

MCG NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NUMBER 254

JUNE 1996

MCG RESCUE PRACTICE - LONGWOOD

by Brian Snell (*taken from the MCG logbook*)

Date: 18th May 1996

Team: Dave Tooke, Letti Patte, Brian Snell, Keith Knight, Joe Frampton, Tim Francis, Marcus Ward, Martin Rowe, Nikki Robinson

Letti agreed to be the 'victim' (after everyone else passed the buck), we all headed down and rigged up the ladder pitch, then pushed on down to see if suitable anchor points could be gained for a haul across the "Bold Step" above "Main Chamber". There are plenty of anchor points on the right wall and if a rope is tied off around a jammed block about 25ft back up on the right, then hung over a step in the rock high on the left wall, a good anchor for a high pulley can be obtained.

We all gathered back at the chamber below the ladder and whilst Letti was strapped into the drag sheet, ropes and a lifeline were set up. When all was ready we very quickly pulled Letti up the first 10ft step to arrive at the base of the ladder. A separate rope had been hung just to the right of the ladder for someone to attach to as it was clear that taking the victim up the pitch wasn't a problem, but tilting the drag sheet at the top so that Letti could slide up into the hollow at the top of the pitch would be. With Brian on the rope and Dave on the ladder this was accomplished without too much hassle. The haul rope was re-positioned up near the "Letter Box" and using bodies as packing-pieces Letti was pulled up across the gully and directly up through the by-pass hole. Bodies were then moved up and through the "Letter Box" and after a bit of a struggle the victim was put feet first through it. More struggling followed to get the stretcher up to the little roomy spot(!) near the bottom of the entrance shaft. Letti was starting to get cold now and there was some urgency to get her out. More struggling got her up and tipped over onto the slab/block at the bottom of the shaft. Ropes were rearranged and the final haul up the entrance went quite quickly and after 2 hours 50 minutes the rescue was over.

The general opinion was that we all did bloody well and the whole exercise went quite smoothly. There were a couple of flaws, like all the jammers ending up ahead of the party outside the cave instead of where they were needed on the final haul. But it's all a good learning exercise. Next time it will go smoother and will start in "Main Chamber".

MCG CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
06 Jul	Mendip	JP's Curry Evening + Barrel	JP Burch	01737-217039
14 Jul	South Wales	Craig-a-Flynnon	Geoff Beale	01734-722510
21 Jul	South Wales	Craig-a-Flynnon	Geoff Beale	01734-722510
26 Jul-11 Aug	Northern Spain	Picos de Europa	Julie Hesketh	0181-876-1863
24 Aug	South Wales	Ogof Draenen	Marcus Ward	01252-876783
25 Aug	South Wales	Ogof Carno	Marcus Ward	01252-876783
07 Sep	Forest of Dean	Slaughter Stream Cave	Marcus Ward	01252-876783
08 Sep	Forest of Dean	Redhouse Lane Swallet	Marcus Ward	01252-876783
14/15 Sep	Sheffield	BCRA Hidden Earth - MCG stand	Tim Francis	0181-876-1863
12 Oct	Mendip	Half-yearly Forum	Joan Goddard	01608-810382
12 Oct	Mendip	Social Event	Pete Moseley	01458-860524
Autumn '96	Devon	TBA	Marcus Ward	01252-876783
Winter '96	Derbyshire	Peak Cavern	Geoff Beale	01734-722510
12 Apr '97	Mendip	Annual General Meeting	Joan Goddard	01608-810382
Summer '98	Madagascar	MCG Expedition	Tim Francis	0181-876-1863

WEEKLY MEETINGS:

At the Group's Mendip headquarters on Wednesdays at 7.00 p.m. and at the Eclipse Inn, Egham, Surrey, on Thursdays from 9.00 p.m.

CAVING ACCOMMODATION:

For up to 30 people, is available at the MCG headquarters: Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse, Blagdon, Bristol, BS18 6XW
Tel: 01761-462797 Grid Ref ST51475606 OS 1:50,000 sheet 182

COTTAGE INFORMATION:**COTTAGE BOOKINGS:**

Through the cottage warden please (address and tel. no. below).

