

MCG NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NUMBER 260

MAY 1997

TO HELL AND BACK - CAMP ONE, INFIERNILLO

by Pete Hollings

With March in Saskatoon typically bleak, I took advantage of surplus Airmiles and headed for Austin to join the latest PEP expedition. This time the plan was to spend some time at Camp One, located only a few hundred metres inside the Infiernillo (Little Hell) entrance to Sistema Purificacion. Only the boulder hopping down the arroyo and the 35m upclimb into the entrance make it worth camping! We arrived at the entrance around 6pm on the evening of the 8th of March, some 32 hours of continuous travelling from Saskatoon. We had to rebuild one section of road and remove three or four large trees, but as all this could be done wearing shorts and it was -28°C at home so I was happy.

The following morning we packed our duffels and trekked down to the entrance, where we sat around for an hour or so while Peter Sprouse and Troy Lanier finished the bolt climb up to the 25m high passage heading into the cliff. Previous visitors had free climbed another route, but erosion and caver traffic had made this almost impassable. Soon we were all encamped in the relative luxury of Camp 1.1, the original Camp One being too small for all fifteen of us, the only drawback was the short crawl required to get to the latrine.

On Monday five teams headed out to map the Tubes. The area around Camp One contains an incredibly complex set of passages that form a three dimensional maze varying from walking passage to belly crawl, appropriately named the Confusion Tubes. I was part of one of two teams surveying in the western portion of the Tubes. Jack Kehoe, Kevin Stafford and I made up one team while Dale Pate, Paula Bauer and Bill Stephens were the other. To get to the Tubes, we followed the Western Loop, a predominantly boulder floored borehole that ends up at a steep flowstone slope. At the top of this, after the customary rest stop, we headed into the Thru Tube, marking a couple of leads along the way. The Thru Tube opens out into the impressive Balcony Borehole from which many of the other tubes take off. Our route took us into the Shoe Tube where we started to survey. Dale's crew took one high level lead, while my team mapped a short section of walking passage before it connected into known passage. We then backtracked a little and started mapping our way up a steeply inclined body sized tube which got steadily smaller before breaking out into walking passage at a T-junction. The upslope route soon broke out into big walking passage at yet another junction. Following the right hand route allowed us to connect to the Eastern Tubes. As this was the first connection between the eastern and western tubes we named it the Detente Tube with the crawling passage becoming the Berlin Tunnel. We then followed the route to the left until it came to a fork at which point we stopped for the day after mapping 185m in 50 stations. Back at camp Dale's team had managed to map 110m complaining that they could hear us throughout. By midnight all the teams were back at camp with nearly 600m in the bag.

The next day we headed back to the same area, not leaving camp until 2pm. We started by mapping a walking lead below the Seventeen Hour Tube. Considering that this is a major route through the cave, it was surprising that this lead had been left for so long. We were hoping that the lead would head towards one of the passages we had mapped the day before. We managed to map 90m of nice walking passage before it degenerated into a low crawl. Instead we decided to push a steeply ascending tube, which eventually connected back to the western end of Detente Tube. This made for a much faster route, hence the name Seventeen Minute Tube. We then headed back to the two way junction and mapped the left hand fork until it connected into the Rio Shumate. As we mapped our way to this connection we were haunted by the eerie sound of the Star Trek theme wafting through the passage, to the accompaniment of frenzied hammering. We discovered the source of this when we bumped into Carl Fromen who was caving with Dale and Paula (the beguiling chanteuse). We first encountered Carl when he stuck his hand through an otherwise impassable tube. We sent Kevin off to find them and were most amused when he managed to get lost for 10 minutes; it really is an incredible maze of passage!

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MCG CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
03 May-05 May	Mendip	Cottage Work Weekend	Joe Frampton	0118-940-2356
16 May-18 May	Mendip	BCRA CRG/CSG Field Meet	Martin Rowe	01252-872006
24 May-26 May	Devon	Pridhamsleigh Caverns & others	Marcus Ward	01252-815112
07 Jun	Mendip	Rescue Practice	Dave Tooke	01784-436237
07 Jun (late)	Mendip	Barbecue & Barrel	Bring your own food	
07 Jun (later)	Mendip	Upper Flood II, The Slide Show	Charlie Allison	0181-224-7591
05 Jul (TBC)	Mendip	Longwood/August Clean-up	Marcus Ward	01252-815112
27 Jul	South Wales	Otter Hole	Goffe 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 trip into OFD I	Joan Goddard	01608-810382
25 Apr 1998	Mendip	AGM & Dinner	Tim Francis	0181-876-1863
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:	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, 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

