



VALE SIMON KNIGHT

As Simon was a member of the Mendip Caving Group for many years and an active caver in the past, this is a reminder of those times as recalled by Pat Walsh and other early MCG members.

Around 1959, Simon's association with music seemed to coincide with his introduction to the caving scene on Mendip.

Pat first met Simon some 42 years ago. Pat was on his third trip from the London area to the Mendips to go caving, and Simon his first in an old battered car driven by Arthur Cox. They immediately became firm friends. It was on this occasion that Pat discovered Simon's music ability as he had a mouth organ which he played all weekend.

Soon we were coming to Mendip most weekends by train, hitch-hiking or in the back of Landrovers under conditions you wouldn't move sheep in nowadays. As teenagers, cash was a bit tight so our trips to Mendip had to be as cheap as possible. No fancy wetsuits either, only boiler suits and old clothes. However, trips to all the caving regions of Britain followed, plus trips abroad.

The highlight of the weekend was always Saturday night in the Hunters singing and drinking large quantities of beer or cider. Some of the Group were not averse to the odd card game or two where minor fortunes were won or lost. Simon always seemed to come out on top in the end, however.

Simon by now was playing the banjo. Pete Goddard, another long-standing MCG member, had just come out of the Army, having finished his National Service, and joined us at this time. Pete was a guitar player and the trips down to Mendip were spent rehearsing the latest song he had written for performance at the Hunters that Saturday. 'The Three Members of the MCG' had arrived and the reputation of the MCG as the musical club was established.

Soon we were all married, followed by children, so the trips to Mendip became less frequent. Simon had now taken up the melodeon which he was rarely seen without for the rest of his life. Simon had now moved to Somerset and Celtic music and its folk were the dominant form of entertainment in the Hunters. Other musicians would come to play with, and listen to him.

His death will leave a large hole in many peoples lives. He will be long remembered and sadly missed.

Ed: I was told that Simon was given a lovely, befitting church service in St Cuthbert's Church, Wells, and an even more befitting wake. A party was thrown where everyone celebrated his life in a manner he would have approved of!

2001/2002 MCG CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
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
Mar 2nd	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	Tel: 01344 776306 cottage@m-c-g.org.uk
Editor	Yvonne Rowe	'Abingdon', 11 Church Hill, Arnside, Lancs., LA5 0DB	Tel: 01524 762664
Recorder / Librarian	Jane Baldwin	23 Wyndham Street, Machen, Caerphilly, Gwent, CF83 8PU	Tel: 01633 441092
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

THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP IS A REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 270088

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MCG News and items from the committee meeting held 3-11-01:-

MOVING ON:- Jane Baldwin to 23 Machin Street, Machen, Caerphilly, Gwent, CF83 8PU
☎ 01633 441092

PROSPECTIVE MEMBERS:-

The following applications for membership have been advertised on the noticeboard in the MCG cottage since 3-11-01:

Bill Chadwick of 36 Nimrod Close, Woodley, Reading, Berks, RG5 4UW ☎ 0118 9691812
E-mail: bill.chadwick@36nimrod.freemove.co.uk

Stephan Natynczuk of Rookery Cottage, Droitwich Road, Bradley Green, Redditch, Worcs. B96 6RT ☎ 01527 821267
E-mail: s.natynczuk@btinternet.com
Proposed by: Kev West and Martin Rowe.

Paddy Newman is currently an associate member as he lives in the USA. He wrote to the committee volunteering to be re-instated as a full member to cover the cost of sending him newsletters. Any surplus money to be a donation to the Group. The committee agreed and the Editor is to write and thank him.

'NEW' GROUP COMPUTER: a *big thanks* goes to Michael Pittman for donating a working computer to the library. It proved useful at the November committee meeting to write up the minutes for Jane Baldwin who could not attend as she was moving house. Also, Roy Kempston's daughter and Ian McKechnie's son wrote up their caving trips for the newsletter (see page 5) which Joan Goddard put on a disc for them and sent to me.

...but unfortunately we cannot print stuff off as part of the Group's printer is missing. Does anyone know the whereabouts of the printer paper 'out' tray and the utility discs? (3 HP Desk-jet Printer Software installation discs). If not, can anyone help in any other way - a loan of installation discs or a spare printer tray(!)?

COTTAGE SECURITY: Just a further reminder to everyone to check windows and doors when they are leaving the cottage unoccupied. Even after the small article in the last newsletter, members or guests are still going out and leaving the cottage vulnerable.

ARCHAEOLOGY WALK

This was the first archaeology walk I composed and it took place in March 1992. This time it will take place on Saturday 2nd March 2002 (members weekend).