COTTAGE FEES per night:

MCG members, members children, SWCC and NPC £1.50
Guest clubs and member's guests £2.50

PREPAYMENT STICKERS:

(Available to members only) 12 nights accommodation £15.00
25 nights accommodation £30.00
55 nights accommodation £55.00

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION:

Full and Probationary Members: £25.00; Associate Members: £12.50

THE COMMITTEE

SECRETARY	JOAN GODDARD	tel: 01608-810382
	10 ENSTONE ROAD, CHARLBURY, OXFORD, OX7 3QR	
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	30 CHURCHILL CRESCENT, SONNING COMMON, NEAR READING, BERKS, RG4 9RX	
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	FLAT 5, 2 THE CRESCENT, BARNES, LONDON, SW13 ONW	
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	PENDLE COTTAGE, MEARWAY, WESTHAY, GLASTONBURY, SOMERSET	

CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES
JONATHAN ROBERTS
MALCOLM COTTER
PAT WALSH
PETE MATHEWS

NON-COMMITTEE POSTS
RESCUE WARDEN
CONSERVATION OFFICER
COTTAGE EXTENSION
EXAMINERS

NAME
DAVE TOOKE
JULIE HESKETH
WAYNE HISCOX
HUW JONES AND DAVE TOOKE

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SEE ABOVE

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MCG doings

ON THE MOVE Huw Jones and Nikki Robinson to Coedhir, 3 Clos-yr-Arad, Nant Felin Cwrt, Castlevew, Caerphilly, CF83 1NF
Tel: 01222-862934

WELCOME to the following probationary member: **David Cory** of 89 Balch Road, Wells, Somerset. Tel: 01749-676044

(Proposed by Pete Moseley and Arthur Spain)

NEW UPPER FLOOD LEADERS Marcus Ward (01252-872783), Julie Hesketh (0181-876-1863) and Nikki Robinson (01222-862934) have completed a history trip with Malcolm Cotter in Upper Flood and are now leaders.

PARTY!!! Don't forget that on Saturday 6th July (members weekend) J-P will be cooking a curry, and Yvonne and Geoff will be supplying a barrel for their 70th birthday and 25th wedding anniversary respectively - all MCG members and their guests are welcome.

EARWIG in on the committee meeting held 9.6.96... **Wessex Challenge:** very successful - await final costings... **New computer:** All data now on Martin Rowe's 486. MCGs 386 to be stored in cottage until library extension complete. Martin to get compatible display and keyboard... **1998 expedition:** need to get information together on Madagascar before applying for grant aid... **Cottage insurance:** Ron Saunders has agreed to take on the task of sorting out the building and contents insurance... **Cotag system:** Lee Hawkswell to check what happens when Cotag batteries run out and whether there is a signal. Lapsed members to be deleted... **Cheque signatories:** Tim Francis and Julie Hesketh will be cheque signatories. Julie is to use Giro account for this year's expedition monies... **Half-yearly:** Priddy Village Hall has been booked for 12th October. Do members want a disco or barn dance?... **Committee restructuring:** Discussed suggestions received from Yvonne Rowe (formulated by members). No positive

conclusions reached but it was thought that the Ordinary member's position was too important to be written off and that if the conservation and access position was becoming more important then it may be appropriate to create a new committee position... **Priddy Green Sink:** Connection to Swildons now made. Tony Jarrat has spent £400 of his own money on the dig and is asking for donations towards his costs. MCG to donate £75... **Activity Centre Warden:** Terry Mathews is unwell so Bob Hinton is acting warden... **Waterwheel:** Lid needs repair. Martin Rowe to do sketch and ask Pat Walsh to make new lid. Bob Hinton to be informed... **Software:** Martin Rowe asked if he could purchase a new accounts package for approx. £35 and it was agreed that he could... **Occasional Publication:** on Upper Flood is nearly complete.

1996 ITALY EXPEDITION Unfortunately the venue has had to be changed due to lack of numbers. Only 6 members have made a definite commitment which won't be enough to get all the tackle and personal gear up to the cave. With only a month to go, and no time for planning any elaborate undertaking, we have decided to go to the Picos de Europa in northern Spain. There is plenty of scope here for all types of caving and walking, and we already have many cave surveys which helps enormously.

YV'S DROPPINGS

DT: "I'm really short this weekend... I feel like Tim!"

JF: (to barman) "Can I have a pint of peanuts?"

MW: "Why can't we apply to the Lottery for funding?"

YR: "You have to be gay or lesbian but we could say MCG stands for the Mendip Caving Gays"

MCG DATABASE is now on the IBM. Please check the info on your address label, if there are any errors notify Martin Rowe.

THE ROMANS AT CHARTERHOUSE ON MENDIP

These notes were made by Joan Goddard at the recent talk by Professor Malcolm Todd of Exeter University.

