

# MCCG NEWS

Number 271 August 1998

FORUM NEWSLETTER OF THE  
CHICAGO COUNCIL ON  
MENDING

**WEEKLY MEETINGS:** At The Beehive, Egham, Surrey, on Thursdays from 9.30 p.m.  
**CAVING ACCOMMODATION:** For up to 30 people. Available at the MCG headquarters: Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse, Blagdon, Bristol, BS40 7XW. Tel : 01761 462797  
**COTTAGE LOCATION:** Grid ref. ST51475606. OS 1:50,000 sheet 182  
**COTTAGE BOOKINGS:** Through the cottage warden please (address and phone number 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 SUBSCRIPTIONS:** 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 (work) 01244 570944 (home)  
 SWCC bookings via Ian Middleton tel:01703 736997. E.mail ian\_m@tcp.co.uk

## **THE COMMITTEE**

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<b>Treasurer</b>	Huw Jones	Coedhir, 3 Clos-yr-Arad, Nant Felin Cwrt, Castleview, Caerphilly, CF83 INF.	Tel : 01222 862934 coedhir@enterprise.net
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<b>Social Secretary</b>	Pete Moseley	Pendle Cottage, Mearway, Westhay, Glastonbury, Somerset.	Tel : 01458 860524

<b>RESCUE WARDEN</b>	Brian Snell	01329 238341
<b>CONSERVATION OFFICER</b>	Marcus Ward	01252 815112
<b>COTTAGE EXTENSION</b>	Wayne Hiscox	01749 671282
<b>EXAMINERS</b>	James Allen & Ben Cooper	

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

## MCG Doings :

### ◆ On the move...

**Dave Cory** to... 92, St Cuthbert Avenue, Well, Somerset. BA5 2JS. Tel. 01749.677468. Email : dc.wells@lineone.net

**Bill Platt** to... 18, Roding Lane South, Redbridge, Ilford. IG4 5NX. Tel. 0181.551 8533.

### ◆ Change of Email Address

**Mike Gould** now at :  
mike@meph.demon.uk

### ◆ Membership...

**Simon Goddard** accepted as prospective member.

### ◆ Rhino Rift & Longwood/August...

The lock on Longwood/August has now been removed (and the door fixed afterwards!) and replaced & the lock on Rhino Rift has been as well which means that it is now possible to get back into those two caves.

### ◆ Pollution warning for Ogof Hen Ffynhonnau in North Wales!

There has been a recurrence of serious pollution to OHF. As in a similar incident at exactly the same time last year, foul water is entering the system at Trout Passage and polluting the whole streamway right down into the lower series.

The water contains suspended solids, and there are bacterial or fungal growths in the water and on the rocks. The vile smell suggests that this is very probably sewage. Cavers are advised to stay away!

The Environment Agency has been informed and water samples sent for analysis.

For further information contact the North Wales Caving Club, Secretary : Simon Dennis, simon@sdennis.force9.co.uk

### ◆ BCRA One Day Symposium

continues from the Meets Programme.

Main lecture by Andy Farrant on the latest geomorphological ideas on their formation. This turns the ideas of Derek Ford (1962) on its head!

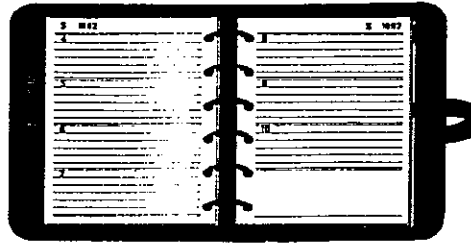
Historical notes, diving and attacking Sump 12, conservation, more historic videos and photos etc etc..

Admission about stlg 1 each to cover hall hire, beer and food arrangements as before.

