

# MCG News

NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NUMBER 266

FEBRUARY 1998

## Cheddar bats to get central heating?

An article in the Daily Telegraph (18.01.1998) explains why plans are afoot to install summer heating in Gough's Old Cave. Roger Ransome, one of English Nature's advisors, believes that providing a warmer summer environment for the bats will increase the survival rate for their offspring (which are born end of June/early July). Out of an estimated 5000 Greater Horseshoe bats in Britain, apparently 300-400 live around the Gorge with about 100 hibernating in the cave, although currently they seem to breed elsewhere on Mendip - probably in a barn somewhere.

Two 120 watt tubular heaters - screened with zinc to prevent the bats singeing their wings - have been proposed to try to raise the temperature in the cave from 10-12C to 25C, which is thought to be warm enough for the bats to breed. When an incubator was installed in the attic of a mansion in Gloucestershire the survival and growth rates for young bats improved.

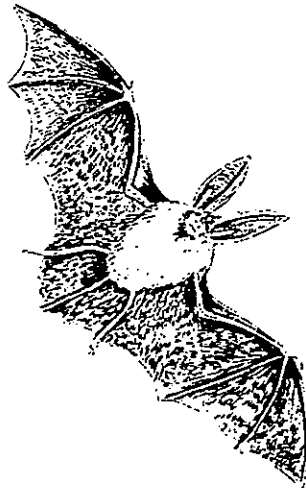
On 19<sup>th</sup> January a TV news programme also featured the same story.

*Now, I may be a bit batty (do I hear cheers all round?), but I would have thought that to get a cave's temperature up to 25C (that's about 76F in old money) would require a door to keep the heat in. How will the bats get in and out, or will they just Huddle around the radiator?*

*Also, on the TV programme, bat people (disguised as cavers) were knocking the poor creatures down from the cave roof with a heavyweight version*

*of a butterfly net onto a large sheet on which they squirmed under a bright spotlight. During many years of caving I have never witnessed a caver subjecting a bat to such traumatic treatment. All cavers I know avert their lamps from the bat and pass by as quietly as possible. I wonder, does the decline in bat population bear any relationship to the increase in bat conservationists?*

Joan Goddard



### **Bats underground - a conservation code.**

- **Do not handle bats.** Also beware of dislodging bats from their roosting position particularly when you are moving through low passages.
- **Do not photograph roosting bats.** Flashguns can be very disturbing.

- **Do not warm up hibernating bats.** This can arouse them. Try not to linger in confined spaces, as even your body heat is sufficient to cause arousal.
- **Do not shine bright lights on bats.** Both the light and heat can trigger arousal.
- **Do not use carbide lamps in bat roosts.** Carbide lamps are particularly undesirable because of the heat and fumes.
- **Do not smoke or make excessive noise underground.** Any strong stimulus can arouse bats.
- **Do not take large parties into bat roosts in winter.** Rescue practices should also be avoided when bats are present.
- **Do seek advice before blasting or digging.** Explosives can cause problems both from the blast itself and from the subsequent fumes. In known bat sites, blasting should be limited to the summer or to areas not known to be used by bats. Digging operations may alter the microclimate of bat roosts.

*(The above code is taken from Bats Underground, a Conservation Code, obtainable from the N.C.A)*

**WEEKLY MEETINGS:** At The Beehive, Egham, Surrey, on Thursdays from 9.00 p.m.

**CAVING ACCOMMODATION:** For up to 30 people. Available at the MCG headquarters: Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse, Blagdon, Bristol, BS40 7XW. Tel:01761-462737. Grid Ref ST51475606. OS 1:50,000 sheet 182.

**COTTAGE INFORMATION:** Through the cottage warden please (address and telephone number below).

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

**COTTAGE FEES per night:** (Available to members only) 12 nights accommodation £15.00  
25 nights accommodation £30.00  
55 nights accommodation £55.00

**PREPAYMENT STICKERS:** Full and probationary members; £25.00; Associate members; £12.50.

**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS:** MCG (members only) have reciprocal booking rights with SWCC and NPC.  
NPC bookings via Andy Goddard tel:01978 812100 (work) 01244 570944(home).  
SWCC bookings via Ian Middleton Tel: 01703 736997 email ian\_m@tcp.co.uk