The earthwork behind Netherwood Cottage was previously thought to be an iron age enclosure but has now been identified as 14th Century. Associated with fallen blocks from what is thought to be an old drystone wall, were pieces of mediaeval blue window glass together with 1cm wide strips of lead. Although it is tempting to postulate leaded window production, there is apparently not enough evidence to support the view. Beneath the medieval layer was a rich assemblage of mesolithic material. In the Roman fort area (in the field east of the Charterhouse Centre) a 5 metre long trench was excavated across a previously unrecorded clay bank and rock cut ditch. The ditch was 'badly cut' in limestone (The Romans obviously had difficulty digging the local limestone, too!) and was infilled with rubbish. It contained over 500 items - pottery and glass vessels, animal bones, brooches, coins, part of a lead ingot, and even two pieces of old leather boot (Roman cavers?).

The pottery was mainly fine table ware (not kitchen ware). One vessel appeared to have been entire before being thrown into the ditch and broken. Much of it was imported Samian ware including wine amphorae and oil lamps, one of which was decorated with a horse's head and a woman. Also found were black and white gaming counters. (Wine, women, and gambling - just like nowadays) The coins were of Claudius' reign (41-54 AD). Roman brooches found in this area after the 1968 floods are notable for having enamelled panels and are very similar to those found in Cornwall and the Scillies. They were probably produced on Mendip - a mould for making them exists from Chewton Mendip.

Quite a lot of raw galena and smelted lead occurred in the ditch. It was probably processed and stored in the garrison. A lead ingot from Charterhouse (now in the British Museum) is dated AD 49, which agrees with the artifacts found. Britain was invaded by the Romans in AD 43 and they were working lead here within 6 years, but it seems that by AD 70 the fort had been abandoned. The archaeologists were surprised to find a piece of metallic zinc in the ditch. Until recently the orthodox view was that zinc metal was not used in Roman times, but it has now been found at a few sites. Zinc was mined at Harptree and Shipham (calamine). In addition to Roman remains, a crude late neolithic axe and a couple of well preserved flint arrowheads were found. These had presumably just been lying around on or near the surface when the Romans arrived.

The 1995 excavations were in a rake in the triangle of gruffy ground between Charterhouse Centre and Waterwheel Swallet. The longest groove is probably the oldest one as it is cut by other grooves. Three separate excavations were made along its length. The turf was immediately underlain by Roman material dating from the 1st Century AD, which included a rare silver 1 denari coin of Julius Caesar (48 BC). The rake was about 1m wide at its top, narrowed to 30cm at three metres deep, and was loosely backfilled. At 3m depth the infill was still yielding Roman material and discarded galena (estimated to be AD 50 - AD 100), but it became 'too narrow' for the archaeologists to work in. What happened after AD 100 when this rake was worked out? Charterhouse ingots have been found dating to 160 AD so probably the miners went across the valley to where the large rakes are. In the excavation which was nearest to Charterhouse Centre, they intercepted a natural cavern which appeared to be undisturbed by the miners. Terry Matthews investigated but felt it was not safe to go down. Is it part of the Waterwheel system?

Towards the end of his talk, Professor Todd posed a few questions. One of the coins found in the ditch of the fort was a Greek one from Corinth and there are frequent finds of Greek coins in Devon and Cornwall. Why is there so much pre-Roman material? When did mining in S. W. England begin? And by whom? Perhaps when the Romans arrived at Charterhouse mining was already under way. How did the Romans find out about it? By bullying the indigenous population? Apparently quite a lot of British chieftains visited Rome after AD 43, so perhaps word got to the Roman commanders that galena was worked here. A commander would enhance his career if he reported the information back to the authorities. Where did the lead go? Where did the silver go? It has been claimed that some of the lead found at Pompeii (destroyed AD 79) had a similar structure to that of Mendip lead (but this is an old theory postulated before modern techniques of analysis, and needs checking). Probably most of Italy's lead was imported from the Sierra Morena area of Spain where lead and silver was excavated by large scale trench mining; British lead most probably went to France and Germany. The Roman fort seems to have been inhabited by the military classes (evidenced by the high quality of the finds). Where did the workers live? In many situations criminals were used for manual work such as mining, or even slaves. Were the Charterhouse miners from the indigenous population? The Roman settlement at Raines Batch is thought to be of a later date (based on other writers views). It probably dates from late 1st Century to 4th Century. By this time mining was probably not carried out by the military, but by lessees. A couple of test pits were dug on the edge of the settlement but yielded nothing.

CCC doings

Joan Goddard and Tim Francis attended the CCC Ltd AGM (13.4.96); the first annual fixed point photographic survey of GB Cavern was presented to the meeting and the written report will be completed shortly. These records will be kept by the secretary of CCC, and the text will be held on the National Cave Register database. (Member clubs will be able to obtain copies for their records, if they wish). Pete Hann (Wessex) is to carry out the photographic survey of Charterhouse Cave.

