

MCG NEWS

Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

Number 280 - June 1999

MCG Practice Rescue 15th May 1999

Attendees:

Brian Snell, Keith Knight, David Snell, Dave Tooke, Letti Patte, Cara Allison, "Big" Tim Woodhams, Tim Francis, Ben Cooper, Bill Richards, Marcus Ward, Geoff Beale and our volunteer casualty Lynn Furneaux

Summary

As most people will know, the venue for this year's practice was to be held in Waterwheel Swallet. Always hoping to make each practice different and not repeat one from the past, Waterwheel looked to offer plenty of challenges. There are crawls, narrow sections, a 30' pitch, a vertical squeeze and steep passage. Added to this there is also a need to take care of decorations. It's also a cave that anyone could get down. Last year's practice in Longwood, had, by its nature, precluded some people from taking part.

Lynn, our volunteer casualty, had to drive up on Saturday after seeing off a group of youths on the Ten Tors walk. Consequently she and Bill arrived later in the morning. That was OK as I had driven up in the morning also and it gave me some time to get the necessary gear ready. Once everyone was kitted up and ready to go, we had a brief meeting so that I could discuss anchorage points belays etc., and the awareness of looking out for each other with regard to formations. I had drawn up a large A2 sketch of the main stages of the rescue practice and this was useful to point out the potential problems likely to be encountered at each of the stages. After this everyone was straining at the leash to get going, so we set off at about noon. The decision had been made to walk to Waterwheel rather than drive, as nobody was available to keep an eye on the cars. This is still a requirement due to the low life that frequent Mendip and who think its quite alright to help themselves with the aid of bricks.

Ben, Geoff and Tim Francis were to follow on a little later so initially we were a team of nine plus the casualty. This was enough for the 30' pitch. I asked Dave Tooke to go on ahead and get the ladder rigged down the pitch and therefore maintain the momentum. Initially we were quite well spread out but we soon ended up all gathered at the gour pools waiting for someone to get to the end of the duck section and pull the plug in the dam to drain it. Here we assembled the frame of the stretcher to make sure that it would go through OK to the 30' pitch. In retrospect it would have been a good idea to assemble it at the beginning. Not long after we were all gathered in the section above the 30' pitch and while Lynn, Marcus, big Tim and Letti went down it whilst I began rigging the pitch for the haul line and lifeline. The drag sheet and frame were lowered and I popped down to oversee Lynn being strapped into the stretcher. It was about this time that Dave Tooke, who had recently undergone surgery, began not to feel too well. He decided to go out and was accompanied back by Bill. Letti returned back up to the scoop halfway up the pitch to help guide the frame away from the wall and the rescue practice was ready to start at 2:10pm.

The rescue went very well with all obstacles negotiated safely and quite efficiently. The team quickly learned to work well together and from the comments I received all or most enjoyed the practice. Lynn was finally laid on the grass (err no, I mean allowed out of the stretcher) at the surface at 5:40pm, the rescue having taken 3½ hours.

Lessons learned. On the rescue last year it was noted that a plastic sheet for deflecting spray and a pair of goggles would have made life more comfortable for the casualty. This was to be included into this years practice. On the way to Mendip I realized I had left the goggles behind. Never mind Keith Knight would save the day as he had brought along a small sheet of plastic for spray. He remembered it was back at the hut as we got to the entrance of Waterwheel (Oh dear!). These I will be contributing to the MCG Rescue Kit so that it can't be forgotten next time. Lastly, the large industrial karabiners that are part of the MCG kit are more a hindrance than of value and should be interned in the MCG museum.

My thanks to everyone who contributed to making the day work so well and a special thanks to Lynn for putting her trust in us to see her safely through the cave.

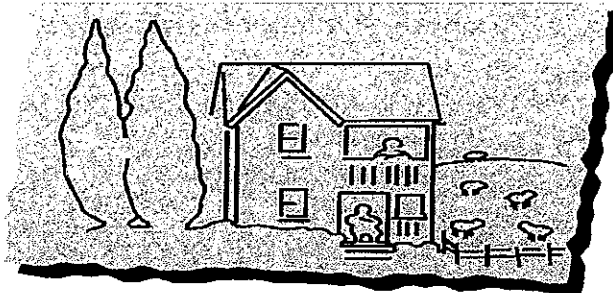
Pages 10, 11 & 12 is the report sent to the MRO.

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

Nordrach Cottage
Charterhouse – on – Mendip
Blagdon
Bristol BS40 7XW. Tel. 01761 462797

Ben Cooper (**Cottage Warden**) Tel. 01256 364199
Or email: ben.cooper@sbs.siemens.co.uk
M.C.G. information: - Tim Francis (**Secretary**)
Tel. 0181 392 2572 email: t.francis@nopres.co.uk

High quality caving accommodation available for bookings of up to 16 people. All usual charging facilities, keys etc. Guests £2.50 per night.



Weekly Meetings:

- At The Beehive, Egham, Surrey, on Thursdays from 9.30 pm
- At The Hunters Lodge, Somerset, on Tuesdays around 10pm or at the cottage at 7pm for caving trips.

