



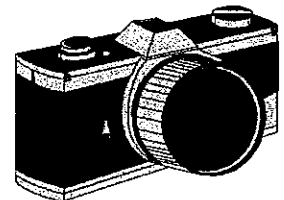
DEVON MEET - March 19-21st 1999

By Lynn Furneaux

Moment of Truth

Saturday

After hearing all the sad excuses and tales of how one member of the M.C.G. was almost Doomed in Bakers Pit, I felt it was time to tell my side of the tale. It was lovely to see some of the M.C.G. members come down to my hometown of Buckfastleigh on the edge of Dartmoor, and to be able to show them around some of our local caves.

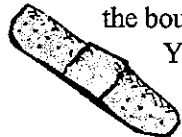


My group were the cavers that wanted to take photos and do some filming.

After climbing down into Bakers Pit, Bill and I went off in our two groups; I led mine down into Crystal Corridor and up the Cats Crawl. I did not realise that we had fitted a shower in Cats Crawl, (one member came out dripping).

From Crystal we went back into the Boulder Hall Extension, from where you go down a hole in the floor to the Drain Chamber. I said to all, 'go down headfirst, gravity will take you through'. But NO! One member of the party decided that feet first and backwards would be best. HE GOT STUCK. After much heaving and breathing, out he pops. 'Stay put' I told him, 'I will bring you round the other way'.

The rest of the group went through the hole and into the Drain Chamber, and I left them at the top of the Dutch Oven, only then did I return for this other member of the party. Again, he did not listen, 'don't climb up the boulder'. Too late (Bang, down he went)



Yes, you've got it; he fell. Now he has sore arms and knees. Thinking about the rest of my group I took this certain member down to Judges Chamber where he could rest and take more photos, while I went on my way around the Devon Series with the rest of my group. In the meantime, Bill had seen this particular member sat in Judges Chamber, and he seemed OK. On returning to Judges Chamber one more caver decided he would sit with G. B. and not go up into the Upper Series. I asked G. B. and Andy to stay put as we would only be about 30 to 40 minutes, and I knew that if anything went wrong up there, they were only just below us.

WRONG!!

After shouting for them, not light, sight or sound could be seen or heard.

My mind is now thinking, 'Bill had come and taken them out for me'.

WRONG!!!

Unknown to us our two errant members had gone walkabout without map or compass.

We climbed out of the cave, to find Bill fast asleep in the car, (but not for long).

Yes you've got it; Bill had not brought them out. Both Bill and I went back in to rescue them.

The motto of this tale is that I let a full member of the M.C.G. FALL, GET STUCK AND LOST all within one day of caving in Devon.

Sunday

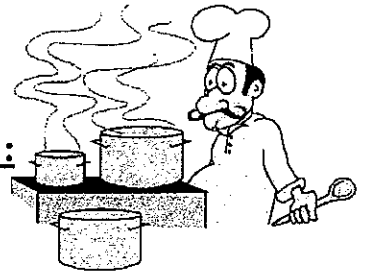
After a late start most of us went caving at Afton Red Rift.

Geoff decided that one more days caving with me was a no go.

Andy had no excuse, only that morning after feeling. Funny how beer and mead hits the head.

More on Devon Page 5...

News in Brief



New E-mail address :

Clive Maybury → clive@cmaybury.co.uk
 Letti Patte → LPATTE@STEELCASE-STRAFOR.COM -all in capital letters !!
 Dave Tooke → dave.tooke2@future.ca
 Simon Goddard → simon.goddard@balliol.oxford.ac.uk

AGM Dinner :

Once again, a big thank you to Pete Moseley for organising the AGM dinner which was held at the Seymour Arms. Over 50 people attended and the whole evening proved to be very enjoyable.



MCG Meet : by Julie Hesketh

I'll be running an MCG trip to the Caves of Portland, near Weymouth in Dorset over the weekend of **23/24/25th July**. The caves, some karst caves and some sea caves are probably best described as "collector's items" and are mainly small in length although a couple almost hit the one kilometre mark. Blackrior Hole is probably the most talked about trip which requires a full SRT kit as the entrance is half way down a 100 foot sea cliff!

