



Suicro Conference 1995

Timothy Francis

After having done the rounds of the last umpteen BCRA conferences I thought it was about time we did something a bit different. This years SUICRO conference was to be held in Derrygonnelly, County Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, and the plan was to fly out from Heathrow, dive into a hire car and drive the two hours to Fermanagh on the Thursday night. Hopefully we would make it in time for last orders at Frank Eddy Maguire's in Blacklion.

Unfortunately a small delay at Heathrow ruined our finely-balanced plans. We arrived at Blacklion thirty minutes late so were unable to meet some local cavers. The next hour was spent driving around pitch black country lanes looking for the Aghanhoo cottage. Unfortunately we took the wrong farm track and ended up in a farmers yard! Eventually we located the right track and drove down the rough track to the caving cottage. This is one of four buildings in the middle of nowhere: the other three are a cow shed, a barn and a ruin. The cottage is a classic two up two down without running water or electricity. The perfect caving base.

We were woken by a herd of cows nuzzling the car who were to be our only companions for the morning. The cottage is surrounded by rough pasture interspersed with limestone outcrops, and judging by the maps in the cottage the area is riddled with pots and swallets. After a quick lunch and shopping spree in Enniskillen we went for a lengthy drive around Fermanagh. At the end of the afternoon we arrived at Tir Navar in Derrygonnelly armed with sleeping bags and a tent *a la mode* BCRA. A friendly local took pity on us and offered us his basement to sleep in. All the Irish cavers were staying in comfortable accommodation only a stones throw from the conference room. There was a restaurant on site as well as showers and a laundry. We pitched our tent in a prime position (if a little noisy) ten yards from the bar and went to look around.

All the lectures were held in a small venue along the corridor from the bar. The bar, being an important feature of any SUICRO conference, was well stocked with Guinness and run by a local publican. Regular restocking of the above dark fluid was required to quench a serious outbreak of thirst from breaking out amongst the spelaeological delegates. Things got under away on Friday night with the festivities ending at about four in the morning.

The weekends lectures included the Martel Centenary Lecture given by Richard Thompson dressed in period costume. Gavin Newman showed all his audio-visuals at least twice and gave several other lectures as well. In addition both the rescue organisation (ICRO) and Spelaeological union of Ireland held their AGMs.

No lectures were held in the afternoon to allow caving trips to be undertaken. We visited Pollarafta and the Marble Arch System over the weekend. Unfortunately most of the Fermanagh caves were flooded so not a lot of caving could be done. However as a taster of Fermanagh caves the two caves we did were ideal. Pollarafta is essentially a classic stream cave and requires no gear. Even more ideal it was only ten minutes drive from Derrygonnelly and we didn't get our car broken into. The highlight of the cave was a group of unusual stalactites called "The Chickens".

(cont. on p4)

NORDRACH COTTAGE BOOKINGS

| NIGHTS | GROUP | SIZE | NIGHTS | GROUP | SIZE |
|---------------|---------------------|------|---------------|----------------------|------|
| 20 Dec | Gordon Woodall | (30) | 01 Mar-02 Mar | MEMBERS' WEEKEND | |
| 05 Jan-06 Jan | MEMBERS' WEEKEND | | 05 Apr-06 Apr | MEMBERS' WEEKEND | |
| 17 Jan-18 Jan | Gordon Woodall | (30) | 03 May-04 May | MEMBERS' WEEKEND | |
| 26 Jan-27 Jan | Kingston University | (16) | 10 May-11 May | Lost World Cave Club | (8) |
| 02 Feb-03 Feb | MEMBERS' WEEKEND | | 31 May-01 Jun | Surrey Scouts | (12) |
| 23 Feb-24 Feb | Kingston University | (16) | | | |

1996 MEETS PROGRAMME

| DATE | AREA | EVENT | CONTACT | TELEPHONE |
|---------------|--------|-------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 03 Feb | Mendip | Rescue Practice, Goughs | | |
| 23 Mar | Mendip | AGM | Joan Goddard | 01608-810382 |
| 23 Mar | Mendip | Dinner | Bill Headington | no phone |
| 08 Jun | Mendip | Wessex Challenge | MCG!! | |
| 26 Jul-11 Aug | Italy | Piaggia Bella | Tim Francis | 0181-876-1863 |

