

# MCG NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NUMBER 261

JUNE 1997

## MCG DEVON WEEKEND, 24-26 May '97

*Team: Marcus Ward, Zoe Hammersley, Martin and Yvonne Rowe, Peter O'Rourke and Michelle, Cara Allison*

We wanted to do Reed's Cave but had been told that it was closed for conservation reasons. What we didn't know was that it is opened occasionally (out of bat hibernation season) on request and with a leader. Luckily for us Ian McKechnie was staying at the Pengelly Cave Research Centre in Buckfastleigh with his scout leaders and families. We were staying just round the corner at the Devon Speleological Society hut so called on them for a bit of social chit-chat and discovered that one of his team, Alan Finch, is on the Pengelly Trust Committee and is their leader for Reed's. So, we arranged a trip for the Sunday.

### *Saturday 24th May:*

Baker's Pit - (MW, MR, YR, CA, PO, M?, Derek Sutherland and Janice Brown) We met Derek Sutherland, one of the scout leaders, at the Pengelly Centre who offered to show us round Baker's. The entrance is in an old landfill site, which explains the long concrete entrance pipe (16m). Once in we almost immediately entered the large Main Chamber and Boulder Hall which was quite impressive. Here we went on to Judges (there's a carving of a judges head on a boulder) and on towards the second entrance. Back in Judges, Martin and Marcus had a look at the high level 'Plymouth Extensions' whilst the rest had a look around some other higher level passages (there are four or five different levels in Baker's Pit!). We all met up in Boulder Hall and went to look at Crystal Corridor, an impressive, long, walking size passage. On the way back we had a good nose round Main Chamber then out after 4½ hrs.

Pridhamsleigh Cavern - (MW, MR, PR) After speaking with the sociable farmer (not) we entered the cave via a crawl from the very large arch and after a few navigational problems found ourselves in Crystal Chamber and in turn Boulder Chamber. From here there is an amazing choice of routes which all seem to end up in the same place! In Boulder chamber we met some other cavers who had been in the cave for 2 hours but had not got any further than this point (we were only 10 mins from the entrance) From here we went the direct route to the end of the cave (via the Pit and the Grand Gallery). The end of the cave is marked by a large turquoise lake which is 20m deep. We returned via the Cellars, which involves thigh deep water in places, and emerges just past Junction Chamber. From here we tried to find an alternative route out but the description was too vague so after a while we gave up and returned the direct way. Once out we washed our gear in the river and found our way back to the DSS hut and, more importantly, the pub!

### *Sunday 25th May:*

Reed's Cave - (MW, MR, YR, PO, M, CA and Alan Finch) The cave entrance is up on a ledge at the back of a huge entrance arch. Alan took a short rigid ladder to get us up on the ledge then we went through the steel door of the cave. Inside there are areas of collapse with huge stalactites broken and calcified into the cave floor. This was thought to have been caused by an earthquake sometime after the stalactites had formed, and around the roof of the cave were huge cracks in the rock just waiting for another tremor to bring it all down!

*continued on page 4*

## MCG CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

| DATE          | AREA        | EVENT                          | CONTACT         | TELEPHONE     |
|---------------|-------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|---------------|
| 05 Jul (FBC)  | Mendips     | Longwood/August Clean-up       | Marcus Ward     | 01252-815112  |
| 19 Jul        | South Wales | Otter Hole (2 places left)     | Julie Hesketh   | 0181-878-5495 |
| 27 Jul        | South Wales | Otter Hole (fully booked)      | Geoff Beale     | 01189-722510  |
| 09 Aug-10 Aug | North Wales | Ogof Hesp Alys & Ben Flynouhan | Julie Hesketh   | 0181-878-5495 |
| 22 Aug-07 Sep | Spain       | Picos de Europa                | Julie Hesketh   | 0181-878-5495 |
| 12 Sep-14 Sep | Bristol     | BCRA Hidden Earth Conference   | Tim Francis     | 0181-876-1863 |
| 18 Oct (FBC)  | South Wales | Phil Ingold's trip into OFDI   | Jean Goddard    | 01608-810382  |
| 25 Apr 1998   | Mendips     | 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:****COTTAGE BOOKINGS:****COTTAGE FEES** per night:

