

Mendip Caving Group

NEWS

NUMBER 226

APRIL 1993

SUMP 12 SOLO Or a Beginners Guide to Cave Diving

by Joel Corrigan

Sunday 28th March dawned bright and early (I imagine), and by twelve thirty I was at the entrance of Swildons Hole. The short walk across the fields is generally quite pleasant, only with two tacklebags and a six litre cylinder it can be rather sweaty, especially when one has consumed more than one's fair share of alcohol the night before at the AGM Dinner! I was beginning to appreciate the reasoning of the other club members: cave diving is a very silly activity indeed without the benefit of Sherpas.

After the Twenty my lot improved somewhat, as I was able to dump a tacklebag, but by the time I reached Sump 2 I was approaching heat exhaustion stage - thick diving wet suits are not really suitable for this sort of trip (I know this now...). Picking up the weights conveniently left there, I struggled into my unfamiliar gear. From start to finish this was turning out to be one huge learning experience, and only practice can possibly iron out the faults. The trick would appear to be in surviving these initial faults!!

Having quite happily free-dived these Sumps before, I was amazed to discover that they are actually much longer and tighter than I had realised. It is only when you have a bottle with you that you can afford to take the time to feel around in the Sump, and understand how dangerous free diving can be. I feel that it is an activity even more silly than carrying a pressurised steel cylinder (i.e, a bomb) underground!

Buxton's Horror was its usual yummy self, and then I reached Sump 6 (what happened to Sump 5, I hear you say). I'd heard mixed reports about 6, and I didn't really know what to think. The old guide book says that it is thirty foot long, but other highly respected cavers say that it is more like sixty. It was also suggested that it was tight. The truth of the matter is that it is reasonably restricted and much longer than Sump 3, leading me to assume that it is probably between fifty and sixty feet long. All in all a lovely Sump.

A lot of time was wasted in finding the bypass routes to Sumps 7 and 8, as there are a few interesting areas that demand inspection! However, Sump 9 was well worth waiting for. One hundred and thirty feet of tight, tortuous, muddy passage was just what the doctor ordered for my hangover. The amazing thing was that I could actually see where I was going (for all of five seconds).

Once beyond the Sump, I spent some time looking for Sump 10, as it is not at all obvious unless you happen to have read the guide book properly! There is nowhere to really escape the water in this area, so I clipped my bottle and harness onto the guide line through 9, and set off to explore, with just my mask for company. After spending some time thrashing and thrutching around in a choked off passage, I finally ducked through Sump 10 (it's only a couple of feet long).

The Sump 11 bypass is a fixed rope climb, and then I was into Swildons 12. This entire area is rather complex, as there appear to be numerous digs around. My original plan had included climbing Victoria Aven (120ft), but had by this time concluded that it would be a very, very silly thing to do on my own. Desolation Row will just have to wait for me!

continued on page 4

++++ MCG 1993 Meets Programme ++++ BANK HOLIDAY WEEKENDS IN UPPERCASE ++++

This list is updated monthly - to add your trip, please phone the Meet Secretary

DATE	AREA	MAIN EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
17 Apr	S. Wales	Dan-yr-Ogof (Fully booked, but check with Geoff for cancellations)	Geoff Beale	0734-722510
01 MAY - 03 MAY	MENDIP	COTTAGE WORK	LEE HAWKESWELL	0923-819103
01 MAY	MENDIP	ST CUTHBERTS	JOHN BEAUCHAMP	0761-463143
08 May - 09 May	Mendip	Novice weekend	Bill Headington	0761-419766
22 May - 23 May	Derbyshire	Mines	Joan Goddard	0608-810382
05 Jun - 06 Jun	Mendip	Geology walk & caving	Malcolm Cotter	07842-52643
05 Jun	Mendip	Swildons Forty (Tony Knibbs 40th caving anniversary)	Denise Knibbs	01033- 61858232
26 Jun	Mendip	Stoke Lane Slocker	Bill Headington	0761-419766
03 Jul	Mendip	Charterhouse Cave	Yvonne Rowe	0252-872006
10 Jul	Mendip	Swildons 40ft Pot (1968)	Martin Rowe	0252-872006
17 Sep - 18 Sep	Bristol	BCRA Cavers Fair	Bill Headington	0761-419766
02 Oct	Mendip	MCG Forum	Joan Goddard	0608-810382
06 Nov	Mendip	SRT Bonfire (Sparkler, Rocket & Thunderflash)	Yvonne Rowe	0252-872006

