

Mendip Caving Group

NEWS

NUMBER 243

JANUARY 1995

MCG RESCUE PRACTICE

You should all know by now that this year's rescue practice will be on February 4th, assembling at 10:00am in the cottage. We will be rescuing Phil Ingold into and out of Waterwheel Swallet. John Crowsley has made all the necessary arrangements, eg ordered the MRD rescue stretcher from Brian Prewer, notified the Charterhouse Centre who will not let their cave key out that day, checked the cave to see what other items are required, etc. The rest is down to you to make this event a worthwhile exercise and a great day out for Phil who once again has volunteered to be our casualty. It is quite a serious undertaking because if we cannot manage to rescue Phil, he cannot simply get out of the stretcher and make his own way out! This serves to make it a more realistic practical experience for us "rescuers" and gives Phil an welcome opportunity to get underground again.

As well as teams of rescuers for stretcher bearing, hauling and seeing to Phil's general well-being, John has asked for a volunteer to be a "formation bouncer". This has nothing to do with chucking out ballroom dancers or synchronised swimmers! The sole job of this person will be to watch every move the team members make in the course of the rescue and to warn them if they get too close to the cave formations. If there is more than one volunteer for this important job all the better - one can go in front of the team, one behind, and so on.

John is very skilled at organising and implementing these rescue practices and puts in a lot of work before and during the events. There will be a de-briefing at the cottage afterwards which in the past has produced useful and constructive comments. He is obviously hoping for a good turnout so come and join us on 4th February at 10:00am. If you have any queries then please contact John Crowsley on 0272-652585

1995 ARCHAEOLOGY WALK

This year's archaeology walk is on Saturday March 4th. Due to the newsletter, Xmas and other commitments (past and future) I am not going to be able to complete the new walk I had planned in time for March, but all is not lost - I will repeat the first walk I organised in 1992. This will take place around Burrington, Dolebury and Rowberrow. It went down very well last time with lots of interest shown in the various sites. The only complaint I had was that it was a bit too long for some people so I have shortened it this time. It will be a circular walk starting from Burrington Cafe at 10:00am, and will take in:

Burrington Camp
Bos Swallet
Read's Cavern
Dolebury Camp
Rowberrow Cavern
Rowberrow Warren
Charterhouse to Uphill
Rowberrow Camp
Aveline's Hole

Iron Age hill fort
Bronze Age occupation site
Iron Age occupation site
Iron Age hill fort
Neolithic to Roman occupation site
Iron Age cross-ridge dykes
Roman road
Iron Age hillslope fort
Palaeolithic occupation and burial site

I will bring lots of information on these sites including pictures of finds, and plans of the earthworks. It's a good day out and an opportunity to chat to and get to know other members in a relaxed way. You will need a packed lunch, warm clothes, waterproofs, walking boots or wellies, a Petzl zoom or torch and an O/S map of the area (optional as others will have one).

The first question I always get is, "Will we be stopping at a pub?" The answer is yes, and it is probably going to be at Rowberrow village. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to phone me on 01252-872006

Yvonne Rowe

NORDRACH COTTAGE BOOKINGS

NIGHTS	GROUP	SIZE	NIGHTS	GROUP	SIZE
27 Jan-28 Jan	WESTMINSTER SCHOOL	(12)	16 Mar-18 Mar	CHATHAM SCHOOL	(??)
03 Feb-04 Feb	MEMBERS' WEEKEND		31 Mar-01 Apr	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	AGM
24 Feb-25 Feb	KINGSTON UNIVERSITY	(16)	05 May-06 May	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	
03 Mar-04 Mar	MEMBERS' WEEKEND		19 May-20 May	KINGSTON UNIVERSITY	(16)
10 Mar-11 Mar	SURREY SCOUTS	(16)	02 Jun-03 Jun	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	

