

Mendip Caving Group

NEWS

NUMBER 246

JUNE 1995

MCG RESCUE PRACTICE, ROD'S POT, 04 FEB 95

by Phil Ingold

Joan Goddard rang me to tell me that Waterwheel was too wet for the planned rescue and would I agree to an alternative cave? Longwood August would not be appropriate, I was told, nor Black Shiver, or Gaping Gill - they were not on Mendip and they were also under water! John Crowsley, the MCG Rescue Warden, agreed to look in Rod's Pot and confirm its suitability. He was accompanied by a "Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme" man on the reconnoitre. He was asked to bail the puddle in the entrance, or lie in it the next day, to ensure I stayed dry. Thanks.

I was collected by Chris Whittle Friday afternoon and whizzed to Mendip along the various motorways. We arrived at "The George" in Norton St Philip but the 6X ran out after the first mediocre pint. Their menu was interesting but too expensive so we crossed to "The Fleur-de-lys" opposite. It was a struggle but my new walking frame let me cross the road without falling or being run over. Their menu was again interesting but more moderately priced. My pork tasted good and the 6X was excellent. A great start to a memorable weekend. The cottage was very quiet at 10pm when we arrived. A few more revellers turned up later but I was concerned at the lack of people for Saturday's rescue. Joan checked I climbed the stairs safely at 1pm, ensuring I would be available for the rescue next day.

A lot more people arrived after breakfast on Saturday to my relief. John Crowsley gave the "team" a graphic description of the cave at the briefing and described the hazards to be overcome. Sets of "human boulders" were appointed to sit belayed above holes or rifts to ensure I could not be dropped into them (accidentally). Others were directed to oversee other problems including essential surface security. The rescue sounded difficult now with many hazards not remembered by me from earlier trips (and perhaps by others). I had struggled into my Polar Bear "Lunar Suit" and John's new pristine oversuit. I was again disappointed - still no baby oil needed! Numerous ropes were laid out in preparation and some attached to the stretcher, others onto the harness and also to the drag sheet.

We set off at about noon after fixing me tightly onto the alloy tube stretcher, supporting my head/neck on a pillow. I had been belayed to a 4X4 car poised above the shakehole then carried and lowered down the conical shakehole where I was passed hand to hand very close to the brambles and scrub. I could see the rescuers were getting snagged as we proceeded. The entrance is tight and awkward so after separating me from the stretcher I was placed on the drag sheet and they began dragging me in. The next problem was the awkward, thin, double bend so I was rested onto my side but getting me through was difficult and slow. I had to help pull my body along to ease myself past the restriction, with numerous other bodies heaving on the ropes and handles. "Go carefully" was the constant reminder. My view of the passage was very restricted - only the dry and sandy ceiling with occasional drips of murky water highlighting the rock very close above my face. It took half an hour to get through the double bend. I heard the exclamation "It's very dodgy!" Uncomfortable and awkward I'd describe it.

I was returned to the alloy stretcher in a flatish bit of cave then I was passed further down the pot. Geoff, a temporary boulder, was anchored over what he claimed to be a b-great hole. I was passed over him and further on down by numerous hands. I was now well past the entrance series and without any problems apart from very hard work. I was handed past more "boulders" secured above holes and drops. I was not able to see many faces but could feel the lumps and hear the strain of the hauling. It seemed to take ages to reach the bottom, crossing black holes safely covered by human boulders. The sound of struggling bodies and abrading oversuits was constant, and I was asked continuously by all I met/passed, "Are you all right?" It was a totally different cave to the quick, easy pothole I remembered. No problems last time - and no problem again as I enjoyed this trip just lying back listening to everyone else struggle! But the cave had now shrunk, becoming twisted and very hard to get through. Had I expanded, my body and limbs now much larger? Lying on the rescue stretcher my view the cave was very limited, the roof seemed similar throughout, not even a noticeable trickle anywhere BUT I did manage to catch one drip. (Ed: when a caver climbed over Phil!) With the help of Yvonne and others I took a blood sample to check my blood sugar level. While we stopped I also took the opportunity to inject some insulin, again with the steady hands of Yvonne helping.

(cont. on p4)

NORDRACH COTTAGE BOOKINGS

NIGHTS	GROUP	SIZE	NIGHTS	GROUP	SIZE
23 Jun-24 Jun	Surrey Scouts	(12)	01 Sep-02 Sep	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	
27 Jun-05 Jul	Chatham School	(14)	02 Oct-05 Oct	Chatham School	(14)
07 Jul-08 Jul	MEMBERS' WEEKEND		06 Oct-07 Oct	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	
04 Aug-05 Aug	MEMBERS' WEEKEND		03 Nov-04 Nov	MEMBERS' WEEKEND	

1995 MEETS PROGRAMME

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
08 Jul	Mendip	Barbecue	JP Burch	01737-767738
18 Aug-03 Sep	France - Alps	Chartreuse	Julie Hesketh	0181-876-1863
Sep TBA	South Wales	Aggen Allwed	Geoff Beale	01734-722510
Sep TBA	Mendip	St. Cuthberts	Geoff Beale	01734-722510
04 Nov	Mendip	Forum	Joan Goddard	01608-810382
04 Nov	Mendip	Disco	Bill Headington	(no phone)

MCG - CAVE LEADERS

DYD - closed until further notice
 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

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: Tell: 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
 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: £12.50
 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 BILL HEADINGTON (not on phone)
 32 COMBEND, RADSTOCK, BATH, AVON BA3 3AN

* CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES *	NON-COMMITTEE POSTS	NAME	TELEPHONE
* JONATHAN ROBERTS *	RESCUE WARDEN	JOHN CROWSLEY	01179-652585
* MALCOLM COTTER *	CONSERVATION OFFICER	GORDON WOODALL	01278-421802
* PAT WALSH *	COTTAGE EXTENSION	WAYNE HISCOX	01749-672081x2213
* PETER MATHEWS *	MCG SHOP	SEE ANY COMMITTEE MEMBER	

THE MCG IS A REGISTERED CHARITY No 270088; THE EXAMINERS ARE BRYAN TERRY AND HUW JONES

ON THE MOVE: Dave and Sharon Gwillim to 42 Effra Road, Wimbledon, London, SW19 8PP Tel: 0181-542-0349
Lorna Cotter and Barry Parker to 21 Brainton Avenue, Feltham, Middlesex. Tel: 0181-890-8390
Domini Barratt is marrying Frank Knight on the 24th June and will live at 28 High Street, Nailsea, Bristol, BS19 Tel: 01275-852485

CONGRATULATIONS to Marcus Ward on becoming a Full member.

BONE HOLE In 1978, the bones found during the Bone Hole dig were left in the the care of a Dr Juliet Rogers, and at some time were transferred to Chris Hawkes (UBSS, Wells Museum, Wells Natural History and Archaeological Society). As a condition of our licence granted by the National Trust we are bound to provide an interim and final report of the Bone Hole finds. Arthur Cox (deceased) and Bernard Reeves submitted their interim report as required in 1975 and a second interim report was published in the MCG Journal in 1976, but the final report has not been completed. As no-one from MCG has the technical ability to catalogue the finds, Chris has found two PhD students from Bristol University to undertake the task. They will also be visiting Bone Hole to gather further information. Coincidentally, MCG are about to complete a "catwalk" above Skull Slope so that cavers do not cause disturbance to the archaeological material.

EARWIG in on the committee meeting held 3.06.95... Cottage extension: It is proposed to start work on the library extension on the 19th June. Initially it will be the groundwork - digging foundations, floor, etc., to be overseen by Wayne Hiscox... 1995 Half-yearly! Chewton Mendip Village Hall booked and a drinks licence applied for. We are proposing to try a disco this year as the Barn Dances, although popular in the past, are now less well attended. Bill Headington is organising this... 1996 Dinner! Bill Headington has suggested that we try the Royal Clarence Hotel at Burnham-on-Sea next year. It offers a good, reasonably priced menu with a hall for a dance, speakers, slide show, or other entertainment. It will take 20-30 mins by coach and will offer accommodation with a discount to MCG members... Upper Flood: A meeting is to be arranged for all Upper Flood leaders and MCG's Conservation and Access officer to meet and discuss conservation, digging, etc. If the meeting proves to be useful it could become an annual event... The Firegrate: has gone to be repaired, or renewed, while it is summer(?). Members/guests are not to light fires in the fire-place until the grate has been replaced.

BARBECUE! Following the success of recent barbecues at Nordrach Cottage, Julie Hesketh and JP Birch are arranging another barbecue for Saturday 8th July.

Bring steak/vegiburgers depending on your preference, MCG will provide the charcoal, and Tim and Julie are organising the barrel. As in the past, there will also be salads and garlic bread for about £1 per head, organised by Yvonne. A disco will be provided by Lee Hawkswell's in-car entertainment system and highways emergency flashing yellow lighting.

SHUTE SHELVE CAVERN

Access is limited to those who make arrangements through Axbridge CG. Visits in small groups should only be undertaken between May and September. No winter visits should be undertaken and then only by people with a specific justifiable reason for entering. (This is a National Trust/English Heritage condition.) ACG wish to remind visitors that to wander in means that you could be locked in when the keyholder leaves. Shute Shelve is not so small that this could not happen. ACG can be contacted via Alan Gray, 42 Maynard Terrace, Clutton, Bristol, Avon, BS18 4PW. A leader system operates.

NEW LIBRARY MAGAZINE

A recent donation to the library is a special edition of "Science & Vie/Paris Match". It contains 25 pages of excellent photographs of the prehistoric paintings in the recently discovered cave at Combe d'Arc in the Ardeche Valley. Accompanying the photos are a number of articles on related archaeological topics - no doubt very interesting to those who can understand French.

YV'S DROPPINGS...

...from the Upper Flood II dig:

JF: "Let me have a go, I'm used to cutting up my own logs."

MR: "I just flush mine down the toilet!"

JB: "Don't we need to get an aga down there?"

YR: "Don't you mean an auger?"

RP: "Tim's got the smallest one!"

TF: "I don't think your not."

DT: "Therefore I must be!"

YR: "The damn miners got here first."

DT: "Yeah - bloody kids!"

JH: "They run the risk of having the kick shit out of them."

SM: "I can get it up, I just can't keep it up!"

JF: "I was a caver in my former life - I was Norbert Casteret!"

MR: "Has anyone got a tape, I'll go and measure the pipes?"

DT: "Bill's got a Sounds of the Sixties one!"

SM: "Why do holes always have bottoms?"

DT: "Why do bottoms always have holes?"

MCG RESCUE PRACTICE : ROD'S POT, 4TH FEBRUARY 1995 continued from p1

We reached Main Chamber without incident. I could now partly disrobe and have my lunch of maltloaf, and top-up on pills in comfort(?). Next rescue I must remember to take some almonds for low carbohydrate nourishment. Main Chamber was fun to explore. I was helped by numerous very strong hands, and it was exciting to look around again and stand upright. Thanks!! At about 2:30pm John reminded us, "It's getting late!". I was rejoined to the dragsheet, harness, stretcher and hauling ropes. "Are you OK?", then HEAVING began at about 3pm. My exit seemed much faster, the Black Holes less hazardous, although I was still unable to see them! The narrow slots were less tight (had they expanded or had I lost weight?). The skills learned on the inward trip were easily noticed and appreciated by me, as I was moved more easily out!