- ◆ Internet News... The Weils Disease Information Centre, set up by John Moore's University, has a new web site :  
- <http://www.livjm.ac.uk/wdic/>

## Committee Snippets...

**Bone Hole** : a new padlock is to be installed by the MCG. Tim to contact the National Trust regarding possible relaxation of access procedure. **Shares** : Wessex Water is the subject of a take over bid. The offer price for shares is well above market value and a decision has been made to sell. In order to maintain our broad & narrow range shareholding, it has been decided that the proceeds of the sale will be used to buy Bristol Water shares. **Cottage** : trench for guttering now completed, pipework imminent. Wayne to obtain a quote for pine shelving in the library. **Tackle** : new SRT rope not to be replaced in one go, to be spread out over 2 or 3 years. **Computer** : the club has recently bought a second hand computer from B. Cooper for a nominal sum. This computer will be left in the library for members to use at present but may be removed and used by subsequent editors. **Mad update** : all visas & flights arranged so at least we're going!! **Leadership** : Ben Cooper & Letti Patte to undergo their Upper Flood leadership after Madagascar. **Membership** : membership application forms can be obtained either by E.mail or post from the Hon-Secretary. **Donation** : £25.00 to be donated to the Derbyshire Rescue Organisation to help fund the purchase of a new vehicle.



## FORWARD MEETS PROGRAMME

DATE	VENUE	EVENTS	CONTACT
21st August	Mendip	BTCV : dry stone walling.	
27th Sept.	Mendip	BTCV : dry stone walling.	
October '98	South Wales	Julie is trying to organize a trip down Craigy-Ffynnon. If interested contact her.	Tel : 0802 431588 julie.hesketh@cbi.org
20th Sept. until 1st Nov.	Madagascar	A 6 weeks expedition to the Mahajunga region, in September / October but you could meet them for a few weeks only, if time is a problem.	Tim Francis Tel : 0181 392 2572 t.francis@nopres.co.uk
15-28 November	Wells Museum	A Brush With Darkness, ISSA cave art exhibition.	
21st November	Priddy Village Hall	BCRA One Day Symposium. Subject : Swildon's Hole & St. Cuthbert's Swallet. More information on Page 3.	
November '98	North Wales	Julie is trying to organize a weekend in North Wales, dates to be set. If interested, contact her	Tel : 0802 431588 julie.hesketh@cbi.org
7th Nov.	Mendip	<b>Half-yearly.</b> New Inn, Priddy, Skittles evening. More to come in the next newsletter.	Pete Moseley Tel : 01458 860524

### Advanced Bookings



### More MCG News

- **2 weeks in September** : dates still to be confirmed. During the day, the cottage will be used by the police dog handlers. Please make sure that any illegal stashes are removed from the cottage.

Thank you to all those who had to deal with more than the usual s\*\*t on the weekend of the 15th / 16th of August. There was no room for weak stomachs, or was there MW??!!

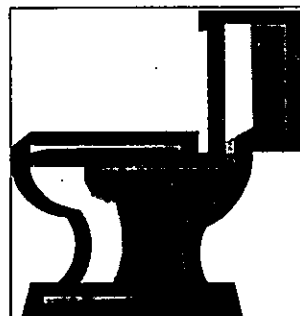
**OOPPS!!**

**Word gets around...** JG to MCG members : "it took WH 20 mins to get it up" {the sewage inspection cover that is}.

### Toilet Roll count down :

➡ **8 large rolls left.**

The committee feels that it would be sufficient until the next meeting when the situation will be reviewed.



## BCRA Regional Meeting – North Wales (by Julie Hesketh)

The BCRA arrange occasional regional meets, open to all cavers, across the country. This was the first meet arranged in North Wales. Intrigued by the mystique which surrounds access arrangements in N.Wales and with the prospect of a trip in a difficult-to-access cave, we (Tim Francis and Julie Hesketh – meeting up with Cara Allison) decided to forgo the MCG rescue practice on the hope that “this had better be good...!” It was better than good – it was excellent – a fabulous mixture of good weather, great scenery, a well known venue, speakers of a high standard and a caving trip thrown in, it was well worth the trek. Camping was available in the grounds of Valle Crucis Abbey – a beautiful setting, just down the road from the Llangollen Eisteddford pavilion where the meeting was held.

