

Mendip Caving Group

NEWS

NUMBER 228

JUNE 1993

A VISIT TO SWILDONS 13

by Tim Francis

After the Blitzkrieg of Hymacing undertaken in 1991 and 1992, several sites are now beginning to show dividends. Prominent amongst these has been White Pit. This is situated in a large depression in Priddy, not much more than a quick stagger from the Queen Vic. Interest in the site stemmed from its location "somewhere downstream" of Sump 12 in Swillies. Apart from Sandpit Hole the gap between Swildons and Wookey was previously devoid of cave. Since the Hymac operation the stalwart diggers of the BEC have opened up 150 metres of passage to a depth of 50 metres.

We arranged a visit with Tony Jarratt for Sunday 4th April, with the trip commencing in the Hunters. A quick change at the roadside and it was off to the cave. Before descending the entrance pipes we spent a pleasurable thirty minutes hauling spoil up, and out of the cave. (Come back Pinetree, all is forgiven!) Once in the cave we were left to wander around in small groups: vital if the formations are to be conserved. Below the entrance drop there are two passages, with the main way off to the right. A crawl and two free-climbable pots lead to a further junction. Uphill leads to a rubble slope and a beautifully decorated passage, normally referred to as "The Pretties". This extends for 12m or so, and has some of the best straws on Mendip. At the end there are still a couple of diggable leads.

Back at the junction, at the base of the Second Pot, the main route follows a tight, low passage. After 9m the tight pitch-head at Coffee Pot is reached (7.5m). Beyond this point the passage dramatically increases in size. A further 4.5m climb opens out at the base of Master's Hall. This aven has been recently climbed to several feet below the surface. The main way appears to close down, but an awkward rift can be free-climbed. This gains the top of Prophecy Pot, a fine 15m pitch, which unfortunately comes to an abrupt conclusion. However, upon descending the pitch we were rewarded with views of a fantastic calcite cascade and a small collection of cave pearls.

Before leaving the cave we followed the left hand passage at the entrance junction. This is currently the main dig site and trends over the top of Prophecy Pot. Another prettily decorated chamber, Waist of Thyme, is also passed on the right. On exit we hauled out a few more buckets of spoil before we were finally released.

In conclusion, White Pit is a fascinating cave with tremendous potential. If you don't mind lending a hand with the digging then we would certainly recommend a trip. Contact the BEC for access details.

Team: Charlie Alison, Andrew
Bellamy, Joel Corrigan, Ralph
Diment, Tim Francis, Julie
Hesketh, Kirsty Stroud.

ABANDON ROOMS!

Guests may moan about our rules, but how about these found on a Prague hotel bedroom door and reported in The Guardian, 15.4.93: "Guests should announce the abandonment of their rooms before 12 o'clock, emptying the room at the latest until 14 o'clock, for the use of the room before 5 at the arrival or after the 16 o'clock at the departure, will be billed as one night more."

++++ MCG 1993 MEETS PROGRAMME +++++ BANK HOLIDAY WEEKENDS IN ITALICS +++++

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

DATE	AREA	MAIN EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
26 Jun	Mendip	Stoke Lane Slocker	Bill Headington	0761-419766
03 Jul	Mendip	Charterhouse Cave	Yvonne Rowe	0252-872006
03 Jul	Mendip	St Cuthberts	John Beauchamp	0761-463143
04 Jul	Mendip	Hunters Hole SRT	Richard Carey	0272-862029
10 Jul	Mendip	Swildons 40ft Pot (1968)	Martin Rowe	0252-872006
07 Aug	Mendip	St Cuthberts	John Beauchamp	0761-463143
04 Sep	Mendip	St Cuthberts	John Beauchamp	0761-463143
17 Sep - 18 Sep	Bristol	BCRA Cavers Fair	Bill Headington	0761-419766
02 Oct	Mendip	MCG Forum	Joan Goddard	0608-810382
02 Oct	Mendip	St Cuthberts	John Beauchamp	0761-463143
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		
COTTAGE INFORMATION:	Tel: 0761-462797	Grid Ref 51475606	OS 1:50,000 sheet 182
COTTAGE BOOKINGS:	Through the cottage warden please (address and tel. no. below)		
COTTAGE FEES per night:	MCG members, member's children, SWCC and NPC		£ 1.50
	Guest clubs and member's guests		£ 2.50
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		



