

MCG NEWS

August 1987

No. 194

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

Breakthrough at Upper Flood, Blackmoor.

Episode 3

TERMINAL SINK DEFEATS DIGGING TEAM BUT

PROGRESS MADE IN HIGH LEVEL FAULT PASSAGE.

In August '86 Alan Dougherty and Gary Pairaudeau broke through into Hannah's Grotto and a fault controlled rift beyond (see newsletter no.188). Following this 20 metre long discovery work continued in the hole at the end of the rift. Initial rapid progress soon slowed in a narrow section as the floor of cracked mud became sloppy with work. The question of whether this section flooded was answered in the winter when a murky pool appeared. Conditions were bad enough for digging to stop in the hope of an improvement in the spring.

Our frustration made us turn our attention to the wet bedding plane where the Sunset Boulevard stream disappears. It was clear that the way to advance would be by blasting: the whole 10 metres of this end section being a flat out crawl in water, presenting a challenge to the diggers. To start at the high part and take some roof off all the way along would have produced a vast amount of spoil and taken a long time, so we would try and enlarge the end, and go on from there.

Our initial efforts seemed only to blow mud away but this afforded a better view of the dig. Probing with the cottage sweep set was tried and revealed a solid wall to the left. The rods could be pushed straight ahead but there was insufficient space for the brush! The distance probed was 9 metres and when an obstruction was encountered we concluded that the way on remained restricted. The prospect was for another long dig, in much worse conditions than those preceding the 1985 breakthrough. Several working sessions were made in the bedding plane and some progress was made but by mid May effort was again being made at the other site.

The turning point came when we aquired a new digging machine - Bob Marles! The bedding plane dig was left and work restarted at the rift dig. The mud pool in the dig was bailed back and an obstructing piece of rock removed. This allowed Malcolm Cotter and Bob to dig under the rift and gain access to a wider but still clay-filled passage. At the end of the session a small space above a stal floor was broken into. The roof (still formed by the stal floor) started to rise. This one digging session thus changed the mood from despondency to enthusiasm.

On 6th June '87 Alan Dougherty and Vince Simmonds broke through into a short section of passage by digging up through the calcite false floor into a void. Further work enabled Vince to squeeze up into an enlargement of the passage. Alan and Vince removed part of a mud bank and wriggled downwards until stopped by a large boulder.

After considerable effort the boulder was removed to allow access below a decorated grotto to a final blockage. The whole extension is draughting, so prospects look good despite the mud. The length of new passage beyond the August '85 terminal point is 8 metres and work continues in cramped conditions.

Malcolm Cotter &
Alan Dougherty

SPECIAL DATE

1987 MEETS PROGRAMME

15 AUG	WALES	O.F.D.	GEOFF BARTON	0923 849241
5 SEP	MENDIP	STOKE LANE SLOCKER	GORDON JISTER	01 579 3466
5 SEP	SPAIN	RONDA	NEIL HUTCHINSON	01 267 1005
26 SEP	MENDIP	HALF YEARLY	-	-
17 OCT	YORKSHIRE	RIFT POT	PADDY NEWMAN	-
7 NOV	MENDIP	ST CUTHBERTS	BRIAN TERRY	0533 432533
21 NOV	WALES	DAREN CILAU	IAN PARRY	0296 87795
5 DEC	MENDIP	BLACKMOOR MASTER CAKE	HELEN MIRIAM	01 393 3955
19 DEC	MAJORCA	VARIETY	NEIL HUTCHINSON	01 267 1005

Note: Entry at 5 Dec does read cake, not cave.

CAVING ACCOMODATION is available at the MCG, Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse - on - Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6XW. Map ref: NGR 5147.5606 OS 1:50,000 Sheet 182.

Cottage fees:(per night) Probationary, Associate, Full and Hon. members £1.25
 Members children £1.25
 Reciprocal members (SWCC, NPC) £1.25
 Guest clubs and members guests £1.75

Day fees: Members using any cottage facilities (tackle, showers, etc) are asked to make a reasonable donation via the donation box.

