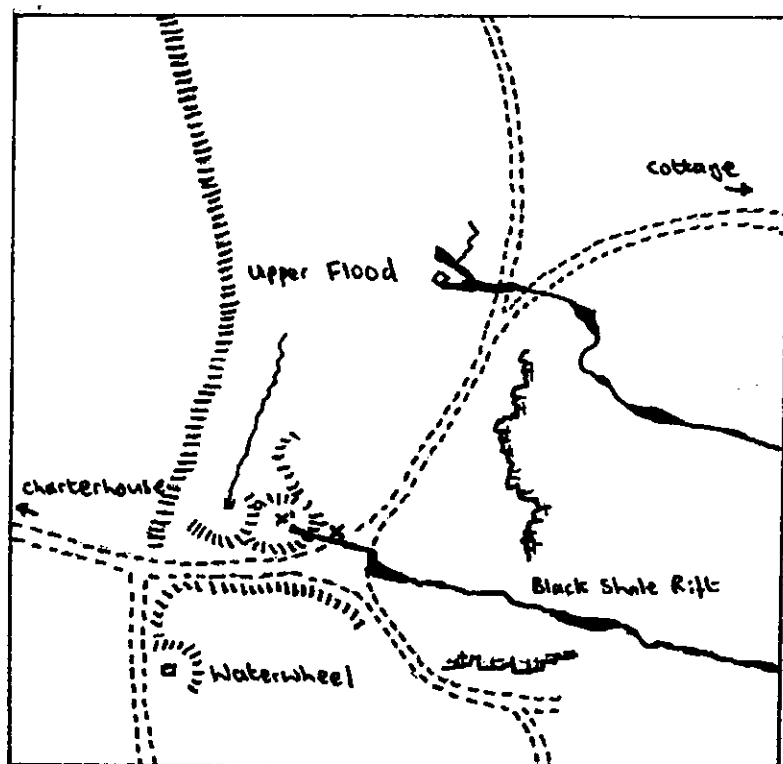




THE GRUNTERPHONE AND UPPER FLOOD: RADIO-LOCATING RIP-OFF AVEN

by Tim Francis

Blackmoor Valley Caves



x' Rip-off Aven
x molephone point
- cave sketch

In newsletter no.231 an article described the discovery of Rip-Off Aven, a small extension at the upstream end of Black Shale Rift. After examining the survey as well as the results of a previous radio-location, we realised that the aven must lie extremely close to the surface. The creation of a convenient second entrance would provide easier access to the downstream dig, primarily the "Split-Rock" face. However we needed an accurate surface location of the aven to determine if a dig would be practicable.

On Saturday 20th November we met up with Brian Prewer from the MRO. We used the Grunterphone, the baby brother of the molephone, with Brian organising things at the surface. Underground, the molephone was taken as far upstream as possible whilst keeping the aerial horizontal for accuracy. We also attempted a rough survey of Rip-Off Aven but were hampered by lead tailings affecting compass bearings.

After switching on, communication with the surface was achieved straight away. It was then only a matter of five minutes before the exact location was pinpointed. Joel left a marker to record the position, which had landed on the edge of the track (see map). The top of the aven lies twenty-five feet west of the molephone point taking it directly under a large shakehole. A high level of interference suggested that the aven lies extremely close to the surface, perhaps only 25 feet. Considering the depth of the shakehole we could be very close indeed. Interestingly, the next shakehole westwards is where the surface stream sinks, and the site of an old MCG dig. This stream does not reappear at Rip-Off Aven, suggesting that the Gruffies of Blackmoor still hold many secrets to be discovered.

Team: J Corrigan, R Diment, T Francis, J Frampton and B Prewer (MRO).

