

MCG NEWS

April 1986 No.184

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

♪ If you go down to GB today
You'd better go in disguise.
If you go down to GB today ♪
You're in for a big surprise...

There were strange goings on at the cottage on Sunday 23rd March. Why was Tony wearing a DJ under his caving gear? What was Yvonne cramming into her ammo box that was obviously of a non-caving nature? Why were so many tackle bags being taken down GB? Does Denise really have a dress on under her overalls and was Ian also wearing a suit to go caving?

All was soon revealed to those who arrived in the Main Chamber of GB for here was the agreed venue for Tony's birthday party.

Out of the tackle bags came wine, biscuits, cheese, more cheese, more wine, plates and glasses. Off came Tony's and Denise's caving suits to reveal a particularly chic couple with Tony in his black suit and bow tie and Denise in her brown frock and green wellies. Ian and Yvonne disappeared behind a rock and re-appeared a short time later smartly attired in waiter and waitress outfits to serve the drinks (as befits such an auspicious occasion).

The picture was completed when everyone scurried around lighting the chamber with the fifty candles specially transported into the cave.

Other cavers gazed in disbelief at the transformed chamber and it wasn't long before the chords of the MCG song echoed round the cave followed by a medley of other songs. We were joined by friends from other caving fraternities and shaggy dog stories were soon being exchanged. The candle-lit chamber was transiently enhanced by a burning magnesium strip flooding the cave with a bright white light.

Roy discovered a new 'cottage' game called 'big bang'. This was played by taking the innards of an empty wine box, inflating it, placing it on the ground and stamping on it. The crux of this game is not to let anyone know thus effecting maximum panic when a very loud bang resounds around the chamber.

Everyone ate and drunk their fill and all too quickly it was time to go home. The tackle bags were re-packed, candles snuffed and caving suits donned.

Linda and Gill, meanwhile, were in a particularly mischievous mood and decided to set up an ambush against Roger, Phil and Derek. They filled their helmets with water and lay in wait. Unfortunately John and Liz happened to pass the spot first and fell victim to the dastardly plot in addition to the unsuspecting trio.

All the partygoers emerged from the cave a little inebriated to witness yet another instance of Linda and Gills naughtiness. The glutinous mud outside the entrance proved to be too much of a temptation and handfuls of mud greeted the somewhat wet Roger, Phil and Derek who immediately retaliated. I felt that three onto two was not on and the battle of the sexes ensued. Thus six muddy cavers made their way back across the field to the car ending what must have been the most eventful trip to GB.

Our thanks to Tony for letting us share your special day.

Jo Davies.

SPECIAL DATE

HOME.

AWAY.

Apr 12	Member's weekend. Assault course (Sat) Box Mines (Liz Price) (Sun)	
Apr 26	.....	Birks Fell, Yorkshire (Roger Wallington)
May 3	Member's weekend Swildons (Andy Beare)	.....
May 10	Wolverhampton (12)	.....
May 24	.....	Bakers Pit, Devon (Arthur Spain)
Jun 7	Member's weekend Geology (Malcolm Cotter)	.....
Jun 28	.....	Pant Mawr, Wales (Steve Taylor)
Jul 12	Member's weekend St Cuthberts (John Miriam)	.....
Jul 26	.....	Lancaster Hole, Yorkshire (Ian Parry)
Aug 9	Member's weekend Radstock Mine (Yvonne Ward)	.....
Aug 23	.....	Tunnel Cave, Wales (Any offers?)
Sep 13-27	.....	Malaga, Spain (Adrian Duckett)
Oct 11	Member's weekend Half Yearly	.....
Oct 25	.....	Lost John's, Yorkshire (Mike Lovell)
Nov 8	Member's weekend Cheddar Gorge (Jon Roberts)	.....
Nov 22	.....	Dan Yr Ogof, Wales (Tony Knibbs)
Dec 13	Member's weekend Mangle Hole (Dave Baxter)	.....