MCG - CAVE LEADERS

| DAN-YR-OGOF | OGOF FFYNNON DDU I |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| Geoff Beale | Geoff Barton |
| John Beauchamp | Geoff Beale |
| Ian McKechnie | John Miriam |
| John Miriam | ST. CUTHBERT'S |
| Roger Wallington | John Beauchamp |
| CHARTERHOUSE CAVE | Malcolm Cotter |
| Charlie Allison | RESERVOIR HOLE |
| Nick Gilson | Geoff Beale |

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 |
| | 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, AVDN 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:

Andy Bellamy but I don't know where to!
JP Burch new telephone no: 01737-217039

APPLICATIONS

for membership have been received from:
Tony Townsend 30 Strathmore Close,
 Carterton, Oxon, OX18 1FB (Proposed by T
 Bolton, G Goddard)

Tim Souch 83 Oxford Hill, Witney, Oxon,
 OX8 6JU (Proposed by T Bolton, G Beale)

WELCOME

to the following probationary members:
Jason Picken, Jan Burt, Sean Tinsdale
 and Tony Bolton.

EARWIG

in on the committee meeting held
 2.12.95... Cottage extension: all work
 to cease until Easter when there will be
 a real spurt. This is due to the weather
 and lack of volunteers' time due to
 other commitments. When work recommences
 we will need someone living in the
 cottage for 2 weeks while the roof is
 done. Is anyone prepared to stay for a
 few days, a week or whatever? A
 tarpaulin is required to cover roof
 against rain, and overnight during this
 period. Timber and tiles to be ordered
 in January... Upper Flood II: Too wet to
 fit new lid this w/e. Existing lid to be
 cemented in, a hole cut and an old-style
 lid to be fitted (Wayne has it ready)
 Needs doing ASAP as water at bottom of
 shaft is now 4ft deep (knotted rope and
 short ladder inserted in case of
 emergency)... Outdoor Activity Centres:
 MCG is OK as the new laws do not affect
 club or amateur caving... 1996 Dinner:
 Full details will appear in the January
 n/1 but very briefly the menu will be:-
 Starters, Mushroom soup, Crispy
 camembert & cranberry sauce or Melon
 with port; Main courses:- Poached salmon
 steaks, Roast beef, Chicken chasseur or
 a Vegetarian meal; about £15 per head
 (to be confirmed); a coach; a raffle;
 Joan is to get in touch with Gavin
 Newman to enquire about price etc. for
 after dinner entertainment... OFD & DYD
leadership: Joan has written to SWCC re
 Joe Frampton's wish to become an MCG OFD
 leader, with a view to becoming an MCG
 DYD leader... Uper Flood: Malcolm Cotter
 has dug out the Lavatory trap. He now
 wishes to put a hose into the Lavatory
 trap to reduce the water flow onto the
 bank. Wayne Hiscox can supply one but if
 it's not suitable Malcolm can spend up

to £50 on piping... Water tank: The
 cottage water tank had furred up badly
 but Mark Ward spent a whole day cleaning
 and renovating it - thanks Mark.

PREPAYMENT STICKERS

At the moment members can buy 12
 bednight stickers for £15 or 25 bednight
 stickers for £30. The committee were
 asked at the December meeting if they
 would agree to 50 bednight stickers for
 those who use the cottage more
 frequently. The committee agreed to 50
 bednight stickers for £55. For anyone
 who uses the cottage regularly
 throughout the year, these pre-payment
 systems provide good value. Those who
 use the cottage frequently (and quite a
 few do now) are also doing the club a
 favour, especially during the autumn and
 winter months, as they keep the cottage
 aired and warm thus preventing damp from
 setting in.

SWEATSHIRTS

Have you bought your MCG sweatshirt yet?
 If not, why not? And if so, how about
 another one? There are two dark green,
 hooded sweatshirts (large) at £17 each
 as well as a selection of green, black
 and navy blue non-hooded ones, excellent
 value at £10 each. Also caving wellies
 at £11 a pair (sizes 7, 9 and 11), and a
 number of other reasonably priced caving
 items and books. Contact any committee
 member.

NCA AGM

The National Caving Association's AGM is
 on 16th March 1996. Closing date for
 nominations for members of the National
 Council is 6th January. If you have
 anyone in mind, please contact Joan who
 has the nomination form.

