

Mendip Caving Group

NEWS

NUMBER 218

NOVEMBER 1991

ARTHUR COX

by Malcolm Cotter

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Arthur Cox on the 6th November from a heart attack at the age of 67. Arthur had just recovered from double pneumonia, and was undergoing treatment for kidney failure, when he complained of abdominal pains in hospital, and subsequently had his gall bladder removed. He died a few days after the operation. Arthur was greatly cheered by the card which he received from members while in hospital.

Arthur joined the MCG in 1959 while in his late thirties having done 12 years caving with the Scouts. He continued to help them, founding the Scout Caving Group. He often got members to help him by leading his scout caving trips, and sometimes the scouts would help with his digging. In the relaxed atmosphere of those days, Arthur kept a trunk of caving gear for the scouts in the old cottage in Nether Wood. For several years Arthur's Mendip transport was an NSU Quickly. Arthur was a good engineer and kept vehicles going in a remarkable manner, that is why he never needed the latest model. He frequently helped to patch up vehicles so that the owners could make the return journey to London.

Arthur was a keen digger, and for many years supported the work at Coopers Hole Cheddar. The work was great fun for all involved apart from the digging. Following the breakthrough at Coopers Hole in August 1962 a crowd assembled at his house, and with Arthur as chairman we all composed a press release on the discovery, which he published. Arthur was much taken with the notion of a master cave at Cheddar, so was keen to pursue the dig at Coopers Hole, but because of poor support was unable to do so. His thoughts about the Cheddar system led him to look at the prospects of Bone Hole.

Arthurs last digging venture and his greatest achievement was with Bernard Reeves at Bone Hole. Arthur and Bernard pursued the dig with great enthusiasm but little help over several years, eventually confounding everyone by their fine discovery. I well remember the visit from them both on 30th December 1974 when they called in on me to relate what they had seen the evening before. The find came late in the day, after they had extended their digging session as things had been getting interesting. Arthur uncovered an opening with Bernard looking on from the top of the shaft. When the obstructing rock was released a rush of air was felt and a dark cavity revealed. They did not venture down for fear of the unstable nature of the shaft. The following weekend the shaft had partly fallen in and it took until late on Sunday, after shoring and heavy digging, to make the breakthrough.

Arthur was only able to continue his caving for a few years after the Bone Hole discovery because of angina. He then took up Genealogy. His first and continuing project was in compiling his family tree. He then assisted other people in their studies and gained the respect of many in the field. To help him in his work he used a Sinclair Spectrum computer, which he programmed himself and used to the end.

For a number of years Arthur let his membership lapse, but earlier this year he rejoined as an associate member and made a few visits to the Eclipse. He was very interested in the discovery of the stream in Wigmore Swallet, and its connection with Cheddar. The group has lost an early member who did a great deal to advance underground exploration in the Cheddar area.

++++ MCG 1991 MEETS PROGRAMME +++++ BANK HOLIDAY WEEKENDS IN ITALICS +++++

Meets and Leaders are published as an on-going programme throughout the year.

DATE	AREA	MAIN EVENT	CONTACT	TELE. NO.
07 Dec - 08 Dec	SWales	AGY AGY	Geoff Beale	0734-722510
04 Jan - 05 Jan	SWales	SWCC	Geoff Barton	0932-849241

Accommodation in Yorks & S.Wales can be booked by through the relevant cottage warden:

Yorkshire	Northern Pennine Club	Steve Thorpe	0532 559214
South Wales	South Wales Caving Club	Debby Stevens	0202 679602

WEEKLY MEETINGS are held at the Group's Mendip headquarters on Wednesdays at 7.00pm. and at the Eclipse Inn, Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey, on Thursdays from 8.30pm.