Everyone is welcome. As the weather should (!) be fine, I will try to find us a convenient campsite nearby (preferably one which will allow us to have a barbie in the evening....)

So if you fancy a fun weekend on the south coast this summer, get the date in your diary.....



MCG Meet in the summer : by Joan Goddard, Martin Rowe & Co.

A trip to the Picos de Europa has been organised – caving & walking. We will be leaving England at 10pm on Tuesday 10th August and returning from France on Sunday 22nd of August.

The cost will be about £100 – excluding petrol & food.

Please contact Joan – 01608 810382 – or Martin – 01524 762664 if interested.



Word Gets Around Special AGM Weekend...

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ TW : “If I go down Pinetree, MR is coming”. ➤ AS : “I’m going out with GB”. ➤ TF : “You haven’t seen gadgets until you’ve seen CA’s”. ➤ BC : “TF has got an orange helmet available to all”. ➤ JG : “I’m quite easily satisfied”. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ TF : “I know it all”. ➤ BC to MW “How do you turn the hot water heater down?”
 “I don’t know, I haven’t had a shower for two weeks”. ➤ SG : “Typical, as soon as I get up he comes”. |
|--|---|

Forward Meets Programme :



**MARK
THIS
DATE**

<i>DATE</i>	<i>VENUE</i>	<i>EVENTS</i>	<i>CONTACT</i>
15th May	Mendip	Rescue Practice down Waterwheel. For more information contact →	Brian Snell on 01329 238341
15th & 16th May	Wales Agen Allwedd	Key booked for Saturday & Sunday. Maximum party size 8. For a place contact Julie →	0171 395 8053 (day) 0802 431 1588 (eves) julie.hesketh@cbi.org.uk
5 th - 6 th June	Nordarch Cottage	Cottage Work Weekend. Contact →	Marcus Ward on 01252 815112 m.ward@nichicon.co.uk
11th - 13th June	MCG Yorkshire Meet	BCRA Regional Meet, Punchbowl Inn, near Reith, Yorkshire Camping space has been booked. Contact Julie →	0171 395 8053 (day) 0802 431 1588 (eves) julie.hesketh@cbi.org.uk
19th-26th June	Nordrach Cottage.	BTCV will be staying at the cottage in order to finish the dry stone wall, if interested, please contact Julie on →	0171 395 8053 (day) 0802 431 1588 (eves) julie.hesketh@cbi.org.uk
25th - 27th June	North Wales Meets	Trip to Powells Lode, Milyr Tunnel booked. Accommodation to be confirmed (but probably B&B or camping at the Colemenny Arms pub).	Julie on 0171 395 8053 (day) 0802 431 1588 (eves) julie.hesketh@cbi.org.uk
23 rd - 24 th & 25 th July	Portland MCG Meet	Julie is organising a trip to the Caves of Portland, near Weymouth in Dorset. For more information see Page 3.	Julie on 0171 395 8053 (day) 0802 431 1588 (eves) julie.hesketh@cbi.org.uk
10 th - 22 nd August	Picos de Europa	A 12 day trip to Spain caving & walking. For more information see Below.	Joan Goddard Or Martin Rowe
11 th & 12 th September	Mendip Hills	A Cheddar & Mendip Walking Festival is being organised including walks ranging from 'family interest' to 'serious walkers'	Gorgeous Walks 01934 742688 tgo.cheddar@btinternet.com
1 st 3 weeks in October	Madagascar	Return to the Bemaraha. Tim & Ben have expressed an interest in a three week trip.	Tim Francis t.francis@nopres.co.uk
6 th - 7 th November	Nordrach Cottage	Half-yearly meeting. Skittles evening in the New Inn. Contact →	Pete Moseley

Next Committee Meetings :

14th-15th & 16th May 1999
4th - 5th & 6th June 1999
2nd - 3rd & 4th July 1999

DEVON TRIP - *By Bill Richards.*

Bakers Pit 20th March 1999

The party consisted of - Julie, Tim, Malcolm, Lorna, Cara, Richard, Andy, Geoff, Ben, Lynn and Bill.