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PAT WALSH	EXAMINERS	HUW JONES AND BEN COOPER	

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BRIAN MURLIS We were given the very sad news at the start of the AGM of Brian's untimely death. Brian joined MCG in November '87. He was already an experienced caver and at the time was digging in Battery Swallet. In March '88 he became Tacklemaster and from April '89 until April '92 was Cottage Warden. During this time he was an active digger in Upper Flood, Bone Hole, Rod's Pot, Pinetree, Longwood Valley Sink and Eastwater, amongst others. Eventually he turned his attention to South Wales, taking up cave diving in Danyr-Ogof where he helped push Battle of Britain Series, adding several thousand feet to the system. He was a regular contributor to the newsletter, and wrote up his explorations of DYO for an Occasional Publication. Due to his diving in South Wales he spent less time caving on Mendip and he reluctantly left MCG about 1993, although he always kept in touch with us. A collection will be organised later.

AGM doings

THANKYOU There was a vote of thanks for Joan Goddard, Lee Hawkswell and Geoff Beale for their hard work and input during their time served on the committee.

HALF-YEARLY SOCIAL As a result of the poor turnouts to the half-yearly social functions over the last few years (barn dances and a disco), the floor was asked by Pete Moseley if anyone could suggest something different and less costly. Suggestions included a barbecue and disco at the cottage (similar to those held over the Upper Flood II dig period); a curry evening and disco; a karaoke evening; a games evening with armchair rugby; and a bonfire and fireworks to go with any of the above if held at the cottage.

MCG SUBS Johnathan Roberts suggested that the treasurer should now be projecting ahead from this year's accounts and thinking about whether we will need to put subs up in the near future.

ELECTRICS Roy Kempston asked if we could have our own electric supply as the present supply was only just coping with demand. He was told that when enquiries were made many years ago we were quoted about £5000. Now, with inflation and privatisation, costs would be even more expensive. The cottage warden had tried low wattage bulbs throughout the cottage but these kept going missing and their cost means it's not worth replacing them.

CAVE KEYS Marcus Ward asked who would keep the Group's new Draenen and Aggie keys. If they are kept in the tacklestore and borrowed, they could be out of circulation for some weeks if a member takes them a week or two before a trip to South Wales and returns them a week or two after. It was suggested that the meet secretary keep them. A request for these keys would be made to the meet secretary who would send them by post to the requesting member. The member would post them back again after the trip.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Post	Elected
Secretary	Tim Francis
Treasurer	Martin Rowe
Editor	Yvonne Rowe
Tacklemaster	Dave Tooke
Caving secretary	Julie Hesketh
Cottage warden	Joe Frampton
Social Secretary	Pete Moseley
Recorder/Librarian	Wayne Hiscox

NON-COMMITTEE POSTS

Cons & Acc officer	Marcus Ward
Rescue warden	Brian Snell
Examiners	Huw Jones/Ben Cooper

MOTION A motion was put forward by Tim Francis to change the titles of some officers. The motion was passed and the officers are now called:-

Secretary, Treasurer, Editor, Tackle Master, Caving Secretary, Cottage Warden, Social Secretary, Recorder/Librarian.

SIGNATORIES The signatories are now Martin Rowe, Tim Francis, Wayne Hiscox and Roy Kempston (any 2 being required).

TO HELL AND BACK - CAMP ONE, INFIERNILLO - continued from page 1

Back at camp we totalled up the survey and found that we had managed to map over 250m. Peter Sprouse's team, John Cradit and Troy, had produced a similar amount, having completed a bolt climb in Napoleon's Dome, at the western limit of the cave that lead them into 270 metres of walking passage. They left the survey at a 15m pit, having run out of rope. Susie's team, Robin Cope and Bill, had also had a good day in the Arrakis area, which was named after the desert planet in the novel Dune. It is possibly one of the oldest portions of the cave and now consists of dry, dust-filled passage. Susie's crew mapped over 200m heading into a blank area of the map.

Almost by default, Wednesday became a rest day. Groups had straggled into camp between 1 and 4 in the morning and consequently most of us did not stir from our sleeping bags until late in the afternoon. So we spent the rest of the day eating, talking and drinking beer. Some adventurous souls even wandered back to the entrance to watch the sunset.... unfortunately it was overcast.

