



## Caves and Swallets of East Mendip revisited, 14.07.01

It was another of those sunny, quiet days at Nordrach Cottage. Richard was in cave ticking mode and there wasn't really a lot going on. So the two of us decided to go off on another of our esoteric jaunts to East Mendip. This time the plan was to take a look at some old MCG digs from the 1950's and 60's, as summarised by Dave Mitchell in Journal no.3. Armchair caving at its best.

### *Elm Cave ngr 7464.4873*

Between Vobster and Hapsford, the Mells River has cut down into the limestone creating a small gorge. Associated with this gorge are a number of small caves, the largest of which is Elm Cave. We'd failed miserably to find this cave back in February despite two attempts although had succeeded in bagging Spleenwurt Shelter as a consolation prize. It turns out that Elm Cave is actually in the valley of Fordbury Water, a tributary of the Mells River. Park your car next to the pond, in Great Elm and remember to take some bread for the ducks. On each of our visits we were also treated to the warblings of an opera singer drifting across from an open window nearby. The best route to the cave is to follow the footpath that starts at a gate opposite the duck pond, and head upstream up Fordbury Bottom for 400m. You can either follow the path or more easily the railway line that leads to Whatley Quarry. The cave is on the bank on the right hand side not far after where the stream passes underneath the railway line.

There is an old gate at the entrance but its not locked. The cave, essentially one descending phreatic passage, is suprisingly large with a couple of chokes in the lower levels. One can still see remnants of the original MCG dig and the shoring still seems sound. The cave descends as far as the water table and terminates in a large static sump. There's plenty of silt on the walls at the bottom suggesting that the water rises and falls depending upon weather conditions on the surface. On our visit there was dive line, in good condition, heading off into sump.

### *Downhead Swallet ngr 6901.5839*

I'll always remember this little swallet because it was to be the site of my 1000<sup>th</sup> caving trip. A bonus is that it is extremely easy to find. Tucked behind the back of the hamlet of Downhead is a small valley. The cave is at the bottom, just out of sight of the road.

On our visit in July there had not been any rain for several weeks and hence the stream was actually sinking into the riverbank 50m upstream of the swallet. We had a bit of a rummage here but a rather large boulder needs levering out. Downhead Swallet itself has three entrances, none of which reunite underground. The largest bit of passage can be found within the entrance on the right but it doesn't extend for very far. The longest section of cave is found inside the left entrance, although we had to dig out a load of flood debris to get in. We wiggled and thrutched for a reasonable distance until the squeezing got rather desperate. I then carried on a bit further until the physical limits were met. At the end we couldn't hear the sound of running water and there was no sign of the sump mentioned in the guide. With some digging gear and enthusiasm I'm sure we could have removed more of the flood debris and continued further. We suspected that we'd pushed further than anyone else has done for the last 30 years so we popped into the MNRC to check out the survey. Unfortunately they couldn't find a copy of the survey so we still don't know for sure.

### *Tom Tivey's Hole ngr 7051.4447*

Not really a cave this one but still a site of interest for the itinerant caver. It's actually a little rock shelter in the delightful wooded valley upstream of Asham Wood - one of the few bits of limestone this far East that hasn't been quarried away. The cave is tucked underneath a small cliff known as Heale Ladder and doesn't need a light.

*Tim Francis*

## 2001 MCG CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
Nov 3/4th	Mendip	Members weekend	Tim Francis	0208 392 2572
Nov 10th	S Wales	Lectures	(see n/l 302 p8)	
Dec 8th	Mendip	MCG Christmas Dinner	Lynn Furneaux	01626 366960
Dec 8/9th	Mendip	Members weekend	Tim Francis	0208 392 2572
Dec 14th	Mendip	Lecture	(see n/l 302 p8)	
Feb 9th	S Wales	Lecture	(see n/l 302 p8)	
Feb 2/3rd	Mendip	Burrington caves	Martin Rowe	01524 762664
Feb 2/3rd	Mendip	Members weekend	Tim Francis	0208 392 2572
Spring 2002	Mendip	Archaeology walk	Yvonne Rowe	01524 762664
Spring 2002	N Pennines	Nenthead mines	Martin Rowe	01524 762664
TBA (n/l 292)	Somerset	Castle Cary tunnels		
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 2001 - 2002 COMMITTEE:

