

Mendip Caving Group

NEWS

NUMBER 244

FEBRUARY 1995

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1995

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP
WILL BE HELD IN THE LONGROOM OF THE HUNTERS LODGE INN
ON SATURDAY 1st APRIL 1995, COMMENCING AT 1pm

Nominations are invited for all Committee posts. Nominations for office, and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules must be submitted in writing by first class post to the Secretary's home address with signatures of full members proposing and seconding and at least 25 days before the meeting (ie. by 7th March). A nomination for office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand for election by the nominee. A postal vote may be granted to any member who applies in good time to the Secretary.

CHARITIES ACT, 1992 You are a charity Trustee if you are a member of the management or executive committee of a charitable association. Anyone considering standing for election to the Committee should read the leaflet "Responsibility of Charity Trustees", available from the Secretary.

Arthur Spain has decided to make way for a new (?younger) person on the Committee. He has put in a great deal of hard work during the four years that he has been Ordinary Member (as well as a previous two year stint as Treasurer) and the Group has benefitted greatly from his efforts. Thanks Arthur... Martin and Yvonne Rowe are also standing down as Treasurer and Editor respectively; they have both worked extremely hard while serving as Committee members and are "retiring" to enable them to spend more time doing other things - so how about other members giving the two posts a go!... As was agreed in 1994 the Rescue Warden and Conservation Officer are also to be elected at the AGM.

Copies of the 1994 AGM minutes were circulated with the May 1994 newsletter. Members may obtain further copies from the Secretary (please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope).
Joan Goddard, Hon. Secretary, 4th Feb. 1995

MCG ANNUAL DINNER SATURDAY 1st APRIL 1995

Venue: The Crossways Inn, North Wootton

MENU

Time: 7:00pm for 7:30pm

Coach: £2.50 each (single or return).
Pick-up: 6:30pm prompt at Nordrach Cottage, 6:40pm at the Hunters.
Pick-up: midnight from Crossways for return to Hunters and Nordrach Cottage.

Guest beers: London Pride, Wadsworths 6X, Bass, and a "suprise"

Accommodation: available at the Crossways (mention MCG when booking).

Special events: There will be a raffle, and either a guest speaker or a "professional" caving-song singer, plus the traditional skittles match.

Cost: Tickets are £14 each which includes a glass of house wine or a soft drink. Requests for tickets in writing please (an application form is enclosed with this newsletter) to Arthur Spain, "Waitangi", Long Lane, Dinder, Wells, Somerset, BA5 3PQ, enclosing a SAE and a cheque made payable to "Mendip Caving Group" (not "MCG"). NO TICKETS WILL BE SOLD AFTER 25th MARCH

Starters
Home-made Leek and Potato Soup
Prawn Cocktail
Duck Pate
Fruit

Main Courses (meat)
Salmon in Puff Pastry & Hollandaise Sauce
Roast Lamb with Red Currant Jelly
Pork Tenderloin in Brandy, Cream & Gooseberry Sauce

Main Courses (vegi)
Stuffed Vine Leaves
Cheese and Nut Croquettes

Served with Roast & Creamed potatoes
& a Selection of Vegetables in Season

Desserts
Gateaux
Raspberry Pavlova
Fruit Salad with Fresh Cream
Cheese and Biscuits

Coffee and Mints

NORDRACH COTTAGE BOOKINGS

NIGHTS	GROUP	SIZE	NIGHTS	GROUP	SIZE
17 Feb-18 Feb	ROYAL HOLLOWAY	(15)	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	
16 Mar-18 Mar	CHATHAM SCHOOL	(??)	07 Jul-08 Jul	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	

1995 MEETS PROGRAMME

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
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

Geoff Beale	01734-722510
John Beauchamp	01761-463143
Ian McKechnie	01932-228292
John Miriam	0181-393-3955
Roger Wallington	01753-433841

