 in 2020, the tenth £1, £3.17. The full £10 would then be worth over £36! Jon's final comment: "Could be some party".

IT'S TIME TO THINK of caving haunts for 1985. Your Meet Secretary will soon be having to think of places to visit, holes to book and pubs to renew acquaintance with during next year's caving seasons. So get in early, and order a cave from Geoff Barton, your friendly MCG stockist.

A FURTHER PLEA from Ian - he left a dark blue MCG sweatshirt in the Mawson Arms on Thursday August 16th, and would probably buy a pint or so for any lucky finder, on its return.

ADDITION to last month's membership list:
 Gordon Lister's telephone number is 01.579.3466.

A REMINDER about the Half-Yearly Party and Barn Dance at Chewton Mendip Village Hall. It's on Saturday evening, October 6th, 7.30 pm onwards. Admission £2.50. There will be a Mobile Hunters and our very own Velvet Bottom Band. Simon and Val are working on baked potatoes, but we do need offers to help with the food catering, to extend the range of edible comestibles and assuage those cavers' appetites. Last year some superb dishes were around (and the food wasn't bad either). Please put your creative imagination to work, to titillate the tummies on the night. The Committee will be pleased to recompense the cost of your catering. Please let John Pudduck know what food you propose to bring along, so that he can keep track of the 'menu'; John is liaising with Simon and Val about the general arrangements.

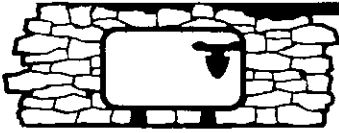
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CAVING ACCOMMODATION is available at the MCG, Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse on Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol BS18 6XW. Map ref. NGR 5147.5606. O.S. 1:50000 sheet 182. Apply to the Cottage Warden.

WEEKLY MEETINGS are held at the Mawson Arms, Chiswick Lane South, London W4, on Thursday evenings from 8.30pm. Close to A4/A316 Hogarth Roundabout. Nearest buses: 297 in Chiswick Lane South, and 27,91,237,267,290,E3,E4 in Chiswick High Road. Nearest tube: Turnham Green.

SPELEO DATE

(Saturday's date shown)	NORDRACH AND MENDIP & cottage bookings	OTHER REGIONS
Sept. 1	MEMBERS' WEEKEND (Chris Whittle)	.
8	.	.
15	.	OFD/DYO (Denise Samuel) at SWCC
22	.	.
29	.	BCRA National Conf, Univ.Lancaster
Oct. 6	HALF-YEAR FORUM LONGWOOD-AUGUST TIDY-UP MCG PARTY !!!	.
13	.	.
20	.	LINK POT (Neil Hutchinson) at NPC
27	.	.
Nov. 3	BONFIRE WEEKEND (Brian Terry) Wessex 50th Anniv. Dinner	.
10	.	.
17	.	DERBYSHIRE (Roy Kempston) at OCC
24	.	.
Dec. 1	MEMBERS' WEEKEND (Ian McKechnie)	.
8	.	.
15	.	AGEN ALLWEDD (Tony Knibbs) at CSS (PROPOSED MAJORCA MEET
22	CHRISTMAS ON MENDIP	(contact Adrian Duckett, Ian Parry
29	NEW YEAR'S GATHERING	.



MENDIP HILLS LOCAL PLAN

THE 'MENDIP HILLS LOCAL PLAN' has been published, in the form of a draft written statement and proposals' maps, by Avon and Somerset County Councils. Interested individuals and groups have until 15th October to comment on the draft Plan, before the final policy document is drawn up. The MCG has been asked formally for our comments, by county officers, and the committee will be preparing a response to be finalised at the committee meeting on October 11th.

Many may regard planning and its offshoots as something to be ignored at best, reviled at worst. Nevertheless we happen to visit a region and own premises in a part of the countryside which is not only changing according to local interests but also due to national pressures such as easier road access, Ministry grants to farmers, and the demands of groups such as ourselves for recreation. Many members come to Mendip to enjoy the scenery and the sights as well as the caves and other facilities; the Mendip Hills Local Plan is intended by the two counties not as a process of halting change absolutely or of forcing new features on the Mendip countryside, but, in their lights, of providing a framework for retaining the best features of the area, and attempting to avoid the worst features of change elsewhere.

Jon Roberts has prepared this special 4-page supplement to MCG NEWS, to brief members about the draft Plan. His work will provide a basis for our formal response to the county councils. Please let Jon or other committee members know your views on the Plan, so we can incorporate these where practicable in our reply. It may be a matter worth discussing at the Half-Yearly Forum. Please note we shall be replying as the Mendip Caving Group, with our interests in caving access and conservation and the Mendip countryside, and as the owners of a field centre within the designated area of the Local Plan.



