

MCG NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NUMBER 259

FEBRUARY 1997

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1997

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP
WILL BE HELD IN THE LONG ROOM OF THE HUNTERS LODGE INN
ON SATURDAY 12th APRIL 1997, COMMENCING AT 2:30pm

NOMINATIONS are invited for all Committee posts. The Examiners, Rescue Warden and Conservation Officer will also be elected at the AGM. Nominations for Committee Officers, and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules must be submitted in writing by first class post to the Secretary's home address with signatures of full members proposing and seconding and at least 25 days before the meeting (i.e. by 18th March). A nomination for office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand for election by the nominee. A postal vote may be granted to any member who applies in good time to the Secretary.

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

COPIES OF THE 1996 AGM MINUTES were circulated with the May 1996 Newsletter. Members may obtain further copies from the Secretary (please enclose a stamped, addressed envelope).
Joan Goddard Hon. Secretary 05.02.97



MCG ANNUAL DINNER 1997

- VENUE** The Galloper Restaurant, Wookey Hole Caves
TIME 7:30pm for 8:00pm
- PRICE** Tickets £15 each, available from Pete Moseley. Requests for tickets to be sent to Pete at Pendle Cottage, 82 Meareway, Westhay, Somerset, BA6 9TZ, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope please with cheques made payable to 'Mendip Caving Group'. No tickets to be sold after 31st March (for catering reasons).
- COACH** Nordrach 7pm, Hunters 7:15pm, Wells 7:30pm, Wookey 7:45pm
PRICE £3 from Nordrach, £1 Wells or Wookey. Price includes return journey.
- ROOMS** Accommodation is not provided at the venue, however there are several hostelrys in Wells that can be used.

MCG CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
02 Mar	Bath	Box Mines	Mike Carson	01753-655143
09 Mar	Derbys	Peak Cavern	Geoffe Beale	0118-972-2510
28 Mar-31 Mar	South Wales	Aggie/Draenen/Carno etc	Marcus Ward	01252-815112
12 Apr	Mendip	Annual General Meeting	Joan Goddard	01608-810382
12 Apr	Mendip	Annual Dinner Wookey Hole	Pete Moseley	01458-860524
13 Apr	Mendip	Archaeology Walk	Yvonne Rowe	01252-872006
03 May-05 May	Mendip	Cottage Work Weekend	Cottage Warden	
16 May-18 May	Mendip	BCRA CRG/CSG Field Meet	Martin Rowe	01252-872006
07 Jun	Mendip	Rescue Practice	Dave Tooke	01784-436237
27 Jul	South Wales	Offer Hole	Geoffe Beale	0118-972-2510
22 Aug-07 Sep	Spain	Picos de Europa	Martin Rowe	01252-872006
12 Sep-14 Sep	Bristol	BCRA Hidden Earth Conference	Tim Francis	0181-876-1863
18 Oct (TBC)	South Wales	Phil Ingold's 'Rescue' OFDI	Joan Goddard	01608-810382
Summer 1998	Madagascar	MCG Expedition	Charlie Allison	0181-224-7591

WEEKLY MEETINGS:	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:	Through the cottage warden please (address and tel. no. below).
COTTAGE BOOKINGS:	
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
RECIPROCAL RIGHTS:	MCG (members only) have reciprocal booking rights with SWCC and NPC: NPC bookings via Andy Goddard tel: 01978-812100 (wk) 01244-570944 (hm) SWCC bookings via Ian Middleton tel: 01703-736997 email ian_m@tcp.co.uk

THE COMMITTEE

SECRETARY	JOAN GODDARD 10 ENSTONE ROAD, CHARLBURY, OXFORD, OX7 3QR	tel: 01608-810382
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MEET SECRETARY	GEOFF BEALE 30 CHURCHILL CRESCENT, SONNING COMMON, NEAR READING, BERKS, RG4 9RX	tel: 0118-972-2510
TACKLE MASTER	TIM FRANCIS FLAT 5, 2 THE CRESCENT, BARNES, LONDON, SW13 ONW email t.francis@nopres.co.uk	tel: 0181-876-1863
COTTAGE WARDEN	LEE HAWKSWELL 36 ST ANDREWS ROAD, WARMINSTER, WILTS, BA12 8ER	tel: 01985-212690
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RECORDER	WAYNE HISCOX 3 KEWARD, GLASTONBURY ROAD, WELLS, SOMERSET, BA5 1TR	tel: 01749-671282
ORDINARY MEMBER	PETE MOSELEY PENDLE COTTAGE, MEARWAY, WESTHAY, GLASTONBURY, SOMERSET	tel: 01458-860524

CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES	NON-COMMITTEE POSTS	NAME	TELEPHONE
MALCOLM COTTER	RESCUE WARDEN	DAVE TOOKE	01784-436237
PETE MATHEWS	CONSERVATION OFFICER	JULIE HESKETH	0181-876-1863
JONATHAN ROBERTS	COTTAGE EXTENSION	WAYNE HISCOX	SEE ABOVE
PAT WALSH	EXAMINERS	HUW JONES AND DAVE TOOKE	

MCG doings

ON THE MOVE Gordon Woodall to Long Orchard, Moorland, Somerset, TA7 7OX ☎ 01278-691333
 Bob Wanstall 31 Euston Grove, Ringwood, Hants, BH24 1FB ☎ 01425-480642
 Stephen Jones's hostel no: ☎ 0117-928-9503
 AEM 2 Alan Clements (formerly Wright) to D238167P, AA96/3, I.T.G., Newcomen Hangar, HMS Sultan, Gosport, Hants.

WELCOME BACK to Greg Smith and Bob Wanstall who have rejoined the Group.

CONGRATULATIONS to Letti Patte on becoming a full member.

WELCOME to Stephen Jones and Graham Treliving who have been accepted as probationary members.

AN APPLICATION for membership has been received from Cara Allison 19 Wathen Road, St Andrews, Bristol, BS6 5BY ☎ 0117-924-7367 (proposed by C Allison, J Goddard) and will be considered at the April committee meeting.

EARWIG in on the committee meeting held 8.2.97...
Cottage Extension: Waiting for some decent weather...
Upper Flood: A meeting is to be set up with John Baker of the Charterhouse Activity Centre and Joan Goddard, Tim Francis and Lee Hawkswell to discuss access arrangements...
Madagascar: 17 members have expressed an interest so far. Air fare £300 cheaper than at first thought. MCG to put in for a Sports Council grant...
Building Contents Insurance: Quotes - Eagle Star 50% more expensive than Zurich Municipal. Ron Saunders to be asked to check both policies for any catches. Agreed to go with Zurich Municipal if their policy is ok...
Covenants: Tony Bolton has offered to help with covenants and will contact Alan Mellon (thanks Tony)...
Public Liability Insurance: BCRA have introduced cover for guests but MCG to look into specific cover whereby guests become temporary members for a maximum of 7 days for £1.50, with a proviso that they would have no other MCG rights and would have to be accompanied by a full member. It would be difficult to administer away from cottage. Joan to talk to Nick Gilson...
Yugoslavia: 8mm footage of MCG's trip to Yugoslavia in the 1950's to be made into 2 videos, 1 for loan, 1 for archive...
Upper Flood Survey: The two sheets are to be framed for the cottage - any offers to make frames to Tim Francis...
Hidden Earth: BCRA conference to be held in Bristol on 12-14th Sept. Volunteers required to help on MCG stand - contact any committee member...
Printer: Geoff Barton has kindly donated a dot matrix printer to MCG - thanks Geoff.

TOOL AMNESTY Could members please look in their toolbox, carboot, shed, etc. to see if they have inadvertently taken any MCG tools and sneak them back into the understairs cupboard please - they've nearly all disappeared...

TOOL DONATION If anyone has any tools they don't use, don't need or have two of, we would be really grateful if you could donate them to MCG.

WALL BUILDING BTCV will be rebuilding Nordrach's stone wall as part of their course training on 18th May and 27th July. If you wish to help/learn please let Julie Hesketh know on 0181-876-1863. Wayne Hiscox will need help to fetch and unload the stone on the work weekend in May.