It was still hard to get round the double bends. I again tried to help, by pulling myself through after being rested on my side (after I had been gently lifted from the alloy stretcher). The drag sheet was pulled, dragged, heaved and I arrived at the entrance in fading daylight at about 5pm. It was nice to be welcomed by the new Surface Team of Don and Emilie Vosper, and Vanessa Gill at the entrance. The evening air smelled fresh and there was a clear star-lit sky as they struggled getting my wellington boots off and John's now muddy oversuit. John's van tried to get stuck in the mud but was persuaded to get moving after threatening it with a visit down the shakehole. We then started back to Nordrach Cottage after a fantastic day. I was helped out of my furry suit, ready for a shower. However, the immersion heater element had failed and there was no hot water so I had a rinse instead. (Ed: the rescue party, having got back to the cottage before Phil, used up all the hot water from the Economy 7 water heater!)

My chauffeur and I wanted dinner. The New Inn at Priddy was suggested for a quiet meal, then we visited the Hunter's for an excellent pint of Exmoor Ale. On our return, the cottage was very warm and welcoming. A quiet evening was spent chatting to some of the wonderful rescue team who I had sadly not been able to thank at the pub as we were at different venues!

Many thanks to John Crowsley and his brilliant organising, all the team (23 underground heaving and dragging, the surface team of 3 and my chauffeur Chris). The Mendip Caving Group - what a wonderful club! A special thanks to Joan for ensuring I was safe (!) all weekend XXX. A very special thanks to Yvonne for suggesting in 1993 that "We could take you caving". I didn't think it possible then but I've been proved wrong again. XXX wonderful!

Quaking Pot looked great on TV recently. Should I have an easier dream for 1996?

A NEW HONORARY MEMBER FOR MCG

The Constitution of MCG allows Honorary Membership to be conferred on people who have given exceptional service to the Group. Election to this class of membership requires the unanimous vote of the committee.

Phil Ingold joined MCG as a Probationary member in September 1967 and became a Full member in April 1968. He was a Committee member from 1971 to 1973 and again from 1977 to 1983. As well as being an active caver and digger, he put in much work when we built our new headquarters in the late 1970s. He also acted for many years as one of the MCG Shopkeepers, right up to 1993. I first met Phil in the Foremen's lounge of the old wooden cottage some time about 1978. He appeared to be injecting himself with an illegal substance! Not being a member at the time, I did not think it right to reproach him which was just as well as in the next Newsletter I received there was an article by Phil on how his caving was unaffected by his diabetes. So what I had seen was Phil testing his blood sugar and injecting insulin!

A few years ago, Phil became less active, until he had to reluctantly stop caving. When Yvonne heard of this she uttered the immortal words, "We could take you caving", and Phil became our regular rescue practice casualty. Since then he has been "used" in GB Cavern, Swildon's Hole and Rod's Pot.

In recognition of all his services, the Committee made Phil an Honorary Member at the AGM on 1st April 1995. Jim Hanwell of MRD presented him with an engraved tankard from all Phil's friends in the MCG. The tankard states the names of the caves he has been rescued into and out of, and it will be updated annually! He was also presented with a bottle of BCRA Rescue Ale and a framed collage of photographs from all his "rescues". Helen was also presented with a small gift of earrings made from local stone.

Honorary Memberships are few and far between, reflecting the exceptional service provided by the member concerned. Phil now joins an elite group of three - himself, Ron Saunders and Malcolm Cotter (a founder member of MCG in 1954). Past Honorary Members included The Marquess of Bath and Fred Young who both sadly died 1992 and 1994 respectively.

Martin Rowe

Chartreuse 1995 - Update

We now have 11 cavers who have paid their £50 deposit and are assured their place on this year's MCG summer trip to the sun. So far, trip members are: James Allen, Charlie Allison, Joan Goddard, Tim Francis, Zoe Hammersley, Lee Hawkswell, Julie Hesketh, Martin Rowe, Yvonne Rowe, Reggie Pain and Marcus Ward. Richard Carey will join us on his new bike (I don't know, students these days.....) and Pete Harvey will join us for a week after spending a week with the SWCC.

This leaves a couple of spaces in the bus (3 at a push) for anyone who has not yet paid up but still fancies a spot of Chartreuse underground. ITS NOT TOO LATE!

The good news is that the ferry is booked - we are leaving Blighty at midnight on Friday 18 August from Dover and returning at midday on Saturday 2 September. Charlie has kindly restocked the expo medical kit with enough gear to survive a nuclear war so all eventualities are covered for.

The bad news is that I need more money!!! - mainly to put a deposit down on the bus but also to pay for BCRA insurance. So, how about another 50 quid by the end of June, together with your BCRA membership number if you have one (if you don't then you should be ashamed of yourself as you will be costing us more money!) Once again, please make cheques payable to "Julie Hesketh".

On the subject of money, the exchange rate has fallen to a ridiculous 7.2 francs/£ so be prepared to find things more pricey than last year. This may also mean that the kitty we take out with us to cover the cost of campsite, tolls etc. may not go so far so it may be worthwhile all members taking an extra £20 or so for the kitty, just in case. It is unlikely that we will need it but it would be handy in an emergency.

1995 ARCHAEOLOGY WALK

by Yvonne Rowe

This year's walk was held on the March members weekend and took place round the Burrington, Dolebury and Rowberrow areas. There were ten of us actually on the walk - four more arrived too late because B*! wanted a bath first! They tried to find us on route but sadly missed us. He needn't have bothered with the bath because we encountered so much mud on the walk that we all needed a good clean afterwards anyway.