CHARTERHOUSE CAVE

Charlie Allison	0181-393-5910
Nick Gilson	01934-417697

OGOF FFYNNON DDU I

Geoff Barton	01932-849241
Geoff Beale	01734-722510
John Miriam	0181-393-3955

ST. CUTHBERT'S

John Beauchamp	01761-463143
Malcolm Cotter	017842-52643

RESERVOIR HOLE

Geoff Beale	01734-722510
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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
COTTAGE INFORMATION:	Tel: 01761-462797 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
PREPAYMENT VOUCHERS:	Guest clubs and member's guests £ 2.50
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION:	(available to members only) 12 nights accommodation £15.00
	25 nights accommodation £30.00
	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: 01608-810382
10 ENSTONE ROAD, CHARLBURY, OXFORD, OX7 3QR	
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
4a HAZELTREE ROAD, NORTH WATFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE	
TACKLEMASTER TIM FRANCIS	tel: 0181-876-1863
FLAT 5, 2 THE CRESCENT, BARNES, LONDON, SW13 ONW	
EDITOR YVONNE ROWE	tel: 01252-872006
10 GREENLEAS CLOSE, YATELEY, CAMBERLEY, SURREY, GU17 7SL	
RECORDER WAYNE HISCOX	tel: (WORK) 01749-672081x2213
3 KEWARD, GLASTONBURY ROAD, WELLS, SOMERSET, BA5 1TR	
ORDINARY MEMBER ARTHUR SPAIN	tel: 01749-679358
WAITANGI, LONG LANE, DINDER, SOMERSET, BA5 3PQ	

* CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES
 * JONATHAN ROBERTS
 * MALCOLM COTTER
 * PAT WALSH
 * PETER MATHEWS
 * REGISTERED CHARITY No 270088

* 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

MCS

doings

ON THE MOVE Joyce Dines to:
The Cottage, Long Barn, Waverley Abbey,
Farnham, Surrey, GU9 8EW
Ian McKechnie to: 41 Daneswood
Close, Weybridge, Surrey, KT13 9AY
Tel: 01932-854959

Richard Whittington's telephone no. is
01275-392751 (contrary to what the
address list says!)

APPLICATIONS for membership:
Paul Newey 4 Blaise Lane, Englefield
Green, Egham, TW20 OPH Tel: 01784-432833
(Proposed by T Francis, J Allen)
Alan Wright Trellis Cottage, 50 Devonsh-
ire Street, Bridgwater, Somerset TA6 5ES
Tel: 01278-444135 (Prop. M Rowe, Y Rowe)
These applications for probationary
membership will be considered at the
committee meeting on 1-4-95

CONGRATULATIONS to Gordon
Woodall on becoming a full member.

RESCUED AGAIN! The rescue
practice was moved to Rods Pot, due to
Waterwheel being sumped (it has been
rather wet recently on Mendip!!). Thanks
to John Crowsley's pre-planning, and to
the 23 members who turned up to form
hard working teams, we all had a
worthwhile and valuable day's practice
in what turned out to be a tricky and
technical rescue. Because of narrow
rifts and tight passages John could not
always be at the head of the action to
give instructions or advice but everyone
used their initiative with one person
taking control of the situation as it
became necessary. Everyone worked well
within their team and it was noticed
this time, more than at other practice
rescues, that everyone kept asking Phil
how he was feeling and involved him in
the decision-making, particularly at the
more awkward stages along the way. I
know Phil enjoyed getting underground
again and I (Yvonne) for one feel more
confident in the various rescue
techniques after this, our third rescue
practice with Phil as our casualty. Many

thanks to the MRO for the loan of their
stretcher, to John for all his hard work
and expertise, to Phil for loaning us
his body again, and to everyone who
turned out to help on the day. We didn't
have time for a de-briefing after the
event but if John has any important
points to raise I'm sure he'll write
something for the newsletter. Phil has
said he'll do a write-up from the
casualty's point of view and we look
forward to that.

LOST AND FOUND Lost: John
Crowsley lost a steel karibiner on the
rescue weekend - it has probably got
muddled in amongst someone else's gear,
not surprising when you think how much
rope and metalwork went down the cave.
Found: on the same weekend - a green
Daleswear fleece undersuit and a pair of
black ankle socks.
Found: after the new year celebrations -
a pair of large-sized suede and fabric
walking boots.
If you have lost any of these items
please claim them by phoning Yvonne
Rowe.

BARN DANCE '95 Arthur's last
job as Ordinary Member is to book
Chewton Mendip Village Hall for our Barn
Dance on 4th November 1995. We would
like to introduce a "certain something"
into the Barn Dance event to make it
more inviting for all, maybe some games
or feats of skill for all to try. If you
can think of anything (clean-ish!)
that's likely to appeal to the majority
then let the new Ordinary Member know
when she/he takes office.