Following discussions resulting in a few small amendments to the draft, the Longwood Valley Conservation Plan was adopted. There are no changes to access arrangements. As before, requests to dig must be made to CCC Ltd and must also be approved by Bristol Waterworks.

During the past year there have been two cases of novice cavers being taken into GB, and those responsible have been banned from the cave for 12 months. Plans are under way to replace the lock on the blockhouse, but the timing of any change will be notified in advance and keyholding clubs will receive replacement keys.

REMEMBER TO TAKE YOUR CCC PERMIT WHEN YOU CAVE IN GB, LONGWOOD, RHINO, TYINING'S OR CHARTERHOUSE CAVE (seal in a plastic bag and keep in your helmet?). Remember, CCC or Somerset Wildlife Trust members can ask to see permits while you are on land owned or leased by them.

Dig reports were received for:-

Tyning's Great Swallet (UBSS) - no progress made since 1993(!), due to a boulder fall.

Bat Passage, GB (UBSS) - large number of trips last summer when dig dried out, culminating in a breakthrough into a parallel rift previously discovered via a different passage. This has cured problems with bad air.

Timber Hole (Cerberus) - the rift is closing down so alternative options are being considered.

Charterhouse Cave (Wessex) Terminal boulder choke - slow progress is being made to cement a stable route which is following a good draught.

Longwood Valley Sink (Wessex) - digging continues; to establish the cost effectiveness of the dig it is planned to poke a miniaturised video camera down the tube to see if any enlargement lies ahead.

Requests were made by BEC and Cerberus members to dig in Rhino Rift and at a surface location in Velvet Bottom respectively. Both will require Bristol Waterworks' approval.

ROYAL FOREST OF DEAN CAVING SYMPOSIUM II

The weather was very kind to those attending this year's symposium, the programme looked good and everything was well organised but things got off to a bad start, partly due to lecturers turning up late or not at all. Because of this everything got behind and never quite caught up. Cavers and walkers were waiting for their trips to start and were hanging around for ages when they could have been at lectures. As a result, one lecture only had five people in attendance! I think the others fared a bit better. I also heard a complaint that people had to choose between lectures or field/caving trips when they would like to have done both.

The catering was very good, except that the food at Saturday lunchtime was eaten by those waiting for trips so by the time those attending lectures turned up to eat, the tables were almost empty. Tea, coffee and biscuits were available all day and the meal on Saturday evening was ample and delicious.

For my own part, I enjoyed the archaeology lecture and field walk (but then I would), and the 'armchair' caving trip into Red House Swallet with good slides and an interesting talk. Some of the contents of the other lectures overlapped with each other and with those of two years ago and I found myself looking at my watch and getting restless long before the end.

The idea of a caving symposium is a good one, and the 'Forest' one two years ago was excellent, but I feel that unless something significant happens, like another massive breakthrough or a new cave is discovered, then perhaps a longer period between symposiums might be better and less repetitive.

Yvonne Rowe

CNCC Doings

ACCESS When visiting caves, please ensure that you follow the correct route to the cave. Wandering aimlessly across the fell will aggravate the landowner and may restrict access.

LITTER The amount of litter and spent carbide that is being deposited in some caves is un-acceptable, there is no excuse for either. In certain caves spent carbide has been dumped within metres of the entrance. This is pollution, it is unsightly and it damages the cave environment.

PERMITS Meet secretaries will only accept requests for permits if your club has paid its annual subscription and the request must be on headed notepaper. Most access agreements require that the land owner is given notice and a copy of the months meets, so please apply for your permits at least three months in advance.

MCG digs update...

...taken from the MCG logbook:-

PINETREE POT

4.2.96 Joe Frampton - After blousing out of Swillie's I thought I'd better do something productive so I hoisted up my skirt and went for a dig. Tim was last down and I had visions of continuing his bit of passage but 2ft of liquid sludge soon put me off. It was a bit early to go home so I poked the spade at the left of the slurry pool and found a possible body-sized phreatic tube leading off. I dug about 1.5m of spoil and it's still going. *Joe*

2.3.96 Julie Hesketh, Tim Francis, Joe Frampton - Down for 2½ hours but still only managed 16 skips of spoil. The dig is a little awkward but some more volunteers would make short work of it, especially as the breakthrough is imminent! Julie had a wonderful time relating her birthing fantasies while Tim and I pondered on what she meant when she said: "Get this bump out from between my legs". *Joe*

17.3.96 Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh, Duncan Horne, Andrew? - A quickish trip to take some interesting fence posts to the dig. Made life much easier for 6 whole buckets until Tim tried to pick a fight with a boulder. It didn't want to move and got its way. There was mud and more mud. *Andrew*