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	Janice Richards	0985 219111

WEEKLY MEETINGS:	At the Group's Mendip headquarters on Wednesdays at 7.00pm. & at the Eclipse Inn, Egham, Surrey, on Thursdays from 9.00pm.
CAVING ACCOMMODATION:	For up to 30 people, is available at the MCG headquarters:- Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6XW Tel: 0761-462797 Grid Ref 51475606 OS 1:50,000 sheet 182
COTTAGE INFORMATION:	Through the cottage warden please (address and tel. no. below)
COTTAGE BOOKINGS:	MCG members, members' children, SWCC and NPC £ 1.50
COTTAGE FEES per night:	Guest clubs and members' guests £ 2.00
PREPAYMENT VOUCHERS:	(available to members only) 12 nights accomodation £15.00 25 nights accomodation £30.00
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION:	Full & Probationary Members: £20.00; Associate Members: £10.00 The subscription includes free day-time access to the cottage by the member, their children, and their accompanied guests



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 MALCOLM COTTER
 PAT WALSH
 PETER MATHEWS
 REGISTERED CHARITY No 270088

NON-COMMITTEE POSTS:
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 CONSERVATION OFFICER TIM FRANCIS 081-878-3508
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 MCG SHOP MALCOLM COTTER 07842-52643
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ON THE MOVE

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Bill Headington, 43 Wheeler's Road, Midsomer Norton, nr Bath, BA3 2BT Tel: 0761-419766

Steve Wyatt, 17 Stonewell Drive, Congresbury, Avon, BS19 5DW Tel: 0934-838953

Don Vosper's tel. no. is now 0761-453214

CONGRATULATIONS...

...on becoming Full members, to Graham Old, Ben Copper, Rob Whalley, Andrew Bellamy and James Allen.

WELCOME...

... to 5 new Probationary members:

Helen Woodford, 10 Ranelagh Road, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 6BJ Tel: 0737-767738

Nick Kelly, 10 Vale End, Nailsea, Bristol, Avon. Tel: 0275-858401

Clive Maybury, 30 Porlock Gardens, Nailsea, Bristol, Avon. Tel: 0275-85869

Christopher Clipsham, NACMC, Tai Newyddion, Nant Ffrancon, Bethesda, Gwynedd, LL57 3DQ

Barrie Whitehead, 47 Mowries Court, Somerton, Somerset, TA11 6NF

PROSPECTIVE MEMBER

For consideration at the committee meeting on 5th June:

Nic Wood, 60 Denmead, Two Mile Ash, Milton Keynes MK8 8SA tel: 0908-260841
Proposed by Kevin West & Bill Headington

WHERE ARE YOU PAT?

Longstanding MCG member Pat Newman has not been seen on the caving front for a while and I've just found out why. Those who know him will be interested to learn that he is adventuring in far flung places. Here is what he's been getting up to:

New Mexico - caving in the Guadalupe Mountains.

Mexico - caving, walking, photography.

New Zealand - cycling in South Island, sea-kayaking on the Abel Tasman, snorkelling in the South Pacific, bungy jumping at Hammer Springs, soaking in natural hot pools.

His last postcard said he was off to Australia then home via the USA. Mmmm!

25 YEARS ON

It is 25 years since the Great Flood that changed the shape (especially underground) of our part of Mendip. It occurred on 10th July 1968 and that date happens to fall on a Saturday this year. We thought we might celebrate with a nostalgic trip down Swildons.

Before the Great Flood, the 40ft pot was reached from the junction of the Dry and Wet Ways (the Water Chamber) along a rift (the Water Rift) and the pot was descended by ladder. The force of water entering Swildons on 10th July 1968 ripped out the floor of the Water Rift to a depth of 32ft, all the way from the Water Chamber to the base of the pot so that today, the 40ft pot is now an easy 8ft climb. It is still possible to traverse the original rift to the head of the old 40ft pot (now often used for SRT practice). The idea is to recreate a trip down Swildons, via the 40ft pot, using clothing and equipment that was available in 1968. So... no wetsuits, waterproof oversuits, wellingtons, marigolds, BDHs, FX2s or kernmantle ropes! In the evening, for survivors, there will be a barrel at the cottage with beer on sale at 1968 prices (if you have genuine 1968 currency).