With a good night's sleep behind us, we were able to make an early start. The plan was for three teams to head towards the lead above Napoleon's Dome, rig the drop, and then leapfrog survey down the borehole that was sure to be there. We headed along the Eastern Loop up to the Balcony Borehole. There, we traversed over the 30m drop over the entrance, listening to the sound of cavers entering the Thru Tube below. We then worked our way through the Octopus Tube, into Silly Rabbit Tube, then through Mrs. Lubner's Tube which opened out into the Misty Borehole. From there, the Hose Tube and the Banana Tube took us into Napoleon's Borehole which we followed to the base of the climb. While some people headed off to rig the drop Susie, Maria, Tehrany, Jack and I took some photos, marvelling at the incredible draught in the passage. By the time we caught up with the others the pit had been rigged and typically, there was no way on at the bottom. Troy and John had already started working on a dig at the bottom in an attempt to follow the air, while Peter was tackling a nasty climb in order to examine a possible lead. Despite gashing his leg when a large handhold pulled loose from the wall, Peter made it to the top and reported 'going' cave. Consequently we divided into three teams and set to work. Susie, Troy and Kevin were to map the pit; Jack, Maria and I surveyed up the climb and into the passage beyond while Peter, Bill and John became the designated push team. We surveyed 75m up the steeply ascending mud covered passage before we heard the unmistakable sound of frenzied digging. The great air we had been following all along had disappeared into a maze of impenetrable tubes and rock-filled digs. By the time we got there, the push team was already on its fourth dig! While we continued poking away at various holes, Susie's crew returned to the top of Napoleon's Dome to check out another lead but unfortunately this didn't go either. We got back to camp after a 14 hour trip to find that Wayne Bockelman, Mary and Carl had mapped 100m of tube while Dale, Robin and Paula had mapped nearly 200m.

Friday was to be our last day of surveying. A quick look at the results showed that we were only 500m short of making Sistema Purificacion 90 km long, so as each team headed out into the tubes, they knew that 100m each would be enough. I went out with Kevin and Jack to a portion of the Confusion Tubes off the Eastern Loop. Peter pointed out a couple of leads then headed off with Troy to survey some tube. Our first lead led off the Original Tube, this was a fairly short one that soon connected into known passage and was named the Plagarist Tube, because it was not very original. The Tubes in this area were very different from those in other areas consisting of clean-washed rock with beautiful scallops. We next backtracked a little to map a passage off the Seven Way Junction. It took us a little while to get started on this survey, as Jack struggled to sketch his way out of the Junction room. Things didn't get any better as we progressed down the passage with nearly every station having two or more leads coming off it. We eventually mapped the Chimichanga Tube for 70m until it connected into the First Tube. As we were a little short of 100m, we decided to map a couple of side leads before we were eventually stopped by sketcher failure, when Jack was finally defeated by the complexity of the passage.

We headed home stopping along the way to watch Troy tackle a dome climb near camp. He and Peter having stopped surveying some time before us. The presence of the power drill and a motorcycle battery meant that Troy was able to make good progress up the climb, much to the amusement of the peanut gallery below who offered 'helpful' advice while finishing off the last of the beer. Unfortunately, Troy ran out of bolts before he got to the top, but a smoke test had shown that at least some of the air was going in that direction. Susie's team was the last group back, the lead in Arrakis having been mapped for over 150m and left still going. We totalled up the survey for the trip only to find that we were 19m short of the 90 km mark. While there was some talk of going out again to find a few more meters of survey, nothing came of it.

The next morning Peter woke up unusually early and proceeded to sort through his entire collection of plastic bags, eventually forcing us all to get up far earlier than we had intended. Apparently it was almost possible to hear the whole camp roll over in unison as Peter shone his light around the room. As a result camp was packed up fairly quickly and people started making their way back to the entrance. Carl was the first to descend. While we talked him out of abseiling down with his frame pack on his back, he instead decided to lower it down on the end of the rope. He enlisted Maria to do the actual lowering, while he abseiled down the other end to stop it getting stuck. About half way down, he told Maria to let go, and the next thing we heard was the pack tumbling free. We later learned that the frame had fallen apart, but Maria assumed it was her fault, a view supported by the peanut gallery. The last we saw of Carl he was hiking down the arroyo hauling his mutilated pack behind him. It was Maria's turn next, and she looked very organised as she clipped in her descender, grabbed hold of the tether to brace her pack, and then pushed her pack over the edge only to find that it was not clipped in. Once again the peanut gallery was vastly amused. The rest of the descents were uneventful and we were all back at the trucks by noon. We took advantage of the easily accessible water to wash up for the first time in a week, while inspecting the damage in the two tumbling packs. Apart from the pack itself, Carl had only broken the filter on his camera, although Maria's disposable camera was pretty mangled.

From there, it was all downhill, literally. The fact that it was raining made the roads a little treacherous with the rebuilt section causing a few problems. But we made it down to the tarmac in good time and stopped for supper at the Hacienda, a beautiful Hotel in the middle of nowhere that did not even flinch at catering to 15 smelly cavers. From there we drove through the night back to the States getting into Austin at dawn, and from there it's only 12 hours to Saskatoon.

SWILDON'S HOLE - 9th February '97

Geoff Beale, Tony Bolton, Captain (Joan) Goddard, Private (Simon) Goddard, Cara Allison, Ian Wright.