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

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](mailto:ian_m@tcp.co.uk)

## THE COMMITTEE

|   |                      |                    |
|---|----------------------|--------------------|
| <b>SECRETARY</b>  | <b>TIM FRANCIS</b>   | tel: *****         |
| FLAT 6, 16 LAMBERT AVENUE, RICHMOND, SURREY, TW9 4QR email <a href="mailto:t.francis@nopres.co.uk">t.francis@nopres.co.uk</a> |                      |                    |
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| 44 BEECHTREE AVENUE, ENGLEFIELD GREEN, EGHAM, SURREY, TW20 0RS  |                      |                    |
| <b>COTTAGE WARDEN</b>   | <b>JOE FRAMPTON</b>  | tel: 0118-940-2356 |
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| 3 KEWARD, GLASTONBURY ROAD, WELLS, SOMERSET, BA5 1TR  |                      |                    |
| <b>SOCIAL SECRETARY</b>   | <b>PETE MOSELEY</b>  | tel: 01458-860524  |
| PENDLE COTTAGE, MEARWAY, WESTHAY, GLASTONBURY, SOMERSET   |                      |                    |

**CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES**

MALCOLM COTTER

PETE MATHEWS

JONATHAN ROBERTS

PAT WALSH

**NON-COMMITTEE POSTS**

RESCUE WARDEN

CONSERVATION OFFICER

COTTAGE EXTENSION

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THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP IS A REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 27968

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# MCG doings

**ON THE MOVE** Julie Hesketh to 55 Rocks Lane, Barnes, London, SW13 ODA  
Tel: 0181-878-5495

Tim Francis to Flat 6, 16 Lambert Avenue, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4QR (no tel. yet)

**WELCOME TO** Pete Bennett who has been accepted as a probationary member.

**AN APPLICATION** for membership from Kerry Howard of 70 Prospect Avenue, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, SS17 0NJ  
Tel: 01375-406354 This will be considered at the committee meeting on 2nd August.

**HIDDEN EARTH CONFERENCE** MCG plans to have a stand at this year's conference to be held in Bristol on September 12/13th. MCG's stand at Sheffield last year proved successful, mostly due to the timely arrival of the Upper Flood Occasional Publication. Tim is to try to get an Occasional Publication on Mallorca ready for this September. Julie Hesketh has volunteered to organise this year's stand providing the Mallorca publication is ready, so any queries or suggestions to her please. A coach will be laid on between the caving huts and the conference. It might be as well to book a bunk early if you intend to stay at the cottage that weekend as we've already had a request from the main conference organisers for spare bunks.

**COTTAGE WORK WEEKEND** As usual, not many members turned up to work but quite a few major tasks were undertaken:

- Door 'closer' on lounge door renewed
- Silt trap dug out and lined with concrete
- Old wall knocked down in library
- Plastic roof on kitchen porch replaced
- New shelves in understairs cupboard
- General springclean

Thanks to everyone who came and did a job - your efforts are much appreciated.

**EARWIG** in on the committee meeting held on 3.5.97... **Madagascar:** Request for Expedition bank account. To be called "Madagascar '98. It must have "MCG a Registered Charity" on all associated paperwork. Signatories to be Dave Tooke, Tim Francis and the MCG Treasurer. A defunct MCG account to be used... **Cotag:** Joe Frampton to chase up cotag fobs and yale keys from lapsed members, and to find out who have paid for but not received any yet. Cotag fobs not returned will have their numbers erased from the system... **1997 MCG Dinner:** This year we made about £100 profit. Generally, Pete Moseley got positive feedback - main menu good; vegan menu good; vegetarian menu not so good. Some felt service was a bit slow but others preferred this... **Rescue Kit:** To be kept in a cupboard up high in the tacklestore. New gear being marked up in readiness... **Mailmerge:** Huw Jones is to organise mailmerge for MCG in July.

**WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH!** Cleanaway are reverting to the wheely bin system so this will replace the blue bags. The costs will be £2.75 a lift, ie. £143.00 a year. Martin to compare this to previous years. How do members feel about this cost? Let a committee member know your views.

## EXTENSION DOINGS

Next few weeks - builder to finish off the rendering and damaged ceiling in the lounge.

**Weekend July 5th-6th:** We'll be aiming to do some work on the extension. Primarily to move the front door to its new position, and to move the rubble in the car park. Wayne Hiscox has suggested we use it to level off the layby outside the cottage. Shows we're maintaining it!

**End of July -** Wayne, Arthur and Don are hoping to complete the internal wiring.

**Weekend August 2nd-3rd:** Extension work planned so help will be required on this members weekend. Work will start on the inside.

## MCG DEVON WEEKEND ~ continued from page 1

There are very pretty formations everywhere including variously coloured stalactites, bosses, columns, flowstone, curtains, crystals, small crystalised gours, and of course the famous 'Little Man' at the very end of the cave. Altogether the trip took about 2 hours which left us time for trip down Afton Red Rift. Before went Alan took us to look inside two small adjacent caves further along the cliff.

Rift Cave - Short but very well decorated and with a couple of tight side rifts to explore - in and out in about half an hour!

Joint Mitnor Cave - This was an archaeological cave and consisted of a large entrance chamber with a second, smaller chamber down a short passage. In the entrance chamber there's a huge talis cone absolutely full of bones and teeth. Most has been taken away for identification by the Natural History Museum but there is enough left to make the visit worthwhile if your'e interested in that sort of thing. Amongst other bones and teeth were those of deer, bison, elephant (including a baby), rhinoceros and bear. It is thought that the animals had fallen in and died there, then maybe eaten by hyenas as the skeletons were not intact and some of the bones were found to have gnaw marks on them. The archaeologists were working there for quite a while, and students still visit as part of their university courses, so the chamber has electric lighting like a show cave.

Afton Red Rift - (MW, MR, YR, CA) When we told Alan, our Reed's leader, which cave we intended doing this day he laughed and wouldn't tell us why, but we soon found out. Pete and Michelle decided to do some sightseeing and Zoe wasn't feeling well so only MW, MR, YR and CA on this trip. Whatever you do, don't try to find a cave using the new 'Top of the Pots' book! It is lacking useful and obvious instructions, and contains errors - one we found being the grid reference and instructions on where to find Afton Red Rift. We ended up at Castle Cave which is nowhere near Afton Red Rift (but it's amazing how well you can make instructions fit!). We eventually found it in a different location hidden in the undergrowth up a quarry face (the book said it was obvious to spot!). Aston Red Rift starts as a narrow but not too difficult rift, a bit like a tightish meander, but soon becomes wide, goes down at an angle of 40° with a very smooth surface and with no hand or footholds. At this point I bottled out as I knew that although I could probably get down ok, I most certainly would not be able to get back up. I went back to the car to keep Zoe company. Cara watched Martin struggle for a while then too bottled out for the same reason and joined us in the car. What a wise decision we made as when Martin and Marcus finally emerged they said they were absolutely k\*\*\*\*\*d! They had only been underground about two hours but they said it was the hardest two hours of their life. Going down was bad enough but coming up had proved 'very difficult' (not their choice of words!). Although not mentioned in the book (again, not very helpful!), there were bolts at the head of the difficult part of the traverse, for the now obvious reasons - it's harder on the way up, not just because it's wide and smooth, but also because you do a round trip ending up much further down the rift so have further to climb up. Not a cave they will do again I think!

### *Monday 26th May:*

Marcus and Zoe went to visit South Brent. Pete and Michelle packed up and went back to London (they had already been in the West Country for a week). Martin, Cara and Yvonne went for a walk up on Dartmoor to find a prehistoric 'stone row' and hut circles. We found a stone row which went in either direction as far as the eye could see and was quite amazing, although it was by no means the best to be seen on Dartmoor apparently. As for the hut circles - I had seen some many years ago on Dartmoor and they had been quite distinct and obvious, but although we were in the right place according to the map, we didn't see anything that convinced us that we were looking at hut circles. Never mind, next time maybe.