CAVING ACCOMMODATION for 30 people is available at the MCG headquarters, Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6XW Tel.0761-462797
National Grid Reference S147.5606 Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 sheet 182

COTTAGE FEES per night: MCG members, member's children, SWCC and NPC £1
Guest clubs and member's guests £2
ANNUAL SEASON TICKET: Optional exemption from cottage fees, for members £10
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Full and Probationary Members: £20; Associate Members: £10
The subscription includes free day-time access to the cottage by the member, their children, and their accompanied guests

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The Mendip Caving Group is a registered charity, number 270088

The Group's Trustees are: Ron Saunders, Malcolm Cotter, Pat Walsh and Peter Matthews

ARTHUR J. B. COX

by Mike Rennie

Arthur Cox was born in 1924, the second son of his father's second marriage. His father had been a senior member of the Great Western Railway organisation, and had served a term as Mayor of Ealing. Arthur was educated at St Pauls School, West Kensington, where he was a keen member of the army cadet force. He moved with the school to Crowthorn where it was evacuated on the outbreak of war. At school he gained what today would have amounted to 10 O levels, including Science, Latin, and Greek.

On leaving school in the middle of the war, he went to Sandhurst. It was there that during some recklessly organised training he was almost killed by a bomb explosion, an experience that left him scarred for life. He immediately left Sandhurst and joined Napier's as an engineer producing weapons for the war, often working over twenty hours a day.

The war over, his accident took its effect, as he moved from one unsuitable job to another. Undaunted by his job prospects, Arthur sought to help in other fields, a trait of his character we will all remember with admiration and thankfulness. He became Scoutmaster of the 12th Hounslow Scouts, where many of the boys were on probation. He gave each one his unlimited time, day and night to help them. This work began to extend to other areas when he took over also as Senior Scoutmaster at a hostel for boys needing help, in Osterley. I first met Arthur in 1950 when he was helping with the scout troop near his home in Ealing, forming a friendship that lasted over 40 years until his death. At a scout camp the previous year on Mendip, Arthur had met Joe Bulcher, the then Stationmaster at Binegar, who had introduced him to caving. At our camp at Priddy Hill Farm, we were led off one night, it was always at night in those days, to enter Upper Swildons with plimsolls and scout berets. It was an experience for which I shall always owe a debt of gratitude to Arthur.

In 1952 both Arthur and I joined the 5th Isleworth Scouts, Arthur leading the Senior Scouts. Arthur's rather unorthodox methods may not have been wholly attractive to the respectable scouting fraternity, but to us in our late teens he was a continued source of inspiration, challenge and help.

Caving trips to Mendip increased when we both joined the Mendip Caving Group in about 1958, opening another chapter in Arthur's life. Apart from his caving exploits, his name will go down as a legend as one who could get almost any car going, usually with the help of a piece of silver paper from his ever ready cigarette packet.

COTTAGE BOOKING

A new trial cottage booking book will be introduced for Bookings from January 1992 till the AGM, which will have a counterfoil and will include seven day booking. Comments on its suitability should be made to the committee.

Included in it will be new cottage rules, a copy of which is included with this newsletter for your consideration.

THURSDAY MEETINGS

Thursday 9th of January Ian McKechnie will be putting on a slide show at The Eclipse, and also we will have the January Newsletter available that evening. It is hoped to have more slide shows and talks there if the first one is successful.

THE LONG ROAD TO ST. CUTHBERT'S SWALLET

by Tony Knibbs

Finished, the standing joke which has lasted almost twenty years, "How's St.6Cuthbert's survey going, Dave?" The ensuing status report was often lost amidst mock-derisive laughter. Following the early surveys - notably B.Ellis (1962) and R.Steiner (1968) - Dave Irwin had embarked on producing a definitive high - grade work, parts of which were progressively published in BEC "Caving Reports". At last the complete work is published in the form of a monograph of which the quality is outstanding.

"St. Cuthbert's Swallet" written and compiled by D.J.Irwin, published by Bristol Exploration Club (1991) and available at £10.00 inc. p&p from BEC, The Belfry, Wells Road, Priddy, Wells, Somerset. ISBN 0-9517282-0-2.

