

MCG



AGM

NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 2001

The Annual General Meeting of the Mendip Caving Group will be held in the Back Room of the Hunters Lodge Inn on Saturday 31st March 2001, commencing at 2.30pm.

AGENDA

(Chairman: to be confirmed)

1. Apologies for absence.
2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 08.04.00
3. Agreement that the minutes are a true record of that meeting.
4. Matters arising.
5. Officers reports and matters arising from those reports.
6. Election of Honorary Officers for 2001 / 2002.
7. Election of Rescue Warden and election of Conservation and Access Officer.
(Nominations for these two non-Committee posts will be accepted at the meeting)
8. Election of Examiners 2001 / 2002.
9. Motions.
10. Any other business.
11. Date and venue of next Annual General Meeting.

Copies of the 2000 AGM minutes are enclosed with this newsletter. Members may obtain further copies of the minutes or Constitution and Rules from the Secretary.

2001 MCG CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
3/4th Mar	Mendip	Bone hole w/e	Martin Rowe	01524 762664
3/4th Mar	Mendip	Cottage work w/e	Ben Cooper	01256 364199
31st Mar	Mendip	MCG AGM	Tim Francis	0181 392 2572
31st Mar	Mendip	MCG Annual Dinner	Lynn Furneaux	01364 643679
13-16th Apr	Mendip	Upper Flood II dig	Martin Rowe	01524 762664
5th May	Mendip	Archaeology walk	Yvonne Rowe	01524 762664
2/3rd Jun	Mendip	Cottage work w/e	Ben Cooper	01256 364199
Jun TBA	Wales	Gower Peninsula	Richard Carey	0117 986 0945
TBA (n/l 292)	Somerset	Castle Cary tunnels	Martin Rowe	01524 762664
Every Weds	Mendip	Mid-week caving	Richard Carey	0117 986 0945

ACCOMMODATION:	Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol BS40 7XW Tel: 01761 462797 Grid Ref ST51475606 OS 1:50,000 sheet 182
WEEKLY MEETINGS:	At The Beehive, Egham, Surrey, on Thursdays from 9.00 p.m. At The Hunters Lodge, Somerset, on Tuesdays about 10.00 pm or at the cottage on Wednesdays at 7.00 pm 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] 25 nights accommodation £30.00
ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION:	Full and Probationary Members: £30.00 Associate Members: £15.00
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 secretary@m-c-g.org.uk
Treasurer	Richard Carey	Hamleaze, Old Bristol Road, Keynsham, Bristol, BS31 2AA	Tel: 0117 986 0945 RichardMCarey@email.msn.com
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Social Secretary	Lynn Furneaux	4 Tor View, Wallaford Road, Buckfastleigh, Devon, TQ11 0AP	Tel: 01364 643679

Rescue Warden	Brian Snell	01329 238341
Conservation Officer	Marcus Ward	01252 815112
	JP Burch	01737 217039
Cottage Extension	Wayne Hiscox	01749 671282
Examiners	Tony Knibbs	0033 5 61858232
	Charlie Allison	01903 821447

THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP IS A REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 270088

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MCG News and items from the committee meeting held 03-02-01:-

ON THE MOVE: Dave Baxter to 11 Andrews Way, Fairford Leys, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP19 8WA Tel: 01296 427063

POST CODE CHANGE:- for Joan Goddard which is now OX29 6PZ

..and *another* correction for Richard Carey whose tel. no. is 0117 986 0945

The CSCC website is: www.csc.org.uk

Please note: The MCG AGM on March 31st will be held in THE BACK ROOM of the Hunters Lodge Inn at 2:30pm.

COTTAGE EXTENSION: On the June work weekend it is hoped to finish any outstanding extension jobs like rendering the porch, finishing the roof tiling, moving the meter and digging a hole for the cables etc. There will be a full list of cottage extension and general cottage jobs in the newsletter nearer the time. We will require lots of volunteers so please come along, even for an hour or two, if you can.