+++ MCG 1994 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
05 Feb	Mendip	Rescue Practice	John Crowsley	0272-652585
05 Mar	Mendip	Archaeology walk	Yvonne Rowe	0252-872006
23 Apr	Mendip	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	Joan Goddard	0608-810382
23 Apr	Mendip	40th Anniversary Dinner	Arthur Spain	0749-679358
Summer 94	France	Alps Expedition	TBA	

Accommodation in Yorks & S.Wales can be booked by through the relevant cottage warden:
 Yorkshire Northern Pennine Club Pat O'Connell 0729-822014
 South Wales South Wales Caving Club Janice Richards 0985 219111

1994 ANNUAL DINNER - CROSSWAYS, NORTH WOOTON

The MCG's 40th Anniversary Dinner will be at the same venue as last year (the Crossways, North Wooton) on Saturday, April 23rd. Many members have come and gone since 1954 and the committee would like to invite past members to the Dinner. Would anyone who has contact with a past member and has their telephone number or address please let me know (0749-679358) so that I can assess numbers ASAP. Because of the probable numbers involved, it will not be possible to issue free tickets to past members, only the normal allocation to guests.

In addition, as it is a special Dinner celebration it would be good to have special after dinner activities or guests, if you have any preferences or sensible ideas please let one of the committee know. Arthur Spain

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 ST51475606 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: (1994 RATES)	Full & Probationary Members: £25.00; Associate Members: £15.00 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, DX7 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 HAWKESHELL	tel: 0923-819103
4a HAZELTREE ROAD, NORTH WATFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE	
TACKLEMASTER KEV WEST	tel: 081-570-6624
21 WESLEY AVENUE, HOUNSLOW, MIDDLESEX, TW3 4LY	
EDITOR YVONNE ROWE	tel: 0252-872006
10 GREENLEAS CLOSE, YATELEY, CAMBERLEY, SURREY, GU17 7SL	
RECORDER WAYNE HISCOX	tel: (WORK) 0749-72081x2213
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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* **NON-COMMITTEE POSTS**
 * RESCUE WARDEN
 * CONSERVATION OFFICER
 * JOURNAL EDITOR
 * MCG SHOP
 * MCG SHOP

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



ON THE MOVE

Bob Wanstall has moved to:
31 Euston Grove, Ringwood, Hants,
BH24 1FB tel: 0425-480642

Steve Marshall will be moving on
4th January 1994 to: B Squadron,
BAD Kinton, Temple Herdewyke,
Leamington Spa, Warks., CV33 0UL

AN APPLICATION...

...for probationary membership has
been received from:

Pete Hollings, 6 Burntwood Close,
London, SW18 3JU tel: 081-874 5086
(Proposed by: T Francis & J Allen)

This application will be consid-
ered by the committee when it
meets on 5th February 1994.

EARWIG...

...in on the committee meeting
held 4.12.93... T-shirts with new
design available in the New
Year... Cottage extension: some
drawings are being produced for
planning permission with work to
start in spring (hopefully)...
Mendip map in lounge being renewed
by R Wallington... Cleanaway bin
too expensive, three months
cancellation notice given - we
will go back to poly bags... Group
to pay for enlarging colour prints
of Upper Flood, for display in
cottage... the B&W photos of Upper
Flood have been located...
Considering locks on windows for
security and insurance discount...
Editor needs a new printer,
possibly bubble jet... Pinetree
gate to be repaired.

YV'S DRIPPINGS

FB: "It took me 10 years to find
out what they were - I thought
they were bad haemorrhoids"

JH: "Joel's lost his cheque
book... pity the person who
tries to use it!"

YOU'LL BE FRAMED

... if anyone can bring a
camcorder to the Annual Dinner. As
it is the 40th Anniversary, we are
hoping that many former members
will be present and we would like
to record the event for posterity.
(There is also an interesting new
cottage game, but that's another
story...) If you can help, please
contact Arthur Spain.

DANGER SLB

By the time you receive this
newsletter, four more MCG members
will have been on an SLB course so
will be licenced SLB users. These
are Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh,
Joel Corrigan and Ralph Diment.

