

# MCG NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NUMBER 264

SEPTEMBER 1997

## More MATIENZO '97 by Kerry Howard

### Cueva de Cordisera

A steep walk up a hill was rewarded by an entrance, some 20m x 20m. This huge passageway continued straight into the hillside. We descended into the bottom of an empty lake, which would have been impressive had it been filled, as the water mark was some 4m high and 20m across. It must have had a very quick drainage system, as it had been raining heavily the day before, and in fact all throughout the week, yet it was only slightly damp.

We had planned to go down the 50m pitch at the end of the cave, but the bolt holes were hard to find, and the walls were very loose, it almost looked as if the pitch head was collapsing! Meanwhile, a short way back in the main passage, Phill had found another continuation in the roof. We therefore abandoned the idea of descending the pitch, and went to explore the upper series. A 3m climb up to the left opened out into a fair sized well decorated chamber. This continued through more large passage, ending in a squeeze and drop via a handline through a boulder choke. The other side of this was a HUGE chasm, with an aven going straight up, even Malcom's spotlight could not reach the roof! Below was a seemingly endless black pit. Rocks dropped and timed gave us an estimated distance of well over 100m. The chasm was passed using a fixed traverse line on the right hand wall, nice and easy, which was just as well considering the void below us! Once passed the traverse, a large passage with some pretties ended at a large flowstone, and one cute bat which was roosting only a foot above our heads.

On the way out, just past the boulder choke on the right, a tight, meandering inlet was followed. This opened out into daylight, where two huge shafts stretched up to the sky - potential for a 40m pull through trip. All in all, an impressive (large) cave.

### *Simas del Picon, Cubija VN50129686 Alt: 300m by Sonya Cotter*

**Party: Reg Pain, Big Tim (Royal Holloway), Lee Hawkswell, Norma, Malcolm and Sonya Cotter.**

Picon is a cave known since the 1970's and originally visited by the Spanish. It has been revisited and pushed by the Matienzo Expedition, with new discoveries in 1993 (see Caves and Caving No. 63/ Spring '94) and in 1994 some small leads were finished off and the terminal choke examined. The side passages that may have by-passed the terminal choke were pushed but found to be too tight at that time.

Picon is part of the Sistema de Cubija, the cave entrance is on the opposite side of the valley to Mostajo (See Kerry Howard's write-up in the August newsletter). The entrance pitches are at the same altitude.

The short entrance pitch is hidden by vegetation and a bolt-hole can be seen on the rock outcrop on the right-hand side. The quickest descent would be by ladder. The short pitch is in two sections: the top slope is less than six metres, followed by a re-belay point at the top of the remaining vertical element. It hardly seemed worth rigging for SRT! The pitch is at one end of a large open boulder-strewn entrance, slippery underfoot with vegetation. A short way in the roof lowered to a slippery calcified squeeze, which was entertaining, opening into a chamber strewn with blocks of limestone. We clambered up the rock-strewn slope and into a lower passage, with some formations, and finally up through a hole in the boulder choke into a huge chamber where blocks of stone lay precariously perched in layers all around. Just as Reg came through into the main chamber, Big Tim in front had used the loose wall to lean on and a humungous boulder came hurtling downslope. Reg performed a Herculean boulder pushing trick, so avoiding being squished and the possibility of the boulder trapping everyone inside the chamber. Masses of smaller rocks came raining down. After this little incident, which left us feeling somewhat shaken, we continued, following the blue route arrows, which were hidden in places where rocks had fallen! The passage here was wide and high, eventually narrowing down to a choke. On the right-hand wall was a crack decorated with stal which followed the remaining length of the existing passage. A climb down to the passage parallel to the choked one was spotted by Reg and we clambered down and into a nicely decorated section of lower but walking-size passage, with a sandy floor and black, degrading stalagmites and columns. This took us to a vast underground canyon, where scree slopes rested on other scree slopes everywhere. This began about 10 to 15 metres wide and widened to 40 metres or so across. One by one we clambered up the moving slope, the other members of the party waiting at the foot of the slope behind the safety of a house-sized boulder which had evidently fallen from the roof. Above The Scree Run, the chamber reached its widest extent, and there were two routes on. Reg and Lee explored the narrow passage at the top, and said it was quite loose in the roof and narrowed down considerably. We were running short of time, and decided it was time to slide back down the scree and out. On the way, Malcolm reassuringly told us, "I think this is probably the most unstable cave I have ever been in!" filling us with confidence as we picked our way through the choke where Reg's boulder had fallen.

