

# Stendip Caving Group

# NEWS

ISSUE 223

SEPTEMBER 1992

Cottage Warden's Update By Lee Hawkswell

Hello everyone it's time for some more ramblings from another committee member to let you know what's been happening.

**Booking Sheets:** Those of you who have been to the cottage recently will have seen that the booking sheets have changed. The idea is to make the treasurer's life easier in deciphering the the sheets. There is now one sheet per day, so if you are staying for the weekend, for example, remember to book yourself in on both Friday and Saturday. There are also blank sheets for Sunday to Thursday in the back of the folder for mid-week bookings. Please take these out and insert them into the right place as and when required.

The sheets have two columns for writing names in (Name and Alternative Name). The first column is for booking as usual, writing your name next to the bunk you will be using. The second column is for when a bunk was previously booked, but due to a cancellation is now free. The name in the first column can be crossed out and the new name placed next to the bunk number in this column.

Please don't abuse this facility in using it to move people around the cottage so you can be in your favourite bunk.

There is a space at the top of each sheet for the name of any guest club staying and which bunks they should be using, and on arrival they should sign in next to these bunks. Everything else is as usual. At the end of the stay the sheet(s) should be removed and sent to the treasurer, together with any monies collected, by a committee member if present, or any other member. No cash should be sent, cheques only please.

**The Phone:** This has now been altered so that local calls are charged at the set local rates (these will be posted next to the phone). Sorry about the delay, but the workings of that phone are a nightmare, and it took me three attempts to work it out.

I am also looking into having the mechanism changed when the new 10p comes out. I have written to the manufacturers but they appear to have gone out of business. So if there is anyone out there who knows where I could get this done could they please let me know.

**The Eight Room:** So called because of the number of bunks it contains, has become a members only room for a trial period. This is in order to try and prevent guest clubs spreading out and taking over the cottage.

Finally if you find or see anything that needs doing, or have any good ideas, please let me know.

Many thanks.

## MCG Facts & Figures:

**Meetings:** Mendip HQ Wed 7.00pm  
Egham Eclipse Inn, Egham Hill Thurs 9.00pm

**Cottage Fees:** Members, members children £1.00 nightly  
SWCC, NPC members £1.00 nightly  
Guest clubs, members guests £2.00 nightly

**Season Ticket:** Exemption from cottage fees,  
members only £10.00 year

**Subscription:** Full, probationary members £20.00 year  
Associate members £10.00 year

The Mendip Caving Group is a registered charity, no. 270088. The trustees are Ron Saunders, Malcolm Cotter, Pat Walsh and Peter Matthews.

**MCG Cottage:** Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse-on-Mendip,  
Blagdon, Bristol. BS18 6XW  
Tel: 0761 462797  
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**Secretary:** Joan Goddard Tel: 0608 810382  
10 Enstone Road, Charlbury, Oxfordshire.

**Treasurer:** Martin Rowe Tel: 0252 872006  
10 Greenleas Close, Yateley, Camberly, Sy

**Meet Secretary:** J-P. Burch Tel: 0737 767738  
19 Raneleigh Road, Redhill, Sy. RH1 6BJ

**Cottage Warden:** Lee Hawkswell Tel: 0923 819103  
4a Hazel Tree Road, Nth Watford, Herts.

**Tacklemaster:** Kevin West Tel: 081 570 6624  
21 Wesley Avenue, Hounslow, Middlesex.

**Editor:** Charlie Allison Tel: 081 393 5910  
69 Cheam Road, Ewell, Surrey. KT17 3EG

**Recorder:** Wayne Hiscox Tel: 0749 437540  
3 Keward, Glastonbury Road, Wells, Somerset

**Ordinary Member:** Arthur Spain Tel: 0749 679358  
Waitangi, Long Lane, Dinder, Wells.

## Editorial

Some people have been moaning at me, some only a little, some rather more than is good for their stress level, about the erratic newsletters. The main reasons for this are that I haven't done this before, and since I was elected in April I have been on two expeditions both of which made great demands on my time. Also I am getting very little material to put in the newsletter. I'm sure other people went caving abroad this year, have interesting anecdotes or information, press cuttings, etc. If you have could you please send them to me at the above address, I'd be most grateful. Unfortunately I'm not psychic so I can't chase up something I don't know exists (and I'm not going to make 130-odd phone calls a month to find out!!) The idea now is to get something sent roughly once a month, but it will be a very thin newsletter if contributions are incoming at the present rate. It isn't cheap to produce a newsletter (postage alone is over £30.00 per issue), and it's far more cost effective for me to send out a 10 or 12 page newsletter than it is a 2 to 6 page one. Many thanks for the contributions so far.