BOX MINES TRIP at Box Hill (GR ST834694). Mike Carson will be leading this trip on Sunday 2nd March and if you've never been down Box Mine before, it's well worth a trip. As well as the maze of mined passageways, there is lots of industrial archaeology, in particular some huge, wooden floor-to-ceiling cranes. There are all sorts of other interesting items to be seen on the way too including some quite explicit graffiti! Meet at the Quarryman's Arms 12:30 - 1:00pm, or earlier if you want some of their good food first. For more details contact Mike on 01753-655143..

RAFFLE People don't learn do they? Even though I forgot to take the raffle prizes to the half-yearly Barn Dance, and even though some winners still haven't got their prizes, I have been asked to organise a raffle for the Annual Dinner! Last time I advertised for people to donate raffle prizes to keep the costs down, and it worked very well with quite a few interesting and caving-orientated (except the nose-hair clippers!) prizes. I've made a solemn promise to get it right this time, so I'll try again starting with a request for some donations please. You *must* have some Xmas presents that you don't want, need, or already have. Or perhaps the next time you're in Wells you can buy a little something from 'you-know-where'. Some suggestions are wine, chocs, caving items - cards, pictures, stickers, gloves, krabs, slings, books, surveys, etc. Please contact Yvonne Rowe on 01252-872006 if you have something to donate.

COTTAGE WORK WEEKEND This is to take place on the Bank holiday weekend of 3/4/5th May. The Saturday night will also be a curry evening courtesy of JP Burch. If the weather is good perhaps we can have a barbecue on the Sunday? There will be more details and a jobs list from our new Cottage Warden nearer the time.

NIGHT WALK Speleo Rhal, and Mike Haselden, have invited MCG members on a night walk (like night orienteering) on 15th March 1997. An MCG team went on one many years ago and came second - and had a really good laugh too. For more details contact Mike on 01703-464491.

MCG in Mallorca, 1996

by *Tim Francis*

On this year's trip to Mallorca we intended to visit a few of the more unusual sites, investigate potential sites for a diving expedition next year, and obtain background information for a forthcoming journal.

Cueva Tancada This trip provided an excellent light introduction to the week. The entrance overlooks the sea and has fantastic views of the Badia D'Alcudia and the Serres de Llevant. The cave essentially consists of a short section of ancient passage. It is extremely well decorated and is definitely worth a visit, if only for a spot of photography. We noticed plenty of used candles throughout the cave so it would appear that the cave is used as a 'wild' showcave. Typically, every muddy hole in the floor was investigated but none could be followed for very far as most were blocked by a choke of calcited boulders. At the deepest point of the cave we could clearly hear a pulsing draught, although not feel it, which must have been caused by the waves crashing against the cliff face.

Avenc de Fra Rafel This was to be the main objective of the trip this year, and therefore we had set aside a couple of days in case the entrance was difficult to find. In fact the search took about two hours after we got a little confused in a wooded doline. The first impression you get of the cave is that it is an extremely deep pothole. The entrance shaft is in fact a 61m pitch leading to a cone of a rubble. However a window in the shaft at -18m gives access to a well decorated series of galleries and the final 117m pitch, the "Gran Pou".

From the surface we were able to scramble down a steep, scrubby slope. A traverse was rigged from two trees leading to a single bolt rebelay. A short abseil and pendulum from this bolt and we landed in the beautifully decorated Sala de l'Orgasme. This is a large section of yomping sized passage and well worth a special trip just for the photography. The walking/scrambling section is divided in two by an awkward climb around the side of Pou del Foradi. No rope is required and it is probably easier to tackle the climb on the left. A huge calcite boss dominates the chamber with some fine stalactites at the top.

Beyond this chamber the passage becomes more rubbly before ending at the Gran Pou. This starts as a steep slope rather than a pitch and care needs to be taken as much of the rock at the top is loose. A short calcite slope leads to a rubble ledge and the start of the real pitch. Descent of the left hand wall leads to a y-hang from two 8mm spits. This gives a fantastic airy descent past some impressive formations. I was unable to locate a deviation so opted to continue the descent to a large calcite ledge: Galeria de les Girgoles. Unable to find another free hang I used a couple of stal naturals to shimmy down a well decorated gully off to the left: Galeria de les Finestres. Unfortunately I had to call it a day about 30ft from the bottom as there were no further naturals available. A bolt or 11mm rope would have done the trick!