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 and Fullers Brewery. Nearest buses: 290 Chiswick Lane South and 27, 91, 237, 267, 290, E3, E4 in Chiswick High Road. Nearest tube: Turnham Green.



SECRETARY: NEIL HUTCHINSON, 15H Gloucester Avenue, Camden Town, London, NW1. 01-267-1005 (home).

TREASURER: MIKE LOVELL, 4 Settrington Close, Loddon Park, Earley, Reading, Berks. 0734-663747 (home).

MEET SECRETARY: GEOFF BARTON, The Lodge, The Heath, Weybridge, Surrey. 0932-849241 (home).

TACKLEMASTER: ALAN DOUGHERTY, 'Wynhanger', Station Road, Wrington, Nr Bristol, BS18 7LL. 0934-863056 (home).

COTTAGE WARDEN: JOHN BEAUCHAMP, St Hugh's Cottage, Charterhouse, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6XR. 0761-62929 (home).

RECORDER: IAN McKECHNIE: 21 Conyers Close, Hershaw, Walton-on-Thames, Surrey, KT12 4NG. 0932-228292 (home).

EDITOR: YVONNE WARD, 15 Jesse Close, Yateley, Camberley, Surrey, GU17 7AH. 0252-876783 (home).

ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBER: GORDON LISTER, 127 Seaford Rd., West Ealing, London, W13. 01-579-3466 (home).



Cottage

COTTAGE BOOKINGS

3 - 7 Aug	Somerset NCV	(12)
10 - 14 Aug	Unicorn	(20)
17 - 21 Aug	Unicorn	(20)
22 / 23 Aug	C. Towner	(12)
24 - 28 Aug	Unicorn	(20)
31 Aug-4Sep	Unicorn	(24)
14 - 18 Sep	RNAS	(20)
21 - 25 Sep	RNAS	(11)
26 / 27 Sep	HALF YEARLY	
28Sep-2 Oct	Unicorn	(24)
3 / 4 Oct	Wolverhampton	(12)
5 - 9 Oct	Unicorn	(24)
12 - 16 Oct	Unicorn	(24)
31 Oct-1Nov	A. Mellon	(12)
2 - 6 Nov	RNAS	(19)
16 - 20 Nov	RNAS	(19)
7 - 11 Dec	RNAS	(19)

INCINERATOR

The nice little cheapo Sainsburys incinerator is for burning combustibile items ie cardboard boxes, so that the dustbins are not overfilled. I and a few others are fed up with having tetanus jabs so that baked bean tins (which clearly do not burn) etc are removed to the dustbin.

DUSTBINS

The 2 plastic dustbins are for bagged-up rubbish. The metal dustbin should be kept for disposal of ashes.

THE NEW SHED

Although not quite finished, the inside/outside and floor have been treated. Please keep it clean. The key is located behind the library door.

A PS on the shed: When the light is on in the shed - so is the bar heater; make sure it is turned off when not required.

HOSING DOWN AREA

We now have a drying line and clothes pegs. There is also a high-pressure nozzle on the hose-pipe. It is rumoured that if the wind is just right you can hose down Mrs Frys pigs from the cottage! On a serious note please ensure that if you've hosed off a considerable amount of mud etc, it will end up in the gully. To avoid blockages, please clean out both the capped and open gullies. A trowel and bucket will be provided for this purpose.

LOUNGE FLOOR

If you have been to the cottage at all recently you will have noticed that the lounge floor has been sanded and treated. It was a hard and unpleasant task, especially the smell and fumes from the varnish. All who were involved with this undertaking would be grateful if you would treat it with some respect ie. wipe up any spillages immediately and sweep it after a stay at the cottage. Thanks.

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.

MCG GETS ME DOWN!

There are still plenty of sweatshirts for sale plus the new 'MCG gets me down' T-shirts, all in many sizes and colours.