1995 MEETS PROGRAMME

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
04 Feb	Mendip	Rescue Practice	John Crowsley	01179-652585
04 Mar	Mendip	Archaeology Walk	Yvonne Rowe	01252-872006
05 Mar	Mendip	Longwood Clean-up	Martin Rowe	01252-872006
01 Apr	Mendip	Annual General Meeting	Joan Goddard	01608-810382
01 Apr	Mendip	Annual Dinner	Arthur Spain	01749-679358
08 Apr-13 Apr	Upper Flood	Archaeology Dig	Yvonne Rowe	01252-872006
14 Apr-18 Apr	Upper Flood	New Entrance Dig	Joan Goddard	01608-810382
27 May-29 May	Yorkshire	Gaping Gill Winch Meet	Geoff Beale	01734-722510
18 Aug-03 Sep	France	Chartreuse	Martin Rowe	01252-872006

MCG - CAVE LEADERS

DAN-YR-OGOF		OGOF FFYNNON DDU I	
Geoff Beale	01734-722510	Geoff Barton	01932-849241
John Beauchamp	01761-463143	Geoff Beale	01734-722510
Ian McKechnie	01932-228292	John Miriam	0181-393-3955
John Miriam	0181-393-3955	ST. CUTHBERT'S	
Roger Wallington	01753-433841	John Beauchamp	01761-463143
<u>CHARTERHOUSE CAVE</u>		Malcolm Cotter	017842-52643
Charlie Allison	0181-393-5910	<u>RESERVOIR HOLE</u>	
Nick Gilson	01934-417697	Geoff Beale	01734-722510

Accommodation in Yorks & Sth. Wales can be booked through the relevant cottage warden:

Yorkshire	Northern Pennine Club	Andy Goddard	01244-570944
South Wales	South Wales Caving Club	Gary Vaughan	01202-679602

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 Tel: 01761-462797 Grid Ref ST51475606 OS 1:50,000 sheet 182
COTTAGE INFORMATION:	Through the cottage warden please (address and tel. no. below)
COTTAGE BOOKINGS:	
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



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TREASURER MARTIN ROWE	tel: 01252-872006
10 GREENLEAS CLOSE, YATELEY, CAMBERLEY, SURREY, GU17 7SL	
MEET SECRETARY GEOFF BEALE	tel: 01734-722510
30 CHURCHILL CRESCENT, SONNING COMMON, NEAR READING, RG4 9RX	
COTTAGE WARDEN LEE HAWKSWELL	tel: 01923-819103
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* CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES
 * JONATHAN ROBERTS
 * MALCOLM COTTER
 * PAT WALSH
 * PETER MATHEWS
 * REGISTERED CHARITY No 270098

* NON-COMMITTEE POSTS
 * RESCUE WARDEN
 * CONSERVATION OFFICER
 * COTTAGE EXTENSION
 * MCG SHOP
 * AUDITORS

NAME TELEPHONE
 JOHN CROWSLEY 01179-652585
 TIM FRANCIS 0181-876-1863
 WAYNE HISCOX 01749-672081x2213
 SEE ANY COMMITTEE MEMBER
 BRYAN TERRY AND DAVE TOOKE

MCG

doings

CONGRATULATIONS to Dave Swillim on becoming a full member.

COTTAGE FEES Many thanks to Tim Francis and other members who endeavour to sort out cottage fees and then promptly forward a cheque and booking sheet to the Treasurer. However, when people like Tim are not about, some cottage fees are still not reaching the Treasurer, despite appeals in the newsletter. Some members and member's guests appear to be leaving the cottage without paying cottage fees at all. Others are paying cash, the booking sheet is signed by the member collecting the fees, but the money is then left in the lectern at the end of the weekend. Quite large amounts of money have gone astray recently. The only way the committee feel the problem can be solved is by every member and guest paying their cottage fees by cheque, not cash. If you don't have a cheque book, find someone at the cottage who does, give them the cash and ask them to include your fees on their cheque. This way there is less chance of cash going astray - a crossed cheque payable to Mendip Caving Group is of no use to anyone else. Please state on the back of the cheque what the payment is for (eg cottage fees, date of stay, names of members/guests) - it helps the Treasurer when he is entering it in the books. Finally, don't delay sending off the cheques and booking sheet. There are always SAEs in the lectern, and the post box is only 50 yards down the road towards the Hunters. Thankyou.