NCA COURSES

DCA/NCA Caver Workshop on 22-23
Jan 94 at Buxton, cost £10 per
head per day. Advance booking by
20th Dec 93 to Nigel Atkins, 51
Darklands Road, Swadlincote,
Derbys, DE11 0PG, with SAE. Tel:
0831-449919 & 0283-216507. Fee
payable to NCA. The courses cover
Ladder & Lifeline, SRT, SRT
Advanced, First Aid / Cave Rescue,
Cave Instructor, Cave Photography.

WEIL'S DISEASE

NCA have produced a handy plastic
card printed with a warning about
Weil's disease. The size of a
credit card, it describes the
symptoms, how to test for the
disease, and where you can obtain
a free blood test. Please send a
20p stamp to cover cost, and a
stamped addressed envelope, to:
Jenny Potts, 3 Greenway,
Hullandward, Derbys., DE6 3FE

LIBEL CORNER

Found on the destination board at
the cottage, cards saying:

"If you are wondering where the
bra and knickers went - James Cox
took them home."

"Destination: Mothercare
Party: Timmy + Timmy's Mum
ETR: 7.30am"

THE FINAL WORD

Tim Francis: "Tch! The youth of
today!"

TIENSHAN — CONTINUED

by Mike Haselden

Ed: In newsletter 232, Mike had returned to camp to clean off the decomposing putrid contents of a skull. The adventure continues the following day.

We set off on a far more ambitious trek, this time carrying full supplies and equipment for two or three nights high up in the mountains. The first overnight camp was reached in the early afternoon which gave us a chance of acclimatisation to altitude, and rest. This camp was situated in the Ala-kel valley at about 10,000 feet above sea level. It is a regular staging post for local mountaineers and is equipped with a log cabin, mess room and two open fire places. This site has been skillfully decorated with many axe carvings. During the afternoon a nearby rumble directed our attention to an avalanche high above on the near vertical side of a west facing peak.

At about 5 o'clock the following morning we struck camp and headed up the valley alongside its icy torrent. The path became increasingly steep and narrow between two high peaks and then very indistinct up a variety of slopes and scree. When we had almost reached the top of a pass the view unfolded over a coll into the vast panorama of a frozen lake surrounded by towering mountains as far as the eye could see. One has to endure a few minor discomforts when camping and trekking in wild country but the rewards of such magnificent views and the lasting memories make it all truly worthwhile.

Dwarfed into insignificance by the giant landscape we ventured along, at first contouring round the lake shore. Then to our left a mighty and intimidating scree slope presented itself. This was no place for the fainthearted. The Russian leader was already busy tackling it. We followed, and for over two hours slogged ever upwards with each step sinking downward in the loose fragmented rock. Blizzard conditions engulfed us before reaching the snow covered ridge with overhanging cornices on the far side.

After a brief rest the descent on the other side of the ridge demanded a lot of care with ice axes at the ready. An uncontrolled slip on the icy slope would have been too dangerous to contemplate. About 1500 feet further down, the gradient eased off into a concave slope and the pace became more relaxed although we were still on snow.

Following another rest, during which a hot brew was made by the Russians, we went down the valley towards Altun Arashan where hot springs would provide therapeutic bathing for all. Russians seemed poor judges of distance. On this, and many other occasions, a distance of 4km would take two or three hours, when clearly we would have covered at least 8km.

Before reaching our goal that day it was decided to camp for the night on a meadow by the bank of the river. Unfortunately it started raining before we could pitch the tents which did nothing for camp comfort. Dinner was cooked as usual by open fire but this time between showers. The next morning the sky had cleared and with the drying sun any discomfort was soon cured.

Hot springs — that was our goal. Leaving the tents in place we left camp travelling light and, after an easy hour's downhill walk through woods and meadows, with brilliant mountain views all round, we reached the small settlement of Altun Arashan, consisting of no more than half a dozen dwellings. Here the inhabitants all had striking Mongolian features and were very friendly.

The hot springs had been piped into a rough building with two communal baths, each big enough for all of us. The water was a constant flow of about forty degrees.