If you want to fly the flag for the club then Gordon Lister is the man to see.

He will have a selection of T-shirts at the Mawson Arms on Thursdays but if you want a sweatshirt could you please let him know in advance.

The T-shirts are £3.50 each
The sweatshirts are £6 each.



Changes of Address

Andy Beare and Lesley Robbins are now at 17 High Beeches, Bookerhill Road, High Wycombe, Bucks. Tel: 0494 449955

Jon Roberts is now at 1 Vauxhall Walk, London, SE11 5JT. Tel: 01-735-0331.

Bill Ducklin is now at 1 St Annes Court, Worcester Road, Sutton, Surrey, SM2 6RX. Tel: 01-643-5105.

Linda Gates is now at 316 Pinewood Park, Cove, Farnborough, Hants, GU14 9LJ. Tel: 0252 511758.

Peter Spain is now at 25 Forge Close, Holmer Green, Bucks. Tel: 0494 715027.

WELCOME.....

.... to 3 new members -
Bob Marles of 27 Watmore Lane, Winnersh, Reading, Berks. Tel: 0734 790764.

Stephanie Bohin of 23 The Glebe, Wrington, Bristol.

Nick Geh of 10 Queensholm Crescent, Downend, Bristol, BS16 6LR. Tel: 0272 573797

CONGRATULATIONS.....

on full membership go to Adrian Thomas (7.6.86)
also David Briggs and Stephen Wyatt.

Also welcome back to Victoria Arbizu who is back in England until the end of August and has already been seen at the Mawsons Arms and on (and under) Mendip.

PLEASE NOTE.....

The Half-yearly is to be held on the 26th September - ie. one week earlier than previously advertised.

BREAKTHROUGH IN BONE HOLE

No - seriously folks, the padlock has at last been removed (blasted off!) so digging can now re-commence.

A TRIP WITH A DIFFERENCE

I daresay it's been done before though I don't know by whom - certainly not by the MCG - three generations underground together.

It is quite a thrill and when your grandson says "Sit on your bottom grandpa" - mind you do, he'll be taking care of you.

The family quartet was little Simon Ingold with his Mum and Dad and me and the venue was Goatchurch.

One wistful moment was when Helen asked the little fellow if he'd like to go on or go further down and received the reply "I'd like to see the daylight!". After all, when your only three, Goatchurch must look very formidable.

