

Mendip Caving Group

NEWS

NUMBER 202

AUGUST 1988

SIMA GESM, AUG 13th - 29th

As you read this, the summer expedition should be getting under way and the final team consisting of 10 MCG plus 6 rather "well known" Northern cavers will be assembling in Ronda by the evening of Saturday Aug 13th (Optimist! - Ed.). Base camp is to be the Refugio Rodrigues de la Fuente situated a little way below the cave entrance at about 1400m.

The overall plan is to rig the cave in 3 days (hopefully no problem given the extensive rigging expertise on the trip), then leave the cave rigged for a day or so to allow everyone a chance to reach the bottom before de-rigging and heading north to the Picos and another system called the Sima la Cueto.

Sima la Cueto consists of a network of large, predominantly horizontal passages reached by a continuous series of pitches totalling 600m in depth containing a single entrance pitch of 302m. Thus a trip to the farther reaches of the system will be quite arduous and probably involve a bivouac.

As you can see we are all set for an action packed 2 weeks and should return armed with a large amount of newsletter material and hopefully one or two decent photos.

Neil Hutchinson

VALE - MRS FRY

It is with sadness that we have to report the death of Mrs Fry in June. Jim and Mrs Fry both contributed greatly to the well being of the MCG. Back in the days of the old cottage in Netherwood, where material comforts were few, our members were often to be found taking breakfast in Mrs Fry's cafe or outside in her garden. Her poached eggs on toast were second to none, and many hours were spent there drinking tea whilst planning caving trips and digging projects.

When the MCG were made homeless, Jim provided land for our wooden cottage, and later sold us a piece of his land for our present building. After Jim's death in 1981 Mrs Fry continued to take an interest in the Group, and those of us who visited her were treated to her generous hospitality and to long chats in her kitchen. She was interested in hearing about our trips and discoveries although she never could understand what made us go down "they horrible dark holes".

We extend our sympathy to Ken, Mary and the rest of Mrs Fry's family.

Joan Goddard

HALF-YEARLY GENERAL MEETING

There will be a general meeting of the MCG on Saturday October 8th starting at 3-pm at Nordrach Cottage. Cottage fees will be discussed, although this is an informal meeting at which members are free to raise any subject.

SPELEODATE

1988 MEETS PROGRAMME

13 AUG - 27 AUG	SPAIN	SIMA GESM	NEIL HUTCHINSON	01-267-1005
02 SEP - 03 SEP	MENDIP	BLACK HOLE SWILDONS	GILL WARREN	0252-835051
16 SEP - 17 SEP	YORKS	PEN-Y-GHENT	MARTIN ROWE	0252-876783
08 OCT	MENDIP	HALF-YEARLY	BOB SPELEO	0761-62797
15 OCT - 16 OCT	DERBYS	TO BE ARRANGED	JOHN BEAUCHAMP	0761-62929
04 NOV - 05 NOV	MENDIP	STOKE LANE	MIKE MINTRAM	01-673-2057
18 NOV - 19 NOV	S.WALES	OGOF FFYNNON DDU	GEOFF BARTON	0932-849241
02 DEC - 03 DEC	MENDIP	GB CAVERN	GORDON LISTER	01-579-3466
XMAS - NEW YEAR	MAJORCA	AVENCS Y CUAVAS	MARTIN ROWE	0252-876783

CAVING ACCOMMODATION for 30 people is available at the MCG headquarters, Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6XW Tel.0761-62797 National Grid Reference 5147.5606 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 sheet 182

COTTAGE FEES per night:	Prob., Assoc., Full and Hon. members	£1.25
	Members children	£1.25
	Reciprocal members (SWCC, NPC)	£1.25
	Guest clubs and members guests	£1.75

CAMPING FEES per night: Charged at the same rate as cottage fees.
COTTAGE DAY FEES: Members using any of the cottage facilities but not staying overnight, are asked to make a reasonable donation via the donation box.



