

Mendip Caving Group

NEWS

NUMBER 238

JUNE 1994

BCRA MENDIP REGIONAL MEETING, 14th MAY 1994

by Timothy Francis

This regional conference, held in Priddy Village Hall, is the first of a series of regional meetings which the BCRA are promoting over the next few years. A packed and varied programme was organised, with emphasis placed upon the preservation of caving's historical record. In addition Tony Jarratt set up a display of cave engravings selected from his own collection. The morning session was kicked off by a photographic journey through St. Cuthbert's Swallet conducted by Pete Glanville. This began with a trip that followed the streamway from entrance to Sump 2, and continued with a ramble through the best sections of the rest of the cave - The Railway Tunnel, Maypole Series, Rabbit Warren. The list was endless! His aim is to compile a complete photographic record of the cave for future generations to enjoy. Even now the slides provide an interesting insight into some of the less frequently visited sections.

Pete Glanville was followed by a talk on the proposed Balch Room at Wells Museum given by Jim Hanwell. The aim is to create an extension to the museum's collection which is specifically dedicated to the caving history of Mendip. By using a few carefully selected tales we were persuaded of the need to preserve records of Mendip cavers. Jim was particularly interested in unpublished items such as personal cave logs and cave memorabilia. The talk was aimed at raising awareness of the need to preserve such items rather than a plea for financial donations.

On a similar vein Dave Irwin presented a talk on the rebirth of the Mendip Cave Register. He has almost completely updated the register, and copies were available for examination throughout the day. The register will be available to all "bona fide" clubs and club cavers. With the advent of easily accessible data bases the register should be able to be continually updated. This talk led up to a discussion on the Mendip Survey Scheme by Bryan Ellis. He is attempting to get this running again, and is of interest to the MCG as we are members of the scheme.

A quick bout of tea drinking took us onto an outline of the British Cave Rescue Conference by Dany Bradshaw. This is to be held in the summer at Eastwater Farm (see newsletter no.236 for details). The morning was completed by a talk on cave minerals by Charlie Self, and a roundup of digs and discoveries by Tony Jarratt. The former was kept at a laymans level, and concentrated in particular upon minerals Charlie had documented in some Turkish caves. J'Rat's talk was similar in style to that given at the BCRA Conference last September, with ideas thrown to the floor to open up the discussion. Not a great deal has happened on Mendip since last year apart from a further small extension in Attborough Swallet. Other digs mentioned were Welsh's Green, Viaduct Sink, Eastwater, Timber Hole and Shute Shelve. Battery Swallet and Pinetree were the MCG contributions.

During the lunchbreak several old caving films were shown, the most interesting being a pre-war clip of Lamb Leer. There was also opportunity to look at dye-tracing maps of Mendip sinks and resurgences. After lunch Maurice Hewins played more early cave films and appealed for other examples to set up a central record. This led to a talk by Trebor McDonald on the Wigmore-Attborough system. This concentrated on the downstream hydrology and possibilities for further extensions. Unfortunately it will take a considerable effort to pass the terminal constriction.

Dave Irwin returned to the podium to present an overview of the potential sources of speleological reference. This was guided to a considerable extent by his own research for a book on the history of Mendip Caving. He emphasised the need to look beyond the traditional boundaries of cave literature and personal recollections. This was followed by a brief talk on the MRD by Jim Hanwell. He stressed the need for cavers to be aware of external pressures on the rescue scene, and increasing demands for professionalism demanded by proposed EC regulations. The meeting was rounded off with an update on the 1994 Expedition to Meghalaya, India given by Rob Harper and Chris Smart. Judging by the excellent slides and surveys they found kilometres of passage.

Although the content of the meeting was excellent it was a little disappointing that more cavers did not attend. Such regional conferences complement the September BCRA in that they add more of a local feel to the proceedings. See you at the next one!

NORDRACH COTTAGE BOOKINGS

DATE	GROUP	SIZE	DATE	GROUP	SIZE
01 Jul-02 Jul	MEMBERS' WEEKEND		02 Sep-03 Sep	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	
06 Jul-07 Jul	CHIPIN SCHOOL	30	07 Oct-08 Oct	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	
08 Jul-09 Jul	BCRC CONFERENCE	12	04 Nov-05 Nov	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	
29 Jul-30 Jul	G.S. EXILES	12	02 Dec-03 Dec	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	
05 Aug-06 Aug	MEMBERS' WEEKEND		30 Dec-01 Jan	MEMBERS' NEW YEAR PARTY	


