

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting will be held at Nordrach Cottage on Saturday 23rd March 1985 at 3.0 pm.

Chairman - Arthur Spain

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the AGM held on 7th April 1984.
3. Officers' reports have been circulated with Newsletter 177 and will be taken as read. Questions and comments are invited.

Secretary	-	Tony Knibbs
Treasurer	-	Mike Lovell
Cottage Warden	-	Paul Merron
Editor	-	Jonathan Roberts
Recorder	-	Ian McKechnie
Meet Secretary	-	Geoff Barton
Tacklemaster	-	Roy Kempston

4. Election of officers for 1985/6.

(a) Nominations will be taken for the post of Editor.

(b) There being no other nominations, the following committee members are returned unopposed :

Secretary	-	Tony Knibbs	Recorder	-	Ian McKechnie
Treasurer	-	Mike Lovell	Meet Secretary	-	Geoff Barton
Cottage Warden	-	Paul Merron	Tacklemaster	-	Roy Kempston
Ordinary Committee Member	-	John Pudduck			

(c) The meeting is asked to ratify the co-option of Mike Lovell as Treasurer.

5. Election of Auditors for 1985/6 - general and MCG Shop accounts.
6. Any other business.
7. Date and venue of next meeting.

REMINDER As usual, a coach has been arranged as transport to the Star Hotel, Wells. It will depart Nordrach Cottage at 7.0 pm and will leave the Star Hotel at 11.45 pm. The fare is £1.00 per person.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS' ANNUAL REPORTS 1984/5

### Hon. Secretary - Tony Knibbs

The past year has been one of steady progress in all aspects within the Group. It is pleasing to see that the pattern of improvements during the past few years is still continuing today. It seems that the only thing we lack is a really good discovery which would benefit the Group and provide something for others to enjoy. Been digging lately ?

And there is certainly no lack of members, with numbers now heading for 125. This figure indicates a point at which a plateau has been reached; the rapid increase seen in the early 1980s has slowed to a point where annual intake more or less balances natural losses in membership. Which reminds me: have YOU attempted your training trip yet, to become a full member ? There's 30 or more probationary members eligible now.

The altered image of the Half-Yearly General Meeting to that of a forum for discussion has worked well. A slight saving of time was apparent, although discussion reflected constructive concern and feelings were freely expressed. The committee enjoyed the ability to relax without the burden of presenting formal reports.

Monthly committee meetings have been well attended during the year, and each one has provided interest.

A considerable amount of time around late summer was devoted to considering our reactions to the proposal for Avon and Somerset County Councils to implement a wide-ranging new strategy plan for Mendip. This threatened to affect caving, amongst other pursuits, and our comments were sent to Somerset's County Planning Office, and advised to the Council of Southern Caving Clubs who are co-ordinating a response from caving clubs. There has so far been no notable reaction from the planning authorities.

Another aspect which was dealt with concerned an extra facility for Group members - establishment of a reciprocal rights arrangement with the South Wales Caving Club. Traditionally, we make regular visits to their HQ at Penwyllt - now we can do so at member's rates and enjoy most of the privileges of members such as using the SWCC library and borrowing tackle. SWCC members will have the same rights at Nordrach Cottage and we look forward to seeing SWCC members as frequent guests.

The new post of Committee Member has been found useful. A new batch of sweatshirts will be on sale probably by the AGM, so watch out for John Pudduck's sales pitch. T-shirts too will be available later in the year.

Resignations are inevitable as time goes by. After three years as Hon. Treasurer, Arthur Spain decided to step down at the turn of the year. Controlling the pennies is the most demanding (rewarding?) of committee tasks, and we extend our hearty thanks to Arthur, together with our good wishes for the future in more rural surroundings. Mike Lovell has been co-opted as Hon. Treasurer; you will be asked to ratify this appointment at the AGM.

Due to career developments, Jonathan Roberts will be resigning from the post of Hon. Editor at the AGM. JR has served on the committee since 1981 when he took on the task of Recorder (after a brief spell as Meet Secretary) and created for us a most useful and well-stocked library. Sincere thanks to Jon whose wry humour will be much missed in committee. The next Editor will find it challenging to maintain the current high standard of production of newsletters.