EASTER DIG AND PIG
As there will be quite a few people
helping with digging the new Upper Flood
entrance at Easter we shall be having a
barrel and barbecue on the Saturday
night, 15th April. I (Yvonne) will make
a substantial salad and some garlic
bread, and Joan will do some baked
jacket potatoes. Just bring your own
meat or whatever you want cooked on the
barbecue - we will ask for something
towards the cost of the salad, garlic
bread, potatoes and beer.

YV'S SDROPPINGS
Geoff Beale: "I'm actually Bulimnic but
I keep forgetting to throw up!"

Matthew: "Is there a men's team and a
woman's team?"

Anna: "Yes"

Matthew: "Am I on the men's team?"

Matthew: "Oh B*ll*cks... come back!"

Martin: "Why, where have they gone?"

UPPER FLOOD Work on the new entrance will begin on 8th April. Initially, this will be an archaeological dig. Yvonne Rowe is co-ordinating this part of the dig which will continue throughout the week up to Thursday, 13th April. If the archaeological dig goes well (ie. nothing of importance is found!), the real digging (which Joan Goddard and Lee Hawkswell are co-ordinating) through bedrock will start on Good Friday, 14th April and will hopefully be finished by Easter Monday, 17th April. Because of the short timescale, we need as much help as possible. For the archaeological phase, a shelter has to be constructed over the dig, and the depression has to be fenced off. All the digging has to be done with 9cm trowels and all the material has to be sieved through a 5mm mesh before being stacked behind a temporary barrier for re-use later when backfilling. For the new entrance, a shaft 1.75m square will be constructed, with corrugated iron shuttering. When bedrock is reached 1m entrance pipes will be installed. Finally, the space between the pipes and the shaft walls must be backfilled.

Because the site is a National Archaeological Monument, we cannot use any heavy machinery and the dig will be labour intensive. If you are able to help with either phase of the dig, please contact Yvonne Rowe or Joan Goddard. Everyone is welcome to help - no previous archaeological or engineering experience is needed. For those able to help with the archaeological dig, we hope to arrange a short meeting at the cottage on 2nd April. Yvonne will describe in more detail what we will be doing, there will be a short video demonstrating some digging techniques and we hope to have some handouts available.

HERE WE MOAN AGAIN!!

It has been reported to the committee by members making impromptu midweek visits to the cottage, that on their arrival they have found the cottage empty but with windows left open, lights on and doors unlocked!!! There have been members as well as guest groups using the cottage on these occasions. Doors have even been found unlocked on Friday night when members have arrived for the weekend. How are we to get it through to members that the cottage and its contents are our greatest asset and its security is the responsibility of ALL of us? It is up to the last person to leave (no matter how long for) to ensure that:

- a) All windows are closed and locked

- b) Back and side doors are locked and bolted
- c) Front door snib is off to allow Cotag system to operate
- d) Fire guard is in place (when necessary)
- e) All lights are switched off
- f) The main gas tap (in kitchen) is in the off position

If cottage security continues to be abused then, as we've said before, the committee may be forced to use the "spy" option on the Cotag security system (see newsletter 243, page 4) to find out who the guilty and irresponsible people are.

Lee Hawkswell is going to re-emphasise cottage security to visiting groups, but to the minority of members who are abusing security guidelines, which are not unreasonable, please don't spoil it for the majority who do take cottage security seriously.

AND WE MOAN AGAIN

There were twenty-two people staying at the cottage over the weekend of the rescue practice and at one time or another they all prepared food, cooked, ate, drank, showered, used the changing room, used the toilets, used the stairs and bedrooms, enjoyed the open fire, etc, etc. Twenty-two people doing all these things, plus in and out with muddy boots (not to mention all the dirty caving gear) naturally makes rather a mess of the cottage. So, how come when three of us came back late-ish from an afternoon walk we found almost everyone had gone home and left nearly all the "housework" for us to do? The small group of guests who were still there had done their bit, but what was left took three of us an hour to do, and then we didn't do things like clean the cookers or sweep the bedrooms as we wanted to get home at a reasonable time too. Do you really think that is fair? We, like you, don't come away for a weekend to do housework. We like caving and walking too, but cottage work HAS to be done and if EVERYONE did their bit it would take no time at all. If you leave before others there are still plenty of jobs you can do, like sweeping your bedroom, cleaning the sinks there, washing up, clearing the fire grate, clearing the silt traps, etc. Leaving the work for others is becoming a bit of a habit with some members and in case you've forgotten, when you became a member you agreed to take an interest in the upkeep of the cottage, and that means cleaning as well as maintenance. I know you don't like to keep hearing about this but it isn't on to keep leaving all the work to the same few people every time.