This trip was arranged as Tony's training trip. He was to rig the old 40ft pot for ladder and SRT. Having reached the head of the pitch, everything went well until he dropped the anchor spanner down the pot. Private Goddard was given the task of finding it. This held the rigging up until it was retrieved and brought back up to the pitch head. Captain and Private Goddard and Cara then descended on the ladder/lifeline, followed by Ian, Geoff and Tony on SRT. Once the training/rigging was completed we all set off out via the wet way.

Somewhere between the Water Chamber and the entrance, a purple 10mm cowstail and 3 alloy krabs were lost. If found, contact Geoff Beale where a liquid reward is offered for their safe return.

OFD II - 23rd February '97

Geoff Beale, Tony Bolton (MCG) John Hutchinson, Steve Mackey (SWCC)

In God-awful weather we trudged up the hill to OFD II entrance in what was like a Welsh monsoon. Once inside, however, things were drier - but only slightly. Our intention on this trip was to locate Edwards Short Cut which is at the bottom of Gnome Passage on the left hand side, and to see where it goes from there, and also where it is a short cut to. Once located we had several awkward climbs and traverses to contend with but nothing daunting except where you could fall down deep holes. We diverted from the main route and John H showed us to the beautifully decorated Frozen River Passage with its abundance of helictites, straws, pillar columns, etc. It is a stunning passage and well worth a return for a camera trip. Popping under a small rock in a passage that was easily missed, brought us to an area of high sinuous rifts that eventually brought us to Cross Rift where we turned right and up some awkward climbs to the top of Moonlight Chamber with a huge white stalactite hanging from the roof and with an equally large pure white stal boss underneath it. We turned at this point and came out via Cross Rift and Salubrious Passage to - yes, a continuation of the wet Welsh weather.

So - where did Edwards Short Cut go to? I don't know but the passages visited on this trip were very impressive and worth a re-visit, especially to the Frozen River Passage.

Geoff Beale

Pothole Pourri

MAY DEVON MEET As reported in Bulletin 20, Marcus Ward has arranged an MCG Devon meet on the May Bank Holiday weekend of 24/25/26th May. Marcus plans to do five caves in all, most of which are not that long but are well worth visiting for various reasons. The five caves are: Pridhamsleigh Cavern, Bakers Pit, Radford's Cave, Afton Red Rift (a round trip), and Pixies Hole. Marcus has booked accommodation in the Devon Speleological Society hut so come along for a weekend somewhere a bit different. If you are interested, ☎ Marcus on 01252-815112 for more details.

LONGWOOD/AUGUST Marcus Ward again! He has for a long time now been meaning to arrange for a clean-up in Longwood /August (his favourite Mendip cave), and now that he is MCG's Conservation and Access officer he has made this his first task. The clean-up is planned for the members' weekend of July 5th/6th - probably the Saturday but it depends on what suits other people at the time.

MORE CONSERVATION & ACCESS (but not Marcus this time). At the meeting of the Pwll Du Cave Management Group on 1st March '97, members and officers of the PDCMG met to discuss the land sale at Pwll Du, and its consequence to cavers, and to consider the news that a second entrance to Ogof Draenen had been opened.

Access and Land Purchase. Due to the proposed land sale, the Coal Authority through its Land Agent has stated that it now requires a legal access agreement. The PDCMG is now in negotiations with the CA and good progress has been made. The CA are asking for gated, controlled access which seems to be covered by the present arrangements. PDCMG has also expressed an interest in land purchase and has made progress over raising money for possible land purchase. The area is also being put forward to the Countryside Council for Wales as a possible Site of Special Scientific

Interest, and for other protection by a) Land purchase, and b) Working with other possible purchasers such as Environmental organisations or the PDCMG.

Second Entrance. The meeting was informed that the second entrance had been opened more or less by accident, when a boulder choke inside the cave was being investigated and it ran in. Work has been done above ground to make the collapse safe. PDCMG considered that the new entrance was not viable, due to its position on a very steep, dangerous slope with inadequate access. The site was highly visible and erosion would be a problem, with the top lip of the opening already beginning to break away. It was felt that remote areas of the cave had already been well conserved by virtue of their distance from the original entrance, and that these areas would be threatened by the opening of an entrance nearby. Given the unsuitability of the site, and various other implications, it was decided that the new entrance would be capped, but in the unfortunate event that a rescue was necessary from that area, it should be possible to re-open the entrance.

NEW DIG At Easter a 'new' old mine shaft opened up under Gruffy Field near to the entrance to Charterhouse Cave. It is about 10-12 feet deep with ginging at one end under which an open passage extends for about 4 feet. It is to be restored/capped and dug by members of CCCo Ltd clubs starting on 10th/11th May. Any MCG members interested are welcome.