After our prolonged ablutions we all came out feeling clean and invigorated but smelling slightly of rotten eggs due to the sulphur in the water. However, the smell soon dissipated. All too soon it was time to return to camp where, after a short break, we packed up and headed back up the valley. Before leaving the tree-line, firewood was collected and lashed to our packs, the Russians, as always, with the greater burden. We passed a Mongolian type mountain tent dwelling from which a mother and two small children emerged. The mother beckoned us to her tent and offered us mares' milk cheese and a frothy turbid drink. Susan had the courage to be the first taster and we all followed. The drink turned out to be fermented grass which is prepared by chewing and spitting into a vessel and allowed to brew. It tasted like silage. I gave the children some of my sweet ration. Why did these people who have so little give to others who have so much?

In the late afternoon we reached the last of the grassy flats. From this point on the terrain would be increasingly steep and rocky. We set up camp, having had an easy-going day. We would need well restored bodies the next day but by now our food supply was very low. Boiled potatoes with bread was to be the main and only supper course.

Our valley was orientated towards the east so we were bathed in the warm sun of the early dawn. Even so, the overnight frost held the temperature down for quite a while so the fireside was in demand over breakfast, which consisted of bread scraps with cheese and coffee. The last of the food rations.

By the time most people are at work, we were already slogging up the valley with the approaching slopes appearing to become steeper and higher. Our route would take us roughly south of the previous pass, but higher. The first slope was mostly scree with snow bands which we were able to avoid. The steepness increased, and with gained altitude, the slopes eventually became fully snowbound.

On the final approach to any high point there is the excitement of achievement and a completely new view. The new vista was no disappointment but as usual, words alone defy the glory of the moment. However, the descent route promoted feelings of trepidation. Some of the Russians had already started going down and they were forced to take cover from a small snow and rock avalanche inadvertently started by our step cuttings. The severely steep slope of about 2000 feet or more took us a good hour of difficult descent. Then we were able to relax and release some tension by glissading and laughing at each others antics.

We were in a vast hanging glacial valley far from camp and with difficult ground ahead. The valley then fell away steeply into the distance, and our passage became even harder with many craggy obstacles to negotiate. Eventually we arrived at our valley and camp-site of the carvings where we thankfully discarded our loads and set about the serious business of replenishing our alimentary needs. A cache of supplies had been deposited at this camp. We rested and drank until late in the afternoon before reloading and making good the final leg back to base camp in the Karakol valley.

The next day was set aside for resting and preparing for another trek, but it was also to be a fun day. Attention was, however, mainly focused on the activity of the Russians who were building a hollow cairn with local boulders into which they lit a roaring fire. Most of us joined in the action by fetching logs, sawing and chopping to feed the furnace, which was kept burning throughout the day. By late afternoon the rocks were red hot. The burning embers were then raked out and the big stores tent erected over the cairn. Yes, we had a sauna!

We all changed into bathers and crowded in. After a suitable period of profuse sweating we would plunge into the icy river; at least the brave ones did. Then back to the fug. This activity went on well into the evening and I think it surpassed the hot springs for enjoyment.

(Mike and Susan's final trek will appear in newsletter no. 235)

MINOR DISCOVERIES IN DAN-YR-OGOF

by Joel Corrigan

Since the Bank Holiday camp in the "Far North" (see newsletter 229), a number of us have been pushing leads in DY0 on a regular basis. At long last we have had some return on our efforts.

During the camp at the end of May, somebody noticed an aven in the roof of "Grand Hall". After a thorough search, we concluded that no-one had ever attempted to get up there. The reason was simple - even though it was a place of obvious potential, to climb up the aven would have been very difficult without a Bosch drill. As we all know, it is only within the last few years that these have become available to your average caver. as it was, it still took us almost half a dozen trips to climb it, as this was no straight-forward bolting exercise.

