



MCG NEWS

Mendip Gaving Group Newsletter

Number 288 - April 2000

A WEEKEND IN FERMANAGH - NOVEMBER 1999

Geoff Beale, Graham Old and Andy Harrison.

Andy, a Yorkshire caver, is a new 'introduction' to the MCG who I met in my local pub in Oxfordshire, but was working on a long term contract in Northern Ireland.

Graham Old and myself arranged a long weekend over in Fermanagh and were met at Belfast Airport by Andy. We stayed overnight in his flat in Coleraine. Saturday morning saw us driving down to Fermanagh to meet up with Les Brown who has been on MCG caving trips in England that I have also been on.

Our Saturday trip was going to be an extensive tour around Marble Arch Cave, but local access problems meant that this was abandoned. Instead we were given a trip into Boho Cave (pronounced Bo Cave) by Les and some of his NI caving chums including a girl called Veronica, who I'm sure has been to the MCG cottage before.

Boho Cave is a small through trip that is reported as very flood prone. Certainly the maze of passages, some up to 20' high, showed flood debris in all sections of the cave right up to the roof.

A small, tight and very muddy passage gave access to some good formations. Andy managed this awkward section, but it was too tight for me. I had to reverse backwards uphill through tight, muddy boulders. Graham called a bad back, so we took photographs of anything that looked photogenic, including Veronica when she returned with the rest of the party!

We had pre-booked a B&B in Enniskillen and drove there in the evening. We went to a pub (as you do) and walked into a free Guinness promotion. Draught Guinness in bottles - whatever next! Graham missed out as his tittle is lager.

On Sunday we went to Pollnagollum of the Boats. This is a massive shakehole entrance not far from Marble Arch Cave. We drove to Blacklion which is just in Eire to fill up with petrol because here, over the border, it was much cheaper (unleaded about 60p per litre).

We drove via the scenic route - Marlbank Loop, which leads to the cave. We were driving along a narrow lane when we were stopped by an armed RUC Policeman who wanted to know who we were and what we were doing etc. We were very aware that he kept his hand on his unholstered pistol all the time.

Suddenly, unexpectedly, a military helicopter took off from a hidden gully behind some trees, then a platoon of heavily-armed soldiers surrounded our car, but we were waved on by the RUC Policeman. After this excitement, going into the cave seemed quite tame!

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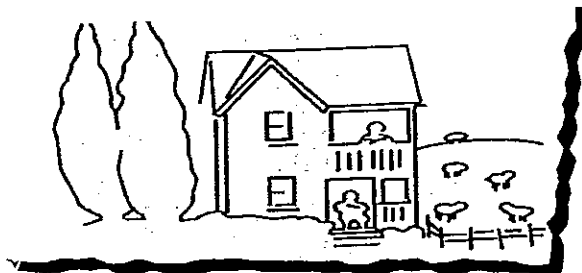
MENDIP CAVING GROUP

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Charterhouse-on-Mendip
Blagdon, Bristol,
BS40 7XW
Tel: 01761 462797
Grid Ref ST51475606
OS 1:50,000 sheet 182

Ben Cooper (Cottage Warden)
Tel: 01256 364199
Or e-mail: ben.cooper@sbs.siemens.co.uk

MCG information:- Tim Francis (Secretary)
Tel: 0181 392 2572

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 9.00 p.m.
At The Hunters Lodge, Somerset, on Tuesdays about 10pm
or at the cottage at 7pm for caving trips.

COTTAGE FEES per night:	MCG members, members children, SWCC, NPC	£1.50
	Guest clubs and member's guests	£2.50
PREPAYMENT STICKERS:	(Available to members only)	
	12 nights accommodation	£15.00
	25 nights accommodation	£30.00
	55 nights accommodation	£55.00

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Full and Probationary Members: £25.00 Associate Members: £12.50

RECIPROCAL RIGHTS: MCG (members only) have reciprocal booking rights with SWCC and NPC
NPC bookings via Nic Blundell, tel: 01203 713849 (hm) or 01203 838940 (wk)
SWCC bookings via Ian Middleton, tel: 01703 736997 or email ian_m@tcp.co.uk

THE 2000 - 2001 COMMITTEE:

Secretary	Tim Francis	Flat 6, 16 Lambert Avenue, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4QR	Tel: 0181 392 2572 Timf@bjm.co.uk
Treasurer	Richard Carey	Hamleaze, Old Bristol Road, Keynsham, Bristol BS31 2AA	Tel: 0117 986 2029 Richard@richard42.free serve.co.uk
Caving Secretary	Martin Rowe	'Abingdon', 11 Church Hill, Arnside, Lancs., LA5 0DB	Tel: 01524 762664
Tacklemaster	Bill Richards	6, Elizabeth Square, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 4EJ	Tel: 01626 366639
Cottage Warden	Ben Cooper	10 Coronation Road, Basingstoke, Hants, RG1 4HA	Tel: 01256 364199 ben.cooper@sbs.siemens.co.uk
Editor	Yvonne Rowe	'Abingdon', 11 Church Hill, Arnside, Lancs., LA5 0DB	Tel: 01524 762664
Recorder / Librarian	Wayne Hiscox	3 Keward, Glastonbury Road., Wells, Somerset, BA5 1TR	Tel: 01749 671282
Social Secretary	Lynn Furneaux	4 Tor View, Wallaford Road, Buckfastleigh, TQ11 0AP	Tel: 01364 643679

Rescue Warden	Brian Snell	01329 238341
Conservation Officer	TBA	
Cottage Extension	Wayne Hiscox	01749 671282
Examiners	Tony Knibbs	0033 5 61858232
	Charlie Allison	0181 224 7591

MCG news & items from the committee meeting held 9th April '00

Address change:-

Pete O'Rourke is now at: c/o Drs Hight and Bryan Miller, Earth Essentials, 4067 Shell Road, Sarasota, Fl 34242, USA (for next 4 months)

Tel: 001 941 346 3220

e-mail: earthess/aol.com

e-mail address changes for:-

Barry Clements:

clementses/@internet.com

Adrian Gorman:

adrian/tci-ed.co.uk

Karina Gill:

karina/tci-ed.co.uk

Julie Hesketh:

Julie.Hesketh/@internet.com

New members:-

Welcome to Peter Robinson and Paul Nichols who have been accepted as probationary members.

Annual subs:-

It was proposed at the AGM to increase the subs by £5. This is in line with inflation and there has not been a rise since 1992! At present, from your £25 subs, £5 goes towards the minor maintenance of the cottage, and £20 goes into the general fund. The £5 increase will go into a new fund called 'Renewals and Replacements' to provide for major maintenance. This will be included in the next subs request which will go out towards the end of 2000.

Devon Spelaeological Society:-

The DSS has asked if they could have reciprocal rights with MCG. Tim Francis is to contact them.

The rescue practice weekend:-

This year's *rescue practice* has been provisionally booked for Saturday 22nd July. It is to take place down Manor Farm Swallet. The techniques learned during a rescue practice are useful, and could be vital, so put this date in your diary and come and be a valuable part of the team(s). More details will follow shortly.

It is planned to hold a *barbecue* on the evening of the rescue practice with a *barrel* (not free!). Various salads, baked potatoes and breads are usually organised by volunteers at the cottage and a small charge made for these. Because of choice (meat or veggi), barbecue items are bought and paid for by individuals.

A *rounders match* is to be organised by Lynn Furneaux for the next day (Sun 23rd July). More details to follow later.

The annual dinner:-

The dinner made a small surplus this year. The evening was a success even though there was a low membership turnout. The food was excellent and was followed by a good slide show and raffle.

Lynn would value some feedback, whether you went or not. Did you like the venue? (for those who didn't go, it's nothing like the Burrington Cafe of old). Where next year? What type of entertainment? Skittles? Slide show? Speaker? Caberet? ???

Non-payment of subs:-

Four months has passed since this year's subs were due. If you have not yet paid, it is assumed you no longer wish to belong to MCG, therefore, after this month, you will receive no more newsletters.

continued from page 1 - **'A Weekend in Fermanagh'**

The large shakehole entrance led over and under some very large blocks to a nasty boulder choke where route finding proved initially difficult. The way on lies to the left and not straight on up a ramp into a very unstable boulder ruckle.

The stream is heard noisily through and below the boulder choke and the trip to the bottom reaches of the cave involve negotiating several lakes where a swimming technique is needed, interspersed with some large, wet streamway. The general direction of the streamway tends across the mountain away from the Marble Arch Cave system.

Once we were all out Andy drove us back to Belfast Airport where we caught the plane home.