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COTTAGE BOOKINGS

Cottage doings

18 AUG-25 AUG	DAVE BRIGGS	(04)
02 SEP-04 SEP	ROY KEMPSTON	(10)
12 SEP-16 SEP	FOSSEWAY SCH	(12)
19 SEP-20 SEP	RNAS	(19)
23 SEP-25 SEP	LINCOLN SCOUTS CC	(8)
24 OCT-28 OCT	RNAS	(19)
07 NOV-11 NOV	RNAS	(19)
21 NOV-25 NOV	RNAS	(19)



ON THE MOVE

Dave Briggs has moved to:
51 Wybourn Grove, Onchan, Isle of Man.

Grant Shephard has moved to: 1 Lower
Tail, Carpenters Park, Watford, Herts.
Tel: 01-428-0083

Gill Warren has moved to:
6 Oakley Road, Camberley, Surrey,
GU15 3AT. Tel: Camberley 684809

Arthur and Lynn Spain have moved to:
"Waitangi", (The Beeches), Long Lane,
Dinder, Nr. Wells, Somerset, BA5 3PQ.
Tel: 0749-79358

Andy Beare/Lesley Robbins have moved to:
7 Reynards Close, Winnersh, Berks, RG11
5NT. Tel: 0734-792066

Tony and Denise Knibbs have moved to:
Las Claourios, Thil, 31530 Levignac,
France. Tel: 61 85 82 32

FULL MEMBERS

The following have been accepted as full
members:

Mike Carson (Charterhouse Cave &
Pinetree Pot, M. Rowe/Y. Ward).
Mark Buck (Manor Farm, V. Simmonds/
J. Beauchamp).

PROBATIONARY MEMBERS

The following have been accepted as
probationary members:

C. Wright, D. Little, K. Knight,
D. Coutin, S. Say, J. Loring.

PROSPECTIVE MEMBER

The following application for
probationary membership has been
received and will be considered at the
next committee meeting:

Jocelyn Clark (proposed by J. Beauchamp,
V. Simmonds) Swallet Farm, East
Harptree, Somerset.

COTTAGE FEES

At the AGM there was much discussion
about the cottage "night" fees and
proposed day fees. There were two
written proposals handed to the
committee which were read out to
members. As there was no satisfactory
conclusion it was decided to publish
these proposals in the Newsletter so ALL
club members can read, think and,
hopefully, contribute some constructive
discussion at the October 'half-yearly'
meeting.

Please read pages 4 to 7 then if there
is anything you feel strongly about
please have your say.

YV*SDROPPINGS

Discussion in Hunters bar on ladder
climbing technique...

Pete Collings-Wells, "I always prefer to
put one in from behind!".

Heard coming from the showers...

Steph, "I'll hold your thingy in for
you".

Later...

Steph again, "I'm pressing it in as hard
as I can but it's still only dribbling".

Hannah Dougherty, "Does the MCG club
have its own pig?".

Louise, "I can't get it in the same hole
twice!".

EARWIG...

...Drainage channel needed across
gateway to relieve flooding by side
door... Long term maintenance plan and
budget required... New and better
club/cottage advert for Descent... New
Charterhouse permits to be issued to
full members (completed)...Frys to be
approached re second electricity
cable... Consider fencing off cess pit
to prevent parking!... 4 members
attended SRT rescue weekend - Mike
Haseldedn to organise Mendip
weekend/Armchair meet/newsletter article
to pass on information... New rope rack
in tackle store... £200 approved for
bang and other digging expenses... MCG
members booked SWCC cottage then failed
to turn up (the meet secretary had no
knowledge of this - MCG have apologised
and paid SWCC for lost bed nights as
another party was turned away).

Comments on MCG funds in 1987 and proposals for 1988 and 1989

(see attached tables)

Club income and expenses in 1987 and 1988

Membership and subscriptions rose slightly during 1987, with new members joining locally. Overall, club funds were satisfactory for 1987 and should be favourable for 1988. It is bad management, though, not to have recovered taxable income from covenants in 1987, and this must be put right if the proposed expedition grant and the journal costs are to be funded in 1988 without undue reduction in the net income, which is itself needed to improve the MCG bank balance after the outlay on new cottage works.

Cottage income

1987 saw the busiest year ever for the cottage, with about 3200 bed nights (estimated). Most of these were guest parties, principally Unicorn Leisure and the Royal Navy. A quieter period is anticipated in future, though still with Navy bookings which get a favourable rate for using the cottage. There is now limited advertising in Descent for guest clubs to stay at the cottage, and this is proving its worth.