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 Nic Blundell on tel. : 01203 713849 (home) or 01203 838940 (work) or on email : nic.blundell@bigfoot.com.
SWCC bookings via Ian Middleton tel. : 01703 736997. Email : ian_m@tcp.co.uk

THE 1999 - 2000 COMMITTEE :

Secretary	Tim Francis	Flat 6, 16 Lambert Avenue, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4QR.	Tel : 0181 392 2572 t.francis@nopres.co.uk
Treasurer	Dave Tooke	44, Beechtree Avenue, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey, TW20 0SR.	Tel : 01784 436237 dave.tooke2@future.ca
Caving Secretary	Julie Hesketh	23, Ashleigh House, Mortlake High Street, London, SW14 8SH.	Tel : 0802 431588 julie.hesketh@cbi.org.uk
Tacklemaster	Marcus Ward	56, Barn Meadow Close, Church Crookham, Fleet, Hants, GU13 0YB.	Tel : 01252 815112 m.ward@nichicon.co.uk
Cottage Warden	Ben Cooper	10 Coronation Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG1 4HA.	Tel : 01256 364199 ben.cooper@sbs.siemens.co.uk
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Rescue Warden	Brian Snell	01329 238341
Conservation Officer	Marcus Ward	01252 815112
Cottage Extension	Wayne Hiscox	01749 671282

Examiners James Allen & Martin Rowe

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News in Brief

Accepted as Probationary Members :

William Webb – 30 The Spinney,
Bradwell Village, Milton Keynes, MK13 9BX.
Tel : 01908 320022.
Email : bill@comtex.swinternet.co.uk

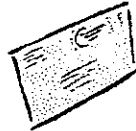
Michael John Norton – 62 Bay Road,
Bullbrook, Bracknell, Berks. Tel : 01344 421469.

Accepted as Full Members :

**Lynn Furneaux ; Pete Bennett ; Simon
Goddard & Bill Richards.**

Rejoining as Associate Member :

➤ **Katja Kaufmann**



Change of postal address and code :

Jane Baldwin to : 14 Commercial Road,
Machen, Caerphilly, CF83 8NA

New e.mail addresses :

Yong Shik : cavepark@cakra.dongguk.ac.kr
Jean-Paul Burch : jean-paul@cwcom.net

Blast from the past...

“ Hi Letti,

You don't know me, but you might have heard about a Spanish girl who came over England a few years ago: Victoria Arbizu, that's me. Since then, I am still a happy MCG member. Today I got your copy of the MCG News (issue no 279) and really appreciate to be still in contact with all of you. Last Saturday I finally graduated at Rice University in Houston, and now I need to let people know that this is my new address for mail: **2420 McDuffie St. No7, Houston, Texas 77019 (USA), my phone no: 713 942 0861 (h), and e-mail address: varbizu@hotmail.com (starting from August!) I am planning to stay here for another year and then, back to my home country.**

Thanks for your effort and care of the MCG News...it's a wonderful link for the International -and National too!- MCG members.

All the best for you and my MCG friends.

Happy caving trips.

Victoria “

"Lost and Found" :

Left in the cottage after the March Members weekend, two Shifting spanners. If found, please contact **Ben Cooper, 01256 364 199.**

Thanks.



Guests Bookings :

11/6/99 to 13/6/99 Guides	Beds : 24
19/6/99 to 27/6/99 BTCV	Beds : 15
10/9/99 to 12/9/99 Scouts	Beds : 20

"We are saddened to hear of the death of Bryan Ellis.

As Chairman, then General Administrator and latterly Membership Secretary for the British Cave Research Association (BCRA), Bryan was well known to many members of the MCG and the wider caving community.

A card has been sent to his family on behalf of the MCG together with a donation to the Bristol Oncology Centre (Research) who cared for Bryan over the years. His family have asked that donations be made rather than floral tributes at the funeral which took place on May 28th. Any members wishing to make personal donations or pass on sympathy to Bryan's family should contact J.E. Gilbert and Son Funeral Directors, 139 St John Street, Bridgwater, TN5 5JA."

Forward Meets Programme :



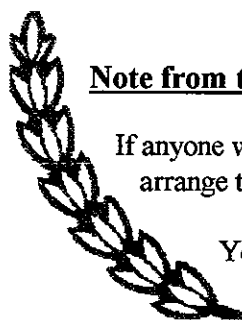
**MARK
THIS
DATE**

<i>DATE</i>	<i>VENUE</i>	<i>EVENTS</i>	<i>CONTACT</i>
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
12 th June	Mendip	Open session at the Blue School climbing wall on caving. 7.30-10.30pm.	
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	Caving trip organised. Camping accommodation to be arranged. Contact Julie Hesketh for details.	Julie on 0171 395 8053 (day) 0802 431 1588 (eves) julie.hesketh@cbi.org.uk
2 nd , 3 rd & 4 th July	Nordrach Cottage	Committee Meeting	
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 contact →	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 contact →	Joan Goddard Or Martin Rowe
10 th - 12 th September	Leeds	BCRA Hidden Earth Conference. Leeds. Includes MCG talk on the 1998 expedition to Madagascar. Details available from the BCRA website on http://www.sat.dundee.ac.uk/~arb/bcra/index.html Or contact Pete Cousins on (01543) 251791	
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. Contact Tim Francis for details of the forum. Skittles evening in the New Inn. For more information contact →	Tim Francis t.francis@nopres.co.uk Pete Moseley
13 th & 14 th Nov.	Mendip	CSCC training event.	

Note from the Meets Secretary :

If anyone would like trips down Aggy, St.Cuthberts, Charterhouse Cave, Dan-yr-Ogof or OFD, I can arrange them. Let me know!

You may be aware that access has been renegotiated for the Fairy Caves on Mendip. Access is by pre-arranged trips only with an authorised leader. I am trying to arrange an MCG trip in the summer. Please let me know if you would like a place.



Committee Snippets – May & June :

- Extension - carpet tiles purchased by Joan Goddard, fitted by Richard Carey at the work weekend. Black out blind for the library to allow slide shows.
- Manhole cover on the cesspit needs replacing.
- Bone Hole - Wayne and Pete to arrange a date to replace the rusted lock.
- Three new tackle bags to be purchased from Dragon. The neck is to be wide enough to take a ladder.
- EGM called for Saturday 3rd July at 6pm, Nordrach Cottage. The issue to be discussed is the need to co-opt a new Treasurer.
- Members are reminded not to throw rubbish over the back fence & into next door's field.

