

# MCG NEWS

July 1985 No 179

Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group



## SAN MIGUEL ANYONE?

Neil Hutchinson

As you may, or may not know, last Christmas five MCG members spent two weeks caving in the Island of Majorca.

Reaction within the club before our departure varied from curious scepticism, to sheer disbelief that there were any caves on Majorca at all. In the event, however, this proved to be probably the most successful MCG foreign trip for many years, with a huge amount of information gathered and many useful contacts made.

The team consisted of Adrian Duckett, Ian Parry, Andy Bear, Martin Rowe and Neil Hutchinson. All travel arrangements were made through Thomas Cook. This included flight to Majorca, a rather plush and well situated villa for two weeks in the village of Cala San Vicente (just down the coast from Puerto Pollenca) and a free hire car for the duration of our stay.

The two main caving regions we were concerned with were the Pollenca area, and the Plateau of Escorca, each containing some of the biggest and deepest caves on the island. Both these areas are very rugged and mountainous, and a combination of treacherous fractured limestone and thick gorse-like vegetation, coupled with a total lack of relation between cave entrances and surface features, made locating the caves themselves both difficult and tiring.

These difficulties led to life following a routine of one day spent finding an entrance and the next day spent caving. We descended eight caves during our stay,

and these form a fairly typical cross-section of Majorcan caves in general. None are particularly long, though many are quite deep, (with 120m pitches by no means uncommon!) and virtually all are dry and very warm. Here is a brief description of the caves we visited.

### Avenc de la Pla de Bassas

A predominantly vertical cave, with a series of six relatively roomy pitches forming a total descent of 148m down to a final sump. The cave has a large water catchment area and judging by the amount of vegetation wedged in the roof would respond very quickly to heavy rain.

### Cava Campana

A huge and very impressive cave consisting primarily of a number of enormous and well decorated chambers linked by steep, inclined sections. The cave ends in a very large chamber with beautiful pools of crystal clear water, and a number of ways on down a smaller but unstabbed lower series of collapsed passage.

### Cava Cornavaques

This cave took two days to find but was well worth the effort. It is situated high up on the mountainside and again almost entirely horizontal in nature. A couple of steep slippery climbs lead to walking-sized passages and chambers, containing some spectacular straws.

# DATE

Saturday's  
date shown

Nordrach and Mendip  
& cottage bookings

Other regions

July 6	Members' weekend. Eastwater Cavern (Mike Bygrave). Draw for Otter Hole trip.	.....
July 13	Adrian Duckett party. Yorkshire Ramblers Club. Full - avoid!	.....
July 20	Ian McKechnie (&12)	.....
July 27	James Davies (12)	.....
Aug 3	CVBSC (Phil Ingold & 8)	.....
Aug 10	.....	.....
Aug 17	Members' weekend. Roy (&5)	.....
Aug 24 (bank hol)	.....	Lancaster Hole (Adrian Duckett) Yorkshire.
Aug 31	Members' weekend.	.....
Sept 7	Members' weekend. St Cuthberts (John Miriam).	.....
Sept 14	Phil Ingold (&4). Hurstpierpoint Ventures (8) (Steve Taylor)	.....
Sept 21	Members' weekend.	.....
Sept 28	Hurstpierpoint Ventures (8)	Little Neath (Denise Samuel) South Wales.
Oct 5	Half-annual meeting. Barn Dance. Shatter Cave (Pat Walsh)	.....



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Avenc D'Escorla

Situated on the Escorca plateau. An inconspicuous vegetated gully forms the top of the 116m free-hanging entrance pitch. The second pitch of 30m lands in a boulder-strewn chamber with no obvious way on. A spectacular shaft which, like many other vertical caves on the Island looks as though it has the potential to go much deeper

shafts like this on the Island. This particular one is situated right on the path up to puis de Masenella, the second highest point on the island. This one is quite entertaining for anyone at the bottom of the shaft as they have to play 'dodge the falling boulder' both those falling out of the roof and those chucked down the hole by passing German tourists. As such a cave best avoided !.