Caving in Canada. Pete Hollings

Since being in Canada I've managed one trip underground. The nearest caves to Saskatoon are in the Rocky Mountains, with some of the best in the area around Crowsnest Pass, some 2.5hrs drive from Calgary. A 4WD road takes you to a small parking area where the Park Service have set up a log book to monitor cave usage. From the car park it is about a two hour walk up to the col between the Andy Good and Ptolemy plateaux with roughly a 3000ft height gain (I'll never complain about the walk to Gaping Ghyll again !). We met a few groups on the way up with plans to do various caves in the area, including one who planned to take their dog caving!

Once at the col Taco van Ieperen and Ian McKenzie led the way to the entrance of Quintapenta, only a short distance from the entrances to Yorkshire Pot and Mendips Pot. Despite the fact that the entrance is at the head of a large gully it was only dug open a few years ago. A flat out crawl leads to a small chamber with a way on at the back leading to the first pitch, a series of short drops rigged with a single rope. Immediately beyond this is a 20m free hanging pitch followed by a section of horizontal passage. A climb down on the right bypasses the third pitch and leads to a 5m climb. At the top of this a traverse take you over an undescended pitch.

The cave continues with an awkward section of rift passage, which has to be traversed in the roof, at the end of which was our goal for the weekend, a damp 30m virgin pitch. Ian went down first, only to discover that the rope was too short, he balanced on a ledge while another rope was lowered down. Once at the bottom Ian started to rig the next pitch while Taco and I surveyed down. The next pitch required considerable gardening and was still very loose as we descended. At the bottom of the rope we found ourselves in a small chamber with a floor of loose boulders. Towards the back was a small hole, Ian attempted to free climb this but couldn't. As we'd run out of rope, and by now were starting to get cold, we left it for another day.

The trip out was uneventful and found us back on the surface after nine hours underground. From the entrance it took about 1.5 hrs to get back to the truck, however it was a pleasant walk with a full moon and not a cloud in the sky. We pulled out our sleeping bags and dozed off watching the stars. What a way to cave !

Postscript.

On one of the last trips to Crowsnest Pass before the entrances were blocked by snow the last pitch was descended and found to connect with Surprise Streamway in Yorkshire Pot. The undescended 30m pitch has also been descended and was found to come out on the ledge half way down the wet pitch.

MRO WORKSHOPS

Saturday 25th February RESUSCITATION WORKSHOP Annual event to keep us all up to date with latest thinking on Artificial Ventilation and External Chest Compression techniques. Lots of dummies and expert advice. Hunters Lodge, 7:30pm

Friday 17th March MRO ANNUAL MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE Hunters Lodge 8:00pm

Saturday 25th March OBSERVATION OF THE INJURED Practical session covering the observation and recording of vital signs - Blood Pressure, Pulse, Pupil Size, etc. John Hill. Hunters Lodge 7:30pm

Saturday 29th April FOLLOW UP TO CLUB RESCUE PRACTICE REPORTS After incidents and practices many useful suggestions are made. This session gives those concerned the opportunity to report their findings, have them discussed and acted upon. Hunters Lodge 7:30pm

Saturday 20th May TECHNICAL RESCUE A day-long practical session at Westbury Quarry. More details to follow - from Nigel Taylor and posters.

GAPING GILL WINCH I

(See also Gaping Gill Winch II, page 9)

Geoff Beale has booked 10 bunks at the NPC hut in Yorkshire for the Gaping Gill winch meet over the bank holiday weekend, Friday to Sunday - 26th to 28th May. He is concerned that having booked these bunks no members will show which will look bad for MCG, so if you are interested could you let him know as soon as you can so he can either cancel some bunks or book more as necessary. If you don't let him know but still turn up then you will have to take pot luck on getting a bed, and it's likely to be a popular weekend. You don't need to book a place for the winch trip into Gaping Gill - simply turn up and take your place in the queue.