To gain access to the aven, we had to bolt up the wall, then bolt across the ceiling to the start of the aven itself, then bolt up the aven proper. The majority of the trips tended to be quite long (generally of the ten to twelve hour type), even though it was only taking us a couple of hours to get there. The nature of the work also necessitated carrying in a fair amount of gear each time. This normally consisted of full SRT kit, Bosch drill, two or three batteries for the drill, food, ropes, lots of spare lighting, warm clothing, and a cuddly toy. Dan-Yr-Ogof being what it is, we found it necessary to wear wet suits. I for one found this to be the hardest part of the project, as I am one of the many sufferers of "shrinking wet suit syndrome", and the backs of my knees would invariably end up being tender for the rest of the week!

Finally, on the 31st of October we were all prepared for our big trip. Six weeks earlier, Liam Kealy (SWCC) had actually got to the top of the aven, but had been prevented from pushing the find due to a lack of time. That day, Pete Munn (SWCC) and myself had watched enviously from the bottom, as there were some rather large boulders poised in the aven. The Far North is not the place to take unnecessary risks, and if you can get away with sacrificing one member of the team, instead of all three.....!

Our massive find turned out to be a mere fifty metres or so of passage. All our hopes of going over the top of Far North Choke were dashed. We were into another (albeit higher level) area of breakdown. We had climbed into approximately thirty five metres of northerly-headed passage, ending in a pretty hopeless narrow rift. The one prospect left to us in this section is the roof tube. This consists of roughly a fifteen metre climb (very easy and not exposed), terminating in a vertical boulder choke with a good draught.

We still have several good prospects in the Far North. These include the blasting of the above-mentioned choke (and surveying what we have found so far). Other plans are to climb the "Intimidator" : this is an unclimbed aven in the "High and Mighty" series that the lads found during 91/92, and is probably eighty feet high. This is obviously going to take us a couple of months, and will probably start sometime next year, as we are now into the period of uncertain weather conditions (erm, the winter). In addition, there are several areas of the Far North particularly suited to Mendip cavers, which the majority of people tend to ignore.

What I'm slowly getting around to saying is this : are there any members of the MCG out there who would like to get involved with the Far North Project for 1994? We plan to have at least one camp next year, but tend to suffer from a lack of enthusiastic and capable explorers! It would not be an MCG dig as such, as there are at least two other clubs involved, but there are certainly lots of things to keep you interested in DY0.

Remember this : from a Welsh cavers point of view, fifty metres of passage is not much to write home about. To a Mendip caver, though, fifty metres is a major breakthrough!! So if you are bored of spending five hours cleaning your oversuit after a Pinetree digging trip, you can always come down Dan-Yr-Ogof and let the Green Canal do it for you!!!

OGOF CRAIG-AR-FFYNNON DDON'T
The trip that never was!

by Geoff Beale

Party members: Captain Goddard, Martin & Yvonne Rowe, Geoff Beale, Graham Old.

Following MCG's earlier attempt this year for a trip into Craig-ar-Ffyynn, when unfortunately due to communications misunderstandings when we turned up on the wrong day, our latest booked and confirmed trip was set for 21st November. However, as things conspire against you some of the time, our trip into Craig-ar-Ffyynn was doomed to fail (again).

Martin drove in appalling weather - ice, snow, fog and cold, and we arrived at the meeting place and waited patiently for our leader to bring the key. Unknown to us was that he had had a car accident and was in hospital. That was the end of this trip so we decided to have a trip into OFD I.

We eventually reached SWCC's headquarters and duly filled in the ticket and asked for a key. This was our second misfortune for the day. After getting kitted up and going down to the bottom of the hill we discovered we had been given a key to the top entrance. So back up to SWCC where we found that all OFD I keys had been loaned out. We were advised to check to see if OFD I gate had been left open, so down the hill again. Alas no, but Mr Barrows who lives in the cottage adjacent to the entrance lent us a key to get in.