BACKGROUND

From some years Avon and Somerset, with the local district councils, have been working on a Local Plan for the Mendip Hills. A 'Report of Survey' has been published; an 'Issues Report' has been debated recently. The synthesis of the various ideas and comments is shown in the new draft Plan, which when adopted will represent the policies and proposals for Mendip for the next 10-15 years. The Counties say a "careful and correct balance has been struck between the various interests which this part of our countryside is expected to provide for".

The basis for the Plan is that part of Mendip designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This extends from Bleadon (near Weston-super-Mare) in the west to Hinton Blewitt and Chewton Mendip in the east, and from Burrington and Chew Valley in the north to Wookey Hole in the south. The Plan does not rigidly follow the AONB boundary, but includes some adjoining districts to ensure attention is given to the fringes: a plus mark for the planners.

The Mendip Hills Local Plan aims to:
* produce co-ordinated policies for use by different authorities, interest

groups and the public, within available resources and within the context of the counties' Structure Plans;

- * provide for preservation and enhancement of the area's natural qualities;
- * provide for the efficient but harmonious operation of agriculture, forestry, quarrying and the rural economy;
- * provide for recreation and tourist needs identified that are compatible with the conservation of the area;
- * prepare development control policies.

On receipt of comments during this public participation stage, the draft Plan will be amended as the counties feel appropriate, and then placed on deposit at which time formal objections can be made. If major objections are sustained then a Public Local Inquiry will be arranged, to be conducted by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for the Environment. He may recommend further modifications to the Plan, before the Minister rules on the Plan's final form.

CONTENTS

The draft Plan's contents include chapters on the landscape, archaeology and historic heritage, agriculture, forestry and woodlands, wildlife, recreation and tourism, building development, quarrying, transport, waste disposal, special geographical zones ranging from Winscombe Vale to Priddy Village to Charterhouse, and specific proposals for putting the Plan into practice.

- The Plan can be viewed in several ways:
- * by function - from the viewpoint of cavers, farmers, traders, residents, etc. This is how most of the chapters are arranged;
 - * by geography - the impact of several chapters' general proposals upon any one district; upon the area as a whole; and specific proposals for localities;
 - * by administrative intent - what form of action the Counties seek to adopt in implementing their proposals, is this likely to be effective, etc.

Landscape: The Counties seek "to protect the diverse character and quality of the Mendip landscape and important features within it". They note however that "much of the attraction of the Mendip landscape derives from charac-

teristic small features, such as the stone walls, shelter belts, barrows and rock outcrops which equally warrant protection so far as possible, though in many cases this is outside the formal planning process". The 'landscape' extends to features such as:
* advertising (guidance on acceptable standards of ads "will only succeed if widely supported by local business interests" - the counties are not proposing to use their statutory powers to make Mendip Hills an area of 'Special Advertisement Control' except perhaps in one or two places - Cheddar Gorge by inference elsewhere in the draft Plan)
* derelict land and eyesores (the Charterhouse Manor area is proposed for scheduling as an "untidy haulage site, intrusive advertising boards on roadside, fallen tree etc"). In such places landowners will be "encouraged" to tidy things up, "in some cases positive help will be required".

Archaeology: Mendip contains the biggest concentration of sites in Avon and Somerset, largely because of the lack of intensive cultivation. Protection and conservation of sites is sought; the draft Plan notes that many field monuments have no legal protection, and that modern technology and financial incentives assist the farmer to cultivate land previously left to dairying or moorland. It is "crucial" to the aims of the Plan that "farmers also appreciate the archaeological value of non-scheduled sites". The Plan proposes to encourage farmers to consult the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries & Food (MAFF) "if they intend beginning potentially damaging operations". The Counties will "monitor" changes to the pattern of archaeological sites through agricultural operations, and seek voluntary agreements with farmers to conserve sites. Under Section 24 of the 1979 Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act, local authorities may provide grant aid farmers to help them in entering agreements. Avon and Somerset might use this scheme, against criteria such as archaeological importance of its own type, the importance of other types of remains, state of preservation, physical relationship to other sites, the likely effects if nothing were done, and the desirability of access by the public. "In some cases it

may be impractical to seek the conservation of particular sites".