The walk was too long the first time (16 miles!) so I have shortened it a bit. It will now be about 10 miles long and will take place around Burrington, Dolebury and Rowberrow. It will be a slow amble with lots of rests on the way as we stop to look and talk about the various sites.

It will be a circular walk starting from Burrington Cafe at 9:30am (earlier if you wish to breakfast in the cafe first) and will include:-

- Burrington Iron Age hill fort
- Bos Swallet Bronze Age occupation site
- Reed's Cavern Iron Age occupation site
- Dolebury Iron Age hill fort
- Dolebury Levy - Iron Age pottery finds
- c20th century ale house!
- Rowberrow Cavern Neolithic - Roman occupation site
- Rowberrow Warren Iron Age cross-ridge dykes
- Holloway Roman Road
- Rowberrow Iron Age hillside fort
- Tynings barrows Bronze Age burial mounds
- Aveline's Hole Palaeolithic occupation and burial site

I will bring lots of information on these sites including pictures of finds, and plans of the earthworks. It's a good day out and an opportunity to chat to and get to know other members in a relaxed way. Guests are also welcome.

You would be best advised to wear waterproof boots and clothes, and you might wish to take some food and drink to snack on before we reach the pub - or instead of if it's a nice day and you prefer a picnic. You will also need a Petzl zoom or a torch as we will be looking in a few 'holes'.

Yvonne Rowe

A Wednesday Tale - Goatchurch 24/10/01

Only Matt Amner and myself this week. We had a limited choice of caves, both being probationary members and therefore not having access to the keys in the Tackle Room, so we both set off for Goatchurch. This decision being made after Matt said that he hadn't been to the "Very End" before.

We had a warning that the cave was going to be busy that night when we were getting changed in the car park. "Where are you going lads?" said a member of the large group that was suiting up nearby. We duly replied, "Goatchurch". "Right! You'd better get in before us or we'll be in your way. There's already a group of scouts in there", he said pointing at the parked and empty minibus.

We entered the Trademan's Entrance and quickly slid through Bloody Tight into the Boulder Chamber. Here a large party of Girl Scouts negotiating the Coffin Lid (with hand-line) blocked our progress. As Jacob's Ladder was full of chirping young voices from below, and neither of us fancied the third and tight alternative, Matt and I took this as an excuse to explore some of the various passages hidden amongst the boulders. As we returned a second group of Girl Scouts began to emerge from the Water Chamber below, one repeatedly exclaiming in our direction, "You do this for FUN! You do this for FUN!"

Once clear we quickly progressed down to and through the Drainpipe. We paused for a while and dripped sweat before attempting the final charge through the crawl, down the small rift, under the wet squeeze, up the Dexion and finally up to the end chamber. We rested for a while in this spacious and peaceful retreat while watching our light reflect off the swirls of moisture particles caused by our long and deep breaths. We soon recovered and sat back trying to guess the percentage of people who enter Goatchurch that reach the "Very End". I thought it would be small. Matt thought it would be even smaller than that.

Back at the Drainpipe we heard voices of another group at the far end. We established that there were more of them so we proceeded first. Twelve meters later we were received by a group of four blokes. "Hey, you're wearing marigolds", I was told. "They're not marigolds", I said. "They're blue".

Waiting in the Water Chamber above was a splinter group of the group we had just met. They had come as far as they were prepared to go. As Matt and I passed we were quietly asked, "Is that the way out? We stopped to speak to this group about the various pubs available to thirsty cavers after a Wednesday evening of high adventure. Mine's a pint. Cheers!

We exited through the Main Entrance and by this hour it was cold and dark outside. Distinctly different to the light and warmth that Goatchurch has shown us this evening.

Simon Stevens

MY TRIP TO GOATCHURCH

We started by coming through the Old Entrance and we were going to journey through right down to the bottom (nearly). We would go through the drainpipe and then come out at the new entrance. So we started to come down the Giant's Stairs. I slipped a few times but eventually made it down.

After walking for about half an hour we reached the detour called Bloody Tight; there is a drop so we had to attach the harnesses together and then get pulled over to the other side. Then we came to the Water Chamber that is very big. Then we got to the Coffin and slid down. Then we finally got to the Drainpipe and were relieved because after the Drainpipe we were coming back up. So we crawled through the Drainpipe. For me it was quite hard but for the others it was virtually impossible. Then we had a Mars bar, some dark chocolate and some brandy. We then came up the drainpipe.

The Coffin Lid was really difficult because I am quite small so I kept falling down to the bottom but eventually with a little help I got to the top. Then we kept going and got to the Grotto which was bigger than the Water Chamber (I think). Then we climbed up the Slide into the Boulder Cavern. Then we got to the Terrace and were nearly out. Then we went through the Dining Chamber and came out through the New Entrance.