Cava Cal Peso

Another horizontal system, not too long, but again with a lower series of passages largely blocked with loose fill + mud.

Cava Coma Freda

A small cave, having a 30m entrance pitch and short slope down into a small chamber containing some superb formations, including hundreds of cave pearls.

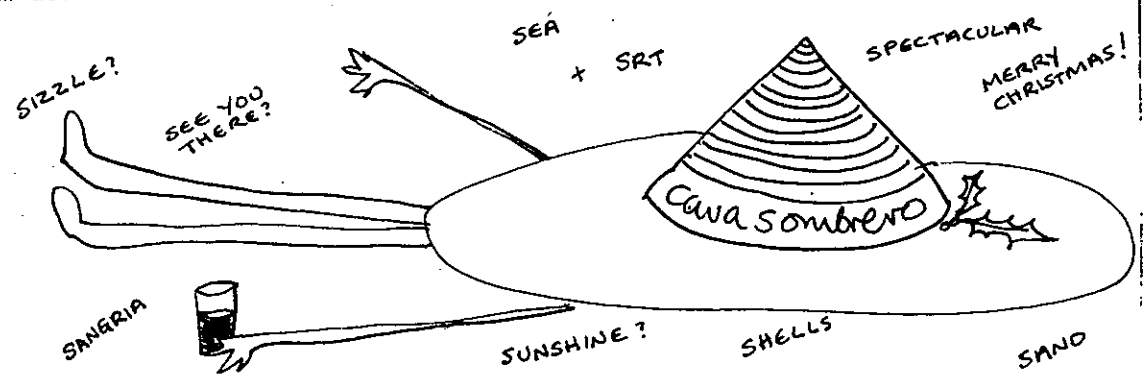
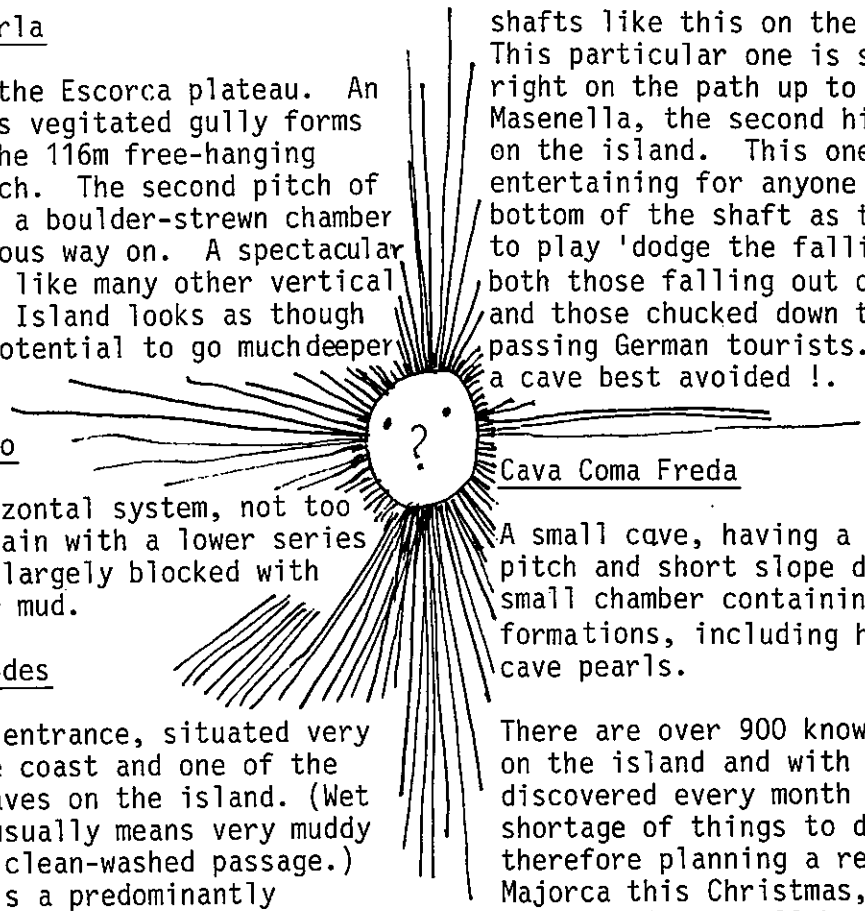
Cava des Rhodes