Many archaeological sites on the Mendips are visited just because they happen to be in attractive open country", says the draft Plan. They are vulnerable to human erosion and some remedial action may be needed. Large numbers of visitors also increase the risk of vandalism. There is a need for wider understanding and appreciation of sites, and to cater for established general interest. The counties propose to design and implement "management schemes" for selected sites, at Priddy and Charterhouse. These would embrace, at Charterhouse, upper Velvet Bottom, the lower part of Blackmoor, Netherwood, the Rakes and the Roman town. At Priddy, the Mineries' area north of "Priddy Pool" (including much of Malcolm Cotter's and Don Searle's land), North Hill, Priddy Nine Barrows and Priddy Circles would be within the defined area. Public access would, according to the Counties, depend on voluntary agreements being drawn up between landowner and local authority. Detailed agreements would need to cover measures to safeguard adjoining land uses, car parking, area information by means of display panels, leaflets etc, and waymarked paths, circular trails, gates, stiles. The two sites would

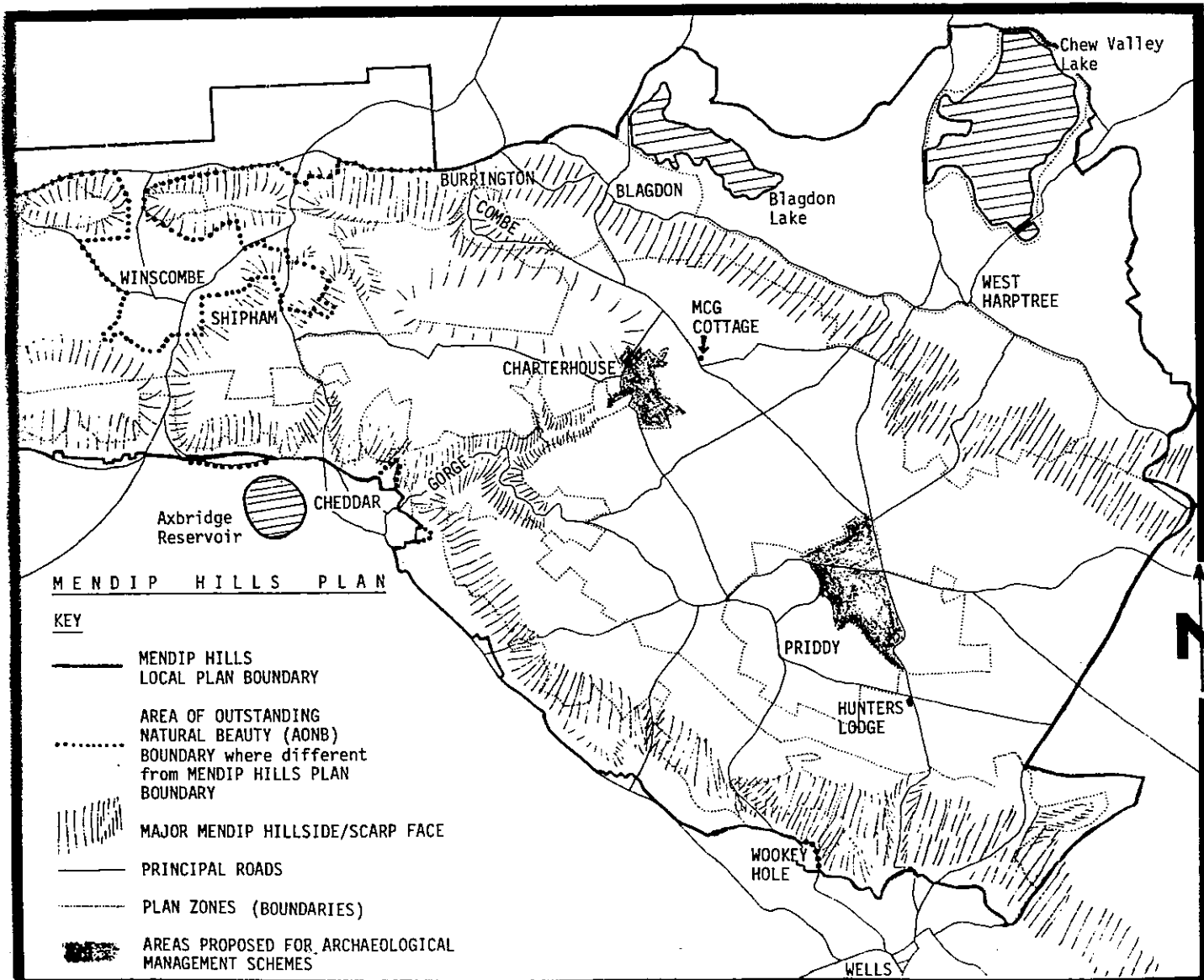
"accommodate present demand"; "if demand increases then it may be necessary to add to these later in the Plan period".

