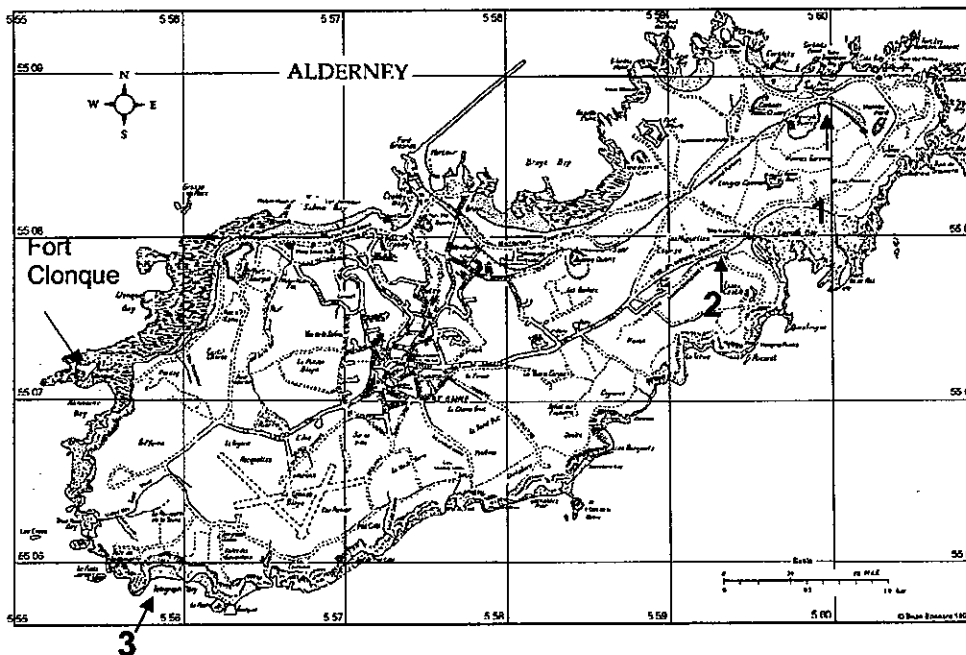


Underground Alderney

By Tim Francis

To celebrate the 30th birthdays of two Old Moles, Rupert Knowles and Cheryl Wicks, whom many of you will know, 15 of us flew out to Alderney for a long weekend of revelry. Why Alderney? On a Sunday afternoon ramble to Weston Super Mare the group came across a Landmark Trust property, which was available for rent. We were looking for somewhere novel to stay so a copy of their brochure was purchased: www.landmarktrust.co.uk. Fort Clonque on Alderney looked like an excellent venue and was promptly booked. The fort was built in response to the Napoleonic threat but was substantially altered by the Germans during their occupation of the Channel Islands in World War II. It is connected to the main island by a causeway but is inaccessible at high tide and seemed ideal for our visit.



For a dedicated spelaeologist like myself, a granite outpost of the British Isles seemed to hold out little prospect of getting underground. A perusal of the web and paper literature and contact with a few locals came up with nothing in the way of sea caves. But I knew we'd need a torch for the walk back from St. Anne to the fort so I packed a Maglite just in case. We flew across from Southampton to Alderney on March 16th in a little yellow plane, run by the airline Aurigny (French for Alderney), called Joey. The in-flight magazine provided much mirth as it included a tale entitled "Timid Tim": www.aurigny.com/pages.gb/frame.html. The highlight of our flight was a slight detour to avoid an air sea rescue in progress mid channel. You never get above more than a couple of thousand feet in altitude so the views of the south coast and the channel are fantastic.

Continued on page 4

2002 MCG CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
TBA	Mendip	Archaeology walk	Yvonne Rowe	01524 762664
Every Weds	Mendip	Mid-week caving	Richard Carey	0117 986 0945
7/8 June	Mendip	Cottage work weekend	Ben Cooper	01344 776306
26 October	Mendip	Longwood/August MRO rescue practice	Brian Snell	01329 238341

GROUP INFORMATION

Accommodation	Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol BS407XW Tel: 01761 462797 Grid Ref ST51475606 OS 1:50,000 sheet 182		
Weekly Meetings	At The Hunters Lodge, Priddy, Somerset, on Tuesdays about 10.00 pm or at the cottage on Wednesdays at 7.00 pm for caving trips.		
Cottage Fees	MCG members, members children, SWCC, NPC		£1.50
per night	Guest clubs and member's guests		£2.50
Season Ticket	Available to members only To be confirmed by committee		£30.00
Annual	Full and Probationary Members:		£30.00
Subscription	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 2002 - 2003 COMMITTEE