1994 MEETS PROGRAMME

DATE	AREA	MAIN EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
02 Jul	Mendip	Charterhouse Cave	Nick Gilson	0934-417697
02 Jul-03 Jul	Mendip	SRT Rig/Bolt/Survey	Joel Corrigan	0344-873613
08 Jul-10 Jul	Mendip	BCRC Rescue Conference	John Crowsley	0272-652585
16 Jul-17 Jul	Yorkshire	Nick Pot	Joel Corrigan	0344-873613
05 Aug-08 Aug	Forest of Dean	NAMHO Field Meet	Yvonne Rowe	0252-872006
14 Aug	South Wales	Ogof Craig ar Ffynnon	Geoff Beale	0734-722510
20 Aug-03 Sep	France	Alps Expedition	Joel Corrigan	0344-873613
17 Sep-18 Sep	Newport, Shrops	BCRA Conference	Tim Francis	081-878-3508
05 Nov	Mendip	Half-Yearly Forum	Joan Goddard	0608-810382
05 Nov	Mendip	Barn Dance	Arthur Spain	0749-679358
03 Dec	Mendip	Reservoir Hole	Geoff Beale	0734-722510

ACCESS UPDATE: Foxes Hole in Burrington is now gated - access is available to bona fide cavers. Access arrangements are on the door of the library
Stoke Lane is closed due to a change of ownership - new access arrangements are being negotiated.

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 Gary Vaughan 0202-679602

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 accommodation £15.00
 25 nights accommodation £30.00
 ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: 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, OX7 3QR	
	TREASURER MARTIN ROWE	tel: 0252-872006
	10 GREENLEAS CLOSE, YATELEY, CAMBERLEY, SURREY, GU17 7SL	
	MEET SECRETARY JOEL CORRIGAN	tel: 0344-873613
	2 WINDLEMERE HOUSE, WESTWOOD ROAD, WINDLESHAM, SURREY GU20 6NB	
	COTTAGE WARDEN LEE HAWKESWELL	tel: 0923-819103
	4a HAZELTREE ROAD, NORTH WATFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE	
	TACKLEMASTER TIM FRANCIS	tel: 081-878-3508
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	EDITOR YVONNE ROWE	tel: 0252-872006
	10 GREENLEAS CLOSE, YATELEY, CAMBERLEY, SURREY, GU17 7SL	
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3 KEWARD, GLASTONBURY ROAD, WELLS, SOMERSET, BA5 1TR		
ORDINARY MEMBER ARTHUR SPAIN	tel: 0749-679358	
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 TIM FRANCIS 081-878-3508
 WAYNE HISCOX 0749-672081x2213
 SEE ANY COMMITTEE MEMBER
 BRYAN TERRY AND DAVE TOOKE



ON THE MOVE Julie Hesketh & Tim Francis to: Flat 5, 2 The Crescent, Barnes, London, SW13 ONW tel: 081-876-1863; Joe Frampton to: 125 Elgar Road, Reading, Berks. tel: 0734-505304; Rob Whalley new tel: 0923-461596

APPLICATIONS for membership: Tim Haynes 8 The Eagles, Yatton, Bristol BS19 4QR (Prop: J Corrigan, D Tooke) Marcus Ward 15 Jesse Close, Yateley, Camberley, Surrey GU17 7AH tel: 0252-876783 (Prop: J Frampton, M Pittman) These applications for probationary membership will be considered at the committee meeting on 6th August.

CONGRATULATIONS to Clive Maybury and Nick Kelly on becoming Full members.

WELCOME to Pete Hollings who has been accepted as an Associate member, and to Steve Albino who has been reinstated as a Full member.

EARWIG in on the committee meeting held 4-6-94... Cottage extension: Roger Wallington to produce detailed drawings. Aim to get building shell built this year, roof etc finished next year. Pete Moseley and Gordon Woodall have volunteered to help with blockwork. Grant assistance being sought. When footings are being dug the contractor will be asked if car park drainage can be improved... New Upper Flood entrance: Ralph Diment to produce surface map with cave survey superimposed; Pete O'Rourke to produce shoring drawings and can supply some materials; NCA will provide grant towards shoring costs... Car Stickers: Arthur Spain to purchase 100 black on white stickers (more details later)... Half Yearly Forum: Barn Dance, as requested by majority of members, 7:30pm on 5th November at Chewton Mendip Village Hall (more details later)... Special Publication: Belize expedition report is being printed and will be ready shortly... MRO: radio link to be provided to Nordrach Cottage for rescues nearby; initially John Crowsley, Arthur Spain, Joel Corrigan and John Beauchamp to receive training for use of MRO communication equipment.

WANTED 1946 model caver. Good body and smooth running engine. Taxed (to the hilt). Long MOT. Fed-up with going solo, seeks caring, lady owner 25-45 to share life, love and caving adventures. Write to PO Box 100, c/o MCG for details.

MCG EQUIPMENT: LOANS

The committee likes to think that members can be trusted to borrow, look after and return Group equipment, but there is always someone who will abuse the system, spoiling it for the rest.