Listed buildings, and town and village conservation areas are also discussed in the Plan. "Enhancement schemes" and better information are proposed.

Agriculture: Natural conditions suit pasture on Mendip, except on the southern fringes, but the Counties have observed long term trends towards mixed and arable farming, and towards fewer farm units managed intensively. "In the longer term these changes would have an effect upon the character of the AONB and probably the best way of safeguarding its natural beauty is to ensure that representative areas of typical Mendip landscapes are retained and protected". To enable the local authorities to be "more responsive" to local farming opinion, and the farmer "more aware" of other interests, the Counties propose to "maintain close links with the farming community in the Plan area". This is described in more detail - that most agricultural operations are exempt from planning control, that current agencies do not have comprehensive powers, nor sufficient money to pursue management schemes extensively. "The stewardship of our landscape heritage,

therefore, rests very much on the farming community". MAFF, the NFU and the Country Landowners Association have all "stressed their support in principle" for some form of voluntary agreement to safeguard a selection of typical landscape "providing that farming productivity is not unreasonably compromised".

The most noticeable changes are caused by removal of typical man-made or natural features, reclamation of scrub, and construction of large structures:
* Field boundaries:- stone walls are "crucial to the character of parts of Mendip, particularly around Priddy". Hedges are more common on lower land and on western Mendip. The rate of loss is such that between Bleadon and the M5 half of the field boundaries present in 1946 had been removed by 1981.
* Small woods and copses:- many are now neglected or grubbed up for timber. Tree Preservation Orders can be applied but the Counties prefer negotiation and agreement.
* Swallets, shakeholes, caves, small rock outcrops:- typical of limestone areas, but more than a quarter of the mapped shakeholes on Mendip have been filled, for various reasons, "thereby impoverishing the landscape and losing the opportunity of discovering and mapping large cave systems. Local caving organisations would be willing to com-



ment on proposals for filling".

- * Field monuments:- already noted under archaeology; only about half of Mendip sites are defined as Ancient Monuments.
- * Gruffy ground:- a distinctive feature of Mendip, and from the farmer's viewpoint of small agricultural potential.
- * Dew ponds:- many neglected or filled.

The Plan argues that retention of these features is "unlikely to be a critical factor in farm viability". Greater education of the farming community, and critical assessment of the sometimes over-estimated economic benefits of removing these features, are advocated. MAFF grant-aid is not comprehensive, with farmers paying three-quarters or so of the cost of work, so removal of all these features is not perilously precipitate. It has however been a slow erosion. The 1981 Wildlife & Countryside Act offers the conservationist some straws to grasp, and the Counties will use their powers to inform MAFF of important landscape features, especially when this applies to moorland or scrub reclamation. A few areas of rough grazing and scrub will be specifically safeguarded. Reclamation of this type of land is most often influenced by the availability of MAFF grants. Voluntary agreements will be sought over new styles of farm buildings, with powers of Direction limited to "certain crit-

ical amenity areas". And safeguarding water supplies is a growing concern on Mendip, because of the greater use of farming nitrates which will enter the limestone aquifer.

Forestry, woodlands, wildlife: Greater management of the remaining ancient woodland on Mendip is advocated, to ensure its healthy regeneration and a permanent habitat for wildlife. Multiple user of woodlands (timber, wildlife and recreation) is preferred. An increase in woodland cover is sought, with further conversion of broadleaf to conifer resisted, and more broadleaf sought. However conversion of limestone grassland to woodland is not favoured. Replanting of Forestry Commission woodlands (in the years 2000-2020) will enable more broadleaf to be provided.

More generally, the Counties support "conservation and enhancement of wildlife resources throughout the Plan area ... the importance of the Mendip countryside as a reservoir of wildlife should not be underestimated". The use of 'island' nature reserves is not an adequate approach. The Counties will support the Nature Conservancy Council in notifying areas of ancient woodland, limestone grassland and rough pasture as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Recreation & tourism: Recreational use should be catered for in an AONB "only where it is consistent with conservation of natural beauty" (this is a Countryside Commission recommendation, supported by the Government). This leads the Counties to propose not only development control but also "active management of visitor pressure through education, encouragement or discouragement of publicity, and by providing appropriate facilities". Any further major recreational development beyond existing 'honeypots' like Cheddar, Wookey Hole and Chew Valley Lake "ought not to be encouraged, except for a country park at the western end of the AONB". Otherwise there would be problems with landscape conservation and road traffic. However Mendip will remain popular as a destination for day trips, though it is "not capable of accommodating many more visitors at peak times than at present". "The sports for which Mendip caters... are also likely to remain popular". Objectives are therefore to:

- * maintain broadly the same visitor levels as exist now, whilst minimising environmental effects
- * provide improved visitor facilities in some areas and reduce pressure in others
- * continue to provide for specialised sports within the Plan area where compatible with the environment.