Resignation :

It is with great regret that I have decided to tender my resignation from the committee. After two years as Tacklemaster and having just taken over the job of Treasurer at the last AGM I feel that I cannot continue to give the job the time that it requires.

As many of you will be aware I have recently had health problems and, despite recent surgery, I am still not feeling 100 per cent. Finally, last week, I received more bad news of a personal nature.

Needless to say, the above issues have led to a reappraisal of my priorities and I feel that I must spend more time on improving my health and with my family.

I hope that members will understand the reasons behind my resignation and I apologise for leaving the club without a Treasurer having only just taken over the role.

Dave Tooke – Hon. Treasurer

Upper Flood Conservation Pan Update :

The conservation plan is coming along, but I am looking for volunteers to help with the fixed point photography. Once the photography is complete a draft copy will be available, yet it is hard to say how long it will take to get the photographic survey completed (as it depends on how many volunteers there are). There are about eight pictures left to finish and each picture can take up to an hour to do due to the measurement taking etc. Once this initial set of photos has been taken the future survey should be a lot quicker and easier.

I would like to thank Letti, Dave and Simon who have all helped out with the photography. And any additional help would be a great help and would be very much appreciated.

If anyone is interested in fixed point photography please contact me.

Marcus – Conservation & Access Officer

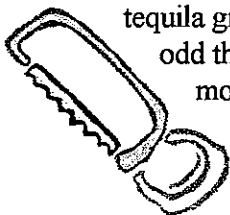


Dear all, I would like to thank everyone who was involved in helping to organise my surprise 30th birthday party at Nordrach Cottage. I heard on the

tequila grapevine that something was afoot. Even so upon returning from Swildons it did seem a bit odd that there was a crush of cars at the cottage rather than the two that were there in the morning. How you managed to get everything ready in time was beyond me. However I can't honestly believe that Richard and Ben kept us working the pump at the Mud Sump for three whole hours merely to guarantee that everything was in place on time! I hope everyone enjoyed the barbecue, cottage traverses and slide show as much as I did. I'm still

not so sure about

the saw squeeze machine!



Many thanks,

Tim

Fragments from France - 19

By Tony Knibbs

Réseau Trombe, Arbas 25 April

As part of a Spéléo-Club d'Aérospatiale training weekend, an interesting exchange trip took place between two of the upper entrances of the ever-popular Trombe system in the Coume Ouarnède, above Arbas: Gouffre des Hérétiques and Gouffre des Indomptables. Both potholes enter the huge main chamber of Trou du Vent.

Gouffre des Hérétiques has already been briefly described ("Fragments from France - 15", MCG N/L 257) as a series of dry pitches giving access via the TDV to the stream from Trou Mile, flowing into the lower reaches of the main Trombe system.

Gouffre des Indomptables is easily reached from the forestry track leading up from the parking area at the Fontaine de l'Ours above Labaderque. The entrance is a narrow slot in mossy lapiaz about 100m SE of the Hérétiques entrance and only 30m from, and 5m below, the track. It is essentially a series of consecutive, dry shafts totalling 100m in depth, whose final 40m pitch enters the sloping passage from Hérétiques into the Trou du Vent chamber.

The upper end of this impressive, boulder-strewn chamber therefore has three ways in, and the lower end can be entered from either Trou Mile streamway or from Gouffre Cécile via several wet pitches. So, if you find yourself at Arbas and are looking for a few hours of harmless fun, think of the many permutations of through-trips you can create based on TDV chamber!

Réseau Lachambre, Ria (Aude) 8/9 May

The little town of Prades is on the N116, the road from Perpignan to Bourg Madame, and lies just to the north of Pic du Canigou. The village of Ria is about 5km west of Prades and should be better-known as the location of Réseau Lachambre, a 25km network of mostly horizontal passages and chambers opening out fan-like NE from the single entrance and developed on seven levels over a vertical interval of 250m. The cave contains the most magnificent and varied selection of calcite and aragonite formations I have ever seen - not quite a Lechuguilla, but very close!

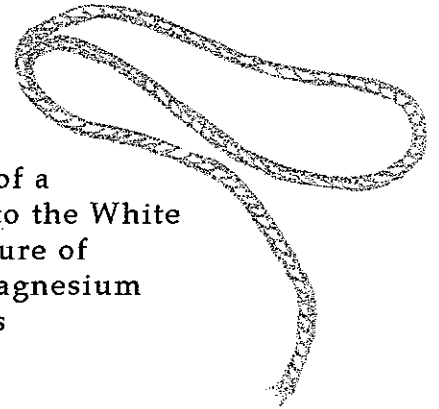
The cave was discovered in 1979 by an ex-miner, Dédé Lachambre, and was surveyed and explored by the Club-Spéléo de Conflens of Prades and GES Barcelona - the survey is entitled Cova Lachambre and several location names are in Catalan. It quickly became obvious to the early explorers that they had found something very special indeed which needed protection. A local "karst war" almost broke out when it was decided to restrict access, and a policy of non-publication was adopted. Visit permission is limited to ten groups per year; this is simply obtained by applying at least six months before the scheduled visit period and allowing some flexibility of date. All visitors must be insured and belong to a recognised national caving body. I have a contact name and address for a very cooperative obligatory guide.

More fragments on the next page...