After following the entrance passages we had to lasso a stal stump to gain access to an upper passage with good formations and some nice pools. What happened next was a rebellion by some of the senior members of the party in oversuits to getting wet in the interesting (ed. - and armpit deep!) pools and passages where photographs were required. Smug members wore wetsuits on this trip (ed. again - only our leader as I remember). We then went up the main streamway to the boulder choke and a quick look at Hush and Dip Sumps and the connection to OFD II with its beautiful aragonite crystals. Then out to a welcoming shower at SWCC.

The Craig-ar-Ffyynn team have given us a cancellation for another trip in December. Watch this space. The third time lucky rule might apply and MCG could get a trip into Craig-ar-Ffyynn this year!

Ed. Well, that date has just past, and guess what? Yes, it was cancelled!!! At least this time we found out the night before, not when we got there.

SEEING IS BELIEVING!

For those of you who have experienced Roy Kempston's tricks of light underground and doubted his amazing powers, here is the technical explanation as to how he does it:-

"It now does not seem improbable that, when by the power of thought an image is evoked, a distant reflex action, no matter how weak, is exerted upon certain ends of the visual nerves, and, therefore, upon the retina. Helmholtz has shown that the fundi of the eyes are themselves luminous, and he was able to see, in total darkness, the movement of his arm by the light of his own eyes.

"This is one of the most remarkable experiments recorded in the history of science, and probably only a few men could satisfactorily repeat it, for it is very likely that the luminosity of the eyes is associated with uncommon activity of the brain and a great imaginative power. It is fluorescence of brain action as it were." (Nikola Tesla, October 1893)

Well, Roy, the last two sentences say it all really don't they?

LIMESTONE QUARRYING — A CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

by Tim Francis

On Sat 23rd Oct a conference on limestone quarrying was held at the Showground in Shepton Mallet. It was jointly organised by the Royal Bath and West of England Society and the Royal Geographical Society. The proceedings were split into two sections consisting of five thirty minute talks, and an open forum discussion.

The first talk, "The Geology and Hydrology of Limestone Formations" was given by Dr Peter Smart. This was a wide ranging lecture covering the importance of caves to the scientific record, the underground hydrology of Eastern Mendip, and the consequences of quarrying on the hydrology. He pointed out that the underground hydrology is less mature than Western Mendip where quarrying is potentially more damaging. Emphasis was placed on the effects of lowering the water table and particularly the progressive decrease in spring flow. Interestingly, he avoided mentioning that a borehole in Torr Quarry has intercepted a major conduit downstream of Heale Farm Swallet, resulting in spring failure.

The following talk, given by Dr Rameans Gallois from the British Geological Survey, was entitled "Limestones as a Resource and its Alternatives". Half of the talk was concerned with the relationship between the physical and chemical properties of limestone and its economic uses. Carboniferous limestone is ideal for use in the construction industry, especially for concrete aggregate and in road building. He outlined the possible alternatives including recycling waste materials such as slate and coal mining waste. Extraction of such materials can have high transportation and environmental costs.

The third talk, "The Economic Aspects of Quarrying", was given by Mr David Tidmarsh. He spoke on behalf of Foster Yeoman Ltd who quarry at the Torr Works in East Cranmore. This was a lively talk packed full of statistics and thought-provoking comments. He outlined the vast array of products that use limestone, and the resultant benefits to the national economy. The local economy of Eastern Mendip benefits from a £40 million contribution both directly and indirectly from the quarries. To conclude the talk he believed that a workable balance could be struck between quarrying and the Mendip environment.

Dr William Stanton presented an emotional "Case for the Environment" based upon personal experience rather than from a National Rivers Authority point of view. He outlined the benefits of limestone to society such as landscape, water supply, recreation, archaeology, fauna and flora. Contrast was made with the harmful effects of quarrying - spring failure, loss of water supply, pollution, removal of caves, destruction of archaeological sites and landscape loss. Interestingly, he attempted to develop a budget which quantified this contrast. Finally he suggested using a levy on limestone extraction to encourage recycling and use of alternative materials.