A FEW LINES FROM YOUR NEW EDITOR.

This is my first newsletter - I hope you enjoy it.

I will follow much the same format as in previous newsletters as I feel members are happy and familiar with the general layout and content but I welcome any constructive criticism and advice.

I am lucky because since I 'volunteered' to be editor there has been the AGM and dinner plus Tony's birthday down GB cave which are good topics to start with. I hope, though, that items will flood in thick and fast because I am relying on you all to supply me with your experiences (caving preferably!), dig news and anything topical that members might be interested in.

In one of my quieter moments I made anagrams of every club member's name (most have more than one). Some of them are quite amusing so I thought I would put six in every newsletter as a kind of competition. The first person to come to me at the Mawson Arms with the correct answers can have a pint of his or her choice. Someone did a few anagrams in a previous newsletter - I hope they don't mind me pinching their idea.

Finally, I would like to continue the embarrassing photo competition so if any of you have any suitable (or should I say unsuitable) photos then please send them in. If there are enough, the winner will be announced at next years dinner.

I shall be listening and watching!!!

Yvonne Ward.

Here are some the 1986 dinner's poetic achievements:-

What an achievement to get there on time
For at least eight men out of nine
The young ones had made it
The old one delayed it
He's only approaching his prime.

To reach all those years, forty nine
Is an achievement quite truly sublime
Just a small step away
In March not in May
Puts half a century on the line.

There once was a man from Peru
Whose elephant was kept at the zoo
When asked where its crease went
His greatest achievement
Was to say "round its arse, silly moo!"

The shiver that went down the spine
When 'achievements' was Tom's main line
But outdone by the chill
And the sensuous thrill
Was - the limerick must be in rhyme.

An MCG caver did cry
"To the uttermost depths I shall try
And in this great hope
I'll set forth ? ?
To make the attempt or to die".

An MCG man of repute
At the dinner got pissed as a newt
When asked by someone
What achievements he'd done
Replied "It's my birthday, you coot!"

There was a young caver called Knibbs
Who was never a teller of fibs
But when we were told
He'd achieved thirty years old
We laughed as we swung from his ribs.

I am the most marvellous caver
My achievements just couldn't be
braver
My name, don't you know
Is Bob Speleo
For I know that my exploits you
savour.

Two cavers called Gordon and Grant
Who never say "no" or "I can't"
Met with Linda and Gill
Who said "Ok, I will"
And they could have achieved but they
aren't.

There was a young man who reached
fifty
Whose achievements were often quite
shifty

While down GB at three
Amongst crumpets and tea
His only request was fine whiskey.

Achievements we've had by the mile
By stacking the tiles in a pile
It seems such a shame
The roof lets in rain
Mind you, they've been there a while.



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'THE GOOD NEWS...'

Lost cave of Cheddar discovered by divers

(The Times 27/3/86)

By Tim Jones

A team of three divers have overcome physical and psychological dangers to discover what they believe to be the most spectacular underground cave system in Britain and one of the longest in the world.

Their most exciting find is a 100ft wide chamber which may be the legendary 'lost cave of Cheddar' which has tantalized explorers for decades.

Cavers have searched for the way down into the underground River Yeo for six years and in the end the entrance proved to be just a few feet from the show cave at Cheddar Gorge, Somerset, which is visited by 750,000 each year.

The three men, who exposed themselves to the risks of diving in darkness through shoulder width torrent filled sub-terranean passages, yesterday planned to press on through the system which may extend for three miles.

As he prepared to venture further into the claustrophobic unknown, Mr Richard Stephenson, aged 39, of Wookey, Somerset, explained why no one had dived to the cave before.

"It just looked like a puddle, you have to go down a very thin 20 foot chimney and then an even narrower 50 foot chimney before it opens out into a cave".