Secretary	Tim Francis	Flat 6, 16 Lambert Avenue, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4QR	Tel: 0208 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
Caving Secretary	Vacant		
Tacklemaster	Martin Rowe	'Abingdon', 11 Church Hill, Arnside, Lancs., LA5 0DB	Tel: 01524 762664
Cottage Warden	Ben Cooper	Granville, Circle Hill Road, Crowthorne, Berks, RG45 6RN	cottage@m-c-g.org.uk
Editor	Yvonne Rowe	'Abingdon', 11 Church Hill, Arnside, Lancs., LA5 0DB	Tel: 01524 762664
Recorder / Librarian	Jane Baldwin	14 Commercial Road, Machen, Caerphilly, Gwent, CF83 8NA	Tel: 01633 441096
Social Secretary	Lynn Furneaux	1 The Retreat, Tudor Road, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 1HU	Tel: 01626 366960 lynn.furneaux@tesco.net

Rescue Warden	Brian Snell	01329 238341
Conservation Officer	Vacant	
Cottage Extension	Wayne Hiscox	01749 671282
Examiners	Charlie Allison Fiona Cockburn	01903 821447

## MCG News and items from the committee meeting held 6-10-01:-

**MOVING ON:-** Bill Platt to Ard Choille, Somerset Road, Douglas, Isle of Man, IM2 5BA  
 ☎ 01624 615792  
 e-mail: billplatt@madasafish.com

Simon Stevens to 3 Bluebell Close, Seaton, Devon, EX12 2UP ☎ 07971 792688  
 e-mail: simon.stevens@baesystems.com

Letti Tooke e-mail: ltooke@Ergonom.com  
 Lee Hawkswell e-mail: lee.hawkswell@IC24.net  
 Lynn Furneaux e-mail: lynn.furneaux@tesco.net

**WELCOME:** The following have been accepted as Probationary members:-  
 Matthew Amner of 17 Lane End Park, Barnstaple, Devon, EX32 8PP  
 ☎ 01271 325536  
 e-mail: matt\_amner@talk21.com

Simon Tanner of 5 Hawthorn Road, Widdon Valley, barnstaple, Devon.  
 ☎ 01271 346923 e-mail: foshtan@lineone.net

Stuart Newall of 1 Barton Close, Plympton, Plymouth, PL7 2GU  
 ☎ 07929 960148  
 e-mail: stuartnewall@hotmail.com

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Mick Norton on becoming a Full member.

**BONE HOLE LID:** The lid went up to Bone Hole with the help of Doug Harris and his Land Rover on Sept 1st. Tim Francis, Richard Carey, Lee Hawkswell, Jacky Gibbons and lots of new members hauled up an amazing 20 bags of gravel, ¼ ton cement and aggregate, and 8 full barrels of water. *Thanks to all involved.* It is hoped (with help) to fit the grille and complete the task in the not too distant future.

**THE SHED:** Richard Carey arranged for someone to repair the shed. The back wall and side wall have been replaced. The felt on the roof is lifting and requires batons and replacing. The floor is rotting in places and needs repairing. Budget for floor and roof £100

**WATER HEATER** Arthur Spain was contracted to repair the water heater and fit a new element. Limescale had dropped off the element and had blocked the drain hole. Ben Cooper is going to re-wire the showers.

**HOSING DOWN AREA:** There were two suggestions put forward for covering the hosing down area, a) extend the shed roof over the area, which would be heavy and need substantial supports... or... b) a transparent PVC roof, which would be lighter (in both senses). It was agreed to put the task on hold until after the carpark is done.

**GROUP STATIC ROPE:** Martin Rowe had a look at what we had and decided that most, if not all, needed condemning (11mm Bluewater - 1994, 10mm Beal - 1996, 10mm Cairngorme - 4½ years old). It was taken to Hidden earth to be tested, the results of which will follow in a future newsletter. We have two new drums of 200m of 10mm Beale static rope which Martin has shrink and cut into sufficient lengths for Rhino Rift normal route, and for expeditions.