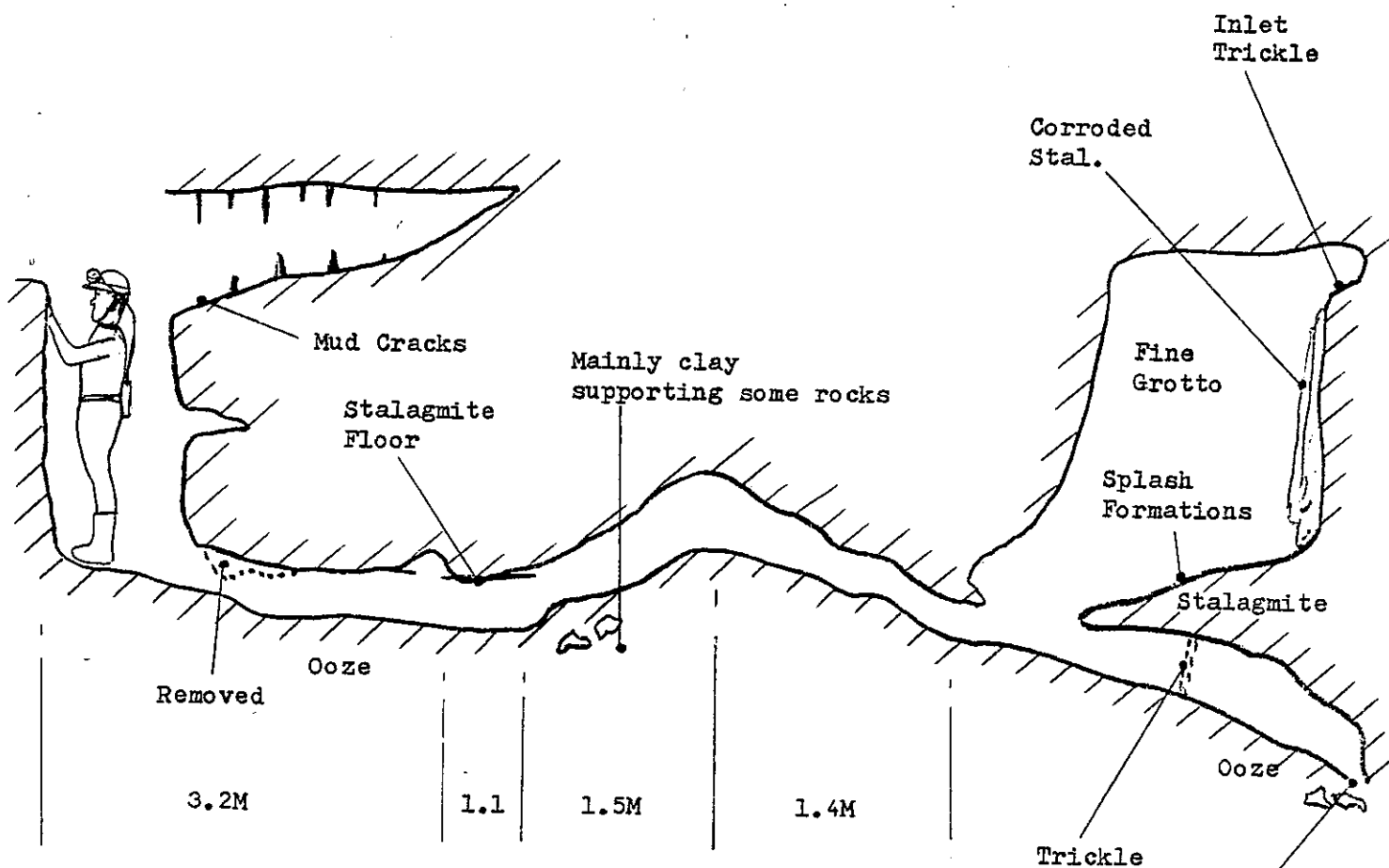
Any guesses as to which family next? And just for the curious our combined ages were 140 years. Work it out if you can.

Ron Saunders.

It has been brought to our notice that during the closing stages of this years dinner, two items were removed from the possession of Tony and Denise. One of these - a camera - mysteriously reappeared in the early hours of Sunday morning. Of the second - a certain item of ornamental metal work - there has been no trace.

Now this may just have been a practical joke in which case the item in question could now be returned to a committee member or the cottage so it can be forwarded to its rightful owners. However I suspect this was not the case and we must assume the worst. Whilst the device had no real intrinsic value it did obviously have a certain sentimental value, and Tony and Denise were understandably annoyed and upset at its disappearance.

If anyone remaining at the Star towards the end of the evening was sober enough to remember anything relevant to this mystery could they please call the MCG incident room immediately.



UPPER FLOOD

N.T.S.

Water disappears into small hole and can be heard trickling away.

Upper Flood Access

In light of the new members and as a reminder to the rest of us, I think it timely just to reiterate the access conditions relating to Upper Flood - these conditions are there for a reason; to protect the cave so please continue to see that they are observed:-

BLACKMOOR ACCESS

- 1) Full members have free access to key and are responsible for party and its conduct.
- 2) Probationary members and guests (inc other clubs) to be accompanied by a full member.

- 3) Party size to be four including the leader.
- 4) No novices permitted.
- 5) No carbide lamps allowed.
- 6) Suitable clothing to be worn to enable crawling in stream to avoid the formations.
- 7) Non-members must fill in an SCC field centre ticket (available in Nordrach Cottage).
- 8) A register will be kept of all visits to the cave. Party leader must make brief entry in book.