23.3.96 Dave Tooke, Joe Frampton, Tim Francis - Everybody worked hard except for Joe who bloused as usual. Couldn't shift large boulder so concentrated on digging past it. Loads of spoil, bad air, profanities etc. No longer a virgin. *Dave*

12.5.96 Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh, Letti Patte, Dave Tooke - Excellent digging-come-banging trip. Very thick thixotropic mud (ask Julie's contact lens). Blasted away two largish boulders using Hilti Caps. May be at the top of a mud-filled boulder choke. Looks promising... *Dave*

19.5.96 Tim Francis, Joe Frampton, Dave Tooke, Letti Patte - Excellent progress made in the new way on from the chamber. Shifted a few more boulders and pushed downwards. Airspace found towards the end. *Tim*

BONE HOLE

27.4.96 Reg Pain, Rupert Knowles - Cave hasn't changed, the larger boulder was still in the dig after our attempt to blow it up last time. Spent the time removing rest of the smaller boulders and generally cleaning up the dig. We need to

break up the boulder that is blocking the dig before any progress can be made. *Reg/Rupert*
5.5.96 Reg Pain, Kerry?, Lee Hawkswell, Nikki Robinson - Will we beat 'the boulder' with some Hilti Caps? Yes, we demolished it - they were easy to use, with only a little "bang" and very little smell. Got the boulder out in many pieces and had a go at another rock in the dig. The Hilti Caps will be making a regular visit to Bone Hole. *Reg*

UBLEY WARREN

5.5.69 Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh - attempted to Hilti the boulder Joe can't get past. The boulder won. Need scaffolding in choke. *Tim*

18.5.96 Joe Frampton, Tim Francis - Quick trip to blast boulder and shore up roof at bottom of boulder choke. Both myself and digging skip can now get to the promising dig site. *Joe*

SWILDON'S HOLE

24.3.96 Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh, Joe Frampton - A Sunday bimble down Swilly's to have a nose at some potential dig sites (that don't belong to anybody, honest) around Batcombe Chamber. Had a look down every scratty hole - on down Lowbow for a muddy grovel. Joe found an inviting tight rift up near the roof near the Water Chamber and nearly stayed for longer than intended as he got firmly wedged for more than just a few minutes. Tim found a promising bit near Lowbow and I found a promising bit just inside the entrance so we might be back! *Julie*

5.4.96 Tim Francis, Joe Frampton - New MCG dig towards Renaissance series! Loads of mud.

SKELETONS FOUND IN CAVE

Investigators in Italy are examining the remains of six bodies discovered by cave explorers in the belief that they could have been victims of the Mafia. They were found inside a cavern near Carini, about 15 miles from Palermo. Some of the skeletons showed evidence of shooting, and one appeared to have been trussed with rope. Italian news agencies said pieces of clothing and shoes of relatively recent manufacture were found near the bodies.

Ceefax, 23.5.96.

OFD I - 19TH MAY '96 by Geoff Beale

Team: Joan Goddard, Tony Bolton, Tim Souch, Roger Beck, Geoff Beale.

The trip for this day was originally planned as a trip into Little Neath River Cave. However, wet weather thwarted our plans as LNRC entrance series becomes impassible under such conditions. We decided to continue our exploration of the 'Railton-Wild Series' in OFD I (reported in the last newsletter) and to take photos of the formations found there.

Although it had been raining during the preceeding days prior to our trip, we found the streamway in OFD I to be remarkably low, even lower than 'The Step' which is an indicator of stream level in this part of the OFD system.

At the limit of our exploration on our last trip we found some beautiful formations in a long passage that we intended to photograph. Beyond the formations at the bottom of the passage a short 8ft drop and a low squeeze to the left led to a continuation that was followed downhill to large boulders over the top of a large, wide canyon floor about 20ft below. By traversing along the top of the canyon over large boulders it was possible to see the fixed chain leading up to 'Lowes Passage' and the start of the escape route. This made a loop route from where we left the main stream around the 'Railton-Wild Series' and back to a connection with the old streamway at 'Lowes Passage'. However, we re-traced our steps back into the 'Railton-Wild Series' taking photographs at the formations, and then out of the cave via the main stream after a trip of about 5½ hours.

FORTHCOMING MCG AWAY MEETS

Marcus Ward, with the blessing of the meet secretary, has booked a couple of weekend's caving for MCG members. The first is in South Wales for the Bank Holiday weekend of August 24th, 25th and 26th.

For the Saturday he has booked Ogot Draenen, a cave you have all by now heard of. The cave was 47,900+ metres long when the guide was written and is one of the largest caves in Britain. The cave contains lots of tapping and this should be respected, so too should any bats that you might see. There's too much to describe here but suffice it to say that it offers a great variety of caving and some very spectacular sights.