He was accompanied by Mr Rob Harper, aged 32, a Bristol Vet, and Mr Rob Palmer, aged 35, who has explored the legendary "Blue Holes" in the Bahamas.

Mr Stephenson said: "It is a very difficult dive technically because of the space constriction at the start and the lack of visibility further on."

A cross-section of the newly explored Cheddar cave which is 100 feet wide and 40 feet deep.

"At first, our lamps were not strong enough and we could not see both sides so we ended up following walls round in circles or getting trapped under ledges".

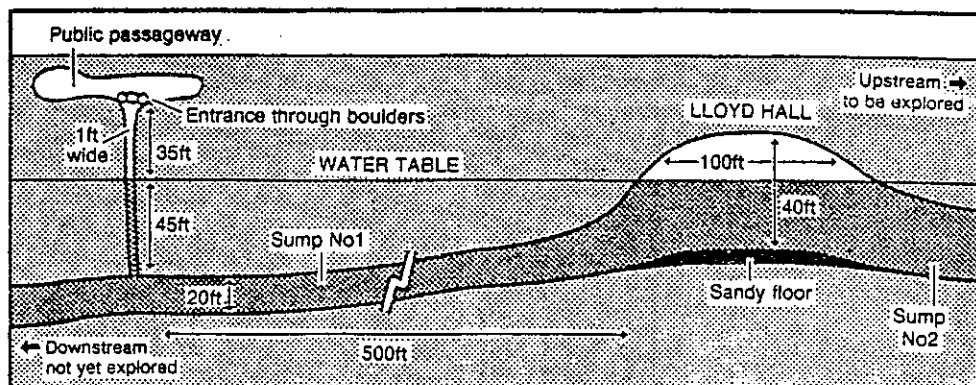
Mr Chris Bradshaw, Cheddar Caves education officer, praised the courage of the divers. "It is absolutely diabolical down there. At one stage they were facing a 1000 foot dive which is very dangerous and creates psychological problems but then they discovered an air chamber which gave them the breathing space".

Yesterday, the team was planning to dive and emerge into a second chamber which they believe could reveal a two-mile passage from the top of the Mendip hills.

Adventure caving leader, Mr Andy Sparrow, aged 31, who masterminded the dive said: "The water coming off the Mendips splits into several separate caves which eventually become choked up and they converge into master caves full of foaming white water. We are hoping to find one of those master caves like the one at Wookey Hole".

In spite of their nonchallance, the diving team exposed themselves to grave dangers and faced the additional traumas of decompression problems.

The legend of the lost caves has intrigued explorers ever since Henry of Huntingdon wrote 850 years ago in his 'Historia Anglorum' of cavers who had gone underground and "traversed great spaces of land and rivers they could never come to the end".



'... AND THE BAD NEWS'

Cave rescuer swept to death

(The Yorkshire Post 24/3/86)

By Tony Francis

Floodwater swept a member of the Cave Rescue Organisation to his death as he tried to rescue two stranded potholers early yesterday.

Mr David Owen Anderson, 27, descended Rowten Pot, in Kingsdale, near Ingleton, North Yorkshire, after two of an 11-strong party from East Anglia University Caving Club failed to return.

He slipped and fell into an underground waterfall, and died in spite of attempts by two colleagues to whom he was roped to pull him out.

Rescue workers estimated that there was 25ft of floodwater at the time, but the two trapped cavers, Mr Nigel Crisp and Mr Ian Kitchen, both 23 and of York Street, Norwich, managed to climb above the water level.

They were sitting waiting for the floods to subside.

The alarm was raised at 10.55p.m. on Saturday. Mr Anderson, who was single and lived in a tiny stone cottage in Riverside, less than 100 yards from the Cave Rescue Organisation headquarters in Clapham, was among the first to descend.

His fall occurred at 1.30a.m.

It was four hours later when the two students were found, and a further three before they were brought to the surface.

A North Yorkshire spokesman said they did not need hospital treatment. "They were cold, wet and tired but otherwise in good shape," he said.