It had snowed the previous couple of days so everywhere was blanketed in a thick white layer but Saturday morning started with clear blue skies. The combination of pure white scenery and brilliant sunshine gave us a lovely start to our walk - Mendip looked more beautiful than ever.

We missed out Burrington Camp high up behind the Cafe at it was too steep and treacherous to attempt the climb in the snow. We set off towards the next site at Bos Swallet stopping at Rod's Pot on the way to tell Helen and Simon Ingold of the trials and tribulations of getting Phil in and out of the cave during February's practice rescue. Simon was quite keen to hear all the tales but I'm not so sure about Helen!

We saw the Burrington and Dolebury sites without any problems and reached the pub at Rowberrow just in time for lunch (funny that!). Having refreshed ourselves we set off for Rowberrow Cavern which we found easily. After that we had a few problems as foresters had been at work chopping down all the trees and making an awful rutted and muddy mess with their vehicles. The sun by now had turned the slippery snow into slippery mud and apart from getting in quite a mess ourselves, we found route finding difficult because everything had changed so much. Thanks to Martin's good sense of direction and Steve Conquest's compass we eventually got back on course, although we came upon the cross-ridge dykes from the opposite direction causing us to miss the exposed section of Roman road. The rest was straightforward.

The walk took just over six hours, including a reasonable stop at the pub. We were very lucky with the weather and although it clouded over during the afternoon, it didn't rain. Thanks to everyone who turned out for this my fourth archaeology walk (and those who tried but couldn't find us). I enjoyed the company and hope you all enjoyed the walk and sites.

For 1996 I will try to get the walk together that was meant for this year, which will be in the Chew Valley Lake area and will include Stanton Drew stone circle, Stoney Littleton chambered long barrow (that we can enter), a couple of good sized hillforts, and other interesting things. If not it will be the second walk I did which will include Priddy Circles, Ashen Hill barrow cemetery, Priddy Nine Barrows, Swildon's Hole (Roman site), a rare stake circle barrow, a Medieval farmstead site, Deer Leap stones, Ebor Gorge (Bridged Pot shelter) and some of the Wookey caves.

UPPER FLOOD II - RESCUE ARCHAEOLOGY 1995

by Yvonne Rowe

The proposed new cave entrance was to be in a depression close to the public carpark on the track leading from Charterhouse Centre to the old mines in the Blackmoor Valley. The site is part of a Scheduled Ancient Monument (pre-Roman, Roman, Medieval and Victorian lead mines), so to get permission to dig we had to apply to Somerset County Council (the land owners), English Nature, English Heritage, then finally the Minister of State. Permission was finally granted a year after applying but on condition that the area of the cave entrance must first be excavated archaeologically.

SATURDAY 8TH APRIL

To comply with the Health and Safety Executive leaflet "Lead and You" we erected temporary fencing around the depression. Danger notices were put up warning the public of deep excavations and lead pollution. A first aid base was set up, and separate hand washing and drinking water facilities were provided (away from the dig). A supply of rubber gloves and face masks was made available for the diggers. A site log was established to note the day-to-day work undertaken, also to record the diggers' "pollution exposure time" (as requested by Somerset County Council). We also put up an information board outside the fence explaining to the public what we were doing and why.

At the base of the depression, the excavation site of 4.40m x 1.60m was measured and marked out and the main coordinates were surveyed with reference to known fixed points. The turfs were removed, carefully laid away from the dig and kept moist so that if necessary they could be replaced at a later date. Immediately below one of these turfs a 1960 British one shilling coin was found on the surface of a rock. One of the younger diggers said: "What's a shilling?" (Makes you feel old eh!)

SUNDAY 9TH APRIL

Yvonne Rowe, Martin Rowe, Joan Goddard, Bernard Reeves and Ben Copper returned to the site to start the archaeological excavation. Because of the small size of the dig and external limitations - high 45 degree lead waste tips on three sides and our only access on the fourth - we found it difficult to maintain a fixed grid. We finally settled on a 20cm string grid which was fixed permanently on one long and one short side of the dig and attached accurately to poles so it could be laid to tally with marked grids on the opposite sides and rolled back as necessary. This proved to be more practical and worked very successfully.

Before starting the first stage of trowelling YR made a drawing of the surface features where the turf had been removed. In the first 5cms of trowelling we found a few fragments of red tile or brick, a piece of fluted clay pipe stem, 1 small and 2 large rusty nails, a sardine tin, a grenade base, 7 brown and 3 clear glass shards and a melted plastic tag. In the second layer (5-10cms) finds included more fragments of red tile or brick, 1 brown glass shard and 1 clear with "BRIS" and part of "T" (Bristol?) on it, a rusty bent nail and rusty metal fragment, a small copper hexagonal screw cap off a battery, 2 pieces of clay pipe stem, a fragment of white glazed cup handle and a lengthwise half pencil with lead. A drawing was made showing the surface features at 10cms depth. At this level there were many flat-topped slabs of rock appearing level and mostly close together but not overlapping. They consisted mostly of dark limestones but also included one of a Lower Limestone Shale and one of Old Red Sandstone. They lay to the west side of the site, occupying half of the exposed area diagonally from the south-west corner to the north-east corner.

