



# NEWS

Mendip Caving Group Newsletter  
Number 305 – February 2002  
[www.m-c-g.org.uk](http://www.m-c-g.org.uk)

## MENDIP CAVING GROUP ANNUAL DINNER

### Starters

*Cream of Leek Soup  
Braised Leeks finished with Fresh Herbs and Cream*

*Country Game Pate  
A selection of blended Game, bound with Brandy,  
Garden Herbs and Cream, served with French Bread*

*Melon and Raspberry Cocktail  
Melon Pearls on a nest of mixed Berries with Orange  
and freshly picked Mint*

### Main Courses

*Steamed Salmon  
Fresh Salmon fillets brushed with Lemon and Dill  
served on a Lime and Lemon Dressing*

*Poached Chicken Madeira  
Plump Breast of Chicken poached with Sage and  
Thyme served over a Madeira Wine Sauce*

*Roast Loin of Beef  
Prime Scottish Loin of Beef roasted with fresh  
Tarragon cooked to perfection and served with a  
Whisky Sauce*

*Spinach and Mushroom Filo Parcels (vegetarian)*

*All of the above with Chef's Selection of Seasonal  
Vegetables and Potatoes*

### Deserts

*White Chocolate Torte  
White Chocolate Mousse set on a Parfait and drizzled  
with a Toffee Fudge Sauce*

*Crème Brulee*

*Bavarois  
A marriage of Passion Fruit and Vanilla Sugar  
decorated with Chocolate*

### Coffee and Mints

### The Details

*Thanks to Linda Milne, who was only co-opted as  
Social Secretary one month ago, we are all set to have  
an exciting MCG Annual Dinner.*

**Date:** Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2002

**Time:** 7:30pm for 8:00pm, until midnight

**Venue:** The Webbington Hotel, Loxton, Axbridge.  
Situated on the southern slopes of the Mendip Hills,  
overlooking the picturesque hamlet of Loxton. The  
Hotel offers the opportunity to relax and enjoy the best  
of comfort and cuisine in beautiful surroundings.

**Dress:** Black tie optional

**Menu:** See opposite

**Cost:** £22.50 including a glass of wine on arrival.

**Entertainment:** Raffle and Guest Speaker

**Coach:** From the MCG cottage at 6pm, picking up at  
the Hunter's and Wells (the coach has to travel in this  
direction to avoid Cheddar Gorge, hence the early  
departure time). There will be a charge for the coach.

**Bookings:** A separate booking form is enclosed with  
this newsletter. Please forward your booking together  
with your payment and choice of menu to Linda Milne,  
or to any other committee member, by 23<sup>rd</sup> March.  
Please make cheques payable to 'Mendip Caving  
Group'.

**Accommodation:** A special price of £30 per person,  
including breakfast, is available for members who  
wish to stay at the Hotel (tel: 01934 750100). The  
Hotel has its own leisure club with a wide range of  
activities including a heated swimming pool, adjacent  
sun lounge, a fully equipped gymnasium, beautician /  
aromatherapist, steamroom, sauna and floodlit tennis  
courts.

## 2002 MCG CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
Mar 2nd	Mendip	Archaeology walk	Yvonne Rowe	01524 762664
Apr 13 <sup>th</sup>	Mendip	AGM	Tim Francis	0208 392 2572
Apr 13 <sup>th</sup>	Mendip	Annual Dinner	Linda Milne	01344 774589
Every Weds	Mendip	Mid-week caving	Richard Carey	0117 986 0945

<b>Accommodation:</b>	Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol BS40 7XW Tel: 01761 462797 Grid Ref ST51475606 OS 1:50,000 sheet 182
<b>Weekly Meetings:</b>	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.
<b>Cottage Fees per night:</b>	MCG members, members children, SWCC, NPC £1.50 Guest clubs and member's guests £2.50
<b>Prepayment Stickers:</b>	(Available to members only) 25 nights accommodation £30.00
<b>Annual Subscription:</b>	Full and Probationary Members: £30.00 Associate Members: £15.00
<b>Reciprocal Rights:</b>	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:**

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## MCG News

### WE HAVE THE TECHNOLOGY

I finally gave up waiting for MCG to invest in some decent computing technology for the Editor (despite two AGMs agreeing to purchase the same) and went out and bought my own all-singing, all-dancing Notebook, scanner, and lots of software. So, it's down to you now to e-mail those articles, snippets and photographs that you promised to send but couldn't because I didn't have an email address. And don't worry if, like Geoff Beale, you don't know how to e-mail me - you can still use snail-mail as I can scan your documents, photographs, slides and negatives!