SECRETARY JOAN GODDARD	tel: 0608-810382
10 ENSTONE ROAD, CHARLBURY, OXFORD, OX7 3QR	
TREASURER MARTIN ROWE	tel: 0252-872006
10 GREENLEAS CLOSE, YATELEY, CAMBERLEY, SURREY, GU17 7SL	
MEET SECRETARY BILL HEADINGTON	tel: 0761-419766
43 WHEELER'S ROAD, MIDSOMER NORTON, nr BATH, BA3 2BT	
COTTAGE WARDEN LEE HAWKESWELL	tel: 0923-819103
4a HAZELTREE ROAD, NORTH WATFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE	
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3 KEWARD, GLASTONBURY ROAD, WELLS, SOMERSET, BA5 1TR	
ORDINARY MEMBER ARTHUR SPAIN	tel: 0749-679358
WAITANGI, LONG LANE, DINDER, SOMERSET, BA5 3PQ	

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RON SAUNDERS
MALCOLM COTTER
PAT WALSH
PETER MATHEWS
REGISTERED CHARITY No 270088

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CONSERVATION OFFICER
JOURNAL EDITOR
MCG SHOP
MCG SHOP

JOHN CROWSLEY 0272-652585
TIM FRANCIS 081-878-3508
CHARLIE ALLISON 081-393-5910
MALCOLM COTTER 07842-52643
PHIL INGOLD 0442-242029



ON THE MOVE

Graham Old has moved to:
1 Upper House Farm Cottage,
Harpsden, Henley-on-Thames RG9 4JS
tel: 0491-628596

Steve Wyatt is back at:
17 Stonewell Drive, Congresbury,
Avon, BS19 5DW tel: 0934-838953
Lee Ferris is now at:
18 Andrula Court, Lordship Lane,
London N22

CORRECTION!

Joel Corrigan's telephone number was misprinted in Newsletter 227. His correct number is: 0344-842083

CONGRATULATIONS...

..to Richard Carey on becoming a Full Member.

APPLICATIONS...

..for Probationary Membership from Mike Eeles (proposed by G Beale, M Cotter) and Joe Frampton (J Corrigan, T Francis) will be considered at the committee meeting on 03 July.

DOGS DINNERS!

Guests are not allowed to bring dogs into the cottage at any time. Members may bring their own dogs into the lounge but should not allow them into the kitchen, or the dining area when people are eating. If it is necessary to leave a dog unattended in the lounge the owner must ensure that it does not have access to the kitchen - if not kept on a lead then you must somehow block the entrance to the kitchen.

TRUSTEE NEWS

Councillor Pittman has resigned as MCG Caving Shop signatory and trustee. He will be replaced by Lee Hawkeswell.

MCG CAVE LEADERS

DAN-YR-OGOF
Geoff Beale 0734-722510
John Beauchamp 0761-463143
Pete Collings-Wells 0462-76651
Ian McKechnie 0932-228292
John Miriam 081-393-3955
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John Miriam 081-393-3955

ST. CUTHBERT'S
John Beauchamp 0761-463143
Malcolm Cotter 07842-52643

CHARTERHOUSE CAVE
Yvonne Rowe 0252-872006
Bill Headington 0761-419766

RESERVOIR HOLE
Geoff Beale 0734-722510

SRT ROPE

Following discussion with a percentage of members, the committee have agreed the following:

- 1 Only MCG members may use MCG SRT rope (no guests).
- 2 The committee would prefer members to undertake formal SRT training before using Group rope.
- 3 Access to the SRT rope store is restricted to approved riggers (initially Tim Francis, Lee Hawkeswell, Richard Carey, Key West) and participation in the SRT trip is at the discretion of the rigger.
- 4 Any two approved riggers may nominate an MCG full member to become an SRT approved rigger provided that the nominee has previously demonstrated his or her ability to rig, as laid out in the SRT rigging assessment form defined by the committee.
- 5 It is the responsibility of each member undertaking an SRT trip to satisfy him or herself as to the safety of the rope and adequacy of the rigging. The committee accepts no responsibility for SRT trips.