For the Sunday he has booked Ogot Carno. The cave is 7000+ metres long (and going). The entrance to the cave is 1750m inside an adit where there is a brick-lined hole in the right hand wall! It contains such names as 'Cough and Drop', 'Chocolate Passage' (mmm!) and 'Southern Discomfort'. It is quite a demanding cave with many climbs, crawls and a neck-deep duck! The guide says it should only be entered by fit and experienced cavers.

If you decide to come along on this weekend and fancy something specific on the Monday, let Marcus know fairly soon and he will try to arrange it, if not there are many caves to choose from in this area that don't require booking. Both caves are fairly close to each other and with this in mind Marcus is trying to book bunks at the Chelsea cottage for that weekend. He tried to book the activity centre next to Ogot Dranen but it was already fully booked. If all else fails there are a few camp sites around that area - pray for dry weather!



Another weekend's caving is booked for 7th and 8th September in the Forest of Dean. Accommodation is difficult here so you could camp nearby or drive there from the MCG cottage.

For the Saturday Marcus has booked Slaughter Stream Cave. The cave is 12,000 metres long with a 20m entrance shaft descended by a series of fixed ladders. The cave is probably most famous for its dog skeleton in 'Dogs Grave Passage' but also a must is 'The Chunnel' - in fact, if the slides are anything to go by, anywhere in this cave is interesting and well worth doing.

For the Sunday Marcus has booked Redhouse Lane Swallet. The cave is 1615 metres long and carries a stream so wetsuits are essential. There are ducks, inlets, a fossil series, crawls, climbs, mud formations, etc., but no tackle is required. The cave is prone to flooding in wet weather so an alternative cave might be sought if it's chucking it down.



Marcus also fancied a weekend caving in Devon as this is an area he has not been to yet. As others have expressed an interest in a Devon weekend too he will look into booking something (caves and accommodation) for late autumn when the holiday period is over. More details to follow.

If you are interested in joining Marcus on any of the above weekends contact him on 01252-876783 or 01252-871238.

MCG leaders

I have been asked to publish a current list of all MCG leaders, so here goes:

UPPER FLOOD SWALLET

Charlie Alison	0181-393-5910	69 Cheam Road, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 3EG
Jean Paul Burch	01737-217039	10 Raneleigh Road, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 6BH
Mike Carson	01753-655143	41 The Poynings, Richings Park, Iver, Bucks, SLO 9DS
Sonya Cotter	01784-252643	249 Feltham Road, Ashford, Middlesex, TW15 1LU
Malcolm Cotter	01784-252643	249 Feltham Road, Ashford, Middlesex, TW15 1LU
John Crowsley	01179-652585	11 Rose Walk, Fishponds, Bristol, Avon, BS16 4JN
Adrian Duckett	0181-568-6211	68 Roxborough Avenue, Isleworth, Middlesex, TW7 5HJ
Steve Eddy	01179-665222	33 Somerset Terrace, Windmill Hill, Bristol, Avon, BS3 4LJ
Joe Frampton	01895-431150	49 Peartree Ave, Yiewsley, West Drayton, Middx, UB7 8DQ
Tim Francis	0181-876-1863	Flat 5, 2 The Crescent, Barnes, London, SW13 0NW
Mike Haselden	01703-464491	3 The Close, Thornhill Parl, Southampton, Hants, SO2 5RB
Lee Hawkswell	01923-819103	4A Hazeltree Road, North Watford, Herts, WD2 5QR
Julie Hesketh	0181-876-1863	Flat 5, 2 The Crescent, Barnes, London, SW13 0NW
Wayne Hiscox	(wk) 01749-672081	3 Keward, Glastonbury Road, Wells, Somerset, BA5 1TR
Mike Lovell	0118-9663747	4 Settrington Close, Loddon Park, Earley, Reading, RG6 3XJ
Martin Rowe	01252-872006	10 Greenleas Close, Yateley, Camberley, Surrey, GU17 7SL
Nikki Robinson	01222-862934	Coedhir, 3 Clos-yr-Arad, Nant Felyn Cwrt, Caerphilly, CF83 1NF
Arthur Spain	01749-679358	"Waitangi", Long Lane, Dinder, Wells, Somerset, BA5 3PQ
Adrian Thomas	01275-851286	36 Ash Hayes Road, Nailsea, Bristol, Avon, BS19 2LW
Dave Tooke	01784-436800	39 Corby Drive, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, TW20 ORX
Roger Wallington	01753-433841	125 Langley Road, Slough, Berkshire.
Marcus Ward	01252-876783	15 Jesse Close, Yateley, Camberley, Surrey, GU17 7AH
Stephen Wyatt	01934-838953	17 Stonewell Drive, Congresbury, Avon, BS19 5DW
Kevin West	01706-222822	1 Oakenhead Wood, Haslington Old Road, Rawtenstall, Rossendale, Lancs, BB4 8RR