Secretary	Vacant	Committee to co-opt at next meeting	secretary@m-c-g.org.uk
Treasurer	Richard Carey	9 Greenvale Drive, Timsbury, Bath, BA2 0HW	RichardMCarey@email.msn.com
Tackle Master	Vacant	Committee to co-opt at next meeting	
Caving Secretary	Tim Francis	Flat 6, 16 Lambert Avenue, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4QR	T.Francis@research-int.com Tel: 0208 392 2572
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 yvonne.rowe@btopenworld.com
Recorder / Librarian	Jane Baldwin	Brooklands Cottage, Twyn Lane, Glascoed, near Usk, Gwent NP4 0UB	Tel: 07702 364840 PJOandA@aol.com
Social Secretary	Linda Milne	40 Harts Leap Close, Sandhurst, Berkshire, GU47 8PB	Tel: 01344 774589 Linda.Milne@btinternet.com

Non-committee Posts

Rescue Warden	Brian Snell	01329 238341
Conservation Officer	Vacant	
Examiners	Wayne Hiscox Mike Lovell	01749 671282 0118 966 3747
Gift Aid Administrator	Malcolm Cotter	01784 252643

Cottage Booking

Stephen Taylor - 1st Hurstpierpoint Scouts	From Sun 28/07/02	To Fri 02/08/02	10 beds
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THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP IS A REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 270088.
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MCG News

ON THE MOVE Jane Baldwin ☒ Brooklands Cottage, Twyn Lane, Glascoed, Near Usk, Gwent NP4 0UB ■ 07702 364840

Bill Richards and Lynn Furneaux ☒ Hill View, 96 Ashburton Rd, Newton Abbot, Devon, TQ12 1RJ ☎ 01626 366960

Keith Knight has a new e-mail address:
kw.knight@virgin.net

WELCOME TO Bob Dungey ☒ 53 Weybank Close, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7UF ☎ 01252 710221 E-mail: bob@dungey.co.uk who has been accepted as a probationary member. Proposed by R. Carey and T. Francis and advertised on the cottage noticeboard from 02.03.02 to 02.04.02.

MCG DOCUMENTS There is now a blue file in the library that contains copies of the following MCG documents:

- Membership Application Form
- Training trip form
- Constitution and Rules
- Gift Aid Form
- AGM nomination slips

COTTAGE TELEPHONE The cottage phone developed a fault recently, which meant that although calls could be received at the cottage, it was not possible to hold a two-way conversation. As the phone was obsolete anyway (it cannot be programmed to recognise the new dialling codes, and it will not accept the new 50p) the committee felt it was not economical to repair. A replacement will be provided as soon as possible, and may even be at the cottage by the time you receive this newsletter. In the meantime, if you phone the cottage, please understand that they can hear you but you cannot hear them.

MCG NEWS Thanks to those who have indicated that they wish to receive the newsletter by e-mail. This will make Mike Lovell's and Linda Milne's job much easier as well as saving the Group money on printing and postage. At the AGM many of you said you would also like receive your newsletter as a pdf document. As I don't want to have to type in dozens of e-mail addresses, can anyone else who wishes to receive their newsletter in this way, please e-mail their request to me, at yvonne.rowe@btopenworld.com

2002 SUBS Richard tells me that a number of people haven't yet paid their MCG subs for 2002. If you are intending to renew your membership please can you forward a cheque to Richard made payable to the Mendip Caving Group for £30 (£15 if you are an Associate) to: Richard Carey, 9, Greenvale Drive, Timsbury, Bath BA2 0HW

If you do not intend to renew your subscription please can you return your cottage key and cotag to the cottage warden. This is the last newsletter you will receive if you have not renewed your subscription.

ARCHAEOLOGY WALK 1 The archaeology walk on March 2nd was a great success thanks to all who turned up. We were lucky after so much wind and rain to have a cold but calm, sunny day. Those who went said they enjoyed it and it certainly made my efforts worth-while...

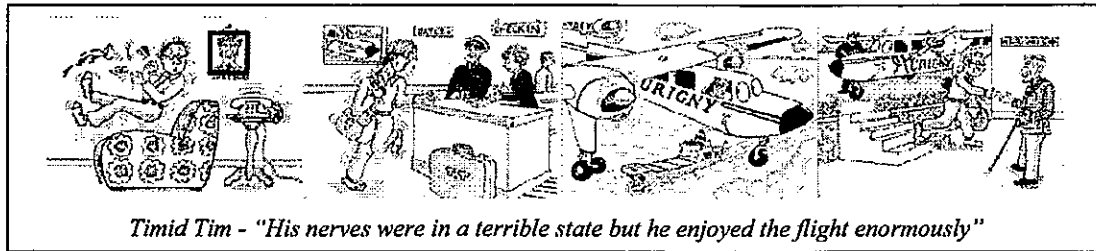
MEXICAN EVENING The archaeology walk was followed by a very enjoyable Mexican meal at the cottage. Thanks to Linda Milne, Tim Francis, J-P Burch and others who contributed to the preparation to make it such a success. We even had Martin Rowe turning out in authentic Mexican dress!