**THE PORCH:** As reported in N/L 301, Brian Snell and Keith Knight plastered the porch in August. They have since fitted a security light, replaced the telephone shelf and telephone, and fitted a 'cabin' hook to hold the front door open when in use. It has not been possible to match the hall tiles (they would be very expensive even if we could) so it was agreed to use terracotta tiles. There will be a large, sunken square, coconut door mat, probably in four pieces so they can be turned, so only a few tiles around the edge will be required. Martin Rowe has the appropriate sealant and would volunteers to help him seal the porch walls, and lay the floor tiles and door mat.

**WINDOWS & WEATHERBOARDS:** These are rotting badly, particularly those upstairs, and need treating/ repairing *before winter*. A local contractor (who's rates are reasonable) is to be asked to give MCG a quote for the work.

**COTTAGE MAINTENANCE:** Ben Cooper is going to put a list of jobs up on the cottage noticeboard. It is hoped that members will pick a job, according to the time they've got, and at least make a start. The committee has agreed to buy an electric drill which will be kept with the other Group's tools. Where specific materials are required, this will be stated. We have a low maintenance cottage but by using the wrong materials we are beginning to get a high maintenance cottage. If you are unsure about any of the jobs / materials listed, contact Ben Cooper or Martin Rowe.

If you have any queries, or can help with any of the above tasks please contact Ben Cooper or Martin Rowe (see page 2 for details).

## The CCC goes to North Wales, September 2001

For the first time the Cambrian Caving Council decided to hold its meeting in North Wales. I decided to take the opportunity of doing a few caves in the same weekend as the meeting. And yes there really are caves and cavers up there – it wasn't just an excuse to visit childhood haunts. The venue was to be the Colomendy Centre at Loggerheads, convenient but somewhat expensive accommodation for the average caver. Myself and Julie made up the MCG contingent but we also bumped into John Crowsey in the pub on Saturday night after he'd come back a Milwr Tunnel trip.

### *Ogof Nadolig*

This is the last major cave in the Alyn Valley that we hadn't visited so an obvious trip for the Saturday. Its located in the woodland just up the road from the sewage farm on the other side of the river from Ogof Hen Fynonnau. You can park about 100 yards from the entrance just beyond Cilcain Farm (which is up for sale). On paper Nadolig seems to be a particularly poky hole, sort of a North Wales version of Goatchurch. In actuality it makes for a rather enjoyable trip. The entrance is an unusual conning tower type of affair and is not locked. Once down the entrance climb the passage below is atypical of the Alyn valley – phreatic and crawly. However the dimensions soon improve to a stooopy size and progress is easy. After a few hundred feet of this the only significant junction is met. On the way in we elected to turn right and climb up the 25ft handline. Above is a roomy bedding, with a few formations in places, that leads to a spacious terminal chamber and the second entrance, St. Valentine's Shaft, off a passage on the left. This entrance is locked and gated so a through trip is not possible without obtaining a key from the Grovesnor. Off the far end of the chamber is a rather unlikely looking dig. The way on is heavily calcited and looks like a long-term operation. On the way back a small loop of passage provides a spot of thrutching practice. Back at the main junction we popped down a 30ft ladder into the lower levels, some of which have been mined. These are more extensive than suggested in the Ebbs guidebook.

### *Old North End Sink*

We still had a couple of hours to burn before the meeting, so we went for a perusal down valley to see if there was anything else of interest. The first site you come to is another old GCC dig. A small section of mine leads to a natural chamber. This looks hideously dodgy and one isn't overly reassured by the rustuing scaffolding and tumble of digging kit half buried under a roof collapse. A small phreatic passage descends down to the right. This looks diggable but must flood in the water. Not wanting to tarry for long in the chamber we headed back out to daylight.

### *Small mine*

As you walk downstream past the sewage works there is evidence of old trial mining levels going into the river-bank. We managed to squeeze into one of these but it was full of water and appeared to end after 30ft. And so to the pub (three in fact).

