

MCG EXPEDITION DEPARTS FOR FRANCE

by Martin Rowe

By the time this Bulletin drops onto your doormat, 18 members of MCG will be on the way to les Alpes de Haute-Savoie, on the first real MCG expedition since... well, a long time ago! We have been given permission to explore part of la vallon de Bossetan, below the peak of Tete de Bossetan (2405m), part of les Alpes de Samoens. Le vallon de Bossetan is the most northerly syncline (or large concave fold of the mountains) of les Alpes de Samoens. Although it has potential for a 1350m deep cave system, relatively few caves are known as the mountain has so far refused to give up its secrets. It is interesting to note that Gouffre Jean Bernard (currently the world's deepest cave at about 1700m) is in the next valley to the south and only a few kilometers away as the crow flies.

Our hosts will be le Speleo-Club d'Annemasse, and we will (hopefully!) be meeting our contacts, Patrice and Jean-Marc Dumond in Samoens on Saturday, 20th August. As our minibus and cars cannot traverse the track to our base, le Refuge du Tornay at 1763m, we are relying on their Land Rover to ferry all our gear for us. From here, we will be splitting up into groups to explore the limestone at the head of the valley.

After Tony Knibbs very kindly provided a full set of stereo aerial photos of the area, it became apparent that mapping our area and accurately identifying the many possible cave entrances was going to be a major task in the two weeks available. In order to make this easier, we will be experimenting with a Global Positioning System. This takes its position from a series of 24 American satellites orbiting the earth. Depending on how many of these satellites are 'visible', the hand held computer can tell you where you are to within 10m. As well as giving latitude and longitude, it will also give the altitude - merely by walking up to a potential entrance, switching the system on and waiting a few minutes! Once the position has been computed, the entrance can be plotted on a map and be allocated a reference number in accordance with the local numbering system. The entrance can then be investigated before moving on to the next site.

After a week or so of this basic exploration, we hope to have identified those sites with the best potential, and the real work to push at least some of the caves will begin. Obviously, with only two weeks available, Gouffre Jean Bernard will not be in danger of losing its world record as the deepest cave. Realistically, we may find something to challenge the deepest caves around Bossetan, currently some 250m deep. If the expedition is really successful, there may be lots of loose ends to tie up on another expedition next year. Who knows, visits to this area could become an annual event for MCG?

Many MCG members have contributed to the organisation of the expedition. In particular, Joel Corrigan really got the expedition off the ground, before leaving the UK to work in Hong Kong. (Bad timing Joel, and you lost your £20 deposit!) Ralph Diment liaised with SCA, organising permits and booking the refuge. Charlie Alison sorted out the transport, hiring the Royal Holloway minibus. Julie Hesketh has organised the first aid and Tim Francis all the expedition equipment. Finally, Joe Frampton stepped in at the eleventh hour when Joel departed, and kept the momentum going as well as taking over the finances. Sorry if I've missed anyone out.

Just for the record, the expedition members are:

Ralph Diment	Joe Frampton	Charlie Alison
Tim Francis	Julie Hesketh	Tim Haynes
Joan Goddard	Linda Gates	James Allen
Martin Rowe	Yvonne Rowe	Marcus Ward
Michael Pittman	Tony Knibbs	Denise Knibbs
Dr Andy Bellamy	Lee Hawkswell	Dave Tooke

ON THE MOVE Fete Hollings has moved to Dept of Geological Sciences, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada, S7N 0W0

WELCOME to Marcus Ward and Tim Haynes who have been accepted as probationary members.

EARWIG in on the committee meeting held 6-8-94... Upper Flood: Permission to dig the new entrance has been received from Somerset County Council and English Nature. Permission awaited from English Heritage. Charterhouse Centre has offered to oversee the proceedings on behalf of SCC. Materials to be gathered in readiness and a co-ordinator sought - any offers?... BCRA Public Liability Insurance: MCG to obtain BCRA insurance - £150 for £2,000,000 cover as opposed to £437 for £1,000,000 cover with Eagle Star... Car Stickers: are on order and should be ready September. They will be for sticking on the outside so can be used on other things... GB Purchase: interested parties now include STNC, caving clubs, individual cavers, non-caving individuals and commercial bodies. Outright purchase by cavers is not the only option - other options include joint purchase with conservation body, conservation body purchases but with agreed access for cavers, or Bristol Water may even choose not to sell. There is a meeting in Sept with the Minister of State and Bristol Water - nothing can be decided until after that... Sweatshirts: the membership have had a change of mind about requirements. Sweatshirts will now be a) hooded with logos back and front as previously advertised, and b) crew necked with small logo on front only. Colours and sizes as previously stated... Half Yearly Social: Roger Dors is unable to staff the bar for us this year so we will have to do it ourselves - we will need volunteers to serve behind the bar - any offers? To keep costs down, the food will consist of a ploughman's-type meal with a selection of salads - any comments?... MCG Dinner: there have been no suggestions forwarded to the committee so the MCG dinner will be at the Crossways Hotel again next year... Surplus Stock: The stock is now for sale but will be run down. The committee will only continue to stock popular items such as Duracells, bulbs etc... Showers: the electric shocks were thought to be coming from a damaged cable that runs outside the shower-room wall. The problem should now be solved - unless you say otherwise! Third shower now fixed.

SURVEYING GEAR The compass altimeter, clinometer and tape are now kept in the shop cupboard, and are available via any committee member. A signing out book will have to be completed by both the borrower and a

committee member. Any equipment not returned will have to be paid for or replaced by the borrower - AND IS VERY EXPENSIVE, eg. an altimeter will set you back £200+ and a clinometer £70+. So, keep this equipment safe if you book it out and please treat it with respect.

SRT TRAINING The committee is organising another training weekend on 3/4th December. If 10 people are interested, we will hire a gym and instructor - there will be a nominal charge, about £10. If you want to learn SRT, or would like a refresher, then let the committee know ASAP

SPECIAL PUBLICATION Some members have said they have articles on recent caving expeditions and exploration and would like them included in a special issue. Yvonne Rowe has agreed to co-ordinate its production and would like to have all articles, surveys, photos etc. by January 1995. If possible, could Yvonne have the text supplied on IBM compatible 5.25 or 3.5 discs, preferably as an ASCII file, to make editing quicker and easier (as yet, we do not know which word processing package we will be using). If you can't get surveys or artwork done professionally, Yvonne can arrange to get it done for you. If anyone else has been involved in successful exploration, here or abroad, or has been on an interesting expedition, then put in on disc (or write it up) and send it to Yvonne to make this special edition a bumper issue. If all goes well, it is hoped to have it ready for the 1995 AGM!

LIBRARY ADDITIONS: -
Race Against Time a history of the Cave Rescue Organisation: by Jim Eyre and John Frankland. Published way back in 1988, but only now available in our library, it makes fascinating reading.
Caves and Cave Life by Philip Chapman - one of the New Naturalist Library series. Published 1993. This book is more interesting than the title suggests. As well as chapters on cave habitat, fauna and flora, there is a potted history of speleology, and summaries of geomorphology and the development of caving in the limestone areas of Britain and Ireland. The final chapter, "The Future of Caves", considers conservation, threats to caves from external influences (quarrying, pollution, acid rain etc.), and to cave fauna from human activity. The book concludes with a list of caves scheduled as SSSIs and a selected bibliography.
Metal Mines of South Wales - by GW Hall
Industrial Archaeology No.12 : Metal Mining (Chapter 12 - Lead).
 40 Years of the MCG - based on photographs loaned by members for the 1994 AGM

A photo album for brilliant/funny/rude pictures of your favourite cave or caver - please note date/place/people on back.