As an example, the Group purchased six Petzl Ariane carbide generators and Laser headsets for the Czechoslovakia trip a few years ago. Three of these have since been lost at a replacement cost to the Group of some £200. Other examples include an aven inspection lamp and battery, all the Group's caving videos, and a computer! Although the committee know who the items went to, they have been unable to recover them because the individuals say they either returned them to the Group or passed them to another member.

To prevent this happening again, any equipment (other than day to day caving equipment in the tackle store, and library books) is to be signed out by the Tacklemaster. The loaned equipment is to be returned to the Tacklemaster by an agreed date and booked back in. IF THE EQUIPMENT IS RETURNED DAMAGED, OR NOT RETURNED ON THE AGREED DATE, THE BORROWER MUST PAY FOR REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT. This applies to: Arianes and Lasers, expedition rope and equipment, surveying gear, altimeter etc. It will also apply to certain items in the library (valuable books, and the caving videos, when replaced) which will be signed out by the librarian.

It is regrettable that the committee have had to introduce these measures, but experience shows that this is the only way to ensure that valuable items are returned.

NEW SWEATSHIRTS The new sweatshirts are about to be ordered. The committee consulted members on design, style, size, and colour. The result was:

Design: old small ladder logo on front left, with large new cave logo on back.
Styles: 2 - round necked and hooded.
Sizes: 3 - large, extra large and extra extra large.
Colours: navy blue, bottle green, black.
Price: to be decided - watch this space.

YV' SDROPPINGS

Anon: "Eastwater? It's only a two hour trip - er - I mean East Twin!"

Discussing the state of the TSG hut:
DT: "It has hot and cold running rain!"

GB: "The acservation and concess...!"
YR: "You mean the ocbservation and... it's no good, we'll have to change his title to something we can say!"

LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE - 1st MAY 1994

by Geoff Beale

The idea for this caving trip was to go for a wander around OFD II, and to "bottom" the pitch at the Knave as an SRT descent, but the thought of walking uphill in caving kit was offputting in view of the hot sunny weather, so we all decided on a trip into Little Neath River Cave.

After paying the goodwill call to Mr Lewis at his farm to obtain access permission we parked at the car park to check out the water levels flowing under the bridge. As a rule of thumb, if water is flowing under the bridge then a trip into LNRC can be doubtful. Although water was trickling under the bridge, Flood Entrance seemed OK if a little high, but as it was a sunny day with no rain forecast we decided to try it later on.

BRIDGE CAVE We had an enjoyable trip into Bridge Cave, through the entrance passage and choke and then down to the short streamway to the sump. On the way out we climbed up the right hand wall which led to a magnificent stal pillar (badly stained) and the natural rock bridge (where the cave gets its name from). We met two other cavers who had done a trip into LNRC earlier and they told us that it was passable but wet.

LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE Before our trip in Bridge Cave, Martin put a rock in the stream at the entrance to LNRC so it was just poking up above the water. The idea was to see if the stream was rising or falling before we committed ourselves - nothing had changed. The water level in the entrance passage was quite high but with an adequate air space. The force of the water was strong enough to propel you along and around all the right-angled bends to the first waterfall and duck. Some degree of "gardening" was necessary to get through the duck including taking helmets off. Once through the duck it was mostly walking in the streamway apart from a couple of places where the stream is impassable and the way on is over large fallen blocks.

After passing the upstream end of the Canal By-pass it is easy caving to view the formations in Mud Hall and Sand Chamber. At the right hand side of Sand Chamber is the rescue dump and the down stream end of Bridge Cave Sump. From here the combined streams flow to the start of the Canal. This is a wide bedding plane - 10ft wide, 3ft high and 500ft long. For the first 30ft there was about 6ins of airspace (YR: I nearly bottled out here, it looked so foreboding!) but after that the roof got slightly higher. The water depth increased to 2ft and we were able to "doggy paddle" along almost the entire length of the Canal, propelled by the stream current.

Owing to the time, we decided to turn around at this point and make our exit via the Canal By-pass. We stopped to admire the formations just after Junction Chamber and also the gour pools at the start of North East Inlets. Half way round the by-pass route is a small chamber where in one corner is a lovely flow stone floor which had been deposited on mud/gravel and supported by stal pillars. The mud has since been washed away leaving the very attractive false floor.

Soon after we reached the flowstone boss which marks the end of the by-pass, we regained the main stream and the start of the entrance passage. Once through the duck the force of the water pushing against you was quite heavy. The passage can be described as "snug" in places and with water starting to back up in front, it wasn't a healthy place to linger, so we all got out as quickly as possible. At least the water was warm - in fact quite pleasant! Once changed we saw Mr Lewis and had a friendly chat and then started our journey home.