**RECIPROCAL RIGHTS:**

## **THE COMMITTEE**

<b>Secretary</b>	Tim Francis	Flat 16, Lambert Avenue, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4QR	Tel:0181 392 2572 Email t.francis@nopres.co.uk
<b>Treasurer</b>	Huw Jones	Coedhir, 3 Clos-yr-Arad, Nant Felin Cwrt, Castleview, Caerphilly, CF83 1NF	Tel:01222 862934 Email coedhir@enterprise.net
<b>Caving Secretary</b>	Julie Hesketh	23, Ashleigh House, Mortlake High Street, London, SW14 8SH	Tel:0181 392 2572 Email jhesketh@water-services.co.uk
<b>Tacklemaster</b>	Dave Tooke	44, Beechtree Avenue, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0RS	Tel:01784 436237 Email d.tooke@rhbnc.ac.uk
<b>Cottage Warden</b>	Marcus Ward	56, Barn Meadow Close Church Crookham, Fleet, Hants GU13 0YB	Tel:01252 815112
<b>Editor</b>	Jane Baldwin	14, Commercial Road, Machen, Newport, Gwent, NP1 8NA	Tel:01633 441096
<b>Recorder/Librarian</b>	Wayne Hiscox	3, Keward, Glastonbury Road, Wells, Somerset, BA5 1TR	Tel:01749 671282
<b>Social Secretary</b>	Pete Moseley	Pendle Cottage, Mearway, Westhay, Glastonbury, Somerset.	Tel:01458 860524

NON-COMMITTEE POSTS	NAME	TELEPHONE
RESCUE WARDEN	Brian Snell	01329 238341
CONSERVATION OFFICER	Marcus Ward	01252 815112
COTTAGE EXTENSION	Wayne Hiscox	01749 671282
EXAMINERS	James Allen & Ben Cooper	

**CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES:** Malcolm Cotter. Pete Matthews, Jonathan Roberts & Pat Walsh.

# *MCG doings*

**On the move.....**Pete Bennett to 7, Marshall Road, Cambridge, CB1 4TY. Tel:01223548145. Email:pb245@cam.ac.uk

Rupert Knowles.....55, Duke Street, Windsor, SL4 1SJ. Tel:01753 856346.

Andrew Shann....90, Windmill Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 7BZ. Tel:01865 751222.

Application received for probationary membership from Matt Hardman, 2, Wilkinson Avenue, Little Lever, Bolton, Lancashire. Tel:01976 827496.

Following Joe Framptons resignation as cottage warden, the committee have co-opted Marcus Ward to the position. Thanks to Joe for his work whilst cottage warden and welcome to Marcus to the post!

Did any one video a recent BBC2 programme in the "Meet the Ancestors" series, in which bones were found in some caves - up north somewhere? If so, would you be willing to donate it to the club library (or lend it for a while)? Please contact Joan Goddard if you can help.

Julie Hesketh is organising a Yorkshire trip for the weekend of 21<sup>st</sup> March. Accommodation will be with the NPC (Northern Pennine Club). Please contact Julie as soon as possible if you want to go as she has to book bed space. There are several cars leaving from London in addition to the Royal Holloway minibus. Julie's phone number is 0802 431588.

The 1998 Half- Yearly is to be held on the members weekend in November. Full details to follow. In view of poor attendance in previous years please

make a note of the date now and try to attend!

The cottage work weekend is to be held on the members weekend in June. There will be a barbecue and a barrel to entice a few more people to come along and help. Further details regarding exactly which jobs need doing on the cottage will follow in the next newsletter.

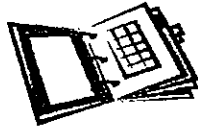
If anyone is doing an "Aggie" trip please would they let Julie Hesketh know.

There are 3 AGM's coming up, should anyone wish to attend they are as follows:-

1. DCA (Derbyshire Caving Association) to be held 21<sup>st</sup> February 1998, at 10am in the Monyash Village Hall, Derbyshire.
2. Cambrian Caving Council, to be held on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> March 1998, in the Gwesty Bach Inn, Brynmaur at 11am.
3. NCA (National Caving Association) to be held Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March, 10.30am, at the Dog and Muffler Inn, Joyford, Forest of Dean.

Local members may be interested in a Somerset Wildlife Trust's illustrated talk on Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup> March at 7.30pm at the Old Deanery, Wells. The talk, by Dr. Peter Glanvill, is about GB Cave.

The venue for the Thursday evening meetings in Egham has changed to The Beehive, also in Egham. From the Eclipse go up Egham Hill (away from London on the A30) and take the 1<sup>st</sup> right in to Middle Hill. The Beehive is on the right almost immediately. Start time 9.00pm.