RUB POINTS 3 - SRT DE-RIGGING TIP

This tip was sent in by Dave Gwillim who picked it up recently from climbers. He says it wouldn't work in all cave situations but is definately worth experimenting with.

Sick of being the last one up the pitch, struggling to get the rope to feed easily through the ascender, especially at the bottom of the pitch? Then try this method which is used by climbers in crevasse rescue to weight the bottom of the rope.

Take the tail of the rope and clip it into your harness, then attach your pack to the rope and allow it to dangle, the rope is then ascended with the pack providing the weight. As well as weighting the rope it provides a 2:1 hauling system for heavy cave packs rather than 1:1 if tied direct to the harness or onto the bottom of the rope.

This can be improved by tying the tail of the rope into the back of the harness rather than the front to reduce the risk of the bag spinning and causing twist in the rope. Use of a light weight pulley to attach the pack to the rope would also reduce the risk of twisting and the drag on the rope.

On large pitches this method could cause problems as the increasing weight of the rope being lifted would defeat the 2:1 advantage of the pack being hauled. To avoid this, this method could be used for the first 10 metres with the pack then attached directly to the harness and the rope allowed to hang free to provide the weight.



MENDIP NEWS ROUND-UP

by Joan Goddard

MANOR FARM The "goodwill" fee for Manor Farm has been raised to £1.50. Let's hope that this doesn't set a new trend for cave access on Mendip!

BOX MINES Access arrangements for The Back Door entrance have been a little confused since Mr. Price, the owner of Tanglewood (the house with tennis courts in the garden) painted a "KEEP OUT" sign on the fence. Apparently he is still willing to allow access to bona fide cavers if they ask at the house, but is worried about children playing in the mine. However, it is worth remembering that it is also possible to use Jack's Entrance and Lady Hamiltons Two, both of which lie in the woods on Quarry Hill. (It is now bat hibernation time so please do not disturb any that you may see underground.)

COMPTON MARTIN OCHRE MINE After the improvements recently carried out to the entrance, CSCC's attention is now being directed to the rotting pit props and collapses of deads which are starting to obstruct the passages inside the mine. English Nature have offered a grant of £500 for work to be done between April and October this year. British Telecom are donating some telegraph poles and arrangements have been made to collect them and transport them to the site. Labour will be required for cutting and installing the props on a number of pre-advertised weekends during the spring and summer. Les Williams (Wessex Caving Club) is coordinating work on behalf of CSCC and help is required from all Mendip cavers. As Compton Martin Mine is on MCG's doorstep, as it were, it would be nice if we could help (in between digging Upper Flood II and building the library extension!). It is likely that maintenance will have to continue for several years; the mine is an SSSI, interesting both geologically and because of the bats.

CHEDDAR: MAPPING THE MENDIP ANTICLINE An Open University television programme to be shown at 06.45 (early morning!) on Thursday, March 30th. (Ed: I've watched this before and can highly recommend it. For those who have been on Malcolm's geology walks, the topic will be familiar.)

LECTURE Don Searle is giving a lecture to the Kent Group of the Geologists' Association on 21st Feb. - "A talk on Speleology". More details from Don, or Joan Goddard.

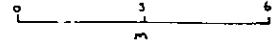
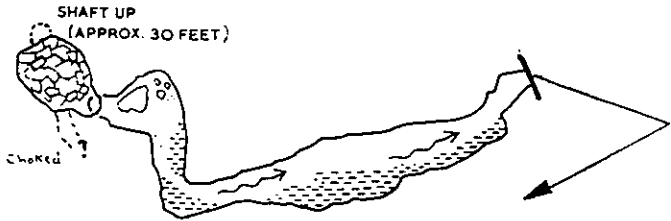
REPORT "Mendip Environment - an ever changing landscape" is the title of a report published last November by Mendip District Council. It is a well presented 40 page document with some accompanying thematic maps (rather simplified, but nevertheless useful). The report is designed to make local people aware of their environment and has useful lists of further information sources for each topic. There is a copy in the MCG library, but you can obtain your own by sending a 70p stamped addressed A4 envelope to Norma Underwood, Mendip District Council, Cannards Grave Road, Shepton Mallet, BA4 5BT

NATIONAL CAVING ASSOCIATION

All clubs that are existing members of regional bodies will become direct members of NCA from the date of its AGM on 18th March 1995. In due course all Member Clubs will receive nomination forms to allow the nomination of Convenors of NCA Special Committees, and ballot papers for their votes. The role of the existing Regional Councils (CSCC in the case of Mendip) will change and after this year they will no longer have a vote at the NCA AGM. A new "National Council" will come into being at the 1995 NCA AGM. At present there is an interim constitution and any proposals relating to the constitution will be thoroughly considered before being put to a ballot under the new system. Discussion about the working of the new national body may also be discussed at the AGM to gain a general consensus of views before being put to a ballot of Member Clubs.