Personally, I found caving in Fermanagh good but the best craic for me in Ireland is over on the west coast in County Clare, where over the last 18 years I have enjoyed many good holiday caving trips.

Geoff Beale

VISITING AN OLD FRIEND

With Tony and Denise Knibbs living in France, and Martin and Yvonne Rowe living in Cumbria (almost three years now for Yvonne), a caving trip on Mendip has become a bit of a treat. We were here for the AGM and dinner but decided we had time for a quick trip down GB Cavern to re-aquaint ourselves with a few familiar places within.

It was very warm and sunny so it seemed a pity to go underground on such a lovely spring day. The answer was to walk to the cave and back. Although it was a perfect spring day, there were still the remnants of snowdrifts along walls and hedges, evidence of the sudden, heavy snow of the previous week.

We entered the cave and went down the Gorge to the Bridge. We crossed the Bridge, traversed the ledge, went up White passage, and continued onwards and upwards. We detoured along the way to the Gallery to look out at the splendid view across Main Chamber. We carried on but detoured again for a look around and to watch another party rig and climb Ladder Dig. We continued along all the usual and familiar routes, stopping now and then to take in the sights around us, ending up in the bottom of Main Chamber. From here we made our way back to the entrance via the climb up the side of the Waterfall. There was a fair bit of water in the cave (probably due to meltwater from the snow) so the Waterfall was cascading well.

At one point on our return to the entrance we rested (*we are crusties now, you know!*) and Denise summed up the trip for us all, "It's like visiting an old friend". I couldn't have put it better myself.

We exited to the still warm and sunny day and set off for the showers and AGM. We were running a bit late by now but as we walked the lane from the Charterhouse Centre to Upper Flood, who should come to our rescue but our knight in shining van, Geoff Beale. Thanks to him we got showered and to the Hunter's in time for the AGM after a lovely hour or two of reminiscence.

by Yvonne Rowe

WESSEX CC CAME TO DEVON : DECEMBER 1999

Monday 27th:

Bill and I were waiting for Les Williams to arrive with the Wessex crew, to go caving in Devon for a few days. We finally got a phonecall at 12:30pm from Neil and John looking for a key to the DSS hut so they could get out of the rain. Les also phoned to say he was going to be late as he was stuck in traffic - or was it the pub?! When Neil and John arrived we offered to make them a cup of tea which was a bad move as we got much ribbing about tea-drinking MCG members. By now Cookie from the Wessex had turned up.

Bill and I asked if they would like a trip down Pridhamsleigh Cavern whilst they waited for Les. John and Neil had never caved in Devon before so Pridhamsleigh would be a new experience for them. As we entered Pridhamsleigh we took a left hand tunnel coming down the rift and then headed along up into Crystal Chamber. From there we slid through the top left hand hole, then crossed the rift into Junction Chamber. It was here that we heard this almighty noise. Les had arrived! We went down to the lake where we found to our amazement that it had flooded right back to The Cellars, which were also flooded. We headed for The Oxbow where we dropped down into the middle of the flooded Cellars. Les said with a grin, "Let's swim the duck!" We said, "No deal!" so from there we went up the Coal Shute where Neil found he could not get his chest through the figure of eight shaped hole, nor could he move the rock that was stopping him.

Cookie said he would like to see some of the tunnels so we set off to explore a few and ended up at Bishop's Chamber, then over and down into the flooded extension. After that it was time to return to the hut. By 7:45 we were in the Kings Arms looking for Cathy, Neil's other half.

Tuesday 28th:

We tried to get keys for Plymouth Cave with no luck, so Afton Red Rift was our next choice. Neil's friends, Chris and Theresa, were to join us at 11:30am but they didn't arrive until 1:45pm. We finally got into Afton Red Rift at about 2:45pm but it was only when we had committed ourselves and were going down the entrance rift did I realise that Chris was not going to make it into Afton, or any other cave that day. Once down the rift, Bill had gone on through a tight squeeze with John, Cookie and Theresa. I was left to follow with Neil and Chris, but we found that the rocks would not Neil through (just like yesterday in Pridhamsleigh). He even took off his clothes but it was no good, so the three of us had to turn back. However, Bill's group had a good trip.