Cueva Sa Forodada This was an intriguing little site for which we had very little information. The cave is located in a delightful gorge downstream of the Cuba Reservoir near Soller. The gorge is also used for gorge running with an excellent pool swim. The small entrance is about 30ft above the stream but the upper levels are not associated with the current hydrology. However in the further reaches two small streamways are met, an extremely rare site on Mallorca.

The entrance passageways consist of low crawls in conglomerate with evidence of bats and small mammals in the earlier sections. A squeeze over a stalagmite boss (handline useful) and a muddy climb are entertaining obstacles on the return. A muddy traverse over a hole in the floor leads eventually to a tight duck. A small trickle of water continually flows over a gour cascade with the final gour creating the duck. This can be bailed forward to make the squeeze relatively dry. Beyond, a slippery climb drops into the tight streamway. Unfortunately we ran out of time to investigate further but a return is planned in 1997. There are supposedly a couple of undived sumps at the end, and I would suspect that the inlets have not been forced to a conclusion upstream.

SALE OF EQUIPMENT

The Group has a number of items for sale via any committee member. A full list is pinned to the noticeboard in the cottage, but the following is a selection of items available:

Cotton boilersuit (size 36")	£9 reduced to £8
High visibility nylon oversuits (medium and large) - excellent for photographic modelling!	£12.50 reduced to £12
Nylon overtrousers, (small, medium)	£10 reduced to £8
Wetsuit trousers (small)	£18 reduced to £15
FX2 car charger	£12
Walking socks (size 6-7.5)	£2.50
Caving helmet (cable strap needs slight modification)	£20 reduced from £24
Downwash (for sleeping bags and duvet jackets)	£2 reduced from £2.50
Nickwax waterproofing (TX10)	£2.00
'SRT' by Elliott	£4.25
'Geology explained in the Peak District' by Wolverson Cope	£1.25
Sweatshirts with climbing caver or stream logo, assorted sizes	£10 - excellent value
T shirts, white, blue (medium, large)	£4.50

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

SWCC has sent us a copy of their special anniversary issue of the South Wales Caving Club Newsletter. It is impressively thick and contains a great deal of SWCC history written in an informal manner with numerous photographs. (As it has already been borrowed by one of our members, we will hopefully receive a review from him in due course!)

Karst and Caves of Great Britain by Tony Waltham, Mike Simms, Andy Farrant and Helen Goldie, has been purchased by the club. This is the 12th volume in the Geological Conservation Review Series and as such is not specifically aimed at cavers. No doubt it will be reviewed in depth in *Descent and Caves and Caving*, but my initial impression is that it contains a wealth of information, especially from a geological point of view. The GCR cave and karst sites were identified back in the 1970s and 1980s and are grouped together into regional chapters. Although most of the information has already been published elsewhere the advantage of this book is that it brings it together in one volume, and attempts to relate underground features to surface topography and geomorphological processes. A comprehensive bibliography and index has been provided and it should prove an invaluable reference book. It's a pity that in using UBSS Proceedings as a source for the section on Charterhouse caves the authors have attributed the Longwood survey to UBSS instead of MCG (although an apology has been received for this mistake).

GB Cave Fixed Point Photographic Survey 1, 1996 produced by Tony Littler and members of MNRC for the Charterhouse Caving Company Ltd. This forms part of the conservation plan for GB cave and is the first of a series of photographic records of specific points in the cave chosen for a number of different reasons; eg. to monitor potential caver damage (carelessness or normal wear and tear), natural damage (water or breakdown) or indirect damage due to surface actions (eg. pollution). Control sites considered unlikely to suffer damage were also identified and photographed. Details of camera settings, flash positions etc. have been recorded to ensure that future photographs will provide comparative information.