We all had a lovely weekend, made better by the hot weather. The DSS hut in Buckfastleigh had everything we needed with comfortable beds, but daylight could be seen through the roof, and there were various not very well covered holes in the walls, so I would not like to be there in bad weather or winter. Its most positive attribute is that the pub is only a two or three minutes walk away and serves a good selection of ale and good, cheap meals. In winter I would recommend the Penghelly Cave Research Centre, also in Buckfastleigh (but extremely hard to find!)

*by Yvonne Rowe and Marcus Ward*

## MORE MALLORCAN ADVENTURES

by *Tim Francis*

As a result of a plea for help from Joel and his gang for porters we decided to return to Mallorca (for the fifth time) six months early. And as expected May proved to be a bit too hot for lugging caving gear around the scrubby hills of Mallorca but we survived! One day we'll get a Mallorcan journal together so it's all good research.

**Penja Rotja** This was chosen as the ideal introduction to those in the party who hadn't been to Mallorca before. The weather was fantastic so the views across to Formentor were spectacular. We all had a good wander around the lower levels of the cave taking in the sites. Charlie was in his element for a spot of photography although he was temporarily incapacitated after trying to electrocute himself on a slave unit.

**Cueva Sa Foradada** We first looked at this cave last November and it is unusual for Mallorca in that it has an active streamway. I was keen to finish off the trip as the cave has three undived sumps so persuaded Bellez and Charlie that it was worth a look. The entrance is located on the side of a small gorge near to the Cuba reservoir. It is speculated that the water resurges in the Soller area, perhaps even from Font des Vergers. The entrance sections consist of dry, dusty crawls with some fine formations. Water levels were much lower than in November so the calcite duck was completely dry but the downstream sump was still at the same level. This is an excellent dive site and the carry would not be too bad. Two streamways meet at the sump and we elected to explore the right hand branch first. This ascends gently but the passage is tight and sharp. It appears to head back underneath the entrance passageway with one vocal connection between the two.

After ten minutes of thrutching the passage appears to end at a calcite barrier. The way on was a squeeze over the calcite and one then enters the base of a 40ft high aven. The small stream emerges from a minuscule sump which would be a challenge to dive. Just above the sump I spotted a desperately awkward tube which must be a sump bypass. The problem was that I couldn't negotiate an awkward bend and we only had a lump of rock to hand. Above the sump an aven rises for about 40ft. A way on can be seen and I attempted to climb into it. A rather desperate move out over a section of flowstone was needed which I left for the next trip. We'll definitely be back with a hammer for the squeeze and a bolting kit for the climb! I suspect that the water at this point is connected in some way with the streamway in the gorge above.

The second inlet back at the downstream sump immediately degenerates into a nasty sharp squeeze. Just beyond we found the upstream sump which looks diveable although kitting up would be a bit of a fiddle considering the nasty squeeze before it.

**Font des Vergers** One day was spent carrying tanks for Joel Corrigan, Ian Williams and Neil Weymouth to this resurgence on the 600m contour. Locals from the town of Soller believe that water seeps through from the Cuba reservoir and resurges at Font des Vergers. At the least the cave must be fed from potholes which must exist on the high plateau several kilometres away. Three of us (Bellez, Julie, Tim) walked up to the top of the hills above Font des Vergers to check out the terrain. The area is definitely worth a look at although the walk in would be easier from Cuba. We didn't wander around in the heat too much as we only had half a bottle of water between us.

Back at the cave the divers gave us a description of what things were like underground. The first two sumps are relatively short and easily negotiated. The streamway intercepts a fine section of passage with a few unclimbed avens that need investigating. The modern resurgence seems to have captured its water so there should be evidence for an old entrance somewhere. The third sump is a more serious affair than the first two and its size is similar to that of the trunk passage. It quickly drops to -30m, and Joel was able to lay an additional 300m of line in some roomy passage. This heads straight into the hillside at a consistent depth. The water must be flowing along an impervious layer so perhaps the locals theories have some substance after all!