## Forward Meets Programme

<b>Date</b>	<b>Area</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Contact</b>
February 1998	<b>Reservoir Swallet Mendip</b>	A Saturday evening trip led by Geoff Beale. A once in a lifetime opportunity 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 ☎ 0802 431588
21 <sup>st</sup> March 1998	<b>Yorkshire Trip</b>	Accommodation at the NPC. Transport available from London.	Julie Hesketh ☎ 0802 431588
25 <sup>th</sup> April 1998	<b>AGM &amp; annual dinner</b>	AGM Hunters 2.30pm. Dinner to be held at The Seymour Arms, Blagdon. See full details on page 4	Tim Francis ☎ 0181 392 2572 or Pete Moseley ☎ 01458 860524
16 <sup>th</sup> May 1998	<b>MCG Rescue Practice</b>	Longwood /August	Brian Snell ☎ 01329 238341
6 <sup>th</sup> June	<b>Work weekend on the cottage</b>	Maintenance/repairs on cottage. All welcome!	Marcus Ward ☎ 01252 815112
Summer 1998	<b>Madagascar</b>	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 Jul/August but you could meet them for a few weeks only if time is a problem.	Tim Francis ☎ 0181 392 2572
7 <sup>th</sup> November 1998	<b>Half-yearly</b>	Full details to follow	Pete Moseley ☎ 01458 860524

### Notice from the committee

The committee is always prepared to receive constructive criticism from members, we recognise that we are all fallible, however, all committee members consider correspondence containing personal abuse to be unnecessary and also unacceptable. We also believe that the members are not aware of a conflict that exists between some sections of the Group. Which unfortunately involves quite innocent members of the committee in protracted correspondence, when such factions believe quite wrongly that members of the committee have a personal axe to grind or some hidden agenda.

We would like to make it clear that the committee has no hidden agenda and would simply like to get on with the day to day organisation of the Group. We have no interest in the political shenanigans of any Group members. We would also like to make it clear that we are jointly responsible for all committee decisions and actions and that any criticisms of any committee member should be addressed to the Secretary for discussion at committee meetings.

In future, so that the whole membership is informed of any contentious issues the committee will publish all critical correspondence in the newsletter (if necessary such correspondence will be removed from exchange newsletters).

## Notice of Annual General Meeting, 1998

The Annual General Meeting of the Mendip Caving Group will be Held in the Long Room of the Hunters Lodge Inn on Saturday 25th April 1998, commencing at 2.30pm.

### Provisional Agenda

(Chairman: tbc)

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 12.04.97.
3. Agreement that the minutes are a true record of that meeting.
4. Matters arising.
5. Officers reports and matters arising from those reports.
6. Election of Honorary Officers for 1998/1999.
7. Election of Examiners 1999/1999.
8. Election of Rescue Warden and election of Conservation and Access Officer.
9. Motions.
10. Any other business.
11. Date and venue of the next Annual General Meeting.

Nominations for office and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules must be submitted in writing by first class post to the Secretary's home address with the signatures of Full Members proposing and seconding at least 25 days before the meeting. A nomination for Office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand election by the nominee. The honorary officers shall be: Secretary, Treasurer, Caving Secretary, Cottage Warden, Tacklemaster, Editor, Recorder/Librarian, and Social Secretary. Enclosed with this newsletter is a nomination form.

Nominations for the two non-Committee posts (Rescue Warden, Conservation and Access Officer) will be accepted at the meeting.

Copies of the 1997 AGM minutes were circulated with the September 1997 newsletter, Bulletin number 22. Members may obtain further copies of the minutes or Constitution and Rules from the Secretary.

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### Library Additions *by Joan Goddard*

**Why count sheep when you can count raindrops?** For some time now Stuart France, of Chelsea Speleological Society, has been recording cave traffic in some of the Llangattock caves using his electronic caver counters. Recently he experimented with a surface detector to monitor walkers on the mountain. All went well at first, during a spell of dry weather, but huge numbers of "visitors" were logged one wet night. That's right – the microphone was so sensitive it picked up the pitter patter of the raindrops instead of the pitter patter of tiny feet!

Next time you survey a cave, take a little extra time to note down a few basic geological features such as scallops, passage shape, joints etc. An article by Dr. Andy Farrant in the December 1997 issue of Compass Points tells you why it is worthwhile and how to do it.

**Classic Caves of the Peak District** by Iain Barker features 50 caves arranged alphabetically, each with NGR, length, depth, grade (*i.e.* severity of the trip), access procedure, tackle requirements, history and description. The caves are the author's personal selection, and there are four maps showing their locations. Some of the cave descriptions are accompanied by plans or rigging guides, and suggestions for further reading are given. This sort of guide is likely to lead to honeypot caving; whether or not that is a good thing, I leave to your own judgement.

# MCG Annual Dinner

This years dinner is to be held at the Seymour Arms, Bath Road, Blagdon. There is limited accommodation available so book early. Tel:01761 462279. There is little other accommodation available in Blagdon so use the cottage!