### MCG NEWS ONLINE

I now have Adobe Acrobat 5.0 on my laptop, which means that MCG News will soon be available as a .pdf (portable document format) file. More than half of you have an e-mail address which means I could e-mail future editions of MCG News direct to you as a .pdf file (you will need Acrobat Reader to open .pdf files, this is widely available as a free download from Adobe). Many thanks to Paul Craddy and Adrian Gorman for their help and advice setting up Adobe on my laptop.

If you would like to receive MCG News as a .pdf file, then e-mail [yvonne.rowe@btopenworld.com](mailto:yvonne.rowe@btopenworld.com)

This will also help Mike Lovell and Linda Milne, who will have to print and post fewer newsletters.

### PAGE TEN...

...there was no page ten! Sorry about the missing page 10 in last month's newsletter, which was an article about MCG's new SRT rope. In my haste to get the masters out to Mike for printing, it got left behind by mistake. However, I have recently received (*by e-mail already!*) some articles from Tony Knibbs, one of which is about ropes and complements the article on the missing page ten. Clear so far? Good. If not, see pages 4, 5 and 10.

### MCG AGM

Don't forget the AGM on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 2002. Come along and support the Group and the committee - what's left of it! Talking of committees - I hope some of you have given some thought to the vacant posts. Technically they all become vacant but in particular those of Secretary, Tacklemaster and Caving Secretary all need to be filled. See the last Newsletter for details on how to submit your nominations.

## 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 (or less) and will take place around Burrington, Dolebury, Rowberrow, Tynings and Blackdown. 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
- Hollow Way Roman Road
- Rowberrow Iron Age hillside fort
- Tynings Barrows Bronze Age burial mounds
- Beacon Batch Bronze Age cemetery
- 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*

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

My thanks to all of you who have already paid your subs. May I please remind those of you that have not done so yet that they are now overdue. Please let me have your cheques as soon as possible.

*Richard Carey*

## SRT ROPE

When I was co-opted as Tacklemaster, I inherited two 200m reels of SRT rope. This was cut into suitable lengths and placed in the SRT store. The purpose of this article is to pass on to SRT users the technical specification provided with the rope by Beal. The new SRT rope is labelled 'MCG 2001 SRT'. It is Beal Professional, of low-stretch, brand name 'Antipodes' (10mm Type A EN1891 and CE0120). It has all been cut from reels without sewn terminations, with batch numbers 2060 and (illegible)940, manufactured in 2000. Antipodes is a polyamide semi-static rope characterised by moderate elasticity sufficient to absorb the energy required to arrest some limited falls. As it is Type A rope it is suitable for use in caving. Before cutting into lengths, the rope was soaked and left to dry slowly, shrinking the rope by about 5% to reduce the risk of sheath slippage.

**Characteristics:** diameter 10.1mm; static strength 2400kg; strength with fig-8 knot 1700kg; number of factor-1 falls at 100kg is 6; impact force of 0.3 factor fall is 4.3kN; elongation 4.4% at 150kg; sheath slippage 0%; 43% sheath to 57% core; shrinkage when wet 4%.

### USE

- The rope must be protected against sharp edges and tools in use.
- Rubbing of two ropes running at unequal speed generates heat which can lead to rupture.
- Avoid over-rapid abseil or lowered descents as this can lead to burning of the rope and accelerate sheath wear. The melting point of polyamide is 230°C. This temperature may be obtained during very rapid descents.
- Check there are no burrs or snags on descenders or other components.
- When affected by water, the rope becomes much more sensitive to abrasion and loses strength: re-double your precautions.
- Temperature of use or storage must never exceed 80°C.
- Before and during use, the possibility of rescue in case of difficulty must be considered.
- The recommended knot for tying on is a well-tightened fig.8.
- The minimum length of rope which must extend from both sides of each such knot is 10cm.
- The security system must of necessity have a reliable anchor point, at the same height as or above the user. All slack in the rope between the user and the anchor point must be avoided.
- If users find themselves in a position where they need to free-climb, they must use a dynamic rope. Low stretch ropes must never be used in situations which could result in a fall greater than factor-1.
- The different safety elements (harness, slings...) must conform to European Norms and be used in full knowledge of their limitations.