### Hon. Treasurer 1984 - Arthur Spain

On the whole another good year at least as far as cash flow is concerned: subs were up due of course to the greater number of new members joining the Group. Bank and Post Office interest were up, with cottage guest income nearly £200 more than last year although members' income was slightly down. Sweatshirts continued to sell but the return from these only really offsets the initial expenditure plus a small profit. Our non-exec. committee member surpassed himself after the Autumn shindig and actually passed money over as surplus instead of coming cap in hand for more - wonders will never cease. And lastly on the good news front our very own caving shop made a handsome donation to general funds.

We seem to be roughly holding our own as far as fuel costs are concerned, slightly more for electricity but less for gas and, surprise, surprise NO coal bills at all. Rates of course increased, but moderately; however the cottage capital expenditure was quite high (higher still this year if the extension goes ahead). The committee did spend a little

Hon. Treasurer (1984)  
- Arthur Spain

BALANCE AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 1984

GENERAL PURPOSE FUND	-	CURRENT ACCOUNT	13.66
		DEPOSIT ACCOUNT	1910.91
SPECIAL POST OFFICE ACCOUNT	-	DEPOSIT ACCOUNT	2944.95
			<u>4869.52</u>

Statement of accounts  
for the  
MENDIP CAVING GROUP  
=====

YEAR ENDING 31.12.1984

BANK ACCOUNTS >

<u>BALANCE AS PER</u>		
SPECIAL FUND		2658.33
INTEREST ON SPECIAL FUND		286.62
GENERAL FUND		1924.57
PETTY CASH		5.45
		<u>4874.97</u>
UNPRESENTED CHEQUE		- 107.91
		<u>4767.06</u>

YEAR'S INCOME  
& EXPENDITURE

AUDITED BY -  
DATE -

*M J Llewellyn* *Spain*  
*14.2.85* *14.2.85*

1983	INCOME		1983	EXPENDITURE	
3304.59	CASH IN BANK 31.12.83	819.01		<u>COTTAGE</u>	
4.44	CASH IN HAND 31.12.83	10.40	113.05	GAS	49.40
94.62	BANK INTEREST	81.07	552.27	ELECTRICITY	550.67
865.00	SUBS 1984	1020.00	380.85	INSURANCE (1984 ONLY)	250.75
	SUBS 1985	30.00	219.81	ORDINARY RATES (D.D)	251.21
996.00	COTT. FEES (MEMBERS) 1984	932.50	61.75	WATER RATES + WESSEX WATER	64.43
945.50	COTT. FEES (GUESTS) 1984	1133.20	18.40	RUFUSE COLLECTION	19.30
	COTT. FEES 1983	113.00	69.03	HOUSEHOLD ITEMS	51.73
330.00	SWEATSHIRTS	180.00	103.52	MISC. COTT. EXPENDITURE	428.74
29.09	DONATIONS	40.48			<u>1666.23</u>
497.00	ANNUAL DINNER	471.00		<u>COMMITTEE</u>	
70.00	COACH COLLECTION (ANN. DIN)	12.00	24.25	COTTAGE WARDEN	38.05
43.15	C.C.C PERMITS	30.55	20.00	SECRETARY	25.00
	2001 CLUB	6.00	27.99	TREASURER	33.33
	1/2 YEAR DANCE PROCESS.	84.00	42.17	RECORDER	79.76
	CAVING SHOP DONATION	100.00	250.92	EDITOR	370.83
	MISC. INCOME	37.41			<u>546.97</u>
		<u>5100.62</u>	631.07	<u>MISCELLANEOUS</u>	
	CHEQUE UNPRESENTED	107.91	586.40	TACKLE	200.96
			390.22	ANNUAL DINNER	537.50
		<u>5208.53</u>	29.50	LIBRARY	254.33
	UNACCOUNTED INCOME	128.85	102.26	SUBS TO OTHER CLUBS	66.50
				MISC. EXPENDITURE	103.44
				COTT. WARDENS FLOAT	11.95
				RECORDERS FLOAT	19.48
					<u>1194.16</u>
			829.41	CASH IN BANK	1924.57
			10.40	PETTY CASH	5.45
					<u>5337.38</u>
	TOTAL	<u>5337.38</u>			

*Spain*  
*14.2.85*

AUDITED BY

*M J Llewellyn*  
*14.2.85*

more, blame the national inflation figure if you like. As you can see, the tackle expenditure is significantly lower due no doubt to the spend-out in 1983 which holds us in good stead. Somehow the Annual Dinner made a loss but this is amply made up by the fact that approx. £130 of income is unaccounted for despite the auditors' and ex-Treasurer's efforts to trace it; better than a loss though.