Members' bed nights have yo-yoed between 1986 and 1987, and there is no way of predicting reliably their numbers in 1988 and 1989. For discussion purposes, I have assumed a figure half-way between the last two years. The growing number of local members are making more use of the cottage, who of course do not need to stay overnight. The financial implication of this is discussed in the final section.

Cottage expenses

One of the main reasons for accepting such a high level of guest usage during 1987 was to pay for essential cottage repairs and to contribute to new improvements such as the washdown area and drying shed. This policy has proved outstandingly successful, with a handsome income surplus after offsetting cottage expenses and major cottage repairs, and with a £1565 contribution towards the new works. The net charge to MCG funds of the new works was thereby reduced to roundly £1000.

The sharp rise in cottage expenses will of course not be repeated in 1988, with fewer people staying; but the overall cottage costs (two-thirds being fixed expenses which have to be paid regardless of how many people stay there) are going up, apparently inexorably. I have assumed some increases in costs in 1988 and 1989, and the financial projections show that as a result we shall just about break even in 1988. Some repairs can be afforded but there will be no money spare for new works.

higher cottage fees in 1989

We must anticipate increasing cottage fees at the beginning of 1989, by at least .25p per bed night. My projection of the likely effect on

gross and net incomes is shown in the first 1989 column. Even this does not leave a great working margin after costs; it also makes the difference between members' and guests' fees seem even smaller, with £1.50 charged to members and reciprocal clubs, £1.75 for the Navy, and £2 for guests. Personally I should favour a 45p increase for guests (25p for the Navy), with the general guest rate being £2.20.

a new approach to cottage fees

My attention has been drawn to some apparent debate between local and distant members, about reasonable contribution towards daytime cottage expenses. Few local members need to stay overnight, of course. I see the issue as somewhat wider and more important than just day fees. The active club is becoming more of a Mendip-based group, whose members will need to stay overnight at the cottage less frequently. Yet the traditional system of charging for members' usage has been on a night fee basis. I consider that there is therefore a strong argument that the cottage night fee system should be revised to allow for the new circumstances of usage, and so ensure adequate financial contributions towards the Group's biggest asset.

We already rely heavily on guests (and now the Navy too) to pay for much of the cottage expenses, including a substantial amount of the fixed costs. You will see from page 2 of my financial notes that, typically, members pay only 20-40% of the total cottage income.

The contribution from guests can also be expressed in a different way, by enabling cottage fees to be lower than they otherwise would be. For example, in 1989 estimated fixed cottage expenses are £2175: if MCG members had to pay for all of this, it would cost £3.40 every time a member stayed overnight, plus a further 60p for consumables (ie, variable expenses). A total of about £4 per night, more if some members ceased to turn up!... In practice, if we continue to be subsidised by guests and the Navy, we might expect to pay about £1.50 per night in 1989, with roughly 90p towards fixed expenses and 60p towards variable costs. So any changes in methods of payment are hardly going to be extortionate!

All members, however frequently or infrequently they visit Mendip or go caving, already pay in their subscription a contribution towards caving tackle, etc. As members of the Group, we have a joint responsibility to look after the wellbeing of the cottage structure, however much we make use of the cottage. One possibility is therefore to extend the membership subscription, to include a permanent or optional cottage levy of £5-£10, to contribute towards cottage costs. An extension of this argument has been proposed by some members, to make it possible to pay a lump sum for all cottage usage during the year. The total sum required from members during 1989, under £1000, or no more than £10 per member, makes this a proposition worth examining.

Options for payment of cottage fees

I set out below what I see as the options for 1989 onwards, for the bulk of membership - probationary and full members:

A) Abolish night fees, and charge day fees instead as a similar rate, eg £1.50 per day.

Advantages: simple to implement, equal contribution incurred by all members when they use the cottage.

Disadvantages: for local members, a heavy penalty for frequent use of cottage during daytime only, when variable costs are only 50-60p per person per day. A discouragement to a growing and enthusiastic section of the membership.

B) Keep night fees for members, at say £1.50, but allow an optional yearly lump-sum contribution of £5 towards day fees as part of the membership subscription.