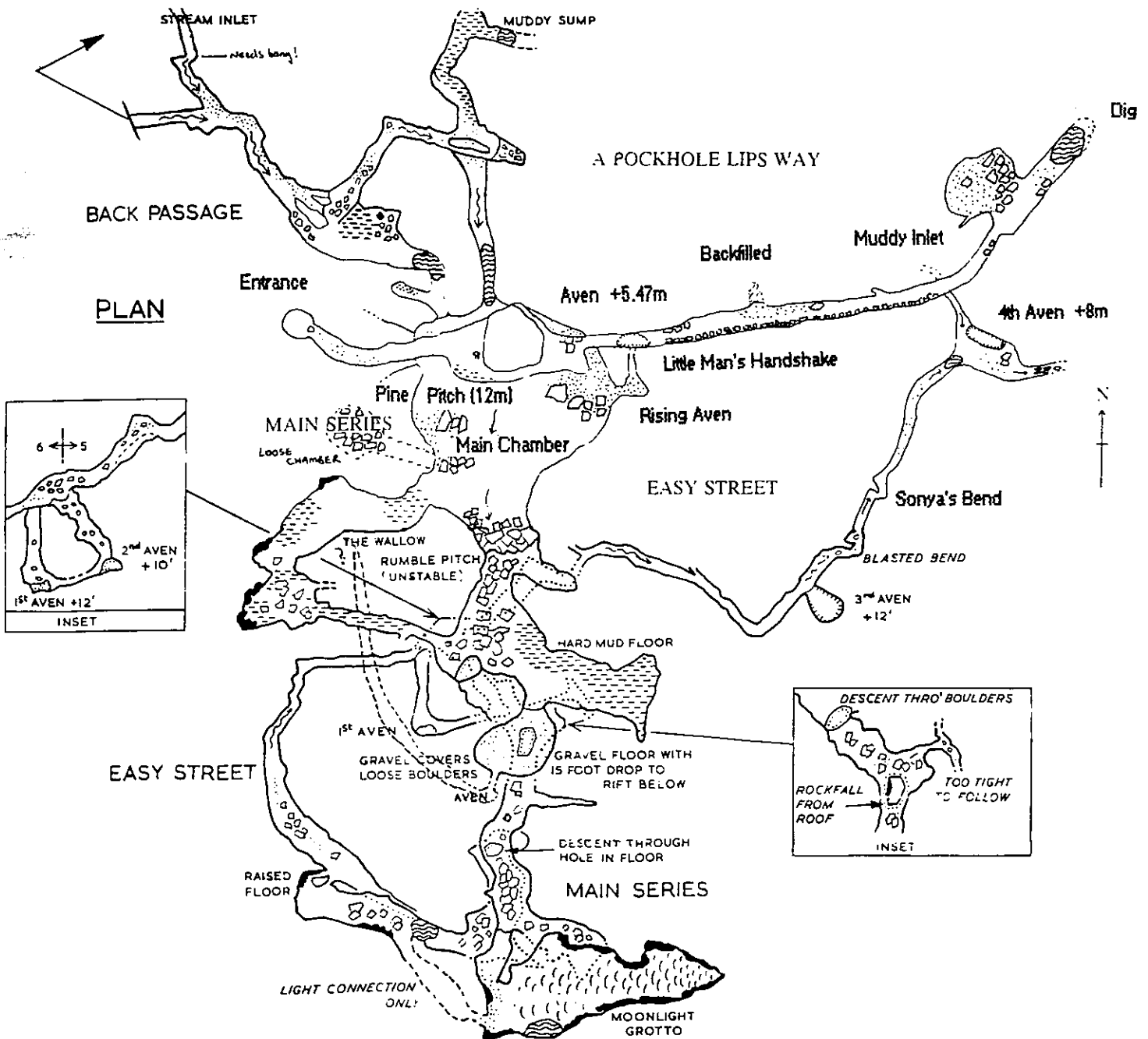
PINETREE POT SURVEY UPDATE

The inlet on the right hand side of the face is now about 3m long. We seem to have entered an aven or enlargement as the roof is now not solid rock. This was undercut for nearly a metre with a heavy drip and loose material falling down. Hopefully the whole thing will collapse to allow us to dig further. The tube on the left is being dug sporadically as conditions are rather cramped!
 Tim Francis