A4 format, 82pp with 56 monochrome photos, full colour front and back covers, 8 drawings, 28 survey illustrations, and cross - section drawings. An A1 format folded master survey sheet is included with the publication.

Taken as a whole, the team of Dave Irwin and his named colaborators - Dr D.C.Ford, P.J.Romford, C.M.Smart and Dr J.M.Wilson - brings this publication a considerable fund of expertise which is evident in the comprehensive insight offered into one of Britain's major cave systems.

The facinating story of the discovery and exploration, covering the period 1953 - 1988, makes compulsive reading of the first quarter of the book. Several well chosen (and sometimes nostalgic) photos enliven the text which nicely catches the atmosphere of the 1950's and 1960's explorations. The personalities named here constitute a veritable "Who's Who" of Mendip at the time, admirably illustrating the cross-club partisipation in this great adventure.

By its very nature, this multi-level labyrinth of passagees, chambers and occasional boulder chokes is difficult to describe, either verbally or pictorially. The cave is described series by series, each being illustrated by an appropriate mini-survey, which can easily be located on the main survey sheet, where the overall plan view is only annotated according to individual series.

Without already having a working knowledge of this complex system, the reader would do well not to attempt non-stop absorption of every thing from entrance rift to sump 2; it would be akin, say, tp reading consecutively the descriptions of all the caves of Eastern Mendip. Study the series' individually, and try to correlate the text with the beautifully detailed surveys which accompany each section. Better still, take a trip into St. Cuthbert's and enjoy the immense vatiety of caving that it offers.

The last quarter of the document is devoted to scientific aspects, geology, geomorphology, hydrology and biology. Happily, none of these topics plumb indiscernable depths, and the subject matter is conveyed in language understandable to most cavers. Survey notes are "dismissed" in just over four pages; in view of the work involved, and Dave Irwin's deep knowledge of the subject, such brevity is surely an act of self-denial.

The appendices occupy the final nine pages of this book, and provide an exhaustive bibliography, acceaa and rescue notes, tabular data on water analysis, and a list of the permanent survey stations. No index is provided.

Here then , is a club-sponsered publication which rises above the all-too-frequent encountered mediocrity of so many British caving publications. Production quality and page design - I liked the use of blue for the titles and subtitles, and admired the typographical layout - are outstanding in the acheivement of a document which is "pickupable" and eminently readable. It represents excellent value at its modest £10.00 asking price.

HALF YEAR GENERAL MEETING

At the EGM held on the 2nd of November the following motions were passed. The amendments are shown in capital letters between inverted commas for ease of identification here.

Constitution & Rules.

Paragraph 8

"FIVE" officers shall constitute a quorum.

Paragraph 9 (d)

Nominations for office and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules "MUST BE SUBMITTED IN WRITING WITH SIGNATURES OF FULL MEMBERS PROPOSING AND SECONDING AND" shall reach th "SECRETARIES HOME ADDRESS BY FIRST CLASS POST AT LEAST 25" days before the meeting. "A NOMINATION FOR OFFICE MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SIGNED AGREEMENT TO STAND FOR ELECTION BY THE NOMINEE".

At the EGM the assembly thought that the motion had failed. Since there were 4 votes against, 16 votes were required to make a 4/5 majority. In the event there were 19 votes in favour so the motion was passed.

The General Motion,

The Post Office Investment Account shall be transferred to and administered by the trustees, and "that the following people, M. Cotter, P. Mathews, R. Saunders, P. Walsh, the Trustees of the club, be signatories of the said account, all four to sign". was also passed.

The amendment to paragraph 14 concerning the trustees was withdrawn and will be resubmitted at the AGM

CSCC:

The Council of Southern Caving Clubs has unanimously voted in favour of Club Membership of The National Caving Association rather than Individual Membership.

Flower Pot

Flower Pot is now open - Access by application to Harry Shepherd at Priddy Hill Farm.