**Cueva Sa Campana** This is a must for any caving trip to Mallorca and requires very little equipment (see previous articles for pitch lengths and rigging details). Hopefully Charlie was able to take some excellent photographs particularly in the entrance chamber. Most of the cave is well decorated with stal and in

addition has some fine cave art specimens similar to those growing in Daren Cilau. Reggie spotted a huge helictite about three feet in length not far from the camp site which we had not seen before.

**Other holiday highlights** Obviously on a trip to Mallorca one must take in some of the other highlights that the island has to offer. The less speleologically inclined members of the group took in the delights of several beaches, Aquaworld, and snorkelling whilst Julie indulged in some diving at Dragonera. The local cavers had mentioned a well on the island of Dragonera which supposedly connects to a resurgence at -20m just offshore. Unfortunately the diving team were unable to locate the resurgence. All of us did a quick showcave at Arta on our day off. Other highlight included roasted suckling pig at the restaurant of Torres de Canymel and a barbecue of octopus and salmon at the villa. *See you next year? Tim*

(Team: James Allen, Andy Bellamy, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh, Kerry Howard, Laura Hughes, Reggie Pain)  
(Divers: Joel Corrigan, Ian Williams, Neil Weymouth, Dean ?, Stefan ?)

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## OGOF DRAENEN ROUND TRIP

*by Marcus Ward*

Team: Steve Jones, Martin Rowe, Marcus Ward

We entered the cave and headed towards Tea Junction via Cairn Junction and Wonda Bra, then headed up White Arch Passage to Lamb and Fox Chamber bumping into another group also intending to do the round trip. We motored on and entered the Indiana Highway which is a nice easy going passage, except towards the end where we saw a traverse line which spans a 20m deep pot. We didn't know anything about this so we carefully traversed around on a crab. From here we continued on and entered Mega Drive which is very impressive. This is followed for some distance until it abruptly ends at the Nunnery. Here the way on is a right turn into Perserverance II which doesn't seem right as it all suddenly becomes small but after a while it increases from crawling size to stooping size, then walking size as the passage breaks out at the head of Balcony Pitch which drops 8m into Arms Parks.

A heated discussion followed about the way on. The guide book says "the way on is left" - but is that left facing the pitch or looking away? Luckily, we also had a survey to help us out. We followed the Players Tunnel to the very large St Davids Hall. Next we entered the Squirrel Rifts which is a navigational nightmare. The description states "follow the main route through", but the reality is that at every junction all the routes are well worn so it is just trial and error finding the way through, with a little help from survey points. After what seemed like an age, we dropped into Haggis Basher, and in turn the Far Agent Bloreng Streamway which trickles down a large passageway for 500m to a chamber and an inlet. This is the start of Agent Bloreng which becomes quite wet and sporting with the belly deep Sewers and a duck which we decided to avoid via a very hard climb out of the stream into a chamber and back into the stream the other side of the duck. Unfortunately, we didn't realise there was a 180° bend in the stream and Martin went back upstream and ended up in the duck anyway! From here it was only 400m via various cascades, waterfalls and deep pots to the junction with Beyond a Choke Streamway which is a lovely stream passage with some fine decorations.

From Beyond a Choke Streamway it is just over 1km back, via two boulder chokes, to Tea Junction and the route out. All in all we had a superb trip and were underground for 7 hours, but I still believe the hardest part of a trip down Draenen is the slog back up the hill once you're out!

# THE MENDIP CAVING SCENE

## Priddy Village Hall, 7th June 1997

### BCRA Regional Meeting

The programme started at 9.30am with coffee and cake. I didn't really feel guilty as I tucked into warm, fresh-out-of-the-oven fruit cake knowing that a dozen or so MCG members were shortly to be sweating and hauling on a rescue practice! There was a reasonable turnout although only Johnathan Roberts and myself were from MCG. The lectures didn't start until 10.15am - bad news for my pocket as this meant I had 45 minutes to buy books from the BCRA, UBBS and Tony Jarrat stands. There was also time to look at the various displays and artefacts, mainly on loan from the Jarrat Collection.