French Fragments :

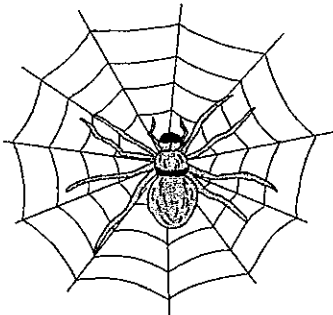
The Saturday trip was a four-hour jaunt to the White Canyon area of Galerie del Gran Canyon. The entrance is protected by a double door arrangement which would do credit to a bank! Much hands-and-knees crawling is called for over the first 100m of mostly excavated passage which is formed in salmon-pink marble, polished in places by the passing of cavers. Standing upright again in Galerie Mardé offers easy walking in a roomy rift passage of irregular cross-section.

After the first hour's promenade the formations begin to appear, a few drip pockets in the mud with white pisoliths, then gours, stal flows, straws, columns, cave pearls as big as hen's eggs, clusters of aragonite crystal flowers, a strange white powder form of a magnesium salt.... Finally a short rope-climb took us into the White Canyon where floor and walls were covered with a mixture of aragonite flowers sprinkled with the white powdered magnesium deposit. It is amazing how fast a camera eats film in this cave!



Sunday was devoted to an eight-hour trip to even greater marvels. We entered the cave at 10h00, bruised knees again in the crawl, then almost immediately turned right off Galerie Mardé into Galerie François from which two detours - Galerie Gaby and Salle Stephane - set the scene for an even greater overdose of formation types and sizes, especially Salle Stephane where every footstep and handhold had to be carefully considered. After ascending to a boulder choke and degenerating to several crawls, Galerie François eventually drops into a T-junction at a 10m fixed-ladder pitch; Galerie du Marteau runs off to the left but we followed the Boulevard du Canigou to the right, still dry with an interesting mud floor giving easy strolling for a few hundred metres to a bivouac site - Camp Massart. (Mr Massart fell to fame - and a broken leg - off the fixed ladder several years ago.)

It was now lunch time, so out came the bread and saucisson, etc. before moving on towards Galerie Vincent, but first a short detour off to the right into Galerie Bruno down to running water and a sump. Continuing along Galerie Vincent brought us to a thrutch up through boulders then a rope-climb up an almost vertical stal slope, opening out into Salle Vincent with a steep descent to the climax (last straw?) of the trip along 150m of the Rivière Vincent where calcite vied with aragonite to take our breath away. Most striking were the profusion of almost transparent, faceted aragonite stalactites, intricate outbreaks of thread-like eccentrics and "the Spider", a fist-sized crystal cluster hanging on a single straw. Mind-blowing!



It only took just over an hour of sweaty progress (13°C ambient temperature) to get back to the entrance, each of us carrying pictorial memories of a truly stunning trip.

AFTON RED RIFT

7th May 1999.

By Bill Richards

Lynn and I decided on a trip into Afton Red Rift to try and improve our photography skills. We entered the cave to find the gate open, a set of keys in the lock and a tackle bag just inside the entrance ????We continued into the system, I descended the steep rift and came across the other party descending the final climb. Standing on a small ledge, I pointed the way on for them.

At the top of the rift (before meeting the other group) Lynn and I discussed whether to set up a safety line, and decided against it. Then after meeting the other cavers we changed our minds. Whilst putting the hangers in at the lower end I dropped my BDH, containing camera, three flash guns, two photo cells and two mini tripods, into the rift below. OOPS!!!!!! I said. After descending into the bottom of the rift I discovered, thankfully, all the kit was OK due to the large amounts of foam in the container. It was this incident which caused us to change our minds and continue the trip in the reverse direction.

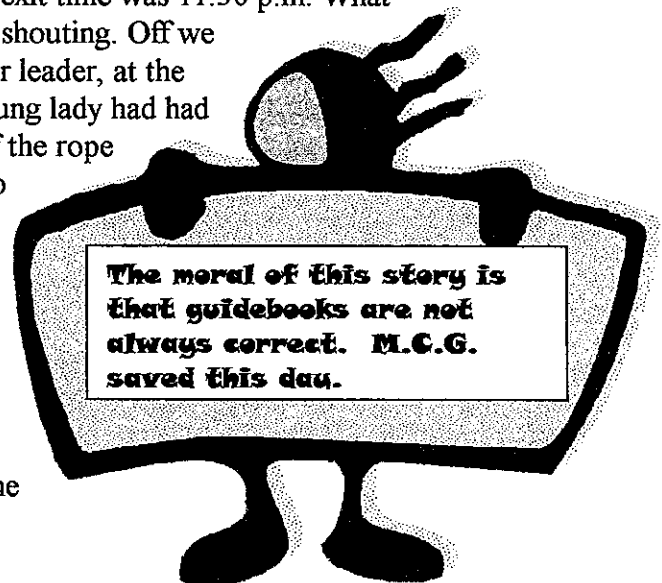
We met up with the other team at the Cascade chamber where introductions took place, and Lynn gave them our copy of the survey to assist them out. After watching them leave we set up camera and flash guns and took our photos (at the time of writing, we have not seen the finished results).

We packed our kit and made our way to the Flower Chamber. After much heaving and straining I managed to lift Lynn onto my shoulders to aid her climb up. One up, one to go. Thankfully I was carrying a short lifeline with me. Lynn tied it to the stal at the top of the pitch and lowered the other end to me. A series of middleman loops helped me pull myself out of the chamber. One very tired William.

After much puffing and blowing we reached the top of the short pitch to the bottom series. We had earlier decided to leave the rope there to aid the other groups exit. The question was, had they gone out already, or were they still below us? We stopped and listened for a while, not a sound. The decision was made; we de-rigged and made our way to the entrance. At the gateway, you've guessed it; the other groups kit was still there.