The final talk was given by Mr Humphrey Temperley, the Chairman of the Planning Committee for Somerset County Council, on "Planning Perspectives". This section formed something of a summary to the other talks. Particular emphasis was placed upon the dilemma of meeting the industrial demand whilst retaining the integrity of the Mendip plateau. An extraction figure of 15m tonnes a year was suggested as a realistic level, giving a life of 30-40 years for Mendip quarrying. In an era of higher environmental constraints it is becoming increasingly difficult to find areas acceptable to quarrying.

The rest of the afternoon was devoted to a discussion of local and national issues, particularly the demands of the Mineral Planning Guidance Notes (6) produced by the Department of the Environment. It is difficult to obtain a consensus between regional bodies such as British Rail, the NRA and planners. Considerable debate was also concerned with the use of secondary aggregates (china clay and slate). The discussion ended with consideration of a levy on limestone, with some of the money ploughed back for research on alternative materials. Points of view were given by a wide variety of conservation groups, local interest bodies and parish councils.

MCG's 40th ANNIVERSARY 1994

Below is a list of names of past members taken from the 1984 Journal. Some I am in contact with but for many I need to know their current addresses from anyone who may know of their whereabouts. Please contact me as soon as possible so I can send them an invite to the dinner.

Tony Crawford	Sonya Carruthers
Dave Harle	John Rutherford
Chris Reynolds	Len Arnold
Richard Woollacott	James Gibb
Jack Green	Paul Green
Bob Knott	Pete Munt
Joy Dyer	Pete Dyer
Richie Spain	Trevor Westoll
Tony Fitzgibbon	Don Doveston
Tony Ingold	John Barker
John Evans	Mike Rennie
Stev Dixon	Pete Virgo
Ted Gabb	Brian Hillman
Roger Saunders	Pul Merron
Clive Towner	Rob Penn
Len Eley	Julie Spain
Bruce Dean	Neil Brooker
Mike Bygrave	Dick Housego
Bob Varley	Alan Cowley
Brian Mee	

There are numerous other past members, some who were with the MCG only a short time, these I have ignored. The names above are those who had Group membership for at least 3 years up until 1984. There may be others who you as members feel ought to be invited, if so let me know their names and addresses.

In addition, as it is a special Dinner celebration it would be good to have special after dinner activities or guests, if you have any preferences or sensible ideas please let one of the committee know.

Many thanks. Arthur Spain, Tel: 0749-679358

A 369 DAY CAVING TRIP!

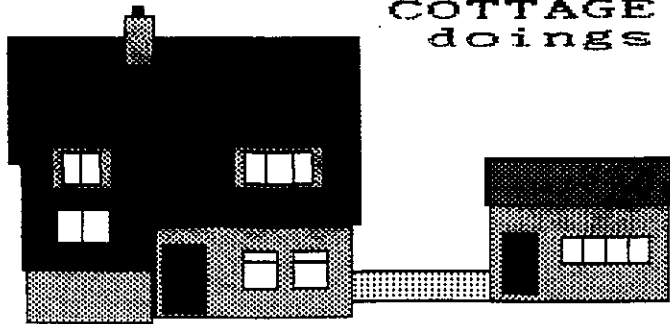
On december 9th Maurizio Montalbini emerged from an 80ft deep cave near Pesaro, Italy after spending a record 369 days underground. His body had run so awry that he firmly believed that he would step out into a balmy June evening.

Time was not all he had lost. He is now 44lb lighter after an astronaut's diet of dried vitamen-enriched food. Scientists hope his feat of endurance will help them understand more about the body-clock and what might happen to space travellers isolated from the sun and the seasons. Staff at the US space centre Nasa believe he may also provide clues as to why long-term astronauts lose strength in their bones.

Montalbini, 40, is a glutton for punishment. In 1987, he spent 210 days in caves near Ancona, setting the last world record. He reported that the experience left him depressed. Even so, he decided to do it again - with improvements. Last time he lived on a wooden platform 12ft by 15ft in conditions of 99 percent humidity.