Compton Martin Ocre Mine

Following information given through the MCG that the owner Rex Chapman wanted an Access Agreement, a visit was made by CSCC Access & Conservation Officer, Dave Morrison, the owner has agreed to the cave being gated. Each member club will have a key on a similar basis as Singing River Mine.

Cow Hole - Ubley Hill Pot Judgement

The Department of the Environment Inspector has ruled in Schedule 4, - Delete Step 2 altogether. (This was the requirement to empty the holes of spoil altogether). Otherwise the Enforcement Notice is upheld. This means that the dumping of spoil was illegal and may not continue. It will be a warning to other landowners not to fill in cave entrances without planning permission.

SOME NOTES ON THE FRENCH DOUBS, AND SOME GERMAN CAVES

by Christine Kratzke

Well, the MCG German correspondent has been caving in the French Doubs in May (there are cavers in the MCG - Ed!). I was invited to go with a group of German cavers and their supporters, most of them members of a small club. The welcome was very friendly as we all met up in the campsite at Villersexel. After driving all night on the 16th, Friday morning saw all of us - 14 people - try to enter a cave called Gouffre de Poudry. This is a small cave, about Grade 3, with two major pitches. The entrance pitch has to be rigged off an old oak tree, this was followed by a shaft, a muddy slope with loads of gravel, and the last 105ft pitch with an excellent free-hang. It turned out I reached the bottom of the cave first, and was only followed up by three other cavers of the party later on. The next day saw some of the cavers appearing out of their tents very early in the morning, (by the way it was bloody cold in France!), about 5 a.m. to go down a cave. A good enough reason for me to keep snuggled in my sleeping bag, especially as the cave was going to be entered by another group later on. Unfortunately this group did not go in the end. So, with more luck on Sunday, I went down with a party of four other cavers to descend a cave called Gouffre du Petit Sibot. This was a nice cave with a chamber with some mega formations at the bottom, at a depth of 210ft. The two pitches 54ft and 15ft caused no problems for me, and I explored all the muddy holes in the floor of the main chamber which I could find, plus the upper bits of the chamber with more formations. And now for Monday's delights!! All of us reached Grotte de Crotot at 1000ft and we did the series on the ground level, as access procedures are difficult, and we were only allowed to be on this level. Four of us reached the end of the passage, as the others took their time taking photos. The trip was mainly walking in the sream with bending down from time to time, but the cave was one of the most impressive and extra-ordinary ones I have ever seen. The cave was very beautiful and the masses of formations overwhelming. Loads of crystals were sparkling like gems, there were also some curtains approximately 9ft long, which had the most beautiful patterns with the light shining behind them!

And now some remarks on two German caving regions, both in the middle of the country. The first cave I ever did in the country was the so-called Hohlsteinhöhle, situated in a very small karst region near the town of Detmold. I visited this cave last November. It had a small pitch in a shaft (good place to find one Ed.), two small free climbs, and a good squeeze called the Organ Pipe. It was similar to an easy Burrington cave. The next region that was visited was the Sauerland. I went caving there for the first time last December, and ended up doing a small cave with excellent excentrics called Milchhöhle, with another mole of RHBNC, and a very friendly member of a local club. The region saw me again a few weeks ago in June when I had the chance to help a young caver to de-rig a rope in a 'cave system'. Well the five caves were found earlier this century when a tunnel was dug across them! So those small caves were found and can now be entered via the tunnel called Ot-Stollen. The caves are very small, some of them very muddy, and one sump, one good squeeze, a little pond with a boat (it was totally dry when I went) can all be found in there. Also there was a laboratory, once! This was used by a student to do research on caves! Crawling wasn't required most of the time, and gear hardly needed. The next cave I saw that day was a kind of Avaline's called Feldhofhöhle, which needs no further comment.