1985 could be a heavy year with the cottage extension and the Journal, but we have sufficient funds to cope with the demand, in the Post Office account, plus of course the subs. were increased this year to hedge against future increased capital expenditure (and inflation). Don't let us become complacent, however, just because we are a well-off Group on paper. This could soon disappear without means to offset the outgoings. So please read again the blurb that came out with your February newsletter concerning the Sports Bond, it's money for the Group. Plus the old chestnut - covenants. It's up to you folks.

Don't forget we have a new Treasurer: please don't overwork the poor chap like you did me.

Hon. Meet Secretary - Geoff Barton

Those of you who have looked inside their membership cards will have seen the meet programme. The formula is much the same as before - two trips per month with a mixture of home and away. It is up to you to ask me if you want to see any change in the formula or any specific caves. Now the good news, we have another booking for Otter Hole on 1 September. To give non-committee members a chance please submit all names to me for a lottery to be held on 6 July.

Hon. Editor - Jonathan Roberts

This is the seventh issue since last year's AGM, the same rate of production as the previous year. The newsletters haven't emerged as regularly as you, or I, wanted; however I hope the attempts to improve their style, layout and general attractiveness have been noticed. I think we now have one of the better caving publications in the UK.

From personal experience it always seems as though the Editor writes 50% of the material, but, even if true, this would do less than justice to the many and varied contributions made by members. Especial thanks are deserved, I am sure you will agree, by Mike Haselden, Alan Dougherty, Tony Knibbs and Ian McKechnie for their extensive writings, and to the growing number of photographic contributors. Thanks too to Ian for producing the 30th Anniversary Journal and Newsletter 168, to complete last year's commitments.

One result of the larger membership and newsletter circulation is that it is no longer possible to rely on employers' generosity to contribute to copying and postage costs. Nevertheless a newsletter is vital to keep the Group together and in touch with events and activities: a good newsletter is well worth paying for. We are nearly at the point where it may be cheaper to have the newsletter printed rather than photocopied; printing would also do better justice to the photographs and enable additional copies to be produced at minimal cost.

Please give the new Editor your full support and ply her/him with plenty of news items and other scribbles - it takes dedication to produce an attractive, informed and error-free publication, even occasionally. The pleasure comes in seeing the Mawson Arms quiet on a Thursday evening, as members devour the latest issue...

Hon. Recorder - Ian McKechnie

During the year, the library has grown by about 150 assorted books and other publications. We regularly send our newsletter to about 35 other clubs, and receive something in return from most of these. The "library list" is regularly updated, and new additions are normally left on display for a month or two before they disappear onto the shelves. A list of new publications, with a summary of contents, is also given to the Editor, and I hope in due course it will appear in the newsletter.

"Floppy" publications such as clubs newsletters are now being filed in pamphlet boxes to make access easier and reduce the risk of damage; this activity is continuing. The present library shelving is almost full, and some additional shelving is being added. Space is limited, but an urgent need for a library extension is not envisaged just yet.

Members seem to be making good use of the library; many different names appear in the loan book, and there is usually someone in the "reference library" during a club weekend. We now have our newspaper cuttings collection filed in scrap-books in the library. We also

have a growing photographic collection, which is currently undergoing the same treatment. Anyone with newspaper cuttings or spare photographs, old or new, may send them to me for "sticking in". Particularly valuable is anything directly relevant to the MCG; we should keep our historical records complete, and if you have anything you don't want to part with, I will be glad to copy it.

Our archives also now include an 8mm cine film, a fairly extensive set of 35mm slides, and a growing collection of caving videos (VHS). Anyone wishing to add to or borrow any of these, please contact me. Incidentally, we also have a 35mm projector at the cottage if you should want to show your slides down on Mendip.

Hon. Cottage Warden - Paul Merron

At last year's AGM a suggestion was made by Pat Walsh that the Group may be better off paying a contractor to do some of the important work on the cottage. I was determined not to have to pay someone to do work that we could easily do ourselves. The window frames and doors were the most urgent jobs, but in general, Pat was concerned that the fabric of the building was preserved and, to a large extent, we have achieved that and without paying outside contractors.