ARCHAEOLOGY WALK 2 The next walk will be either Autumn 2002 or Spring 2003 and will include:

- A Roman road
 - Priddy Circles (Neolithic)
 - Ashen Hill Barrow Cemetery (Bronze Age)
 - Priddy Nine Barrows (Bronze Age)
 - Earthwork (Bronze Age)
 - Swildon's Hole (Roman site)
 - Glebe Stake Circle Barrow (rare - Bronze Age)
 - *Hostelry* (20th century)
 - Medieval farmstead site
 - Deer Leap Stones (Saxon)
 - Bridged Pot Shelter (Neolithic)
 - Badger Hole (Palaeolithic)
 - Hyana Den (Palaeolithic)
 - Rhinoceros Hole (Palaeolithic)
 - Wookey Hole (Palaeolithic)
 - *Museum and for pub*
- More details to follow nearer the time.

GOOD NEWS The Inland Revenue have paid £416.24 into the treasurers COIF deposit fund. This results from Malcolm Cotter's claim for the year 1998, the year for which we misplaced our records of paid-up members. In the end we were only 4 short of the possible number who had signed covenants but for whom there was no record of payment. *Our thanks to Malcolm.*

Underground Alderney – continued from page 1



Upon arrival Julie and myself headed straight off to the Albert where the others had already booked a couple of tables. After partaking of victuals, birthday champagne and a few rounds of Drambuie flammers we stumbled down the hill towards Fort Clonque. In the morning my bramble-scratched legs and mud stained jeans testified to a suspicion that we seemed to have gone a tad off route a few times. Once at the Fort I took a look at the well-stocked bookshelf and came across a book on the German Second World War tunnels of the Channel Islands, which had a brief section on Alderney. Furthermore the logbook had an entry from members of Subterranea Britannica so a spot of underground furling seemed on the cards.

The third largest of the Channel Islands, Alderney is about 3½ miles long by 1½ miles wide. It has a population of about 2,200 and, like each of the other islands in the group, has its own unique character and wildlife. For example: Alderney has a large population of very active moles and a unique population of blonde hedgehogs, with brown eyes, hands and feet. These are not found in the other islands and none of the Alderney hedgehogs have fleas.

On the Saturday morning a few of us headed over to Braye to hire some bicycles, which was only twenty minutes walk. The plan was to meet the rest of the rabble in St. Anne for lunch allowing us the morning to cycle around the island. After a spot of off-roading along the railway line and beach we headed up to the Quesnard lighthouse where we hoped to find the first tunnel (see 1. On map) in Mannez quarry. The tunnel is a through trip a couple of hundred feet long and walking height throughout its length. The roof at the second entrance is a little bit unstable but the odd rock fall was no deterrent to our intrepid explorers. There's not a lot to say about the tunnel but it was certainly a strange sight emerging back out into daylight and then to see a London Underground train, Northern Line branch, right in front of you. The railway line on Alderney, that only runs in the summer, uses a pensioned off tube train to ferry tourists between Braye Harbour and Quesnard point. *Team: Peat Bennett, Chris Fitch, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh*

After grabbing some pies and cakes in the bakers in St. Anne we cycled back along the East coast of the island to find a second tunnel (2.) that I had marked on my map as lying directly underneath Essex Castle. This proved to be extremely easy to find as the entrance was in a small quarry just off the road. In fact the entrance was so large that we decided to cycle in for some of the way until it became apparent that the illumination from one Maglite was noticeably insufficient for six people. We stumbled along the passage keeping an eye out for holes in the floor. Fortunately wooden pallets had been laid over deepest puddles. Whilst illuminating the way for the others I caught sight of something out of the corner of my eye and I let out a cry making everyone jump. We had stumbled across a strange wendy-house cum shrine affair complete with candles. We continued along and after negotiating a rock fall were within sight of a second entrance. However there was an ankle deep entrance pool, which only the most foolhardy of the team attempted to traverse with the consequences of soggy shoes for the rest of the day. Julie was the first out and exclaimed, "Oh, I think we're in somebody's back garden!" Actually the tunnel just emerges around the corner from the quarry entrance so a through trip was possible. *Team: Peat Bennett, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh, Duncan Horn, Rupert Knowles, Belinda Luke*

The rest of the weekend on Alderney was spent walking around the island. The weather on the Sunday was distinctly bracing but the views across to France and Sark were excellent. We did not visit any more tunnels (I think there are about eight on the island) but there are plenty of German bunkers and fortifications dotted around the coastline. We popped in to a few of the bunkers and most seem to be in excellent condition. I had also come across a report of a sea cave (3.) in Telegraph Bay near to the airstrip. Normally the bay is easily accessible but the others reported that the base of the cliff had been washed away, with an in situ rope assisting a muddy scramble at the bottom. So we didn't bother to take a look.