Bakers Pit is a very warm cave as everybody found out at the entrance. After descending the tubes into the boulder hall we split into two groups. Lynn took Malcolm, Lorna, Geoff and Andy to take photos. We all walked to the end of the boulder hall where we went our different ways. My group climbed through Two Johns Tunnel, up into the Glorious Devon Series which eventually ends up under the graveyard. After some exploring we carried on to the red chamber where some more exploring over a bold step across a deep hole took some of the party down into the Great Rift, and back again to carry on through the system. From the Red Chamber, we climbed down through the Helter Skelter and out into the bottom of the Great Rift. From there into Judges Chamber, where earlier this year the large boulders moved, dropping about four feet. A short walk up to and behind the waterfall found us climbing a vertical squeeze up into the P.C.G. Extension. As I don't know this part of the cave very well everybody went off exploring. There are some beautiful formations in the extension. Having satisfied our curiosity we descended the vertical squeeze and met a very strange and lonely man (Geoff) in Judges Chamber. On asking where the rest of the party was, he said he couldn't remember, though he seemed to think that they were coming back to collect him.

After leaving Judges chamber we climbed the Great Rift, the Dutch Oven and ended up in the Drain Chamber. Tim, Ben and Julie went along the drain to the end and spoke to Malcolm who was in Judges Chamber. We climbed up through the roof of the Drain Chamber through a squeeze into the Boulder Hall Extension, where many years ago the roof collapsed onto the floor in large slabs. Crystal Corridor was our next port of call; the tape in this long chamber marks out the route avoiding the deep pool on the right. A trip around Cats Crawl, then into the dig at the end of the corridor. We all returned via Boulder Hall Extension into a tunnel at the back, up an eight foot climb and into the main Boulder Hall.

I climbed the rungs up to the locked gate at the entrance and the padlock did not want to unlock. It took at least ten minutes to open. After leaving the cave everybody went back to the caving hut. I waited for Lynn and her party to exit the cave. On waking me from my slumbers, she asked if Geoff and Andy were with me? No was my reply. At which point I put me oversuit and wellies back on, and we went on our "rescue" mission. We found the two missing bodies. Geoff was in the Boulder Hall Extension, and Andy was nearby at the far end of the Boulder Hall. Lynn led Andy out and I led Geoff (who had a very sore knee) out.

I hope everybody enjoyed the trip as much as I did.

Afton Red Rift 21st March 1999

After a very late start the convoy set off to the wilds of Afton. We arrived and parked in the farmyard. I think the very large bull had his eye on Ben, but that's another story. The quarry where the cave is situated was sheltered from the very strong blustery wind. Just inside the entrance, on the right was a bat. Tim called a warning to be very careful. A safety line was set up over the steep descending passage rift and then dropped to the floor as a hand line for the steep climb out. Whilst setting up this line I was sat over the rift and gave Malcolm a running commentary about the cave ahead. We continued through the system and arrived at the Flower Chamber. After a lot of exploring I found the way to the Cascade Chamber. Tim as usual found a grubby wet hole to explore. On the way back the squeezes were very interesting and the climb at the end was tiring. I converted the hand line into a lifeline for the last two. Malcolm, I look forward to seeing the photos and video.



Geoff and Andy declined the trip due to injuries and a hangover.

Pontypool or Bust Dig Report

Tim Francis

So far in 1999 we have done five trips to the dig face at Pontypool or Bust, Ogof Draenen (ref. Newsletter 272). Lured back by a decent outwards draft and the comfiest dig ever discovered it was only a matter of time before we returned for another look. This time we've been doing day trips of 12 hours or so rather than the Tim and Duncan camping epic of 1998. The following is a brief update of progress so far, taken from my log book.

Saturday 13th Feb – BC, TF, DH.