Time was getting on. It was 10.40 p.m., our exit time was 11.30 p.m. What do we do? The decision was made for us. We heard shouting. Off we went, back to the top of the pitch, to find Nigel, their leader, at the bottom. After some discussion we learnt that the young lady had had a fall and had hurt her knees and elbows. The end of the rope was passed through the two squeezes to assist her to the bottom of the pitch. I then life-lined her up the climb. She pulled herself up the steep inclined rift to where Lynn led her out.

I then followed, leaving Nigel and the others in his party to de-rig my kit, and follow us out. In the car park afterwards we found that Nigel was a member of the W.C.C. and he has promised me a pint.



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III EUROPEAN SPELEOLOGICAL CONGRESS
"NEW APPROACHES TO SPELAEOLOGY"

Lisbon, Portugal
October 1st – 3rd 1999

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Organised by Sociedade Portuguesa de Espeleologia

Excursions: 24th – 30th September

Several exciting trips in fascinating areas guided by local cavers.

- Volcanic caves and landscapes of Azores
- Caves and landscapes of Alentejo and Algarve
- Caves and landscapes of Serras de Aire and Candeeiros Natural Park
- Caves and landscapes of Littoral-Centre of Portugal

(Caves, limestone regions, archaeology, prehistory, geology, culture, architecture, villages, seaside, and... food and wine).

Main events: Congress 1st – 3rd October

All speleo subjects, meetings, workshops, discussions, hot news, exhibitions and market.

Symposia:

- | | |
|--|-------------------------|
| - Influence of Speleology among Youth | - Conservation of Caves |
| - Speleology and the Advance of Sciences | - Marketing Show Caves |
| - Communications and posters | - Cave Explorations |
| - Karst Geomorphology | - Physical Speleology |
| - Volcanospeleology | - Biospeleology |
| - Applied Speleology | - Cave Archaeology |
| - Speleo Techniques | |

Documentation and History: 50th Anniversary of the Portuguese Speleological Society

Also: Exhibitions - photo, publications, equipment, film and video shows.
Tours around Lisbon

Tough work: Camps 4th – 10th October

Several mini expeditions, various techniques, photo-safaris, archaeology & more. All details are subject of later confirmation.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| - Pumping flooded caves | - Digging spring entrances |
| - Rescue tyroliennes | - Diving under - 100m |
| - Diving shallow sumps | - Exploration of selected caves |
| - Archaeological excavation in caves | - Photographic safaris |

Call for papers

Papers will be submitted to commission of referees. However, all contributions are welcome. All supports are admitted: printed, PC or Mac. All languages are admitted although simultaneous translation is not guaranteed. Deadline for papers: 31st July 1999

For enrolment, questions, opinions, special requests, sponsoring contact:

III EUROPEAN SPELEOLOGICAL CONGRESS

Rua Saraiva de Carvalho, 233

1350 - 301 Lisboa

PORTUGAL

Phone/Fax: +351 1 3966291 e-mail: eurospeleo99@ip.pt , web: <http://ip.pt/%7eip259632/eurospeleo99>

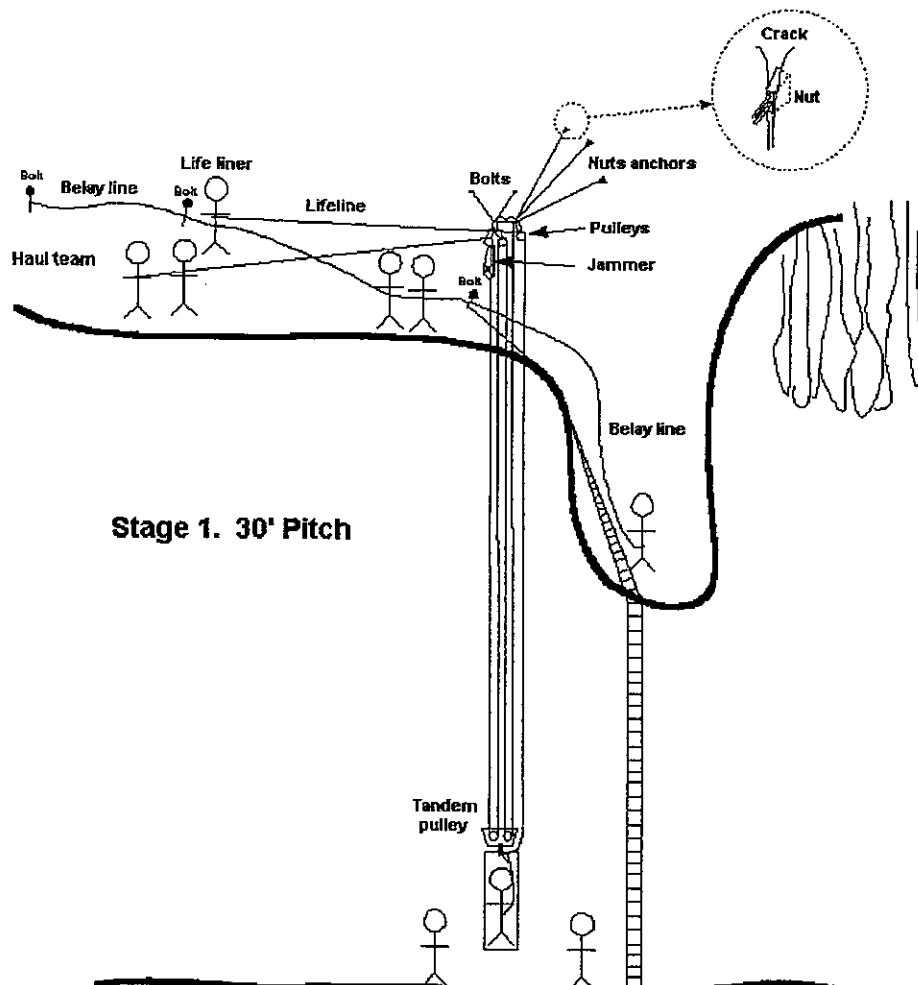
Mendip Caving Group - Practice Rescue Report 1999

Introduction

This is a report on the annual MCG Rescue Practice held this year in Waterwheel Cave in 15th May.