Let's hope that if we stick to this code, the cave may be saved from too much damage. If you have any other suggestions on cave conservation, tell the committee your views.

SAFETY NOTE

This article, on routine maintenance, is prefaced by a warning which I "lifted" from a newly published book by a caver of 25 years experience. As I feel the subject is serious, I offer no apology for the breach of copyright.

" A WARNING

Anyone finding that they are just too busy or lazy for routine maintenance is definitely in the wrong game. A caver's life depends totally on his rope; much better to give up caving altogether than kill himself by neglect of his equipment".

I would also add that your misuse of club equipment is just as likely to result in the death of some other member of the club - how would you feel in a situation like that?

1. ROPE CARE.

All group ropes are coded with a letter (ABCD etc) fixed to one end with heatshrink plastic. The key to the code is affixed to the wall in the tackle store. Before taking a rope, ensure it is of the correct length and type (ie. static or dynamic). If you are unsure, ask a more experienced member.

Ropes must always be carried underground in a tackle sack (dragging a coiled rope through a cave behind you went out of fashion along with candles and cloth caps). By using a tackle sack, the rope is easier to handle and remains protected until needed.

After every trip, every rope (no matter how "clean" it appears to be) must be washed then inspected for damage. An unwashed rope will contain silt particles which if not removed will abrade the rope next time it is used as well as making it stiff and awkward to use.

There are three rope cleaning machines at the cottage - it doesn't matter which you use, as long as you thoroughly clean the rope.

a) wall mounted rope washer - at present on the gas store wall but being moved to the washing down area.

To use, pass the rope through the pulley above the machine, down through the brushes, close the box and turn on the water supply. When washing commences do not pull the rope right through - instead, pull it back through the machine again. Repeat until only clean water flows out of the machine.

b) portable rope washer.

To use pull the rope back and forth through the washer while a second person anchors by standing on it and directs the hose pipe. Repeat until only clean water flows.

c) the Beaver - a 12" length of pipe with nylon bristles - use as a portable rope washer.

After washing inspect ropes carefully for signs of wear or damage. Do this by running the rope through your hands feeling for damage and flexing the rope to see if there are "soft spots" within the sheath. Ropes should then be stored - it is not necessary to dry ropes before returning them to the store.

Any damaged rope should be withdrawn and reported ASAP to the tackle master (Alan Dougherty). New ropes are expensive; this is a good reason for avoiding damage but no reason at all for using a suspect rope.

ROPE STORAGE

All caving ropes are made from either polyester or polyamide (nylon). Both have the advantage that generally they are not chemically affected by most substances. However, there are two chemical groups which readily and severely damage caving rope; dilute acids and strong alkaline - the chemicals we use in electric caving lamps! Irreversible damage occurs within MINUTES and no amount of washing will repair the damage.

There is no solution to this problem except to avoid all chemical contact with caving rope. The following rules must be followed:-

1. Use a proper caving lamp. Avoid ex-miners lamps, especially ACID which are open-vented and leak easily. Carbide is generally OK - you have to try very hard to ...p7

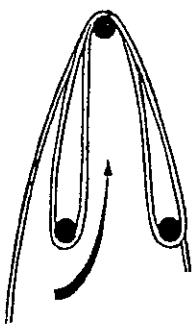
burn through a rope, and the sooty mess is quickly seen - not so acid eating away the core of the rope.

2. Always carry rope in a tackle sack - above ground as well as below. Dont throw a rope into your car then dump a lamp next to it.
3. Store ropes properly - in the tackle store is the only correct place; not the shed or your car boot.
4. NEVER leave a rope in the CHARGING AREA.
5. NEVER take lamps into the TACKLE STORE.
6. DO NOT STORE lamps or any chemicals in the tackle store (this applies to petrol for the winch, dry cells, wet cells and carbide).