Moles on Alderney: James Allen, Peat Bennett, Ralph Diment, Debbie Diment, Chris Fitch, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh, Duncan Horn, Kerry Howard, Rupert Knowles, Belinda Luke, Paul Newey, Reggie Pain, Phil Rice, Kirsty Stroud, Cheryl Wicks

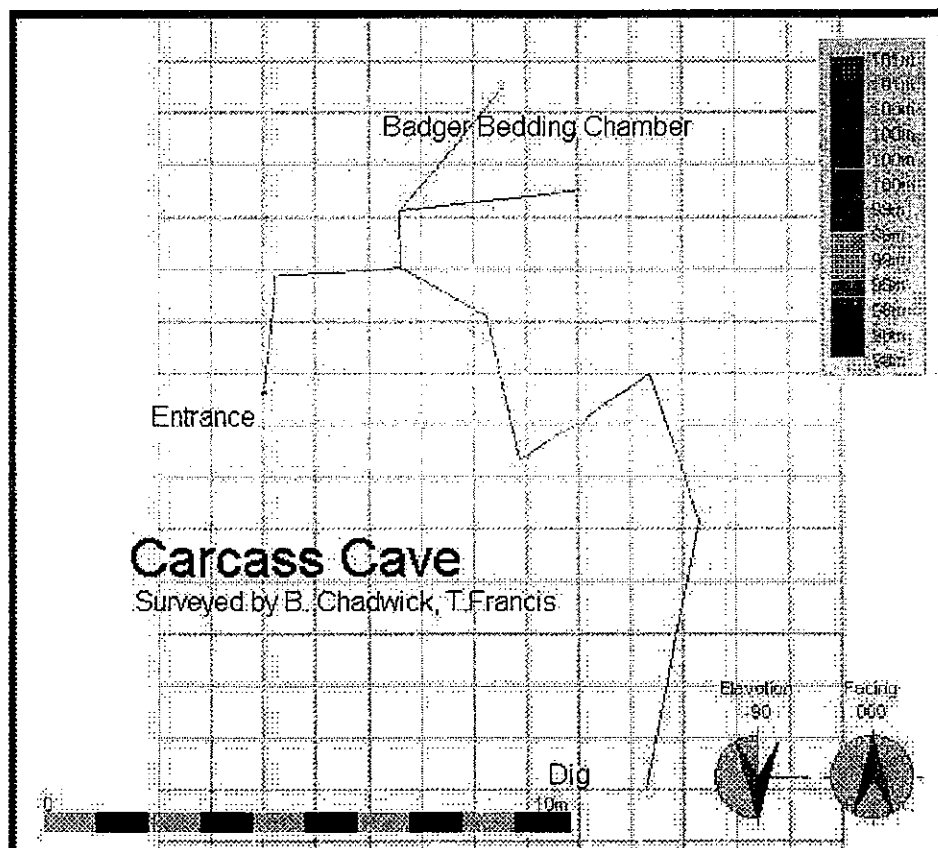
Digging at Carcass Cave

by Tim Francis

MCG exploration on the hill has been limited in the last few years but digging across the tail end of 2001 has focussed upon a new site on Shute Shelve hill. A small opening was noticed by a novice caver, next to Carcass Shaft: an impressive Axebridge dig. Mick Norton and others quickly opened up 15m of dry dusty crawls with several possible leads. Over the next few weeks a combined assault by an agglomeration of MCG, Bracknell and Newbury cavers rapidly extended the cave.

Digging out the sandy sediment was easy enough although extremely hot work. Encouraged by the good air quality we persevered and our efforts eventually resulted in a small breakthrough. After a particularly long day's digging Tim forced a typically desperate squeeze to reveal 10m of walking sized rift. The squeeze has now been enlarged to sensible proportions and its removal revealed a nice phreatic meander. The rift is obviously fault controlled and completely different in character to the rest of the cave. The floor is littered with rocks that have fallen off the shattered right hand wall. The left-hand side is coated with ancient flowstones. Bill has taken a fine set of photos, some of which should make their way onto the web site in the near future.

The draught was found to be coming from a small hole at the far end of the rift. At first we thought that this draught might be coming from Carcass Shaft, which lies only 7m away. But a smoke test in the shaft proved negative. It is possible that there is a connection with Shute Shelve Cavern itself so we'll take a look at possible options there after the bat hibernation season is over. At present digging continues but progress will now be much harder. I suspect that more persuasive methods will be required but no doubt Mick will come up with some ingenious digging methods before the team gives up. A survey has been completed revealing that the cave is approximately 30m long. I have appended Bill's Survex output but a final survey will be drawn up in the near future.



Anyone interested in digging at Carcass or at other interesting sites on Shute Shelve hill should contact Mick Norton or Doug Harris.