Caving

WHAT THE PLAN SAYS...

GENERAL:

Mendip is of national importance for caving. The sport is pursued individually and through clubs, and the area can have over 500 cavers on a busy weekend. In general the cave entrances are on private land and local clubs have negotiated access with owners. As the number of cavers using the 30 miles of cave passageway has increased over recent years, problems have arisen. Increasing recreational pressure is leading to erosion of the caves, problems of litter and graffiti, making the sport less enjoyable as well as damaging natural features.

Most caves are freely available to cavers. These 'open' caves can still be acceptable to those cavers who merely wish to be underground. It does mean, however, that caves that still retain their impressive features need to be safeguarded. A controlled access 'leadership' system works well in some caves and this idea could be extended by clubs or landowners. Clearly this is outside planning's statutory sphere of influence, although the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 does enable those caves within SSSI to be given some degree of protection. Proposal WR6 in Chapter 6 should help to ease the problem. It may be possible, through voluntary arrangement and discussion, to secure better use of caves. WR6 allows for closer negotiation with landowners and caving organisations to maintain access but minimise damage to caves.

As the number of cavers has increased, so problems on the surface near the cave entrances, such as litter, damage and dangerous parking, have also increased. Again the solution lies in educating offending cavers, who simply need to pay more heed to the Country Code. The Warden will seek to prevent problems although it is accepted that many caves are a long way from parking areas.

Other problems caused by farming activities and tipping have already been referred to in earlier Chapters and proposals set out there should help to protect the cave systems. Quarrying has resulted in both the discovery and destruction of cave systems on Mendip. However, the application of the Structure Plan policies which normally only permit new workings outside the Plan area, should assist safeguarding in the long term.

ENVIRONMENT: The caves on Mendip present a special problem. Many are important scientifically, either for the features caused by the action of water on the rock, or as winter roosting sites for large numbers of bats; animals given special protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. A number of caves are notified as SSSI and this should help to protect their geological features. Under the Act it is an offence to kill, injure or take any species of bat, to disturb bat roosts or damage roosting sites. It is crucial that remaining bat roosts on Mendip do not suffer too much disturbance in winter. The following measures should help to reduce disturbance by cavers to bat roosts and to geological features.

PROPOSAL WR6: The County Councils will contact the caving organisations to emphasise the importance of Mendip caves as scientific sites and to encourage the organisations to take responsibility for recreational use of particular caves, as unofficial wardens. (A & S)

CAVING AT PRIDDY:

Caves in this Zone, as well as being scientifically important, are heavily used for recreation. Eastwater Cavern and Swildons Hole are particularly popular and cavers and their vehicles are much in evidence around Priddy on many weekends. It is not proposed to take any special measures with regard to caving. The procedure following from SSSI notification in the Wildlife and Countryside Act will help to protect the scientific interest of the caves. In addition Proposal WR6 in Chapter 6, paragraph 6.13 will apply.

CAVING AT BURREINGTON:

Cavers also have a parking problem, most of them parking on the track leading to Goatchurch Cavern. A variety of vehicles park there and cavers use the trees and bushes for drying wet clothes, so the whole area becomes very unsightly. There has been some erosion in the area and in addition pollution of the stream has occurred from waste carbide left behind from caver's lamps. Avon County Council have carried out some minor improvements to the Goatchurch Car Park but a properly designed and constructed scheme is required. In addition the opportunity should be taken of providing information facilities here, geared particularly for cavers. This approach accords with the suggested Countryside Recreation Sites Hierarchy in para. 7.20

PROPOSAL BC7: THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES WILL SEEK TO IMPROVE PARKING AND INFORMATION FACILITIES IN THE VICINITY OF GOATCHURCH CAVERN IN NEGOTIATION WITH THE CONSERVATORS OF THE COMMONS. (A)

General tourism focusses most on Cheddar Gorge, Wookey Hole and Wells Cathedral. Cheddar Gorge sees over a million visitors a year. The hazard of road traffic mixing with pedestrians along the length of the Gorge, and the poor quality of some of the tourist facilities, cause the Counties much concern and they propose a major independent study to propose solutions. Elsewhere on Mendip, visitor numbers and tourist facilities are much fewer, for example at Burrington, Priddy and Ebbor Gorge. Even so, there are traffic problems at peak visiting periods on narrow lanes, indiscriminate parking on verges, and the numbers of people hazards the character of the AONB. Proposals are:

- * rationalisation of the pattern and treatment of the places people visit
- * careful management of major tourist attractions
- * better information and directions for visitors
- * more efficient use of public rights of way.