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**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, BS40 7XW  
**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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**SECRETARY** **TIM FRANCIS** tel:0181 392 2572  
 FLAT 6, 16 LAMBERT AVENUE, RICHMOND, SURREY, TW9 4QR email t.francis@nopres.co.uk

---

**TREASURER** **HUW JONES** tel:01222-862934  
 COEDHIR, 3 CLOS -YR -ARAD, NANT FELIN CWRT, CASTLEVIEW, CAERPHILLY, CF83 1NF  
 email coedhir@enterprise.net

---

**CAVING SECRETARY** **JULIE HESKETH** tel: 0181-392-2572  
 FLAT 6, 16 LAMBERT AVENUE, RICHMOND, SURREY, TW9 4QR email jhesketh@water-services.co.uk

---

**TACKLE MASTER** **DAVE TOOKE** tel: 01784-436237  
 44 BEECHTREE AVENUE, ENGLEFIELD GREEN, EGHAM, SURREY, TW20 0RS  
 email d.tooke@rhbnc.ac.uk

---

**COTTAGE WARDEN** **JOE FRAMPTON** tel: 0181 569 1964  
 MAYFLY, WILLOW WREN WHARF, HAYES ROAD, SOUTHWALL, MIDDLESEX, UB2 5HB.

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**EDITOR** **JANE BALDWIN** tel: 01633-441096  
 14 COMMERCIAL ROAD, MACHEN, NEWPORT, GWENT, NP1 8NA

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**RECORDER/LIBRARIAN** **WAYNE HISCOX** tel: 01749-671282  
 3 KEWARD, GLASTONBURY ROAD, WELLS, SOMERSET, BA5 1TR

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**SOCIAL SECRETARY** **PETE MOSELEY** tel: 01458-860524  
 PENDLE COTTAGE, MEARWAY, WESTHAY, GLASTONBURY, SOMERSET

**CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES**  
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**NON-COMMITTEE POSTS**  
 RESCUE WARDEN  
 CONSERVATION OFFICER  
 COTTAGE EXTENSION  
 EXAMINERS

**NAME** **TELEPHONE**  
 BRIAN SNELL 01329-238341  
 MARCUS WARD 01252-815112  
 WAYNE HISCOX 01749-671282  
 JAMES ALLEN AND BEN COOPER

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# MCG doings

**ON THE MOVE** Richard Carey to CPR, CTRA Matilla, 47100, TORDESILLAS Spain.

Jonathon Roberts to Bridge House, Wanstrow, Somerset BA4 4TE. Tel:01749 850413.

**VICTORIA ARBIZU** is now in America until Summer 1999. She is studying for a Masters Degree in Spanish at Rice University, Houston, and working as a teaching assistant at the same time. She is in contact with the local cavers, and is already planning a trip to Mexico for Easter '98. She would be pleased to hear from any MCG members intending to visit USA or Mexico during the 2 years she will be there. Her address is: Victoria Arbizu, Graduate House, Room II 311, 6500 South Main Street, Houston, Texas 77030, USA  
 telephone: (1)713 630 9222 (home)  
 (1)713 285 5403 (work)  
 email: VARBIZU@RICE.EDU

**YVONNE ROWE** has started her new job in Windermere. Rumours that Martin and Yvonne's new house in Arnside was built without planning permission and had to be demolished are not quite correct! A planning application was needed to convert part of the property from car parking to a (very) large garage for their Land Rover and two MG's. This has delayed their purchase, but they now have planning permission. Unfortunately, they don't have a buyer for their house in Yateley, so their move is on hold. Martin is still in Yateley, and Yvonne can be contacted at her temporary address: Yvonne Rowe, High Ground, Victoria Road, Windermere, Cumbria LA23 2DL tel: 015394 46836.

## *Hidden Earth '97 BCRA*

**Conference** was almost on our doorstep this year, in Bristol. Tim and Dave were involved in organising the UK lecture programme and Saturday Night Stomp respectively (and dragged in a few others to help, too!), but as MCG didn't have a stand this year most of us were able to go along to many of the talks and slide shows. There were the usual 'Area Round-ups', serious lectures (eg *Cave Development in Mulu, GPS on expeditions, the Ease Gill Resurvey Project, Self-Rescue in Carno, Bats, Cave Spiders*) and reports and videos of recent club trips and expeditions. Competitions for the best *photos/video/painting/SRT skills etc* filled in any spare time - and there were always the trade stands to make you part with your money!