ST CUTHBERT'S

As John Beauchamp is shortly to leave
 for Australia (again!) we will require
 someone to replace him as St Cuthbert's
 leader for MCG. Anyone interested should
 contact John, Malcolm Cotter, Tony
 Knibbs or any BEC leader to find out how
 many training trips are required before
 becoming a leader. In the short term
 Tony is happy to oblige (and he's over
 here from France quite often these
 days), but perhaps there are some
 younger cavers out there who would like
 to get to know the cave and apply for
 leadership. If you are interested,
 please let Joan Goddard know.

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

Giant Caves of Borneo by Mike Meredith and Gerry Wooldridge is a recent donation to the library. It is a 142pp hardback book containing well over a hundred excellent photographs. Produced with an eye for tourism in the Gunung Mulu National Park, it also makes good reading for the rest of us. It was published in 1992, but somehow never got onto MCG's library shelves - a sad omission which has now been rectified. The text covers the history of the Clearwater system; cave fauna; and the discovery of Sarawak Chamber.

Swildon's Survey - the most recent survey, only just published but already "out-of-date" as the entrance passages alter almost weekly.

Red Dragon Journal No 22, 1995-96 is the journal of the Cambrian Caving Council - contains many reprints, but also some original articles.

Caves of Llangattock by Chelsea Speleological Society is another useful publication which was missing from our shelves. Although by now a little out of date, it nevertheless provides a useful reference for the area.

A Dictionary of Karst and Caves compiled by David Lowe and Tony Waltham and published as BCRA Cave Studies No 6. This is produced in A5 format to the same high standard as the rest of the series and provides a good reference source for the long words that crop up nowadays in the caving literature. It has 15 diagrams, the same number of photos, and a useful table at the back which lists the more important limestone of Britain in relation to the geological sequence.

Lamb Leer Cavern 1879-c1900 - a reprint of a lecture given by Dave Irwin last October to the Wells Natural History and Archaeological Society.

The Caves of South Wales by Tim Stratford, the new 4th edition.

I Don't Play Golf - Recollections of a Rescue Volunteer a rather peculiar book by Don Black. "Rescue volunteer" refers to a volunteer who rescues people, rather than a volunteer who gets rescued!

The Prehistory of Metallurgy in the British Isles by R F Tylecote, which includes a chapter on lead, and refers to the Charterhouse area.

and last but not least - a Survey of White Pit

An addition required in the library is a two-hole paper punch - has anyone got a spare one they can donate? (Can't we afford to buy one? - Treas.)

SUICRO CONFERENCE continued from p1

We had to rush our trip on Sunday as we had to catch the 9.30pm flight from Belfast so we were only able to do a quick trip down Marble Arch. We went in via a fossil entrance in the base of a large shakehole and this route quickly joins up with the show cave passage after five minutes or so.

We went for a quick jaunt upstream via a sump bypass. Several notices have been placed in the cave as ICRO have recently introduced a conservation trail which highlights sensitive sights. We left the cave via the wet downstream entrance which the tourists can do as boat ride. As we were in furies we had to haul ourselves along the in situ ropes rather than swim for it.

The SUICRO weekend continued without us as Eire had a Bank Holiday on the Monday. We have since heard that the Sunday night session lasted until 6am on Monday morning! Our trip ended at Heathrow where Julie discovered the delights of the baggage retrieval system they've got at Heathrow. Her rucksack was still in Belfast. An excellent weekend!

MCG RESCUE PRACTICE

A rescue practice sub-committee was formed at the 1995 MCG Forum and comprises Dave Tooke, Marcus Ward, Brian Snell and JP Burch. On the weekend of 9/10th December they met on Mendip to look at possible caves and to determine routes, equipment, methods, etc. The cave decided on is Gough's Cave and the rescue practice will take place on 3rd February 1996. Gough's is a show cave, and we are very grateful to the owners for allowing us to carry out a practice here. The route will be a "figure of 8" with a pitch and lots of escape routes if the teams get tired or the casualty gets cold.