A low-level entrance, situated very close to the coast and one of the few 'wet' caves on the island. (Wet in Majorca usually means very muddy rather than clean-washed passage.) Again this is a predominantly horizontal cave, with a few short drops.

There are over 900 known entrances on the island and with new caves being discovered every month there is no shortage of things to do. We are therefore planning a return trip to Majorca this Christmas, with provisional dates of 15th to 29th of December. So if the idea of good caving in a warm climate with spectacular scenery and lots of San Miguel appeals to you, contact Adrian Duckett or Neil Hutchinson for further information.

Avenc Comi

A blind shaft blocked by boulders 50m down. There are many surface



RESCUE DRAW

Sorry no-one from MCG actually won; better luck next time!

The draw was held on 25th May at SWCC H.Q. - most of the winners were local valley people, one or two were cavers.

I'm sure that you would all like to know what the fortified elephant was. Well, it was a cuddly toy with

a bottle of vodka strapped to it!

Anyway, many thanks to all of you who brought tickets. The total raised (by 1st June, 1985) was £977. It is hoped to use the money to buy a compressor.

On behalf of the SWCRO I would like to thank you all again for your contributions.

Denise.

# MCG doings

## FROM A SQUEEZE TO THE CHURCH

To all our friends in the MCG, many thanks for the wedding gifts-- a carriage clock and photograph frame. I now have no excuse for arriving late at committee meetings and I have so far managed to keep the frame exclusively for caving photos. Our 'delayed honeymoon' took us to Scotland, and to fly the flag for the MCG we paid a visit to Sinoo Cave, Durness. This is large but short, and not very sporting (Johnson and Boswell visited it!) but worth a visit. Full report and photograph on postcard at the cottage! Thanks again - Ian & Penny McKechnie.

## SEND IT BACK! (please?)

If you were one of the 60 people Alan Mellon wrote to recently about covenants, this message is for you! Thank you very much to the 30 or so who sent back an answer in the sae provided so promptly. Could the other 30 please reply to Alan in the sae - even if you don't want to do a covenant. Then at least he'll know he can stop chasing you. Thanks a lot.

## GET AHEAD...GET A HAT...

Roy Kempston reports that one of the club helmets with a Petzel box on the back is missing from the tackle store at the cottage. If you have accidentally taken it home, could you please let Roy know?

If you lose any tackle at the cottage it may be covered by the club's insurance. If you think it has been stolen, report it to the police at once. It is also vital to make any insurance claim promptly, whether the tackle has been lost or stolen. If you notice tackle is missing,

please phone Roy as soon as possible so that he can decide whether to make a claim.

## MCG GETS CHEAP RATE AT NPC

Northern Pennine Club has agreed that MCG members can stay at the NPC cottage paying members' rates!

## Bob Speleo $\beta$



## COTTAGE BOOKINGS

There has been some confusion over cottage bookings in the last few months, and we have had one weekend where members found there were no bunks available. In an effort to prevent this happening again, I am re-stating the rules and guidelines on cottage bookings as laid out in our club constitution:

**MEMBERS.** Members may stay at the cottage without prior notice, and book themselves into any available bunk.

**MEMBERS' GUESTS.** are limited to 2 per member, and may be booked into any available bunk at the cottage without prior notice.

**MEMBERS' GUEST PARTIES** are groups of non members over 2 and up to a max of 12 that have been invited to stay at the cottage by a member. These parties must book with the cottage warden, the warden will make and keep a copy of the booking and see that the booking is entered in the book at the cottage.

MEMBERS have priority over members' guests.