His second cave has all mod cons, comfortable living quarters, pumped air, some light - and an exercise bike. He has pedalled 950 miles since beginning his feat on December 6th. His only contact with the outside world has been through a computer linked to a control room on which he could also "talk" to his wife Antonella.

(Taken from a report by Lorraine Fraser in The Mail on Sunday)



COTTAGE doings

COTTAGE BOOKINGS

New Years Eve	(almost full)
07 Jan-08	Jan Members' Weekend
14 Jan-15	Jan M Cotter(filling up)
28 Jan-29	Jan Westminster Sch (12)
04 Feb-05	Feb Members' Weekend
11 Feb-12	Feb Hull University (6)
22 Feb-25	Feb Navy (12)
04 Mar-05	Mar Members' Weekend
07 Mar-10	Mar Navy (20)
11 Mar-12	Mar Osterley Sea Sct(12)
18 Mar-19	Mar C Whittle (15)

NEW KEYS FOR 1994

If all goes well, the new access system will start on 4th February (members' weekend). The system is being installed on the front door, replacing the old key. YOU WILL STILL NEED YOUR OLD KEY FOR THE SHED AND SIDE DOOR. When we are satisfied that the system is working, the lock on the side door will be changed to an ordinary mortise lock and bolts, similar to the back door. A detailed explanation of how the new lock operates will appear in the January newsletter.

SILT TRAPS

The silt traps are not being emptied regularly and keep clogging up. There have been a lot of new members in the past year or so who probably don't know where they are situated or how to clear them (or even that they need to be cleared regularly), but the rest of you should. So, for those who don't know and a reminder for those who do, the traps are covered with breeze slabs, one being at the fence by the back door, and the other by the hosing down area. They are best cleared by using the chimney flue brushes which can be found in the under-stairs cupboard. Please see that you do your bit to keep the silt traps clear after you have used the hosing down area, and especially if you have been cleaning particularly muddy gear.

MRO DOINGS 1994

SAT 15th JAN MEETING: REF. BRITISH CAVE RESCUE COUNCIL CONFERENCE 94. MRO is host to this biennial conference based at Eastwater Farm on July 8th, 9th and 10th 1994. Obviously it will require a great deal of effort by Mendip cavers to make this event run smoothly and it is essential that work should start as soon as possible. Individuals and clubs, who are willing to make a contribution to the organization and running of the conference are asked to attend a preliminary meeting at the Hunters Lodge Inn, Sat Jan 15th, 7:30pm, to start the ball rolling.

SAT 29th JAN CERVICAL COLLARS AND SPLINTS. Video presentation followed by practical session with MRO kit. Hunters Lodge Inn 7:30pm.

SAT 19th FEB RESUSCITATION W'KSHOP In view of the response to last years lecture and recent events both underground and on the surface, MRO has decided to hold this workshop annually. As before, the emphasis will be on the practical. You owe it to yourselves and your friends to be up to date with artificial ventilation and external chest compression techniques. Hunters Lodge Inn, 7:30pm.

SAT 12th MAR MRO KIT CIRCUS Hands-on experience of MRO equipment for small groups circulating around various demonstrations. At the same time there will be discussions with club team leaders - please ensure that your club is represented. Hunters Lodge, 7:30pm

SAT 16th APR MEETING: REF. BRITISH CAVE RESCUE COUNCIL CONFERENCE. A further meeting regarding the organization and running of the Conference. Please offer any help and time you can. Hunters, 7:30pm

SAT 30th APR PRACTICAL COMMUNICATIONS WORKSHOP. An afternoon session both on the surface and underground with the MRO radios and Molefone in use. Venue/time t.b.a.

8/9/10th Jul BRITISH CAVE RESCUE COUNCIL CONFERENCE. Eastwater Farm, Priddy. Surface and underground sessions, lectures, practical demonstrations, stomp, bars, cave rescue game, hangovers and much, much more. Watch out for more details or, better still, come along to the meetings on Jan 15th and Apr 16th to see how you or your club can help make this event a success.