CHARTREUSE 1995 We are pleased to say that quite a bit of interest has been expressed in the summer trip to Chartreuse. Tony Knibbs has kindly sent me an enormous amount of information (descriptions, surveys, access, history, etc.) on the caves out there and a few photos. There is too much to print it all in the newsletter (and it's in French at the moment!) but I will try to include some at a later

date. In the meantime if anyone is interested in a copy please send a cheque or PO for £3.50 (to cover the cost of printing at 10p per sheet) and a stamped, addressed A4 envelope to Yvonne Rowe (address on page 2).

EARWIG in on the committee meeting held 01.01.95... Cottage extension: Building regulations drawings are in hand... Upper Flood: Permission for new entrance has been granted. Archaeology dig to commence 8th April prior to the start of the new entrance dig at Easter. Volunteers for both digs required, contact Y Rowe, archaeology; or Joan Goddard, new entrance (see article on page 4)... Gruffy Field (GB): Somerset Wildlife Trust and Bristol Water are soon to exchange contracts as BW has decided to sell the land. Caving clubs need to set up a limited company (based on CCC membership) with a company secretary and directors to sort out, among other things, a 150 year lease for access to GB. Extra clubs will be able to join the company which could get involved in other caves and cave access in the future. £1 per share, 1 share per club. All correspondence relating to this subject is with Joan Goddard should anyone be interested... Electric shocks: Arthur Spain to carry out earth bonding and any help will be gratefully received... Upper Flood padlock: This has been reconditioned and put back on the cave lid. A spare key (for rescue only) has been put in the rescue box... Key deposits: These have been transferred to the COIF deposit account at 4.82% interest. The committee want to keep key deposits in a separate account but it will stay in the COIF for the time being as no-one else can give a better return on £1000... MCG dinner: As Arthur received no alternative venue suggestions for the MCG dinner he has booked the Crossways for April 1st 1995... Changing room heater: A timeswitch has been put on this heater in an effort to stop members and guests leaving it on all night to dry their caving gear. If it is tampered with in any way then the heater will be removed altogether... Sweatshirts: We have had lots of requests for more hooded sweatshirts. An order form to go out with newsletter. When we have enough for a batch of 12 or more Arthur will contact the suppliers.

YV'S DRIPPING

JH: "Where do your middle names Rosevear and Sergeant come from?"
 JR: "They are family names."
 JH: "What's your father's name then?"
 JR: "Eric!"

UPPER FLOOD SECOND ENTRANCE: PERMISSION RECEIVED FOR EXCAVATION

Exactly a year after our first enquiry, the Group has been granted permission from the Department of National Heritage to excavate a second entrance to Upper Flood in the depression just north of the triangular car park area. Somerset County Council and English Nature have already given us the go ahead. A second entrance means that people going to the end of the cave will be able to bypass Sunset Boulevard and hence avoid the possibility of accidental damage to the fine formations.

SCC have stipulated that pipes and a secure lid are to be in place within 10 weeks of the start date. We will begin the project by fencing the depression on the weekend of 8th/9th April 1995 and will start excavation immediately afterwards. As the dig site is on the Charterhouse Leadworks (a National Archaeological Monument) we must carry out careful archaeological excavation until bedrock is reached - according to the specification which we included in our application to the Department of National Heritage. A representative of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, and the County Archaeologist may also inspect the site during work. A file of relevant correspondence (including a copy of the Proposal which was put forward with our Application for Scheduled Monument Consent) is in the library at the cottage. For those unable to get to the cottage a brief summary is printed below:

Proposal for archaeological excavation at the site

Excavation will be confined to the area of the depression and the site will be safeguarded by means of adequate fencing (to be agreed with Charterhouse Centre, representing Somerset County Council). The area occurs within County Monument 508 which was notified to Somerset County Council on 2nd August 1983 under Section 1 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