At last got back into Draenen. Three hours to the dig at POB. Filled up the water bottles at the drip at the beginning of the Crystal Maze. Dumped the stove etc. then through to the dig. Ben had to remove his oversuit to get through the squeeze. Dug for about four hours. Pushed the face for another eight feet plus made half the dig a lot bigger. Left all the digging gear in the chamber. Carried out the stove and remaining food. All pretty knackered and out by 11.30pm. 12 hour trip, long sleep.

Saturday 20th Feb – BC, TF.

Keeping the momentum going. Quick bash down to Pontypool or Bust for more digging. Managed about three hours digging and a ten and a half hour trip. Out by 10.30pm so actually made it to the pub for a few jars. Good progress in the dig but dug as far as we could go before we were knackered. Sweet and sour this week.

Saturday 27th Feb – PB, BC, TF, SF, JH, DH.

Much bigger team; in fact too many people this time so took slightly longer to make it to the dig. Ben and Simon went off for a spot of photography in the Sand Swims, whilst the rest of us dug for about four hours. The new skips really did the trick. Widened the whole dig right up to the end. Can see some airspace at the end and the base of a slope.

Friday 2nd April – PB, TF RK.

More work at the POB dig face. Dug out an excellent 62 buckets with some of the team more knackered than others. Excavated our way up the slope and to a calcite barrier at the top. Air space can be seen all along the roof line. Things initially looked better to the left so pushed up through the blockage until we could see over the top. To the left the airspace continues but there are loads of straws. In the centre it looks like there is a larger spot of airspace. Finally had a mad five minutes digging on the right. Much more airspace here. Twelve hour trip with the food being Chicken Korma.

Sunday 4th April – PB, BC, TF

A day off allowed most of the team back in. Another hefty push and 60 buckets. The pile of spoil in the chamber grows ever larger. On the way in Pete was convinced the draft had picked up since Friday. Bodily emissions confirmed that the draft is blowing at one to two metres a second. Dug up and into the airspace on the right. Things are so large you can virtually crawl! The larger airspace seems to have formed where the sand has dropped away from the ceiling at the edge of the passage. Forced a head sized hole into the pocket in the middle. This doesn't extend very far and the right hand side ends just a body length in front. So right at the end of the session had a good nosey straight ahead. A thin air space extends for at least a metre. Food: Seafood Pasta.