TYING THE KNOT

On May 28th MCG member Gill Warren married Pete Norris, with whom she cycled to New Zealand in 1991, and they are honeymooning above the Arctic Circle. Her bridesmaids were MCG members Linda Gates, Julie Marshall-Deane and Fiona Wills. Good luck to Gill and Pete, and best wishes from the MCG.

THE LEGEND OF THE DAREN DIGGER

by Joe Corrigan

It is a little known fact that in the wonderful world of caving there is a rare subspecies - the legendary Daren Digger. This elusive creature is not easy to recognise from a distance, but up close the truth becomes all too clear. For the Daren Digger exudes the reek of numerous days spent underground at a time, combined with the stench of unnameable beverages. A most unsavoury creature altogether.

For quite some time, I had had a silly notion to meet these beasts in their own environment, and on Thursday 15th April the opportunity arose. Together with three other "Bigfoot" hunters, I entered Daren Cilau. My colleagues were Chris Seal (RUCC, CSS), Henry Bennet (BEC, CSS), and Brian Gibbons (nearly CSS).

You can bet that I was very, very excited about the prospect of spending three nights underground, searching for my prey. Unfortunately, though, you'd be wrong! Never before had the entrance series seemed so long. It is amazing what steel scaffold bars and large tackle bags can do for morale. I failed to see what possible use scaffolding could be with my mission...

Hard Rock Cafe was to become home for the next few days, and under the expert supervision of our glorious leader (erm, that's Chris, and not me), we turned this featureless bit of rock into a palace. One of the most important rules of underground camping is to maintain a more or less normal routine (at least as far as bedtime is concerned), or symptoms akin to jet-lag can occur. Now the relevance of the enormous amounts of alcohol that we'd brought down became clear. In order to mirror standard weekend practice, we were forced to mix (and drink) horrendous cocktails, play underground cricket with a luminous ball and a rocket tube (whilst on the way to the Terminal Sump at 4am), and go digging with terrible hangovers!! Being new to this game, the others had no great difficulty in convincing me that this was for my own good.

You may be forgiven for thinking that all we did was party, but the truth must be told; in my search for the "DD" I was forced to dig in certain areas of the cave. "Chokes Away" received our attention on the Friday, where we installed some of the hated scaffold poles. This site, beyond "Twelve O'Clock High", is regarded by those in the know as an area of great potential, although rather long-term in nature. Finding no trace of the Daren Digger there, we turned our attention to the "Hulk One" dig on the Saturday. This is basically a Hades project, but we decided to help them out a bit. I had also discovered footprints. Could it be...?

Yet again, no luck. We had shifted loads of spoil from this horrid little hole, and in the process had enlarged it to a size suitable for larger-than-Hobbit size cavers. We even managed to discover a new dig site. Heading back towards "Western Union", Chris and Henry spotted a high level tube. As a "new boy", I was elected to climb and investigate. I discovered about 5m of sandy passage, with a reasonable air flow. Dinner was beckoning, so I had to call it a day after about an hour.

I can honestly say that I had a great time down Daren, and I'm not just saying that because I'm trying to recruit diggers!! As I shall probably become a more regular camper, I will certainly take my own sleeping bag and dry kit down there, but if anyone wants to dig on a one-off basis, then using gear that is already there is generally not a problem, so long as you get permission. Strangely enough, those people who have set up the camps get rather upset if thoughtless cavers trash their belongings, or don't replace food. I wonder why?!

By six pm Sunday we were back at Whitewalls. The trip had been a success in some ways, but a complete failure in others. We had done some useful and much needed work at the dig sites, but I had been outwitted by the seemingly non-existent Daren Diggers. Needless to say, I was somewhat disappointed at not having seen them for the entire weekend. At the end, though, hope was rekindled, when Martyn Farr was heard to say, "Pooh, what a honk! It must be those Daren Diggers again."