WANTED...

...for Pinetree Dig: buckets and skips suitable for spoil removal. Contact Tim Francis or Julie Hesketh.

"Sump 12 Solo, Or a Beginners Guide to Cave Diving" (cont. from p1)

The return journey was pretty straight-forward, with the exception of the dive through Sump 9. This turned out to be rather interesting, and the best learning incident of all. Obviously I was aware that the visibility on the return trip would be greatly reduced, but hadn't realised that zero vis could be bettered! Great globs of mud appeared to smother my mask. Then my helmet (with all of my temporarily redundant lights) decided to take the opportunity to float away!! Oh dear, I thought. What else could possibly go wrong? And then I had my answer. Just as I was negotiating a circuitous section (whilst holding my helmet on with one hand, and the guide line with the other), my diving harness copied the helmet and attempted to part company from its owner. Thus I was stuck in the middle of the longest Sump of my short cave diving career with my bottle wedged behind my back, my helmet dragging behind me, and my genitalia attempting to crawl up my throat!!

I made it out of the Sump (somehow), and at the time I wasn't in the least concerned how lucky I had just been. It is only now with the benefit of hindsight that I realise what an extremely silly boy I was!!! Back in the streamway I met the secretary of the CDG, and decided that I would be much better off joining them, as I could at least borrow some gear...

Some nine hours later I reached the surface, only to find that the car wouldn't start... What else could possibly go wrong?

CAVING IN DEVON

by Ian Mckechnie

I was recently given the opportunity of a caving trip to Devon, staying at the Pengelly centre at Buckfastleigh. Never having caved in Devon, it was an offer I couldn't refuse.

The first cave we visited was Baker's Pit. The entrance is a short walk up the hill from the cottage, to a concrete pipe in the centre of a field. Two fixed ladders descend a total of 120ft into the cave. From here on it's rather unmemorable (especially if you enjoyed 6X the night before as much as I did!). The impression was of something like Ubley Hill, but much longer and much more complex. And there was mud everywhere! Next time I'll stick to the lemonade, and give you a better report.

After a reviving lunch, we walked to Fridhamsleigh Cavern. This is a mile along the road from Buckfastleigh, parallel with the A38, turn right down a lane signed "Fridhamsleigh", cross the A38 on a bridge, and pay 50p at the farm. The large, ungated entrance is up a track opposite the farm, at the foot of a cliff overlooking the A38.

This cave has happier memories for me. Two alternative entrance passages meet before a chamber with a "camel's back" on the left. To the right of this, the route eventually leads to a tight hole in the floor, through which to cautiously drop 8ft into a small stream. Follow this through deep pools, through a low section, and over a knife-edge, to an ascending slope. After a few more adventures, you arrive at a deep, clear, lake. There is an alternative high-level route back from here, rejoining with a slide down the camel's back.

Not big cave systems; not well-decorated; but certainly worth a visit. Journey time from SW London is about 3 hours, the pubs are good, and if caving is too much, it's only 20 minutes to the beach!.



...FROM THE AGM

YOUR NEW COMMITTEE

Yvonne Rowe is now newsletter editor, and Bill Headington takes over as meet secretary. Other committee posts remain unchanged. The new committee would like to thank JP Burch and Charlie Allison, who retired at the AGM, for their work on the committee.

FUTURE ELECTIONS

To allow members to approve or disapprove of potential Trustees and to comply with the Constitution, from the 1994 AGM all committee officers must be elected. This means that there will be ballots for unopposed posts.

CONSTITUTION

Proposers and seconders of probationary members will now be advertised. The proposed amendment that full members should be probationary members first was rejected, as this is already stated in the Constitution. The amendment to revise Privileges of Membership was referred back to the committee who will come up with a proposal at the HYGM.

WHO CAN YOU TRUST?

As a charity, the Group's property and funds are vested in four Trustees: R Saunders, M Cotter, P Walsh and P Mathews. Under the Charities Act 1992, members of the committee, the two shopkeepers and signatories to MCG bank accounts are (or should be) Trustees also. The constitution was amended to reflect this. The original Trustees are now known as Custodian Trustees. Every member of the committee is now a Trustee as are Roy Kempston and Bryan Pittman (cheque signatories) and Phil Ingold (shopkeeper).

INCREASED SUBS

From 01Jan94: Full & prob £25; assoc £15

COTTAGE USAGE

Members must now seek prior approval of the committee if they wish to spend more than 14 days in any calendar month at the cottage.