That doesn't mean we can all sit back and let things go now. Last year, I published a list of jobs that needed doing. I am glad to say that most of those jobs are now complete, but not all of them - and some more have now crept up. I will be publishing a new list soon and hope that I get as good a response this year, as last.

Most notable of the jobs that were completed last year were, of course, the fence (washing line!), the roof over the back door, the painting of woodwork, a third shower head, and the list goes on. We all owe our thanks to the members who have carried out these tasks.

All in all, the cottage is in good condition but there are still a few jobs to be done, and, of course, we must all keep an eye on things. 1985 I hope will be the year to pay some attention to the decorative order of the interior of the cottage: the lounge in particular is in need of a coat of paint.

Having taken a quick glance at a recent balance sheet, it appears that the revenue for guest bookings for the cottage has risen this year from the 1983 total, and the revenue from members has stayed about the same as 1983. As there was an increase in cottage fees last year, it appears that guest bookings have certainly stayed the same, if not risen slightly, but members' bookings are certainly down???

Finally, things are beginning to happen with the extension, at long last, and I shall be looking for some volunteers to help with the construction soon.

I thank you all for your support and help in 84 and look forward to a good 85.

Supplementary note by Jonathan Roberts:

Paul is quite right to believe there was a decline in members' usage of the cottage in 1984. The following table shows bed-nights paid for at the cottage in its first three full years, allowing for cottage fees paid late and assuming that a quarter of the fees paid in 1984 were at the old charges:

YEAR	BED-NIGHTS PAID FOR (estimate)			% OCCUPANCY*
	MEMBERS	GUESTS	TOTAL	
1982	866	743	1609	49
1983	1008	689	1697	51
1984+	792	675	1467	44

+ does not allow for any late payment of 1984's fees in 1985

\* assumes weekend+bank holiday use only (full house = approx. 3300 bed-nights a year)

TACKLEMASTER'S REPORT 1984/5

With no summer expedition this year the tackle has not had as much use as last year, although the Majorca trip did take SRT gear to foreign climates. At the start of 1984 the group had 540 ft of ladder, 1450 ft of life-line, 24 belays, 4 spreaders, 3 pulleys, 500 m of SRT rope, bolting kit and a large amount of hangers, anchors and M-Rs. To this has been added 5 long and 4 short rope protectors, 5 spreaders and a SUUNTO Compass and SUUNTO clinometer for survey work by the group.

During the year the group has 'lost' 55 ft of ladder, 50 ft of life-line, 2 belays and a spreader, (I in fact had a 15 ft ladder and a belay 'removed' from the 10 ft in Longwood). The ladders were all individually marked in November and another 15 ft ladder had gone by then, which leaves a 25 ft ladder missing - where are you No. 13?

The ladder marking should make booking-out easier, as the number can be quoted, but please tell me if you lose any tackle so that it can be replaced. The 4 helmets for use by guests have been converted to Petzl type, so a 4½ volt battery is now required (the shop now stocks the Duracell version).

Please note that the ring markings (one ring = 50 ft for life-line and one ring = 20 m for SRT) refer to the length when the rope was cut up, so allow for shrinkage when using!

R A KEMPSTON 6 MARCH 1985

*Roy Kempston*

Tel: Ashford 52643

249 Feltham Hill Road  
Ashford  
Middx TW15 1LU

Dear Member,

You will be aware that discussions have been taking place with Mr M Brown concerning the purchase of a part of his field which adjoins our present site. The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the latest situation and to ask for your opinion as guidance to making a decision.

The decision to set aside £1,000 for additional land purchase was taken at an AGM two years ago. The major advantages of having some extra land are:

- \* to provide a camping area
- \* to increase car parking facilities
- \* to allow for possible building development.

To acquire land on the NW side of the cottage would allow better use of the area between the building and the existing fence (which would be removed).

The accompanying diagram shows the present site and the area which is now being offered for sale by Mr Brown. It also shows a larger area which has been discussed but not accepted by him.

The asking price is £1,000 for approximately 184 square yards or 1/26th acre. Considering that agricultural land on Mendip is currently priced at £1,000 - £2,000 per acre, the price asked equates to £26,000 per acre.

Our response has been to say that we would consider the value to the group of this plot to be about £500 - £600, exclusive of legal fees. We have confirmed that we can go to £1,000 for land purchase but that a larger plot must be available for this price.