SLB — SOUNDLESS BREAKER

The Explosives User Group (BCRA) is pleased to announce that they have negotiated a special deal with Safety Explosives (North West) Ltd to allow cavers to obtain SLB at reduced rates. Answers to some common questions about SLB are as follows:

What is SLB? SLB is a low velocity deflagrating explosive which is primarily composed of a gas-generating component. When correctly loaded into shotholes and fired, it can be used to split boulders or remove flakes with a minimum of noise and vibration. SLB is a black powder not unlike sugar in consistency.

How is SLB detonated? It is set off using a special ignitor, which in turn is activated with a standard detonating machine. SLB is insensitive to normal detonators.

Can SLB be used as a plaster charge? No, SLB can only be used in properly charged and tamped shotholes.

Is a licence needed to acquire and store SLB? Up to 5kg of SLB can be purchased and stored without the need for a police licence. Under an agreement with the Health and Safety Executive, the importer will only supply SLB to people who have been trained to use it and hold a certificate to prove it. Training is available through the Explosives User Group and is free of charge to holders of an explosives licence or costs £15.00 for a non-licence holder (£17.00 for non-members).

What are the fumes like? SLB generates nitrous oxides, carbon monoxide and large quantities of carbon dioxide. Fumes from charges should be treated with at least as much respect as those of any "normal" explosive. Remember - there are no such things as "safe" bang fumes!

Can SLB be used in solid rock? SLB is at its maximum effectiveness when used in an isolated boulder and is ineffective for mining solid rock. However, in applications where a free face to break to is available it is an effective tool for widening passages.

Is SLB safe to handle? Direct contact with the skin does not induce nausea or headaches as with "nitro" based explosive. Internal ingestion of the powder should be avoided.

Does SLB create flyrock, noise and vibration? If correctly used, SLB will produce only minimal noise and vibration, and flying debris is minimised.

Can SLB be used underwater? SLB powder must be dry to ignite properly, but this does not preclude the preparation of waterproof charges. The effect of pressure on the ignitors is unknown.

Does SLB have a limited shelf life? Stored under proper conditions (i.e. cold and dry) SLB has an indefinite shelf life.

How much SLB is required in a typical application? Recent tests indicate that 10g of SLB is sufficient to reduce a 0.25 cubic metre boulder to about six pieces.

How much does SLB cost? Costs for the cartridges are as follows:

Cartridge size	Approx mass	Cost (ex VAT)
P15	180g	£16.00
P6	60g	£12.80
P3	30g	£10.65
Delay ignitor		£ 3.65

Each cartridge is supplied with one ignitor and only delay ignitors are available separately. It will be obvious to many people that this is substantially more, per shot, than the cost of using normal explosive and detonators. However, taking into account the increased shelf life and the lack of storage or licence restrictions it is still an attractive option for many users.

Where can I obtain SLB? SLB is available by contacting the BCRA Explosives User Group at:
17 Pendle Road,
Clayton Le Woods,
Leyland, Lancs.
PR5 2UN

Arrangements for delivery will be made at the time of purchase (SLB cannot be sent through the post)



IT STARTED IN THE PYRENEES ?

On Monday 8th July 1968 a small low developed over the intensely heated Pyrenees. There was also localised thunder in northern Spain and Biscay caused by unusually warm Mediterranean air. The low which had hung over Britain all weekend had dissipated and the warm Mediterranean air behind the warm front advanced northwards on the 9th, expanding and lifting to a height of 5,700-5,800m, and becoming unstable. The weather report at noon on the 10th stated: "The warm front over France, with Mediterranean air to the south of it, has moved north to the English Channel associated with a thundery low over Biscay. The high pressures will continue to maintain mostly dry weather in the northwest, but a complex low pressure system will spread thundery outbreaks to much of England and Wales."

On the afternoon of the 10th the low lay over east Devon and was travelling N-N-E. Immediately preceding the arrival of the depression, warm saturated air lay across the the area associated with a light E-N-E drift from a high pressure ridge extending down into the North Sea. Temperatures at midday were a muggy 14°C, with cloud down to 200m. Strong convection occurred over locally heated surfaces, deepening large cumulus clouds with anvil-like characteristics at their summits. Barometric pressure slowly fell from 1014.8mbs to 1008.4mbs between 1200hrs and 1800hrs as the depression edged north towards south Somerset.