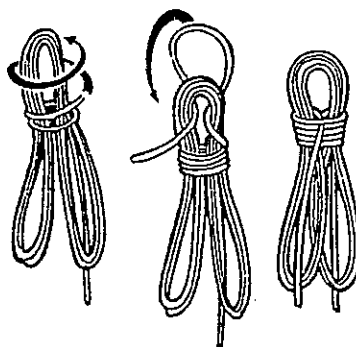
ROPE COILING

- a) When packing a rope into a bag, it is best to pack it loose not coiled. The rope is fed into the bag avoiding small coils which would cause it to twist later. At the bottom of a pitch any spare rope is left in the sack, preventing damage by falling rocks and cavers feet.
- b) Coiling for storage:
 - i) plaitting is no longer recommended for hennmantle ropes. It introduces twists and kinks, and anyway has to be unplaited before packing into a sack for use! However, if plaitting is all you know, carry on using it.
 - ii) traditional coiling - again, falling out of fashion for some reasons but is better than plaitting.
 - iii) modern coiling - by far the best method for modern ropes as it avoids introducing twists. It is simple and practical, the rope being formed into hanks by laying loops across the hand (or around 3 fixed pegs). The end of the rope is then secured by winding 4 or 5 turns around the hanks and pulling a loop between them. This loop is then passed over the hanks and pulled firmly down to fasten the rope.

When coiled the rope is returned to the tackle store and hung on a wooden hook. (N.B. ropes can be stored wet, but not if left on a nail or metal hook!)

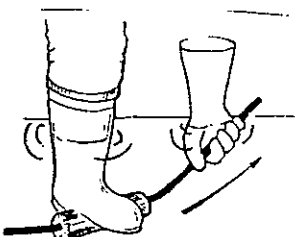


Above - coiling a rope

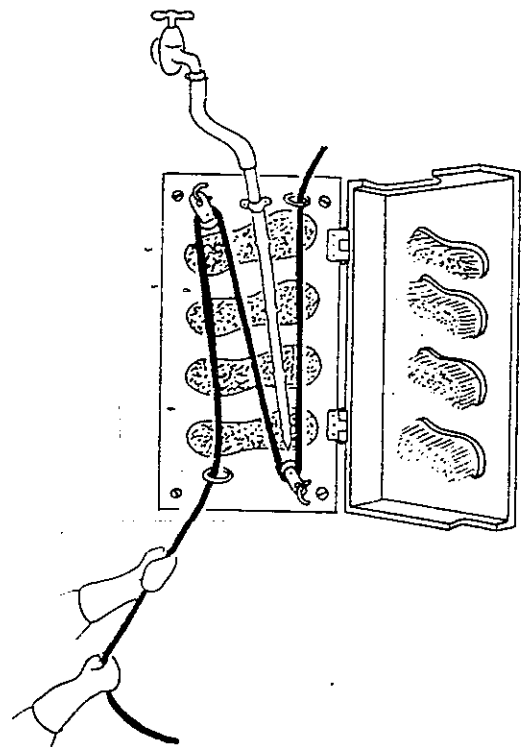


Right - wall mounted rope washer

Below - portable rope washer



Rope washer - The rope is fed through a pad of bristles in a plastic tube. The washer is held underwater and the rope pulled to and fro until clean.



30 DAYS IN THE LIFE OF A 'WHIRLING DERVISH'

(FINAL EPISODE)

Day 13. Wednesday 24th September - Weather hot.

'Cabo de Ronda' was the scene of a bloody event during the Spanish Civil War, Genaro told me. The body of an unfortunate war victim was dropped in the cave; however with the vast volumes of winter flood water every year nothing but his spirit would now remain.