Tickets are £17.00 per head. Please complete your menu choice below, tear off the slip and return to Pete Moseley, 82, Meareway, Westhay, Somerset BA6 9TZ, together with your cheque made payable to MENDIP CAVING GROUP. Cheques will not be accepted after 31<sup>st</sup> March 1998. Tickets will not be sent out this year as I am so well organised that choices and numbers will be kept in my little book!

A coach has been organised to pick up in Wells 7pm, Hunters 7.15pm, Nordrach 7.30pm, and Blagdon 7.45. The cost of the coach will be £3.00 per person.

## Menu

*Fresh Fruit Cocktail*

*Or*

*Apple, celery and cheddar soup*

*Or*

*Smoked Mackerel Pate with hot crusty bread*



*Rib-eye Steak Diane, with a veritable medley of vegetables*

*Or*

*Braised Chicken Breast, with leek and Stilton sauce including a veritable medley of vegetables*



*Stickey Toffee pudding*

*Or*

*Hazelnut Meringue chocolate Gateau*

*Or*

*Apple & Blackberry sponge pudding*



*Vegetarians can choose their menu on the night from the blackboard. Vegans please let me know what you would like to eat. Both vegetarians and vegans please forward cheques and numbers for catering purposes..*

\*\*\*\*\*

**Name:**

My menu choices are:

**Starter:**

**Main Course:**

**Pudding:**

I require \_\_ ticket/s and enclose a cheque for £\_\_\_\_\_.

## Beginning the New Year with a bath (cold)

*By Tony Knibbs*

Hangover permitting, there is a certain indefinable pleasure in starting the New Year with a caving trip – nothing strenuous, you understand, just a gentle potter along easy passageways. The air having a certain moisture content, ie. it was raining cats and dogs and blowing a gale outside the nice, warm cottage, thoughts turned automatically to a morning stroll down the idyllic streamway in Swildon's Hole.

Putting up the first trip card of 1998 on the notice board, we pretended not to notice the weather as the intrepid team – Joan Goddard, Tony and Denise Knibbs and Jon Roberts – piled their gear into a waiting French-registered carriage and headed eastwards.

That was the first pleasant bit; the first unpleasant bit was stepping out into the inclement weather at the little parking area next to Priddy Village Hall and, again, pretending not to notice the weather while bravely pulling on our wetsuits. We had the pleasure of wishing Simon and Val Happy New Year (they were clearing the hall of the previous night's debris).

If the fields were wet, then the entrance was wetter! Visiting Swildon's no more frequently than once a year seems to require me to take a slightly modified route through the Entrance Series at each encounter, looking at the same boulders from a different angle. This done, a lively stream was followed through the Middle Dry Way (a stupid name, given the ambitions of the stream) to the Old Grotto where a deafening roar promised a thorough wash before much longer.

And so it came to pass that the cataract in the Water Rift did all but wash off our wetsuits as we blindly groped our way to where we could see again. The climb down to the bottom of the old Forty-foot Pot began with a bath and continued in a waterfall. I half expected to see Christmas tree lights up in the alcove, but perhaps such decorations had fallen victim to economic circumstances this season.

As you can imagine, the Twenty-foot Pot was quite spectacular, even with the ladder rigged well out to the right. The rest of the streamway down to Sump 1 was very invigorating. So much so that I managed to tumble into the second Double Pot with excitement (I think), or maybe it was just the residual effects of last night's beer – that Cotleigh was always good for a couple of extra staggers. Some things never change, do they!

The sump was covered in scum and froth, but you can't keep a good man down and so Jon, reading the collective desires of his colleagues, willingly sacrificed himself to preserve the good name of caving and plunged into the unwelcoming pool. We breathed a sigh of relief and stoutly resigned ourselves to await his return, however long he should be gone beyond recall. So we agreed to give him ten minutes which is just about what it took to get down to the Landing and back again.

Thence, having at least had our representative call on Swildon's 2, we retraced our steps back up the streamway and eventually emerged into miserable, grey daylight with the prospect of changing out of our nice, warm wetsuits while standing in a southwesterly gale in a temperature of about 10C – the wind-chill raised some notable goose-pimples!

A psychologist ought to have something to say about consenting adults indulging in such weird behaviour in a public place. But, whatever the perversion might be, I'm convinced that a straw poll of those present would have concluded that such antics are only feasible when the mind has before it a firm image of a warm cottage and a hot shower. So we're not entirely stark raving mad.....are we?

### Sponsored walk in aid of West Brecon Cave Rescue Team

Following on from the plea for donations in the last newsletter, a walk is being planned from Brecon to the South Wales Caving Club's HQ at Penwyllt on Sunday May 3<sup>rd</sup> – a distance of 20kms (or is it 20mils?). Apparently there's "not too much up-and-down stuff" and there will be opportunities for walkers who fall by the wayside to be picked up and transported to the finishing point. Anyone is welcome to come along (hopefully with lots of sponsorship) but even if you are unable to join the walk how about sponsoring someone who is doing it.

