

# NEWS

Mendip Caving Group Newsletter

Number 309 – September 2002

[www.m-c-g.org.uk](http://www.m-c-g.org.uk)

## The Secret Meet in Shipham Quarry

*By Tim Francis*

On our regular drives across the hill to the dig at Carcass we'd become intrigued by the lump of limestone between Tynings Farm and the Shipham Road that apparently contained no caves. In particular there are a couple of obvious scars (quarries) that must have intercepted caves at some time or other. A quick scan of 'Barry Stanton' revealed that was indeed a fragment of cave still available to the caver. And with a length of 150 feet Shipham Gorge Quarry Cave was well within the acceptable limits of an MCG collector's item. So Richard and I went over one weekend for a gander and the entrance was surprisingly easy to spot. It can be seen from the quarry entrance although give it a couple more years and the newly planted trees will have obscured the view. The tricky part is that one can only access the cave by descending from the upper level of the quarry as it lies half way down the cliff face. We were easily able to scramble around the quarry side and noted several large boulders that looked like ideal belay candidates.

So a little Mendip meet was planned for the July members' weekend in order that a few more people could attend. We weren't sure of the access arrangements so this was kept on a 'need to know' basis. The massed hoards milling around the quarry entrance might attract the attentions of a few undesirables. The beginning of July was unusually hot and sunny so our walk up to entrance was a struggle against heat exhaustion. But were soon merrily wrapping tethers and ropes around those two boulders we'd spotted previously. The tricky part is actually placing the ladder in the right place, as you can't see the entrance from the top. So a member of the party was sent away round the quarry to shout out "left a bit", "right a bit". This also proved an invaluable technique for assisting in the life-lining process, as communication between the cliff face and the top is impossible.

The climb down is rather exposed so yours truly was volunteered for the first descent and gardening job. With cameras at the ready the others despatched me over the edge. The views across to Cheddar Reservoir and the levels beyond are absolutely fantastic although the photos do not really do it justice. As I made my way down only small amounts of rock needed to be gardened although debris continued to rain down on us as each person climbed up and down. Apparently the cave was explored by the UBSS in 1977 and I suspect that hardly anyone, if anybody at all, has been back since. 55 feet down the cliff face the entrance was met. To actually get inside the cave required a spot of penduluming and some careful crawling to avoid dislodging any of the loose rock at the cave mouth. The whole of the entrance is extremely shattered, a result of quarry blasts, so extreme care should be taken. Once I was settled in the cave I rigged up a handline that assisted the approach. The others quickly followed although we always left a couple of people on the surface at any one time.

The cave itself proved to be a rather pleasant phreatic tube that ascended gradually into the hill. It was mostly crawling sized but quickly closes down at a choke. Presumably this would continue on beyond as the end is still a long way below the floor of the upper level of the quarry. We had a crowbar and hammer but the choke looks reasonably long term. The only side passage is a muddy tube on the right, which extends steeply until it becomes too tight. A couple of rocks that restricted the view were removed but it is definitely too tight beyond. This passage has a small trickle of water so everyone returned with a smattering of mud. Finally just inside the entrance is a small aven that is blocked with rocks about 15 feet up. There is definitely a way on here that might repay a few hours of vertical digging.

And so the exit. This proved extremely entertaining as the rope was forever getting stuck. I recall that Ben had to make a couple of desperate moves to retrieve the end so thank God we had brought a few sets of cowstails. But despite the three-way life-line calls it didn't take us too long to exit. Indeed our main concern was to see a suspicious car pull up at the lay-by by the quarry entrance. I ran back down to the car and fortunately it had not been broken into. So there you have it. A cave with fantastic views, half way down a cliff – who needs Portland?

Team: Peat Bennett, Richard Carey, Ben Cooper, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh

## 2002/03 MCG CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

| DATE         | AREA     | EVENT                               | CONTACT       | TELEPHONE    |
|--------------|----------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Memb W/Es    | Mendip   | Digging in Carcass Cave             | Bill Chadwick | 0118 9691812 |
| 27-29 Sept   | Monmouth | BCRA Caving Conference              |               |              |
| 5 October    | Mendip   | Half-yearly Forum                   | John Pudduck  | 01749 870383 |
| 5 October    | Mendip   | Skittles and Beer evening           | Linda Milne   | 01344 774589 |
| 26 October   | Mendip   | Longwood/August MRO rescue practice | MRO           |              |
| 2 November   | Mendip   | Quiz Night                          | Linda Milne   | 01344 774589 |
| 7 December   | Mendip   | MCG Christmas Dinner                | Linda Milne   | 01344 774589 |
| Spring 2003  | Mendip   | Archaeology walk                    | Yvonne Rowe   | 01524 762664 |
| Jul/Aug 2003 | Slovenia | MCG caving holiday (2003)           | Yvonne Rowe   | 01524 762664 |

### GROUP INFORMATION

|                            |   |  |        |
|----------------------------|---|--|--------|
| <b>Accommodation</b>       | Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol BS407XW<br>Tel: 01761 462797 Grid Ref ST51475606 OS 1:50,000 sheet 182   |  |        |
| <b>Weekly Meetings</b>     | At The Hunters Lodge, Somerset, on Tuesdays about 10.00 pm  |  |        |
| <b>Cottage Fees</b>        | MCG members, members children, SWCC, NPC  |  | £1.50  |
| per night                  | Guest clubs and member's guests   |  | £2.50  |
| <b>Season Ticket</b>       | Available to members only   |  | £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<br>NPC bookings via Nic Blundell, tel: 01203 713849 (hm) or 01203 838940 (wk)<br>SWCC bookings via Ian Middleton, tel: 01703 736997 or email <a href="mailto:ian_m@tcp.co.uk">ian_m@tcp.co.uk</a> |  |        |