Neil, Andy and I started the descent and still in daylight penetration we were confronted by a deep pool with a right-hand bend going out of sight. In the meantime Sue and Wendy stayed at the cave entrance under the shade of a cork tree keeping an eye on the weather for the system is very, very flood prone. It appeared that no previous SRT descent of the system had been made and without a boat a traverse line would have to be rigged over the pool. Working in turns, Neil and I started bolting around the obvious left-hand wall. The water obstruction passed, we progressed on and down a steep passage, the stone carved out on all sides to incredible shapes, reminding one of the sheer force of water. Leslie, JR, Ian, Martin, Paddy and Gary joined us but another obstruction halted progress. Peering cautiously over the edge of a curiously shaped rock lip we could see an impressive pitch dominated by more sculptured limestone.

The rhythmic tapping of hammer to bolt pervaded the cave again and a traverse line to a nice 'Y' hang was rigged. Neil descended, rigging a deviation en route. I followed on down making further adjustments. With so many ledges and drops in all directions it was difficult to know which way down to go next. I explored one good possibility with a temporary rig but by now we were running out of time and made good our return uneventfully.

Whenever I think of Cabo de Ronda I remember those incredible shapes which even Picasso could not have dreamed of.

Day 14. Thursday 25th September - Weather hot.

A group of us explored the ancient town of Ronda which is built on the edge of a huge gorge spanned by an old stone bridge 100m high, and visited the Arab Baths complete with fourteenth century saunas.

Later Gary and I prepared for a long overnight camping trip in Gato. Our heavy loads gave me a touch of hypothermia and I was glad to reach Dune Chamber where we set up camp. Sand has the advantage of making a comfortable bed but the disadvantage of getting in every corner of your kit. We enjoyed a cooked supper before settling down for the night.

We purposely left our alarm watches unset with the result that we both overslept and our intended exploration had to be curtailed. However the trip was an interesting experiment. Upon exiting the cave a Spanish army group was on exercise in the area and had rigged various Tyrolean traverses across the mouth of the cave. A chat with the officers resulting in us being invited to try the lofty traverse which, of course, we did.

Day 15. Friday 26th September - Weather hot.

Sadly the caving was over and the group departed for home but for Sue and I the adventure was not quite over. We headed south again to Algeciras.

Day 16. Saturday 27th September - Weather extremely hot.

We sailed across the Straights of Gibraltar to Cueta (Sebta in Moroccan) which is still under Spanish control. Unable to hire a car for the day a taxi took us to the Moroccan border where we stepped across into a truly different world belonging to another age. A lot of hustling and shouting went on and we found ourselves southbound in an old taxi, sharing with two Arabs. Typical scenes of palms, dunes and camel trains completed the atmosphere of Morocco.

At Tetuan we were escorted by one of the unwanted Arabs into the heart of the medina. We did eventually manage to rid ourselves of the escort but only to be tagged by another, and another and it became very hard to match their persistence with courteous rejection. The medina is a fascinating place where time has stood still for many centuries. During our brief visit to this land we gazed at the Rif mountains (home of hashish) and planned one day to return to do some walking there.

Day 17. Sunday 28th September - Weather very hot.

We camped for the night just outside Granada and that evening visited the city where we were lucky to witness a huge religious procession wending its way through the streets.

Day 18. Monday 29th September - Weather very hot.

We devoted the day to admiring the Alhambra, the only remaining Moorish palace in the world and which is a wonder to be seen with its flowers, fountains, pools, courtyards and beautifully carved and decorated plasterwork; a place we were sure that you could return to and be entranced all over again.

Days 19-22. Tuesday 30th September - Friday 3rd October - Weather cool, drizzly, and cold on the mountain tops.

For the next four days we moved around the Sierra Nevada touring and exploring the area, culminating with an ascent of Mulhacen the highest peak in Spain at 12000ft. Sierra Nevada seems to consist mainly of shattered slate and the approach to many peaks is vast, boring and featureless, making navigation a challenge, especially in limited visibility with a Spanish map as was our experience. Nevertheless the views from the peaks (weather permitting) were quite spectacular.

Days 23-25. Saturday 4th - Monday 6th October - Weather hot but overcast.