Joan hopes to have sponsorship forms available soon, so if anyone is interested please get in contact with her (or a member of SWCC). WBCRT is a worthwhile cause – and you never know when you might need its assistance!

**Upper Flood / Waterwheel Log 1997**

This year has seen a significant increase in the number of trips made into Upper Flood, but there have been hardly any visits to Waterwheel. 13/18 leaders led, or participated in trips which included 16 guest groups. The following is a breakdown of trips entered into the Blackmoor log since 1990. I have not included trips made to Blackmoor Shaft and Upper Flood II which should also be recorded in the log.

Upper Flood						Waterwheel	
Year	Total Trips	Guest Trips	Digs	Cons	Photo	Year	Total Trips
1997	45	16	26	3	1	1997	4
1996	27	7	10	2	3	1996	9
1995	37	11	14	7	2	1995	15
1994	20	5	5	2	2	1994	11
1993	17	2	8	0	2	1993	12
1992	21	4	8	1	0	1992	9
1991	28	6	1	0	1	1991	15
1990	28	4	4	2	6	1990	16

Note that some of the guest trips may also have turned into digging trips! A new gardening spray has been purchased, and left in the tackle store, so that if anyone feels like a spot of stal. cleaning then there can be no excuses. Speak to Malcolm or the Committee if you want to get involved.

**Summary of Leaders**

*Charlie Allison	0181 393 5910	69, Cheam Road, Ewell, Surrey, KT17 3EG
*Jean Paul Burch	01737 217039	10, Ranelagh Road, Redhill, Surrey, RH1 6BH
Mike Carson	01753 655143	41, The Poynings, Richings Park, Iver, Bucks. SL0 9DS
*Sonya Cotter	01985 212690	36, St. Andrews Road, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 8ER
*Malcolm Cotter	01784 252643	249, Feltham Hill Road, Ashford, Middlesex, TW15 1LU
John Crowsley	01179 652585	11, Rose Walk, Fishponds, Bristol, Avon, BS16 4JN
*Steve Eddy	01179 665222	33, Somerset Terrace, Windmill Hill, Bristol, Avon BS3 4LJ
*Joe Frampton	0181 569 1964	Mayfly, Willow Wren Wharf, Hayes Road, Southall, Middlesex TW18 1PH
*Tim Francis	0181 392 2572	Flat 6, 16 Lambert Avenue, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4QR
*Lee Hawkswell	01985 212690	36, St. Andrews Road, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 8ER
*Julie Hesketh	0882 431588	23, Ashleigh House, Mortlake High Street, London SW14 8SH
Martin Rowe	01524 762664	Abingdon, Off Church Hill, Arnside, Carnforth, Lancashire LA5 0DJ
*Nicki Robinson	01222 862934	Coedhir, 3 Clos-yr-Ared, Nant Felyn Cwrt, Caerphilly CF83 1NF
Athur Spain	01749 679358	Waitangi, Long Acre, Dinder, Wells, Somerset BA5 3PQ
Adrian Thomas	01275 851286	36, Ash Hayes Road, Nailsea, Bristol, Avon BS19 2LW
*Dave Tooke	01784 436237	44, Beechtree Avenue, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey TW20 0RS
*Marcus Ward	01252 815112	56, Barn Meadow Close, Church Crookham, Fleet, Hampshire, GU13 0YB
*Stephen Wyatt	01934 838953	17, Stonewell Drive, Congresbury, Avon BS19 5DW

Members with access to Upper Flood key due to historic associations (not expected to lead guest trips):

Adrian Duckett	0181 568 6211	68, Roxborough Avenue, Isleworth, Middlesex, TW7 5HJ
Mike Hazelden	01703 464491	3, The Close, Thornhill Park, Southampton, Hampshire SO2 5RB
Wayne Hiscox	01749 671282	3, Keward, Glastonbury Road, Wells, Somerset BA5 1TR
Mike Lovell	01734 663747	4, Settrington Close, Loddon Park, Earley, Reading RG6 3XJ
Roger Wallington	01735 433841	125, Langley Road, Slough, Berkshire SL3 7DZ

**Rules of Access:**

- Party size limited to 4 including leader. If more than 4 are required, in digging for example, travel through the cave should be in a party not exceeding 4 including the leader.
- The key to the cave is not to be passed to anyone who is not an agreed leader.
- No carbide to be used in the cave.
- Novice cavers are not allowed entry.
- Wet suits are to be worn beyond the first duck
- The Blackmoor Log, which hangs on the back of the tackle store door, is to be filled in for every trip.