Our casualty will be MCG's own regular rescue practice "victim", Phil Ingold. As you will all be aware by now, ours are no ordinary rescue practices as Phil cannot simply get up and walk out of the cave if anything doesn't quite work out - they are for real! The Practices have to be taken very seriously for obvious reasons but this also makes things much more realistic for our practice purposes. There's nothing like reality for quick and necessary learning. On another serious note - as Phil has to be rescued IN as well as OUT of the cave we require as many people as we can muster, so we are hoping for a good turnout of members on the day. We will need enough people to make up teams for different tasks, and to relieve working teams as they get tired.

There is another plus side to the rescue practice, apart from learning rescue techniques, and that is the fact that Phil gets to go underground. This is the only way he gets to see a cave now and having been an extremely active caver in the past he gets dreadful caving withdrawal symptoms!

If you are available on Feb.3rd, and whether you need to learn rescue techniques or not (these things constantly change), come and support Phil and the MCG on a most worthwhile caving trip. Contact any of the rescue sub-committee if you think you can come so they have an idea of numbers, but turn up on the day anyway even if it's a last minute decision - *Your club needs you!*

The Spoil Scene

Timothy Francis

Bone Hole

Reggie Pain has been pushing a draughting sandy dig in the further reaches of Bone Hole. The current site of interest, The Bottle Bank, lies below the area of water worn boulders and is accessed by an awkward squeeze. Plenty of volunteers have been roped in to lend a hand and good progress has been made. A pulley and rope system has been set up from a couple of 8mm spits, and stacking space is ubiquitous. Elsewhere a clean up previous digs has been undertaken. Bang wire, tools, skips and general items of rubbish have been removed. Conservation work is now concentrating on Skull Slope and any help with this project would be welcome.

Pinetree Pot

The crack team of Pinetree diggers are back! Digging has focused upon the left hand wall of the terminal chamber, and a hole seven feet deep has been excavated. Water appears to drain away at this point but progress is slow. The way on from the chamber is still elusive but we'll get there eventually!

Upper Flood

Work on the second entrance is being deferred until January or February next year. The lid is now on and the site is quickly growing over. Unfortunately the lid has already been forced and required an afternoons work to bend it back into shape. Underground Malcolm has been beavering away at enlarging and stabilising the lavatory trap. Taping and cleaning up of formations also continues. On the digging front a new site, "Chocolate Muffin Inlet", downstream of the formations has been probed. Interestingly this takes water in periods of low flow and releases water in wet weather. Hmm....

A TOURIST UNDERGROUND IN FRANCE

Roy Kempston

It was the family holiday, so the rules were simple, have as much fun as you can and involve as many of the family at once (within reason !), make it relaxing, and by the way the car's full. So there was to be no real caving and anyway my knee's still f***ed a year after the operation. The chosen holiday was to be camping in France chez Eurocamp, with a few days on the Vendee, ten days in the Dordogne and an overnight at Tours on the return journey.

According to all the literature and advice I amassed before the holiday, the Vendee was sans caves, the Dordogne had beaucoup de caves and the Loire had the odd cave interessant.

No time was spent caving on the Vendee, it was more to do with exploring the sea, the sun, the wine, etc. However once in the Dordogne it was more of this (without the sea) and a very difficult set of choices about which caves to visit.

Our campsite was 11km north of Souillac and the closest showcave was Les Grottes de Lacave, about the same distance to the south east of the town. The large entrance is about 200m from the Dordogne river at the base of the cliffs, with the trip commencing with a journey by electric train into the depths. The cave is split into two main parts with a lot of steps (or for the less able a lift) dividing the two. The tour is guided and we were first taken past lots of decorations and into a very large chamber. The guide realised we were not French (though I don't know how) and asked how much we were understanding, and from then on gave a short resume at each stop. He also told us that he supported Manchester United FC and was a great fan of someone called Cantona. The second part of the trip contained an active stream flowing over many gours to several large lakes. In the Salle du Lac the normal lights are extinguished and replaced by ultra-violet light to create a glowing effect (but be careful and don't stand next to anyone with a day-glo white shirt !). The way out is via the steps (down this time) and return journey by the train. Leading from the cave car park is a track which runs down to the river where you can take a picnic, a swim, watch the formations of canoes pass by or just gaze in awe at the Chateau de Belcastle on the top of the opposie precipice, (described as one of the most photogenic castles in the Dordogne valley). A good trip.

The second cave selected for a visit was the more famous Gouffre de Padirac, located about 50km to the east of Souillac. This is a cave that is very much on a large scale and one that owes its major discoveries to Edouard Alfred Martel from about 1890 onwards, and in fact he was so impressed he bought the cave and opened it to the public in 1898.