Throughout the day there had been light rain and local thunderstorms. By late afternoon the rain had become more continuous, saturating the already moist soil. Heavy showers (10-15mm/hr) ensued over the following 2hrs between 1800hrs and the arrival of the front in the area. The main storms were gathering along an east-west belt, 80km long, between the Bristol Channel and west Wiltshire. At 1900hrs, the flow into North Hill Swallet was enough to deter the diggers from their Wednesday evening session. The stream at Swildons Hole was topping the level of the old entrance. Fields and some roads were flooded.

The warm front reached Mendip about 2000hrs and was slowed before surmounting the southern escarpment allowing the advance of the over-riding wedge of warm air. At the same time, the more rapidly moving cold front closed in, bending and steepening. As these fronts converged, the warm air lifted and the trough deepened. The Mendips, standing at right angles to the path of moisture-laden clouds, forced the air to rise and cool, prolonging the storms and increasing precipitation. Winds strengthened, with the down-draughts created by each successive outbreak of thunder in excess of 35kph. Frequent violent downpours (50mm/hr) were occurring and the clouds became visually turbulent. By about 2200hrs the offending cold front had "buckled" over Mendip under the influence of surface drag by the stronger relief and the upper trough. After this the cloud base lifted, the rain eased and the thunder became less intense. In the swallets, streams rose to the following flood levels:

East Twin	2.0m	Read's Cavern	1.0m	Swildons	3.5m
West Twin	2.4m	Tynings Swallet	5.2m	Stoke Lane	0.6m
Longwood	1.0m	Eastwater	1.0m	St. Cuthberts	0.9m
Manor Farm	1.0m	Withybrook	1.0m		

The Burrington area showed the most extreme response of resurgences alone while Cheddar suffered the effects of surface flood waters joining those from underground. Central and east Mendip were less effected. The highest falls recorded were to the north over Chew Valley Lake which took over 400 million gallons of water during 20hrs 20mins (that's over 2200 skipfulls per second!!) on the night of 10th and the morning of 11th July.

Most of the damage to property on Mendip was caused by flood surges, often resulting from man-made obstructions. The best example of this was the breaching of the Yoxter/Charterhouse Road at Velvet Bottom at 0200hrs on the 11th, releasing water ponded there since the evening of the 10th. (During this phase of ponding Blackmoor Flood Swallet and Grebe Swallet were formed as a result of collapse into former mine workings.) This surge reached Cheddar at about 0210hrs! This was not the first surge at Cheddar - at 2115hrs on the 10th, diners at the Caveman

Restuarant were forced to abandon their meals and head for higher ground. Flood surges happened in East Twin Valley, caused by fallen trees trapping boulders and turf; and at Swildons Hole when the floor of the Water Rift gave way.

At 2300hrs on the 10th, the Manor Farm stream overflowed and flooded the farmhouse to a depth of 1m. At the junction of this valley with Velvet Bottom evidence suggests that a stream 12.6m wide and 75cm deep reached that point. At Manor Farm Swallet, a collapse produced a shaft 16m deep and 6m diameter.

In the Longwood valley the flow uprooted trees and removed the valley infill exposing bedrock in places and a new exposure of the Carboniferous/Trias contact. As at Manor Farm, the flood flowed to join Velvet Bottom. Longwood Swallet was less effected than Manor Farm Swallet but both Longwood and August series were temporarily blocked by dislodged boulders. Considerable debris was shifted in the stream passages, sand being deposited 1.8m up the walls in part of the Downstream Series.

At Tynning's Farm Swallet, what was normally a trickle of a few litres per second became a flood that filled the depression completely and overflowed into the next one to the west, severely damaging the steel door to GB Cavern. Between the two depressions part of the col collapsed to form a steep-sided hollow 4.5m diameter and 3m deep. An enormous volume of water entred GB Cavern causing striking changes within the cave. The crawl just inside the entrance was enlarged to a small gallery with unstable boulders poised in the roof. The floor of the First Grotto collapsed, leaving the ladder hanging. At the upper end of the Gorge a mud flow was initiated by a collapse on the surface. Large boulders were transported down the Gorge and were finally deposited below the 40ft Pitch. Water ponded up and reached the level of Ladder Dig, depositing a thin layer of silt there.