LIBRARY EXTENSION

The committee are authorised to spend up to £10,000 on cottage work. Two suggestions for the library extension have been proposed. Roger Wallington will now be asked to draw up plans which will be put to members for approval.

A.O.B.

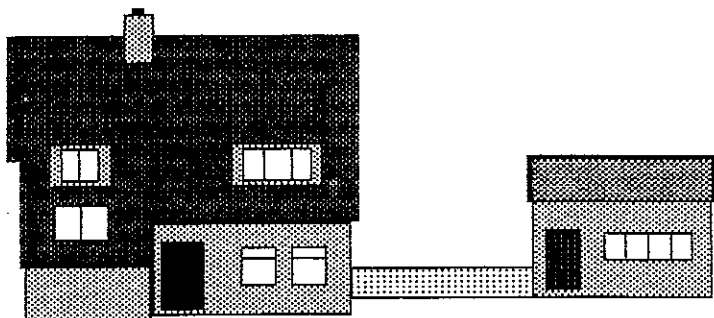
Rules for GB access are to be re-circulated... members must attend SRT course before using Group SRT rope... and must demonstrate ability to rig before having access to SRT store... T-shirt design being finalised... Group facilities not to be used to express private political opinions, views or innuendos about other members...

1994 AGM

The next AGM will be on 24th April 1994 at the Hunter's Lodge, Priddy commencing at 1pm.

BOB SPELED RETURNS..





JUST THE JOB!

Thanks are due to Arthur Spain for (amongst other things) changing the "gubbins" on the shower extractor fan. It is now sensitive to humidity and will cut in and out when the showers are in use or condensation starts to build up for any reason. Please do not turn the fan off. It is automatic, and will stop when its job is done...

... thanks also to Kev West and Lee Hawkeswell for repairing (or should I say rebuilding) the rope washer. They have put in 4 new brushes and repaired the casing...

... Kev and Lee have also built a special, ventilated box at the end of the tacklestore to house the Group's SRT rope. The rope is available to approved SRT riggers who will be told the combination number for the padlock.

COTTAGE BOOKINGS

13 Apr - 14 Apr	Ealing Scouts	
16 Apr - 17 Apr	Alan Mellon	(12)
23 Apr - 24 Apr	EDSS	(14)
30 Apr - 02 May	Members' Weekend	
14 May - 15 May	Fred Burton	(12)
04 Jun - 05 Jun	Members' Weekend	
11 Jun - 12 Jun	Phil Barton	(12)
18 Jun - 19 Jun	Ian McKechnie	(12)
02 Jul - 03 Jul	Members' Weekend	
09 Jul - 10 Jul	Great Flood Weekend	
06 Aug - 07 Aug	Members' Weekend	
03 Sep - 04 Sep	Members' Weekend	
01 Oct - 02 Oct	Members' Weekend	
05 Nov - 06 Nov	Members' Weekend	
19 Nov - 20 Nov	EDSS	(12)
03 Dec - 04 Dec	Members' Weekend	

HOSING DOWN AREA

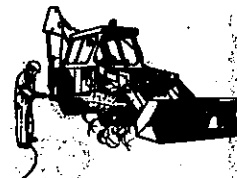
Please clear out the silt trap after washing your gear. The trap is immediately "downstream" of the washing area, and is covered by 3 breezeblocks.

COTTAGE WORK WEEKEND

The cottage is now 12 years old, and is begining to show it! We could blow it up and start again... or you could help us with some simple repairs and maintenance. The cottage was built with a membership of about 60, so now that we have a membership of about 120 it should be twice as easy to maintain it. Lee Hawkeswell has planned a work weekend on May 1st to 3rd, over the Bank Holiday. We would like as many members as possible to come along, even if it is only for a few hours. Don't worry if you think you have no skills to offer - Lee will find something for you to do even if it is only collecting the beer money! (Yes, there will be a barrel).