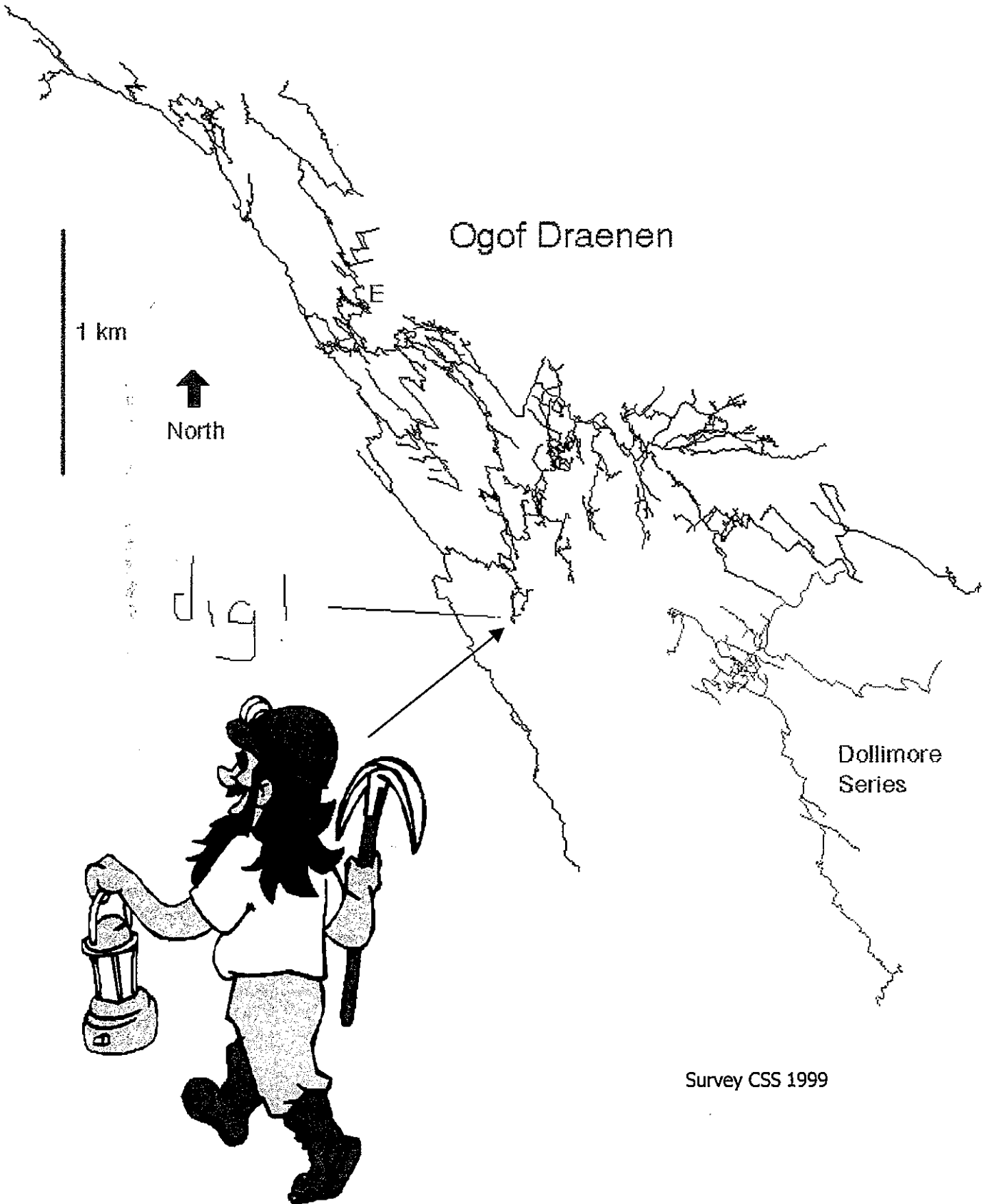
Diggers: Pete Bennett (PB), Ben Cooper (BC), Tim Francis (TF), Simon Fryer (SF), Julie Hesketh (JH), Duncan Horne (DH), Rupert Knowles (RK)

So what are the prospects? Take a look at the survey opposite and you'll see the huge gap on the survey between the streamway and Luck of The Draw. It's a great dig but the only flaw in the plan will be if the chamber fills up with spoil before we break through. The next trip is in May so watch this space.

Survey on the next page...

Pontypool or Bust, Ogof Draenen Dig Report

Tim Francis



Survey CSS 1999

The Massed Hoards in Mallorca

By Tim Francis

The 1999 jaunt to Mallorca was the sixth visit by the MCG to the island in recent years, and the largest group so far. Of the eleven intrepid holiday cavers six had been before and five were Balearic beginners. So many people meant that the villa was packed to the gunwales, and indeed Ralph, Bellez and Cookie slept outside. Temperatures were ok but I think their sleep was somewhat disturbed one night by tables and chairs being blown around the patio. We hired three cars to give us the flexibility of visiting more than one cave at the same time. However the warm weather meant that other attractions proved more appealing for some.

Cova de sa Campana

As it is the deepest cave on Mallorca and also has the largest chamber, the Sala des Gegants, Campana is a must on any trip. However this year some of us wanted to explore the lower levels which are reputedly rather grim. Just in case I brought along the bolting kit. We split up into several small groups with some just bimbbling around, a few doing a spot of photography and the rest of us doing the pitches. On previous years I'd looked at the various pitches off the last chamber and had assumed that the drop hidden behind the huge stal boss was the main way on. This is the lowest of the three pitches and is adjacent to an occasionally used camp site. It is apparent that the local cavers use the pitch as a rubbish bin.