Advantages: No change required for distant members, and a facility for fair payment towards day-time expenses for local members, equal to a day cottage visit 9 times a year. Distant members could take advantage of this option, and then be required to pay only £1 per night, booking themselves in as a 'Day' member in the cottage booking sheets.

Disadvantages: No major contribution by local members towards fixed cottage expenses, though some extra money would be gained by the club after covenant income had been claimed.

C) Keep night-fees for members, but offer a £10 all-in yearly contribution to cottage costs, with no fees then payable by members who pay this lump sum - in effect a 'season ticket'.

Advantages: Contribution by all members towards fixed cottage costs and variable expenses, with further significant income from covenants if many members use the scheme. Payment as part of subscriptions in the early part of the year ensures extra money is earned from bank interest. Enough income, if popular, to cover a number of future years' increases in cottage costs. Once paid, an incentive to cave on Mendip more frequently. Balances out frequent usage by local members incurring daytime expenses, with distant members staying less frequently but using overnight accommodation.

Disadvantages: May not be seen as fair by members who use the cottage very infrequently and at present have a yearly outlay of less than £10 - but they have the option of not buying the 'season ticket'. Sets a likely maximum on cottage income from members (about £1600 with 120 paying members, after covenants), with a small rise in expenses if more people come to Mendip.

D) Keep option of night fee payment, but offer and encourage payment of a £5 or £10 lump-sum as described above (a choice of either to be allowed). The £5 sum is likely to be preferred by local members, and the £10 sum by distant members.

Advantages (other than above): gives a flexible choice of payment to members.

Disadvantages (other than above): the likely members' cottage income is reduced below £1600.

E) Make one of the lump-sum schemes mandatory, with abolition of cottage fees.

Advantages: simpler to operate, and ensuring a guaranteed income from all members. Even at £10, the prepayment amounts to no more than 7 nights' worth (eg 3½ weekends' worth) of cottage night fees already subsidised by guest income.

Disadvantages: Requires a further payment from members even if they are 'retired' or 'resting from caving'; some might prefer to become associate members.

As examples of likely income from lump-sum payments and covenants, I have shown estimates for 1989 based on the present size of membership,

firstly with an average payment of £5 and no night fees income, and secondly with 120 full and probationary members paying £10.

next steps

It is important to keep a sense of proportion about the options. Members pay much less than half of all cottage income, and the largest slice of cottage costs is not day-to-day expenses, but fixed costs which must be paid whether or not anyone stays there.

It is, I believe, reasonable for all members to contribute fairly towards these fixed expenses, since ownership of a cottage is an integral part of the Group's structure - and part of its success in recent years. Concern about payment or non-payment of day fees may be reasonable but not the most important part of paying for the cottage. If the Group agrees that some form of lump-sum contribution is reasonable for cottage upkeep, then it would be straightforward to extend the scheme to include day fees as well.

I propose: "that the committee reviews possible future methods of payment for the cottage, consults members about the options described above (and any others that may be suggested), and reports back to the October half-yearly meeting with definite proposals that may require voting on". Any new scheme would be expected to start on 1st January 1989, when subscriptions are due.

Jonathan Roberts

I wish this preceding paragraph to be considered formally as a motion to the AGM on March 26th.

PHIL INGOLD'S PROPOSAL:

I would like to propose that we introduce a fixed charge for people using the cottage facilities who don't stay overnight. (e.g. midweek/evening cavers and day visitors, on any day).

A system of signing a 'day/evening' sheet, similar to weekend bookings, should be introduced. It would enable the cottage fees to be recorded, as they are for weekends.

I suggest 75p for Full and Probationary members and £1.00 for non members.

The introduction of this measure would ensure all users of the cottage contribute to its running costs.

THE COMMITTEE'S PROPOSAL:

Any system of membership fees / cottage fees (either per day or night) should be easily understood and simple to administer. The present system should continue with the following changes:

Members making only minimal casual use of the cottage without staying overnight (eg changing and showering only) should pay at least 50p, which will be deposited in a wall safe using pre printed envelopes. If a member makes more use of the cottage than this a full cottage fee becomes due.