**SOME UNSEASONABLE LOCAL WEATHER** A lecture by Jim Hanwell and organised by Wells Natural History and Archaeological Society. Friday, 12th December, 7.30pm, Wells Museum. Admission £2 (free to WNHAS members). I don't have any further details, but bearing in mind who the lecturer is, I'm sure that there will be much of interest to cavers. *M.R.*

**Caving Quiz** to be held in Priddy Village Hall on 15th November at 8 pm. Teams of six can be entered with no limit on the number of teams per club. Plenty of beer will be available to even up the competitors knowledge!

## Forward Meets Programme

Date	Area	Details	Contact
Saturday 18 October	Wales (OFD)	Trip with Phil Ingold. CANCELLED	
Sunday 19 October	Wales (Dan-yr-Ogof)	Photographic trip with Geoff Beale to take pics for the MCG pin-up calander 1998. 4 places available in addition to Geoff (star model).	Julie Hesketh ☎0181 392 2572
1 Nov 1997	Charterhouse	Led by Charlie Allison, a tourist trip around a very pretty cave (up to 2 hours).	Charlie Allison ☎0181 224 7591
	St.Cuthberts	Malcolm Cotter will be leading a trip in St Cuthberts Swallet. 4 places in addition to Malcolm are available.	Malcolm Cotter ☎01784 252643
February 1998	Reservoir Swallet Mendip	A Saturday evening trip led by Geoff Beale. A once in a lifetime oppertunity to view the only cave likely to keep you out of the Castle on a Saturday night. There are 4 places in addition to Geoff.	Julie Hesketh ☎0181 392 2572
25 April 1998	AGM and annual dinner	AGM at Hunters as usual. Dinner venue to be decided.	Tim Francis ☎0181 392 2572 or Pete Mosely ☎01458 860524
Summer 1998	Madagascar	Jungle, snakes, poisonous spiders and if you're very lucky a spot of caving. A 6 week (or so) expedition to the Mahajunga region, probably in July/August but you could meet them for a few weeks only if time is a problem.	Charlie Allison ☎0181 224 7591

### Trip with Phil Ingold

As you can see from the above Phil's trip has been cancelled, he has sent the following letter for publication:-

To all my friends in the MCG

Many thanks for all your efforts and hard work in preperation for my rescue into and out of OFD.

I'm only sorry that I was not fit enough to make the trip when so much time and effort had been put in by so many.

At least I Managed 4 extra years of caving with my friends in the MCG which otherwise would not have been possible.

I enclose a copy of a verse that seems very appropriate.

When good friends walk beside us  
 In the trails that we must keep  
 Our burdens seem less heavy  
 and the hills are not so steep  
 The weary miles pass swiftly  
 Taken in a joyous stride  
 But all the world seems brighter  
 when friends walk by our side.

## Notes from the Half Yearly

### **Attendance**

Seventeen members attended this years forum with the breakdown being 6 committee members, 3 Custodian trustees and 8 members.

### **Library Extension**

A copy of a proposal of the interior layout prepared by Joan Goddard and Charlie Alison was circulated. The meeting felt that the library should be fitted out properly rather than cutting corners. A wide ranging discussion included topics such as the nature of the shelving, power sockets, a plan chest and background heating. Pete Harvey offered two heaters that would meet the heating requirements.

Wayne gave a round-up of how the building work is progressing. Interior work to be completed includes some block work, wiring, moving the cotag, rendering and plastering, and flooring. The wiring and cotag should be completed in the next week or so. On the outside the roof needs to be tidied up, guttering and water goods put in place and a trench dug for a root barrier. Finally the building inspector needs to visit the site so that a completion certificate can be issued.

### **Other Cottage Issues**

The BCTV will be completing the dry stone wall next year with another four walling days planned. Julie Hesketh is to ascertain the amount of stone required to complete the wall and obtain delivery in advance. It was felt that it was worth taking advantage of the good price now in case the situation changed next year. Other issues raised were the new wheely bin, car park drainage, weather boarding on the shed, and repair of the lounge roof. Unfortunately because of the lack of unbonding all of the ceiling will need to be replastered.