WOOD STORE: The area has been cleared in readiness for the wood store - it just needs levelling. Ben Cooper has found a ship-lap shed for £99 which, by the nature of the lapping, will allow air to circulate and keep the wood dry within.

GIFT AID: With your subs renewal form you should have found a 'gift aid' form (which has taken the place of the previous covenant form). This should have been filled in and sent back when you paid your subs recently. If you simply forgot then it is not too late to still fill it in and send it to Richard Carey. If you have lost your form you can get another by contacting Richard.

CAVING VIDEOS: The committee have agreed that the library stock should include caving videos. A list of acquisitions will be published shortly - and of course donations will be gratefully received.

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

Somerset v Hitler, Secret operations in the Mendips 1939-1945 by Donald Brown, 1999 This is a fascinating book for anyone interested in Mendip's relatively recent history although the part played by caves and mines covers only a few pages. Sandford Levvy, Great Oone's, Denny's Hole and Foxes Hole were all used by the British Resistance Organisation during the Second World War and Blackdown was transformed into a decoy city complete with roads, railway lines and a simulated Temple Meads station and marshalling yards.

An Introduction to the Caves of North East Wales by Cris Ebbs, 2000 -Each copy of this book (57pp) is printed directly from Cris' computer and the use of coloured text is innovative and attractive. Cave descriptions are in black, warnings in red and directions to the cave entrances in green. Cross referenced caves are also colour coded. In some cases cave descriptions are accompanied by little "icons" to indicate whether archaeological (icon is a bone), a dig (spade), locked (picture of padlock) or a 'favourite'(star). Where possible the descriptions are accompanied by a small survey. Because each copy of the publication is individually printed, updates can be incorporated at any time (the version we hold was updated January 2001). It is unfortunate, and unfair, that persons unknown have photocopied this work and it has been on sale in a well known caving shop (the copied version is black and white so has none of the appeal of the original).

The Book of Priddy - a photographic portrait of Mendip's highest village - by Albert Thompson, 2000. As its title implies, this comprises mainly photos with short captions. Caving is represented in the chapter on leisure by six photos which include Swildon's entrance before and during the building of the blockhouse. Elsewhere St Cuthbert's and Chewton Mendip lead works are illustrated - as are the pubs!

Caving items

BONE HOLE: On the March members weekend it is planned to fit the new metal lid to Bone Hole. This will require lots of hands (and muscle) as the lid is approx. 5ft x 4ft 9ins. There are also reinforcing bars, bags of cement and other necessities to get up to the cave. It is hoped to get as much as we can, as near as we can in the Land Rover, but then it will be down to sheer brute force and ignorance (as they say). Please come and help. Whether you are fit or not, there will be something you can do.

CONSERVATION: The club has purchased a second spray so that two people can clean formations at the same time. Since the New Year Tim Francis and Julie Hesketh have begun work on a new section in Upper Flood with excellent results. Underneath the mask of bang and flood debris the formations are still pristine.

EAST TWIN: During the recent flooding the hole in the floor where the streamway sinks became blocked with debris. A large quantity of rocks and branches has been moved further into the cave. As a result the stream had backed up, flowed over the top and sumped off the route into the rest of the cave. Last week water levels had dropped but the flooding had completely blocked off the squeeze into the last chamber of East Twin. On 21st Jan, Richard Carey and myself spent a merry couple of hours digging the squeeze open again. Beyond, the flooding has carried a lot of material downslope and wrecked the SBSS dig. The debris tide mark suggests that the water filled up as far as the connection to Spar Pot. This connection is still open and has been unaffected by the flooding.

It would seem that the removal of the grill on the entrance has meant that all the flood debris - leaves, branches, rocks etc - now washes straight into the cave and blocks the streamway. Although not flooding over the top, the streamway was still backing up significantly rather than running away freely as it used to do.

So whilst the road will no longer flood we can expect more frequent flooding in the cave.