The queue for the 90 minute trip winds alongside the rim of the vast entrance shaft, which is 33m in diameter and 75m deep, and from where you can view people either decending the 455 steps or taking the two lifts to the pyramid of rubble at the bottom. At the bottom another queue winds along a narrow rift starting the 2km trip, on its way passing a smelly subteranean loo to arrive at a landing stage. From here a flotilla of flat bottomed boats each taking 11 visitors (most not flat bottomed) and a 'gondollier' move about 500m along the Riviere Plane to the Lac de la Pluie. Its very reminiscent of the Green Canal but on a different scale and mostly drier, with the roof rising in places to over 75m, with decorations cascading the full height.

Another landing stage is reached, where the guides are very clear 'No photos and No English spoken', leads the way past a 40m high stalagmite to the Salle des Grands Gours, a series of pools, the largest being 120m long. A staircase passes magnificent decorations to the Salle du Grand Dome with the stall all the way to the roof 90m above. More steps, many more superb decorations, a quick stop at the statue of Martel (see Descent 126 page 36) and then return by the boats with obligatory photograph taken of each one. A very good trip - shame about the other visitors, the smelly loos and my lack of French, and a question: why are there queues going in but not going out ?

The kids were by now caved out, so after a few days rest, a surface trip to La Roque-Gageac about 35km to the west of Souillac got the vote. The village is built into the side of the golden cliffs above the river (Dordogne again). The best views are got by taking a boat ride, from where we spotted some window holes in the cliffs that looked impossible to reach. However, by taking the path to the east end of the village we managed to find an overgrown route through the undergrowth that eventually led to a rift in the rockface. After about 10m the roof closed over and we entered the old shelter that had eye-holes bricked to the shape of windows with a superb view over the river valley. There were lots of smoke stains and a rough floor, but what was kept there we don't know. Other ways through the undergrowth also lead to old rock walled shelters. All well worth the trouble to find.

At the opposite end of the village there is a 'troglodytic fort' in old cave passage half way up the face of the cliffs. The stairways to reach this are interesting and only just attached to the sheer rock. Its well worth a visit and is gradually being restored.

All too soon the holiday was drawing to a close, with just an overnight stop on the return to the ferry at Le Havre. The camp site was to the west of Tours and about 10km from the grand chateau at Villandry, with its magnificent ornamental vegetable gardens. 2km to the east of the chateau are the Savonnières Petrifying Caves. These caves have had an amount of quarrying applied but are still not that large. One chamber is used for displaying stone dinosaurs and another for wine tasting and other functions, but the main outputs of the concern are all manner of petrified items produced by putting a large variety of formers and moulds into the pools and water flows in the cave and thus creating interesting calcite items from the very saturated solutions. We have a memento of the trip and the crystals on the surface of the artefact (ok its a duck) have an attractive appearance.

Not a normal caving holiday in any sense of the word but we did manage to appreciate the many and varied forms and functions of limestone in the localities we visited.

NEW YEAR'S EVE



Since the announcement of a party in the last newsletter, a number of people (around 12 so far) have expressed an interest in going out for a meal on New Year's Eve instead of having to go to the bother of cooking it ourselves! The Miners Arms (down the road from the Castle of Comfort) has been warned and they are preparing themselves for a party of around 25 on Sunday 31 December at around 7.30pm. The number of seats is flexible until I confirm the

booking. Prices for a 3 course meal range from £11.95 to £20.00 per head. I need to confirm the booking and indicate choices of starter and main courses. Please can you let me (Julie Hesketh tel: 0181 876 1863) know if you are coming and which of the following you would prefer. **The price of the maincourse includes a starter and desert.**

Starter: Courgette and ham stir-fry, Smoked mackerel with horseradish sauce, Japanese style prawns (with crudités and dip), Asparagus and egg tarts, Stilton, celery and apple soup, Kidneys with sherry and cream, Ham and sweetcorn pancake topped with cheese sauce, mushrooms and bacon in garlic butter, Mendip snails (tray of 6 £1 extra, 12 £2 extra)