Descending the Angel's Staircase

by Pete Hollings

The presence of Christmas decorations throughout the neighbourhood meant that it was once again time to dig up the caving gear from the basement and head for Mexico. I flew down to Austin where I joined a convoy of folks heading for the Purificacion karst, arriving in Conrado Castillo late in the afternoon of the 21st of December. This year our group included a few Canadians as well as a large contingent of Americans.

While the principal goal of the trip was the exploration of the Angel's Staircase we spent the first couple of days working on some smaller local projects. These included continuing the blasting open of a lead at the bottom of Cueva de Cuchilla. Despite a couple of trips, the low crawl still needs further mining, although the passage is supposed to get a little bigger around the corner and it may not be necessary to blast for a whole six feet! While this was going on, I returned to Cueva Nadolig, which was dug open during the 1995 Xmas expedition. We had left the cave at a drafting crawlway that we thought would need blasting. However, we hadn't reckoned on Charley Savvas who, during the Easter expedition, had hammered his way past the constriction but generously explored no further. On our first trip to Nadolig, Marcus Berksdale, Cyndie Walck, Scott Scheibner and I surveyed and hammered our way through the low crawl to the top of the first pitch, with the 11 shot, 30 metre survey taking over two hours. We returned the following day with vertical gear and were able to descend three relatively short pitches of six, seven and eight metres respectively, turning back at the top of the fourth drop. The lowest point of Nadolig is now below the level of the entrance to Cuchilla and has excellent potential for going deep, as well as possibly connecting with the Dragon River area of Purificacion.

Christmas Eve was spent making a supply run for the camp in the World Beyond. Large quantities of rope, survey gear and bolting equipment were divided into 17 equal piles and loaded into custom cave packs, designed so that they would just fit through the Crack of Doom. By the time I'd added in some personal gear my pack weighed in at 32lbs, which was about average. The 17 of us made our way into the cave at a fairly leisurely pace. A number of obstacles, notably Flowstone Falls and the X-rated climb, were rigged to make life easier with cave duffs. We arrived at our camp site next to The Cube in about seven hours and spent a little while selecting and flattening out sleeping areas. With everyone feeling confident that they knew the route out, we split into smaller groups and made it out of the cave in between three and six hours (my group only got lost a couple of times!).

Not surprisingly, Xmas Day saw very little underground activity with the majority of people spending the day alternately eating and sleeping. By noon on Boxing Day, the first group (Bill Nasby, Cyndie, Charley, John and I) were once again at the Brinco entrance to Sistema Purificacion loaded down with 30lb camp duffs. We made it to camp in four hours and settled down to await the arrival of everyone else; within a couple of hours 17 people were settled into what is the seventh camp in the system.

The next day we made the first big push into the Angels' Staircase. Our plan was for small teams to systematically check side leads off the main route, particularly a going lead that had been partially explored in 1995. A number of ropes that had been left in the cave the previous year had been washed away, whereas others were looking distinctly frayed. This meant that we had to start using our new supply of rope sooner than we had planned. Myself, Cyndie and Kevin Stafford were assigned to one of the lower leads, which almost immediately went vertical with a 10 metre drop. From there we had two choices, the first went to another small drop which was rigged off a thin piece of poorly cemented breccia backed up by a body belay (it's amazing what you'll do to get into virgin passage). At the base of this was a longer drop, but as our rope did not reach the bottom we headed back to tackle the other route. We proceeded to map around 200 metres of passage down two more drops before connecting back into the main survey. We eventually got back to camp at 1am after a 14 hour trip. The teams mapping the lead from the previous year had descended approximately 100m before reaching a lake with leads going off in two directions, at which point they stopped the survey. Another team (Peter Sprouse, Bill Nasby, Maria Tehrany and Susie Lasko) had managed to map some 250m of horizontal walking passage in a lead near the Canal of Ulysses.

While most of us spent the next day recovering, Charley, Taco and Joe Ivy went to examine a lead about ten minutes from camp. This lead was within a few feet of the main trail through the World Beyond, but had gone unnoticed for 15 years until Taco spotted it. The lead was pushed for ~100m and had incredible air producing delicate formations which were to give the passage its name - Batwing Passage. That evening, five more cavers made it into camp, but we also lost two through illness, leaving an amazing 20 people in camp.