### *Lower Ceriog Cave*

"Chirk? There aren't any caves in Chirk" said one old lag in the Cadole Arms. Well in 1906 Lower Ceriog Cave was the longest caving trip to be had in Wales and it gets a healthy write up in Bakers "Netherworld of Mendip". Chirk was sort of on the way home so we stopped off for a brief visit. Finding the entrance is easy but I'd recommend parking on the road above opposite the old lime kilns rather than by the bridge. Follow the footpath down from the kilns and the cave is found just above the river. The surprisingly spacious portal is only 50ft or so inside the limestone bed. So we certainly weren't expecting half of the cave to be walking and stooping sized with the added bonus of a few formations. This degenerates into a small streamway and crawls to a lower terminal chamber. All ways on at the end close down although the choke on the right looks worth a dig. The cave does draught but the air is lost someway back from the end up a side passage on the right.

### *Upper Ceriog Cave*

Last visited in 1962 by a bunch of SWCC and Shropshire cavers, this is another site Baker visited. We optimistically went for a rummage in the quarry above the lime kilns but only came back with bramble thorns and nettle stings.

by Tim Francis

## MCG News continued:-

**ARGENTINA INVITE:** Tim Francis is planning a return trip to Malargue to explore the gypsum caves of Potimalal. He plans to visit some lava tubes as well. The date is the first two weeks of March 2002 and the cost, including flights and camping, will be in the region of £1500. If you are interested, or want more details, contact Tim (see page 2).

**COTAG FOBS:** Existing cotag fobs are beginning to fail. To ensure entry to the cottage please be aware of this and maybe think about replacing your fob before, rather than after failure. See N/L 293, page 3 for details and cost of replacement fobs, or contact Ben Cooper (see page 2)...

...and on the subject of cotag fobs... Ben is low on cotag fobs and has run out of probationary/guest keys so the committee has agreed to him buying more of both at a cost of about £175 in all.

**CLOSED!** Thrupe Lane, Cuckoo Cleaves and Swildon's are still closed due to the foot and mouth restrictions.

### FIRST AID FOR CAVERS:

Course for Southern Area Caving Clubs.  
*In an emergency would you know what to do? Be the one who does!*

'Marlin' will be running the first of these First Aid courses for Southern Area Caving Clubs. Dates are as follows:

- ◊ 14th, 15th & 16th December 2001
- ◊ Course starts Friday 7pm, finishes Sunday 6pm.

To reserve your place contact Andy Sparrow, 5 Old Station Close, Cheddar, Somerset, BS27 3DF. ☎ 01934-741427 or call 'Marlin' on 0121-749-2308

**BEECH TREE:** The beech tree close to the library is beginning to be a problem, especially when it is windy. It needs cutting back by a third. Doug Harris to quote.

**DINNER CHEQUES:** Richard Carey will be returning all cheques for for the March annual dinner as they are now out of date.

**COTTAGE SECURITY:** Will the last person leaving the cottage at any me, but particularly at the end of the weekend, please check that all windows and doors are locked. If doors or windows are left unlocked (especially the snib on the front door) it defeats the object of having the Cotag security system and leaves us wide open (literally) to break-ins - or should that be walk-ins!

**COMMITTEE MEETINGS:** The next meeting will be held at Nordrach Cottage on:- Saturday 3rd November at 5pm.

**WHITEWALLS CLOSED AGAIN:** South Powys footpaths and common land is again closed due to foot and mouth. There was another outbreak close to Crickhowell mid July. This means that Llangatwg and Llangynidr caves cannot be accessed.

Whitewalls falls within a 'closed' area as the cases of foot and mouth are very local. The cases are north of the Usk, but some by only a few 100 metres - and these are just outside Crickhowell. The canal towpath is shut from Govilon to near Llangynidr.

*Access to Carno and Draenen remains open.*

The only only 'mountains' open are the Blorengge and Skirrid. Crickhowell Tourist Office confirms that Llangatwg, Llangynidr AND the Clydach Gorge are off limits.