YR: We all agreed that it was a superb trip and very exciting. Marcus said it was one of the best trips he's had and can't wait to go to South Wales again. Thanks to Geoff Beale for an enjoyable day.

Team: Martin Rowe, Yvonne Rowe, Marcus Ward, Geoff Beale.

PINETREE GATE

The gate that cavers use to get into the Pinetree Pot field (on the B3134, adjacent to Warren Lodge) had got a bit rickety. MCG offered to repair or replace it but Mr Brown, the landowner, has kindly replaced it with a new one that requires you to roll under it rather than climb over. It has barbed wire along the top so you can't be tempted to clamber over. Please respect Mr Brown's wishes with this as well as his land and visits to the cave (see newsletter no.228 for access agreement).

MCG RESCUE WARDEN'S REPORT - APRIL 1994

by John Crowsley

(Ed: For those of you who didn't attend this year's AGM and didn't get John Crowsley's report, it is printed below. It contains some useful suggestions and advice, plus John's account of the rescue practice from the Rescue Warden's point of view. For the victims account of the rescue practice, see Phil Ingold's report in Newsletter no.237)

THE 1994 RESCUE PRACTICE This was held in Swildon's Hole on February 5th and Phil Ingold was our willing "victim". There was a good turnout of about 30 members. A dozen to carry him in, a dozen to carry him out, and half a dozen operating molephones and directing the usual Swildon's traffic.

Thanks to Phil's great faith in his fellow club members, MCG practices have a certain sense of reality; we just can't undo the stretcher and tell him to walk out "cos the pub's just opened", we've got to carry him out.

The MRO turned up mainly, I think, to dissuade me from taking Phil through an evil squeeze. Just as well or Phil would probably still be there now. I had tried to make him fit by cutting a few bits off him earlier. We had discovered that our casualty bag was useless if we were to strap the victim (sorry casualty) to the stretcher. It was not possible to do up the crutch strap. A hole needed to be cut in the bag. We maybe should have taken Phil out of the bag to cut the hole, but we left him in.

Bag amended (Phil trimmed to size), off we went to Swildon's. We learnt a lot. The passages of the (not so) dry way were hard work and it took about 2 hours to reach the Old Grotto. My plans had obviously been a little too ambitious and we settled for taking him back out from there with a new team. No pitches were encountered but the idea was to practice what we are most likely to do on a real rescue: be stretcher bearers. Several members had a go at co-ordinating the passing of the stretcher. It was realised that responsibility had to be handed down the line as people got stuck behind the stretcher. So now there were several budding wardens just dying to co-ordinate something - look out Phil! I must thank Phil, particularly as he volunteered for the next one as well. Also the MRO for all their help and kit, and of course all those who turned out on the day.

THE DEBRIEF It was suggested afterwards that it would have helped if the webbing of the carrying straps had been a different colour to the other straps. This has apparently already been done on latter stretchers. The head rope was too long and the tail rope not used. Modifications are being made to the casualty bag.

THE NEXT RESCUE PRACTICE This has been set for February 4th 1995, meeting 10:00am at the cottage. The suggested venue is Waterwheel Swallet.

In the meantime, as people keep muttering words like pitch and hauling, there could be a technical rescue workshop on Saturday 1st October. This would be for a maximum of 10 members with their own SRT kit. If anyone is interested please let me know ASAP. I will have to book a gym and it will be first come, first served.

THANKS Thanks again to everyone for their support. Can I remind you all that the rescue conference is being held at Priddy, 8-10th July. I am happy to continue as the MCG Rescue Warden if members and committee wish me to do so. ED: Yes, they do John - and thanks for all your hard work in organising and overseeing this year's successful rescue practice.

BRITISH CAVE RESCUE COUNCIL CONFERENCE

Don't forget the BCRC Conference to be held on 8-10th July at Eastwater Farm, Priddy. A great deal of work has gone into organising this important event but so far there has not been much interest shown by MCG members. It is not very far off now so if you are interested in First Aid and Medical Help, Stretchers and Communications, Pitch Rigging and Hauling, Cave Diving and Sump Rescue, Hymac Digging and Shoring, Uses of Explosives, Wessex Challenge (teams required), Breakfast and Packed Lunch, BBQ/Pig Roast, Stomp and Bar, please contact Joan Goddard or John Crowsley with your name and details of items you're interested in ASAP. SEE ALSO NEWSLETTER NO.236 PAGE 7. It looks like being a thoroughly enjoyable and informative weekend (the social side looks good too) so lets see a good MCG representation - it's right on our doorstep after all.

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANISATION INCIDENTS AND RESCUES FOR YEAR ENDING 31st DECEMBER 1993

There were eleven call-outs during the year, and seven of them necessitated rescuers going underground. Four of these were as serious as any on record, of which three were the result of injuries sustained from falls. It has come to MRO's attention that some cavers are risking to jump down short climbs, and even encouraging inexperienced people to follow suit! Neither practice is safe, and certainly not the latter.