List of cottage work

- * Clear gutters
- * Fit additional shelving in kitchen
- * Service kitchen fan
- * Reduce level of carpark to improve drainage
- * Unblock drain from hosing down area to soakaway
- * Fit new stair carpet
- * Spring clean all rooms
- * Ease gas store door
- * Renew hinges on changing room door
- * Adjust fixings on loft ladder
- * Clean windows
- * Clear out the stair cupboard
- * Clean and tidy shed
- * Drink barrel



NEW COTTAGE KEYS

Since the locks to the cottage were last changed, many members have left the Group without returning their keys and several current members have lost keys. The committee have now decided that when new locks are next fitted, a £10.00 key deposit will have to be introduced. As we have some 120 members, this will generate £1200 which will be used to finance an electronic access system, enabling lost keys to be deleted. Full details will be in the next newsletter, in the meantime further information can be obtained from any committee member.

MRO PITCH HAULING PRACTICE

MRO have invited the MCG to take part in a pitch hauling practice at Split Rock Quarry on Saturday 5th June, either morning or afternoon (approx. 3 hours each). A team of 8 is needed. Various hauling, lifeline, ladder and SRT techniques can be practiced. All involved should be equipped with SRT harness, SRT kit and helmet. Don't forget your cowstails. This is a preliminary to an underground hauling practice to be held in St.Cuthbert's Swallet on 30th October 1993.

Teams need to register with Tim Large, Tel: 0749-344472 stating preferences for morning or afternoon. Anyone interested should contact Bill Headington.

PORTH YR OGOF - A WARNING

The Cambrian Caving Council has put out this warning about the serious dangers that lurk within Porth yr Ogof Cave in South Wales:-

"While much of this cave is as "safe" as any, the deep water areas have claimed the lives of 8 persons since 1957, most of whom were novice cavers being guided. The deaths have all occurred in deep water areas. The pools and sumps all look attractive or easy to cross but the water is exceptionally cold even when the flow is slight. Sudden immersion in this cold water causes extreme shock leading to a variety of risks. We recommend that leaders do NOT take groups of inexperienced persons into the deep water area. Parties of experienced cavers are asked to consider the following points before entering the deep water:

- 1) THAT EACH PERSON IS EQUIPPED WITH A WET SUIT AND BUOYANCY AID.
- 2) THAT EACH PERSON IS A CONFIDENT SWIMMER.
- 3) THAT PROVISION IS MADE FOR A SUITABLY PREPARED LIFE-SAVER TO BE WATCHING.

Please remember your moral and legal responsibilities to your party and the nearest phone to contact 999 Emergency - Cave Rescue is in the village of Ystradfellte... a considerable time delay would be involved."

Talking of wet caves...

...this is a good time to mention a few facts gleaned from a CRO report in Caves and Caving:-

* WITHOUT A WATERPROOF OVERSUIT HEAT LOSS IS 26 TIMES QUICKER IN WATER THAN IN AIR - remember this when you try to tempt those poor novices through Sump 1 in Swildon's, or when they're hanging around at the 20' ladder pitch after having fallen into the Double Pots.

* WITHOUT A WATERPROOF OVERSUIT A PERSON'S CAVING CLOTHES CAN SOAK UP AN EXTRA 30kg OF WATER - remember again those poor novices who, already tired, have to drag this extra weight up the ladder and on out of the cave.

* 105m OF CAVING ROPE WEIGHS 221bs WHEN DRY BUT 551bs WHEN WET - a caver was swept to his death into a downstream sump and the coroner believed that a major contributory factor was the wet weight of his tackle bag which contained 105m of rope. It was attached to his harness by a 1.5m tape lanyard, acting as a sea anchor or drogue and making climbing up the ladder to safety very difficult, adding greatly to the force exerted by the fast flowing water.

Safety note: If you are taking rope down a stream cave, you should line the rope bag with a poly bag before packing your rope, then fasten the poly bag with a rubber band cut from a tyre inner-tube. This will help to keep the rope dry and light, as well as increasing buoyancy. Don't attach the rope bag to yourself except on pitches. In wet sections, the bag can be floated and retained by a lanyard held in the hand.

ST CLEMENTS CAVES, HASTINGS

by Ian Mckechnie

During a recent family outing to Hastings, we chanced upon St Clements Caves, and decided to pay a visit. St Clements Caves are located in Castle Hill, at the East end of Hastings close to the seafront. Formed in the soft, white, Ashdown Sandstone, the vaulted passages and chambers are obviously man-made. The caves follow a complex and random pattern, suggesting that natural cavities in the stone were enlarged artificially in the past. It is likely that sand was mined here as early as the seventeenth century for the glassmaking industry. In later times, parts of the caves may have been used by smugglers, and the present owners take full advantage of this link, with much of the system now being used to portray the history of smuggling.