GUEST PARTIES are groups of non members to a max of 12 who wish to stay at the cottage with the object of caving. They must book with the cottage warden who will make a copy of the booking and see that it is entered into the cottage book.

I now have at home, a folder full of booking sheets in which I will make all the bookings of large parties. These bookings will be duplicated in the book at the cottage. Bookings of large parties of any description must be made through the cottage warden.

There will be approx 2 weekends per month available for guest bookings, the remainder will be members' weekends. Usually the 1st and 3rd weekends in each month, with the exception of Easter, which will be for members and close family only.

There it is folks! If we stick to these rules then things should run smoothly. I must stress that we have to keep guest bookings and parties to a max of 12. It is an advantage to have guests, as it brings in money, but not at the cost of members being without bunks. Also, all bookings of large parties must be made through the cottage warden and not just entered into the book at the cottage.

Paul Merron

#### INTRODUCING.....

New probationary members:  
Christopher Richards,  
10 Milton Road, Weston  
Super Mare, Avon.  
Peter Merron, 21 Seely  
Road, Tooting, SW17.

And two probationary  
members have now become  
full members:

Karen Lewis, 5A Helena  
Road, Ealing.  
Stephen Bedford, 5 Myrtle  
Road, Hampton Hill, Middx.

## MCG on the move

For many years now, the MCG has been going west, in more ways than one. There was a time when a qualification for membership could have been 'domiciled in the London Home Counties'. Those days have passed - devolution is here to stay.

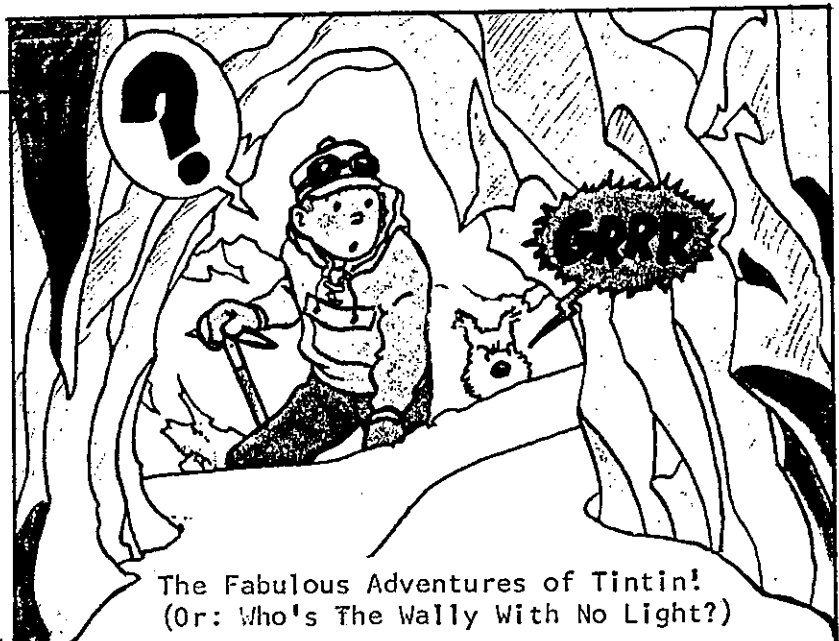
As well as those members who have moved to Somerset, there is a very welcome increase in the number of new members who already live on and around Mendip, many of whom bring with them established expertise and detailed local knowledge.

The Mendip element is now large enough to constitute an effective weekday caving and digging team, and the members concerned are becoming gradually more involved in all group activities.

'How long,' you may ask, 'will it be before the main thrust of MCG activity comes from an area within 15 minutes drive of Nordrach Cottage?' At the present rate of increase, this could occur within the next few years

Perhaps we are about to see a significant change in the group's centre of gravity - a change which is most welcome, even if it is 30 years late.

Tony Knibbs.



The Fabulous Adventures of Tintin!  
(Or: Who's The Wally With No Light?)