"Such arrangements might also allow a modest increase in the general level of recreational level and tourist activity to the benefit of the local economy." The Plan therefore cites a number of places to visit on Mendip, to be "developed and improved" at minimum cost (listed below). According to the Counties, these are near important and attractive places of interest, have good road access, availability of paths and good views. The Plan comments that virtually all the sites were already "used to some extent by visitors. These proposals do not therefore mark a major shift to promote previously unused site", rather "a change of emphasis to encourage the active use of selected sites, thus enabling other more sensitive areas to remain undisturbed. In many cases improvements to on-site information and signposting is all that is required, but elsewhere negotiation to acquire land or rights of access will be necessary". The West Mendip Way cross-country footpath will be revised too, to cross some new or improved

sites. Other selected rights of way will be waymarked to meet popular demand, and the Counties hope in a few cases to negotiate new rights of way.

Caving: relevant sections of the draft Plan are reproduced on page 5 without comment.

Other sports: CLIMBING is focussed on Cheddar Gorge, but has caused damage to wildlife and other SSSI features. Further negotiations with landowners and climbing associations are proposed.

HANG-GLIDING takes place at Crook Peak, Wavering Down and Loxton. Agreements are negotiated between gliding clubs and landowners, and provided rights of way are not hindered then local authorities do not intend to interfere.

HORSE RIDING is popular and is expected to remain so. However many centres rely on public rights of way, moorland and common land which are not in infinite supply and suffer from intensive use by commercial riding firms. New authorisations for stables will only be permitted where there are adequate bridleways or private land.

MOTORCYCLE SCRAMBLING is not liked for its damage to the landscape, but cannot easily be controlled and is legal on some tracks. The Counties propose a carrot and stick: to crack down on illegal riding and secure "acceptable" sites such as disused quarries.

SAILING & WINDSURFING are popular at Axbridge, Blagdon & Chew Valley - it is for Bristol Waterworks to control demand, to respect the needs of wildlife.

STOCK CAR RACING occurs near Tynings Farm, is a local nuisance in various ways, and, since most competitors and spectators come from the built-up areas of Avon, could be better relocated elsewhere. The racing circuit only operates under temporary permissions.

Other functional issues can be listed

briefly. TRANSPORT problems focus on car parking, the lack of public transport, and roads unsuitable for coaches. Coaching routes should be agreed with operators voluntarily; bypasses are proposed for Banwell and Winscombe; more car park sites are suggested. There will be studies and experiments with better public transport. While conversion of redundant buildings may be permitted within severe limitations, NEW BUILDING DEVELOPMENT will be heavily frowned on within the AONB within Somerset except for infill at fringe villages and at some farms (based on proven need). Avon proposes new housing estates at Banwell and Winscombe. QUARRYING will not generally be prevented (by buying off the mineral rights) in the present areas; however new or extended sites will not be favoured within the AONB, and will be permitted instead on two zones on Eastern Mendip.

Zone proposals discuss specific policies for: Winscombe Vale; Mendip southern fringes; Mendip plateau; Chew lowlands; Mendip northern slopes; Mendip southern slopes; Bleadon Hills; Blackdown; Burrington Combe; Cheddar Gorge; Charterhouse; Priddy; Ebbor and Wookey; Chew Valley Lake; and various quarries. There are proposals for additions to the AONB: largely open land between the current boundary and the built-up parts of villages; and the whole of Winscombe Vale south of Sandford Hill (except the village itself) which has been a major omission till now. Proposals for AONB deletions generally embrace those fringe villages cut in two by the current AONB line following the main road.

Finally, it is worth repeating a fact which should have become obvious during this summary - that the administrative status of an AONB does not automatically apply any new statutory system of planning control, as does apply in National Parks. The primary purpose of an AONB is "to conserve natural beauty". Without formal planning processes to match, this can only be achieved with a great deal of local co-operation.