Worth mentioning in the North of Germany is a little cave called Kalkberghöhle. This is the only cave in the North and today it is a show cave. It is interesting for speleologists because of its exceptional position, and its geological value, being a cave formed in anhydrite and gypsum.

NEXT MCG JOURNAL

Charlie Alison, Sonya Cotter, Yvonne Rowe, and Bryan Pittman will be forming a Journal Steering Committee soon. Bryan has been informed there is already enough suitable material for a journal. We will soon have access to an IBM compatible computer as well. So get those articles in NOW!

MCG COMPUTER

At the EGM the club's computing facilities were discussed. It was explained we have had two BBC B computers and a Daisy Wheel printer on loan from J.R. for quite a while. His generosity to the MCG has been very much appreciated as they have been very useful to the committee and the Newsletter Editor in particular. However after the meeting Jonathan expressed a need to have one back, so we have now returned the one in the library with its associated daisy wheel printer. We now have one on loan to the Editor from Jonathan and our own dot matrix printer. For the journal the aim is to use IBM type computers which have more desktop publishing facilities, but we have not yet found one cheap enough for the MCG to purchase, but we are still looking.

MEMBERSHIP

The following applications for membership have been received:-

Andrew Bellamy,
86 Northumberland Avenue,
Reading RG2 7PP
Proposed Dave Tooke
Seconded Lee Hawkswell

Julie Hesketh
20 Osbourne Road
New Milton, Hants. BH25 6AD
Proposed Dave Tooke
Seconded Lee Hawkswell

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members are reminded subscriptions fall due in January 1992 and a renewal form will be included with the January Newsletter.

MEET PROGRAMME

Jean Paul has had his knee operation, and we wish him a speedy recovery. He has written a Meet Programme Questionnaire which is included with this newsletter for you to express your preferences for the coming MCG Meet Programme.

On page 2 it is noted Geoff Beale is Leading a trip to Agy on 7th/8th December - he is also digging down Hanover Chalk Mine Emmer Green Friday Nights if you wish you are welcome to join him. Also Geoff Barton has organised a meet at South Wales Cottage for 4th/5th January when it is expected there will be plenty of space, so let Geoff Barton know if you want to go.

Please note the Bookings Officer for SWCC is now Debby Stevens, 37 St Mary's Road, Poole, Dorset.

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF WESTERN MENDIP

By Yvonne Rowe

While walking on Dolebury Hillfort with the MCG members a few weeks ago, I was asked all sorts of archaeological questions about hillforts, the people who built them and why? They must have found it interesting because they suggested that I organise an Archaeology Weekend.

Well, I thought about it, looked at a few books and maps, then got quite excited about it. There is a wealth of archaeology around the Charterhouse area alone so this makes an obvious starting point.

The sites range from Palaeolithic through to Roman and cover two main "local" areas. These can both be covered by walking a circular route from the cottage, and include three cave entrances and a mine. The two walks could be done over a weekend but are quite long (all day!) so might best be done on one day in 1992, the other the same weekend in 1993.

If the idea proves popular, there are other areas of interest not too far away, so it could be made a regular yearly meet like Malcolm's Geology Weekend. Once I have completed all the research I will spend the winter writing it into manageable walks and talks, with diagrams, etc.

Because bracken and undergrowth has a habit of hiding many interesting archaeological features, the walks would be best undertaken in early spring, (possibly the members weekend in March 1992) or late autumn. Nearer the time I will publish an itinerary with a few basic details of the periods and type of sites to be visited, which will be around 16 in all.

COTTAGE RULES

All Beds only Reserved until 01.00am on Night Booked.

NO TIPPEX ALTERATIONS ALLOWED except by Members Drawing line through Previous Name and writing New Name Above the Alteration

BLOCK GUEST BOOKINGS _ ALL GUESTS TO BE BOOKED AGAINST HOST MEMBERS NAME.

ALL GUESTS TO KEEP TO ALLOCATED BED SPACES ONLY.