On December 29 we made the final push down the Angels' Staircase. I joined Peter, Cyndie and Susie on a trip to examine the leads near the sumps at the bottom of the Staircase. As we made our way down the series of ropes we gathered all the spare pieces available and even cut off some of the longer tails on rigged drops. It was just as well we did because we used our last rope on the final drop. It took a total of 17 ropes to make it to the bottom of the Staircase, although the original survey crew used only seven - God alone knows how! Our first task was to survey the ~4 metre high lead that had been so tantalisingly obvious on the survey.

This led us into a large room with a gravel sump at one end. We were able to wriggle through this and map walking passage to the base of a flowstone climb. Peter climbed this and numerous other pits until he was stopped by a five metre pit that he was unable to climb. Amazingly, he heard the voices of the crew surveying a lead above, who returned with rope and mapped their way down. Meanwhile we returned to the area of the sumps and did some clean up survey before heading out, getting back to camp after some 15 hours. Other teams had mapped over 400 metres of passage in one side passage with many leads still going, but without making the connection to Satan's Lovenest. This was only 30m away according to the survey, and would have offered another potential connection to the lower Infiernillo trunk level. The lake lead had ended after only 80 metres at a constriction that would probably yield to some serious persuasion, whereas Batwing Passage was surveyed for 80m before getting too tight.

The following day, Charley and Taco returned to Batwing Passage and discovered an alternative way on leading to the base of a small climb. They returned for rope and survey crews and managed to get a fair way before stopping. This lead is heading into a blank area of the survey with the strong air offering potential for an eventual surface connection. While a number of people decided to head out of the cave, I spent the day helping Susie take photographs of the World Beyond.

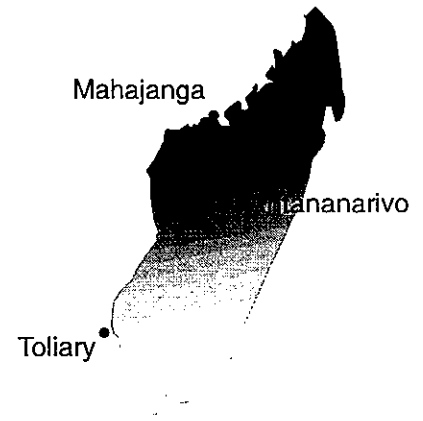
On New Years Eve, the last of us exited the cave, surfacing to blue skies and beer as we welcomed in the New Year. A total of 2300m was surveyed during the camp pushing the system to over 87 km.

On New Years Day we packed up camp and headed over to the Yerba Buena area, where Peter was very keen to try and open up a new entrance to Cueva del Rio Corona. This had been surveyed to the base of a trash pile from within the cave the previous year, but we had been unable to identify the appropriate sink on the surface. As soon as the trucks came to a halt, Peter was leading a crew on a surface survey to help identify the sink. He was helped by a lap top computer which allowed him to direct the survey in the appropriate direction.

No sooner had the general area been found, than three teams were digging in various sinks and within an hour or so Charley's team had made the connection. This new entrance meant that the 10 hour round trip to leads in the back of the cave was reduced to 20 minutes and we were able to take advantage of this in the next couple of days. A number of dome climbs were tackled in an attempt to get a connection with the nearby Sotano de las Calenturas, but with no success. Numerous groups scoured the hillsides for other leads, however the only notable find was a new entrance to Calenturas (the eighth!).

We left the mountain on January 4, after what had been two weeks of very enjoyable caving. I eventually made my way back to frigid Saskatoon, only to find that my bags had disappeared. Being separated from my caving gear was somewhat traumatic, however my fiancée was not particularly sympathetic to the suggestion that we scale down our wedding plans so that I could afford to replace it! Fortunately the gear turned up after 48 hours, having decided to take a separate holiday to Cranbrook, B.C., of all places. Now all I've got to do is mend it all in time for the next PEP trip in March.

MCG: Madagascar 1998



This is a short note to provide some initial information on the proposed expedition to Madagascar in summer 1998, prior to the AGM discussion on whether the MCG should go. It is somewhat difficult to condense to 1 A4 page, but here goes. The island is up to 1600 x 650 km and exports have included coffee and uranium. Habitats range from heathland to rainforest. There aren't any unpleasant snakes. French & Malagasy is spoken. Over 33,000 km² of Karst has been recorded - together with caves containing river passages over 30m wide and 5km long...