## Link Pot Meet

Alan Mellon



The Whitsun Yorkshire meet took place with three intrepid members, Adrian Duckett (AJD) Neil Hutchinson (NH) and Alan Mellon (AM) travelling north on the Friday to Green Close.

Alan Dougherty (AD) joined us on Saturday and with a late start we set off across Casterton fell to Link Pot. Dropping a rope down, next to the previously rigged ladder (presumably a party on a through-trip from Pippikin), we set off with yells of "no using the ladder!"

At the foot of the pitch we entered Hilton Hall and passed up the slit type squeeze heading towards Pippikin. AJD and AM followed NH and AD like lambs to the slaughter, which appeared to be the theme for the weekend. At Squid Junction some confusion ensued while Neil tried to remember the way on, trying all options and deciding it was none of them. Eventually the right hand passage was taken which brought us to Night Shift Chamber and a low crawl down through boulders to the Canyon. Crossing the canyon we carried on to the right to China Dog Chamber and Tiger's Inlet, the way into Serendipity series. Following the finely scalloped streamway and crawls, we continued up to Cairn Junction, something of an impressive cross roads, at which point navigation became dubious again. Having looked at the right hand passage, Neil decided that it should be onwards and forwards. Following the passage we were soon into a muddy flat-out crawl, bringing us out into the roof of Serendipity, a large stream canyon. We continued down the first 15ft pitch to where the stream tumbles over the lip of a 70ft shaft. AD started to rig the pitch, but found it impossible to rig the rope out of the water. With thunder forecast for later on that day this wasn't too good! Neil had a look and by rigging something of a "mega-deviant" (I think I mean deviation, but

you never can tell with Neil) on a ledge was able to reach the main stream passage. However on reaching the ledge AD was not too happy with the possibility of a rub near the top of the pitch and a somewhat "damp" climb. So at this point we called Neil back up and started to make our way out, a quicker return trip without any route-finding problems. In future if anyone plans to do this trip on ropes, a bolt or two carefully positioned would make the pitch into the streamway both safer and drier.

### Sunday 26th May - Long Kin West - Newby Moss.

Yet again a late start, with what was left of the morning used to pack the ropes. By 2.15 pm we had trudged up onto the fell. Before going down, we decided that by 3.30 pm we would turn round unless we were close to bottoming the pot, since we were going to meet Martin Rowe in the pub at 8.00 pm.

The first pitch consists of a narrow rift with two deviations down to two re-belays on a ledge at 90ft (27m). The remaining 195ft (59m) being straight down to the boulder floor with the last section against a wall. By 3.15 pm Neil had just rigged the 2nd rebelay and was heading for the bottom of the shaft (attached to the rope of course!). Neil was quickly (?) followed by Alan M. and Ade.D. and at the foot of the pitch a discussion was held. We decided to carry on down the shaft. 25ft (8m) second pitch and then the 180ft (55m) third pitch - Martin would not mind waiting, would he? Passing down the damp second pitch, we did a short squeeze and crawl and reached the third pitch. Here two main bolts and a back-up on a wire tether were rigged. AJD abseiled down the pitch rigging a rebelay at -45ft (14m) and with a knot at approx. -150ft (45m) continued to the boulder-choked floor. NH followed with AM shortly after,

desperately hoping that he could still remember how to pass a knot.

At the foot of the pitch ASD started and AM was given the happy news that he was de-rigging. An uneventful return was made by all to the base of the first pitch, by which time AJD was at the top two rebelayes. NH left, with AM following after, stuffing the rope into a rather large tackle sack approx every 50 ft. It was quite an experience to be hanging 200 ft (61m) above the floor of a chamber, stuffing rope into a large sack and thinking, "what on earth am I doing here ?".

AM had great fun trying to remove the top deviation which was a hexagon

chock. About 15 mins was spent dangling 5ft from the top of the pitch beating hell out of the chock with a hammer until it finally surrendered. At 8.10 pm we started walking off the fell and made it to the pub by about 9.40pm. Martin didn't mind too much about us being late !