### **Accounts**

The committee raised the principal of Ethical Investments which proved to be the main talking point of the whole meeting. After considerable discussion the following was agreed by a majority at the meeting:

"This meeting supports the judgement of the Committee in investing funds in an ethical way through recognised investment routes". (Proposed J.Roberts)

This overlapped with discussion regarding investment for income versus investment for growth. It was felt that the everyday running of the club should be funded by subs and cottage fees. Jonathan Roberts mentioned that as a rule of thumb investments should amount to 10% of the clubs assets. In addition there was concern that the value of investments should not decrease with time. Therefore the following proposal was agreed by the meeting:

"Consideration should be primarily given to growth investments" (Proposed P.Walsh)

### **Expeditions**

There was a brief discussion regarding an alternative trip to Madagascar next year, perhaps to the Vercors. Trips to Poland and South Korea in 1999 were also mentioned.

### **BCRA Committee**

Julie Hesketh summarised a letter she had received from Pete Cousins regarding a vacancy on the BCRA Committee. Anyone interested should contact Julie for further details.

### **Any Other Business**

With the beer now flowing and the barbecue beckoning there was little enthusiasm for further discussion. Wayne mentioned that Phil Elliot had donated a number of ladders which had previously been used by the cliff rescue team. the Tackle Master is to obtain tags to mark up the additional stock.

## Summer Trip to Ireland

*Tim Francis*

As a result of the Picos trip having been cancelled at the last minute Ireland was chosen as an alternative destination. Four of us (Joe, Tim, Steve and Pete) squeezed into a hideously over-loaded Fiesta and successfully made it to Doolin in one piece. Julie elected to fly to Shannon and arrived the following day. We had decided to do one week in Clare and then drive up to Fermanagh, Northern Ireland, for the second week.

### County Clare

After considerable flaffing we decided to camp at Doolin as other options were not really practical. For the first couple of days the weather was fine so we managed to knock off a couple of trips. The most obvious trip to do was the *St. Catherine's to Fisherstreet Pot* through-trip as this was within walking distance of the camp site. Just after we had finished rigging the Fisherstreet entrance Cara and the NWCC emerged from the cave so we got a lift up to St. Catherine's saving us from an hour long walk. Most of the trip is walking sized stuff with some fine canyon passage in the lower sections. The trip is only marred by some rather noxious pollution at the downstream end. That evening it started to rain, and it rained for virtually all of the rest of the holiday.

To start with there were a few sunny intervals so we did *Pol-na-Gcéim* and *Faunarooska* before the rain really started coming down. *Pol-na-Gcéim* provided Steve with some useful SRT practice and a sharp reminder to the rest of us regarding a certain authors reliability. After this trip was cut short near the bottom we went for a wander over the Pollballiny depression. There is good potential here for a dig to connect with *Pol-na-Gcéim*, downstream of the sumps. We saw two excellent locations which look like they haven't been dug before. *Faunarooska* is in the same area and is a lovely streamway cave. No tackle is required except for right at the bottom and we did not bother with the pitch. The moonmilk formations near the end are particularly fine. On the way out Steve and Pete made the classic mistake of crawling past the normal entrance and continuing upstream for another ten minutes. Our laughter turned to slight concern as the rain turned torrential but they turned up eventually.

Extra-curricular activities in Clare tended to be centred on the Doolin Café and the local hosteleries. During one particularly riotous evening in McDermotts Bar certain MCG members were seen swinging from the rafters! We decided to leave for Fermanagh a day early if only because Joe had abandoned his sodden tent for the relative comforts of a hostel. Free tea, coffee and a spin dryer so he tells us. Julie headed off to Switzerland via Shannon airport and her place in the car was taken by Cara.

### County Fermanagh

As we left Clare the weather looked like it might improve but the forecast predicted more of the same. The forecast was right! This time we escaped the rigours of camping for the charm of the Aghnahoo Cottage. We soon gave the cottage the MCG treatment making it virtually habitable. We were able to check the weather forecast and recharge lights at the Marble Arch show caves. This area of Fermanagh has an intriguing micro-climate. The caves flood approximately five hours after rainfall but drain quickly. Unfortunately they all flood so there is not a lot to do when it rains. We did the full tourist bit taking in numerous sites of interest, visitor centres, scenic drives and the delights of Enniskillen - the swimming pool, the cinema and the Indian.