The top copy of each Booking Sheet shall be returned to the Treasurer every Sunday duely completed with a cheque for the fees collected in one of the envelopes provided in the lectern.

Sunday Night Bookings to be paid for Sunday Afternoon when it is not a Bank Holiday Weekend.

TURN THE GAS OFF IN THE KITCHEN WHEN VACATING THE COTTAGE.

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ALL COTTAGE USERS TO CLEAN THROUGH THE COTTAGE BEFORE LEAVING.

THE LIBRARY HEATER MUST REMAIN ON AT ALL TIMES
(The Window may be opened for ventilation)



POOH STICKS

Pooh goes to the M.C.G.



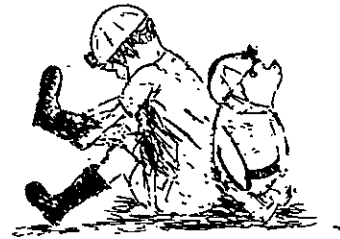
One day it was one of those adventure days. You know the ones I mean. Pooh had found himself in an enchanted sort of place called the Mendip. They were walking, thinking of this and that.

"What I like doing best is Caving," said Christopher Robin.

"How do you do Iscaving," asked Pooh, after he had pondered for several minutes. Pondering was a thing a Bear of Very Little Brain did a lot of.

"M.C.G.," explained Christopher Robin.

"Oh I see," said Pooh, although he didn't.



After a while they came to a house in the middle of Mendip. It seemed an unusual place.

"Been caving before lads?," enquired a scruffy looking fellow.

"Who... er... sorry!," stammered Pooh.

"Ah, the Sierra de Baoruca '90 expedition. Not been there myself. This should be right up your street; grab a helmet."

Pooh began to get a strange feeling in his stomach.

"Don't worry," said Christopher Robin. "It is because you are a very small animal that you will be useful in the adventure before us."

Pooh was not entirely convinced.

But what fun they had!

Boulders there, water there, some mud and even a few broken straws. Well they weren't always broken, but that's another story.



This was a real adventure!

Unfortunately for Pooh, Christopher had forgotten something. He had forgotten to tell Pooh that "Iscaving" can often not be. What he had forgotten to tell Pooh was that they were going Digging!

Not surprisingly, Rabbit, thinking himself experienced in such matters, saw himself as the obvious Director of Operations. But Pooh and Tigger and the others agreed that digging would be rather bothersome. "Besides, Christopher Robin, it's a very difficult thing digging unless you know how to do it," explained Pooh.



"It's easy," exclaimed tiny Piglet, who was already getting into the spirit of things.

And indeed it was. After some time a small hole appeared.

"See if you can force that squeeze, Pooh Bear," said the man.

So he started to climb into the hole. He pulled with his front paws and pushed with his back paws and in a little while his nose was through... and then his ears... and then his front paws... and then his shoulders... and then

... "oh help!" said Pooh, "I'm Stuck!"



It had all gone horribly wrong.

"We'll dig you out lad, don't worry," said the man.

Which wasn't strictly true. He may have meant to dig Poor Pooh out, but in the confusion Poor Pooh was...

... pushed in...

... and down.



The day became very bothersome indeed.

"Ow," said Pooh as he landed in a particularly wet puddle.

"Ow, ow," said Pooh again.

The others in their haste had all jumped down on top of him.



Sorting themselves out, they quickly headed off down the virgin passageway.

"Just your sort of thing, eh lad?" said the man.

This WAS exciting! In fact it was so exciting that Pooh forgot what happened. People talked about Master Caves and Systems and Things. But Pooh did remember being patted on the back lots of times and of course the lashings of honey he ate for tea.

Pooh decided that he liked Iscaving, especially the bit about being able to name the Master Caves and Systems and things. After it was all over Christopher Robin gave him a big hug. "Oh Pooh, I do love you," he said.

Thanks to A.A. Milne and E.H. Shepherd.

Story by Tim Francis

Calligraphy and drawings by Andy Bellamy.