#### Barn Dance by Arthur Spain

November 7th, 8.00pm 'til midnight. A must for MCG members senior, middle, and young; and of your respected other halves and friends who fancy a good evening out. To be held at Priddy Village Hall, with a change of bands this year: the London Velvet Bottom Band. Our caller will be the charismatic Andy Downing; if you're reluctant to dance he's the one to encourage you. In addition there will be a well stocked bar. The price is a very reasonable £6.00 in advance (£7.00 on the night), children under 14 half price. Tickets from me, or Martin Rowe at the Eclipse on Thursdays. If requesting them from me please enclose an SAE.

A 29 seater coach will leave the cottage at 7.30pm. The cost of this is not included, but is estimated to be about £1.50.

However, as with all functions like this, some assistance is required to ensure its smooth running. Therefore volunteers are needed to assist with the food supply and pre/post room preparation. Please let me know what you are able to help with. Below is a list of the requirements (all costs will be refunded).

#### Foodstuffs:

Cold Meats, Mixed Salad, Quiches, French Bread, Chilli-con-Carne, Butter, Veg. Curry, Flans, Crisps, Fruit salad, Baked Potatoes, Gateaux, Rice or Mixed Pasta.

Preparation of food at the hall	2 Volunteers
Washing up	2 Volunteers
Preparation of the	3 Volunteers
Clearing up afterwards	4 Volunteers

People are also needed to wash the floor on Sunday morning.

My address for tickets is: Arthur Spain, Waitangi, Long Lane, Dinder, Somerset BA5 3PQ. Tel: 0749 679358

Many thanks to all prospective volunteers!

#### Half Yearly Forum:

Although this is an open discussion, to ease things along it has been decided to have some sort of agenda. If there is anything you would like to discuss could you please send details to Joan as soon as possible.

#### Journal Update: by Charlie Allison

In order to allocate funds for the production of a journal Martin needs to have an idea of the number of pages etc. that it will have. In order to provide this information can you please send me your articles ASAP so that we can work out the best and most cost effective means of production.

## Cottage Bookings:

September 1992:

25th & 26th      Wolverhampton Mining Club 10 persons

October 1992:

2nd & 3rd          Member's Weekend 30 Mile Walk, Arthur Spain

23rd & 24th      Phil Ingold 12 persons

November 1992:

5th & 6th          Member's Weekend Half Yearly Meeting

20th & 21st      7th Rygate Scouts 12 persons

December 1992:

4th & 5th          Member's Weekend Ubley Hill Pot clearance  
J-P Burch's Curry saturday night.

## Meets Program:

At the moment there is only the cottage curry planned. J-P says that this is due to an apparant lack of interest in organised caving trips. Therefore if people want trips booked e.g. Otter Hole for example could they please get in contact with J-P.

## MRO Lectures:

October:

10th              MRO Circus: Equipment demonstration and training.  
7.30pm Hunter's Lodge.

31st              Underground Workhop. 9.00am G.B.

Small groups of 6 to 8 people including own casualty to study use of Entonox, Fracture Splinting, Stretcher Loading, and Molephone. Bill Headington is forming a team, please contact him at the cottage for more information.

November:

14th              MRO Stomp. Priddy Village Hall 7.00pm 'til late.  
Tickets from Dany Bradshaw.

December:

5th                Rescue Management, a lecture by Jim Hanwell.  
7.30pm Hunter's Lodge, audience participation hoped for.

6th                Warden's Meeting, 8.00pm Hunter's Lodge.

31st              Open day and coffee morning, 10.00am MRO Store.

## G.B. Key:

One of our keys to this cave has gone missing. Could the person who has please return it to the cottage as soon as possible, thank you.

**Library Additions:** by Joan Goddard

London Under London, A Subterranean Guide.