PINETREE POT

(c) Mendip Caving Group 1995



BUTCOMBE CAKE So its your birthday and nobody has made you a cake. Never mind. Get busy. There's nothing like a birthday cake, eaten underground.

You will need a cup of margarine, 4 large eggs, 2 cups of dried fruit, a teaspoon of baking soda, 2 cups of flour, a teaspoon of salt, lemon juice, cherries and a barrel of Butcombe.

Sample the beer to check that it has settled. Take a big bowl. Check the beer again. To be sure it is really of the finest quality, pour one level cup and drink. Repeat.

Turn on the electric mixer, beat the cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl. Add a spoonful of sugar and beat again. Make sure the beer is still okay. Cry another cup.

Murn on the mixer. Break two eggs and add to the bowl and chuck in the cup of dried fruit. Turn on the mix until it's like thick cave mud. If the fruit gets stuck in the beaters, prod with a drawscraper. Sample the beer again to check the soft consistency. Sift two cups of salt - or whatever - sod it, who cares? Double-check the beer.

Next, half cut the lemon juice and strain your nuts. Lose cherries. Pick flour. Mix well with six babblesponges of brown sugar. Grease oven. Turn to 160 degrees. Stop giggling. Get up off the floor. Throw bowl out of the window, check the beer again and go to the Hunter's while the barrel settles for a bit. Bappy hirthday!

Thanks to Kate Taylor for sending this delicious recipe in.

GAPING GILL WINCH II
It will be 100 years ago on 1st August when the first person went down Gaping Gill, Britain's biggest cavern, and now it was my turn. I would have done it sooner but it seems like a 100 year wait to get to the front of the queue. Cavers can crawl into Gaping Gill for most of the year, but the rest of us only get two chances - at the late May and late August bank holidays.

The queues build up from early morning, a mix of ramblers and curiosity-seekers. They join the tents of the local cavers who organise the event in a part of the Yorkshire Dales more noted for its heights than its depths. I was more concerned with the straight drop of 365ft directly below me. It felt like being on a scaffold, waiting for the wooden floor to be whipped away from beneath my feet. Instead of a noose around the neck I was strapped into a bosun's chair, hard-hat on head and

careful to keep every extremity tucked in, as instructed.

"The first winch was set up in 1933," Russell Myers, a member of Craven Pothole Club, told me, "and we've had no accidents so far." The winch starts working at about 9am, or whenever the first visitors arrive. If you have to wait your turn you can wander the slopes of Ingleborough, have a hot-dog, or if the wait is a really long one, visit the Ingleborough Show Cave, a 30 minute walk away. Eventually your turn comes and you're sitting in the chair about to be lowered into the cavern. Then the floor's pulled away, the chair drops, your stomach stays where it was, and you descend into the darkening shaft. In front of your face the rock and moss flash by, and the smell of damp and earth gets stronger. Fell Beck splashes the 300ft or more into Gaping Gill, creating Britain's longest straight-drop waterfall, before it makes its way underground to emerge alongside the entrance to the Ingleborough Cave and from there flows on through the nearest village, Clapham.

As you make your own way underground, the dark of the shaft becomes lighter again as you reach the main chamber, where paraffin lamps are set up to illuminate the cave. It's a breathtaking sight, and worth the wait. Some people say that the main chamber is big enough to hold York Minster, or even St Paul's itself. It looks big enough to me to hold both of them - 500ft long and the roof disappearing 300ft above your head. Guides will tell you about Gaping Gill, and the network of caves that leads off it, even taking you along them for a glimpse of the torchlit world of the cavers. Its like being in a Jules Verne novel.