The Swildons Hole stream rose rapidly to fill the gatehouse hollow to a depth of 3.5m. The pressure of this head of water was released by the opening of a choked rift 3m high and 1m wide between the tree roots - forming an alternative entrance to the cave. Below ground, as well as the floor of the Water Rift being demolished (by-passing the "Forty"), great boulders were tumbled along near the entrance and a huge piece of flowstone moved across the Well. Ponding must have occurred back from Sump 1 as far as Tratman's Temple, with Barnes Loop carrying a shallow stream. Where ponding occurred debris marked the flood level, the most impressive site being above the "Twenty" where the flood must have reached 5.1m above the top of the pitch! Chambers as far as Swildon's 8 showed signs of flooding (17m above normal in Swildon's 7) and high velocity.

In Burrington, the entrance to East Twin was blasted by Bristol Waterworks on the night of the 10th in an effort to prevent flooding in Burrington Combe. Twigs marked the flood line in the cave 4.5m up the wall of the main chamber. In the West Twin Valley, Flange Swallet (the stream sink 50m downvalley from Sidcot Swallet) was buried by boulders. The entrance to Sidcot Swallet was reached by the water and the entrance to Bath Swallet was changed due to a large collapse. In Burrington Combe itself water drained into Aveline's Hole and ponding occurred in the main chamber.

Luckily, 10 h July 1968 was a Wednesday and very few people, if any, planned a caving trip that day. Had the storm been on a Saturday...

They say history doesn't repeat itself but it did - on 30th July 1969 another storm struck the Burrington area and flooded parts of Bristol, but the effects were minimised by the fact that there had been a drought for 20 days prior to this second storm.

(This article by Yvonne Rowe, based on extracts from *The Great Storms and Floods of July 1968 on Mendip* by JD Hanwell & MD Newson, 1970.)

Lets hope there isn't a recurrence of "the great flood" 25 years on, or our Swildons 40 and anniversary barbecue on July 10th will be a washout!

MALLORCA '92 : A TOUR OF INDIVIDUALS

by Tim Francis

In the past Mallorca has often been a haunt of the MCG over the Christmas period, so this trip was something of a revival. Once the broader details were ironed out at Staines railway station, one Thursday night in November, we were off. Myself, Julie Hesketh and Pete Hollings (WLCC) grabbed the cheapest flight possible, and despite such short notice Malcolm and Norma Cotter were also able to come along. Apart from the odd bemused look from customs, logistically things went without a hitch.

The cuevas de Mallorca are notoriously difficult to find with paths rarely trodden. Our first efforts were no exception to any rule. Upon recommendation we had decided to attempt Cueva Campana which was supposedly easy to find. No such luck! We spent several hours wandering the desolate limestone scrub at Sa Colobra looking for the damn thing. We have since found better references (ULSA) and it seems we'd probably followed the wrong indistinct pathway. Undeterred, we returned to the villa at Palma Sol, near Puerto Cristo.

Hangovers permitting our second choice of cave was Penya Rotja near Alcudia. The walk to this cave is fantastic with dramatic views of Formentor across the Bahía de Pollensa. Furthermore, for Mallorcan standards the entrance is relatively easy to locate. The description of the cave we had was vague and seemed to suggest that it was small. The upper levels are dry and dusty with the odd bit of stal. Whilst the others took the requisite holiday photographs I headed off to find the way on. Previous accounts suggested that the survey (Federacio Balear d' Espeleologia, Palma - FBd'E) would not be much help. Spotting a lead I dropped down a nasty Eastwater-type rift, 30ft deep. With the aid of a couple of slings Pete was also able to climb down. A handline is definitely recommended. Beyond, we followed a crawly section along a black flowstone "river". This appeared to suddenly end. Nosing around further we spotted another awkward hole somewhat reminiscent of "The Slot" in Pierres Pot. Dropping down, it proved to be relatively easy. The slot lands on a balcony overlooking a huge chamber, beautifully decorated. The pitch may have been 50ft deep. Crawling around we followed a series of squeezes and passed several pitches. Eventually we reached the bottom although a 20ft handline would make life easier. At the bottom we wandered through several large chambers with impressive formations. Things tended to get a bit dodgy in the lower levels with a few promising draughts. Reluctantly we had to return to the others after an hour or so.