WATERWHEEL KEY: The Cheddar Caving Group (CCG) have adopted Waterwheel as part of the 'Adopt a Cave' scheme in Descent and have fitted a new padlock. Tim Francis explained the reasons why we weren't keen to adopt the cave but instead prefer to have an access arrangement with the Charterhouse Outdoor Centre. Tim advised CCG to do the same and to keep a log book of caving trips and caver numbers in the event of damage etc. MCG has agreed to pay half the cost of the padlock and should receive a key by the end of February. We have also said we will help them with conservation in the cave. At present a key can be obtained from the Charterhouse Outdoor Centre.

DEVON CAVES:-

Bakers Pit is open as from 1st February. For access contact DSCC or Bill Richards and Lynn Furneaux (MCG). The key costs £30 per year or £5 per weekend but you will need to show a copy of MCG's BCRA insurance certificate first (*obtainable from Richard Carey*).

Afton Red Rift has been taken over by the Devon and Cornwall Underground Club from the Devon and Cornwall Rescue Organisation.

Bunkers Hole: Bill and Lynn are trying to get leadership for this cave - watch this space or check DCUC's web site.

MID-WEEK CAVING:- Don't forget, there is lots of caving going on most Wednesday nights. If you are interested in taking part, meet at the cottage on Wednesday nights at 7pm, or phone Richard Carey on 0117 986 0945

... and a couple of **Yv's droppings:-**

Found on the destination board:

'Jane, gone caving, back at 5 - Linda'

A committee member: "The SRT rope, hopefully, is in a mouse-free environment!"

WEDNESDAY NIGHT IS ALIVE AND KICKING

Contrary to popular belief the Wednesday Nighters are as active as ever. The Usual Suspects are Richard Carey, Stephen Duckworth, Jacky Gibbons, Vicky Landeryou, Clive Maybury, Steve Wyatt and Simon a prospective prospective member. We don't always cave together but meet at the cottage every Wednesday night and discuss our options.

3th January: A trip was made to Upper Flood with Steve along with Clive, Vicky and myself. We only went as far as the Lavatory Trap. It was Vicky's first trip to this cave and the sheer quantity and quality of the formations awed her. I don't really like all the crawling and haven't made that many trips here but with two sets of kneepads I survived. Back to the cottage for tea and medals.

10th January: Steve, Richard, Simon and Vicky went to Sidcot Swallet to explore Purgatory. The entrance is very tight for the long legged and Steve and myself experienced some difficulties exiting. We had a good rummage around and found some good fossils of shellfish along with crinoids. It is remarkably undamaged as compared with Paradise although there are beginning to appear direction arrows. There is no need of this as there is only one way in and out. The formations are quite impressive and in good condition.

17th January: Steve had arranged a trip into Charterhouse Cave so it was left to Vicky, Jacky and myself to do some caving. We decided to do East Twin as we had previously attempted it but were unable to do so because the way on to the third chamber was sumped. Once again we were thwarted. This time although no longer sumped the crawl was blocked with flood debris and stones. I returned with Tim to dig it out but I'll let him tell that story. So, East Twin once again abandoned we went to Goatchurch for a rummage around the upper bit. Jacky had not been to Orange Peel Passage, perhaps I should call it Black Eye Passage. This Passage is a flat out crawl over pebbles to a small chamber with just about enough room to turn around. There is a small grotto, taped off, but is quite claustrophobic and Jacky was not too amused since we did not follow her.

24th January: Steve was not available this week as he was committed to lead a trip in Upper Flood. Vicky and Stephen Duckworth and I went to Rod's Pot. We climbed everything. After descending the tight pot we all then free climbed the larger one and apart from a little knee trembling everything went to plan. Next we climbed up the aven to enter Hanging Boulder Chamber. This aven is quite a struggle but the chamber is worth it provided you don't look too closely at the hanging death in the roof. We bottomed out at the Bear Pit and all successfully climbed out without assistance or aid.

We are hoping to get a trip into Waterwheel but since the lock was changed we have been unable to get a key from the Charterhouse Centre. This is in hand but is still not resolved. Vicky even booked the key but it wasn't in the place where they said they would leave it. So we will persist as it is within walking distance of the cottage and represents better security for car parking.