Diggers: Pete Bennett, Ben Cooper, Bill Chadwick, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh, Doug Harris, Elaine Johnson, Stephan Natynczuk, Mick Norton, Martin Peck and others

RESCUE PRACTISE NEWS

By Brian Snell

As we all know, 2001 was a complete white-wash for any caving on Mendip with Foot and Mouth running rampant across the country, so I think I can be forgiven for being unable to organise a Rescue Practise. However, in October I was contacted by Mark 'Gonzo' Lumley from the MRO who was keen to try to get some events organised where the clubs of Mendip could work together on a Rescue Practise. Several mid-week events were organised, one even involving a helicopter where the lesson learned was the procedure to be followed when carrying a stretcher to a helicopter. A practise was organised by the MRO on 10th November 2001. A note was put in the MCG newsletter about this but I think for most people the notice was a little short. Consequently only Keith Knight and I were there to represent the MCG but as it turned out this was probably just as well. Those wishing to join in the practise were supposed to turn up at the Belfry at 10:30. By 11:00 there must have been about 35 people from different clubs all wanting to have a go. The rescue was to be held in St. Cuthbert's and because of the numbers this was split into two separate simultaneous short rescues. The party we joined started adjacent to Kanchenjunga and went as far as Mud Hall. Very short compared with past MCG practises but it was a point worth noting. Some I have organised in the past have probably gone on a bit too long, although I have never had any complaints. The practise went quite smoothly given that most people in the team had not done one before and after the final lower of the casualty into Mud Hall, we completed the exercise in about 1.5 hours. We then joined the inevitable queue at the entrance rift but amazingly we were out before the pubs closed. During this practise we had an opportunity to see how the replacement to the Mole Phone system worked and it was very impressive - we were told it had been used very effectively in the Goufre Berger.

This event was a quite successful and the MRO are keen to organise similar events for 2002. Of immediate interest will be: *Saturday 26 October, Longwood/August. A rescue practice coordinated by Club Team Leaders and overseen by the MRO.*

During the past few years I have been Rescue Warden, I have tried to make each practise different from those that have taken place in the past. My problem is that on Mendip there are a finite number of caves suitable for rescue practises and sooner or later I will have to repeat one which has been done before. Perhaps this doesn't really matter but getting involved with a combined MRO organised practise could likely make a pleasant change, especially as there are opportunities to see how some of the equipment we haven't used yet works (e.g. splints, etc).

The proposed Longwood/August practise in October could be very interesting and I'm thinking of making this the MCG practise event. We have already done something similar before when the MRO oversaw our practise in Gough's Cave a few years ago. I would see this as a possible opportunity to get to know members of some of the other clubs. My only reservation is that this is not a good cave for people who are new to caving or too large to fit through the Letter Box in the entrance series. When we ran our practise in Longwood we did have some people drop out on the day because it was a little too much for them. Therefore, some MCG members might feel that this is not such a good idea. If so, I would be keen to hear peoples' opinions about this soon, so that if necessary I have time to organise an independent MCG practise.

Here's an email from Yong Shik about a rescue in Korea; the quaint English gives it some extra interest. YR

Just I want to say Hello, I am still alive. Last weekend I went down one vertical cave in Korea with two caving colleagues and had an serious accident which one of my friend fell down with a couple of huge boulder chalk stones about 14M. Eventually he had broken leg and negative to move by himself. It is about -150M below from cave entrance. I got out for a help also called cave friend who 8 hours away from caves. 119 came to the ground but no hope due to even they could not get inside cave. Only they provided medic equipment.

Anyway it was huge jobs to get him out. Totally 14 active cavers came to rescue him also it was a first cave rescue operation. It took about 44 hours since he was fell down. Amazingly he did not loose control and make him very well be confident. A lots of camera crew came to report it. Through this accident he was almost dead if he could have gone to shock. We shoted him 4 morphine during the rescue operation. Finally he was out and rushed to hospital safely only he had broken leg but very badly. Anyway I have learned a lots of thing through this accident. Also be careful when you are doing caving. I am very fine only I was physically tired.