## THE GREAT ACETYLENE TRAGEDY

What a fascinating tale it was in the last Newsletter! I refer, of course, to the luckless Belgian who was unfortunate enough to get his carbide wet at the wrong time in Gouffre de Pourpeville in the Doubs, France. You could be excused for believing it to have been a simple accident, but that would be to ignore the possibility of this being a case of the cave taking revenge on the caver concerned - making an example of him, so to speak.

To have started caving on Mendip in the early 1950s was to instantly get into bad habits. The only easily available lighting was the traditional helmet-mounted stinky lamp, usually a "Premier" caplamp obtained from Caswells in Midsomer Norton for 7 shillings and 6 pence, which equates to approximately £5 at today's earning power. Thos. Black & Son Ltd would sell you an inferior "Daylight" model for about twice the price.

First experiences with this picturesque little device persuaded you that some form of electric lamp was obligatory, or you'd never see beyond the first waterfall let alone have light after a sump! So you needed two unreliable forms of light (which MCG Constitution & Rules enshrined in print), both of which offered unparalleled opportunities for polluting the environment: spent carbide, a sooty flame and dead batteries. As you can imagine, large numbers of conservation-minded cavers became adept at all three forms of pollution.

But it was the acetylene lamp (and smoke from photographer's flash powder to a much lesser extent) which inflicted by far the most permanent damage, particularly to roof decoration and to stalagmite walls where names could be written so clearly and so very indelibly.

Caving in France today reveals the incredible mess left in the wake of a century of speleos armed with carbide lamps. I can only tell you that some instances of thoughtless desecration are simply mind-boggling. Ask a French caver why he/she still uses an acetylene lamp and you will be told that it gives a nice, friendly light and is cheap to operate. Also it is the only form of lighting which is practical on trips of more than, say, 15 hours duration or which entail camping in remote locations. There is no easily accepted argument to these latter propositions, but this is just not true in the Ardeche where stals abound and trips average about five hours.

And let me not single out our Gallic cousins for guilt; just look around you in Britain and ask yourself why that group of cavers in Lost John's, or perhaps a party in Knotlow Mine on a three-hour trip are using carbide lamps. I was once told, "Oh, we're preparing to go to France this summer, and this is good practice". Even in caves in which acetylene lamps are formally banned - OFD springs to mind - cavers (or let's just call them prats) are still occasionally to be seen wandering around with their helmets apparently on fire.

Apart from the long duration or remote location argument, there is, today, no truly defensible justification for using a carbide lamp underground. But there, cavers are fiercely hypocritical on the subject of cave conservation, convinced that a thousand words are worth at least one deed. So it seems only to be expected that, every so often, the environment itself will seek revenge. Acetylene flames are bad for your health - ask any caver!

*By Tony Knibbs*

## A FEW OTHER NON-MCG EVENTS FOR NOTING.

### BCRA Regional Meeting - North Wales - Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May

This event is hosted by the North Wales Caving Club and is to be held at the Royal International Eisteddfod Pavilion, Llangollen. Admission charges are £2.00 in advance or £3.00 on the door for the Saturday Meeting. (Cheques payable to North Wales Caving Club) Members of the BCRA's Cave Surveying Group will be present. The meeting coincides with a weekend field meeting of the BCRA's Cave Radio Group.

Tickets and further information are available from:

Simon Dennis, Secretary NWCC, Kemmel, Storeton Lane, Bamston, Wirral, L61 1BX Tel:0151 648 6578. OR Adrian Farrel, Ty Du, Abbey Road, Llangollen, LL20 8EB. E-mail [af@datcon.co.uk](mailto:af@datcon.co.uk). For information about the Cave Radio Group's field meeting write to, Richard Rushton, 77 Hirstwood Road, Shipley, West Yorkshire, BD18 4BY. Tel:01274 580041. E-mail [richard@yabon.demon.co.uk](mailto:richard@yabon.demon.co.uk).

### BCRA Conference "Hidden Earth 98"

The venue is the Floral Hall, Southport, on the weekend of 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> September. Planning is at the very early stages and the event takes a lot of organising. Offers of help would be welcome. You can contact Pete Cousins (01543 251791) or David Gibson ([gibson@mcrosolv.demon.co.uk](mailto:gibson@mcrosolv.demon.co.uk)) Further details of the conference will be available in the spring.

### J.P.'s sponsored cycle ride in aid of MS

Last year JP organised a cycle ride which raised £4,000 for his local branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society and he's planning another ride this year on May 17<sup>th</sup>. If any members would like an enjoyable day's cycling around the Dorking area then contact JP (or contact him anyway to pledge sponsorship) Tel:01737 217039.

July 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Cavers Fair, Priddy - further details to follow.

Finally.....