The aim of the practice rescue was to attempt to carry a casualty from the bottom of the 30' pitch at the end of the cave, back to the surface. This would be a good exercise for negotiating pitches, crawls, steep passage and tight sections. Initially we were a team of nine plus casualty. This later became a team of twelve as others turned up whilst the first haul was taking place.

Once the casualty was safely strapped into the drag sheet and attached securely to the frame. The practice began at 2:10pm. The whole event was essentially split into five stages. Stage 1, the haul up the 30' pitch. Stage 2, through the crawls to the gour pool chamber, where a rest was scheduled. Stage 3, continue to the vertical squeeze and the start of the steep section. Stage 4, the easier section to the bottom of the entrance and Stage 5, the haul up the entrance pipes to the surface.



There are two bolts available at the head of the pitch and short Y hang was rigged for hauling the stretcher. Behind this on the left wall, three nuts (climbing hardware) were placed (equally tensioned) in cracks and linked together with the Y hang to give an independent anchor for the lifeline and a backup to the bolts. This may be overkill but someone getting injured on a practice is not an option, especially the volunteer casualty. Consequently, when ever possible, pitches are rigged so that they are bomb proof and nothing can go wrong.

More from Brian on the Rescue Practice...

To help reduce the strain on the anchors a tandem pulley was attached to the stretcher linked to two pulleys at the Y hang. This gave a 4 to 1 ratio and meant that little under a ¼ of the stretcher weight was required to haul the casualty up the pitch. In addition a jammer was used on the last pulley at the Y hang to lock the rope between hauls. A separate line was linked to the large bolt (with the chain) at the head of the pitch, another large bolt about 10 feet back and a third large bolt backed up by a thread another 10 feet further back. This was a general belay line and was used by for the person belaying the casualty. It was also used by those people working at the top of the pitch and a person in the scoop half way up the pitch who was there to fend the stretcher away from the wall and to help with the transfer of the stretcher off of the haul lines.

For the number of rescuers required here, two people were needed to carry and position the stretcher at the base of the pitch. With the pulley advantage, only two people were needed for the haul. Two more were required at the top of the pitch to transfer off of the hauling lines to normal carrying. As previously mentioned one person was positioned in the scoop halfway up the pitch. Lastly, one person was needed for life lining. Once started, the pitch went very smoothly and the casualty was soon at the top of the pitch. This is despite the fact that the tandem pulley at the stretcher end had been unwittingly turned by 180 degrees. So the ropes had a slight twist causing them to rub together and create a little drag.

Whilst the stretcher was being moved on to the crawls, the two rescuers at the base of the pitch returned back up and the haul lines were de-rigged. In the crawls, there was only room for two rescuers (one at each end of the stretcher) to move the casualty. Only on the bends could other people lend a hand. So here a change of people were needed at these points. Due to the fact that the stretcher was being carried out head first, when the end of the crawls was reached the head of the stretcher needed to be moved into a pocket so that the foot end could be swung round. Consequently the casualty was lifted up steeply into the gour pool chamber feet first (i.e. slightly upside down). Not comfortable for the casualty, but this was executed quite quickly. In the chamber the stretcher was rotated back so that the head was back toward the entrance. Here the team took a short rest for drinks and food.

Beyond the gour chamber another short crawl was negotiated before a steep rise up towards the next chamber. Here, there were excellent nut belays for safeguarding the stretcher. The stretcher was carried on without too much difficulty to the chamber below the vertical squeeze up into the longer steep section. Here, an attempt was made to pull the stretcher through but it was soon realised that this would be easier if the casualty went through just in the drag sheet. While this was being done, a long haul line was rigged from the top of the steep section where it momentarily goes to horizontal and there is a taped off red stal. About 4' back there are two good threads for anchors. One is at about head height and the other is at waist height around a jammed block in a 3" wide crack. The haul rope was anchored here and also a lifeline belayed. The haul line ran back down to the stretcher and attached to a pulley on it. So the haul line needed to be pulled upward to raise the stretcher. A point to note here is that the stretcher is not so much hauled up this section, as there are lots of protruding obstacles. Rather it is man handled up with the haul line acting as an aid and of course the lifeline for protection.

The steep section was completed quite quickly. I only had enough time to get to the entrance and rig it before returning to find that the stretcher was being moved into the horizontal section next to the lifeline. Again here the casualty is tipped head down for a short while as the passage drops down about a few steps. The section to the entrance being quite roomy compared to previous and with manufactured steps was again negotiated quite quickly.

Rescue Practice, the end...

At the entrance a steel wrecking bar was laid across the top and the same pulley arrangement used for the 30' pitch, was used here. Again, the same mistake was made when the pulley was twisted by half a turn when attached to the stretcher. This caused a small amount of drag again but wasn't a problem. This allowed a controlled lift up the pipes, keeping the casualty's face away from the steel rungs, which protrude out from the sides of the pipe. Finally, when the head of the stretcher was level with the top of the pipe the stretcher was attached to the bar. Rescuers got each side of the wrecking bar and lifted it, allowing others to come in from the side, take hold of the stretcher and lift it carefully out of the pipe and onto the surface.