As in Clare we managed to visit only a few caves during the week. The first of these was the excellent *Tullyhona Resurgence*. This starts off with an awkward squeeze but soon develops into a fantastic streamway. This has low ducks, cascades and a perched sump. The sump is easily bypassed and leads to a well decorated streamway. This eventually breaks up into a series of inlets which all close down in some drafting chokes.

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## Summer Trip to Ireland *continued*

Our next choice of cave was the *Marble Arch System*. Water levels were high so most of the show cave was closed to tourists but we were still able to make it upstream to enter the rest of the cave. An interesting feature of Marble Arch is the Conservation Trail which aims to highlight the unnecessary damage that cavers have inflicted on the cave in the past. My only concern with the signs is that they tend to make the cave rather touristy even in the further reaches. Overall Marble Arch is a fantastic trip especially if you swim out of the Lower Cradle entrance as we did. Very refreshing if you're wearing furrries! Later on in the week the weather meant that we did a lot of walking and dig spotting. Steve and I managed to nip down *Pollnarees* for an hour. The whole thing floods horrendously so we didn't stay around for long. Just a quick bash to the sump and back.

So with time on our hands I decided to have a look at a small resurgence, *Springwell Rising*, just downhill from the hut. Clearing away the foliage I squeezed in a bit and quickly noted that knee pads would be required. A quick dash back to the hut for the missing kit and Pete and Steve were persuaded that really did want to have a look. The previous limit of this cave was 15m ending in a choke. After some typically desperate digging I managed to remove a section of roof to squeeze over the offending boulders. Myself and Pete then dug and crawled for about 150ft until we called it a day at a large choke. Steve followed on later but was defeated by a rather awkward twisty manoeuvre. The passage alternated between low wet thrutches and small fossil chokes. Most of the streamway was well decorated with a few unusually shaped blobs of stal. The final 20ft section involved lying flat out in the steamway (or rather the streamway flowing through you), helmet off and slowly progressing by means of tapping off roof pendants and removing streambed cobbles. Unbeknown to me Pete was going to abandon me to my fate but luckily the duck popped up into a small dry chamber. This was completely blocked by a choke which I think must be associated with a small cliff feature on the surface. I think there could be a way over the top of the choke but by this stage we were both rather cold and had abandoned the digging kit a while back.

The extension has not been surveyed but a brief description will appear in the new Fermanagh guide book which is out in the next month or so. Perhaps next time we're in Fermanagh we'll have another dig at the end as I suspect no-one else will bother.

Team: Cara Alison, Pete Bennett, Joe Frampton, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh, Steve Jones.

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## Library Additions

**The Complete Caving Manual** by *Andy Sparrow*. I recommend this book to anyone starting caving. It is illustrated with many excellent photographs and line drawings and has an eye catching, colourful cover, too. As one would expect, the chapters on equipment and techniques are clear and informative but there are also sections on cave formation, mines, cave diving, cave camping, underground photography and brief descriptions of caving areas of the world. Obviously a book covering so much ground is fairly sketchy in parts and for this reason Andy has suggested some further reading, as well as a short glossary of terms. This book is softback and costs £14.99.

**Quest for Adventure** by *Chris Bonnington*. A jumble sale buy, this one! Published in 1982 it includes a chapter entitled "Dead Man's Handshake", written in rather journalistic style, which describes cave diving episodes leading up to the linking of Kingsdale and Keld Head.

**Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club Anniversary Journal (50 Years)** There seems to be a great many "anniversary" publications at the moment and this issue makes for a varied and enjoyable read, especially for those into Yorkshire caving.

**The Ease Gill System** by *Jim Eyre* (BCRA Speleohistory Series Bo. 1, 1989) -48pp, Details of 40 years of the system's exploration, together with some nice photos.

**Record No.1** (the first journal of the BCRA Speleohistory Group, Autumn 1997). Contains an article on **Holwell Cavern** in the Quantocks (by *Dave Irwin*), and another on the **Bleadon and Hutton Caverns** on Western Mendip (by *Irwin and Chris Richards*) which delves back to 1757. Finally a transcript of an account of **Peak Cavern** which occurred in the Saturday Magazine in October 1832.