Reference has been made to published sources of information. There is evidence that lead and a small amount of silver was mined in the Charterhouse area from pre-Roman times to the mid nineteenth century when accessible reserves were worked out (Gough, 1967). The waste materials left by these mining operations were reworked by the Mendip Hills Mining Company which began operations at Charterhouse in 1844. In 1861 the company was sold to Treffry and Co which continued smelting until 1878, and buddling until closure in 1885. The depression where we propose to excavate appears to be near the edge of the 'buddle sand' deposits (sand and gravel discards from the washing process employed by the Mining Companies) and is thought to be mainly a geologically controlled shakehole.

Archaeological fieldwork

Work will be carried out in accordance with good archaeological practice, and public liability insurance will be provided by the Mendip Caving Group. To protect the site, shelter will be provided in the case of adverse weather. Turf and spoil will be stored temporarily in suitable containers and will be used to partially backfill and returf the shakehole after the new cave entrance has been completed. Initial archaeological excavation of the shakehole will commence on or about 8th April 1995 and continue as necessary. The stratigraphy will be carefully recorded and work will be halted if any artifacts are found so that relevant experts may be called in to examine the site. A site grid will be established before work begins, and a drawing frame will be used to record finds. After removing the turf by spade, the soil will be trowelled for large artifacts. All soil removed will then be sieved (5mm mesh) for smaller items. Sections and plans will be made at each stage of the excavation. Finds will be removed, numbered, photographed and referenced as found. Any fragile finds will be photographed and drawn carefully before lifting. Context record cards will be used to record finds, and a site notebook kept detailing a brief day-to-day account of work in progress, observations etc.

Analysis and report

Analysis of finds will follow the archaeological investigation. A report of the excavation will be published by the Mendip Caving Group or in a relevant archaeological publication. Copies of the report will be made available to interested

parties, and copies will be placed in Bristol City Library and Wells Library. Finds will be offered to a suitable body such as Wells Museum, UBSS Museum or Bristol Museum.

Proposed method of excavating shaft

In conjunction with the archaeological investigation, a shaft approximately 1.75m square will be constructed to bedrock. As the cave lies close to the surface, spoil will be kept to a minimum and will be stacked behind a temporary barrier at a safe distance from the shaft perimeter, but within the hollow. A site forman will be appointed each day to ensure the safety of people working in the hollow, and to ensure that work proceeds in an orderly and tidy way. All spoil will have been previously screened for archaeological artifacts.

Shoring of the shaft will begin when it reaches 1.0 metre depth and will continue down to its base. It will be constructed from corrugated iron or similar shuttering with 4in x 4in wood timbers for side and cross braces, and vertical corner supports. Once bedrock and the cave void (likely to be a narrow rift) are encountered, concrete pipes (c 1000mm diameter) will be lowered down within the shoring. The shoring will then be removed and digging spoil tipped in the space between the pipes and the shaft walls. A lockable lid will be positioned on top of the pipes to secure the entrance. Turf removed at the start of the excavation will be repositioned on top of the spoil. Finally the fence will be removed and the site tidied.

Health and safety

MCG members have had many years experience of digging and caving in the Black-moor/Velvet Bottom area (and by and large we are a healthy lot!) but SCC is concerned about possible health hazards due to levels of residual lead etc in the buddle sand through which we will be digging. Last month's newsletter (No. 242) listed some sensible precautionary measures, and Mike Lovell will take samples for analysis while work is in progress.

Starting work

Yvonne (who will supervise the archaeological work), Martin, Joan and everyone else who would like to help, will be on Mendip the week before Easter, and hopefully will have got the archaeological part of the project to the stage where serious cave digging can commence. A large workforce is required over the Easter period as we hope to make major progress and with a lot of luck may even be able to insert pipes during the weekend.

NIGHT ORIENTEERING

MCG member Mike Haselden is organising an orienteering night walk in the New Forest on February 25/26th 1995. Anyone who has ever taken part in these exercises will know just what fun they can be. MCG had a team in one organised by Speleo Rhaf many years ago, January 1987 in fact (see newsletter 192 for a report), and amazed themselves by coming second!