Park Yongshik <cavepark@hotmail.com> Sent: 22 February 2002

Blackmoor Log Report

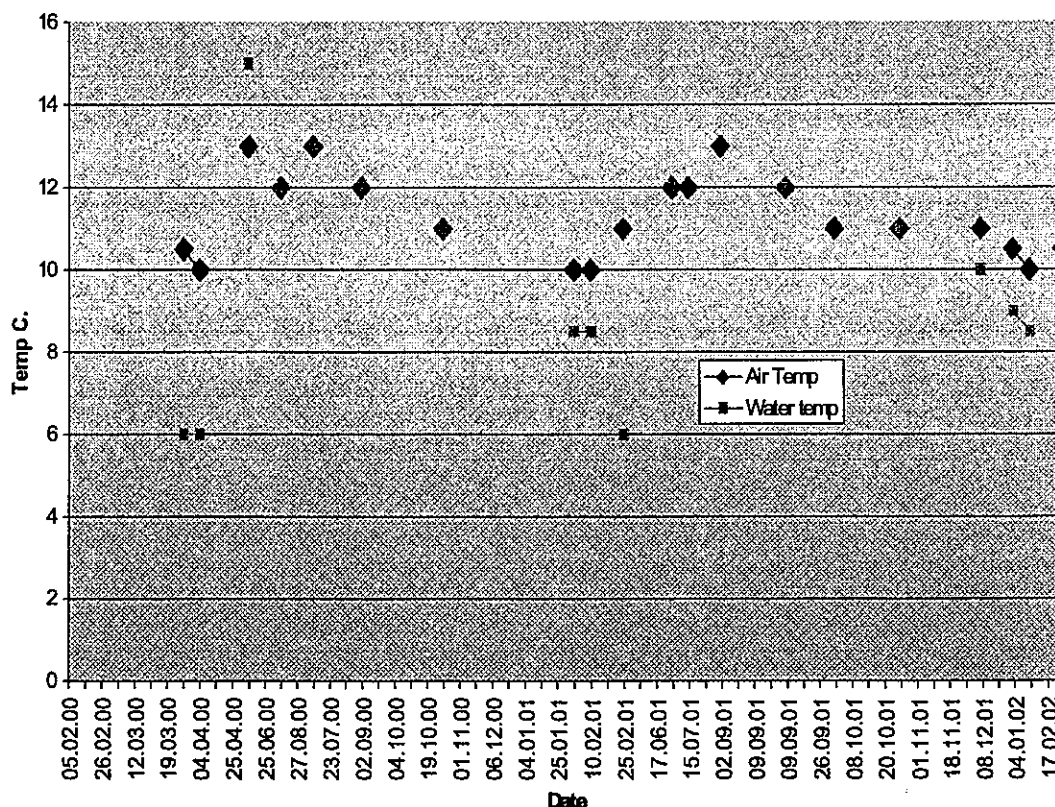
By Tim Francis

Most members will be aware that any trip into a cave on the Blackmoor reserve must be recorded in the green log book that hangs on the back of the tackle store door. Each year the Secretary provides a copy of the log, and a typed up summary of the entries, to the Charterhouse Centre. I would urge everyone to remember to fill in the log so that we can provide an accurate record of our activities.

2001 was a typically average year for trips despite Foot and Mouth with 30 visits recorded: 21 into Upper Flood, 8 Waterwheel and 1 Blackmoor Shaft. For Upper Flood these trips break down as 10 tourist, 7 digging and 4 conservation lead by only six leaders – John Crowsley, Tim Francis, Lee Hawkswell, Julie Hesketh, Arthur Spain and Steve Wyatt. Conservation has focussed upon stal cleaning in the entrance passage and Midnight Chamber and good progress has been made. The purchase of a second spray has certainly made this task easier. If you haven't been down Upper Flood for several years I hope that you will see quite an improvement on your next visit. Most of the digging trips involved dragging scaffolding and kit down to the Red Room. Further progress has been made in removing the stal barrier upstream of Midnight Chamber but work can only progress in low water conditions.

Leaders will have noticed that there are two thermometers in Upper Flood: one in Midnight Chamber and one at Sludge Duck Junction. Infrequent measurements have been recorded across the last two years and below is a graph of the Midnight Chamber results. Although we have very few records at this stage there does seem to be a distinct seasonal pattern to the data. As would be expected, water temperature fluctuates more widely than the air temperature with the ranges as: Water - Max: 15c, Min: 6c; Air - Max 13c, Min 10c. Across the winter months the air is invariably 1 to 2 degrees warmer than the water, which explains why the water often seems to feel so damn cold. We'll need a few more years' data yet to get a decent picture so please make a note of the temperature for the log.

Temperature Records in Midnight Chamber



Fragments from France – 22

The Spéléo-Club d'Aérospatiale has now renamed itself Spéléo Canyon Airbus-France as a result of commercial name changes. For its Annual Dinner this year it chose a gîte at the small town of St Antonin-Noble-Val in the département of Tarn et Garonne (47) an hour's drive NNE of Toulouse. It was a small turnout this year, 18 people and two dogs, but the weather was sunny and warm on the 2/3 February weekend. St Antonin is situated on the river Aveyron which flows between impressive limestone cliffs; and it seemed to have enough English-speaking residents to support the availability of perhaps seven English newspapers in the local *papetrie*, and estate agents offered English language information – £100,000 would buy a substantial 4-bedroom, stone-built detached house sitting in half an acre. Interestingly I noticed the family name *Aveline* on a war memorial in the town. Having walked up to the Trou de la Gourgue resurgence and dry Grotte de la Gourgue on Saturday afternoon, it was time to go caving on Sunday morning at a not-very-early hour.