The following article was taken from the Times, 4<sup>th</sup> February, 1998.

# Potholers reach depth of success

BY KATHRYN KNIGHT

FOUR British potholers have set a world record by descending almost a mile.

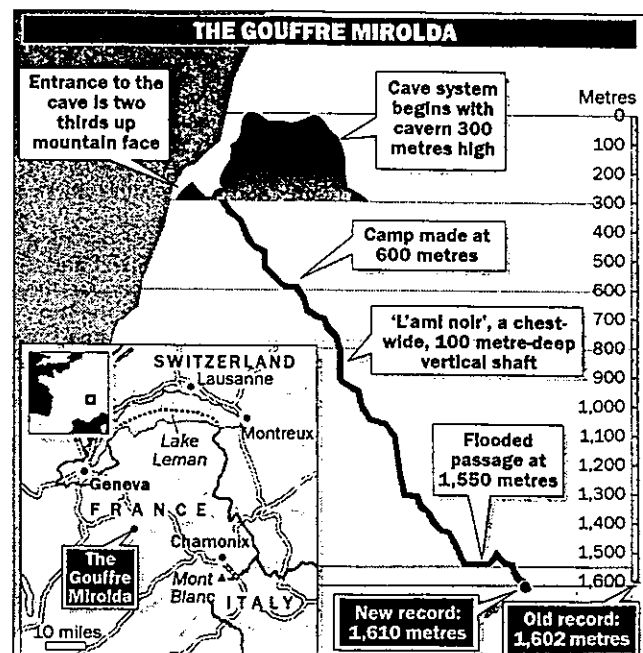
In a three-day expedition in the French Alps, Ged Campion, from Walsall, Graham Salmon, from Preston, and Bruce Bensley and Stewart Muir, both from Wolverhampton, reached the lowest recorded depth, 1,610 metres, beating the previous record by eight metres. Yesterday Mr Muir, 34, a design engineer, said they were planning a further descent into the cave, Gouffre Mirollda, between Geneva and Chamonix.

The previous record of 1,602 metres was set locally by a French team. The British group teamed up with four French cavers who had diving equipment to get past a

flooded passage that had defeated previous attempts.

Mr Muir said: "Although we descended almost a mile, we actually scaled around three or four miles at least, because you are often moving horizontally or diagonally along ledges and passageways. One of the worst bits is a descent known as *L'ami noir*, or black friend, which is two pieces of rock only a chest-width apart, which you have to slide down for 100 metres.

"It's an odd feeling being so low down, but it's a real challenge. You have to commit totally. If something goes wrong, you have to save yourself. That danger makes you feel very alert. Some of the scenery is so beautiful, it is worth the risks."





# CSCC NEWSLETTER

January 1998

## GB Cave WARNING

Syringe Needles and used condoms have been found dumped in the parking / changing area at GB Cave, Charterhouse. Although the area has been cleaned up, cavers are advised to take care when changing as there may be some needles left in the mud. You are reminded that if you find any thing dumped in or around cave entrances you should contact CSCC C&A Officer Martin Grass. Address overleaf.

Report: Martin Grass

## Cheddar Access

Access to the caves of Cheddar Gorge has been changed to take account of Bat hibernation periods. Some of these caves are of national importance so access to the caves on the south side of the Gorge, with the exception of Goughs Cave and Reservoir Hole, is allowed only between the 1st of May and the 30th of September.

Visits to the caves are by prior permission from Cheddar Showcaves, write in the first instance to :-

The Manager,  
Cheddar Showcaves,  
Cheddar,  
Somerset.

Report: Martin Grass

## Swildons Hole

Unless you have been on another planet recently then you must be aware that the mud sump drain hole has been blocked for some time. This has meant that during wet weather the mud sump has filled up becoming impassable. It is planned to bail the sump on the afternoon of

Sunday February the 8th and then attempt to clear the drain hole. Anybody interested in assisting with this will be very welcome, so contact C&A Officer Martin Grass for more information or to volunteer your services.

Report: Martin Grass

## TRAINING UPDATE

### Cavers Fair

The CSCC training event which ran over a weekend last year was well supported and proved a great success. This should now become an annual event although this year it will be combined with the Cavers Fair over the weekend 4&5th July. I hope to organise at least one day down in the Blue School gym with sessions on various topics (two if we can rope in other instructors) and also plan an SRT practice at Split Rock. This will be along the lines of an event I attended last year in Belgium where a quarry is rigged with over 30 SRT routes varying from the easy to the ultra-technical. This will be a practice session for people who already have basic SRT skills - not for complete beginners!

### Evening Lectures

A reminder that I am available to do one hour talks (free of charge!) on Saturday evenings. These can be at the pub or local caving clubs and can cover a variety of topics such as cave formation, cave leadership, knots, bolts, belay systems or survival.