**The Blue Holes of the Bahamas** by *Rob Palmer*, 1985. This fills a gap in our library; it is one of the earlier books about cave diving - easy reading with plenty of colour photos.

## Even More Matienzo '97

### *Cueva del Agua*

Aggy, Andrew, Andy, Phill, Reg, and Kerry decided to do Cueva del Agua, while the rest did Toad in the Hole. Phill (who had been there before) explained that there was very little water in the entrance, and that everything would be fine. Hmm. There was lots and lots of water rushing into the cave, but we decided to do it anyway (we abandoned the dingy due to a fast acting puncture). After a scramble over some boulders, we dropped into the streamway. Almost immediately Phill was swept off his feet, and would have got washed away, had he not been cows tailed to Aggy. We all therefore clipped onto each other for safety, and made slow progress down the river. Some excellent formations were passed on the ceiling and walls, with huge flowstones dropping into the river. However, we only got a short way into the cave, as the river got too torrential, and we ran out of rock ledges to walk on. We made our way out, and spent some time imitating white water rafting on the punctured dingy, before Big Tim came to pick us up.

*Torcon de la Calleja Rebollo (Toad- In- The- Hole), Vega Valley. by Sonya Cotter*

**Party: Lee Hawkswell, Norma, Malcolm & Sonya Cotter.**

"Toad" is located on the opposite side of the Vega Valley to the South Vega System and apparently got its name when a toad was rescued just prior to the breakthrough in 1981! It's a really interesting cave, with elements of everything- wide open chamber, pretty formations, water, phreatic tubes, sticky rift etc. so well worth a visit. A point to note is that the pitches are short, and so ladder is preferable to SRT if you want to save time. The shakehole is located up a very steep slope, and it's worth carrying caving gear up rather than wearing it, unless you want a sauna in your oversuit, which is what we got, because it was raining so we'd put our full kit on! The entrance was pointed out to us from the road by the rest of our group, some of whom had already gone down and had to spend a long time searching for the entrance. From the road, a rough path can be seen going across the slope and then about three hundred metres up a solitary tree could be seen directly above the line of fir trees- this was apparently our entrance site. That seemed fine, until you get higher and the area looks very different to what it had from a distance! We followed the path around and behind the farmhouse, trying to avoid the vicious dog, and then across the slope to where the fir trees began. At this point we split into two groups, to (hopefully) get the entrance pitch rigged in time for Norma and Malcolm's arrival and so give us more time in the cave. This was not to be! After climbing up the slope, it became apparent that Lee and I had climbed too high up. We were given a shout by Malcolm, who said they'd found the entrance about 50 metres lower than we expected!

The shakehole was very muddy and it had been raining, so it was very slippery! We heeded Phill's advice (he'd gone down with a party a few days earlier) and rigged a handline. We used a 47m rope and used the tree above the shakehole as a belay point. (Note: a 47m rope was used not because the entrance rift is deep, but because the shakehole in the wet weather needed it. In dry weather you'd get away with no rope.) The entrance shaft is a short, narrow rift, and the area immediately above was really loose, particularly after the rain. This opens into well decorated fossil passage, which connects in many different directions. This first part of the cave has a small stream, and there was a great deal of flowstone that could have made good photographs. This was my favourite part of the cave, worth a separate photographic trip. After exploring the side passages, Lee and I followed the small stream through the main passage, another case of the Matienzo yellow brick road, and went ahead to rig Maypole Pitch whilst the other two caught up.

Maypole is about 25 feet high, and has a rope in place. Someone in the party would need SRT kit to ascend and rig the ladder. We heard the others coming, and after regrouping, went on to rig the next pitch. Above Maypole, the passage winds and follows a phreatic style, passing over a rock bridge and around a pit, with smaller passages visible below. The second pitch began at a sandy sloping ledge, descending to a 20 foot vertical drop. As advised, we used about 3 metres of sling linked together as a tether on the huge stall boss above the slope. A line was attached to this and the ladder attached at the top of the vertical element, using the other rope.

At the foot of the pitch was a wide, gently sloping and well decorated chamber. There were signs of digging at the opposite end. On the left- hand wall was a low opening, shielded by stall. We had been told to expect this from the other group, and crawled through this, down a slope and into a small grotto. The crawl continued to the right and left. Lee had a look to the left, whilst I continued along the crawl, which was fairly wide but hands- and- knees and often flat- out with a few formations. After about 80 metres, the crawl opened into a rounded, muddy chamber, with a few nice formations. At this point I returned and told the others to follow, and we crawled under the low roof at the end of the muddy chamber and into another short length of crawl, which forked.