### CARE AND LIFETIME

- The lifetime of this rope depends on frequency and the type of use. The rope may suffer irreparable damage during its first use.
- Repeated loading, abrasion, UV, and humidity degrade the properties of the rope little by little.
- Average lifetime with weekly use is 2-3 years.
- The rope must be taken out of service if it has held a fall; if on inspection the core appears to be damaged; if the sheath is very worn; or if it has been in contact with chemical reagents.
- In any case the use period of the rope must not exceed five years. The cumulative storage and use periods should in no case exceed ten years.
- The rope must not be allowed contact with chemical reagents, particularly acids, oils, and petrol, which may destroy fibres without visible evidence. In the case of cleaning agents or paints specific pre-use tests must be made.
- Avoid unnecessary exposure to UV, store the rope in the shade, away from dampness and direct heat.
- If the rope is dirty, it may be washed in clear cold water, if necessary adding a washing powder for delicate fabrics and using a synthetic fibre brush.
- If the rope has been soaked, in use or by washing, leave to dry in the shade away from any sources of heat.
- After each use inspect the rope visually and manually along its entire length.
- This rope must be inspected annually by a competent person.
- Rope can suffer very serious invisible damage when not in use, and not under observation.
- Use a rope-bag for transport, to protect from dirt and minimise twisting.

**WARNING** - There are so many ways of mis-using a rope that it is impossible to inumerate them all. Speleology, abseiling, tyrolean traverses are dangerous activities which may lead to serious injury or even death. This rope must not be used except by competent and informed persons. An apprenticeship in appropriate techniques and safety measures is the responsibility of the user, who takes on responsibility for all risks and damages which may arise from the use of this rope.

*Martin Rowe*

## Notes on Ropes

During 2001 the magazine "Spéléo" featured two articles on the effects of the usage of ropes underground. Over many years now I have heard or read comments about the life expectancy of ropes; not all these comments have been supported by research. Because safety is at stake where ropes are concerned, I thought it useful to offer a précis of the two articles. Anyone interested in the details can obtain the relevant back numbers of "Spéléo" to read the fuller analysis.

In "Spéléo" No. 38 July 2001 Georges Marbach published and commented on some research reported by Francesco Salvadori and carried out by the Italian magazine "SpeleoCENS" in association with the CAI (Club Alpin Italien). The research was aimed at observing the effects of two years general caving use on a common static rope. Each of 14 Italian clubs were given a 40m length of 10.5mm dia. Béal Antipodes rope, used it for two years, then returned it for testing. The rope samples were from the same reel, and two 40m lengths were subjected to control checks: one length was tested immediately to verify its 'factory-fresh' performance; the other was stored under ideal conditions for the two-year period before being tested to ascertain the effects of such storage. The samples used for caving were then compared to these control samples.

The immediately tested new rope failed under a load of 3269daN; the stored rope failed at 3230daN, ie. It showed a loss of about 1% of ultimate strength.

To minimise the effect of differences in usage, the two-year-old samples of ropes used underground had three test lengths of 4m cut from their middles where knots and abrasion were probably least frequent. All of the used ropes retained an average of between 34% and 58% of their original strength, the higher figure being attributable to heavier usage. (Three sets of samples were identified to have been used more intensely.) The average loss of strength over all the used samples was 44%. The average use was 166 descents/ascents over the two-year period. It is interesting to note that the two unused samples showed a strength loss of 37% where a figure-of-eight knot was introduced, whereas the used samples lost only a further 12% of their residual 44% of original strength due to such a knot.