The next couple of days were spent cave hunting in the vicinity of the villa, as well as the obligatory show-cave stops at Drach and Hams. The south east coastal area is rarely visited in comparison to the mountains in the north. Although there are dry valleys all over the place the limestone is not conducive to large caves. The terrain is rough and the vegetation unfriendly. However, whilst looking for Cuevas del Pirata we stumbled upon a classic shakehole in a field at Ca'n Fresquet. Technically the road was probably private but what the hell! The cave is eventually one large chamber, a collapse feature blocked with unconsolidated material. At the bottom the way on is sumped. However, we were able to crawl upstream for 50ft or so until things got too hairy. We then wandered down to the coast at Punta D'es Llevants. A few sea caves were spotted that looked promising - the Blue Holes of Mallorca!

At the same time we also bumped into the local landowner. Well, we were blocking his road. "Pointing in our best Castilian" we explained about Pirata. To our surprise he invited us on a guided tour on the Sunday. The cave is still gated with remnants of seats, lighting, and steps hewn out of the calcite still remaining. Essentially the cave consists of a couple of large chambers descending to a blue sump. Dived by the FBd'E it was finally connected to Cova des Pont in October 1989 by Cwmbran Caving Club. This makes a system of 2025m, second only to Drach (2400m). We were keen to explore further but our guide, Juan, was intent on sticking to the path. In our limited Spanish we discovered the name of the shakehole we'd explored before. I think he said Cueva del Mustic (Gloomy Cave), but the others disagreed. The farmer is not keen for any

other cavers so please don't go traipsing over his land without asking permission first.

The other cave visited was Cueva Coma Freda at Formentor. This impressive shaft is easy to find and excellent for SRT practice - 30m with one rebelay. At the bottom there are several large chambers with dramatic formations: a brilliant setting for photographs. Despite looking in every hole we couldn't find a way on.

In conclusion the week proved to be a useful recce trip. We'll definitely return in the near future. Cheap flights and cooler weather mean that caving on Mallorca should only be attempted during the winter months. 1:25,000 maps can be obtained from Stanfords. The caves are extremely hot so take cotton boiler suits and the most apallingly thin furry suits you can find. There are no cave rescue facilities so you have to be totally self-sufficient. Thanks to RHBNC "Moles" for the loan of the rope.

Team: Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh, Pete Hollings (WLCC), Malcolm and Norma Cotter.

Ed: If anyone wants further details of caving in Mallorca, I have all the maps, surveys, grid references of all the caves, SRT rigging details, full descriptions of locations and details of caving groups on the island - masses of information as compiled by the MCG and Dave Elliot during our visits in the 1980's.

JOURNAL UPDATE

by Charlie Allison

I have several major articles for the Journal, as well as some shorter fillers. The quantity of material I have received or been promised is such that it looks like being a sizable volume. However, we need a stunning photo for the front cover, the sort of thing that would make Chris Howes tremble with excitement. The criteria for submissions are:

- a) Very high quality, good contrast as it will be photocopied
- b) Colour prints preferably, although I can copy slides to make prints
- c) Should show some aspect of MCG caving activities eg. Upper Flood
- d) Print can be of any size, but 6" x 4" easiest to handle
- e) Landscape rather than portrait format preferable
- f) 35mm or medium format (6x6 or 6x4.5) negatives acceptable.

Also I need a monochrome or colour photo showing a scene of very early MCG activities, with the same criteria as above. Please send as many photos as you want to me at: 69 Cheam Road, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 3EG. Tel: 081-393-5910 Please use card reinforced envelopes to prevent damage to your prints, slides should not be glass mounted as they are likely to shatter in the post! It is not too late to send me more articles for submission, along with illustrations as applicable. Submissions can be typed or hand written (neatly!). Diagrams need to be black ink only for final reproduction. Please write or phone me if you have any questions, ideas, etc.