Saturday morning kicked off with the usual scene setting lectures – one on the geology of N.Wales and secondly, a brief introduction to the caves themselves. Much of North Wales has been extensively quarried for its ores and limestone, since prehistoric times. Some natural cave exists which is accessible from the surface but much cave passage has been found by miners and entrance is only via old mine workings. The North Wales Caving Club and the Grosvenor CC are the 2 main clubs in the region and administer access to those caves where leaders are required on behalf of Tarmac who own vast swathes of N.Wales, particularly around Minera. Peter Appleton provided a good overview of the main sites. Amazingly, North Wales has as much limestone as Mendip but much of it is privately owned by industry which makes access difficult. Cavers are at a particularly sensitive point in negotiating access to the main sites at Minera such as for Ogof Llyn Parc.

The morning continued with something for the “tech-ies” with a presentation from Peter Styles of Liverpool University on “the detection of cavities using the microgravity technique”, John Hey of the Cave Radio and Electronics Group gave a roundup of recent advances in cave radios and Wookey gave a talk on Survex and computer aided surveying techniques.

Lunch in the sun and a quick trip round the trade stands was followed by a thought provoking talk on the general issue of access arrangements. All aspects of access were covered – from both the cavers and landowners point of view. A wide-ranging discussion followed on landowners liabilities and rights of access which highlighted the need for cavers to respond to the government consultation on freedom of access to the countryside.

The afternoon session wandered onto the theme of local mining activity with Christopher Williams’ talk on archive sources for mines and caves. A vast amount of research has gone into understanding the history of local mines – key to comprehending where cave passage is likely to be found. Edric Roberts gave an account of the exploration and opening up of the Great Orme Mine to the public. The mine, on the Great Orme Peninsular is now a tourist attraction which has received considerable grant funding during its restoration. The mine yielded mainly copper ores and has been of great interest to archaeologists for the many archaeological relics found there. The mine’s interest has been heightened as it revealed a few surprises for its renovators – carbon dating showed that an extensive part of the mine was not only from 19<sup>th</sup> century activity as previously thought but dates back to prehistoric times.

The evening entertainment was in the pub – beer, a talk by the Cave Radio Electronic Group, beer and a chance to catch up with caving friends, oh and some beer.

The highlight of the weekend came on Sunday with a trip to Grand Turk Passage via Cefn Shaft. The cave is near the village of Minera, the main lead and zinc mining area in the UK. The trip is mainly through abandoned lead mines and took us under two further entrance shafts before we reached a slippery climb upwards towards natural cave passage. A flat out but very slippery and slimy downhill section finally took us into a most impressive gently sloping, wide bedding passage – Grand Turk Passage. After 300m or so it ends in a low crawl which could easily be mistaken for the end of the trip. The best bit is beyond the crawl though as the passage opens back out into a meandering streamway leading to a large, clear, blue sump in a near-vertical shaft. Diesel contamination of the sump curtailed our stay at the end of the cave and we quickly hurried out for fresher air.



## **Officials try to grab cave painting :**

**By Andrew Spurrier**  
in Paris

The French state has been accused of overreaching itself in its efforts to gain control of a cave containing one of the most ancient collections of rock paintings.

Three senior officials of the Ministry of Culture, including the former national heritage director, have been charged with falsifying official documents in an attempt to prove that the discoverer of the cave, a civil servant, was on ministry business when he did so.

The Chauvet Cave received its name after it was discovered on 18 December 1994 by Jean-Marie Chauvet, close to the Gorges d'Ardeche. The cave contains about 300 paintings spread over 490 meters of wall in three separate chambers.

Under the French law, the discoverer of an archaeological site has the right to exploit the photographs and other images of the site provided that the find is "fortuitous".