This pitch only has one bolt in flowstone so that gave us bundles of confidence. I engineered a couple of naturals as back ups and then it was over the edge. The pitch begins as a steeply inclined rift with all walls consisting of flowstone. A rub point is passed at -4m and a ledge reached at -9m. At this point it became apparent that local cavers merely abseil to the floor ignoring the hideous rub point. Not overly keen on this idea I elected to put in a rebelay. The natural in the roof looked hideous so I proposed putting in a bolt. Lack of time meant that we left the pitch rigged for a return visit later in the week.

On the second trip there were only four of us so we made fast progress back to the pitch. I abseiled back down to the ledge and attempted to place a bolt. Unfortunately there was no solid rock just flowstone so no bolt could be placed. So there was no alternative but to rig from the natural in the roof. This was dead sharp and not overly solid looking. But what the hell. A couple of rope protectors gave added confidence and we were off. The pitch is about 25m and lands in a large chamber. The floor is littered with boulders and well decorated in places. Judging by the lack of damage (apart from rubbish that has been thrown down the pitch) the chamber is infrequently visited. We thrutched down a delightful Eastwater type rift in the floor which ends at an enticing hole at the bottom.

So despite doing the wrong pitch we were rewarded by seeing a nice chamber. Perhaps next year we'll check out the other pitches.

Cova Sa Foradada

Another return visit and a few more loose ends to tie up. In the lower levels there are two small streamways that meet up just before a sump. One streamway is an extremely sharp rift to a perched sump. I'm sure in summer this will beailable but this year a small stream was still flowing. The other inlet is much longer but also ends at a sump. There are two alternatives to bypass the sump. Above the sump is a small aven. Whilst I was putting in a bolt to protect the climb Ralph bashed away at a tight squeeze with a lump hammer. The aven almost certainly doesn't do although across the other side there is another intriguing opening. Ralph managed to open up the squeeze and I pushed through. Immediately beyond is a tight duck. Bailing was difficult so a return is planned with a siphon pipe.

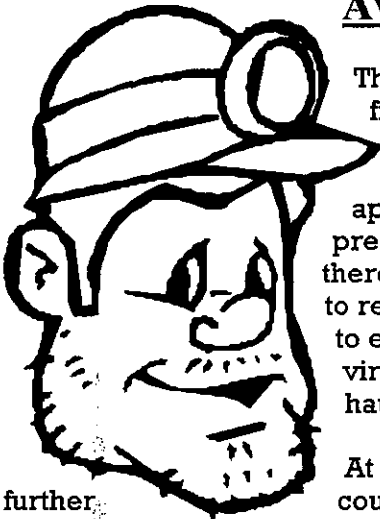
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More on Mallorca....

Cova Tancada

This was visited on three occasions during the week not least for its dramatic views over the bay of Pollensa and the Cap de Pinar. Bellez did the trip twice! The walk to the entrance is a gentle stroll through pine woods and ideal for a light excursion. The cave has been used on and off as a wild show cave but is relatively undamaged. However this year it was a pity so see that there were candles positioned on many of the stalagmites. Many have a thick coating of wax.

Avenc del pla de les Basses



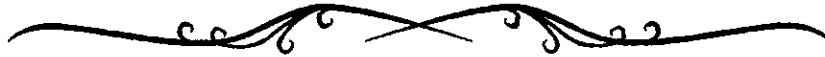
This was a new cave for all of us. Unusually for Mallorca it is easy to find. The entrance is located directly underneath a lone pine tree at the bottom of a large doline, the Pla de Les Basses. Six pitches (30m, 15m, 33m, 10m, 6m, 13m) lead to a sump. The whole cave appears to be rather flood prone so is best avoided if rain is predicted. The interesting stuff starts just before the fifth pitch where there is a Mendip style squeeze. Larger members of the team needed to remove their SRT kits to pass through. From here rigging moves on to expedition style with naturals and rub points in abundance. I virtually ran out of kit at the end with one bolt to spare and using the hauling cord to rig the last section.

further.