- Objective:** The planning is in the embryonic stages but we anticipate a lightweight expedition to investigate the caving potential of the little explored north-western part of the country, around the coastal area of Mahajanga. It can be done. We aim to have an enjoyable visit and to get some serious work done. The final logistics will define the scope further.
- Duration:** Approximately 6 weeks from July to September 1998. It is appreciated that not all would be able to commit themselves for this length of time so it may be possible to join the expedition for shorter periods of time - perhaps three weeks.
- Environment:** We could be in remote areas of rain forest for long periods time. Consequently, the expedition will be largely self reliant. We shall carry what is needed on our backs (or 4x4, donkey or zebu cart). Field food may be dehydrated, water obtained locally. The expedition is geared for cave exploration, however, not everyone can cave every day for six weeks so on the 'days off' activities such as wild life watching, 700 year old baobabs, cave spotting, data interpretation, stunning landscapes at *cirque rouge*, and even a cinema in Mahenjanga are available. As long as you are back to hold flashguns and survey tape.
- Personnel:** The expedition should consist of not less than 8 persons. It is recognised that while there is a great skill base in the MCG, further training will be required prior to departure. Training requirements will be discussed and appropriate events organised in due course. This will include navigation, surveying, medical, photography, fitness, team building & management, communications, etc. Each person should be multi-skilled - it is no good if your only expert in a particular area suddenly becomes dependent on ice-cold Andrex!
- Finance:** Without funding or sponsorship the trip may cost in the region of £1500 *excluding* personal equipment for the full six weeks duration. The majority of this is the return air fare. Additional personal expenditure may be required if persons do not already possess decent boots, Gore-Tex jackets etc. (Well, most of us have SRT kits). The expedition intends to open a bank account and to seek sponsorship once the objectives are finely honed. This could reduce the financial sacrifice.. Payments can be spread. It is likely that a substantial working deposit will be required shortly after the AGM.
- Transport:** Quite simply we intend to fly out, take road transport as far as possible, then yomp into the jungle. Each person will carry a fair share of the expedition kit plus their own personal equipment. For example 8-9mm rope is likely to be used. It might be possible to be based in a village and make forays to the field area.
- Communications:** Devices are yet to be decided but one possibility is to use Psion's, GPS (now cheap, similar in size to a mobile phone, and accurate to within 5 metres), and light weight satellite phones. You can wire the whole lot together too! Radio comms will require evaluation. Battery charging can be done via solar panels. There should be UK base station support in conjunction with the field units to download information.
- Publicity:** A short brochure (A3 folded) stating the aims of the expedition will be produced for potential sponsors. Upon return the aim is for a detailed illustrated publication and a presentation at the BCRA conference. Reports may be submitted to Caves & Caving, International Caver, & Descent for consideration.
- Contacts:** If you require any further information or even better have any information or ideas to contribute please contact Dave Tooke, Letti Patte on 01784 436237 or Charlie Allison on 0181 224 7591.

ARCHAEOLOGY WALK AROUND GLASTONBURY

This will take place on Sunday 13th April (the day after the AGM and Dinner). It will involve some driving, for example, between Meare and Glastonbury but, depending on numbers, we should be able to use our 12-seater Land Rover. Most of the walking will be in and around Glastonbury itself so we'll just keep going until people have had enough or it gets too dark. There will be more details nearer the time, or contact Yvonne Rowe on 01252-872006