In the early nineteenth century, a local man, Joseph Golding, opened the cave as a tourist attraction. He dug new passages and chambers, decorated the existing passages with carved columns and figures, and opened a new entrance at the deepest part of the system. During the war, the system was used as an air-raid shelter, and at this time the floor was concreted. On average, 300 people a night sheltered here, and facilities included a school and a clinic.

If ever you visit Hastings, this showcave provides an interesting way to spend a couple of hours when you've had enough of the crazy golf.

Bibliography: Bedford, Bruce. 1985. "Underground Britain". Willow Books (Collins)

THE MENDIP MOTOR

by Yvonne Rowe

I have discovered some probably little-known details about the Mendips' very own motor car. Most of the information comes from a book called "The Mendip Hills - a Threatened Landscape" by Shirley Toulson, published by Victor Gollancz, London, 1984.

Between 1913 and 1922 the Mendip car was produced by Mendip Engineering at Cutlers Green works in Chewton Mendip. In 1907 C W Harris, who then owned the works, designed a number of steam trucks that were shown at the Bath and West in the following year. In 1913 a Mendip char-a-banc was registered at Weston-super-Mare, and in the same year the first light car was produced, with the help of the local blacksmith. The standard body was a good-looking two-seater with a bull-nose grille.

By the end of the First World War, the works were bringing out a model that could do 45 m.p.h. uphill, and a Miss Letty C., a physical education instructress, was so delighted with it that she took her car over to New Zealand with her for her marriage, despite some intitial teething troubles. Arthur Thatcher, brother of the works manager at the time, recalled: "Miss first broke the differential, then each of the back axle shafts in turn and later one of the springs - so we changed the other three as well - and until we changed the gear box she was stuck on every steep hill."

In 1988, a restorable Mendip was worth about £1000, a Mendip in average condition was worth about £3000 and a Mendip in excellent condition could fetch a staggering £5000! Around 400 cars were produced but Shirley Toulson says that the Mendip motor car is now as extinct as the Mendip sheep, and the last specimen was ignominiously dug out of a hedge at Cookham near Marlow in 1967. (ed: the car, not the sheep!)

I wouldn't mind betting that there's still a Mendip motor on a farm somewhere, rusting away in a ditch or covered in brambles, just waiting for someone to rescue, restore, and love it. If anyone knows where one is hiding do let me know so I can at least get a photograph. I wait with baited breath!

Pothole Pourri

ARCHAEOLOGY WALK

The previous few weekends on Mendip had been typically shrouded in cold, wet fog but luckily Saturday 6th March was clear(ish), dry and mild. 14 people joined the walk, including two locals who'd heard about it at the Castle of Comfort and wanted to learn some of the ancient local history. Everyone enjoyed the walk and seemed interested in my talks on the sites (or were they just being polite?). Thank you to those who took part and made it an enjoyable day for me too. Next year's "circular" walk will be on the March Member's Weekend and, starting from Nordrach Cottage, will take in Charterhouse, Longwood and, if it does not make the walk too long, Cheddar as well.

Yvonne

LONGWOOD/EVEREST

As many of you already know, the MCG adopted Longwood/August Cave and agreed to keep it clean. We used to have annual clean-up weekends but sadly this hasn't happened for some years now. I read recently that a Pierre Royer is organising a massive logistical Nepalese-French expedition to clear the rubbish from the South Col on Mount Everest. It will involve 40 Sherpas to ferry rubbish down 17,716ft to base camp, back to the airstrip at Lukhia, and from there it will be flown to Kathmandu for final disposal! Surely we can muster a few MCG cavers to bring a bit of rubbish out of Longwood and carry it back to Nordrach Cottage for final disposal?

Of course we can and just such a weekend is to be arranged by Tim Francis, the MCG Conservation Officer. We will let you know the date soon.

WALKING BOOTS

Bill Headington's boots went walkabout from the cottage sometime before the 6th March and haven't been seen since. If found, please return them to him.

TRIG PILLAR ADOPTION

Last Autumn I read in a Sunday paper that the Ordnance Survey are abandoning most of their trig pillars for mapping purposes. They are starting a Trig Pillar Adoption Scheme for people who want to preserve pillars as landmarks or for sentimental reasons. While walking on Blackdown on New Year's day, I wondered if I could adopt the summit of Mendip for MCG!