PICOS DE EUROPA, SPAIN '97 We have done some rough costings, based on 6 people travelling in Yvonne Rowe's Land Rover. The ferry (Portsmouth/Caen) would cost about £60 per person, including a (compulsory) berth on the outward journey. The Land Rover works out at £75 each which includes fuel, tolls, and lease charges. With more than 6, costs fall dramatically (eg. for 8 people the Land Rover costs fall to £55 each). There are 12 places in total so if anyone else is interested, ☎ Yvonne on 01252-872006

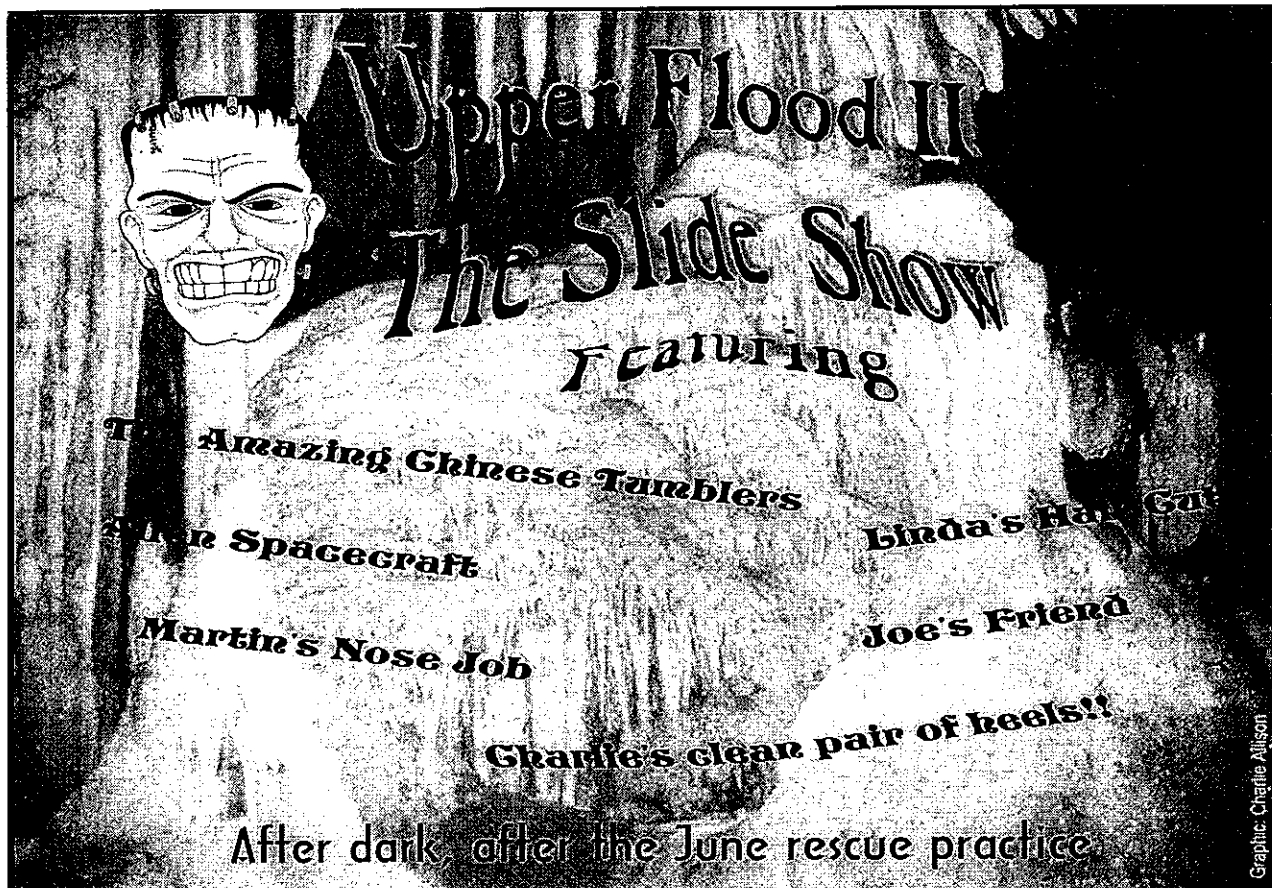
CALLING ALL CRUSTIES

Having "restored" the flues at Charterhouse leadworks, Somerset County Council are now considering what to do with the remains of Netherwood Cottage. For those of you who are old enough to remember, this was MCG's first headquarters before we moved to the wooden hut in Jim Fry's yard. One of the ideas is to provide some form of information point or shelter for visitors to the flues and the nature reserve. SCC would like to consult appropriate persons before making a decision. If any members (especially the ones who were around when Netherwood Cottage was MCG's) have any views on this, can they please contact Les Davis at the Charterhouse Centre, or Tim Francis (who will be responding on behalf of MCG), or Joan Goddard who will be writing as an individual.