*continued on next page*



## Matienzo '97 *continued*

The left fork led to a narrow, oval shaped chamber, with a fissure across the middle. Another club had rolled their initials in the clayey mud and put them on the wall, and waiting for the rest of the group gave me time to roll the MCG's. The rift we had heard about was beneath the chamber, and the entrance was marked by obvious carbide burns on the wall. A short scramble later, the main traverse line (in place) was met and we clambered round the sticky rift. The traverse had few good footings, some of them over deep pipes in the floor, and was really sticky.

Beyond the traverse the cave became a low, muddy phreatic tube, walking height in places. We were expecting another pitch to appear fairly soon, and investigated a hole on the right hand wall. Lee said he would descend, even though it appeared unlikely that this was our pitch. We were able to use some good naturals and Lee descended the ladder. He shouted up that he'd met a narrow ledge, but the pipe continued down to the bottom of our ladders after that and carried on going! We had a quick look around for the pitch proper, but we needed to start back if we were to arrive in time for the minibus. When we got back, Phill told us that they'd not reached the last pitch anyway, and had no idea how much further it was!

This mystery was solved at the BCRA conference, where Juan Corrin showed us the full survey and we realised we were only a short distance from the next pitch and the extensions where we hoped to end our trip. Never mind, we can always go again (yes please)!

We had an interesting time getting out of the shakehole when a wasp's nest underfoot started to rumble. We arrived back at the road fortunately unscathed as Big Tim pulled up in the minibus, having found a shorter path down and successfully avoided the vicious dog.

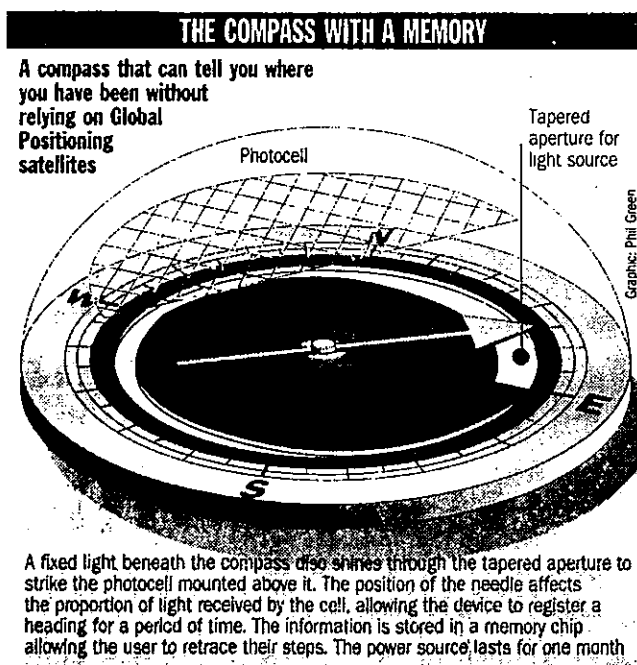
Update on Toad: This year's Matienzo Expedition (which arrived almost as we left) found a few more extensions and explored a new shaft above the cave which dropped 41 metres but failed to connect.

Other activities on the holiday included rigging a death slide in a swollen river, lots of games of table football in the bar, playing in some rapids, eating and visiting a local fiesta.