Aveyron gorge

About 4km west of St Antonin the D115 runs through a tunnel as it follows the river Aveyron along its gorge. The tunnel cuts through one of two huge buttresses of limestone which cause the Aveyron to describe a perfect s-bend. Immediately beyond the SW exit of the tunnel is a long lay-by on the right, above which and hidden from view in a small cirque is the Grotte de la Dame Blanche and a couple of other smaller caves. Our objective was the **Grotte du Capucin** in the lower wall of the towering cliff of Bône which extends eastwards from above the mouth of the tunnel to where the buttress ends above the river. This cliff is a popular climbing venue.

The cave is formed in dolomitised Bathonian limestone and is about 1.5km long. It was first explored by Gabriel Gaupillat, the cousin of E-A. Martel, in 1892. A footpath up through box bushes led to a notable bedrock ledge which could be followed for 100m to the right to reach the vast entrance porch of the cave; there is a much smaller entrance about 150m away to the left, but this had partially collapsed. The 10m high, 20m wide entrance, some 80m above the river, soon gave way to a roomy, borehole-type passage of about 8m diameter. After some 150m water is met at a bifurcation; ahead the passage continues about 10m high and 1 – 2m wide towards a hypothetical junction with Grotte de la Dame Blanche.

We followed the water into the right-hand fork and were soon wading waist-deep in a 1m wide canal between stal-covered walls. Rumours of a thorough wetting were soon proved to be correct as we soon reached a 3m wide, 10m long duck (first passed in 1953) with a minimum of 5cm airspace above 40cm of water. The removal of helmets permitted noses to be kept close to the roof and those on carbide lamps to maintain their illumination! A colleague had advised me that Capucin was a "grotte chaude" and I had elected to wear a one-piece furry suit (rather than a neoprene long-john) under a Petzl oversuit. The air temperature was probably between 12° and 14°C, so the quick-draining furry suit was quite adequate and the usual clouds of condensation from steaming bodies were almost absent.

A couple more semi-immersions were called for as we gently ascended a series of pools of varying depth through cave passage impressively sculpted into sharp-edged spongework on roof and walls. Several pools had a partial covering of floating calcite, and fresh calcite deposition was evident on stal slopes (notably gours) over which the stream flowed. After about 400m in such idyllic surroundings we reached a very large chamber from which some 200m of roomy, horizontal passage brought us to a short scramble up to a terminal sump in which a guideline dipped beneath the floating calcite on its surface, suggesting a known continuation for *plongeurs*.

Progress through the cave had been reminiscent of parts of Dan-yr-Ogof, but with much warmer water – it certainly provided a worthwhile three-hour fun trip. The Tarn et Garonne would be an interesting location for a family sightseeing/walking-plus-caving holiday, with its striking landscape of garrigue and limestone gorges. And there's plenty of historical interest.

Tony Knibbs

SNIPPETS

GOUGH'S CAVE

I don't know if you've heard but Rick Stanton has passed the old Rob Palmer limit in Goughs. This limit was a boulder choke but with a normal set the way on could not be seen.

A few weeks ago Rick dived to Palmer's limit using a home-made rebreather, and then got through the choke with no problems. He then surfaced in a large airbell with a choice of bouldery routes (underwater) to choose from. A return was planned but bad weather has delayed things a bit.

QUANTOCK DIG

Any cavers within a 20 mile radius of Taunton interested in helping with digging midweek? The site is on the Quantocks - draughting chamber in limestone which is the easiest dig on the planet - just doesn't get dug often enough for fast progress.

If interested please contact Peter Glanvill:

PGlanv@aol.com <<mailto:PGlanv@aol.com>>

BURRINGTON COMBE

Here's some info. on the Burrington Combe plans. (Oh and the bridge at Shute Shelve).

Axbridge Interchange Axbridge Bypass December 3rd, 2001 - May 26th, 2002

Bridge Strengthening and Repairs, Road closure.

So to access the car park for Carcass / Axbridge we'll have to divert around the bridge for a while yet. Cattle grids are set to be installed to slow vehicles from Exmoor to the Mendips - ponies to calm the traffic!

TRAFFIC CALMING IN THE MENDIPS

Exmoor ponies and wild sheep could become part of a new traffic calming scheme. Cattle grids are set to be installed at two key gateways to the Mendip Hills to help keep animals safe. The measures are expected to slow down traffic and discourage many lorry drivers from crossing the hills and thundering through nearby villages. Work to install cattle grids should start after Christmas in Burrington Coombe when the road is to be closed for 14 weeks for resurfacing. Once the grids are in place, Sir David Wills, whose estate encompasses both sides of the Coombe, hopes to introduce 20 Exmoor ponies. The scheme is being backed by the Countryside Stewardship, part of the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, which is contributing towards the cost.