Additional to the stated price, a condition of purchase is that the group constructs a gateway in the existing drystone wall and erects a gate to be supplied by Mr Brown. We would also be responsible for constructing a suitable (for tractors) drive-in surface between the gate and the road, supplying material as required.

The present negotiating position is that we are considering the offer package as stated - plot size, price and conditions of purchase.

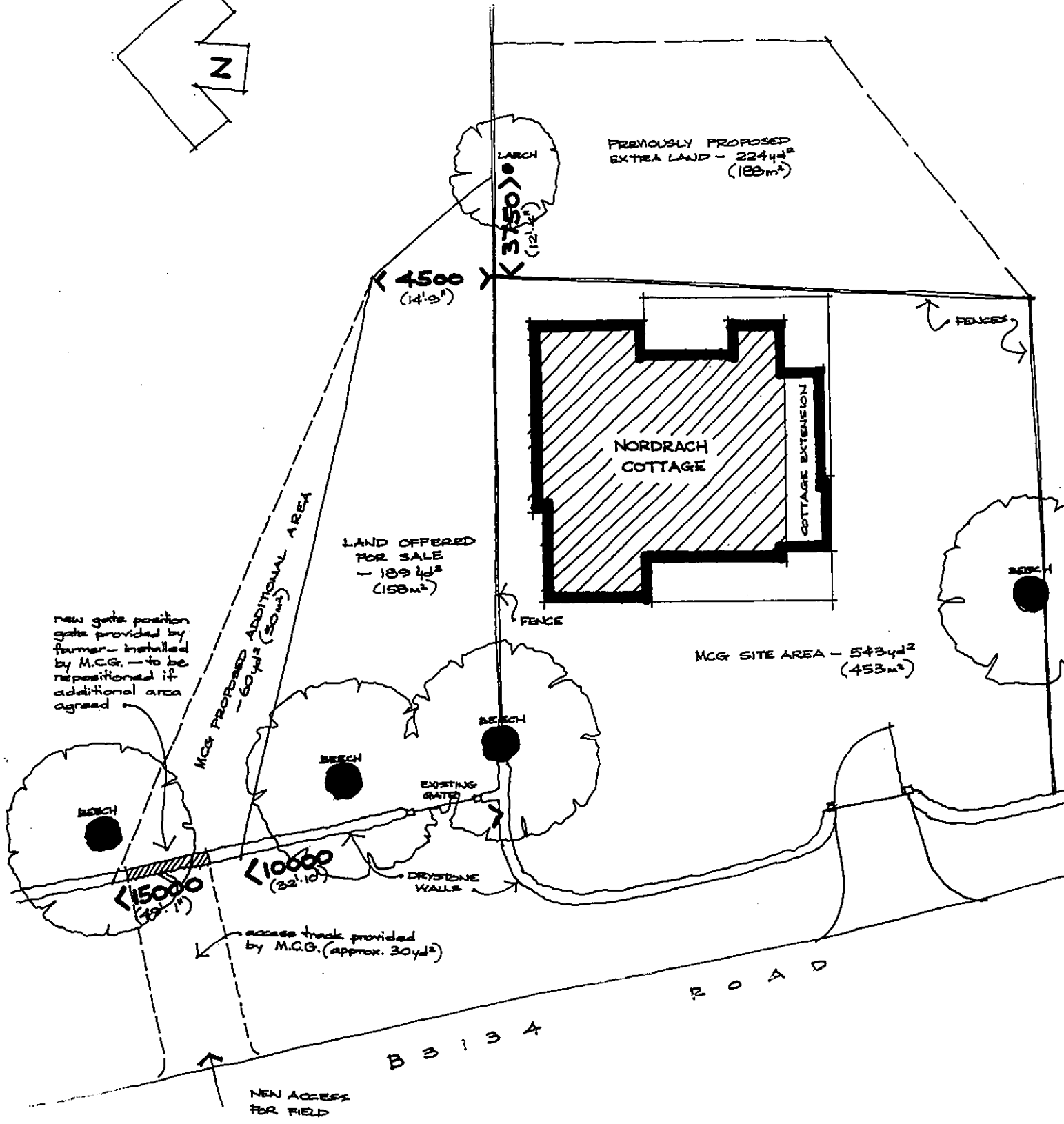
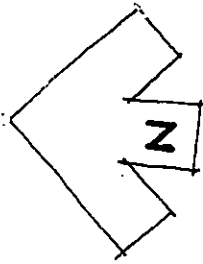
We urgently need to hear the views of members in order to reach a consensus agreement as to whether we:

- (i) accept the package as offered
  - (ii) accept the size and price but reject the conditions
  - (iii) request a larger plot for the same price
- or (iv) offer a lower price for the offered plot

Please respond as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

M.O. Cotter.