We have also had a request from Dick Broomhead for information on Netherwood Cottage, Charterhouse. He would like interior and exterior photos (originals if possible, which will be returned), and any details of prior use, ownership, etc. Dick Broomhead is at present surveying the site. If you can help, please contact him at Little Thrift, Round Oak Road, Cheddar, BS27 3BN or ☎ 01934-743588.

COVENANT WINDFALL

Many thanks to Alan Mellon for sorting out MCG's claim with the tax man. Alan has submitted claims for 1992/3 to 1995/6 totalling £1978.50 and the cheques have now been sent to Martin Rowe. Alan has now stood down as Covenants Administrator, after having recovered in excess of £5000 for MCG. Well done Alan! Jane Baldwin is taking over from Alan and if you are not covenanting your subs you'll find enclosed with this newsletter a covenant form. Please fill it in and return it in the SAE to Jane.



For more information call
Charlie Allison on 0181 224 7591

FRAGMENTS FROM FRANCE - 16

Okay, so we got to the Chartreuse 12 months late - these things happen, but SWCC were in residence and there was enough tackle to handle anything in the Dent de Crolles system. We arrived, bringing Pete Harvey with us from Toulouse, on the 16 August and installed ourselves on the Martiniere campsite at St.Pierre de Chartreuse. The first few days were hot and dry, ideal for sweating off a few pounds by moving kit up to the Trou du Glaz and exploring the top of the Dent de Crolles and locating P40 - not forgetting to stand on the highest point (purely for the view, you understand) at 2062m. We also bagged the Pic de la Pinea at 1771m as a lead-in exercise; this offered more marvellous views, of course.

Guiers Mort - Glaz junction (U-tube) Eventually we persuaded ourselves that the weather was deteriorating enough to go underground. On 21 August Denise and I joined three SWCC cavers on a trip into Guiers Mort, aimed at reaching the Glaz connections. The walk from Perquelin car park (980m) up to the Guiers entrance (1332m) took about an hour and we entered the cave at 13h00. The stream seemed very low, welling up from beneath the right-hand wall 50m beyond the impressive entrance arch; an obvious hole in the wall evidently carried water but was dry. We dumped our rucsacks in an alcove before reaching Climber's Chamber where (surprise, surprise and big mistake) we ignored the inviting 10m rope up the right-hand wall and scrambled on down to the sump pool, above which a howling gale blew outwards in our faces. Deep water was not on the menu so we set off up a grotty hands and knees crawl to the left, which degenerated into flat-out grovelling then worsened to become a wet squeeze. "This is not the way," I thought and back-tracked to an obvious right-hand branch, hopped over a low wall of rocks and promptly found the Hurricane on my left - hard to miss, really. With half an hour well wasted we lost no time reaching the Balcony Pitch of 10m, via a deviation down into Grand Canyon. 100m upstream reached a 6m ascent at the Elisabeth Cascade then, crossing pools (where was Christmas Basin?) and making various easy ascents got us into Syphon Gallery, past its 12m rope descent then down another 12m pitch to reach La Plage sump - beautiful.

Easy walking over the cobbles of the streambed soon brought us to a parting of the ways where we left the stream and climbed up 3m on the right into Bivouac Gallery. We had set 18h00 as the turnround time - whether or not we reached the U-tube junction - so there was no time for sightseeing. Route-finding was mostly a matter of following one's nose; Pothole Gallery was obvious, the appropriate holes were traversed around and stalactite traverse involved straddling over a deeply entrenched floor for about 100m. The climb of 4m up to the right at the junction with Grand Collecteur gave easy access to a hands-and-knees crawl along a broad ledge for maybe 80m to reach a 10m rope descent into the streamway. Upstream was now mostly a stroll with occasional pools - including the famous 'Piscine' - for company, soon becoming more energy-consuming as numerous short climbs presented themselves. Then, all of a sudden, there it was on the right - the hole in the floor into the U-tube - the rift passage continuing ahead past a laddered inlet on the right to drop into a streamway after 100m.

Having proved the connection, we set off back at 18h30, reaching the entrance just as a violent storm was abating. The stream had risen noticeably and the hole in the wall 50m inside was now gushing out water. It was now 22h00 and no time was lost squelching down the path back to the cars. Later I looked again at the survey and was surprised to see how much of the horizontal element of the classic through-trip we had covered in this trip - about 60% - reaching over 100m above Guiers entrance. In the evening of the next day we met Bruno Talour, a local caver who lives opposite the campsite. He brought us a copy of his guide book describing selected trips in the Chartreuse. Discussing the Dent de Crolles System he recommended an alternative to the normal through-trip, one which took in more of the big, fossil galleries and completely avoided the Guiers streamway by rejoining the entrance passage between Climber's Chamber and the entrance. Yes, it avoids the meanders! Two through-trips having been made through the "classic" route, the third party through de-tackled from the Puits du Pendule in order to put the tackle back into the system from P36 downwards.