To check their potential shock-absorbing qualities, rope samples were gradually loaded up to 1600daN, then unloaded at the same rate. The unused samples suffered a permanent elongation of 9%, but used samples showed up to 20% permanent elongation – indication of a notable loss in shock-absorbing elasticity.

The stored sample and the used samples were tested for shrinkage; measurement was done with ropes loaded at 10daN (the European norm). The unused (stored) sample was 1.6% shorter; the used ropes showed an average 13% shortening after the first year and a total of 14.5% after two years. This 'ageing' effect is visibly greatest during the first year of use. The shortening phenomenon is due to the penetration of water and mud which could be minimised by: a) buying rope which has been treated to a water-resistant process, and b) carefully washing ropes after use.

The CAI concludes that, erring on the side of safety, "A rope used regularly over a period of two years must be considered as potentially dangerous and should either be replaced or used with great caution."

"Spéléo" No. 39 October 2001 had an article by Marbach, in which he looked at an instance of catastrophic rope failure in the Grotte de Chevaline, Vercors. His introduction highlighted the fact that there is a tendency in France for cavers to adopt ropes of ever-smaller diameter: 10mm rope has given way to 9mm, and there has been an attempt to obtain European Community Standards approval for a move to 8mm diameter rope. This attempt has failed; Marbach thinks this to be sensible in view of the usual cavalier approach to safety shown by many cavers.

The catastrophic failure concerned a caver using an ascender on an 8.5mm dia. dynamic rope which was originally installed because no static rope was available; it had been left *in situ* seven years earlier on a 10m pitch. The rope broke at its mid point with no suggestion of abrasion damage or the presence of a knot; the caver suffered various fractures.

On examination the sheath of the rope was normal but the internal fibres could be reduced to powder by rubbing between finger and thumb! But the sheath and internal fibres were of the same polyamide material, so whence the difference? Significantly the internal fibres of dynamic rope are subjected to heat-shrinkage to maximise elasticity; the sheath is not so treated. The two elements of the rope may therefore age differently; static ropes are not treated in this way.

*Continued on page 10*

## LIBRARY ADDITIONS

**UBSS Proceedings, Vol. 22 No. 2, 2001.** Most of this volume is taken up by two papers on the hydrochemistry of St Cuthbert's Swallet, but there are also articles on an expedition to Thailand and archaeology of the Mendip plateau near Cheddar.

In addition, a description of mid 20<sup>th</sup> Century mines near Doolin, Co. Clare proved interesting as it explains the puzzling anomaly of a surface river, the Aille, flowing immediately above the Doolin Cave system without apparently influencing the cave's development. It seems that the river previously flowed over non-porous Drift deposits which would have prevented 'leakage' to the cave below. However mining activity involved removing a phosphate bed from beneath the river and this, together with associated diversions to the river, has resulted in limestone being exposed in the river bed. It seems that only ten years after mining ceased in the 1930s some water was sinking into the river bed and it can only be a matter of time before the entire river flows underground. Not in my time though!

I don't think MCG has any members licensed to use explosives but the **February/March issue of Descent** describes an incident when, due to increased security, a caver passing through Miami airport was stopped and his baggage swabbed in a random check for explosives. His baggage proved positive (twice) so his passport and ticket were taken and police were called. Plans were made to have his explosives licence faxed from the UK but fortunately further tests proved negative and he was allowed to continue his journey. Phew!

In the same issue '*Childish Things*' by Alan Jeffreys pontificates on the possibility of children's books triggering an early interest in caving. How many of you can remember the excitement of Rupert Bear's underground exploits and of Enid Blyton's adventure books? Alan's theory is that **"we cavers cave because we have never lost that adventurous curiosity stimulated by tales of mystery and derring-do, the very stuff of children's fiction"**.

There are also articles on Mulu and Llygad Llŵchwr (Part 2 in the next issue will report on the new breakthrough) as well as the usual regional news roundups.

### Club newsletters

**NSS News, December 2001** has two items on Digital cave photography by D. Burnett and P. Jones.

**MNRC Newsletter No. 87, Dec 2001/Jan 2002** has an article by a member who joined the Kendal C. C. trip to Mallorca.

**Wessex Journal Vol 26 No 277, December 2001** describes the Bath Swallet breakthrough in August and has a light hearted write up of a Pierre St Martin through trip (which would be even funnier if I knew all the characters!).