MONDAY 10TH APRIL

We trowelled another layer from 10-28cms. Close to the top of this layer in the south-west corner we uncovered 6 discs (tops/bases), 8 pieces of carbon rod, 1 green plastic wire and 1 red plastic wire, and a piece of casing, all belonging to an old electric battery, "SP11" type. In the same area and at the same level were 8 complete rectangular battery cells and 3 fragments of formica (casing?). These batteries and battery parts were found underlying the top layer of flat slabs of rock. All the batteries were in close proximity and possibly were used in a valve radio. The 8 large cells would have been connected in series to provide a high voltage and the 4 SP11's would have run the valve heaters. These particular batteries would have been used in the 1950's (plastic wire is post 1940's and transistors had replaced valves by the 1960's). Also found in the 10-28cms layer were more fragments of brick or tile, some small fragments of building stone, a piece of white glazed pottery, 4 clear and 2 brown glass shards, a stick of charcoal and a shotgun cartridge base.

A drawing was made showing the surface features at 28cms depth. At this level more flat-topped slabs of rock, again all lying horizontally and mostly close together, had appeared underlying the previous single layer of slabs. They still lay on the west side of the site diagonally from the south-west corner to the north-east corner, reinforcing the probability that this was a man-laid paved area. The spoil taken from the paved half of the site was mostly dark brown soil with a few bits of vitreous lead waste. The spoil taken from the unpaved half was almost all vitreous lead waste.

Just as we were trowelling at the 28cm level in an area in the east side of the dig and 40cms north from the southern edge, a small area slumped away, undercutting the lead waste heap above it. In this slumped spoil of almost entirely vitreous lead waste and below the 28cm level, we found a brown glass bottle neck with a ceramic screw

stopper dated 1930 and a brown glass shard. YR recorded this find as being in the 28-38cms layer but it could have fallen into this level when the 28cm level slumped. In the 10-28cms layer we found a piece of mortar(?), a rusty metal fragment, 2 green glass shards and a piece of clinker (ie non-vitreous slag). We had to stop trowelling further due to the unstable nature of the lead waste at the slump point and the fact that the also unstable lead waste heap above was being undercut.

TUESDAY 11TH APRIL

We put shuttering and bracing in the south-east corner of the dig to stabilise it. We trowelled from 28-38cms and in this layer we found 1 piece of yellow brick, 1 rusty nail, 10 metal fragments and a brown glass shard. On the 38cm level lay the third and final layer of flat-topped slabs of rock that made up the still diagonally orientated paved area. The average thickness of the slabs found in all layers was about 5cms. At the 38cm level the soil found in the paved area also stopped. After that the spoil from the whole site became vitreous lead waste covered in a damp slurry, making trowelling and sieving extremely difficult.

WEDNESDAY 12TH APRIL

Trowelling the vitreous lead waste was extremely difficult but sieving through a 5mm or even 1cm mesh had become impossible as it completely clogged up. We acquired a 2cm mesh sieve (a large plastic bread basket from the shed!), sieved the spoil through this first onto a tarpaulin to remove the slag, then re-sieved the spoil from the tarpaulin through the 5mm sieve. After the tiring effort of sieving 30cms thickness of vitreous lead waste twice in this way and finding nothing we decided that we had come to the end of any archaeological layers.

THURSDAY 13TH APRIL

Digging Upper Flood II entrance started in earnest but as the trench became deeper the sides became more and more unstable. A major shoring and bracing exercise had to be undertaken before any more work could be done. Digging commenced again and at a depth of 1.48m we started to uncover a "wall". To the annoyance of the diggers YR halted all work so that this feature could be properly and carefully exposed, measured and recorded. The wall turned out to be a man-made structure consisting of 5 layers of carefully laid stones 70cms thick from top to bottom, 1.70cm long and covered with large capstones, one measuring approx. 60cms long. The back of the structure and capstones disappeared under the bracing and into the slag heap to the east. When a couple of people pushed their arms into a gap between the slabs in the middle section, they found a void on the other side for the 20cms or so that they could reach through. The inside (ie the unexposed) face of the structure felt quite wet but was clean. The different types of rock that made up the structure were Quartzite, Black Rock Limestone, Crinoidal Limestone, Old Red Sandstone, Marl and a lump of aggregate.

FRIDAY 14TH APRIL (Good Friday)

When the structure had finally been exposed completely we found that the south end continued on beyond the end of the dig and that the north end had been badly damaged sometime in the past. What should have been the northerly continuation of the structure had seemingly collapsed due to subsidence or human interference. The rocks in the collapse were of similar types, shape and size as those in the structure. Around this damaged area was about 36cms of fine grey silt.

SATURDAY 15TH APRIL ONWARDS

Digging continued over Easter Saturday, Sunday and Monday then everyone left for home and work the next day. During the week, presumably due to the dig drying out, a 60cm length of the northern end of the stone structure had collapsed. With this collapse had fallen some infill of silty material. On the other side of the collapse could be seen another identical, parallel stone structure. YR later went down-valley, just beyond Waterwheel Swallet, to look at and photograph a leat (ie a man-made water channel, sometimes covered by capstones to prevent material falling into and blocking it) where it appears at the surface. This leat was structurally the same as the feature in our dig. It consisted of two parallel walls made of five layers of stone-walling capped with large stone slabs. The gap between the walls was the same as in our structure, about 40cms, and it lay at about the same contour and orientation as the structure in our dig. This evidence makes it fairly certain that our structure is part of this leat, but the County Archaeologist and other experts will have to have the final say.

Digging continued until 6th May, when it was finally realised that we had missed Rip-off Aven and the decision was taken to back-fill the trench. As best as possible, material was replaced in the order it had been removed, and as much shoring and bracing as possible was retrieved (only two pieces of shoring could not be removed). When the depression was filled to its original depth, a marker was left for future archaeologists to show that the area has been disturbed (MCG 1995 was laid out with large stones!). Topsoil was returned to the site and the original turfs were replaced.