Non members are not entitled to use the cottage as day visitors. The only fee appropriate to non members will be £2 per day or part day or per night.

Cottage fee for members will be £1.25

Anyone using the cottage will pay the appropriate fee for a day or part day or per night, ie if arriving Saturday morning and departing Sunday afternoon, two cottage fees are due (2 x £1.25 members, 2 x £2.00 non members).

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1989 with £5 cottage charge	1989 with £10 cottage charge
COTTAGE INCOME						
fees due: guests	£1.75	£1.75	£1.75	£2.00	£2.00	£2.00
Navy	-	£1.50	£1.50	£1.75	£1.75	£1.75
reciprocal	£1.25	£1.25	£1.25	£1.50	£1.50	£1.50
members	£1.25	£1.25	£1.25	£1.50	£5 levy	£10 levy
Guests night fees	462.25	440.25	400		460	
Guest clubs fees	424.25	614.50	700		800	
Royal Navy fees	-	832.50	850		970	
Unicorn Leisure fees	-	2243.50	-		-	
Previous years fees	92.50	in above	in above		in above	
Guest fees (deposit)	51.00	in above	in above		in above	
Insurance payment	140.25	90.00	0		0	
Telephone income	-	74.50	250		250	
SUB-TOTAL	1170.25	4295.25	2200	2480	2480	2480
Members night fees	640.25	944.55	800	960	-	-
Members cottage levy	-	-	-	-	800	1600
ALL COTTAGE INCOME	1810.50	5239.80	3000	3440	3280	4080
Members fees as %	35%	18%	27%	28%	24%	39%
COTTAGE EXPENSES						
Basic heat (part of elec.bill)	300.00	325.00	350		375	
General rates	378.88	492.73	550		600	
Water rates/WWA	80.02)))	
Insurances	318.10=	479.60=	500		550	
Refuse collection	21.25	23.00	40		50	
Misc.spending (eg repairs/new phone)	171.41	1029.36	650		600	
ALL FIXED EXPENSES	1269.66	2349.69	2090		2175	
Fuel (coal/wood)	38.10	180.45	150		50	
Propane gas	53.20	)	100		110	
Rest of elec.bill	168.43	535.64=	160=		380	
Sewage disposal	0.00	131.80	140		150	
Household items/ Warden/Float	120.91	400.39	150		160	
Telephone bill	0.00	76.80	250		250	
ALL VARIABLE EXP.	380.64	1325.08	950		1100	
ALL COTTAGE EXPENSES	1650.30	3674.77	3040		3275	
NET COTTAGE INCOME	160.20	1565.03	-40	165	5	805

	1986	1987	1988	1989
ESTIMATED BED NIGHTS				
guests	264	252	230	230
guest clubs	242	351	400	400
Navy	-	555	570	570
Unicorn	-	1282	-	-
other	29	in above	in above	in above
SUB-TOTAL	535	2440	1200	1200
members	512	756	640	640
TOTAL BED NIGHTS	1047	3196	1840	1840
members nights as %	49%	24%	35%	35%
TOTAL COST/NIGHT				
of which:	157p	115p	166p	178p
Fixed cost/night	121p	74p	114p	118p
Variable cost/night	36p	41p	52p	60p

1988 & 1989 INCOME AND EXPENSES

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1989 with £5 cottage charge	1989 with £10 cottage charge
CLUB INCOME						
Bank interest	105.42	81.95))))
CCC permits	17.65	19.15	)150	)150	)150	)150
Donations	69.17	61.43))))
Misc. income	98.67	1.50	0	0	0	0
Dinner/¼-yearly (net)	-36.37	38.01	0	0	0	0
Sales eg shirts (net)	49.25	122.20	150	150	150	150
PO Fund interest	433.78	390.74	350	350	350	350
SUB-TOTAL	737.57	714.98	650	650	650	650
Members' subs (120 paying)	1575.00*	1702.50*	1700	1700	2300	2900
Covenants	719.69	0.00	)630+	570"	770"	970"
			)570@			
ALL CLUB INCOME	3032.26	2417.48	3550	2920	3720	4520
of which, Cottage charge	-	-	-	-	800	1600
CLUB FUND INCOME	3032.26	2417.48	3550	2920	2920	2920
CLUB EXPENSES						
Committee (excl Cottage Warden)	1318.79	1255.44	1300	1400	1400	1400
Misc. spending	92.20	70.49	100	100	100	100
Expedition grant	-	-	400	400	400	400
Journal cost	0	0	600	0	0	0
ALL CLUB EXPENSES	1410.99	1325.93	2400	1900	1900	1900
NET CLUB INCOME	1621.27	1091.55	1150	1020	1020	1020