(Ed: I have decided to precis all but the GB rescue, because the full accounts would take up too much space and the GB rescue involved MCG members so is more relevant to the Group. The report of the GB incident follows; the rest of the report will be in the next newsletter)

GB CAVE - SATURDAY 23rd OCTOBER, 1993

A small group of experienced cavers from the Somerton area went down the cave during the afternoon. The party was led by Paul Curtis and included Damien Waller, Lynne Niland and Jeni Galligan, in her early thirties. Jeni experienced some difficulty in negotiating the awkward traverse and bold step near the top of the Forty Foot climb on the way down the Main Chamber. She decided to jump onto the ledge her leader had already reached. This is much higher than it looks, of course. On landing heavily, she broke her right leg in four places as a result of the impact. Needless to say, she could not move from this precarious shelf but, although in great pain, was more anxious than distressed about her predicament.

The accident happened at about 3pm. Two of the party left the cave immediately to raise the alarm whilst Paul Curtis stayed to comfort the patient. Since her dry clothing had become damp from the spray of the nearby waterfall, she was covered with a polythene sheet to afford some protection. Later, a party of London University cavers already in the cave came to assist. On reaching the road, those sent to call MRO chanced to meet a passer by with a mobile telephone in his car. Because this was used to dial 999, the first notification of the emergency went to a Vodafone network control in Wiltshire, and then to the Southampton Coastguard for some reason. Some 50 minutes elapsed before the Police in Bristol got the message. They immediately called MRO at 5:05pm. Delays of this sort defeat the main advantage of using mobile phones, unless those making the call know exactly where they are and, ideally, in which Police Force area the incident has occurred. Neither piece of information seems to have been known by the informant with the phone! Furthermore, it was not possible for Brian Prewer to contact him for further details.

Alan Butcher, Alex Gee and Dudley Herbert from the Belfrey got to GB at 5:45pm. They immediately went underground with medical supplies, including neoprene splints, Temgesic and Entonox pain relief, and were with the patient shortly after 6pm. Meanwhile, Richard West established the surface Control at the roadside. Andy Sparrow went down the cave at 5:50pm with the Molefone whilst John Beauchamp and Anthony Butcher set up on the surface above the Main Chamber. Paul Curtin carried in the Hot Air Kit just before 6pm, Vince Simmonds the Mager drag sheet and Brian Prewer comforts and a Flectalon blanket. Joel Corrigan followed with hauling ropes and Tim Francis took the Mager stretcher carrying frame.

At 6:10pm a message was received from underground that the patient was being attended to and given pain relief. She thought that she could do much to help herself once her leg was splinted, and that a full stretcher carry would only slow things down. Given the strong rescue party and the other cavers already in the cave to help out, others on call were stood by at the Belfrey. These included Stewart McManus, Martin Grass and Graham Wilton-Jones. Doctors Tony Boycott and Don Thomson were kept informed.

Discussions with Jeni Galligan's friends who had surfaced to make the call-out, indicated that she suffered from asthma, and her inhaler was found in their car. This did not present a problem, however, and the situation was explained to the ambulance crew that arrived at 6:52pm. They had been requested to come early in order to have additional Entonox available, if needed. Meanwhile, those underground found that the patient was unable to assist as much as her initial optimism had led everyone to believe. After about 10 minutes of bravely trying, she was put into the drag sheet. Rapid progress was then made up the Main Chamber, under the Bridge and into the lower end of the Gorge by 6:55pm.

At this point the patient became unreasonably distressed and then suddenly quiet with her eyes staring. Alan Butcher and Vince Simmonds who were closely observing her during the carry spotted that she had stopped breathing; not an easy diagnosis in any circumstances underground, and totally unexpected in view of her injuries and earlier determination. A pulse could not be found. Vince immediately administered mouth-to-

mouth resuscitation and the patient's own breathing was restored after five exhalations. She also responded to questioning, much to the relief of everyone. This dramatic turn for the worse was instantly radioed to the surface at 6:55pm, and medical help was requested.

After appraising the situation with the ambulance crew, Leading Ambulanceman Roger Tomlinson volunteered to go underground and attend the patient as he had done some caving in the past. He went down the cave with additional medical equipment at 7:05pm, escorted and helped by Joel Corrigan. Further rescuers were called to the cave to assist. Jonathan Roberts, Richard Blake, Phil Romford, Graham Frole and Julie Hesketh arrived and went underground shortly afterwards. Lil Romford looked after the two members from the original party who were naturally concerned to hear of the patient's setback.