Tony Knibbs

Trou du Glaz to Grotte Chevalier On the 24th August we set off from the campsite at about 10h00 to do the through-trip from the Glaz to Grotte Chevalier. We dropped two of the party off at the Col du Coq and drove over to St.Hilaire to leave one of the cars at the hospital car park for the return journey. This took longer than expected due to the heavy rain and mist and our two friends at the Col were pretty cold by the time we got back to them. Anyway this meant that the walk up to the Glaz was a lot cooler than usual. The cloud seemed to follow us up and had almost gone by the time we got to the top. Tony and Peter took our kit back down and four of us set off. Everything went well and we had no route finding problems until we were beyond the Fernand pitch. On the traverse line leading to the Diaclase Annette, I managed to slip off the ledge and I ended up hanging from my cow's tails. Luckily a gallant gentleman from SWCC (Brian Clipstone), clambered back and managed to pull me up enough to clip my hand jammer on to the line and thereby pull myself back up on to the ledge. Iain, who followed, made the line more secure for the remainder of the party.

From the Diacase Annette everything was straightforward, down some rifty pitches and round a big hole in the floor. In fact everything was going so well that we forgot to look for a small hole in the floor leading to a tightish meander. Instead we went merrily on and up a fixed rope leading to a big pitch that was not rigged. We began to search for the way on eventually realising that we should not have gone up, but down. We lost about an hour with this diversion but were soon on the right road again. The meander was tight at the start and led to a 10m rope followed by the Puits Maurice. Next came the Nadine Meander leading to the Puits de l'Oubliette, an interesting move down to a rebelay and across and round the corner up a traverse line. This led to a low passage, hands and knees crawl on to the last pitch. Feeling good now that we were near the end, we hadn't banked on the final rope being so tight and a real pain to get on and off. To add to the fun, it was also too short!

But here we were finally in the huge passage of Grotte Chevalier. It reminded us of the large passages in the PSM; you couldn't see the sides. We remembered what the previous party had said about not getting lost here and kept to the left-hand wall. Taking care not to go down the left-hand passage. We clambered up what seemed like a never-ending boulder slope until the roof came down to meet the boulders. Here we searched around on the right for the exit. Climbing up a loose boulder and rock-strewn slope we eventually emerged through a small hole to a beautiful moonlit night. From high above the valley, we could see the lights of the towns below and the mountains silhouetted against the moonlit sky. One of the most impressive views from a cave entrance I have ever seen. From here we just had to get back to the car. First a scramble down the slope a bit until we found the path and turned left away from the cave. The walk was about 1h30 back to the car. The trip had taken us about 8 hours, not including the walks up and down the mountain. Back to camp to find that Peter had drunk all of my beer but that he had made an excellent curry!

Denise Knibbs

Glaz through-trip (P36 to Reseau Sanguin) On the 27th August a party of six assembled at the Trou du Glaz portal, just ahead of the rain, at 10h00. Pete Harvey had selflessly walked up with us simply for the pleasure of taking rucsacks back to the car at the Col de Coq, then repositioning the vehicle at Perquelin. The remaining five duly set off for P36, losing little time with the Lantern Shafts. Despite some strange rigging, P36 was quite straightforward and dropped into a pleasant streamway. Two cascades of 11m and 9m in a fine high rift were passed before reaching the wet Puits de l'Arche over which we traversed on fixed lines to reach the 11m Puits des Malchanceux. Now dry, the passage soon brought us to Puits du Bivouac, also 11m, down to the beginning of the roomy passage of Champs Elysees, entered by a turn to the left. Champs Elysees begins gently upslope, levels off then runs markedly downslope; it later becomes modestly well-decorated with moonmilk and "cauliflower" formations on walls and floor signalling a transformation into Galerie de Champignons. It was while moving downslope over a stretch of these formations that one of the party, Tracy, took a headlong fall, winding herself and suffering a cut hand. I wasn't the only one to think that this was not the best place for a real accident to happen. We continued steadily downslope to a sudden change of direction as the Cascade Rocheuse was reached. Here we were confronted by an almost vertical wall across the passage, disappearing up 50m into gloom from which a rope hung in one of several deep flutes separated by sharp, raised ridges.