The paintings, in black and red ochre, depict a variety of animals, including woolly rhinoceroses, bears, lions, bison, mammoths, aurochs and a panther. They have been carbonated at around 30,000 years, which makes them twice as old as those in the better-known Lascaux Cave in the Dordogne.

Mr Chauvet was an employee of the regional office of the Ministry of Culture. An experienced potholer, he had earlier in 1994 been given responsibility for surveillance of the numerous "decorated" caves in the Ardeche, where the find was made. He continues to carry out this work for the Ministry today.

He insists, however, that when he made his find he did so in his own time and was not subject to orders from the ministry. He was engaged in a pot-holing expedition with two companions.

Whether or not he was on ministry time, senior officials at the Ministry of Culture apparently thought that he should be. According to an examining magistrate, they even went so far as to produce a false "*ordre de mission*", predated to four days before Mr Chauvet's discovery.

The then Rhone-Alpes regional cultural affairs director, Patrice Beghain, and the regional curator of archaeology, Jean-Pierre Daugas, have both been charged with forging official documents. The former national heritage director, Maryvonne de Saint-Pulgent, has been charged with complicity. All three are due to appear before a Lyons criminal court in the autumn.

One of the owners of the site, who is also in dispute with the state over the price of the land, claimed that the alleged forgery was part of an attempt by the state to gain total control of the cave and its exploitation.

"From the beginning, the state wanted to take over every aspect of the Chauvet Cave," said Pierre Peschier. "It tried to despoil the discoverers and the owners."

According to Christian Hilaire, one of Mr Chauvet's two companions at the time of the discovery, the document which led to charges being laid against the ministry officials stipulated that he was being given a temporary archaeological exploration mission lasting from 15 December 1994 to 31 January 1995.

"They produced a forgery," he said. "We were furious."

A ministry spokeswoman said yesterday: "As long as the procedure is in progress, we will not reply. We will let the legal process follow its course." It is understood, however, that the ministry claims the false mission order, which was drafted on 3 January 1995, was produced with Mr Chauvet's consent with a view to "protecting him and reimbursing his expenses."



## ARNSIDE ANECDOTES : May 23rd - 25th 98

From Yvonne Rowe

Another Bank Holiday weekend and another welcome visit from the MCG. This time it was Dave Tooke, Letti Patte and Marcus Ward up for some caving and a good walk. They arrived on the Friday night and set up camp in Dent ready for an early start Saturday to do an SRT trip down Bull Pot. Martin and I were to meet them at the camp site, and according to the OS map there is just one. When we arrived, we found three fairly close to each other. All the weekend, visitors had piled straight into the first two they came to as they were the nearest to the shops etc..., and they were packed in cheek by jowel. A short distance on down the road was D, L & M's site which had about three other tents on it!!

We arrived late and missed them. Also we passed Bull Pot on the way and had not seen Marcus's car - but we had seen two mini-bus loads of cavers changing into caving gear at the roadside. To cut a long story short, they too had found Bull Pot busy so they tried to find Nettle Pot not far away but all they could find was what looked like a collapsed cave entrance. By this time we had all met up and went to find Upper Hackergill, a small cave in a nearby streambed. Martin and I had not brought our caving gear because we thought we'd be too late for a trip. Instead we went off further upstream to look for other cave entrances while D, L & M were underground. The stream was like any typical Yorkshire stream - full of lovely smooth, rounded boulders that the water babbles over, except there was no water! Never have I been able to walk up a Yorkshire river bed that was bone dry. This should have made cave spotting easier but we only found one, Ibbeth Peril, where at least four should have been, and we only found this one because needless to say the waterfall it was behind had also dried up.

We walked back to where we had left the other 3 via the most beautiful buttercup and daisy meadows to find that they couldn't find their cave either. They were wet, dirty and tired, and more than a little fed up at not having had their caving trip and it now being well into the afternoon. There was only one thing for it - the pub for consolation!