They planned to rejoin the rest of their party after being interviewed by the police, and to spend the rest of the week on their Yorkshire Dales holiday.

Another leader, Mr Jack Pickup, said: "The team is devastated. This is the first fatality the organisation has suffered in its 50-year history.

When people turn out on rescues there is always a risk, just as there is with crews of lifeboats and rescue helicopters.

Another member of the organisation said: "It is a sad day when anyone dies down a pothole, but it is much worse when it is one of your own. Dave was well liked and respected."

Mr Anderson was a self-employed electrician, working from his home. His van was a familiar sight in and around Clapham and Ingleton.

A neighbour said: "He was a quiet and unassuming man, always friendly and obliging. He was always prepared to do odd jobs for anyone.

"When it came to cave rescue he was always among the first to volunteer, and the first down."

Rowten Pot is about half a mile from Jingling Pot, where an accident in October, 1934, led to the formation of the Cave Rescue Organisation the following year.

The potholer, then, was trapped for 29 hours with a badly injured leg.

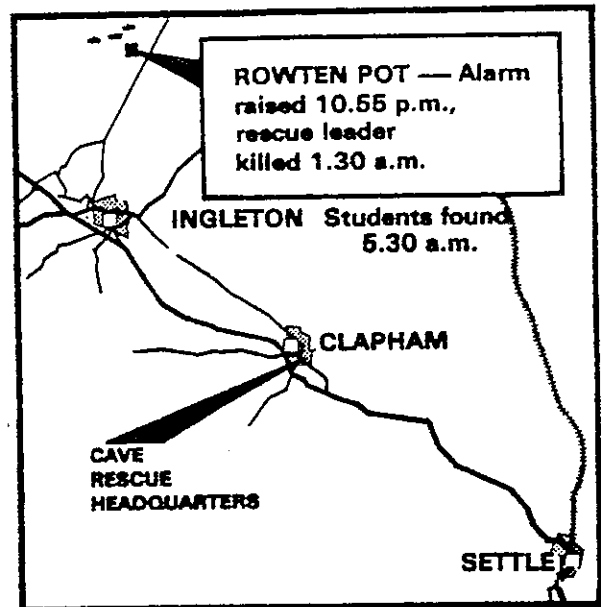
Meanwhile, seven Scouts from Purley, Surrey, were found safe yesterday after getting lost in the Merstham Caves, near Redhill.

The boys, members of a ten-strong party aged between 11 and 15, went into the caves at 7p.m. on Saturday with their Scout leader, Mr Derek Hands.

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Mr Graham Christian, a member of the cave research and exploration unit, said: "They were discovered about half a mile into the caves and were quite calm. It is very easy to become lost in tunnels like these."

STUART MITCHELL recalls death and injury among pot-holers, some of whom had ignored warnings from experts about weather conditions



Yorkshire caves have claimed numerous victims over the years, in spite of regular warnings from the experts and countless long and costly rescue operations.

Yesterday's tragedy at Rowten Pot was just the latest in a long line of incidents in the immediate area around Ingleton.

In January last year a Leeds diver, Mr Derek Crossland, an experienced caver with many years' experience, died in Hurtle Pot.

In May, a woman broke both her arms and injured her head in a 70ft fall in Gaping Gill. On the same day the teams who rescued the woman had to save a Buckinghamshire man trapped in Juniper Gulf pothole for five hours after a fall.

Similar conditions to those at the time of Mr Anderson died yesterday claimed the life of a caving enthusiast at nearby Sunset Pot in June '82.

Mr Neofitos Sabba was hurled off a cliff face 200ft below ground by a torrent of water. This accident drew criticism from rescue experts for the cavers who had failed to take heed of previous thunderstorms in the area.

Earlier in the year Gaping Gill claimed another life when a man abseiling into the main chamber fell about 360ft.