Post Script: While sitting in the pub we heard news of a number of rescues, one of which apparently reached the national press. In this case a woman abseiled off of the end of the rope, falling approx 30ft. So, please let's all remember to take the time to tie knots in the ends of ropes and ensure all our equipment is rigged and operated correctly.

## Tunnel Cave & Dan-Yr-Ogof

TONY KNIBBS

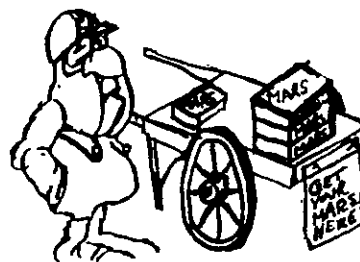
Conforming to an increasingly obvious trend, the latest South Wales meet - Tunnel Cave - was attended by only a few members: Mike Haselden (leader), Tony Knibbs, Denise Samuel, Yvonne Ward. Ian Alderman of Speleo RHAL came along as a guest.

The Tunnel Cave visit took place on Saturday 1 June and was a through trip from Top Entrance down to the lower Cathedral Cave Exit.

A late start and the uphill approach slog resulted in us getting underground at about 1.15pm. Abseiling the first two consecutive pitches of 40ft and 25ft was straightforward and consumed about half an hour. However, the traverse wire over Cascade Aven had broken some weeks previously and we had brought materials to install a new wire. MH and TK busied themselves with this while the others explored Cascade Aven extension.

The new wire was ready in just under one hour and the party was soon down the steep handline pitch of about 45ft into Cascade Aven Chamber. From here, a few minutes in a section of stooping and crawling brought us down into 15ft Pot Chamber.

From below the short drop into this Chamber, a wriggle down through boulders marked the beginning of Paul and Barnabas Extension. Across a low, bouldery chamber we paused to admire the Quadrapus formation while MH got to grips with the first 30ft of Barney's Aven and hung a 25ft ladder. A further 10ft of thrutching up a rift gained a hands-and-knees crawl and short drop into a second aven, Pearl Aven, which gave a nice 15ft climb up to view the formations.



Back in 15ft Pot Chamber it was refreshment time and we all set to, demolishing assorted sweetmeats.

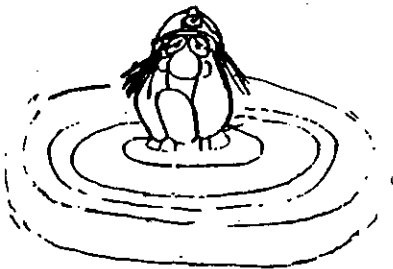
A slightly awkward climb up the named feature took us out of this chamber and soon into Wiggly Stal Passage to reach Saddle Corner. From this point, progress was by seemingly endless traversing at roof level in a high, gently sloping rift. A.....8

7.....

descent to floor level eventually gained Cross Passage and, later, Cross Rift where a stream provided refreshment.

More traversing and clambering over boulders in a high, roomy passage eventually brought us to the two locked grilles into the huge Davy Price's Hall of the Show Cave now known as Cathedral Cave. This region of the cave is populated by dummy figures - some dressed in caving gear and others as cave dwellers of greater age. Howls of mirth echoed along the vast passage as we fell about at the hilarious attitudes of the figures in caving; two wetsuited and finned legs sticking out of a pool were of special interest.

The Show Cave entrance was, unfortunately, closed and we made our exit via a locked grille labelled "Original Cavers' Entrance". A short drop reached a bedding plane with a shallow pool which eventually deepened to neck-deep at a final duck before reaching daylight at 7.45pm.



This was the second day of superb summer weather, and again we elected to spend part of it underground with a visit to Dan-yr-Ogof.

Being a prospective candidate for DY0 leadership, IA was put at the head of the column to show his knowledge of the cave. The trip was a very leisurely affair and included Flabbergasm Chasm, Green Canal, The Rising, The Abyss, Thixotropic Passage, The Washing Machine and the inevitable return via the Long Crawl and The Lakes. The duration of the trip was about four hours, MH and IA making their exit out of the river passage.