As pillars are allocated to people in the order in which requests are made, I thought I'd better be quick. I applied to adopt two pillars - Blackdown and one behind Vompitt Farm (not far from the Castle of Comfort!). I wanted to apply on behalf of the MCG but did not have time to ask the committee. If I'm lucky enough to be accepted, and if the committee agree, I hope MCG members will be willing to check the pillar from time to time, and to undertake any repairs - I will print a small article explaining what is involved in its care. We have a cottage work weekend and a Longwood clean-up weekend, why not a Trig Pillar maintenance weekend? If you want to know more about the scheme, ask me, Yvonne Rowe, for more details.

FROM THE LOGBOOK

22-2-92 QUAKING HOUSE CAVERN. Had a nice chat with the lady at the Farmhouse. No access problems. A crawler's type of cave. Stal Avenue and Stal Bank well worth a visit to see, and the clear pool and white flowstone. Some good squeezes in a muddier than expected cave. Anon

21-6-92 OLD HAM IRON MINE. This mine was re-discovered several years ago by an RFDC caver walking his dog when he found a small hole in the hillside. This dropped steeply for about 100ft to a mined passage starting in a boulder choke. The main adits run roughly parallel to each other with some interesting flowstone appearing. By careful surveying and digging in a mud collapse, the main entrance with stone walled sides and roof was found quite close to the road level and a nearby stream that is good to wash off the clag, etc. The entrance in the hillside is very difficult to find. Permission for this and other mines from Ray Wright at Clearwell Mine. Geoff Beale

... AND YET MORE



NEW TRAINING TRIP

The training trip has been updated to reflect modern caving techniques (other than SRT). An example of the new form, which is to be used for all training trips from now on, is enclosed with this newsletter. Additional copies are available from Joan Goddard. Please treat the training trip seriously - although it is longer than the previous version, the committee believe that it reflects the minimum standards that we should expect to see in a full member who is to be given access to Group ladder and rope. On the other hand, if you are currently a probationary member and the training trip appears daunting, please don't worry! There are plenty of full members willing to show you the ropes ("they're over there in the tackle store!"). Existing full members will not be subjected to the new training trip (ed: phew!) - however, if they want to update their skills they should speak to Kevin West.

SRT RIGGING

Now that the SRT store is complete (see p6) Kev West will start compiling a list of approved SRT riggers with access to the store. How do you become an approved rigger, I hear you ask? Simply by demonstrating your rigging ability to the committee's satisfaction. An example of the SRT Rigging Trip form is enclosed with this newsletter.

SRT TRAINING

The Group will subsidise SRT training for any member who is interested. This can be basic SRT, pitch rigging, SRT rescue or any other course you like to think of. It can be on Mendip or in Yorkshire, and can be indoors or underground. Contact any committee member for further details.

CHARTERHOUSE CAVE

Several people expressed their interest in becoming Charterhouse Cave leaders. The committee had to make a difficult choice, as all the applicants would have made suitable leaders. In the end, we decided that the leaders should be full members and well known to the membership. On these criteria, Bill Headington has been nominated to be the "local" leader and Charlie Allison will be the "away" leader when Yvonne becomes temporarily incapacitated. Commiserations to those who applied but who were not selected.

ACCESS/CONSERVATION

MCG now has its very own Access and Conservation officer in the shape of the very accessible and well conserved Tim Francis. This non-committee post has been created so that Tim can represent the MCG in an official capacity at CSCC meetings. The committee have agreed that he will take on the responsibility of advising members on matters of access and conservation on Mendip.

EARWIG...

...in on the committee meeting 03.04.93... Bone Hole shoring date TBA... T-shirt design selected, AJ Knibbs to finalise... £15 deposit required when loaning CCC keys to visitors... new covers for mattresses being tried out, comments please... 1991 accounts audited and sent to Charity Commissioners... Mike Lovell auditing 1992 accounts... Martin Rowe preparing 1st quarter 1993 accounts... Charlie Allison continues as Journal editor, 1st draft to be ready by 1st July... Bill Headington costing R&B event for 10th July.

CONTRIBUTIONS...

...for the newsletter are always welcome, preferably typed and double spaced. Articles may also be submitted on 5.25" discs or 3.5" discs if they are compatible with my BBC B computer and Acorn DFS (40 or 80 track drive). The general deadline for articles is 2 weeks before a members' weekend (or 1 week before for brief news items).