MCG SHOP BEWARE!

Found in *The Sun*: Golf club coach Ron Lee was sacked for refusing to stock women's gear in his shop. Ron, 50, at the club for 24 years, was booted out after dozens of complaints from wives. He said: "I am not stocking trendy clothes for the wives of new members." But Bob Jordan, 55, captain of Mendip Golf Club near Shepton Mallet, Somerset, said: "It was a unanimous decision to terminate his contract."

Don't worry - the MCG shop is safe for the moment, that is until the manufacturers start to produce designer oversuits and wellies specifically for female cavers!

PINETREE POT

Mr Brown, the owner, is considering closing Pinetree Pot due to problems with midweek cavers damaging his property, parking at the wrong gate and making too much noise. At his request, a new lock has been fitted and the MCG are the only keyholders. A £15 key deposit is required, and the key is only to be issued to bona fide cavers. He does not want any trips Monday to Friday. At weekends, trips should be during the day and not late evening. Cars must not be parked on the minor road to Hazel Warren Farm. As visitors to Pinetree Pot must call at MCG for the key, it may be best for them to use our carpark and walk towards the Castle of Comfort, using the gate near Warren Lodge (ST519556).

SWAN MINE

Access to Swan Mine is difficult (?impossible?) as person's unknown have fixed a lock to the entrance and the keys are not available. Further developments are awaited.

STOKE LANE

I received this information verbally in the Eclipse recently and scribbled a few rushed notes so I hope there are no inaccuracies. I will expand (and correct) when I have more details, but for now...

West London Caving Club have found a new entrance to Stoke Lane Slocker at a higher level in the quarry above (Stoke Lane Quarry?). There is a 30ft rift which is bouldery and loose at the bottom, leading to a muddy crawl. They thought at first that they had found a by-pass to Sump 1 but it merely by-passes Duck 1 near Stoke Lane Slocker entrance and comes out in the Rabbit Warren. It may also connect to Stock's Hole (an old MCG dig) which previously only had a vocal link with Stoke Lane.

NEW CSCC LEADER

At the Council for Southern Caving Clubs Annual General Meeting on May 8th, Alan Butcher relinquished the post of secretary but remains CSCC's representative to the National Caving Association. The new secretary is Steve Cottle of the University of Bristol Speleological Society.

SRT PRACTICE

Would you like to dangle on a rope and go to the bottom of a pitch without all the bother of re-belays, deviations, rub points, traverse lines, and all of the consequent hype of knots or "Y" hangs?

If the answer to the above is "Yes", Geoff Beale has access in the Reading area to a nice, dry, 70ft freehang in a brick-lined shaft. Just turn up and "do it". No caving clothing is needed - just a warm jumper, jeans and boots.

If you are interested, experienced or not, then contact him on 0734-722510 and he will organise it. Ladders and lifelines for the die-hards not into SRT will also be available.

BOOK REVIEW

"WHO WAS AVELINE ANYWAY?"

This little book by Richard Witcombe explains the origins of the names of Mendip's caves and cave passages. The first time I picked up this publication in Bat Products I found it quite off-putting - I think the large print had something to do with it. However, the second time I saw it, curiosity got the better of me and I investigated further. It is interesting to dip into - but not all in one go. Here are a couple of quotes to whet the appetite:-

"Devil's Elbow, GB Cave - originally called Buggery Bend by the UBSS explorers, the log book required a less rude name."

"Snotrom Aven, Eastwater Cavern - this West End Series aven is thought to be somewhere under Morton's Pot (Snotrom is Morton's backwards)."

"Gipsy Pot, Hillgrove - a depression probed by George Pointing of the Wessex in the 1960s. He used his Austin Gypsy to haul out a boulder."

There are three or four references to MCG discoveries and personalities (courtesy of Malcolm Cotter and Mike Haselden)

...And who was Aveline anyway?
...You'll have to read the book to find out (it's in the MCG library).
Joan Goddard