Conclusion

The rescue went very well with all obstacles being negotiated quite quickly. Everyone worked very well together. Suitable changes of team flowed well in the confines of the crawls. Something I have noticed from past rescue practices, is that once underway, everyone quickly learns to do what is needed to maintain the momentum. The more experienced help emphasise the need for only one person to be giving instruction in a particular section of cave.

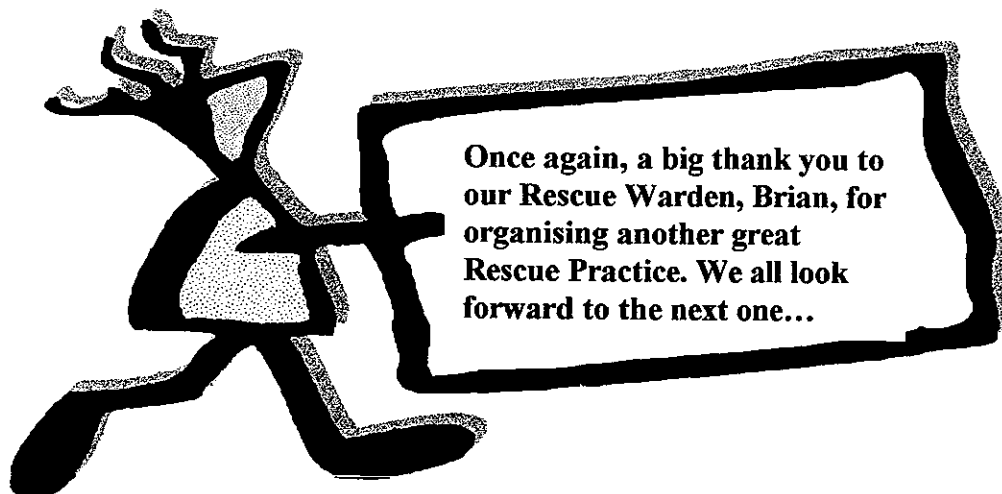
Lessons learned.

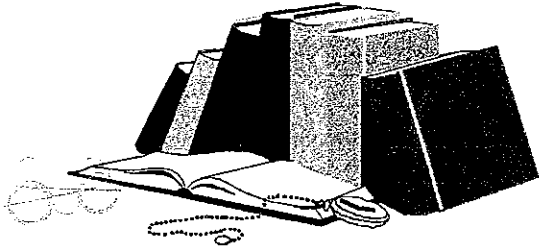
1. The need for a pair of goggles at times, to keep spray or grit out of the casualty's eyes.
2. The need for a small piece of plastic sheeting to deflect spray off of the casualty. This is not only can be used to keep spray away from the casualty's face, but also to help stop more general spray going over the stretcher and wetting/chilling the casualty.
3. When using a four way pulley arrangements it is very easy to attach a pulley with half a turn twist in the ropes. This occurs especially on a long pitch when it is difficult to view the length of the ropes from top to bottom to ensure they are running parallel. Perhaps next time I will use a marker on the pulley as an indicator to keep it the right way round.

My thanks to the MRO for the lone of the stretcher and drag sheet. Especially as this year we were able to use lighter aluminium frame.

Regards,

Brian Snell (Mendip Caving Group - Rescue Warden)





Library Additions by Joan Goddard

- The MCG Newsletters and Bulletins (First Series 1954 - 1959 and Second Series 1961 - 1993) have been photocopied and bound into four volumes. The next volume to be bound, at the end of the current year, will be 1994 - 1999. When the library is complete they will be kept there as reference copies.
- Geology of the South Wales Coalfield, Pt. 5, the country around Merthyr Tydfil, BGS, 1988 - Memoir for the 1:50,000 geological map., covering the area around Penwyllt and the Neath Valley.
- Walking in the Mendip Hills by Sue Gearing, 1999, 112pp - describes 12 circular walks, some of them familiar but others in lesser known localities. It is written in a clear and interesting style and at £4.95 is a book to be recommended.
- 50 Years of "The Shepton" *Journal of SMCC, May 1999* - A special edition put together by twelve contributors. Instead of a standard chronological description of the club's development, each chapter explores a theme. For example, *Early days in North Wales, Digging down the decades, Ten years under the volcanoes, Caving on the Mendips in the fifties, Developing a taste for Guinness*. The result is a very readable publication.
- NAMHO Mining Heritage Guide by R.W. Vernon (Ed), 1997 - useful for contact names and addresses of mining history societies and associated organisations, mining museums and walks with a mining theme.
- OUCC Expedition to Northern Spain, Jultayu 1998.
- OUCC Expedition Rescue Guide by Gavin Lowe - contains much useful information.
- International Caver, No 24, 1999
- NSS News, Dec 1998, Jan & Feb 1999

Various other clubs' exchange publications



Some of the older members of the group may be interested in this recent extract from the logbook:-

"It's been 34 years since I left for the New World and the visit to the Mendips has left the air soggy with nostalgia! Jack and Erica met with Malcolm Cotter and Norma at the Castle of Comfort. After a healthy lunch we stopped at the cottage and went for a two and a half hour walking tour of the Charterhouse area, visiting the five new cave entrances which have been discovered over the last 30 years. Later we visited Coopers Hole and were surprised to discover that nothing had changed over the last 34 years"