With permission, a second shaft was started nearer the track. A new grid was established, turf was removed and the topsoil trowelled and sieved with a 5mm sieve. After 10cms we came to vitreous lead waste and archaeological examination stopped. The only archaeological finds were two bones (probably cannon-bone or metacarpal III of a horse), a cricket ball(!) and lots of small fragments of roof tile and mortar, probably from a building (now in ruins) 2m to the north of the dig.

A full archaeological report with drawings and photographs will be published as an MCG Occasional Publication in the not too distant future.

UPPER FLOOD SECOND ENTRANCE DIG - a brief summary for those who weren't able to join in the fun!

The depression near the carpark at Blackmoor has been the scene of intense activity over recent weeks. On April 8th, as planned, the depression was fenced around with orange plastic fencing as used on building sites etc, a large notice announced "DANGER - EXCAVATION IN PROGRESS", and a number of railway sleepers appeared courtesy of Charterhouse Centre. The project was declared open and turf cutting commenced at a position near the base of the depression. A ripple of excitement occurred when Julie found a coin. Was it Roman? Was it heck! It was a 1961 shilling!

We have undertaken to excavate the surface layers archaeologically so we proceeded with great care under the supervision of Yvonne. We found flat stones in the surface layers which we initially thought might be related to nineteenth century mining activity, but they turned out to be much more recent as 1950s objects occurred below them. The surface excavation continued until Thursday 13th when more members arrived for the Easter weekend. At this stage we were in the black, glassy slag which proved unstable, to say the least, and we had to shore the sides of the pit at regular intervals as we dug downwards.

At about 2.30m we reached a flat slab of bedrock which appeared to have a clay filled rift at the northern end. A decision was made to extend the pit northwards which meant we had to sieve and archaeologically examine the surface layers again - entailing a frustrating delay for those who were desperate to dig downwards as fast as possible! On Easter Monday (17th April) digging continued downwards through sticky mud, and we experienced the first rain since the project began. Expectations were high when everyone left Mendip at the end of the Easter break.

The following weekend digging continued at the base of the pit but it was becoming more difficult. Two clay filled joints led off towards the east but were too tight. Unfortunately they were immediately below the slag heap which made progress in that direction too dangerous. At this point more attention was given to the situation underground and a number of digging trips have been made to Rip-off Aven. On 30th April, Brian Prewer came along with the Grunterphone and a further radio location was made, which agreed well with the previously obtained position. A good sound connection was also made at this point and after some discussion we decided to cut our losses, fill in the first shaft and start again at the radio location point.

On VE weekend there was a large number of members on Mendip who formed a 'bucket chain' to move spoil back to the lower dig, but even so it took one and a half days to backfill and replace topsoil and turves. On Sunday 7th we started on Shaft No. 2. Progress was fast once the surface layers had been examined and we were into slag. Surprisingly the slag was much thinner here, and was underlain by brown clay which made digging relatively easy. At about 2.3m we reached bedrock but this time there was no encouraging rift. Some progress has been made with hammer, chisel and wrecking bar but progress is not going to be easy.

Digging trips underground have resulted in progress along a horizontal tube at the top of Rip-off Aven, a few metres along which is a vertical joint which might be able to be pushed; but we are running out of our permitted 10 weeks of surface digging. Consequently we decided to install the concrete pipes into the second shaft on 20/21 May and restore the site by 16th June, as agreed with English Heritage. Further progress can then be made at leisure.

A full written report will be produced at a later date, and hopefully a video recording will be shown of the archaeological excavation and digging activities.

Although we haven't achieved our (rather optimistic) aim of making a second entrance to Upper Flood this time, there has been excellent support from a large number of members. Speaking personally I have enjoyed the project (including the barbeques, banter and beer) and have been impressed by the hard work put in by so many people.

Joan Goddard, 25.5.95

JOAN'S JOTTINGS

RADON

The Radon Working Party of the NCA is to approach the Health and Safety executive to find out their views. The National Radiation Protection Board was suggesting limits such as 120 hours in Giant's Cave (longer in Swildons which has lower radon levels), before ill effects - so there seems to be little risk to recreational cavers.

PERMANENT TELEPHONE LINE IN DAREN?

At the Cambrian Caving Council AGM in March, the meeting unanimously agreed to recommend that a permanent line be installed in the entrance series of Daren. It will be tucked out of the way in the roof of the passage, and will speed up rescues. (In a recent rescue the temporary telephone line constantly became snagged and broken leading to frustration and delays).

SAFETY OR BUREAUCRACY?

A new EC directive is coming into force on 1st July 1995. All equipment such as that used by cavers, climbers etc. sold after that date must have a CE mark on it. Equipment bought from makers before that date was exempt.

MRO WORKSHOP at Westbury Quarry (20.5.95) attended by 30-40 people. Demonstrations of boulder moving and breaking techniques - useful in rescue situations (and digging!).

1. Air chisel using a 9 litre air bottle and half inch diameter hose; lasts about 10 mins if used continuously - very effective on boulders.
2. Black Hawk hydraulic kit. A long hose connects the hand pump to either an expanding acro-type jack (for lifting large boulders to free a trapped caver) or a scissor type device which is inserted into a small crack and expanded to break the boulder apart.
3. Plug and Feathers is an old method used in Roman times and probably earlier. First a hole is drilled using a Hilti or Bosch drill, then two bits of plastic inserted and a hardened steel wedge hammered slowly down between them (similar to a rawlplug) until the rock is forced apart. Normally they are used in rows of three.
4. SLB was demonstrated and there was a talk on various types of explosive materials.
5. After the demonstrations we divided up into groups, each with an MRO Warden to advise, and were given a problem to solve. Our group had to 'rescue a person with a heart attack from a small passage through boulders' which entailed enlarging the passage to take a stretcher. Our first reaction was to blast the boulders - but it proved to be more sensible (and would be less traumatic for the patient!) to use simple mechanical methods such as a lump hammer and air chisel.