Wednesday 29th:

After an early night, Les was feeling better so we decided to venture further and visit Berry Head Quarry at Brixham. Being the smallest, I was volunteered to climb into Hogberry Cave. When I was sent into the cave I had clean jeans on, but when I came out I was wet and dirty. Also, I split my little finger nail, but none of them would put my arm in a sling. Typical men!

Les thought he would go one better by free-climbing up a 12ft cliff face, but he found he couldn't get back down so Bill had to sprint Gazelle-like back to the car to collect the only piece of rescue equipment we had (a rope). Bill threw the rope with immense skill for Les to catch in his shaky hands he managed to get back safely. While all this was going on, Cookie and I were looking at oiled-up sea birds. Later that afternoon we finally got a trip into Corbridge Cavern.

Lynn Furneaux & Bill Richards

MCG BILLBOARD

Devon Spelaeological Society:-

If you haven't heard yet, DSS are off to the Vercours during the summer of the year 2000. We will be there between Saturday 19th August and Saturday 2nd September.

The plan is for people to visit us, as and when, during the two week period, and with or without family and friends, as is your want. We intend camping at Les Myrtilles campsite, La Chapelle en Vercours - phone 04.75.48.20.89.

If you are interested, or you want further information, give Pete Head a ring on 01626-774039, or write to him at Mary's Cottage, 14 Radway Hill, Bishopsteighton, Devon, TQ14 9QN

Alternatively, for MCG members, contact Bill Richards at 6 Elizabeth Square, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 4EJ, or phone 01626-366639

For a cheap crossing, phone Sea France on 08705 711 711

Chelsea Spelaeological society:-

50 YEARS OF AGEN ALLWEDD

CSS will be celebrating this event over the May bank holiday weekend (26th - 29th).

You are invited to Friday evening and Saturday in the Market Hall, Crickhowell for:-

- ◇ Talks and slides shows about the discoveries in 1956
- ◇ 50 years of explorations and discoveries
- ◇ The bats
- ◇ Geology and sedimentology of the cave
- ◇ Water / dye tracing
- ◇ The survey
- ◇ Diving
- ◇ An exhibition

On the Monday, trips into the system - leaders available if required.

Further details will be circulated nearer the time, or visit our web site www.demon.co.uk/stoneweb/css

CAVERS CAR BOOT SALE

Sunday 11th June at Priddy Village Hall.

Just a reminder that Joan Goddard intends running a car boot/table on behalf of MCG.

As well as selling club publications etc. she needs lots and lots of caving related stuff to sell like old caving books, camping gear, old wetsuits, fleeces, caving equipment etc.

Bring any stuff to the cottage or to the Thursday meet at the Beehive (I'm sure someone will pass it on to me), or phone Joan Goddard on 01993 882 446.

CAVE GUIDES

From 1 to 7 days a week, choose time of year, days of week and hours to suit you. Ideal for active mature people. Interesting work as an Official Guide showing visitors round White Scar, Britain's Longest Show Cave.

Please apply to

The Manager
White Scar Cave
INGLETON
LA6 3AW
Telephone: 01524 241244

(The Westmorland Gazette, 14-4-00)

MCG POLOSHIRTS

Lynn Furneaux is about to put in an order for some good quality poloshirts. They come in any colour, and in sizes small, medium, large, XL, XXL (and the sizes are generous). They will cost £14.50 each regardless of size. See below for logo.

If you would like a poloshirt (or two!) please send your order to Lynn Furneaux at 4 Tor View, Wallaford Road, Buckfastleigh, Devon, TQ11 0AP, stating size and colour and enclosing a cheque for the required amount.

MENDIP CAVING
GROUP

WOULD YOU LIKE AN MCG FLEECE?

For those cool summer evenings or cold winter days, the thing you need is a nice warm, snugly jumper-style fleece, they also make an excellent mid-layer for when it's *really* cold.

I have a contact up here in The Lakes for fleeces of our choice - size, colour, quality, with the MCG logo on the front. There are three main qualities, cheap and cheerful (but ok nonetheless), mid-quality, eg. Regatta, or a good quality Polartech, but at a price.

Before I commit the Group to ordering a batch, I need to know if there is any interest, and if so, the quality and colour most preferred. If you *are* interested, either contact Yvonne Rowe on 01524-762664, tell any committee member, or leave a note in the lectern at the cottage stating your name preference.

Do you remember....

YO'S DROPPINGS?

Well, just when you thought it was safe....