### This month's donations are:

1. A plan showing the locations of the principal caves in the Arbas Massif, an area with happy memories for many members. It is filed with the book *La Coume d'Hyouemed* by Duchene and Drillat.
2. Newbury and District Caving Club newsletters, Nos. 1 - 15 (Oct 1983 - May 1990) - good reference material for Geoff B's early caving exploits!
3. An article from **Best** (a women's magazine, I think) tells about a British couple who bought a retirement house in the Dordogne which had a small 40 ft cave at the end of the garden. Subsequently a (trespassing) local caver discovered carvings of horses, mammoths, human figures and 30,000 year old fossilised human footprints in a small passage at the end of the cave. Fortunately the owners won't be subjected to hordes of tourists traipsing through their garden as their presence would result in damage to the carvings (?paintings) due to exhaled CO<sub>2</sub>.

**Joan Goddard**

## Impressive new Réseau Félix Trombe through trip

In 1983 there was an MCG expedition/vacation to the Coume Ouarnède karst massif to the south of the Pyrenean village of Arbas in the Haute Garonne département. The main objective was to reconnoitre the Félix Trombe system which, at almost 100km, is the longest cave in France. It was hoped that familiarity with the system and the pre-rigging of pitches would have allowed us to do one or more of the classic through-trips. But the weather and circumstances in general dashed our hopes. Last autumn a spectacular new through-trip was pioneered by the concerted efforts of several French clubs.

As frequently happens, the idea for the project was mooted in a pub – Paddy's Pub in Arbas – on a wet and cold morning in February 2000. The idea was to get the caver/cave diver Gilles Morieux into the system via one of the highest entrances, Gouffre de la Coquille (1448m), and exit via the resurgence, Grotte du Goueil di Her (491m). This would involve a labyrinthine traverse of about 10km of passages, pitches and chambers, and diving the 170m long/30m deep JYG sump.

Being a serious undertaking, the preparations were time consuming and involved detailed route planning and equipping in addition to solving logistical and communications problems. Underground reconnaissance began in February 2001 with a trip into the Grotte de Pène-blancue to verify the state of the fixed aids at the Puits Arrosés, a vital link between sections of the through-trip. During the months to come, artificial aids were replaced where necessary; the JYG sump cleared of four old guidelines and a stainless steel cable installed; reserve air bottles positioned; Coquille entrance and the intermediate entrances of Gouffre des Hérétiques and Gouffre du Pont de Gerbaut pre-rigged.

At 07h00 on 15 September 2001 Gilles and his companions set off in dense fog for the Coquille entrance, starting the through-trip at about 10h00. Simultaneously a group entered Goueil di Her to put twin 7.5 litre air bottles at the upstream end of the sump. Gilles reached the bottom (le Pertuis blowhole) of Trou du Vent main chamber at 14h30. By 19h30 he was at the start of the underground river of Pont de Gerbaut where hot soup and a change into pontonnières were the order of the day.

At 23h30 Gilles reached the Puits Arrosés in Pène-blancue. Now accompanied by fresh companions he pushed on towards JYG sump, bypassing the 120m long Pène-blancue sump via Réseau Pschitt and Xavier Goyet streamway. JYG sump was reached at 03h00 Sunday morning, over two hours ahead of schedule, and preparations were made to establish telephone contact with the final escorting group at the downstream end of the sump in the Goueil di Her resurgence cave. Contact was made at 05h30 and Gilles, still in good shape prepared to dive, surfacing at 07h00 exactly, to the delight of all concerned and with daylight only an hour or so away. This new through-trip was named Traversée Gérard Pujol in memory of a fellow caver who died in 1998.