## SRT: Danger!

A recent French report concerned the physiological effect of suspension in a caver's SRT harness. The tests were undertaken by a group of doctors employing sophisticated monitoring techniques on fit, volunteer caver's feigning unconsciousness or exhaustion - that is, slumped in the harness without moving.

Everyday caving experience proves that someone in good physical condition and in continuous motion on the rope can remain suspended for several hours with no difficulty other than discomfort. This study takes the case of a completely inert subject, incapable of helping himself.

The results were unexpected and dramatic. So dramatic, in fact, that the experiments were abandoned as too dangerous after the first two volunteers had become genuinely unconscious and had to be lowered immediately for emergency treatment - one caver after 30 minutes, the other after only six minutes inert suspension.

This effect is seen as a possible new factor in previously unexplained deaths on ropes, not associated with a serious accident. Further experiments are planned to better define the problem, although the doctors see this as a complex medical procedure and in the meantime issue the following advice to cavers:

1. An exhausted caver should not begin the ascent of a deep pitch without first reaching a good physical condition (i.e. rest and food).
2. It appears to be a mistake to imagine that one can rest effectively during the ascent. It is better to descend again at the first signs of exhaustion.
3. Should a caver become exhausted on the rope, it is an emergency. His companions must quickly intervene to help him down.

The above is reproduced verbatim from Caves and Caving 27, P.35, in view of it's obvious implications to users of SRT.

Ian McKechnie



## What's New In The Library

by Ian McKechnie

There's more to the library than Fungus the Bogeyman, as you all know. And to keep you in touch with new additions I will be writing a brief account of them from time to time. This list is rather long, as it goes back to last year when I became librarian. Anyway, here goes:

(Complete with notes on anything that caught my eye!)

Alfie's Song Book. A compendium of cavers' songs, donated by the author Alfie Collins at the Annual Dinner. A review has been promised for the newsletter (are you reading this, Joan?).

Gloucester Speleological Society Newsletter March 1984. Includes an article on Otter Hole.

Bristol Waterworks Report and Accounts to 31/3/83. Great reading if you like accounts. Otherwise, boring.

Shepton Mallet Caving Club Journal Spring/Autumn 1983. Reports on Sarawak expedition.

Axbridge Caving News Spring 1984. Otter Hole access requirements.

East Dorset Speleological Society Newsletter Vol 1 no 3.

Subterranea Britannica Bulletin 19. Various relevant articles. Aim of SB is: "to encourage the highest standard of research into all man-made or man-used underground cavities in Britain, and proper publication of the results of that research."

Subterranea Britannica Bulletin Index nos 1-5, 1975-9.

Croydon Caving Club - Peleobates 44 Jan 84, 45 April 84. Matenzo 84, Otter visit report, Gatton and Guildford stone quarries in 16th Century.

Crewe Climbing and Potholing Club Gouffre Berger Expedition 83. A well-written and comprehensive report. The

main conclusion appears to be that an expedition can be over-organised, as this one was.

BEC Belfrey Bulletin March/April 84. MRO report, NCA equipment report on strength of knots.

Espeleologiaco Ensko Butzordea June 83. Various explorations and cave safety article, all in Spanish. Abstracts written in English, but unfortunately almost incomprehensible, due to typing errors.

Caves and Caving no 23 Feb 84. Expeditions to Spain and Bermuda, photo contest winners, a "fitness programme for cavers", underground films, Agen Allwedd extension, dangers of light-weight ropes.

Pleasures of the Torture Chamber by John Swainn. Donated by Martin Rowe "in memory of many happy hours spent caving and in the Hunter's afterwards". It really is about torture!

Caves and Caving no 24, May 84. Agen Allwedd access, expeditions to Java, Morocco, Greece, Canada, Austria. "Physiology of Training", Glomfjell, Ogof Hesp Alyn, Waterford, Clougher More Cave, World Cave Statistics.

Velvet Bottom Nature Reserve leaflet. Left in lounge.