Proposed Range of Countryside Recreation Sites

(Ω New, or * Improved Sites)

1) Major Commercial Attractions with parking, catering toilet facilities, and information and displays:

* Cheddar Gorge	Grid Ref	463	538
Wookey Hole		532	478

2) Country Parks:

Ω Western End of Mendip Hills

3) Picnic sites with parking, toilets and information boards etc:

* Axbridge bypass		424	548
* Burrington 'Rock of Ages'		477	588
Chew Valley Lake		573	614

4) Picnic sites with parking and information boards:

* Cheddar Gorge, top end		493	533
* Priddy Pools, Stock Hill		548	514

5) Parking areas with information boards:

Ω Banwell, Bridewell Lane		379	584
* Blagdon, above Street End		498	585
* Bleadon Hill		352	576

* Burrington 'Goatchurch' 477 585

* Burrington Ham 489 582

Charterhouse 505 557

Chew Valley Lake, Herons Green 555 594

Chew Valley Lake, Herriotts Bridge 572 582

* Crook Peak, Wavering Down 393 552

* Deer Leap, Ebbor 519 493

Ω Dolebury/Rowberrow 451 584

Ω East Harptree Woods 559 542

Ebbor Gorge 521 485

* Winscombe Hill 422 560

6) Signposted Circular Walks:

* Banwell/Christon

* Burrington

* Charterhouse

* Dolebury

* East Harptree

* Priddy

Copies of the draft Mendip Hills Local Plan written statement and maps can be obtained from the Planning Department, County Hall, Taunton, Somerset TA1 4DY; price £5. There is a free summary leaflet available. Jonathan Roberts is a member of the Mendip Caving Group committee, and is a council member of the Council for National Parks where he represents the National Caving Association.

The BOB SPELEO Column

SEMPER UBI SUB-UBI

We didn't see any BEC members exceeding in the 26-mile London marathon this year, nor did the Wessex get to the tape first. So the MCG is pleased to have two creditable times to record: Roy Kempston at 3 hours 42 minutes, and Geoff Barton at 4 hours 50 minutes.

HUNTERS' HATCH

Not content with this achievement, the following weekend Captain Roy was so desperate for a beer or five that he arrived at the Hunters' bar just one hour and twenty-four minutes after leaving Camberley.

OLD WINOS' TALES

Certainly our drinking prowess is on the up (is this inversely correlated with caving?) The MCG Scottish meet, reported on extensively last month, drank the Old Inn at Carbost out of Talisker, though it is only 100 yards from the distillery. Next step is presumably to take on the Mawson Arms at London Pride, even if it may be connected by pipeline to the adjoining brewery.

WIVES' TALES

Overhead in the cottage, June W. to Linda S...
"I'll tell you what Jennifer and me have decided to do. We'll go along to Swildons to see Pat and David disappear - I like that feeling when the men disappear - and then we'll go over to the Queen Vic and have a Coca Cola or so."

YORKSHIRE POST

30.4.84

These old pits have brought continual misery and grief, as well as expensive coal. The world will be better without them. Man was not created to crawl under the earth: the fewer who have to do it: the better.

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL YORKSHIRE DALES NATIONAL PARK Whernside Cave and Fell Centre DENT, CUMBRIA **MANAGER**

Grade SO 1/2 (£9,060 to £10,539 per annum).
Fixed Term Contract to March 31st, 1987.

This establishment is recognised as the NATIONAL CAVE TRAINING CENTRE but also has a remit to provide courses for other outdoor pursuits. The Manager will be the officer in charge of the Centre and responsible for day-to-day administration. He/she will work closely with the instructing staff to develop and promote Centre facilities. Candidates must have proven administrative experience with a flair for marketing and promotion and a keen interest in outdoor pursuits. Application forms and further details are available from the National Park Officer, Yorebridge House, Bainbridge, Leyburn, North Yorkshire DL8 3BP to whom completed application forms should be returned by May 18th, 1984.

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GAZETTE

CLERICAL ASSISTANT

Up to 30 hours per week.
Scale 1 (£2,191 to £4,020 per annum).
Fixed Term Contract to March 31st, 1987.

Applicants should be adaptable with previous clerical experience, a knowledge of accounts work and good, accurate typing. An interest in outdoor pursuits would be useful.

The hours worked will be by arrangement with the Centre Manager and will involve some weekend duties. Applicants should write in the first instance to: The National Park Officer, Yorebridge House, Bainbridge, Leyburn, North Yorkshire DL8 3BP, giving name, address, age and full details of relevant previous experience.

.... THERE'S MONEY
IN THEM THAR HILLS

Cave-in makes £2,000

A sponsored cave-in has raised over £2,000 to send children from the Penhurst National Children's Home on the adventure of a lifetime.

Mr Fred Nicholls, 38, who went on a diet to take part in the 44-hour potholing trip emerged from the Little Neath River cave in Wales bruised, soaking wet and very relieved.

"It was a fantastic experience, but I don't think I will take it up as a hobby."

Fred, the manager of the Anglia building society at Banbury, and his fellow potholers, Gail Banks, 27 of Bridge Street, Banbury, and Jane Wright, 19 of The Unicorn, Banbury, all caught colds.