Jack Green, 12/3/99

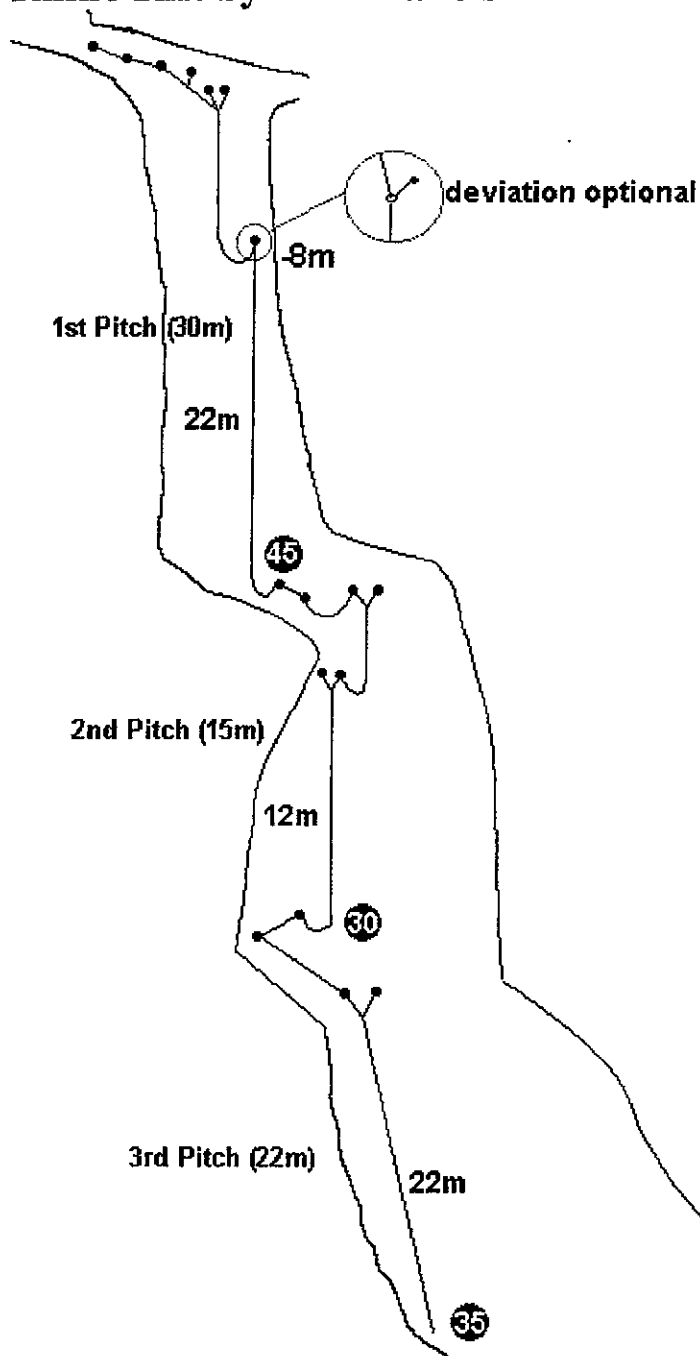


(Taken from 'Five go to Billycock Hill' by Enid Blyton)

"They came to a threefold forking of the ways How awful to go down one and lose the way, never to be found again, perhaps! "Tim! You'll get lost! Come back." But Timmy didn't come back. He ran off into the darkness and the others felt cross. "Blow him." "What's he after? TIM! TIM!"

Answers to the editor, please.

Rhino Rift by Tim Francis



C Andy Sparrow May 1999

Pitch 1:

Start from a natural thread at the top of the slope. Then four traverse line bolts lead to a pair of bolts which provide a y-hang for the pitch. These are slightly further in than before. From here it's about 30 ft to the new rebelay. This is about 20ft above the old rebelay, which was on the flowstone rub point, so don't abseil past. The DMM is off route on a nose of rock off to your right. It can also be rigged as a deviation. (This could be used as a way of swinging into the right hand route on pitch 2).

165ft(50m) rope, 7 maillons, 1 rope sling (optional)

Pitch 2:

The first DMM is on the floor and can be used as a tie off for pitch 1. A second DMM lower down helps the abseil to the Y-hang. As before there is rebelay a short way down. Don't miss the left hand DMM of the y-hang, which is around the corner. The rope lands on a slope so if necessary tie off to the DMM on the left.

100ft(30m) rope, 6 maillons

Pitch 3:

Two bolts force you to hug the wall rather than ambling down the gully, which is still loose. I didn't bother with the second but headed straight for the Y-hang. This is positioned closer to the pitch lip than before, making de-rigging easier. There is still an 8mm spit and rawl bolt in place if you want to traverse out further. Then it's just a gentle bounce down the incline to the bottom.

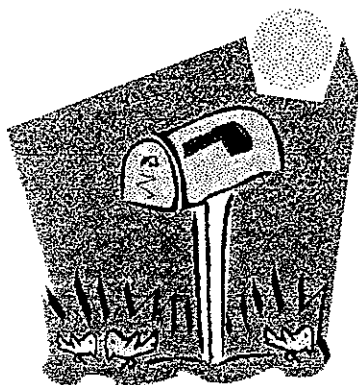
110ft(33m) rope, 4 maillons

(To finish the cave you still need a short rope and sling for pitch 4).

Upon hearing that Rhino had been bolted with DMMs (resin anchors) I thought I'd go and take a look to see if there had been any radical alterations to the rigging. The DMMs were put in under the auspices of the CSCC resin anchor programme. Other caves already undertaken are Swildons and Thrupe Lane. E-mail messages flew round on the Thursday afternoon mustering a team of three. A spot of revelry by Ben on the Friday evening meant that by Saturday we were down to two: Richard and myself. A quick bounce down and up the ropes meant that we were only in the cave for 2½ hours. We didn't bother with the last pitch so it felt more like a Sunday trip really. Overall we felt that the bolts are positioned much as before, just watch out for the rebelay on pitch 1. So far only the left-hand route has been DMM'd so still take bolts for the right hand side. Many thanks to Andy Sparrow for the topo above.

(Team: Richard Carey, Tim Francis)

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