1. THE ABBOTS WAY TRACK	2500BC	NEOLITHIC
2. THE SWEET TRACK (& POST TRACK) 2b. Peat Moors Visitor Centre	3806BC	NEOLITHIC
3. THE MEARE LAKE VILLAGES	300BC	IRON AGE
4. THE MEARE HEATH TRACK	1400BC	NEOLITHIC
5. MEARE FISH HOUSE (& MEARE POOL)	1400AD	MEDIEVAL
6. GLASTONBURY LAKE VILLAGE	300BC	IRON AGE
7. GLASTONBURY ABBEY	7th CENT. 10th CENT 12th CENT.	DARK AGE .ANGLO-SAXON MEDIEVAL
8. THE GEORGE & PILGRIM INN An appropriate lunch stop!	1450AD	MEDIEVAL
9. GLASTONBURY TRIBUNAL 9b. Glastonbury Lake Village Museum	1400AD	MEDIEVAL
10. ST JOHNS CHURCH	1175AD	MEDIEVAL
11. HOSPITAL OF ST MARY MAGDALENE	1251AD	MEDIEVAL
12. GLASTONBURY PRIORY BARN	14th CENT.	MEDIEVAL
13. CHALICE WELL	???AD 12th CENT.	ROMAN MEDIEVAL
14. GLASTONBURY TOR	6th CENT. 10th CENT. 13th CENT.	DARK AGE ANGLO-SAXON MEDIEVAL
15. PONTERS BALL DYKE	???	IRON AGE(?)

If we run short of time (and/or energy), the museums, the Glastonbury buildings and the Tor can be visited properly at another time.

more MCG doings

MCG RESCUE PRACTICE This is being organised by Dave Tooke our Rescue Warden and will take place in Tynning's Barrow Cave on Saturday 7th June 1997 (members weekend). There will be more details in the newsletter nearer the time but in the meantime, contact Dave on 01784-436237 if you are interested in coming along and taking part in this worthwhile practice of rescue techniques.

SLIDE SHOW of MCG's trip to Chartreuse by Charlie Allison at the Cottage on Saturday 8th March, time to be arranged.

RESCUE NEWS Well, the news is that there is no news! There were only two rescues on Mendip last year. This can only mean one of two things:-

1. Cavers are caving much more safely... or
 2. No-one went caving last year.
- Seriously though, this is good news, but the MRO must feel at a loose end!

MCG ON INTERNET Not yet but it's only a matter of time! Tim Francis already e-mails the newsletter to Pete Hollings in Canada, Steve Albino in America and Jules Flavell in South America, saving MCG money on postage. The biggest saving will be when he e-mails Occasional Publications to them as these cost

quite a bit in postage. Tim is to set up a distribution list so he can e-mail MCG publications to other members abroad if requested. He would also like to hear from members in the UK who would like their newsletters and Occasional Publications e-mailed to them. If you want to be on either of these distribution lists then e-mail Tim (t.francis@nopres.co.uk) with your e-mail address.

OTTER HOLE Geoffe Beale has booked Otter Hole for Sunday 27th July 1997. It will be a between the tides trip lasting approx. 12 hours. Cavers must be reasonably fit and have the right equipment, eg. wet suits and 12 hours of *electric* light. Meet in the Otter Hole carpark 9:30am. There are only 6 places so if you wish to be on the trip, or would like more information, then contact Geoffe on 0118-972-2510...

PEAK CAVERN Geoffe has also booked Peak Cavern, Derbys for an MCG group on Sunday 9th March. The trip is fully booked at the moment but if you would like to be a reserve in case of cancellation, contact Geoffe Beale or Lee Hawkswell.

STOP PRESS on Madagascar - the area is due east of Tana, on the coast, and it is an area called Tsingy de Bemeraha. It is spectacular tower karst but a World Heritage site so permission has to be sought before MCG can go there.

MCG ANNUAL DINNER MENU

STARTERS

Home Made Vegetable Soup
Melon Boats
Prawn Cocktail
Smooth Paté With Toast

MAIN COURSES

Roast Topside of Beef
Supreme of Chicken in a White Wine Sauce
Medallions of Pork with Maderia Sauce
Cheesy Pasta Bake

DESSERTS

Raspberry Pavlova
Apple Pie with Cream
Black Forest Gateau

Coffee and Mints

*If Vegans contact Pete Moseley
he will arrange for a special meal*

The menus opposite are interchangeable, and members and guests are asked to tick their choices and order their tickets on the enclosed order form.

The committee is trying to get an after dinner speaker with a Wookey Hole theme.

There will also be a raffle,
hopefully!
(see page 3).