The first talk and slides was by Richard Witcombe who took us through the discovery and exploration of Crapnell and Honeymead Swallets, Charterhouse. Unlike digging Upper Flood II, no pootling about with spades and wooden shoring, but digging on a big scale - a JCB was employed to excavate down to the hoped entrances and for emplacing the concrete pipe entrance shafts. The swallets look interesting but sporty (tightish rifts).

The next presentation was by Trebor (Mike) McDonald on diving at Swildon's Sump 12 and Wookey section 25. The hope of the ultimate (divers) through trip being the prize. Problems of depth (nearly -70m), tightness, lines snagging on rock flakes, and the mere logistics just made me ask, why? There must be nicer ways to die.

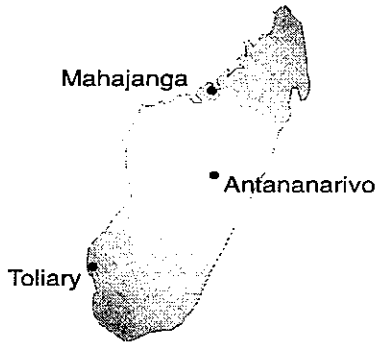
After another refreshment break (this time for a slab of chocolate cake) there was a talk by Dave Irwin on the need to cross-reference documentary sources in order to ascertain dates and whereabouts of cave breakthroughs. He gave the pieced together history of the finding of the bone and stalagmite chambers in Banwell caves during the Victorian times. Dave also gave information about the Mendip Cave Registry - copies available direct from him for £20 (no other outlets). (Maybe this talk was in the afternoon? Apologies because I dozed off - no reflection on the speaker but the effects of the previous night's party catching up on me!)

The lunch break was spent in chat and viewing videos. Beer flowed freely. The afternoon session resumed with a presentation by Tony Jarrat on the 1996 BEC dig at Five Buddles Swallet, Charterhouse. A selection of mining artefacts from this dig was on display. Linda Wilson and Graham Mullen (UBSS and Charterhouse) gave a talk on cave conservation and in particular on a successful means of washing speleothem using 5 litre garden sprays with extendable nozzles. The cheapest recommended was from Argos at £18.99, or something like that. Even helectites could be washed in this manner without breakage. It was recommended that spraying only be carried out and that scrubbing of stalagmites, etc. is likely to cause more damage. Anyone interested should write to Linda or Graham direct for full details (or contact me).

The final presentation of the afternoon was a series of historic lantern slides from Wells Museum, shown by Chris Hawkes and Dave Irwin. There was amazing clarity in these glass slides, some almost 100 years old. Various entrances were shown for identification such as Eastwater, for the slides were taken before collapse and/or construction of present entrances. Pictures included famous names such as Balch. It was interesting to note caving fashion through the ages from Victorian tweed suits and caps to 1910's-20's rugby shirts. Then a gentleman posing underground (in a fairly tight, muddy looking rift passage) in a white shirt and tie - must have been one of James Allen's forbears!

All in all a very interesting and enjoyable day. For those interested an evening site visit to Five Buddles Swallet with J.Rat was arranged. Thanks to everyone involved. Apologies for any omissions/errors/items out of order.

*by Cara Allison*



# Madagascar 1998

Following the presentation and question and answer session at the AGM here is an update on the situation. It is difficult to do justice on a double spread - please call one of us for more information.

*Charlie*

Negotiations are proceeding and are looking positive. The purpose & scope of the expedition is now further defined. Our objective is the Tsingy de Bemaraha area of karst. Here is a synopsis of the current thinking based on our current best possible information.. A dozen or so members have expressed an interest following the request for subs in January. We are still open for participants, however you should contact us ASAP. These notes are based on the AGM discussion.