LAND AQUISITION - NORDRACH COTTAGE  
SITE LAYOUT - 1:200 APPROX.



249 Feltham Hill Road  
Ashford  
Middlesex  
TW15 1LU

Tel: ASHFORD 52643

Dear Member

This is a Bulletin regarding the proposed land purchase.

#### BACKGROUND

Since the start of our ownership of the present site many members thought it of minimal size and wished it was larger. Towards the end of our first build it was proposed that we purchase an additional portion of land at the back of the cottage and a sum of £500 was mentioned. I believe tentative enquiries then indicated that the owner; Jim Fry, would be willing to sell. Because of building and financial commitments the matter rested. About 2 years ago, after Jim's death, Tony Knibbs made a purchase approach to Mrs Fry but was told that because the land was held in trust no sale could be made. During the present consultation a number of members asked if the position had changed. A conversation made with Mary Fry on 6 July revealed that circumstances remain as before.

At the 1984 AGM a number of members asked about land acquisition and were told of the aforementioned enquiry. I then suggested that since the land adjacent to the cottage had just passed on to Max Brown an approach there could be successful. This remark was followed by the comment that I could have a go but should not expect much as past efforts with Harold Brown had failed.

#### THE PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS

The approach of the 1985 AGM proved a spur to action and a visit was made to Hazel Waren Farm on 16 February during that exceptionally cold spell. Max Brown was told that we would like to extend our area. In reply Mr Brown made sympathetic comments saying that he had noticed how cramped we were but he was uncertain of a shape to part with. A triangular portion was suggested which would least interfere with him. He decided to think matters over. The following week-end the offer of a triangular portion of land was made which was disappointingly small. I had hoped for  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre. A letter was subsequently sent pointing out that the areas was too small. On the AGM week-end another offer was made and this was shown on the plan you received.

On 6 July, a glorious warm sunny day, again accompanied by Victoria, another visit was made to Max Brown. A long discussion ensued followed by a fresh visit to the site, at which an offer to extend the small boundary to 6 metres was made. The small triangular portion was withdrawn. I gained an impression that if this deal goes through we may be able to have more later - on more favourable terms if we are not under pressure. Max Brown doesn't want us to have enough to put up a new house and make a vast profit - at his loss as it were! (a fear he expressed). Also he can get more by selling in 2 lots.

Your Answers. None indicated that they didn't want more land. Several members expressed a preference for land behind the cottage but only one amongst them had a strong preference. A number of members thought we should also buy behind the cottage if it comes up. Everyone wanted a larger plot than that offered and some said it would be worth paying more for. However if no more could be obtained you indicated about 2:1 in favour of purchase, on the plan as sent. (29 in favour 12 against; after the size increase a further 5 in favour 1 against). Very few responses received since 1 July.

#### DISCUSSION

A lot of you asked what I thought and I'm glad I didn't have to answer at the time. On the one hand we have the option to purchase a useful but small portion of ground and on the other hand the price is much higher for the size than I hoped it would be. Had I not been involved in negotiations I would probably have been against purchase as I was against paying £500 for the plot behind the cottage. This feeling prompted harder bargaining.

I have been swayed by your opinions and tried to act on them. Several people strongly advocated a more rectangular shape and the suggestion that 6m along the short boundary would be better than 15m along the road was the key to an improved offer. It was also pointed out that none else can sell to us what we want - there can be no shopping around! If we gain ownership of part of the verge the plot becomes much larger and in any case we will have its use.

Ron Saunders has kindly offered to do the conveyancing so acquisition costs would be low. We could even end up with the residue of interest.

Lastly I am persuaded by the fact that we have let many opportunities for property purchase go by in the past because we thought we were asked to pay too much.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Proceed with the purchase for the sum of £1,000.

Thanks for your guidance  
Malcolm O. Cotter