On arrival at the Ten Foot drop in Mud Passage at 7:25pm, Roger Tomlinson examined the patient, administered injections and prepared her in case a saline drip proved necessary. Her blood pressure was found to be very low. Stewart McManus, Martin Grass, Graham Wilton-Jones, Chris Smart, Mike McDonald, Bill Tolfree and others helped to ferry further kit across the fields to the cave. They also prepared to be stretcher bearers once the patient reached the entrance. In view of Roger Tomlinson's involvement down the cave, a second ambulance was requested to take Jeni Galligan to Yeovil Hospital without delay, for Roger needed a change of clothes and well deserved respite after such unaccustomed exertions underground. His assistance was much appreciated and saved valuable time.

After this hiatus, the final phase of the haul out proceeded smoothly and the patient was brought to the surface at 8:40pm. Since she had been first reached and attended by MRO, her safe recovery had taken only two and a half hours; but it was clearly a lifetime for the plucky patient! Jeni has subsequently written-up her own story for the record, and also expressed much gratitude to all who came to her rescue. (A letter from Jeni to MCG thanking the members who assisted in her rescue was printed in Newsletter no.232 on page 8)

That everything ended so well and a life was saved justifies all the training and practicing organised by MRO wardens for local cavers. The MCG members, for example, had recently held a rescue hauling practice in GB and knew what to do. It is worth re-emphasising that the majority of people on a cave rescue are effectively much needed porters and bearers. A knowledge of how to keep such "trains" of people on the move smoothly can only be gained from actually practicing how this is done down caves. Progress and communications in normal caving are quite different and no real substitute for what happens on rescues.

UPPER FLOOD ENTRANCE

As you will have read in Earwig on page 3, plans are underway for the second Upper Flood entrance. Reports on working methods for the construction of the entrance pipe and the study of the archaeology must be submitted to the official bodies before (hopefully) permission can be granted. Because this could all take time to be processed and because we aim to do the surface work next Easter (not so far away!), the committee thinks we should start collecting all necessary materials in anticipation of permission being granted. So...

WANTED - digging tools, scaffolding, strong planks, fencing items, in fact anything that's required for digging a cave entrance in a relatively confined space, taking into account public safety and archaeological sensitivity (Hymacs forbidden!). If you have anything you can donate or can help us to obtain then please contact the committee.

CAMMOO CAVES

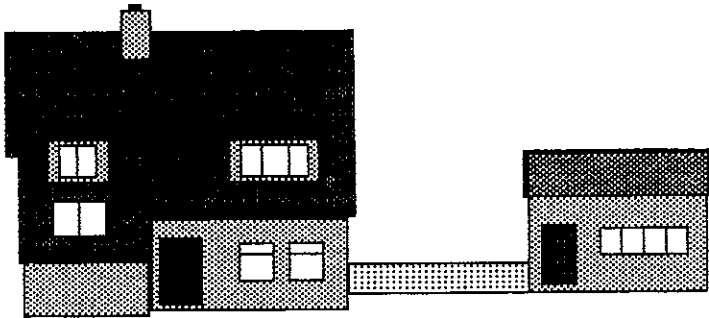
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COTTAGE WORK WEEKEND

The cottage work weekend on 4/5th June was very successful with a lot of work done. Twenty two people turned up over the weekend and put in a lot of effort. Not only were most of the listed jobs completed, but many other jobs besides. Thanks to those who supplied tools and/or went out and shopped for materials, and to everyone who gave up caving/personal time to do some work.

As usual with these types of events I manage to get a few good YV'SDROPPINGS:

PO: "Did you notice any rocks in the grass?"

LG: "No... er... Yes!"

YR: "It looks different with the light on!"

YR: "Don't you dip your tool in my clean water"

WH: "Mine's half way through and I can't get it out"

MR: "I've been screwing all round the cottage today"

WH: "You want 4" at least... 3" is too small"

COTAG ACCESS SYSTEM

Some people have been experiencing difficulty opening the front door to the cottage with their new Cotag keys. A slight adjustment is all that's required but in the meantime, after you have presented your Cotag key and heard the click you just need to pull the door towards you before pushing it open in the normal way. DO NOT TRY TO FORCE IT WITH YOUR SHOULDER as you could do irreparable or expensive damage.

WINDOW LOCKS were fitted on the downstairs windows during the work weekend. This had been planned for some time, and coincidentally there was an attempted break-in recently when a window was forced. The miniature Allen key to open the locks is hanging on the understairs cupboard door. When unlocking, do not unscrew the bolts too far: they will come out! Please remember to return the key after use, and more importantly, please remember to lock the windows before leaving the cottage - especially at the end of your stay.

SILT TRAP SAGA Apparently members who use the hosing down area to clean their caving gear are still not clearing out the silt traps after them. They are being left every time to the same two people, who shall remain nameless! These nameless people were being blamed for clogging up the silt traps after certain digging trips not a million miles from the cottage, but the traps still became clogged while they were out of the country for 3 weeks! So come on folks, do your share - check the silt traps regularly, and clean them out when necessary.