They packed up their tents and we all headed off for a campsite below the Langdale Pikes. "Sorry mate. They're *all* full up round here", we were told. Odd because the next site a short distance down the road had plenty of room. Having said that everyone else was well packed in. We were unfortunate enough to pitch near a group of families who made a row well into the early hours, totally ignoring the 11.30pm curfew and other camper's cries (including Dave's) of "shut the f\*\*k up!". Martin and I had ear plugs, and Marcus would sleep through an earthquake!! (Ed. bless him ) but poor Dave and Letti had a sleepless night.

After a quick trip into Ambleside the next morning for walking substance we split into 2 groups - D, L & M heading for the Langdale Pikes, Bowfell and Crinkle Crags ; Martin & I heading for Rosset Gill & Bowfell (and Crinkle Crags if we still had any energy left). Each group had superb walks in glorious sunshine (Martin had sunburnt & sore calves to prove it) but D, L & M decided to miss out Crinkle Crags, so did we, and we met up at the pub, as prearranged, only 10mins apart. We ate and drank and swapped stories of the day's events. Martin and I headed back to our tent earlier than the others as we were quite tired (we *are* crusties after all!), put in our earplugs and slept undisturbed until 8am the next morning. When we awoke we guessed the others would be asleep for ages so we had a lie in and whispered quietly. When we finally looked out, they had disappeared - tents, car and all!! Apparently they had got back to the campsite at about midnight to find a group of bikers had set up 'next door' and were having a rave - ghetto blaster blaring, bike alarms being sounded off every few minutes, shouting etc etc.. - and we slept through the lot!!! D, L & M had up-tented, taken the car and moved to a quieter part of the site.

On the Monday we all went to Keswick for a few hours before D, L & M set off for the south. Marcus had to buy himself some cotton baggies as he could not bear the coarse denim of his jeans against his sore calf, especially whilst driving. Martin & I bought some posers dehydration systems - called Platypus, they are 2 1/2 litre water carriers each with a drinking tube that you clip to your clothes or rucsac so you can drink on demand, and encased in thermal protective bag (made by Therm a Rest). We'll give them a try and tell you what we think of them.

But my one main recommendation must undoubtedly be 'Muffles wax earplugs'. They really work and from past experience I can tell you that they even work at the cottage in the same room as the MCG's worst snorers!!!

# The Challenge

By Jane Baldwin

And they  
call this fun!

Following a little drinkie in the Hunter's on Friday night Linda and I foolishly agreed to "pop in" on the BEC on Saturday to see what the Challenge was all about this year. As we left the car at 5.30pm on the Saturday I chanted the "No way, no how are we getting involved in this" mantra, in a rather pathetic entreaty to Linda (who, as usual, completely ignored me).

On entering the BEC lounge we were handed a pretty innocent looking map and a sheet of instructions. The object of the exercise was for, teams of 4 people, to go round the course outlined on the map and find, using the cryptic clues, wellies filled with concrete. The wellies collected were to be weighed at the end and the team with the heaviest collection deemed to be the winner.

As Linda and I were a token representation of the MCG she decided it would be a jolly lark to walk the course, forget about the wellies and laugh at everyone else trying to find them. I was repeatedly assured that the views from the top would be my reward for the estimated one hour endeavour. Suddenly we were outside the BEC hut and climbing over two stiles towards Boot Hill.

There were 6 stations around the course where the wellies were to be found the first being at a pond where a man with flippers on greeted us. Here it was expected that the teams waded out to a thing in the middle of the pond and claim a tag, which would entitle them to a wellie. (Was I glad we weren't collecting wellies!) It was pointed out to us that the previous week the whole of the pond had been covered in weed and now only half was. All done in the name of conservation you understand and nothing whatsoever to do with the challenge!

Go straight up the hill for the next bit we were told, so off we went. After about 10mins I noticed that the path we were on was conspicuously flat, and sure enough we were on the wrong path. Linda assured me that we could rejoin the path if we climbed straight up a fairly easy looking grassy slope, at the top of which people carrying wellies over their shoulders could be seen.