### Training Seminar

How do we change the training (or lack of training) culture within caving clubs? Does your club have a training officer or training policy,

if not should you have? In an attempt to raise awareness and promote discussion of these issues a seminar titled 'Training within the Caving Club' has been scheduled for Saturday 30th May. It is hoped that most clubs, especially the larger ones, will be represented. Further details from the Training Officer.

### A Training Facility for Cavers

Wells Community Education have been successful in their lottery grant application for a new sports hall complete with climbing wall and caver training area. The 'caving wall' has been designed specifically to practice the whole range of caving vertical techniques. It should be completed early next year and will be available for use at evenings and weekends. This facility should make a real contribution to training and maintaining ropework skills amongst local and visiting cavers.

### Training Grants

And finally....Don't forget that NCA training grants are available to caving clubs who want to arrange their own courses or events. Contact me for details.

Andy Sparrow  
CSCC Training Officer

## NEW SUBSCRIPTION ARRANGEMENTS FOR 1998

1998 is upon us, and I am writing to let you know how we plan to deal with subscriptions this year. There are changes following the alterations to National Caving Association funding, because of the way in which the Sports Council grant for NCA has been cut back and restricted in its use in recent years - you had a report from us on that subject last year, for the Annual General Meeting.

CSCC has already had preliminary discussions about the level of its own subs for 1998/9 - they shouldn't be any higher than the current £10, which is intended to fund regional access and conservation activity. But we will have to request a separate sub for the National Caving Association element. This has not been needed before and regional councils such as CSCC have previously borne any net costs.

In 1997 CSCC paid an annual membership sub to NCA of £460, on behalf of ourselves and member clubs, but did not raise an equivalent charge onwards to member clubs for the cost of NCA membership. Our annual report and papers for last May's AGM showed this was about to put us in the red, as Sports Council support for NCA was becoming restricted, and also limited the basis of reimbursements from NCA to regional

councils. Effectively, under the old system, an increasingly large proportion of your annual sub to CSCC ended up being paid over to NCA, leaving CSCC only with reserves and short term cash to fund local cave access and conservation work. So changes were needed in any case.

Under the new NCA arrangements for 1998 onwards, the regional councils each pay NCA £40 annually as their own membership sub (which we shall incur as an ordinary cost), while member clubs pay NCA directly an annual sub of £10 each - which is roughly what we paid on your behalf in 1997. If your club is a member of more than one regional council and/or the BCRA, you will only need to pay the NCA sub once, not on multiple occasions. Most regional councils will be requesting the NCA subs from their own local members, and we shall seek £10 on NCA's behalf from our member clubs based in southern England, at the same time we ask for your annual sub to CSCC.

So expect a letter from me a little later this year, requesting both the CSCC and NCA subs. Meanwhile, happy caving!

Jonathan Roberts, CSCC Hon. Treasurer

## RESIN ANCHORS

Resin Anchors have been placed in Lloyd Hall in Goughs cave, The approach and main pitch can now be rigged for SRT, primarily to make access easier for the divers, but also for any other cavers who wish to use them. Resin anchors are placed by the regional council under the NCA Anchor placement program which provides indemnity for the installers and ensures regular inspection and maintenance of the anchors. If you want more information about the scheme or wish to place some anchors and need training then contact the CSCC equipment officer (Address

below)

Even though Resin anchors are regularly inspected it is the responsibility of every caver to check each individual anchor to satisfy themselves that they are safe to use. Any defective Anchors should be reported to the Equipment officer, giving the precise location, i.e. Cave, Pitch and anchor (e.g. Third from top etc.).

Report Les Williams  
CSCC Equipment Officer

Views contained in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the CSCC.

Any relevant news items should be sent to the Editor preferably on 3.5 floppy disk as a text file. Please provide a hard copy as well. Alternatively you can E-mail me

## Dates to remember

Expedition Seminar Plas-y-Nant	7th & 8th Feb
CSCC Meeting Hunters Lodge	7th Feb
Swildons Mud Sump bailing	8th Feb
DCA AGM Monyash	21st Feb
CCC AGM Brynmawr	8th March
CNCC AGM Helifield	14th March
NCA AGM Gloucestershire	21st March
CCC Ltd Hunters Lodge	4th April
CSCC AGM Hunters Lodge	16th May
BCRC Conference Clapham Yorkshire	13th & 14th June
Cavers Fair Priddy	4th & 5th July
BCRA Conference Southport	18th to 20th Sept

but only during University Term times.

Les Williams  
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BA5 3HU.  
Tel 01749 679839  
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## CSCC OFFICERS ADDRESS LIST

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