MW: "We'll have to exchange mobile (phone) numbers so we can keep in touch with each other.... only I haven't got one!"

GB: "I'm not coming on my wife's birthday!"

At the end of a discussion about the bad state of repair of the cottage...

DV: "Why does the old cottage not look any different to when we moved out, yet the new cottage is rotting away?"

BACK AGAIN, AGAIN!

Martin and I have returned temporarily to the committee (for at least the third time) until some else wants to be Editor and Caving Secretary. Mind you, the first time I became temporary editor, it was for ten years! I started with an old manual typewriter and did much cutting and pasting, then I had a BBC, then (as now) a 486 which is not very old, but has become a museum piece already.

Editing the newsletter from up north is not a problem, but attending committee meetings might be. I have to work occasional weekends and we do lead quite busy lives up here with our cars, the caves and the hills. Plus, we have frequent (and very welcome) visitors. However, we will endeavour to attend as many meetings as we possibly can.

Yvonne Rowe



Cottage update:-

The shop:-

The shop is to be moved to the library for easier access. It will be kept in a locked cupboard. On members weekends, when Lynn Furneaux is at the cottage, some goods for sale will be put on display in the library, eg. sweatshirts etc.

Cottage work weekend:-

A work weekend has been planned for May 6th and 7th. A list of jobs to do will be at the cottage but will include the fitting of new sockets for the battery charger, fitting the new manhole covers, fitting and wiring the new humidifier in the shed, and putting the cosmetic finishing touches to the library extension and the porch.

Dry stone wall:-

BTCV have promised to complete the wall during their next cottage visit.

Foreman's lounge:-

It has been suggested that the Foreman's lounge could be partitioned to make two dormitory areas with either 10 and 6 bunks, or 12 and 4 bunks. This would satisfy the criteria that scout groups, colleges and the like now have to meet where males, females and leaders/staff have to have separate sleeping areas. Members could also benefit from the creation of an extra area where they can be separated from guest groups. Even better, it could be used as a snorers' annex!

Cotag system:-

A cable for the printer to the cotag system is to be purchased. This will allow us to check for improper use of cotag fobs, then delete that number. It will also give us advanced warning of your fob batteries running low.

It has been pointed out to the committee that Martin Rowe's phone number on the fob sticker (if it hasn't rubbed off) needs changing to 01524-762664

MCG EXPEDITION - 2001

It's probably a bit late to consider an MCG expedition / caving holiday for Summer 2000 now (although I note that Lynn and Bill may be off to the Vercours with DSS, see page 6 for details). However, your Caving Secretary (co-opted) has a 12 seater Land Rover which is available for use on a Summer 2001 expedition or caving holiday, provided the owner gives her permission. (I'm sure Yvonne won't object.)

What I would like to do is find out where people want to go in July/August 2001, then arrange regular UK meets in Yorkshire, S Wales, Derbys and even Mendip to allow people to get to know each other, to do some "team building", and arrange any training (SRT, cave photography etc). The Group used to do something similar back in the late 80's and early 90's and we had some really good caving trips to France and Spain, but we were always limited by our lack of an expedition vehicle. Eventually, we bought a Land Rover 90, but sold it after one trip to Spain.

So, where do people want to go? So far, Morocco and Yugoslavia have been suggested:

KEF TOGHOBEIT is the deepest system in Morocco at -677 metres and lies in the Er Rif mountains at an altitude of 1,700 metres. Apart from a 76 metre entrance pitch, it seems to be lacking any major obstacles and offers a sporting trip. Other caves include GHAR ISK N'ZOUAY, 2,300 metres long, GHAR BEL HORDAIFA, 1,200 metres long, WIT TAMDOUN, 11,000 metres long and the GROTTA DE CHARA, 8,000 metres long with a fine river passage. Of these, KEF TOGHOBEIT is the furthest north and therefore the easiest to reach. Unfortunately, the Er Rif region is a cannabis-producing area and has a bad reputation for banditry.

Yugoslavia (or what was formerly Yugoslavia) has 50,000 square kilometres of karst, an amazing one third of its total land area. Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro are probably worth avoiding but we should be able to find something suitable to do in Yugoslavia.

Let me have your ideas about the above suggestions, or any alternatives, and I'll start making some plans. Sorry, no emails - you'll have to phone me on 01524 762664

Martin Rowe