Richard Carey

BODIES OF TWO POTHOLERS RECOVERED

Cave rescue teams and police recovered the bodies of two potholers yesterday from a warren of underground passages in the Pennines which have a history of flooding. The victims were found trapped in Ireby Fell Cavern near Kirkby Lonsdale, on the border between North Yorkshire, Lancashire and Cumbria, after their families rang police when they failed to return home. They were named last night by North Yorkshire police as Ray Lea, 58, of Darlington, county Durham, and Julian Carroll, 29, of Tyne and Wear.

The two men had driven down from the north-east to explore the cave which plunges down a series of steep waterfalls before narrowing into a series of crawls ending in the first of six sumps, or permanently flooded passages accessible only to cave divers.

The cave was blocked for eight years after 1954, when a sudden storm and rain deluge caused an underground landslide which sealed the shakehole, or entrance chamber, where a small stream vanishes from the flank of Leck Fell. Cavers from the Northern Pennine Club dug a way through in 1961 and the cave has become a favourite for training, but the menace of flash-flooding remains a hazard in bad weather.

A spokesman for North Yorkshire police said: "In the early hours of Sunday morning, two cavers were reported as having not returned home by family members. A search was instigated and the cavers' car was found near Masongill, close to the Lancashire-North Yorkshire border."

Rescue teams checked the two mile track and footpath to the cavern, one of a number of potholes which form a linked but part-flooded system beneath Leck and Ireby fells. In pouring rain, they discovered a stack of caving equipment close to the first, nine metre high waterfall, which leads to a tougher, twelve metre drop. The bodies were found shortly afterwards but atrocious weather for most of the morning made a recovery attempt too dangerous. The police said that a fully equipped team eventually went back into the cave yesterday afternoon.

The spokesman said: "The two bodies have been recovered and we are in the process of transferring them into the hands of undertakers who will be transferring them to the mortuary at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary later."

Ireby Fell Cavern includes two route deviations for potholers in trouble because of rising water, but heavy rain gives them little time.

The last caving fatality in the area was at Quaking Pot on Ingleborough fell in 1996, when a 24-year-old woman slipped off a climbing ladder and died after falling 40ft.

by Martin Wainwright, The Guardian, 12.02.01

JUST A REMINDER...

...that this year's annual dinner is at the Cox's Mill restaurant in Cheddar. To make a change, this year's guest speaker will be bringing along cave bugs and microscopes for a 'hands on' lecture! There will be a 'tea theme' raffle - any suitable donations to be sent to Richard Carey.

Please send your bookings off to Lynn Furneaux as soon as you can. The price is £18.50 per head. (Remember that we have to cover 6 guests and the speaker in the cost of your meal!)

SNIPPETS

Some news from some oldies (ex members, that is)

A few of the older members will remember Brian (Pedro) Mee who was secretary from 1964-1969. He has retired to Brasil, having visited his daughter there for a number of years. Not only is he enjoying the easy life, sunshine, beaches and low cost of living, but he has ventured into one of the Brazilian caves of which he writes:-

"It was a proper caving trip - ropes and helmets, electric and carbide lamps and water up to your chest, just like old times.....we had been warned that the track up to the caves was impassable when it rained - and it did.....The cave, Gruta do Lapao, started off with a chamber 120metres by 21 metres and went on in the conglomerate for almost half a kilometre. It was quite difficult in places, lots of muddy climbs and slides up to the end where there was a fixed ladder which led back to fresh air. The fixed ladder had obviously not been used for a very long time and gradually fell apart as one after another climbed it. In the end there were two rungs and one and a bit of side left!"

Joyce Dines and Peter have also moved away from caving country, but only as far as Lincolnshire. Joyce had a bad fall when living on East Mendip in 1998, from which she is still recovering, but since moving to Lincolnshire life seems to have taken a turn for the better. Joyce was a member from 1994-1996

TIME TEAM IN FISHMONGER'S SWALLET

The Time Team (Channel 4) has made a programme entitled "The Bone Cave" which examines Fishmonger's Swallet, located in a limestone outcrop to the north of Bristol. It also makes the centre pages of the current issue of Descent (No158, Feb/Mar 2001). The programme is scheduled for 25th February at 6pm (but this may change so keep an eye on the Radio/TV Times).