*Tony Knibbs*

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### COTTAGE BOOKINGS

<u>Who</u>	<u>Nights</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>	<u>Number</u>
Members weekend	2	Fri 01/03/02	Sat 02/03/02	
Pete Mullins	1	Fri 08/03/02	Sat 09/03/02	12
First Bookham	1	Fri 22/03/02	Sat 23/03/02	12
Easter	3	Fri 29/03/02	Mon 01/04/02	
Members weekend	2	Fri 05/04/02	Sat 06/04/02	
AGM & dinner w/e	2	Fri 12/04/02	Sat 13/04/02	
NCA - John Crowsley	0	Mon 08/04/02	Mon 08/04/02	25

## Bath Swallet Revisited, 30<sup>th</sup> December 2001

*By Tim Francis*

Just before the BCRA conference the rumour mill on the hill was saying that a new 70ft pitch had been discovered in Bath Swallet. Information was rather vague and it didn't seem like the sort of thing that you'd find in Burrington Combe. However it was soon confirmed that the Wessex had indeed achieved a breakthrough and there was apparently even a smidgen of passage at the bottom. This seemed like an ideal Sunday trip and the only reason we hadn't whizzed down earlier was because of the good progress at the Carcass Cave dig.

Bath Swallet has been dug on and off since the war, primarily by the UBSS, although with little success. I suppose the proximity of Rods and Drunkards meant that there were much more enticing prospects for cavers to have a go at. Mind you the next thing you'll hear is that someone is having another bash at the squalid recesses of Boss Swallet. The entrance to Bath Swallet lies at the base of the nearest shakehole to the UBSS hut and only a few metres from the track. You can park only a couple of minutes amble from the entrance so nothing too strenuous there. This was ideal for us as there had been a decent dusting of snow over the weekend and we didn't want to be hanging around outside for longer than necessary.

Once inside, Bath is actually a rather pleasant cave and more like Rods than Boss. A few seconds of wriggling through boulders and you soon arrive at the head of a steeply descending passage. A bolt at the top indicates the start of digging operations and for the next 30ft or so the rift has been nicely made safe in places with a concreted back wall. This bit is all easily free climbable and the true pitch starts at the breakthrough point: a boulder jammed in the rift. There are plenty of naturals to rig off but there is also a small rawl bolt and a scaffold bar if you prefer. But I also hear that the CSCC may be putting in DMMs in the next few months. From here the pitch can be rigged as one but for ease of lifelining I would suggest treating it as two pitches: take 33ft and 20ft ladders respectively. There are suitable belay points for the second pitch as well.

It was soon apparent, as we descended the pitch that the breakthrough was much more significant than we had been lead to believe. I bet the UBSS will be kicking themselves when they see the new stuff. At the base of the first drop another section of the rift ascends back up on the left (as you look at the ladder) almost up to the surface. It's quite a thutchy climb but has some nice shells and corals in places. At the top a small bedding plane leads off but it seems to be blocked by rocks. Back at the bottom of the pitch the ladder drops into a section of real walking sized passage (in Burrington!). This appears to be the main phreatic conduit of water from the lines of shakeholes on the hill above. On the left are banks of cobbles and mud banks and the roof has some fine phreatic pendants. Hardly anyone has been down here yet so the rocks are still loose and the mudbanks pristine.

Downstream, immediately around the corner, the passage terminates in a boulder choke. The floor consists of thick sediment and I presume this backs up in very wet weather. There is no way on in the floor. So we turned our attention to the choke above. Firstly I went for a rummage up an ascending bedding plane on the right. This goes for 30ft but a spot of cobble removal showed that it is easily diggable. A further 15ft of low bedding could be seen to continue – an ideal lead in Burrington. Back in the choke Mick noticed a small chamber which I forced my way into. It had not been entered before but anyhow merely looped around to another gap between the boulders. Finally we climbed right up into the choke and spotted black space behind some boulders. A spot of rock removal and a 35ft aven (Pirate Aven?) was entered. Unfortunately this aven pinched out at the top.

Emboldened by this little discovery we then went for a wander upstream. A quick hop over a bank of cobbles and the cave ends in a gravel choke in the floor. However just above this is a lively boulder choke that can be passed with care. An ascending rift that runs parallel to the ladder pitch can be entered. We didn't follow this very far but I'm sure that the Wessex diggers will have passed the jammed boulders and climbed further. Above the point of entry there is a narrow rift, which would probably bypass the boulders. We didn't investigate further but the climb didn't look particularly difficult.

Team: Bill Chadwick, Tim Francis, Mick Norton