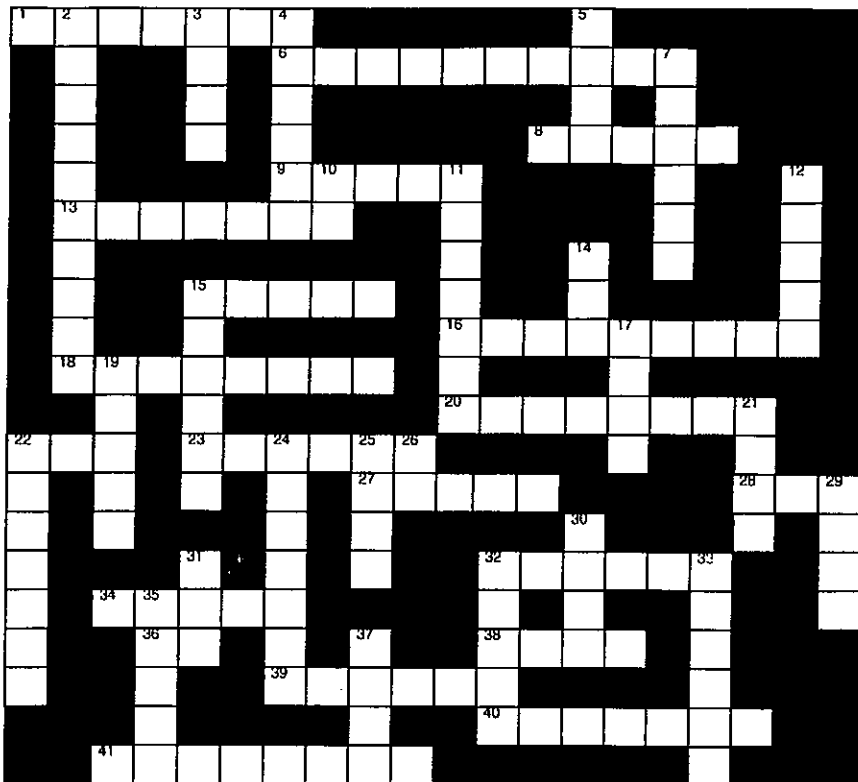
We would like to give thanks to Juan Corrin for providing us with much needed information, Pete Smith for showing us some good cave entrances, and lastly his nephew Phill Rice for organising the trip.

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## Compass Knows where it's been.



Taken from the Sunday Telegraph Sept 21st 1997. A Compass that tells users not only where they are heading but also the route they have taken may save the lives of potholers, divers, when it becomes available later this year. A built in microchip that records directional information also gives a reading of recorded compass positions so that, by working backwards adventurers can return the way they came. The Homer Hiker is expected to cost about £30.



Finally just for fun, crossword compiled by Dave Tooke. Answers in next months Newsletter.

ACROSS

- 1 Laws let sink run dry (7)
- 6 Typical Mendip position - especially after the pub (10)
- 8 See 12 Down
- 9 Fork here to reach drop (5)
- 13 Will see about caving footwear (7)
- 15 Search maps for main pitch (5)
- 16 Currents from the South China Seas ? (9)
- 18 Stretched out forest requires a bold step (8)
- 20 Snow Lids melt to provide a wet descent (8)
- 22 Jarrett's nocturnal products ? (3)
- 23 Master system - or just a wet way ? (6)
- 27 Boy found after crawling some distance in South Wales (5)
- 28 Stick to it - especially while digging ! (3)
- 32 Sort through the overly shy to find digging tool (6)
- 34 The boss loves to see employees in the drainpipe (5)
- 36 Not out (2)
- 38 Look up the rift and spot mixed up welshman (4)
- 39 See 31 Down
- 40 Stingy N can be found near riding stables (7)
- 41 To get across it's useful if you're fed a line (8)

DOWN

- 2 Used for grinding flour at Velvet Bottom ? (10)
- 3 See 4 Down (4)

- 4 & 3 Down Was 'L.A. pure then?'-a question often asked when looking through the Atlas (6,4)
- 5 Short formation - broken off perhaps ? (4)
- 7 His hole is particularly tight when found in Burrington (6)
- 10 To be (2)
- 11 Control the power and sit in comfort (7)
- 12 Down & 8 Across Highest Waters first recorded in '68 (5,5)
- 14 A Cave suitable for plants ?(3)
- 15 After crawling through the festive season find yourself in the height of Summer (6)
- 17 Partially dawdle through deep water (4)
- 19 Aquatic mammal found at racecourse !! (5)
- 21 Dive in head first ? It depends on your bottle (4)
- 22 More confident with the large rock (7)
- 24 Don't get hung up ! get past this and carry on down (7)
- 25 Call it the end at Tynings? (4)
- 26 She doesn't like you caving (2)
- 29 Bit tight for waterfowl (4)
- 30 Knot the most difficult clue - don't get tied up (4)
- 31 Down & 39 Across Randy goofs in Wales - a real showpiece (3,2,4)
- 32 Fast H should be careful at the top (5)
- 33 MCG lizards sit it out here (6)
- 35 Follow it and get that sinking feeling (5)
- 37 Dels brother found in Burrington (4)