JUST FOR THE RECORD

In case anyone is under the impression that all group activity off Mendip has ceased, the following is a brief resume of the trips so far this year in Yorkshire.

Initials have been used for names and to avoid confusion the cast list is:
 Andy Reare, Lesley Robbins, Ian Parry, Martin Rowe, Yvonne Ward, Mike Haselden, Neil Hutchinson, Paddy Newman, Bob Marles, Gary Pairaudeau.

JAN 16th - JUNIPER GULF (AB/NH/PN/IP)
 Cave rigged using alternative dry hangs. Good trip to bottom; exited without any problem but experienced a few "navigational difficulties" on the fell!

FEB 18th - ROWTEN POT (GP/BM/NH)
 Lots of H2O about so descended using 'flyover route' - very impressive.

FEB 19th - STREAMPASSAGE POT (GP/BM/NH/AB)
 Still lots of water but fortunately in solid form due to overnight freeze - some excellent rigging involved.

FEB 20th - FLOOD ENTRANCE (GP/BM/NH/AB)
 Photographic trip into main chamber - big stream flowing.

MAR 12th - BAR POT (AB/NH/IP)
 Originally planned as a main shaft trip but diverted to Bar Pot due to volume of water.

MAR 13th - FLOOD ENTRANCE (AB/NH/IP)
 Good trip although a little damp - main chamber very impressive.

APR 14th - HURNEL MOSS (AB/NH)
 Good rigging practice!

APR 15th - LITTLE HULL POT (AB/NH)
 Not a large cave but well worth a visit. 2nd pitch a bit intimidating for those of shorter reach.

APR 16th - BULL POT (KINGSDALE) (AB/NH)
 Up early to beat the hordes!

MAY 07th - LONGKIN WEST/HURNEL MOSS (NH/AB/IP/MR/YW/LR/MH)
 A good days caving - split into two groups rigging the two caves simultaneously then ascending and walking over to the opposite cave to de-rig. Worked very well considering the

potential for disaster as the fell was totally clogged in with visibility down to a few metres.

MAY 08th - JINGLING POT (MH/AB/LR/IP/NH/MR/YW)
 Both rift route and main shaft rigged and a great deal of fun had by all - especially MH who insisted on doing everything about 4 times!

MAY 28th - LONGKIN WEST (AB/LR/MR/YW/NH/BM)
 A fairly uneventful trip.

MAY 29th - RIFT POT (ALLOTMENT) (AB/LR/MR/YW/NH/BM)
 Found much better alternative route down main shaft but requires a little more rope (about 100m in total).

MAY 30th - LITTLE HULL POT (AB/LR/BM/NH)
 A pleasant photographic trip.

MAY 31st - BULL POT (KINGSDALE) (AB/LR/NH)
 A very quick trip down and out before lunchtime!

JUN 18th/19th - RESCUE COURSE (MH/NH/AB/PN)
 A weekend of SRT rescue techniques - very informative, culminating in a rescue out of POOL SINK in Easegill.

JUL 01st - LOST JOHNS (MH/AB/NH/PN + DE/DL)
 Down to master cave via Dome - excellent!

JUL 02nd - LANCASTER HOLE (AB/MH/PN/NH)
 Due to very inclement weather, a dry system was pretty essential so we visited some of the less trodden parts of Lancaster in the Montague West area - exited via Lancaster Hole.

JUL 03rd - MARBLE STEPS (AB/MH/PN/NH)
 Descended via "Shadow route" to start of intestines but exited due to threatening weather.

DEADLINE . . .

...For the next newsletter is Sept 23rd.

If you are disappointed with the content of this newsletter, please don't blame the editor - write something more interesting for her to print.