Tussocks, tussocks, and more TUSSOCKS! They started off at about a foot or so deep and gradually got deeper and wetter. About half way up the swearing started in earnest, especially after a lizardsy thing crawled over my foot. Then Linda disappeared waist deep down a tussock, closely followed by me chest high and calf deep in mud in one. The people at the top found this highly amusing, so they told us when we bumped into them further round the course. By now the only thing left to do was to laugh (hysterically?) and keep climbing to end the nightmare.

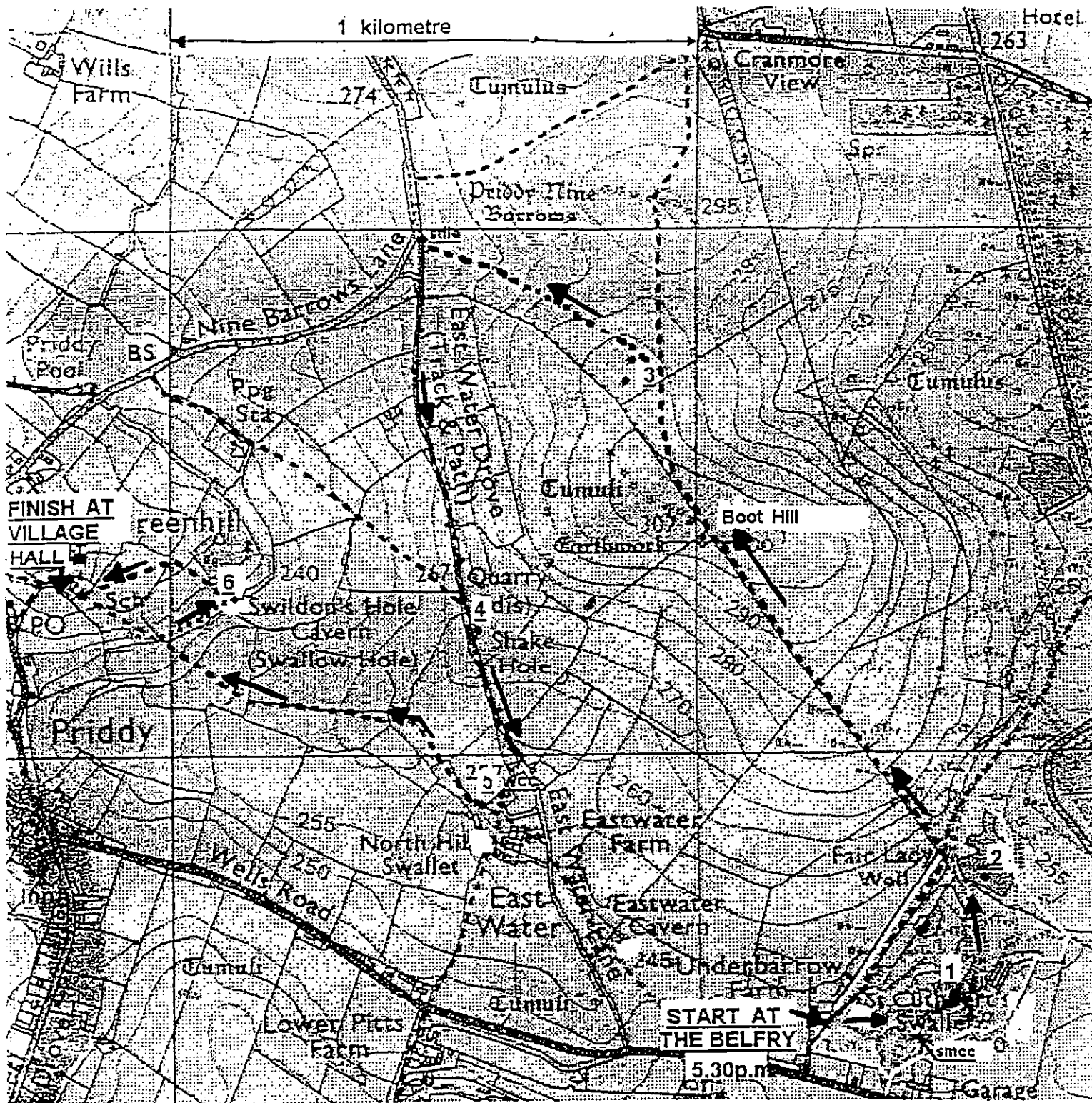
Once on the correct path the rest of the course was relatively easy and enjoyable. That is except for Eastwater Lane. Water being the word for it! The whole width of the lane was about 6ins deep in water for about 30-40m. Manoeuvring round this obstacle involved climbing across the top of a dry stone wall or tippy toeing from one clump of weeds to another along the edge and praying that your balance lasted out.