Most people spend an hour or so wandering round, hearing the stories of that first descent 100 years ago by a French lawyer, Edward Martel. He carried with him a lantern, a phone to his wife on the surface, and a flask of rum. For those not convinced about potholing, Russell Myers offers a reassuring word: "We do check that everyone's out again at night." *Mike Gerrard, The Independent*

ROOM WITHOUT A VIEW A £40,000 "hotel" has opened on an island in the middle of a flooded gravel pit on the Hampshire-Surrey border. But with its permanently flooded floor and dark, damp interior the accommodation will never feature in a holiday guide - unless it is one catering for bats.

The purpose-built cave contains more than 60ft of tunnels connecting a tower to an upper chamber and is (cont on p10)

(cont. from p9) claimed to be the largest man-made site for bats in Britain. It was built by Surrey County Council's highway department as a contribution to a campaign to arrest the decline in the bat population.

"It can truly be called a hotel for bats - it has all the facilities for their stay," said Mr Alan Peterson, highways' project manager. "Its position between the river Blackwater and the Basingstoke canal is ideal for bats commuting into the area for food. Inside, the tunnel is designed to provide the range of temperatures and humidities required during the winter for hibernation. The upper chamber, which is black to absorb heat, is designed to provide a hot summer roost to encourage breeding. Our engineers were heavily involved in preparing designs for the new road when we asked them to turn their hand at designing a bat-cave hotel. They were surprised, but we are pleased with what they came up with."

The cave has built-in hollows for the bats to hide and is likely to be used mainly by pipistrelles. Other species recorded locally include serotine, noctule, brown long-eared, Daubenton's and Natterer's. Bat populations have been affected by pollution, bad weather and changing agricultural methods, which have damaged habitats and insect supplies. They have also lost habitats because of cavity wall insulation in homes.

Mr Frank Greenaway, a bat expert advising the council, said: "Providing alternatives like this is crucial for their preservation. The Blackwater valley is an important habitat where bats commute to feed on the abundant insect life."

by AJ McIlry, *The Daily Telegraph*

CAVE ART DISCOVERY

Hundreds of cave paintings, between 18-20,000 years old, have been discovered in the South of France, in what was described as a treasure trove to match Lascaux or the Spanish site of Altamira. The site at Vallon-Pont-d'Arc in the Ardeche, north-west of Avignon, had been undisturbed for thousands of years and contained the remains of cooking fires, stone weapons, discarded lumps of natural paints, and evidence that the prehistoric families shared the network of caves with bears. The culture minister, Jacques Toubon, who revealed the discovery after the site had been put under guard, said the 300 paintings

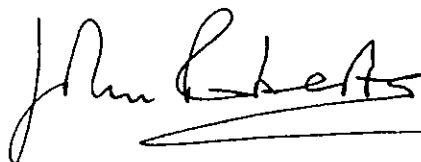
in red, brown, yellow and black represented a unique variety of animals including mammoths, horses, deer, rhinos, owls and bears. "As far as we know, this appears to be the only network of caves which has remained totally intact since the Palaeolithic era (40-10,000BC)." Mr Toubon said. "Apart from the remnants of man's presence, there is a unique study to be made of the evolution of the natural environment since the Ice Age."

The site is in an area dotted with small collections of cave paintings, scattered along a network of underground rivers. Jean-Marie Chauvet, curator of a museum of prehistory at nearby Orgnac, discovered the art work at Christmas when making a routine inspection. Situated at the end of a 500-yard-long tunnel, the caves appeared to have been abandoned about 15,000 years ago. The tunnel ceiling had collapsed, and it was only after a team of archaeologists had cleared a passage that the galleries were revealed. The most striking paintings were 40 woolly rhinos, common animals at the end of the Ice Age. They are rarely depicted in prehistoric sites.

At Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, the dome of the main cave is more than 20 feet high and some of the paintings are huge. One wall is dominated by an enormous rhinoceros, surrounded by three other rhinoceroses, a mammoth, and about 30 other animals, painted in red. The sexual organs of the animals have been deliberately exaggerated, and there is speculation that the murals were the work of a single artist whose hand signature is repeated several times. The new paintings have been authenticated by Jean Clottes, who was recently asked to carry out similar work in a mediterranean cave near Marseille. That site is unlikely to be opened to the public, nor are there any plans to allow public access to Vallon-Pont-d'Arc. *Paul Webster, The Guardian*

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