CHARTERHOUSE CAVE

Charlie Alison	0181-224-7591
Nick Gilson	01934-515689

ST CUTHBERT'S SWALLET

Malcolm Cotter	01784-252643
Tony Knibbs	0033-61858232

RESERVOIR HOLE

Geoff Beale	0118-9722510
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OGOF FFYNNON DDU

Geoff Barton	01932-849241
Geoff Beale	0118-9722510
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DAN-YR-OGOF

Geoff Beale	0118-9722510
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H.E. BALCH'S PALACE

From the turn of the century through to his death in 1954, H.E. Balch was the doyen of caving on Mendip. He needed a base in the Mendips and his long friend, Mr Powell, Headmaster of the Blue School in Wells, had some railway carriages parked high up on the Mendips in a field at Rookham. The 26ft carriages had been moved by teams of horses to the site at Rookham around 1905 from the Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway at Binegar. Eventually Balch purchased one from Mr Powell and he set about turning it into a special place that his friends called "Balch's Summer Palace". From then on he used it as his base for digging and caving expeditions. The LSWR carriage formed part of the structure of a bungalow, complete with corrugated roof and porch. The Balch family continued to use the carriage every summer, even after his death. Until recently it resided in the same location and was the home of a local vet who has decided to have a new house built in place of the carriage. The Somerset and Avon Railway Company have been offered the coach providing it is preserved for visitors to see. SARC have moved it to their Forge Exhibition Centre at Marcroft Wagon Works, Radstock and will restore it. For more details write to Steve Lake, 50 Hillside View, Peasedown St John, BA2 8ET

Norton-Radstock & District Weekly Journal, 28.3.96

CAVING IN VIRGINIA

by Pete Hollings

A seat sale at Air Canada meant that I was able to scrape together enough money to head down to Ohio and meet up with Mike and Andrea Futrell. From Ohio we drove out to Virginia to do a little caving. Before leaving Saskatoon I'd been told to bring some slides along as the viewing facilities at the Bat Ranch (basically an open house for cavers in the area) were distinctly "non-average". This was to be proved true when within a few hours of arriving in Virginia I found myself sitting in a hot tub under the stars, drinking Old Peculiar and watching slides. When a trip starts like this you know it is going to be good !

My first introduction to the caves of the area was a 12 hr survey trip into a 'secret' cave that the Futrell's have been mapping for a while now. Complications with landowners mean that Mike and Andrea have asked me not to say anything about the trip, suffice it to say that it was a very impressive start to the weekend. The trip was made more notable by the recovery of a film that had been lost some 8 months earlier but proved to be undamaged.

With only a couple of hours sleep behind us the next day was not overly productive, with most of the time being spent cleaning and repairing gear, as well as doing a few odd jobs around the Bat Ranch in lieu of rent. All of this was generously lubricated with more Old Peculiar as well as numerous long breaks to swap tales and watch videos of a recent expedition to China. This included the groups visit to one cave where coffins had been stacked in the entrance over the past few hundred years.

A days rest and another evening in the hot tub (the MCG really should think about building one !) saw us all in fine shape for another days caving. The plan was to visit Raspberry Hollow Cave, this had been mapped in 1961 and the survey indicated a number of unexplored leads.

Unfortunately, the landowner had been unwell and preferred not to be troubled by cavers so the cave was never fully explored. As new owners had taken over the property on his death it was time to revisit the cave.

Our first attempt to get permission to enter the cave was thwarted when the owner was not home, so instead I was taken on a quick tour of the area including numerous sinkholes, some of which looked as though they could be opened up with relatively little digging. This done we returned to Raspberry Hollow and were able to get permission to enter the cave.

A stooping entrance leads to a 40 ft freehanging pitch into an impressive chamber. As Mike wanted to make a more accurate survey of the cave we spent quite a while poking about in the numerous leads off this area, producing a survey that bore very little in common with the seventies version ! With the upper area mapped we headed further into the cave along some meandering passage around 3m wide and 6-7m tall until we encountered the stream. At this point the cave became a little less pleasant, as the passage degenerates into a wet belly crawl. We surveyed a little further until a point where the way on was blocked by gravel washed in by recent floods.