As part of the group work, different types of explosive were set in boulders and on scaffold poles (in a 'collapsed dig') and after we had retired to a safe place at the top of the quarry they were detonated so that we could experience the noise of the blasts.

The MRO holds training sessions both outdoors, underground, and in the Hunters. All are welcome. It's a good way to learn more about rescue methods, first aid etc. and to get to know people from other clubs.

MAGGOTS GALORE

Triple Hole/Sandford Rifts West consists of interconnecting partly natural rifts, probably worked by ochre miners 150-200 years ago. The shafts are 40 feet and 30 feet deep and recently they emitted an appalling smell! On investigation it appears that persons unknown had dumped animal carcasses down the shafts (which fortunately do not connect with water courses) and cavers were asked to clear the mess. They have contracted out the work to..... maggots - which were tipped down the hole in large quantities. When nice clean bones remain, then there may be volunteers to remove them. The landowner (ARC Quarries) has requested that the shafts be gated with one club to be in charge of access.

A WARM WELCOME TO BILL HEADINGTON
YOUR NEW ORDINARY COMMITTEE MEMBER



BE PREPARED FOR THE BRITISH SUMMER - you can still buy MCG T-shirts and sweatshirts by contacting any committee member.

SWEATSHIRTS - only £10 each

- SIZE XXL Blue with "climbing caver" on front.
Black with new logo on front.
- SIZE XL Blue, black or green with either "climbing caver" or new logo on front.
- SIZE L Blue or green with "climbing caver" on front.

T-SHIRTS with new logo across the front - only £4.50 each

- LARGE Light blue, grey or white.
- MEDIUM Light blue or white.

THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD
Limestone Research Group
PHD STUDENTSHIPS
CAVE AND KARST SCIENCE

Two University bursaries (£5,750 p.a.) are available for students to undertake research on karst hydrology/geomorphology. Full funding is available for fieldwork which will be undertaken in Ireland, Yorkshire and the Peak District. Applicants should have a good honours degree or postgraduate qualification in Geography, Geology or an Environmental Science.

Further particulars from Professor J. Gunn, The Department of Geographical and Environmental Sciences, The University of Huddersfield.
Telephone, direct line: 01484 472813. Fax: 01484 472347.
e-mail: j.gunn@hud.ac.uk

PART 1: ADMINISTRATION

1. NAME. The full name of the Group is the MENDIP CAVING GROUP.

2. OBJECT. THE OBJECT OF THE Group is, for the benefit of the public, the furtherance of all aspects of the scientific study and conservation of caves.

3. MEMBERSHIP. Membership shall be open to anyone over the age of 16 years with an interest in the objects of the Group. There are four classes of membership as follows:

(a) FULL MEMBERS, i.e. people who have been probationary members for at least six months, who have completed a training trip (as defined by the committee) and who have been approved for full membership by a majority vote at a committee meeting.

(b) PROBATIONARY MEMBERS, i.e. people who have been proposed by two full members, who have attended at least one Group meet where committee members were present, who have been advertised in the newsletter or notice board (together with their sponsors) for at least one month and who have been accepted as probationary members by a majority vote at a committee meeting.

(c) ASSOCIATE MEMBERS, i.e. either:
(i) former full members who are unable to play a full part in Group activities, but who wish to continue their association with the Group. Their change of membership requires the approval of a majority vote at a committee meeting. Or

(ii) persons who wish to become members of the Group, but who are unable to take part in the regular caving activities and who have been approved by a majority vote at a committee meeting.

(d) HONORARY MEMBERS, i.e. people who have given exceptional service to the Group. Election to this class of membership requires a unanimous vote of the committee.

4. PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP. Use of the Group's cottage at reduced rates, use of Group equipment and the library, free publications and advice of meetings and activities. Full members may stand for election to the committee and vote at general meetings. Associate members have similar privileges except that they have no vote at general meetings, and not more than one at a time may hold office on the committee. Probationary members have the same privileges as associate members except that they may not stand for election to the committee.

5. EXPULSION FROM MEMBERSHIP. Membership may be terminated by the decision of two-thirds of the committee (all being present). The member shall be notified of the intention of expulsion, and shall be given reasonable opportunity of attending the meeting and presenting a case. A full or associate member may appeal against the committee's decision to a general meeting called for this purpose by the secretary.

6. SUBSCRIPTIONS are payable on January 1st each year. Members failing to pay by January 31st may have their membership terminated. Members joining after June 30th in any year shall pay reduced subscriptions at pro-rata rates. The amount of subscription shall be determined at a General Meeting and notified to members in time to take effect from the next due date of subscription. The Associate Membership fee shall be half the Full Membership fee. Members may apply to the Committee for consideration of a reduced personal subscription, in three circumstances:

- (i) Members aged 60 or over
- (ii) Members living overseas for at least 6 months a year
- (iii) Members on low income

7. COMMITTEE. The Group's business shall be regulated by a committee of eight members. They will normally be elected at the annual general meeting to serve for a period of twelve months. If a post falls vacant during the year, a substitute officer may be co-opted for the remaining period. The honorary officers shall be: Secretary, Treasurer, Meet Secretary, Cottage Warden, Tacklemaster, Editor, Recorder and Ordinary Committee Member.

8. COMMITTEE MEETINGS. Any officer may call a committee meeting. Five officers shall constitute a quorum. The decision of the committee shall be binding on all members unless varied by a majority vote at a general meeting.