For those who have never been on an orienteering nightwalk, here, briefly, is what is involved: Teams are sent off at timed intervals and might have as much as 3-4 hours to complete the course, but with Mike organising it - who knows!? As your set off time is marked you are given your instructions consisting of map references and a few vague clues, each worth points varying in number according to difficulty. You then need to spend a little time plotting the map references on an O/S map and sorting out a route. Each checkpoint has a marker (usually hidden somewhere obscure) which you have to record as proof that you have actually been there and found it. Clues might be simply "junction of tracks" or "holly tree" of which there might be many in the vicinity! Another type of clue might be, for example, 100m bearing 278 deg mag from the previous map reference, so you can't afford to miss anything out.

It is good, healthy fun and would be nice if we could get up a team from MCG. You need plenty of warm clothing, walking boots or wellies, waterproofs, a Petzl zoom or torch, O/S map of the New Forest, compass, pencils, rubber, notepaper, some food and a flask of something hot. If you are interested in taking part in this event and would like more details please contact Mike Haselden on 0703-464491. Mike can also offer floor space for Sunday morning, but please phone to confirm before 25th February.

WATERWHEEL BY NAME . . .

by Yvonne Rowe

Over the Christmas period the West of Britain suffered serious flooding. Mendip escaped the worst of these floods although many fields were waterlogged, small streams ran down the sides of roads and Velvet Bottom had become a series of ponds and lakes.

On New Year's day Joan Goddard, Martin and myself decided that as many Mendip caves could be seriously wet (and nothing at all to do with hangovers!) we would have a trip down Waterwheel. We planned take a good look round to see what problems and difficulties might be encountered during the rescue practice on Feb.4th - bearing in mind that Phil Ingold, MCG's resident rescue victim, has to be rescued into the cave before he can be rescued out again!

After spending an absolute age trying to unlock the padlock on the cave lid we finally gained access and were on our way. As we dropped down the entrance pipe and on down the steep inclined slope with a wheelbarrow (the slope, not us!) we realised that we could hear water not very far away. Having never heard or seen what sounded like a lot of water this close to the beginning of the cave we ventured on warily.

After the steep incline there is a short section of horizontal passage leading eventually to the vertical drops through boulders. When we reached the passage we found it was full of water 2-3ft deep which was being fed by small inlets entering from cracks in the left hand wall of the passage. At the end of this passage a small amount of water can often be seen entering from a recess to the left but this was now a sizeable flow, which joined by the flow from the passage developed into a good size stream. The stream finally disappeared before the vertical drops through boulders.

The stream (presumably the same stream?) re-appeared somewhere before the gours that are further along on the right. It then cascaded over the red and white flowstone and into the black-stained gours bringing it all beautifully to life and sharpening the colours. The water continued on to join the stream that flows through the Canal and because the volume was now so much greater every vertical drop became a sporting mini-cascade.

The majority of the water disappeared as usual down the 20ft deep fissure on the right, not far from the end of the cave. However, more water than usual continued down to the 30ft pitch, again highlighting the many colours of the mineral-stained rock and creating mini-cascades. For a long time now the bottom of the cave has been relatively dry but once again it was transformed into a lake. As we had not brought the necessary tackle to descend the 30ft pitch we were unable to see how deep it was but we threw a few stones down and it sounded quite deep.

Waterwheel was a bit like a miniature Swildon's this day and was really brought to life with all the water. Everything was clean and colourful and sparkling, and because we didn't know what watery obstacle we'd find round the next bend or down the next drop it was quite an exciting trip.

I think that even if there is still this much water down Waterwheel on February 4th it will be possible to carry Phil above the stream. There was nothing coming in through the roof other than the usual odd drip - water that is! - most entered from low down along the sides, so he *should* stay dry.

What was to be a simple rescue practice reconnaissance trip turned out to be unexpectedly interesting and most enjoyable.