In 1980, cavers throughout the Yorkshire Dales mourned the loss of Mr Ian Plant, who had been among the first rescue workers called to major Dales caving incidents in the previous ten years.

Mr Plant, the 31-year-old editor of a weekly newspaper, died in an uncharted section of Bull Pot, near Kirkby Lonsdale. He was part of a team trying to find a link between two systems.

The last multiple death incident in the Dales was at Langstroth Pot, near Buckden in 1976. Three potholers drowned and three were rescued. All were from Newcastle University Caving Club.

That incident was Britain's second-worst potholing tragedy. In 1966, six students from Leeds University were drowned at Mossdale Cavern, close to Langstroth Pot.

An experiment with a new type of rope resulted in the death of another caver, again at Gaping Gill, in December, 1974. Mr David Huxtable, from the Swansea University Caving Club, fell 200ft when the synthetic rope broke.

In July, 1975, a coroner, Mr James Turnbull, decided not to reopen the inquest on Mr Alan Errith, who had been missing since 1970 when he dived into an underwater cave at Keld Head, near Ingleton. His body was found five years later by a friend.

Rowten Pot itself last claimed a life in 1939, when Mr John Lambert fell twice while trying to return to the surface. Mr Lambert was brought to the surface after 20 hours.

He had fallen 150ft onto a ledge then, in spite of efforts of colleagues, fell a further 50ft to the bottom of the shaft.

Some more limericks...

Tony Knibbs the intrepid caver
Is trying his achievements to savour
With a cheese and wine 'do'
In GB for all you
Who still fancy the flavour.

There is a lad from the city
Who took his place on the committee
A Scotsman old
With sideburns bold
(Just watch what he does with the kity)

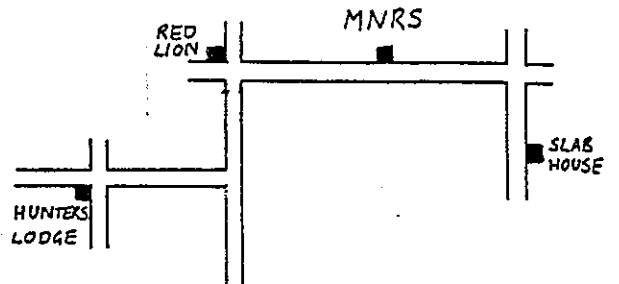
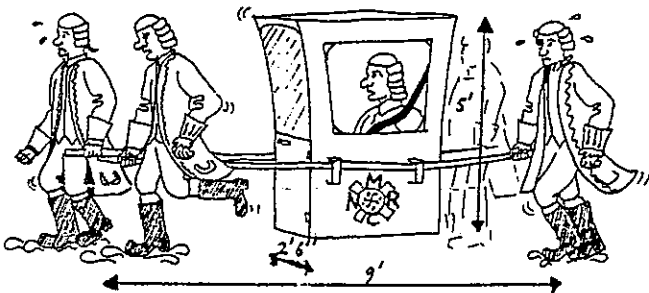
Achievement! What's that? we said
It's something in us that is dead
Upper Flood is so slow
Longwood's no-go
Achievement? Yes! It happens in bed.

THE WESSEX CHALLENGE.

The MNRC, in its 80th year, have great pleasure in announcing the third Wessex Challenge on 5th July 1986. By way of a change, a sedan chair race will be held in which the participants will be called upon to exhibit great skill, agility and stamina. Two teams of four are required to carry one passenger around a course of a variety of obstacles. The illustration below indicates the maximum recommended sizes for the chair. Exceeding these will cause problems!

and body cleansing material is highly recommended (essential). Teams are required to display their chairs for public scrutiny at 5.30 and the race will start at 6.30. The evening will consist of traditional games and passtimes.