9. GENERAL MEETINGS.

(a) The Annual General Meeting shall be held in the spring of each year in order to

- (i) receive the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting
- (ii) receive the officers' reports and audited accounts
- (iii) elect officers for the following year term
- (iv) appoint honorary auditors for the following year term
- (v) discuss formal motions and any other business.

(b) An Extraordinary General Meeting may be requested by a majority of the Committee or by five Full Members.

(c) Notice of any General Meeting, together with the agenda, shall be given by the Secretary to members at least 14 days before the date of that meeting.

(d) The chairman of each meeting will be appointed by the Committee.

(e) 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 the signatures of Full Members proposing and seconding and at least 25 days before the meeting. A nomination for Office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand for election by the nominee.

(f) Votes at General Meetings shall be counted by 2 tellers appointed at the meeting. The election of officers shall be by secret ballot.

(g) The Committee may grant a postal vote to any member who applies in good time to the Secretary.

10. FINANCE.

(a) The Group's funds shall be placed in such account, or accounts, with banks or be otherwise invested as the committee shall direct.

(b) The treasurer shall keep proper accounts and receipts of all transactions.

(c) The signatures of two members, as nominated by the committee, shall be required on all cheques and notices of withdrawal. Any signatory not already being a member of the Committee shall by virtue of being a signatory also be a trustee within the meaning of the Charities Acts 1960 and 1992.

(d) Two independent examiners shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting to serve for a period of one year. They shall examine the books up to the end of each financial year, and may conduct examinations at such times as they may deem necessary and report thereon to the committee.

(e) The signatories may require the authority of the committee before signing cheques etc. for sums in excess of £200.

(f) A member may not hold more than £150 of Group funds in the form of cash for more than 28 days.

(g) Any member of the Group not already being a member of the Committee, who is appointed by the Committee to be a manager of the Group's shop, shall by virtue of that appointment also be a trustee within the meaning of the Charities Acts 1960 and 1992.

11. THE CONSTITUTION AND RULES of the Group may be changed only if approved by at least four-fifths of the members voting at a general meeting. No amendment may be made which will cause the Group to cease to be a charity at law.

12. NEITHER the Mendip Caving Group, nor the committee of the Group, nor any member, can accept responsibility for any loss, injury or death arising from a Group activity, howsoever caused. In particular, members and guests stay at the cottage and camp and cave with the Group entirely at their own risk. Nor is responsibility accepted for the loss, or any damage to personal property. Members of the Group and guests are deemed to know of, and accept without qualification, this rule.

PART 2: CAVING. THE GROUP recommends that all members read and act in accordance with the National Caving Code as published by the National Caving Association, enclosed with this Constitution and Rules.

NATIONAL CAVING ASSOCIATION - The National Caving Code

Always include experienced cavers in the party

Pick a cave or pothole within everyone's capabilities

Leave a note of your trip and latest time of return with a responsible person and report to them on your return

Ask for, and act on, local advice

No less than four in the party and keep together

Take notice of the local weather forecast

One reliable cap-lamp for each person. Without light, you're lost

Boots, helmet and warm clothing are essential

Emergency lights, food and first aid kit should always be taken

See that ladders, belays and ropes are inspected and rigged properly before hanging your life on them

Accident underground is always easy: rescue is sometimes difficult, sometimes impossible

Falls, loose boulders, rising water & exposure cause most accidents

Exit takes more effort than entry Plan with the return in mind

13. THE COMMITTEE shall have full powers to deal with any matter that might arise that is not otherwise provided for in the Constitution and Rules.

14. CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES. There shall be four custodian trustees of the Group. The first custodian trustees shall be appointed by the committee, and the Group's real property (land and buildings) shares, unit trusts and such bank accounts and other investments as the Committee shall decide shall be vested in the custodian trustees to be dealt with as the committee shall direct by resolution (of which an entry in the Minutes Book shall be conclusive evidence). The custodian trustees shall be indemnified against risk and expense out of the Group property. The custodian trustees shall hold office until death or resignation or until removed from office by a resolution of a four-fifths majority of members present and voting at an Annual General Meeting. Where necessary the committee shall by a resolution of a quorum of the committee present and voting at any meeting, nominate the person or persons to be appointed the new custodian trustees and, for effecting such nominations, the secretary is hereby nominated as the person to appoint the new or additional custodian trustees of the Group within the meaning of Section 36 of the Trustee Act 1925. He shall, by deed, duly appoint the person or persons so nominated by the committee as the new or additional custodian trustee or custodian trustees of the Group.

The provisions of the Trustee Act 1925 shall apply to any such appointment. Any statement of fact in any such deed of appointment shall, in favour of a person dealing bona fide and for value with the Group or the committee, be conclusive evidence of the facts so stated.

15. DISSOLUTION OF THE GROUP. In the event of the dissolution of the Group, and after satisfaction of all due debts and liabilities, any remaining assets may not be distributed amongst the members but will pass to a body with similar objects established for exclusively charitable purposes or to some other charitable body.

Clumsiness can wreck cave formations

Observe marked routes - they are there to safeguard the cave

Never leave litter or spent carbide in a cave - pollution kills cave life

Set others a good example when caving - persuade them to follow it

Enlist the help of the Regional Caving Council in passing on scientific information to be recorded nationally

Responsible leaders will avoid taking novices where they may accidentally cause damage

Vandalism means damage to stals, mud floors, rimstone pools, etc - help prevent it

Alert your Regional Caving Council to any developments which may possibly damage caves

Take care not to disturb cave fauna or remains which may be of archaeological interest

Invoke help in taping off formations to keep caves in their undamaged state for the generations to follow us

Organise a trip to clear up litter now and again

Nature needs YOUR help to safeguard her interests NOW!