"We were wet through and it was freezing cold down there. But we got a warm welcome when we got out. The children from the

home were waiting to greet us," he said.

The trio were raising money for the disabled children to go to the paraplegic games in New York.

With their guide Mr Bernie Jennings from Chacombe, they took reserve rations because the cave is likely to flash flood and maroon potholers over 2,000 feet underground.

Fred of Broughton Road, Banbury, has taken part in numerous charity events, but this was his most hair-raising stunt to date.

"The next event will be something less taxing like sponsored knitting," he said.

Bob Speleo β



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INSTEAD...

OXFORD TIMES

19.4.84

HYWEL MURRELL

on Mendip

MENDIP CAVING lost an early participant in 1984, with the death at 75 of Hywel Murrell, a Vice-President of the Wessex Cave Club. Hywel Murrell was not only a keen caver, he also took considerable care to record his trips and observations in his diaries (how many of us do that, I wonder?) This included much research into Mendip's mining areas, and Jon Roberts was fortunate to correspond with him in 1983, after the publication of the 1982 MCG Journal which included a survey of the Charterhouse Rakes mining area.

We reprint here Hywel's letter, which shows his alert interest in the remains of Mendip mining during the 1930s. His letter provides a further source of historical information on the state of the Rakes in that period. Readers are referred to the maps in the 1982 MCG Journal which locate the various numbered shafts.

"020683:

... I kept a diary from 1925 to the war: unfortunately Vol 4 was destroyed by enemy action during the war so I have information only up to 1938.

I have recorded visits to the Bleak House area several times. In July 1935 I explored the rakes thoroughly finding only one open hole which is probably your number 3 - I have recorded no other holes open on subsequent visits which must imply that all the holes you have recorded have opened up in the last 50 yrs.

In August 1935 we explored mine shafts between Ubley Warren Farm & Bleak House. What is probably yr No 14 was about 35 ft deep. I have recorded what is your No 13 on my map but can find no comment about it. We found two more which are not on your map in the next field to SE of No 13. One of these close to the wall and more or less in line with 13 & 14 was under a heap of stones close to the wall - it was about 25 ft deep with a 15 ft heading to the west which seemed to have followed a vein of mineral. The other against the opposite wall and almost due South of the farm was surrounded with tidy masonry but was blocked up almost to the surface. It is curious that altho we visited the area several times I have not recorded seeing anything resembling the 'Groof Hse'.

Finally, in July 1936 we searched for a mine shaft shewn on the 6.in O.S. map of 1903 as being about 800ft due N of Bleak Hse. We could find no trace of it. The hole you have called the Charnel Shaft was recorded by Platten in 1935 & is shewn on my map. We did not explore it but I believe Platten did.

Yours
Hywel Murrell
Professor."

at work

MOST OF US slough off the mantle of work when we reach Mendip - it is after all one of the virtues of caving that contact with rock, mud and water is not very different whether one is a junior telephone sanitiser or an Executive Vice-President. However, sometimes it is worth taking an interest in other members' work-time activities. The following article is taken from Commercial Motor, with their kind permission:

"WHAT'S ERGONOMICS?" people asked when a commercial-vehicle manufacturer first announced that its new driver's cab incorporated those principles. It meant, they discovered, that the cab had been designed to increase the driver's efficiency by improved comfort and convenience.

The man who coined the word to describe the study of the efficiency of persons in their working environment was a professor of occupational psychology, Kenneth Frank Hywel Murrell, who has died at the age of 75.

He gave the word not only to the language but to the Ergonomics Research Society, of which he was the first honorary secretary in 1949. Tube Investments is credited with the first ergonomics department in the country and Professor Murrell became its director in 1952. Drivers whose workplaces have been converted from rabbit hutches to boudoirs should remember him with gratitude.

The article does not state whether Hywel ever manage to design a comfortable and convenient cave... But then perhaps his experiences underground drove him to care for others' comfort.

Whistling in the dark ?

AN INTERNATIONAL WHISTLE CODE has been proposed by the US National Speleological Society. (NSS News, May 1984). The proposals for harmonisation are:

WHISTLE SIGNAL	CALL	MEANING
1 blast	Stop	Stop all movement until further news
2 blasts	Up	Someone or some item is moving up or needs moving up
3 blasts	Down	Someone or some item is moving down or needs moving down
4 blasts	Rope free	After end of rappel or prusik to indicate that one is off rope
Continuous blast	Help!	Alert. Others must assess matters immediately and aid the person in distress as the situation dictates.

Bob Speleo β



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