As we had little desire to dig through this into the canyon passage beyond we returned to a draughting lead we had noticed earlier and began trundling some large rocks out of the way. Digging is certainly a lot easier when you can rely on gravity to remove the spoil! Eventually Mike was able to crawl beneath some 'hanging death' leaving Andrea and me on the other side to dig him out if necessary. Andrea has long ago established a 20 minute 'leash' on Mike in these situations and sure enough he was back in about that long, having bypassed the crawl and dropped back into the main trunk passage, opening a dryer and flood safe route into the cave. As it was getting late we decided to call it a day and returned to the Bat Ranch for a final soak in the hot tub before driving back to Ohio the next day.

All in all the caving was well worth the ten hours of flying time and six hours of driving time required to get there, the presence of a hot tub, a case of OP and friends to share them with made everything just about perfect!

More MCG doings...

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

"YSS 3" (*Journal of the Yorkshire Subterranean Society*, 1994) - a high quality publication produced 15 years after their last journal (MCG isn't the only club to have somewhat intermittent journals!). Articles on Mallorca 1989/90, Slovenia 1990-93, Belize 1992, Yorkshire pots (and mines) and a comprehensive 15 pp on the Aire River system, Malham (digging, Malham Cove risings, hydrology).

"Back in time for tea and medals" - Sgt. Ian Rolland's untimely death in 1994 at the age of 29, whilst diving in Mexico, has resulted in this book of stories, tributes and expedition tales by friends and colleagues. They are sensitively presented and provide an insight into his short but active life of caving both in Britain and abroad.

"Caverns measureless to man" by Sheck Exley. This book was published after Sheck's death, also in 1994 whilst cave diving in Mexico. (Ask Tim what it's like, as he was reading the book last time I saw him!)

"La Grotte Chauvet" - a large format glossy book (in French) with many photos of the paintings which caused such a stir when they were discovered in a cave in the Ardeche Gorge in December 1994.

"On Station, a complete handbook for surveying and mapping caves" by George Dasher. Published by National Speleological Society in 1994 - a comprehensive book with contents arranged in three parts; 1. Collecting the data, 2. Managing the data, 3. Drafting the map. There are appendices which include cave symbols, survey grades, glossary, selected bibliography and examples of surveys with notes on their good and bad points.

"The Heart of Mendip" (published 1915) and "The Seaboard of Mendip" (published 1902), both by F. A. Knight. Both books are mainly concerned with history, archaeology and natural history but include references to caves and mining activity in the area.

"Dargilan" by Alain Passet (in French) - a tourist guide to this show cave.

"The caves of the Forest of Dean" by Tony Oldham and Keith Jones - part 11 in the series "Limestones and caves of South Wales" (en Anglais). This is a compilation of cave descriptions and surveys and is a useful guide for anyone caving in the area.

"Le Grotte del Piemonte" by the Associazione Gruppo Speleologici Piemontesi (published 1993). Are there any Italian readers out there? I'm sure the book is packed with useful information for our summer trip. There are some excellent coloured and black-and-white photographs and each cave has a survey, and a sketch map showing its location, together with coordinates of the principal entrance, levels, lengths etc.

"Underground Worlds" - a Time Life book with colour photographs of caves from around the world, numerous diagrams and some silly chapter headings ("Explorers of a stygian realm", "In the grip of the demon adventure") - a coffee table book with a fair amount of reading matter too.

INTERNET ACCESS FOR MCG?

SHEPTON MALLET, SOMERSET, ENGLAND, 1996
MAR 28 (NB) -- UK Online, the UK consumer online and Internet service provider, has announced it is offering free Internet access, World Wide Web space, and e-mail facilities for registered charities in the UK.

According to Andrew Spencer, marketing manager of UK Online, there is so much general interest and growth in the number of families and individuals who are connecting to the Internet. For this reason, Spencer claims that UK Online expects the scheme to become a significant source of revenue for participating charity organizations.

UK Online is offering up to five e-mail accounts that can be used within the same office or building or even at various locations around the country, as well as space for a charity's own Web site. Links from suitable areas on the UK Online service will also be made available.

According to Spencer, UK Online has promised to donate UKP5 (*ed: I think this means £5?*) to participating charities for every member of the charity that decides to become a personal subscriber to the online service.

In return, UK Online is requesting that participating charities promote UK Online to their members as the "provider of choice" for Internet access and inform their members of the benefits of using the Internet.

Spencer said that the immediate response to the announcement has been extremely positive. "We shall be making announcements about the various charities which have taken advantage of this offer over the next few months," he said.

"Many charities are currently thinking about going online for the first time and are considering the cost-effective marketing benefits of having a presence on the Internet. UK Online can help them take that first step," he claimed.

Spencer went on to say that, while its gesture is philanthropic, the company believes that, as a family service, "There will be a substantial cross-over in target markets between UK Online and those families which choose to become members of a particular charity."

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