THE PAYPHONE is not working, in fact the phone has had to be removed. Some bright spark spilled beer over it and guess what? Yes, phones stop working when they have beer in them! A bit like cavers really only phones are damaged irreparably (mind that could be true of some cavers!!). Consequently the Group now has to purchase a new phone. We've had the present phone about 8 years so it's more than paid for itself. It will be replaced as soon as possible but in the meantime you will have to find a public phone for your calls or use a payphone. IN EMERGENCY ONLY (FIRE, AMBULANCE OR CAVE RESCUE) ask Mary Cox (next door) if you may use her phone. Otherwise, the nearest payphones are at the Castle of Comfort Inn, and Burrington Combe.

WET, WET, UNWET until the showers are fixed. Arthur Spain has removed the Faulty Tower (sorry, faulty shower) but hasn't been able to find time to replace it with a new one. Can anyone help him?

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The lounge ceiling has been washed but needs a coat of white emulsion (paint available at the cottage). The shower ceiling has been prepared for painting but needs a coat of FUNGICIDAL white paint (not available at the cottage). Any offers to finish these jobs ASAP will be gratefully received.



ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN CAVING SYMPOSIUM

by Yvonne Rowe

Well, what a weekend! This symposium, held at English Bicknor in the Forest of Dean, on 10th-12th June, had so much on offer. It was extremely well organised, and was very enjoyable. (According to the Longman Dictionary, symposium means "a party with music and conversation; to drink together". Honest!)

The following is a summary of the morning lectures, which were accompanied by slides:-

History of Forest Caving - the pre-caving scene within the Forest and an overview of activities from the early 50's to the present day.

Archaeology - in the Forest area and Wye Valley and the importance of certain sites.

Hitch Hikers Guide to Geology - in the Forest of Dean; a geological overview of the Forest area, especially the caves.

Hydrology - an overview of ancient and modern drainage, above and below ground, with its impact on cave development in the Forest area.

Otter Hole - its history and exploration, including an outline of its geology and hydrology.

Bishops Wood - an outline of this area of the Forest with its 150m vertical range, its many sinks and risings, and its potential.

Croes Bleddyn - one of the few accessible main sinks of the Otter Hole System, It boasts two streamways, fine decorations, and with more than a mile to its resurgence within Otter Hole.

Troughs & Trows - The Forest of Dean's exception to the basic rules of cave development, the causes and subsequent lost caves.

Water tracing - a practical guide to the techniques of water tracing from the choice of tracing medium, detectors, their treatment and analysis.

Dowsing - how its done, what it can give cavers, and what's already been done in the Forest area.

NCA Grants - expedition planning, caver training, rescue training, what's available from NCA and how to apply for it.

Cave Rescue - an outline of the history, make-up and workings of the Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group.

First Aid - for cavers. Looking at a basic cavers' first aid kit and an outline to some particular Forest underground problems.

Red House Lane Swallet - a history and exploration of this classic, wet, Forest cave (or how to spend a fortune on building an entrance!).

Inkwell & Dannel Area - lying above the Ban-y-gor cave, both have a lot to offer with a potential to go a long way into a large area of limestone.

Highwood Swallet - also lying above Ban-y-gor, a description of recent work, strong draughting and unstable sink, but lots of potential.

Bats Old and New - a brief insight into bats of the Forest which has one of the largest bat areas in Britain.

Itton North - a major sink of the Otter Hole System and probably the longest man-made cave around. A review of the work and its future prospects.

Ban-y-gor Cave - once the largest cave in the Forest but not yet fully developed and with a larger resurgence than Otter Hole. For thin cavers only!

Picadilly Pot - how technology was brought from Mendip in the form of a Hymac to open this cave. The progress that has been made over the past few months and the good prospects.

Diving Around the Forest - what divers have found within the area's caves.

Wet Sink - nearly 11km in length but took almost 40 years to crack. Holds some interesting animal remains and unusual but beautiful decorations.

During the afternoons there was a selection of field trips and caving trips. The caving trips to choose from were Redhouse Lane Swallet, Wetsink (Slaughter Stream Cave), Otter Hole, Seymours Hole, Coldwell Swallet, C3 - Symonds Yat, Croes Bleddyn, Ban-y-gor, or Itton North. The field trips to choose from were long or shorter walks (4 in all) to see the Forest sinks, risings and cave entrances. Also an archaeology field trip, Otter hole walk/drive covering the major sinks of the system, a dowsing field trip, or a geology field trip.

Various entertainments were arranged for the evenings, and the admission cost included lunches on Sat and Sun as well as evening meal on Sat - all for £12!