Tickets for Buffet £2.50
Available from the MNRC
Tel: 076-121-609



The passenger must be in an enclosed box which must be carried off the ground at all times. The porters must wear wellies a wellies and the passenger a seat belt. Sedan chairs, and similar modes of transport, have been used throughout history by many cultures so teams are invited to come in the period costume of their own choice. A complete change of clothing

WHATSISNAME?
STOOL DINGLER FART ON BEN-GOOF!
MASHED IN LEEK SNOGS LIBBERELY
A CHICKEN MINE I'LL RESCUE YOU
Who are they?

MCG doings

ARMCHAIR MEETS

Please can you let Gordon Lister (our new ordinary committee member) have any ideas and offers for armchair meets.

CONGRATULATIONS

To Gary Pairaudeau on becoming a full member.

WELCOME

Two new probationary members:
Robert Davies, 76 Ellingham Road,
Hemel Hemstead, Herts. Tel:45485.,
and Paul Harding, 344 Bidford Green,
Linslade, Leighton Buzzard, Beds.,
Tel: 376291.
Both were introduced by C. Whittle
and P. Ingold.

CODING

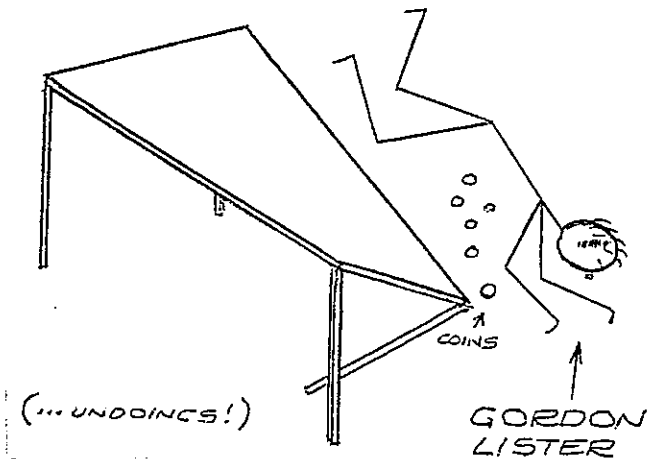
The club is to buy 10 pots of paint
and brushes so members can colour-
code equipment with their member -
ship number.

WATERWHEEL SWALLET

The club has been formally asked by
Terry Matthews, representing the
landowner, to administer access to
Waterwheel Swallet, Blackmoor. We
have accepted for a trial period,
using the same rules as Upper Flood.

MCG GETS ME DOWN!

The new club T-shirts are now avail-
able in assorted colours and sizes
and can be obtained from Gordon
Lister.



BRING AND BUY!

If anyone has something to sell that
they think someone in the club might
be interested in buying or if there
is something that you need, then I
will put a 'For Sale' or 'Wanted'
column in the newsletter.
Please send the necessary details
to the editor.

Some more limericks...

Bill Spike set out to achieve
The biggest cave you could believe
In the end it transpired
That his lamp had expired
And such bad luck is hard to conceive.

Last dinner we wrote of Upper Flood
Not realizing what lay behind the mud
After seventeen years
Of blood, sweat and tears
The achievement is quite f----- good.

A keen old caver called Geoff
Had got us all quite bereft
We followed him round
For miles underground
But we ended up where we had left.

Voting on an AGM winner
Is hard work compared to the dinner
Yes - the mass had their fill
But then, the bitter pill
Malcolm and Pat Walsh bowled the
spinner.

SAFETY NOTE

by Alan Dougherty

ATTACHMENT OF THE PETZL STOP

It has been found that it is possible to accidentally unclip the 'stop' descender when it is attached to the harness, with a small sized or small chamfer karabiner.

I have never seen this happen underground but if you fiddle about with with a 'stop' and 10mm krab. you will find the series of movements which can result in the safety clip becoming disengaged.

The obvious remedy is to use A LARGE CROSS SECTION AND BIG KRAB. When about to descend and before unclipping your 'cows-tail', make sure that the 'stop' is fully loaded without kinks or snags in the system, and that the safety clip is in the correct position.