Anyone wanting to check the current state should contact one of the following:

Charles Bailey	☎ 01873-811662
Arthur Millet	☎ 01873-810548
John Stevens	☎ 01635-200879

# HIDDEN EARTH

The BCRA Hidden Earth Conference took place on 12-14th October 2001 at the Buxton Community School in Buxton, Derbyshire. This is a brief resume of the lectures that Joan Goddard, Martin Rowe and Yvonne Rowe attended:-

*Pakistan 2000 by Simon Brookes* - This lecture reported on the October 2000 Expedition to Pakistan where a team of five cavers from the UK (mostly from the Orpheus Caving Club) joined with members of the Pakistan based Chiltan Adventures Association (Balochistan) to explore more cave in the restricted tribal areas of Balochistan (Western Pakistan).

Over the three weeks of the expedition over 20 new caves were explored and surveyed yielding 1.7 kms of new passage. Significant finds included Murgul Ghul Gharra (Cave of the Bats Shit) in the Harnal District that with 580m of surveyed passage became Pakistan's second longest cave. Also, its main chamber, measuring 40m wide by 90m long, is the largest chamber to be found to date in Pakistan. Other significant finds include Kach Gharra (Kach Cave) located on the Peil Gar Mountain (Elephant Mountain) that contained a 35m entrance pitch and an impressive 70m second pitch. With 350m of passage and a depth of 127m it is Pakistan's deepest cave to date, and more significant its location at the top of a 2000m+ deep band of limestone hints of the possible depth potential of this region. This lecture also provided an insight to this fascinating area and its people.

*Bougoumez 2001 (Morocco) by Jan Evetts* - In September 2001, five members of Imperial College Caving Club embarked on a second recce trip to the High Atlas Mountains of Morocco. This trip (a follow-up to a previous recce in 1999) focussed on the Jbel Gat region at an altitude of 2800m.

This has been a suggested location for an MCG expedition by Yvonne and Martin so they went along to this lecture. Imperial College's trip entailed serious logistics just to get to the caving recce area. It is very difficult to access as there are no roads and the only vague tracks in the area are those used by the sheperds and their flocks. At one point the ground was so steep and loose that the mules they had hired to carry all the gear had to be unloaded before they would tackle the terrain. Once camp was set up, the cavers would have to endure a 3km walk across steep, exposed limestone to the prospective caving area. Unfortunately, as with our own Samoens expedition in 1994, there was minimal cave development. The area is extremely barren, hot and dry. From Joan's and my point of view there are absolutely no flowers, trees or anything, so on days when we didn't cave there would be little else for us to do. A fascinating area but it seems a lot of hard work for little reward.

*Xito 2001 (Picos, Spain) by Richard Doyle* - Oxford University Cave Club returned to the system that established their reputation for deep exploration in te Picos de Europa. With a team comprising both original Xitu explorers and newbies keen for adventure, the expedition aimed to attack both up and downstream leads in search of new passage. This was a short, sharp report on OUCC's summer expedition. They tidied up a few loose ends in one cave and pushed a second for a good distance.

*The Laki 2000 & 2001 Expeditions (Iceland) by Chris Wood* - There is evidence that lava tubes played, and continue to play an essential role in the formation of planetary crusts. These two recent expeditions to the Laki lava flow field in southern Iceland (the world's largest historic basalt flow erupted in 1783/4) found abundant lava tube caves, proving the emplacement of this 'flood basalt' was tube-fed. The many accessible caves discovered provided over 10km of passage, the longest single cave being 1.9km long. These tube caves were discovered and entered where collapses had occurred. My surprise was their size as the word 'tube' to me conjures up something with a small diameter resulting in tortuous and thrutchy progress. In fact many were of substantial proportions where the caver can amble along beautiful, meandering, rounded passages comfortably and with lots of room to spare. There were some excellent slides showing all aspects of these interesting lava tube caves.

*Geophysics of Iceland Caves by Paul Cheatham* - Paul explained how he was asked by Chris Wood to see if he could apply his skills as an archaeologist to the search for 'entranceless' lava tubes. Chris was able to utilise two techniques familiar to any viewer of Time Team - GPR (or ground probing radar) and magnetometry, to produce detailed images of what lies just below the surface, then combine these with GPS and accurately map them.