This is still

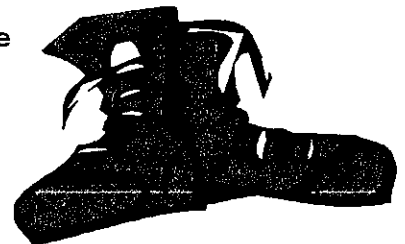
slightly above sea level so may be worth a dive. After consulting a survey it seems that a traverse across from the head of pitch six bypasses the squeezes at the bottom. An alternative pitch can be rigged to descend directly into the chamber.

Whilst looking for Les Basses we came across a potential entrance nearby which has not been recorded elsewhere. Lack of time meant that we could not check it out thoroughly although Julie did a spot of digging.



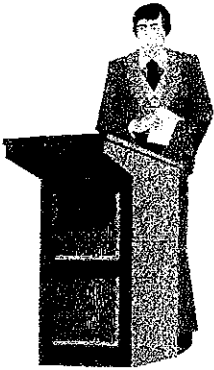
Conclusion

Another great year and I think everyone had a thoroughly enjoyable time. As well as caving, team members went on a day trip to Palma, visited the beach and went for a few walks. We indulged ourselves at various restaurants as well as doing a barbecue at the villa. I have some more material for the journal and will make sterling efforts to get it finished this year. We also have some more loose ends to follow up next year.



Team: James Allen, Andy Bellamy, Andrew Eacott (Old Moles) Dave Cooke (Wessex), Ben Cooper, Ralph Diment, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh, Laura Hughes (Old Moles), Rupert Knowles, Kirsty Stroud (Old Moles).

Snippets from the CCC AGM - Tim Francis



The Annual General Meeting of the Charterhouse Caving Company was held on April 10th at the Hunters. Unbelievably the meeting was over in less than an hour.

Finance – No problems with the CCC budget so subscriptions will remain at 30 pounds per year.

Lock aid and maintenance - During the year the locks from both Longwood / August and G.B. were removed and repaired, causing damage to gates. In response to this a new mechanism is being designed for GB which will be self opening from the inside.

Rhino Rift – Rebolting of the main route with DMMs was completed. It has been suggested that the MRO sign outside Rhino should be relocated. The tree which the sign is fixed to has fallen over! A general clean up is also required.

Longwood Valley and Velvet Bottom – On March 8th the transfer of this land to the Somerset Wildlife Trust took place. The existing licence arrangement covering this area remains in force and the existing permits remain valid.

Conservation – The following cave conservation plans were completed in 1998 :

Charterhouse – Pete Hann (Wessex)
 GB –Linda Wilson (CCC Conservation Officer)
 Longwood / August – South Bristol SS
 Rhino Rift –South Bristol SS

Note that the MCG were minuted to remove the sign from the Icing Chamber in Longwood / August. Also in Longwood it was decided not to DMM Swing Pitch. The wear and tear on spits and naturals will be monitored.

Dig Reports were presented for the following locations :

Timber Hole – Cerberus

Shaft in Velvet Bottom – Cerberus
 Tynings Great Swallet – UBSS
 GB Bat Passage – UBSS
 Charterhouse Terminal Choke – Wessex
 GB Main Chamber Side Passage – Wessex
 Rhino Rift Terminal Choke – BEC
 Gruffy Field Mine Shaft – Graham Mullan

Officers for 1999 :

All officers were re-elected as follows :
 Chairman – John Dobson
 Secretary – Graham Mullan
 Conservation Officer – Linda Wilson
 Directors – John Bell, Dave Cooke, Jane McCorquodale, John Dobson

Future plans :

There will be further conservation plans days in 1999. MCG participated in the GB cleaning day in 1998 with work completed in Helictite Chamber.

A trial of three types of Epoxy Resin will be undertaken on stal breaks in Charterhouse Cave.

The Conservation Officer will arrange a talk on the work done so far. A suitable venue and time to be decided but the theme will cover the preparation and implementation of conservation plans, monitoring and photographic surveys. Four slide projectors will be used to show before and after comparisons over the years. Company members, interested cavers, Somerset Wildlife Trust and English Nature will be invited.

Date of the next AGM :

Saturday April 8th 2000, 10.30am Hunters's Lodge.