[While on the subject of TV programmes, has anyone videoed the programmes on Priddy which were shown on HTV recently? If so, Joan (and the library) would like to borrow them].

ARE THERE ANY POLAR BEARS?

Members' weekend 3rd and 4th February 2001

It was busy at the cottage with some 15 members staying and we even got some caving done. On Saturday, Bill Richards, Lynn Furneaux, Linda Milne, Caroline Sutor and Richard Carey went to St Cuthbert's. Tim Francis, Lee Hawkswell and Jacky Gibbons went to Upper Flood.

The St Cuthbert's trip was led by Zot and assisted by two others (Richard and Jase). For some the trip was a bit overwhelming and the entrance rift certainly claimed its revenge on the way out. Although the dam was working, the levels had risen considerably whilst we were in the cave and a wet ascent was had by all. I can't remember exactly where we went but it is a very pretty cave and the physical cost is quite high.

The evening went exceptionally well with 12 of us sitting down to an excellent roast pork dinner with ALL the trimmings, which was cooked by Lynn Furneaux. I am sure I am not alone in saying it was a very good meal indeed. Thank you very much. The drink flowed copiously and I even allowed myself a glass of water. This was followed by an excellent slide show of the Antarctic provided by Zot. Although it was not related to caving it proved to be very interesting and informative. It could also be said that it was educational.

Richard Carey

A MISSIVE FROM MEGHALAYA

Dear all,

Postcards seem hard to come by in Shillong but Internet cafes are two a penny so it seems easier to send something this way.

We were delayed in getting to India - we were diverted to Bangkok and so had to stay the night in Calcutta before moving on to Shillong. Shillong is filthy and extremely run down. The cavers here are amazingly friendly and Brian and his family are kind - we practically have the run of the house whilst we are here and party all night - though we are only here for one more night before moving on to another caving region. I hope it is prettier than the last.

We stayed in a town called Borsora - a mining town - coal mines. The mining is pretty basic here - small tunnels with small boys and men digging the coal by hand. It is pretty basic stuff. Everything is covered with a layer of black dust and we had little water so you can imagine how grimy I am.

We spent five days there. I was terrified at first - not least because before we went a local guy was shot dead by militants who are trying to extort money from the mining operations. To make it worse we were staying in the mining man's house! Still, we survived despite sometimes having armed military men accompany us to the caves - at one point with loaded assault rifles with the safety catches off!

We moved on to a small village called Kunjoy in the heart of bandit country so as you can imagine, I was a tad nervous by now and perhaps wishing I'd gone to Lanzarote for a week instead. The village was prettier and the people were lovely - lots of babies and small children everywhere watching us! And we had no trouble at all from anyone for the whole trip.

We managed to survey around 5km of cave between six of us - passage size varies from 1m high to perhaps 15m high. We also have a few leads open too - some shafts that we didn't descend as the six of us went for a recce only.

Tomorrow we are moving on to a better known caving area to meet up with the main group and I will do a bit of tourist caving and may get pulled into a team to do some more new stuff depending on how they get on.

See you at the end of the month.

Julie Hesketh

COTTAGE BOOKINGS

GROUP	ARRIVE	DEPART	NIGHTS	BEDS
Manchester Uni Speleo Club	Fri 23/02/01	Sun 25/02/01	2	15
Members	Fri 02/03/01	Sun 04/03/01		
Pete Mullins	Fri 02/03/01	Sun 04/03/01	1	01
First Bookham	Fri 23/03/01	Sun 25/03/01	2	06
Hampshire Scout CC	Fri 23/03/01	Sun 25/03/01	2	20
Agm Weekend	Fri 30/03/01	Sun 01/04/01	1	
Tony 8 & 10	Fri 30/03/01	Sun 01/04/01	1	02
HMS Sultan	Mon 09/04/01	Fri 13/04/01	4	17