Sir David's aim is for the ponies to graze the land - but a by-product of his scheme will be slowing down traffic and possibly discouraging heavy lorries from using the Coombe. He said: "We are trying to restore the Coombe and the commons, which have not been grazed other than by wild animals for 70 years. At the moment it is an overgrown jungle." The cattle grids at Cheddar Gorge are expected to be installed in 2003/4 to protect wild sheep that live there. It depends on funding from the European Union's Life Bid, the National Trust and Longleat Estates, which own Cheddar Showcaves.

The Mendip Hills Joint Advisory Committee is campaigning for traffic calming on the hills, which are designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Spokeswoman Sarah Jackson said that dry stone walling near the grids would signal to drivers that they were about to enter a special area. The group, whose members represent Somerset, North Somerset and Sedgemoor among other authorities, also proposes a speed restriction of 40/50mph.

By Christine Lewis, Weston Mercury

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

<u>WHEN</u>	<u>WHAT</u>	<u>WHERE</u>
Jun 2 nd	Columns open day	Ogof Ffynnon Ddu
Jul 5-8 th	NAMHO Conference	University of Wales, Aberystwyth
Sep 21 st	Speleo Art Exhibition	Dudley Art Gallery and Museum
Oct 26 th	MRO rescue practice	Longwood / August system
Oct ??	Hidden Earth 2002	Forest of Dean

AGM News

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING was attended by 32 members. The minutes of the meeting will be sent to members with a future newsletter but the following is a brief resume of the proceedings:-

NOMINATIONS were voted on and the results were as follows:-

Hon. Cottage Warden – **Ben Cooper**
 Hon. Caving Secretary – **Tim Francis**
 Hon. Recorder / Librarian – **Jane Baldwin**
 Hon. Editor – **Yvonne Rowe**
 Hon. Treasurer – **Richard Carey**
 Hon. Social Secretary – **Linda Milne**

We had three volunteers for the two remaining posts and they will be voted on and co-opted at the next committee meeting on May 4th 2002:-

Hon. Secretary – **John Pudduck**
 Hon. Tacklemaster – **Julie Hesketh, Brian Snell**

Brian Snell volunteered and was accepted as Rescue Warden.

Peat Bennet volunteered and was accepted as Conservation and Access Officer.

Wayne Hiscox and **Mike Lovell** volunteered and were accepted as Examiners.

MEMBERSHIP Of the 32 members present, 31 live away from Mendip, or are former London members who now live on Mendip. There was only 1 local member present. Although many local members are active cavers, using Group equipment and Cottage facilities, they seem reluctant to attend Members weekends, work weekends, Agm's and social functions. Other members would like to get to know them better. We must try to reach them and it was suggested that we hold a mid-summer barbecue or other similar social event so that the different 'factions' can get together.

SPARE COTTAGE KEYS Someone proposed that we have a spare set of keys kept in the tackle-store for impromptu guests. It was thought that if Cotag fobs fail, members would borrow them. Mary Cox has a spare set for emergencies only. Richard keeps a spare set and is happy to arrange for them to be delivered or picked up. *Proposal failed.*

RESCUE PRACTICES Brian Snell explained that there is now a tendency towards amalgamated rescue practices with MRO and other clubs. All clubs are involved in rescues anyway and use MRO's rescue equipment (eg. re-breather, splints, Heyphone etc.) so he felt that this was the sensible way forward for everyone.

PROPOSALS TO ALTER THE CONSTITUTION AND RULES:-

9a – PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP

After much discussion the proposal was withdrawn. *To be discussed by the committee.*

9b – NEW METHOD OF CALCULATING THE QUORUM FOR THE COMMITTEE, TO AVOID BEING UNABLE TO CO-OPT SUBSTITUTE OFFICERS. *Proposal carried.*

OTHER MOTIONS:-

10A – PRIMACY OF AGM OVER COMMITTEE REGARDING CO-OPTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

After much discussion the proposal was withdrawn. *To be discussed by the committee.*

10b – NEW ELECTED NON-COMMITTEE POST RESPONSIBLE FOR GIFT AID SCHEME.

Motion carried.

10c – REINSTATEMENT OF SEASON TICKETS FOR COTTAGE FEES.

Motion carried.

DATE & VENUE OF NEXT AGM

Sat 5th April 2003, 10:30am at the Hunter's.

AGM YV'S DROPPINGS

Discussing a previous Group dinner venue:

TF: "I did like the waiter."

Whether to have MCG's 50th in 2003 or 2004:

TK: "Make it early – some of us might not last."

Circulating Ben Cooper's cottage warden report:

BC: "Can I have one?"

Asked if Norma still had shocks in the showers:

MC: "Norma doesn't shower any more."

MCG extras

COTTAGE WORK WEEKEND This will be held on the members' weekend of June 7-8th 2002. There will be a list of jobs on the cottage noticeboard. *Please come and help*

50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS I already have a list of interesting suggestions for events and activities but would like more. We aim to please members past and present, young and old. The date of the main event, the Dinner, will be announced very shortly. *Yvonne - Editor*