## The Tsingy

*"My second cave yielded greater depths, five storeys down, with chinks of light illuminating galleries and stalagmites. The largest cave was a yawning mouth with a stumpy row of stalactites hanging across the entrance, blunted by the annual floods that pour into the cave and down its throat. As I prepared to go down it I noticed the tonsils, a great bulbous calcite form, encrusted with floret shapes, glistening.*

*The lower chambers were vastly tall, far beyond the beam of my torch, though occasionally the beam caught curtains of stalactites. In a higher gallery I could see crusty stalactites dropping thirty metres down a root system while free-standing roots had been encased in calcite to form pillars..."*

*An extract from Madagascar Travels by Christina Dodwell*

### ☞ Personal Qualities likely to be required:

- **Fit**                      The trip will be fairly arduous - it is not impossible that 60lb+ packs will have to be carried for some distance. Essential work may also have to be carried out in adverse & stressful conditions. Team members will be required to carry a fair share of expedition equipment as well as their own personal kit.
- **Flexible**                The situation may alter rapidly when we are out there, and the location we visit may change so the team must be prepared to modify plans with little notice.
- **Cave Proficient**        Time will not permit polishing of techniques in the field. All persons must be confident of their caving and SRT abilities.
- **Work: before, during, & after**    A lot of work and research still has to be done - it is not a 'turn up & go type expedition'. Planning for most eventualities and research is vital and a team task. Help & input will be required on the writing of reports etc. upon return.
- **Speak French / Malagasy**        A smattering of French will go a long way - very little English is spoken. In the remote areas very little French is spoken.
- **A liking of rice**            Essential - this is the staple diet!

## The Karst

'Trees' growing from the base of the karst - derived from of the UNESCO report and portrays the unique nature of the landscape.



A previous expedition found over 60 miles of passage in the North of the Island. The Bemaraha area of karst is considered to have very good potential for some sizeable caves,

As indicated in the last newsletter training and team building weekends will be organised. We need to get things moving - September 1998 may sound a long way off however time is our adversary.

We are also aiming for RGS approval / sponsorship.





## MOVING ON TO PASTURES NEW

Martin and I have found the house of our dreams in Arnside, Cumbria. It consists of a new (generous) three-car garage with a two bedroomed flat above, and is only three minutes walk from the sea (Morcambe Bay). As luck would have it I have also managed to get a job in a Special College in Bowness-on-Windermere, to start the 1st of September (Martin is still job-hunting). We will be about 20 miles from the Yorkshire caves, and of course we'll have plenty of Lakeland walking country around us. According to the OS map there are a few caves around Morcambe Bay too which will give us something to do in the evenings.

Unfortunately it means that we will not be able to go on this year's expedition to the Picos - priorities and all that. Needless to say we will have to retire from our committee posts much sooner than planned which means that the committee will have to co-opt a new Treasurer and Editor fairly quickly to give us time to hand over and for the co-optees to learn the ropes. We will also be needing the time to tidy up our present home and pack up all our belongings.

As this will probably be my final Newsletter I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped and supported Martin and I during our years on the committee, in particular those of you who contributed to and helped in the production of Newsletters and Occasional Publications. We will be leaving in the knowledge that with the new committee the Group continues to be in very capable hands, and we hope that members will continue to give them lots of support - especially the new Editor (articles, news, etc.) and Treasurer (booking sheets, receipts, etc.).

We will miss everyone but hope to still make the odd(!) members weekend on Mendip. Also, we hope you will let us know if you are planning a Yorkshire or Derbyshire caving weekend so we can meet up with you if we can. Although we will only have two bedrooms we will have a spare bed and floor space, so if you're ever up Arnside way do pop in to see us (and don't forget your bucket and spade).

*Yvonne Rowe*

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### STOP PRESS:

Jane Baldwin has been co-opted as the new Editor.

Huw Jones has been co-opted as the new Treasurer.

Many thanks to you both from the committee, and in particular from Martin and Yvonne - and good luck.