Richard Trench and Ellis Hillman, pub. John Murray 1985

Speleo-Sportive No. 8 Dans les Grandes Causses

Pierre Marchandet

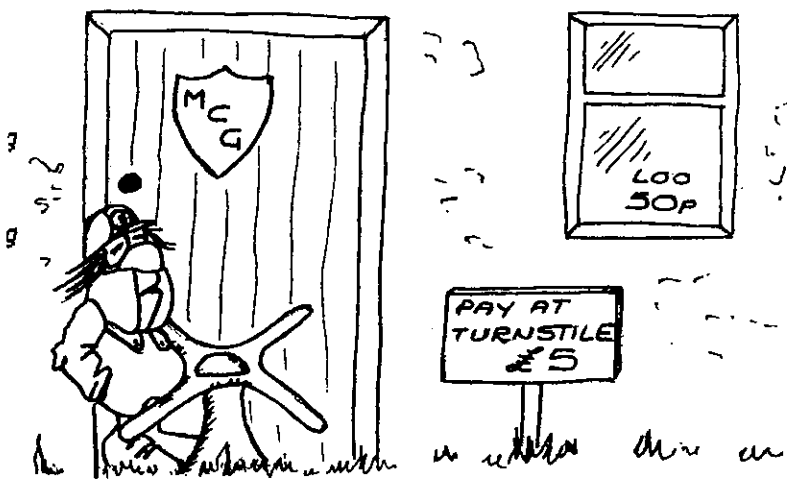
Same format as the others in the series tackle lists, surveys, locations and map numbers, history of exploration and brief descriptions.

Geology and Military Tunnels, a paper by M.S. Rosenbaum and E.P.F. Rose in Geology Today May/June 1992

A bit of peripheral reading for those who are curious about man made underground systems. The Jurassic limestones of Gibraltar are riddled with passages predictably labelled Great North Road, Fosse way, Maida Vale etc. A well decorated chamber was discovered during tunnel construction in 1942. Filed in reprints/references box in library.

### Subscriptions:

Over the last few months receipts have not been covering costs, i.e. we are making a loss at the moment. This means that there is the likelihood that subscriptions and cottage fees will have to be increased next year. The amounts will be decided by the committee later in the year. Yes we are a charity, but we must cover our basic costs in order to continue our activities. There has been no increase for several years, but gas, insurance, etc. has gone up. To keep subscriptions low by using our investments to subsidise them would mean massive long term increases in subscriptions when the available monies become depleted. Also if you bring guests to the cottage during the day and they use our facilities, e.g. showers, and they are not staying the night, i.e. not paying cottage fees, then could you please encourage them to make a donation towards costs. Does 50p seem an unreasonable amount for the facilities available?



### Czechoslovakia:

A few weeks ago Dave Tooke left a draught article on Czechoslovakia at the cottage. Unfortunately it has gone astray. If anybody knows where it is could they please send it to Dave as soon as possible as the article is not yet completed for publication, and needs editing before it is submitted.

Dave Tooke 117 Leavesden Road, Watford, Herts WD2 5ER  
0923 241522

### SRT Rope:

It has been decided that anyone who wishes to use MCG SRT equipment must attend a course, either run by the MCG, or a recognised course run by a qualified (CIC) instructor.

### Car Break-ins:

On 27th of July some progress was made in combating those evil scum who persist in breaking into cars parked on Mendip. On that Monday a party of Scouts led by Bill Headington tried to park in the main Goatchurch car park, only to find their way barred by an inconsiderately parked car. Bill also noted two people hanging around a minibus. Unable to park Bill decided to head off down the Combe to turn his car around. However suspicions were aroused and the group decided to head back to the car park. When they arrived the other car had gone, and the minibus had been broken into. The police were immediately informed. The descriptions given by Bill enabled the culprits to be very quickly arrested and some of the stolen property was recovered. Apparently the persons involved in the break-in were well known to the police, and had committed previous offences. Lock them up and throw away the key!

### Goatchurch Rescue:

At about 2.15pm on 28th July a party of scouts on a trip into Goatchurch led by Bill Headington came up the Coffin Lid into the Water Chamber to find about seven other parties totalling about fifty 'cavers' blocking the way on. Curious as to what was happening Bill asked one of the people nearby what was happening. The nonchalant answer was that the person thought that someone ahead had hurt themselves. Moving to the front of the crowd Bill found an injured person on the Terrace, having fallen whilst attempting to climb out of Bloody Tight. Enquiring what was going on one of the 'leaders' said that he'd been there about twenty minutes. Clearly none of the people in any of the other groups in the cave had half a clue what to do: the MRO had not been called, and no attempt had been made to make the casualty's life more comfortable. Bill later said that the persons in the cave were "running about like headless chickens."