GPR worked quite well on level surfaces, the lava tubes showing up well on the resulting radar profile, with curves in

the radar pattern indicating where the passages are, as well as their depth. However, as the radar antenna has to be hand-towed over the site, this worked less well as the ground became more uneven and harder to traverse. The magnetometer survey was able to detect voids irrespective of how level the surface was and good results were obtained proving that there are indeed entranceless tubes a short distance below the surface. However, when there are many other voids besides the tubes then the magnetometer plots become very confused.

The success in locating considerable lengths of entranceless tubes proved their hypothesis that the basalt was able to spread very long distances without any significant cooling (about 1° C per kilometre) due to the insulating properties of the surrounding flow.

*Aragonite Caves in the south of France by John Gunn* - John visited a number of extremely well-decorated caves in France as part of a programme to assess a proposed new World Heritage Site. The resulting slides were amazing with aragonite formations ranging from chocolate brown to translucent turquoise, and very large single crystals of calcite. To protect these caves from damage and vandalism they have two entrance doors - the inner of these in one case was an old safe door, the outer doors are alarmed and linked to the nearest Gendarmerie.

*Your death and how to survive it: Parts I and II by Charles Bailey* - Carno Adit in South Wales celebrated the 10th anniversary of its discovery this July. During all of this time, and a number of years leading up to the first breakthrough, Charles has been at the forefront of exploration. However, amidst the muck and madness, graft and glory, Carno Adit has twice wagged its disapproving finger in his direction. A fall whilst climbing a 30m aven in the further reaches of the cave, and getting flooded in were warnings enough. This was a tale of these two near misses and how he survived, and some of the lessons we can all learn by sharing his experiences.

In the first instance, Charles was about 2 hours into the cave with one other caver. He rigged a ladder to a 'solid' flake to explore the aven. He had tested his weight on the ladder and lifeline but as he neared the top the flake came away. Charles fell and ended up unconscious with broken ribs in his back and front, plus a badly bruised pelvis and other bits. The lessons learned here were: always use an Italian hitch for the lifeline; a minimum of four in the party (1 to stay, 2 to go for help); have or wear a woolly hat; carry pencil and paper (to record patients progress etc.). Charles also amusingly said if his mate had gone for help before he had regained consciousness, he would have liked a note to tell him that it was ok, he was in Carno Adit! He actually managed to get out under his own steam, albeit many hours later, but more comfortably than a rescue in the circumstances.

The second instance was when he got flooded in the cave. Knowing that the cave can occasionally (but rarely) flood for days, even weeks, the temptation is to 'leg-it' and try to get out before the flood gets too high. Patience is the order of the day here, plus knowledge of the hydrology. There is an adequate food dump with extra lighting etc. so it's safer to wait. It is also worth waiting an extra hour after the water has started to recede as it can fluctuate a little sometimes.

*Caving for Has-beens by Tony Waltham* - Promotion to BCRA President means that one is deemed to be a has-been no longer fit for serious caving. This was a 'must' for some of the MCG delegates! It was very funny. Tony has forsaken grotty, small British caves for the large caves in places such as China, Vietnam, Laos, Mulu and Russia. One cave entrance was in the garage of a palace built on top of a mountain which meant you could step straight out of the car and into the cave! Some of the caves were drive-thru, many were navigated by boat and all were huge. There were no climbs, thrutches, stooping etc. and any water encountered was warm and shallow. Nice for those who can afford it. Will Equitable Life give me enough pension to follow in his footsteps?

*A Rescue Radio for the 21st Century by Mike Bedford* - The Molefone, developed by Bob Mackin, has been the mainstay of rescue communication in the UK since the 80s. But nothing lasts forever and after 15 years of being dragged, dropped, dunked and generally abused, the rescue teams were starting to report failures. Mike described a new system, the HeyPhone, which has been designed to replace the aging Molefone and which has been issued by the BCRA to its member teams during 2001.