Lyon Equipment are preparing a detailed users guide to the 'stop' which will be distributed by N.C.A.

Despite this potential problem, I still consider the 'stop' the best type of descender for S.R.T. It has a major advantage in that it can be tied-off simply and safely.

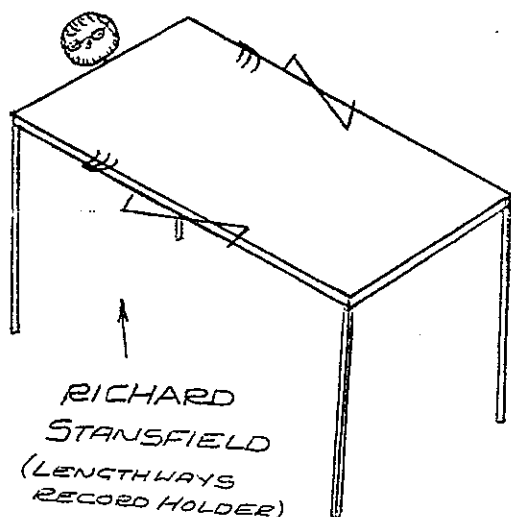
Editors note: Some of the Majorcan team found the petzl stop unsuitable on long pitches, causing stains in the boiler suit!

FOR SALE:

The club S.R.T. rope is NO LONGER SUITABLE for S.R.T. or lifelining but would make an ideal tow-rope or washing line. Anyone interested in buying some at the give-away price of 10p per metre can contact Alan Dougherty on 0934-863056 or see him at the cottage.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Neil H says - would the person that 'removed' the orange tackle sack from the Foremans lounge, please return it as his Bone Hole digging gear is getting dusty!



STOP PRESS!!!

Alan Dougherty has just handed me the details of an S.R.T. course run by Lizzard Speleo Systems at Sedbergh, Cumbria. It looks very good and, at a glance, cheaper than Whernside also if there is a large party interested then Lizzard will send two instructors to run a course at our own location, e.g. Mendip or South Wales. I will have a proper read and give all the details in the next newsletter. The details will also be put up on the cottage notice board.

The BOB SPYGLASS Column

WOMEN ONLY!

At last year's AGM there was a great debate about there being a ladies room instead of the 'mixing' in the Foremans lounge. Later that evening at the dinner this prompted someone to compose this limerick...

Enough of this sexual sinning
A new age will soon be beginning
To ensure you behave
We are digging a cave
Which is strictly reserved for the
wimmin.

At this time everyone was bemoaning the seemingly endless muddy misery that was Upper Flood but if this proposition still stands and in light of the subsequent breakthrough ... we accept!

OVERHEARD:

Malcolm to Yvonne in the Foremans lounge: "I've got something for you in my trouser pocket."
Yvonne's reply: "If it's what I think it is, thank God, I'm really desperate."

(I'm not telling you what it was - you wouldn't believe me anyway)

Denise to Roy in the changing room:
"This dress is so tight, I'm having trouble pulling it up!"

Earwig ...

What's going on? Are they talking about me? Earwig listens in on the committee:
13-3-86



The rope tester is progressing (is now installed)... dustbin stand and new bins are needed... cottage first aid kit to be rationalised and re-stocked... a second key for each cave was proposed for emergency use. These would be on a ring marked "Rescue Keys"... notice board for topical pictures to go up in the cottage... publish what's on sale in shop... black-list and charge deposit to clubs who do not turn up after booking bunks at the cottage.

Next committee meeting 13-4-86

Here is the committee's 1986 meet programme. If anyone has anything they would like raised at a committee meeting they should make their ideas or feelings known, preferably in writing, prior to the appropriate date.

MAWSON ARMS MEETS.

May 8th
July 10th
September 4th
November 13th

MENDIP MEETS.

June 7th
August 9th
October 11th
December 13th