We journeyed to Sierra Morena and from a base camp at Santa Elena we spent two days visiting the mining village of Centenillo and surrounding hills where my ancestors mined galena for over a century and I spent my first thirteen years. The mines, now disused for over twenty years since my father retired, and stripped of all machinery left me with mixed feelings of nostalgia and melancholy. However I did meet a few people who remembered me, including one incredible old man of 85 who spent a day climbing the hills with us, but their generous hospitality made up for my sad feelings.

Day 26. Tuesday 7th October - Weather hot.

We arrived in Madrid during the late afternoon where I visited my old boarding school. The headmistress, now a young 75 year old, remembered me and welcomed us with outstretched arms. After a tour of the old school nostalgia got the better of me and we headed north for the Pyrenees.

Days 27-30. Wednesday 8th - 11th October - Weather variable.

After an overnight camp near Zaragoza we crossed into France and made our way via Objat and Paris where we visited friends before sailing to Portsmouth and home for a reunion with Oliver who could not accompany us on such a long holiday because of school commitments and, much to his disgust, had to stay with his aunt.

Conclusion.

Southern Spain, despite the distance from our land, has much to offer us speleos. Petrol, food and accommodation are cheap, the natives are friendly and the areas of Karst are vast and mostly unexplored with excellent depth and length potential. I am sure I speak for all who attended in conveying gratitude to our Spanish hosts and we very much hope to avail ourselves of their services again.

by Mike Haselden

Earwig ...

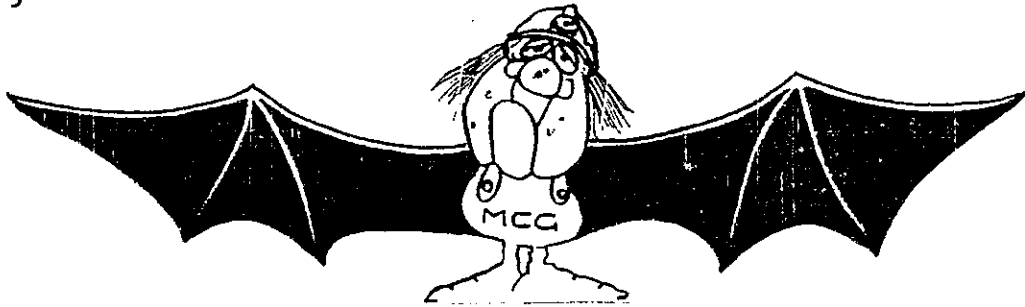
What's going on? Are they talking about me? Earwig listens in on the committee:



... advert in Descent for new members and extolling the virtues of the cottage facilities... two new heaters for the main bedrooms... payphone - to be connected soon on a years trial... small circular airvents for cottage windows... arriving soon - new chairs and tables (from Navy?), stackable to make more room when necessary... new soakaway planned by camping area... cottage work weekends to be organised.

Bob Speleobat
says...

GO BATTY...



come out of hibernation and fly to

PRIDDY (hall) BARN

to hang out at the

'MCG *half-yearly* BARN DANCE'

on September 26th - 8 'til 12:30pm

you can home in on

BAR, BUFFET, MUSIC, CALLER, DIS-ORGANISED GAMES

all for **£3**

ADMISSION is by ticket only and can be bought in advance the committee

We would be very grateful for some volunteers to help with the food. If you could give your offers of help and ideas to Yvonne Ward (0252-876783) then she can make sure we don't end up with a mountain of lettuce and millions of sausage rolls!

THE ½ YEARLY....

This weekend will also be a working weekend with plans to put down the foundations for the coalbunker plus a concrete float. There are many other jobs to be done so if you are looking for an excuse not to go caving than we can be of some help to you and you can help us (the club).

YV'S DROPPINGS

Lesley, "You'll be pleased to know I've mended the hole in my arse".

Yvonne, "We're not going to bed until we've first decided what we're going to do".