Finally we got back to the BEC and the car after taking a short cut. Well done to the BEC for an interesting challenge. The winners were The Wessex. So we'll have to see what they come up with next year. Whatever it is "No way, no how are we getting involved in it" are we Linda?

**On the next page, the map of the course....**



Map of the Challenge :



KEY

- 1 ■ STATION
- Unmarked Local Path. Using these will save you time
- Suggested route.

# The Richmond & Twickenham **informer**

Your Local Newspaper for Richmond, Twickenham, Teddington, Hampton, Kew, Barnes, Mortlake & Sheen

No. 32 Week Ending 7th August 1998

16th Year

20p where sold at newsagents

## POPE PARDONED!

A WEST COUNTRY tourist spot is demanding the return of stolen goods which have lain beneath a posh Twickenham School for more than 200 years.

They believed Twickenham's most famous resident, Alexander Pope, shot stalactites from Wookey Hole caves in Somerset and brought them back to help decorate Pope's Grotto, which is now under St James's Independent School for Boys on Cross Deep.

Now tourism bosses in the West Country have issued a pardon to Twickenham's famous 18th Century poet – but they still want their stalactites back.

It turns out the real cave thief was a relative of the man who famously ransacked Greece for the Elgin Marbles – and Pope only received the stolen goods.

New research concludes Pope was never at the scene of the crime and was sent the rocks (which were stalagmites, not stalactites) by Charles Bruce, 4th Earl of Elgin – whose relative, the 7th Earl, stole the Elgin Marbles 60 years later.

And in a strange parallel to the Elgin Marbles – which the Greeks want to reclaim from us – the Caves want their stalagmites back.

Peter Haylings, who is managing director of Wookey Hole, said: "For many years our cave guides have been telling visitors about the vandalism of Alexander Pope.

"Our document to the school will pardon Pope."

"But just as the Greeks have

By NICK HARDING

asked for the Elgin Marbles back so we believe these stalagmites should be returned to the Mendip Hills."

Caves spokesman Martin Powell said: "The formations now buried in the grotto were taken from around the base of the Wytch of Wookey.

"Legend has it that the Wytch is a real witch who was turned to stone.

"We would obviously like Pope's formations returned to put in our museum and to see exactly what they look like."

Anthony Beckles Willson, who looks after Pope's Grotto for English Heritage, said: "The stalagmites are no longer visible, they are in part of the grotto that has collapsed.

"I do not think there is much chance they will be recovered."

However, moves are underway to renovate the collapsed part of the grotto, which could uncover the formations.

● Pope's Grotto was an underground tunnel with rooms off it, which were decorated with mineral specimens, including the disputed stalagmites.

## He didn't steal stalagmites – but they are under his house



HOMELY: The stolen goods are buried beneath school



RECEIVER: Alexander Pope



SCENE OF THE CRIME: The Wookey Hole caves

See Shaw, T.R. (1998) Wookey Hole in Somerset and Pope's Grotto at Twickenham, England. Cave and Karst Science, Vol. 25, No. 1, P. 29-36.