Went back to the M.C.G cottage and went to sleep.

That was our trip down Goatchurch in 1999.

Nicholas Wills , Age 11, reporting on Goatchurch

TRIP TO G.B - November 2001

Party: Ian McKechnie, James McKechnie, Roy Kempston, Ellen Kempston and Andy Reeson

Mine (Ellen Kempston) and James (McKechnie)'s first trip into a "grown up" cave (!); a rite of passage as our 16th birthdays are both around now. An enjoyable scramble though a bit narrow in places (for the parents!). Over the bridge, we saw a little bit of White Passage before turning round and going down to the viewing gallery. Foolishly conceding to doing Devil's Elbow - lots of water somehow managed to get in our gloves and boots.

The entrance to Devil's Elbow was challenging but we managed it with a rope and a lot of encouragement. I (James) got very wet crawling through the Elbow but the trip was very enjoyable. I will definitely be back for more. *I second that (Ellen)*

*Ellen Kempston & James McKechnie
Typed up by: Neil Kempston, Age: 13*

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

Caves - Exploring Hidden Realms by Michael Ray Taylor, published by National Geographic, 2001 is a large format book with some wonderful photographs, as one would expect from such a publisher. The book is divided into three sections; Ice (caves in Greenland), Water (caves beneath the Yucatan, Mexico) and Earth (chapters relating to various caves). The book has been published as a companion to the IMAX film "Journey Into Amazing Caves" and is a very welcome addition to the library.

Cave Photography Group, Newsletter 4, September 2001 has some useful information on presenting photographs for competitions, in particular the BCRA Hidden Earth Photo Salon. Well worth a read if you are at all keen on photography.

BEC Journal, Vol. 51, No. 6, July 2001 has an article about the Hunters Lodge Inn Sink dig. Frustrated Mendip diggers suffering withdrawal symptoms during the Foot and Mouth crisis were quick to take up Roger Dor's suggestion that they start a dig in the Hunters' car park. Before Roger had time to reflect on his offer, digging commenced on 9th April and proceeded with wrecking bars and chemical persuasion.. into a narrow, shattered, waterworn rift in steeply dipping limestone. A tripod was erected over the six ft square, 17 feet deep hole and at the time of the BEC article there was some 20 ft of bedding plane passage from the base of the entrance climb. Needless to say, vast numbers of experts congregate at the top of the dig to advise and supervise the toiling diggers - especially when the pub shuts!

Cartoons and Artwork over the last 50 years is the 50th Anniversary publication of The Axbridge Caving Club (Occasional Publication No 4)

Chauvet Cave by Jean Clottes, National Geographic, August 2001

The Hidden Earth Conference in October provided the opportunity to fill a few gaps in our book collection, including

Memoirs of a Speleologist by Robert de Joly, 1975.

Underground Britain by B. Bedford, 1985

Race against Time by Jim Eyre and John Frankland, 1988 - the classic book about the Cave Rescue Organisation; an excellent read (replacement for a copy which has gone missing).

Cavecraft by D. Cons, 1966

Recent publications include

Sediments in Caves by Trevor Ford, 2001 - No. 9 in the BCRA Cave Studies Series

Underground Wales by Martyn Farr, 2001 - 95pp of attractive text and photos arranged under the headings of Limestone, Coal, Iron, Lead and Zinc, Gold, Copper, Stone (silica, slate) and Hydro-electric which give scope for information which isn't otherwise easily available. There are ideas for unusual underground trips in Wales, some of them for cavers and others accessible to the general public (listed in an appendix).

Collieries of Somerset and Bristol by John Cornwall, 2001 - not strictly a caving book but interesting because it is a local subject. Surface evidence of mining can still be seen on Eastern Mendip and one fact I found interesting is that there was a "Mendip Shaft" at Stratton on the Fosse.

Uphill to Frome - a guide to the Mendip Way by David Wright, 2000 - a guide to the 50 mile walk with lots of photos and clear maps of the overall route (but 1:25,000 maps strongly advised for anyone undertaking the walk). Background information is good, especially the section on geology and landscape evolution.

Mendip Street Atlas - a good 50 pence-worth! and **Mines of Redruth and Cornwall** (Video).

I'm pleased to report that there have also been some donations to the library this month, including 'Lead and Life at Kilhope' (lead mining at Allenheads, Weardale), 'Cornwall's Old Mines' by H.V Williams, a publication about Nenthead Mines, 'The Caves of the Great Hunters' by Hans Baumann (a ?1960's children's story about the discovery of the cave paintings at Lascaux and Altamera) and 'Megalithic Monuments' by M. Balfour (an illustrated guide to Europe's ancient sites).

Thanks to the donors!

Joan Goddard