Joan Goddard, Joyce Dines, Martin and myself went on one of the sinks and risings walks and could not believe how many there are, and how many are either just in the process of being dug or haven't been dug at all yet! (Don't tell Timmy and Julie, they might defect!) The place is so full of potential and the caves already found look really interesting, especially Wet Sink (Slaughter Stream Cave) which we can't wait to see for ourselves.

If you are interested in this or any other Forest cave then let me or the meet secretary know and we'll try to arrange a Group meet for a day, or even a weekend. It's just over an hour's drive from the cottage so a day trip from Mendip is quite practicable.

MINIMAL IMPACT CAVING CODE

While chatting to Australian MCG member Dave Gwillim about caves and caving in Australia, some interesting facts emerged. One being that to visit any cave in Australia you need a permit before you can gain access. Most of the caves are many miles from roads or civilisation therefore you need to take a pack with plenty of food and liquid, first aid, survival aids, spare clothes etc. Only one party of cavers at a time can get permission for a trip into a cave, so no help from other caving parties if you get into difficulties! This also means that you could be waiting a long time for help to be contacted and for that help to get to the cave. It makes you realise how much we take for granted on Mendip with our "communal" caves/caving, rescue organisation, accomodation, and social activities. Dave sent me a copy of the Australian Minimal Impact Caving Code. Below I have printed extracts as an interesting comparison with our British caving code. Much of the advice is similar to that in our own caving code but the differences deserve a bit of thought, and maybe practice.

GENERAL CAVE VISITATION

1. Remember EVERY caving trip has an impact. Is this trip into this cave necessary? If it is just for recreation, is there another cave which is less vulnerable to damage that can be visited? Make this assessment depending on the purpose of your visit, the size and experience of the proposed party, and IF THE TRIP IS LIKELY to damage the cave.

2. Where possible, the party leader should have visited the cave previously and hence should be aware of sensitive features of the cave, the best anchor points, and generally reduce the need for unnecessary exploration.

3. Cave slowly. You will see and enjoy more, and there will be less chance of damage to the cave and to yourself. This especially applies when you are tired and exiting a cave.

4. If there are beginners on the trip, make sure that they are close to an experienced caver so that the experienced caver can help them when required. Ensure that the party caves at the pace of the slowest caver.

5. Keep your party size small - 4 is a good party size.

6. Cave as a team - help each other through the cave. Don't split up unless impact is reduced by doing so.

7. Constantly watch your head placement AND that of your party members. Let them know before they are likely to do any damage.

8. Keep caving packs as small as possible or don't use them in sensitive caves or extensions.

9. Ensure that party members don't wander about the cave unnecessarily.

10. Stay on all marked or obvious paths. If no paths are marked or none is obvious - define ONE!

11. Learn to recognise cave deposits or features that may be damaged by walking/crawling on them. Examples are:- Drip Holes, Stream Sediments, Paleo soils, Soil Cones, Crusts, Flowstone, Cave Pearls, Asphodilites, Bone material, Potential Archaeological sites, Cave Fauna, Coffee & Cream, Tree Roots.

12. Take care in the placement of hands and feet throughout a cave.

13. Wash your caving overalls and boots regularly so that the spread of bacteria and fungi is minimised.

14. If a site is obviously being degraded, examine the site carefully to determine if an alternative route is possible. Any alternative route MUST not cause the same or greater degradation than the currently used route. If an alternative is available, suggest the alternative route to the appropriate management authority and report the degradation.

15. Carry in-cave marking materials while caving and restore any missing markers. Tape off sensitive areas you believe are being damaged and report the damage to the appropriate management authority.

16. If it is necessary to walk on flowstone in a cave, remove any muddied boots and/or clothing before proceeding OR DON'T PROCEED! Sometimes it is better to assess the situation and return at a later date with the appropriate equipment.

17. Treat the cave biota with respect, watch out for them, and avoid damaging them and their "traps", webs etc. Also avoid directly lighting a cave biota if possible.

18. If bone material is found on existing or proposed tracks, it should be moved off the track to a safer location if at all possible. Collection should only be undertaken with appropriate permission.

19. If you eat food in a cave, ensure that small food fragments are not dropped, as this may impact the cave biota. One way is to carry a plastic bag to eat over and catch the food fragments. This can then be folded up and removed from the cave.

20. Ensure that all foreign matter is removed from caves. This includes human waste. If long trips are to be made into a cave, ensure that containers for the removal of liquid and solid waste are included on the trip inventory.

21. When rigging caves with artificial anchors, eg. traces, tapes, rope etc. ensure that minimal damage occurs to the anchor site by protecting the site. For example, protect frequently used anchors, eg. trees, with carpet, packs, cloth etc. Bolts should only be used where natural anchors are inappropriate.

22. CAVE SOFTLY!

(A further section, on new discoveries, will appear in a future newsletter - Ed)