Bill sent one of the 'leaders' out of the cave to call the MRO, and then proceeded to evacuate the other groups en-masse from the cave. Unfortunately the person sent to phone the MRO did not stay by the phone to be contacted by the rescue warden, returning instead to the cave. So about an hour later when Andy Sparrow arrived, followed shortly by six members of the MRO, all they had received was a garbled message about someone being hurt in Goatchurch, and were apparently none too happy with the state of affairs. Meanwhile Bill had made the casualty's life comfortable. The person was in shock and was suffering from a broken ankle and fractured ribs.

The man was placed in a stretcher and Entonox was administered to ease the pain. A hauling system was rigged and the casualty evacuated from the Tradesman's Entrance via the Coal Shute, the whole rescue lasting about two hours.

It appears that the casualty was a policeman on an outdoor course run by a management training company. The so-called 'leaders' did not seem to have a clue what they were about, and perhaps ought not to be allowed underground! It was said that in normal circumstances competent club cavers could have handled the situation much quicker and more effectively, perhaps evacuating by self-rescue means. Indeed the timely arrival of Bill's group undoubtedly saved the policeman a lot of needless time and pain underground.

### Merstham Mines:

Ian McKechnie is able to organise trips down the mine given sufficient notice. He can be contacted on 0932 228292.

## Mendip's First 200' Pitch by Tim Francis

Ever since Andy Sparrow and friends began bolting up Atlas Aven in Thrupe Lane Swallet, a link with the Railway series had become a real possibility. Over recent years Simon Meade-King and the Thrupe diggers have put in considerable effort in extending this upper level, the start of which begins just below the entrance pitch. Despite discovering several extensions heading off Atlas Aven, the link to the Railway Series was always elusive.

However, on Saturday 8th of August whilst on one of our regular shopping sprees to BAT we learnt that the breakthrough had finally been made during the previous week. Information was thin on the ground, so I gave Andy Sparrow a ring to see whether the route was open. Previously on the 9th of February Ralph Diment and I prussiked up the in-situ rope, so we were familiar with the extensions.

Unsure of the exact tackle requirements we came armed with a 250' rope, loads of tapes, and a smaller rope just in case. Arriving at the cave at 8.00pm we had a fascinating discussion with the farmer who was extremely interested in the new breakthrough. Chucking a ladder on the entrance pitch, we headed off down the Railway Series. Things had changed considerably since we were last there. The new section begins with a 20' chimney which is both wet and loose. A quick thrutch and the head of a 25' pitch is reached: luckily the diggers had left an electron ladder in place. This pitch is very loose, and Kirsty took great delight in kicking rubble on her hapless victims below. Kitting up in this chamber the 40' rope was rigged from an extremely dodgy boulder. The rock is rotten in this area so take care! the route drops down next to the traverse at Vengeance Passage, and a rope is useful to reach the Open Sandwich boulder. This is 40' below the top of the aven, but fortunately the last rope was still in-situ (I hadn't fancied going up on the bolts!), the hang was on!

Taking the rope off three bolts, a bolt re-belay can be found about 20' below. From then on the route was less obvious. Considerable gardening was needed to make things a little safer. I then spent a good hour flaffing about trying to obtain a decent hang, much to the amusement of the others who were watching from the open sandwich. Eventually I spotted a fixed bolt that had probably been placed to gain entry to the Vulture's Nest, over on the far side of the aven. After prussiking back up I traversed downwards about 70' across the shaft using two large naturals as re-belays. A large pendulum, and the bolt is reached. This gives a fantastic free hang as far as the Eagles Nest. At this point two bolts are tucked behind a boulder, allowing a re-belay for the final 50'. Much of the last section is in the spray of the Atlas waterfall, but exhilarating all the same. You get fantastic views of the old ladder route as you abseil past.

A quick Mars at the bottom and it was the long prussik out. A few hairy moments were had when Joel dislodged a huge slab of rock. He said he was aiming for Ralph, who was feeling a 'tad' exposed at the Eagle's nest, but instead just missed Kirsty who was lounging around at the bottom. I got volunteered to de-rig, and followed up at the rear...cautiously!

Mendip's first 200' pitch was bottomed, and until you've done this route you just can't appreciate how big Atlas Aven is. It beats many Yorkshire pots by miles. Congratulations and thanks must go to those who have made it possible. As a postscript news of a further link from the Railway Series has filtered through between beers in the Hunters. This supposedly enters