Maincourse: Spicy lentil bake (£11.20), Leek flan with red pepper sauce (£11.20), Fillet of Lemon sole (grilled, served with prawn, mushroom and cream sauce - £16.50), Fillet salmon (with asparagus sauce), Honey barbecued chicken (with spicy sauce £14.50), Priddy Oggy with cider sauce (House speciality, pork tenderloin, smoked pork and herbs wrapped in cheese pastry - £14.70), Pork fillet with mustard cream sauce (£15.50), Lambs liver stroganoff (£12.60), Lamb steak with piquant sauce (£16.50), Roquefort beef (£19.70), Breast of duck with apricot sauce (£19.30)

NOTES OF THE MCG FORUM

The 1995 MCG Forum held at Nordrach Cottage on Saturday 4th November was attended by 29 MCG members (and one or two non-members). The topics discussed were as follows:-

Conservation plans Upper Flood - it was suggested that we should put aside one weekend per year to clean up formations, tidy up the cave, and take photos. An Upper Flood leaders and conservation meeting to be advertised and to be open to any members interested in going along and giving some input too. (Ed. see supplement)
The Longwood/August conservation plan is to be drawn up by UBSS.
Mains Barn at Priddy, the changing area for Swildon's trips, is to be kept clean and tidy by all who use it.

BEC Upper Flood leader BEC have asked if they could have their own Upper Flood leader. We will first have to look at our access agreement with Somerset County Council to check the legalities as we believe that MCG and the Charterhouse Centre have sole rights of access and leadership. This prompted the questions: "How far down Upper Flood does Charterhouse take groups?" and "How frequently do they go?"

Rescue Practice John Crowsley cannot co-ordinate the practice this year so we decided to do it ourselves. Enough members have been on previous rescue practices to have the skills required, with MRO guidance, to plan and co-ordinate a practice cave rescue. (Ed. see MCG Doings for details)

Wessex Challenge A sub-committee was formed comprising Joe Frampton, Tim Francis and Reggie Pain. Some good ideas are required for a theme - an armchair race was suggested. Priddy Village Hall has been booked. Permission is to be sought for the use of the field. There will be a stomp, and possibly some "event" t-shirts.

MCG's 1996 caving holiday It will be over two weeks from 26th July to 11th August and will be in northern Italy to do "Piaggia Bella". This cave is 911m deep, has 25km of passage and has 11 entrances. It is located in the Marguareis range which spans the Franco-Italian border. It should be much cheaper than France! More details will follow in good time.

CAVE NEWS

Rabbit Mine is to have a grill put on the entrance to prevent entry.
GB Cavernis to have a new gate on the blockhouse that will need less maintenance. It is also hoped that a new lock will lay to rest any rogue keys. It is hoped to be completed by March.

Longwood/August - CCC is to go ahead with the conservation plan.

CSCC meeting - Julie Hesketh and Nicki Robinson and Joan Goddard attended the meeting on 2nd December; here are a few snippets.....

* Loxton Parish Council wish to gate Loxton Cave and CSCC is involved in negotiations to achieve an access arrangement acceptable to both Loxton PC and cavers.

* Acces to Triple Holes on Sandford Hill (owned by the quarrying company ARC) is via Avens Caving Club who have permission to lend the key to members of established clubs.

* A national cave centre has been proposed as a possible Millenium Fund project. As with all caving projects there are the Antis and the Pros, and it will be interesting to see what, if anything, materialises. The location appears to have been narrowed down to two possible sites - the Clydach Gorge near Craig-y-Ffynnon and Eldon Hill Quarry in the Peak District (where a planning application to extend the quarry has recently been turned down).

* Three DMMs recently placed on the entrance pitch which has developed near the entrance to Swildon's, have been removed by persons who disapprove of 'preconditioning caves'. (Is this the Mendip Mafia at work?). After some discussion CSCC has decided not to replace them as there is an alternative route available, or a rope can be rigged from natural belay points in the entrance area.

* The fixed chain into the Swildon's Four streamway from the Blue Pencil passages is to be removed because it is unsafe. It will be replaced by two P-hangers, and you will have to take your own rope.

* In late January there is to be a meeting of CSCC club representatives to consider the production of cave conservation plans and other conservation matters. MCG has undertaken to produce the document for Upper Flood and it is hoped that lots of members will take the opportunity to contribute. (Hopefully this may be discussed at the Upper Flood meeting at the cottage on New Years Day).