Beneath the wall a small passage carried a steady trickle of water at which we filled the carbide lamps. Ascent of Cascade Rocheuse was rather a messy movement, swinging about across sundry flutings, then the rope was joined by a ladder which either got in the way or provided occasional footholds, depending on one's point of view. The top was a broad, roomy stance from which a splendid roomy passage - Boulevard des Tritons - headed purposefully downslope for 200m to the head of Puits Banane, a drop of 18m to a traverse off to the left (before reaching bottom) to a 4m climb into the continuation of Boulevard des Tritons. Still progressing downslope, the passage floor became entrenched, then a slot-like pitch was bypassed to the left. With an occasional need to straddle the trench the way continued roomy and with no route finding problems despite numerous side galleries to left and right. Arrival at a yawning chasm confirmed our position as correct; this was Puits Rias, some 50m of black space but with an easy traverse across and along the left-hand wall. The next navigation check was at the 75m Puits Isabelle where a low crawl under the left-hand wall opens out at an easy ledge around the impressive 10m wide shaft.

Still going downslope for a couple of hundred metres we reached an obvious route marker of a low wall of rocks across the passage, indicating the need to take a left-hand bedding-plane into smaller passages soon reaching the head of Puits Pierre, 35m. An assortment of grotty ropes was reinforced by an SWCC line, red in colour and thick enough to prove awkward to descend. As progress reduced first to hands-and-knees crawling then flat-out, so the air current increased to gale force as we grovelled through the final 250m of Reseau Sanguin to pop out spectacularly into Guiers Mort entrance series between the entrance and Climber's Pitch. We emerged almost exactly at the point where we had hidden our rucsacks before exploring Guiers Mort six days before! It was now 19h00, allowing an unhurried descent to Perquelin then time for a shower before dinner at the "Atre Fieurie" adjacent to the campsite. Why aren't all caving days like this?

Tony Knibbs

MCG doings

WELCOME TO Cara Allison who has been accepted as a probationary member. She has also moved to Flat 3, Chesterfield, House, 123 Henbury Road, Henbury, Bristol, BS10 7AA ☎ 0117-950-1994

AN APPLICATION for membership from Peter Bennett of 20 Sayesbury Avenue, Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire CM21 0ED ☎ 01279-724103 (proposed by Tim Francis, Joe Frampton) will be considered at the committee meeting on 7th June '97

Reggie Pain is now an MCG SRT rigger.

COTTAGE PHONE Joe Frampton has removed the phone temporarily as it is not working properly. Could this be due to M****s confusing the cottage phone with his mobile phone whilst drunk, and walking into the lounge as he was phoning Z*e?!

1998 AGM will be at 2.30pm on 25th April in the Long Room of the Hunters Lodge Inn, Priddy.

A MESSAGE FROM DOWN UNDER We recently had this letter from John Beachamp and I'm sure he won't mind me printing it in the newsletter for you all to read:-

"Greetings from Down Under. Sorry about the delay in contact with you all, we have had a very strenuous year moving and settling twice over. We are now much more established and are pleased to report that we are very soon to be the proud owners of a house in the country. Our residential address will be 18 William Street, Emerald 3782, but as there is no postbox at present any correspondence should be sent to PO Box 569, Emerald, Vic 3782. Thankyou for the menu for the AGM, unfortunately we are unable to get a babysitter that night so must decline the invitation. If you've any free guest tickets to the BEC 'do' later this

year, we could probably swing it. I am also pleased to announce that I have recently started my own business. This is a franchise (very popular here) in the Entertainment Industry, concentrating on weddings and corporate events. Although the first 6 months will be slow, the prospects in this city are exciting and promise to be very financially rewarding. Ally is still nursing but will leave her high-powered job within the next 4-6 months, to concentrate on pampering Tom and myself. A couple of months ago we tried to go underground at Labertouch Caves, approx. 120km east of Melbourne. Not only couldn't we find the cave, we couldn't even find the local road. Such is the size of this place. Give our regards to all that want to remember us. I will write again when we have unpacked the boxes, most of which are still sealed from the UK. Have a good election!"

NIGHT WALK MCG had an invite from Speleo Rhal to take part in their night walk on March 15th. It was organised by Ollie Haselden, son of Mike, and was a really good event. MCG had a small team of four (Martin & Yvonne Rowe, and Brian & David Snell) and we came second out of ten teams. MCG entered once before and came second then too - you don't aim to win or you have to stage the next event (sounds familiar!). It was in the New Forest, started at 7.30pm and lasted 5 hours. You were given ½hr to plot your 30 grid references and work out a route. There were huge penalty points for every minute overdue but we just scraped in in the last few minutes. It was a superb event, great fun and we look forward to next year.

MCG RESCUE PRACTICE Just a reminder that this will take place in Tynning's Barrows Swallet on 7th June - more details to follow. There will be a barbecue and barrel in the evening so all-in-all it should be a good day (and evening!). The cottage will be quite busy that weekend as BTCV have booked 12 bunks but they will also be engaged in a worthwhile cause drystone walling for MCG.