NSS News, May 84. Safety techniques, symposium on Arctic and Alpine Karst, 83 index, Kentucky discovery.

Westminster Speleo Group newsletter, May 84.

Wessex Caving Club, May 84. Troll boltard review, MRO report 83, Some Pleistocene problems on Mendip.

Oxford University Caving Club Proceedings 11, 1984. Spain 82-3, Borneo 83, Gibraltar, ladder techniques.

Cave Diving Group newsletter, July 84. Diving reports (37 in all!), more on surveying, failure reports.

Cave Science, March 84. Expedition to Andros, Bahamas/Blue Holes.

MCG Yugoslavia Expedition 1962 (8mm film and 35mm slides) donated by.....10

.....9

Tony Knibbs. Perhaps material for an armchair meet?

Gaping Gill by Howard M Beck. A new book detailing the history of the Gaping Gill system from the first attempts at exploration, to the recent through trip. To be reviewed later, if someone will volunteer.

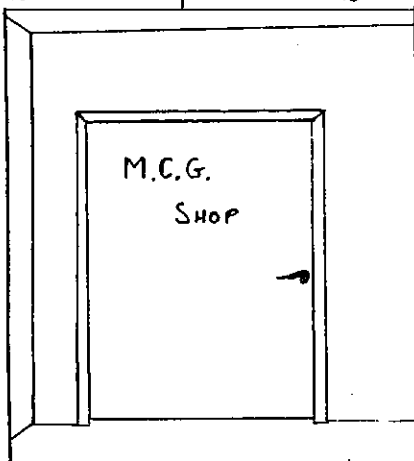
The Great Caving Adventure, by Martin Farr. Another new book. A random selection of cave-diving stories from his experiences. Much more readable than The Darkness Beckons.

And finally, Tony Knibbs has donated a 35mm slide projector to the club. This is stored in the "library reserve" section of the attic. Anyone is free to borrow it on Mendip - please sign it out exactly like a library book. But please don't take it out for more than 24 hours, or bring it back to London, or your home, without checking with me first, and please let me know if it goes wrong, so that we can fix it.

Finally, finally - there is a typewriter in the library for anyone who wants to use it - but please don't take it away from the library. There's also a Roneo stencil duplicator in the attic, surplus to the Editor's requirements. If anyone would like to use it, please let me know.

Incidentally, I've "taken over" a section of the attic for library use. In so doing I moved someone's caving gear - I know not whose. I would like that section to be kept for library use from now on please, so that we don't get in each other's way.

## Bob Speleo $\beta$



## Earwig ...

What's the committee up to now? Are they talking about me? Earwig listened in: 23/5/85 & 20/6/85



The flies in the cottage roof are now dead... The hall is booked for a barn dance at the half-yearly meet ...At Xmas it would be too much to have another party, how about just going down the Hunters & maybe singing a few songs...The cottage cess pit is now empty... The exploration of Upper Flood was discussed at length, but it was decided that exploration is not something for the committee to regulate, but up to those involved in the dig... however, the key was hidden by a member recently, and other members travelled a long way to visit Upper Flood and couldn't. The key is now on the library door with a "members only" tag.... MCG T-shirts should be available for the AGM - it's too late for this summer now... but there are plenty of sweatshirts available from Steve at £6 or from the MCG Shop at the cottage... The shop (alias the cupboard in the little room) is open whenever you can find a committee member, or of Course Malcolm or Phil, to open it! Stock includes green oversuits, I hope to publish stocklist soon.... 17 people still haven't paid their subs, and Tony is chasing them up individually by letter. Next year anyone not paid up by April 1st will be regarded as lapsed. Next year the only reminder will be the newsletter...

...this will save club money & tie up with the covenant deadline...at the cottage, please take rubbish out at the end of the weekend & place outside car park wall in dustbins. Tie the lid on or weight somehow...also the swing bins are now labelled...

Nobody's perfect...Tony' burned the carpet in the tackle room...it was Roy's rope protector...oops!

Next meeting: 18/7/85