*Swildon's Hole by Pete Glanville* - 2001 is the 100th birthday of Swildon's Hole. To celebrate, Pete used slides to present a leisurely journey through the cave, accompanied by narrative explaining the different stages of exploration.

*Poole's Cavern* - Delegates to the conference were able to visit nearby Poole's Cavern. Joan and Geoff Beale took the opportunity of a guided tour at the special price of £1.00 and were impressed with the cave. The video presentation by Sid Perou in the visitors centre was one of the best I've seen. Sensible narrative and suitable, soft background music. The cave was sympathetically lit and we had a light-hearted young guide. The gour pools and streamway were particularly impressive.

**Art Workshop by Robin Gray** - Joan and Yvonne took the opportunity of another trip into Poole's Cavern on the Sunday for the Art Workshop. Graphite sticks, paper and boards were supplied free of charge (as was entry to the cave). After half an hour the Cave manager brought us all a welcome cup of tea. Robin enabled us to try a different technique of drawing and to look at the cave structure and formations in a different way. Instead of sketching information in lightly then gradually increasing shading and detail, Robin showed us how to use our graphite sticks horizontally to apply first the heavier background shading in blocks (according to the rocks and boulders), then gradually tone down to the lighter areas, finally applying any finer detail with the pointed end of the sticks held in the normal way. It took Yvonne a few frustrated attempts to get her mind round to this reverse method of drawing but she finally achieved it. Overall it is a much more relaxed and loose style of drawing which we intend to practice further - maybe in Goatchurch to start with.

**The evening dinner** - was an excellent buffet, after which there was a quiz in the form of a crossword. Although Joan and Yvonne did not attend the stomp, we understand it was successful, if not a bit loud, with most people standing outside so they could hear themselves talk!

**The closing ceremony** - This was a bit different this year with a hastily put-together but impressive audio-visual (well done the technical team) starting with an hilarious video of a spoof rescue, the narrative being in the form of a country and western-type song. It was extremely funny. This was followed by the prize-giving, also presented through the audio-visual, with shots of the prize winners in the audience using a videocam (done this way to save time). Finally there was a compilation of superb photos of caves, caving situations, cavers etc, with some scenes from the trade stands and the competitions. MCG member Julie Hesketh won the women's timed 30m ladder climb - *well done*.

---

## NEWS EXTRA & SOME DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**SIMON KNIGHT** - Many of you will already know that, sadly, longstanding MCG member Simon has died. His funeral took place on Friday 5th October 2001 at St Cuthbert's Church in Wells. Hopefully, there will be an article on Simon's interesting life in, and his contributions to the Mendip Caving group in the next newsletter.

**PATRICK (PADDY) NEWMAN** - has moved *again!* This time to 2240 Loch Lomond Drive, Vienna VA 22181, USA. And some good news... he and his wife Mary are expecting their first baby around 25th November... *watch this space!*

**CAVE RESCUE PRACTICE** - The MCG rescue practice did not occur due to foot and mouth. However, there will be an opportunity to take part in a practice rescue organised by Graham Lumley of the MRO. This will be a combined practice for all Mendip clubs and will be held on Saturday 10th November 2001. The practice will cover techniques and systems and there will be an opportunity to test MRO's HeyPhone (see page 7 - 'A rescue radio for the 21st century'). Meet at the MRO store (at the BÉC).

**SOUTH WALES LECTURES** - November 10th at The Copper Beech, 8.00pm. Two presentations: 'Dan-yr-Ogof, the cave and its exploration' (slide show and talk by Liam Kealy) and 'Ogof Ffynnon Ddu, the cave and its exploration' (video + talk by Clive Gardener). Free entry.

February 9th 2002 at Crickhowell. 'Caves of Llangattock escarpment' (lecture).

**SWCC HQ** - reopened on 14th September with disinfectant mats in place. OFD I and Cwm Dwr are open but not Top Entrance (however, check the status before you go in case the situation has changed).

**MENDIP LECTURE** - Friday 14th December: Lecture by Jim Hanwell at Wells Museum, 7.30pm 'A tribute to Graham Balcombe: Pioneer cave diver'.