### THE 2002 - 2003 COMMITTEE

|                             |               |   |   |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---|---|
| <b>Secretary</b>            | John Pudduck  | 1, Manor Farm Cottages, The Green, Easton, Somerset, BA5 1ED    | Tel: 01749 870383<br><a href="mailto:secretary@m-c-g.org">secretary@m-c-g.org</a>                 |
| <b>Treasurer</b>            | Richard Carey | 9 Greenvale Drive, Timsbury, Bath, BA2 0HW                      | Tel: 0117 9860945<br><a href="mailto:richardmcarey@hotmail.com">richardmcarey@hotmail.com</a>     |
| <b>Tackle Master</b>        | Brian Snell   | 38, Serpentine Road, Fareham, Hampshire, PO16 7EB               | Tel: 01329 238341<br><a href="mailto:brian.snell@dsia.com">brian.snell@dsia.com</a>               |
| <b>Caving Secretary</b>     | Tim Francis   | Flat 6, 16 Lambert Avenue, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4QR            | Tel: 0208 392 2572<br><a href="mailto:T.Francis@research-int.com">T.Francis@research-int.com</a>  |
| <b>Cottage Warden</b>       | Ben Cooper    | Granville, Circle Hill Road, Crowthorne, Berks, RG45 6RN        | Tel: 01344 776306<br><a href="mailto:cottage@m-c-g.org.uk">cottage@m-c-g.org.uk</a>               |
| <b>Editor</b>               | Yvonne Rowe   | 'Abingdon', 11 Church Hill, Arnside, Lancs., LA5 0DB            | Tel: 01524 762664<br><a href="mailto:yvonne.rowe@btopenworld.com">yvonne.rowe@btopenworld.com</a> |
| <b>Recorder / Librarian</b> | Jane Baldwin  | Brooklands Cottage, Twyn Lane, Glascoed, Nr Usk, Gwent, NP4 0UB | Tel: 01495 785361<br><a href="mailto:PJOandA@aol.com">PJOandA@aol.com</a>                         |
| <b>Social Secretary</b>     | Linda Milne   | 40 Harts Leap Close, Sandhurst, Berkshire, GU47 8PB             | Tel: 01344 774589<br><a href="mailto:Linda.Milne@btinternet.com">Linda.Milne@btinternet.com</a>   |

### Non-committee Posts


|                               |                             |                               |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Rescue Warden</b>          | Vacant                      |                               |
| <b>Conservation Officer</b>   | Peat Bennett                | 01223 2406333                 |
| <b>Examiners</b>              | Wayne Hiscox<br>Mike Lovell | 01749 671282<br>0118 966 3747 |
| <b>Gift Aid Administrator</b> | Malcolm Cotter              | 01784 252643                  |

# MCG News

## ADDRESS CHANGES:

### Richard Carey:

 [richardmcarey@hotmail.com](mailto:richardmcarey@hotmail.com)


 0117 9860945

### Clive Maybury:


 [clive\\_maybury@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:clive_maybury@blueyonder.co.uk)

### Jacky Gibbons / Ankerman:

I have changed my name from Jacky Gibbons to Jacky Ankerman (my maiden name!)

 48, Deverill Road, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 9QR

 [jacky.ankerman@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jacky.ankerman@blueyonder.co.uk)

 01985 212690


### Lee Hawkswell:

 [lee.hawkswell@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:lee.hawkswell@blueyonder.co.uk)

### Gary Woollacott:

 [woollacott@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:woollacott@ukonline.co.uk)

### Michael Gould:

 28 Loxley Road, Wandsworth, London SW18 3LJ

 [mgould@orchestream.com](mailto:mgould@orchestream.com)



*Forty-two members are receiving their newsletter by email, a saving to the Group of £16.38 per issue (19p post, 10p print, 10p plastic envelope). Assuming 10 issues per year, the saving will be £163.80. If we can get all 92 members with email addresses onto this system, we can save almost £400 per year.*



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Howdy from Texas, my dear friend Yvonne! It's me, Victoria (Arbizu) from Spain. Remember? Yesterday I got the last issue of the MCG newsletter and was thrilled to read all about the MCG and our Jubilee anniversary in 2004. Well, I want to join you all, please. I will make sure to come over for the long weekend of March 27. How does it sound? If you need any help from me, I will be happy to do it. No way!! Look forward to hearing from you!

Viqui :)

Hope life in the UK is treating you well. Nicholas is now 8 months, and full of energy and fun - he's a very happy baby.

I have been caving once this year, to do a survey trip in Breathing Cave, Bath County West Virginia. It was a nine hour trip including the hike up to the entrance. There were 15 of us split into 5 teams of 3 surveyors. Our group surveyed about 400' of mainly canyon type passage, which got muddy and loose near the back. We are re-surveying to update the old 1960's map, and to check out lots of missing leads etc.

I remember promising an article about caving over here some time ago, but life has caught up with me at present. Maybe I'll get something together by Christmas.

Best wishes to all at the MCG - and hope to see y'all sometime soon.

**Pat (Paddy) Newman**

Hi Yvonne.

From the latest newsletter I see that you're organising a trip to Slovenia for next year. You will recall that Denise and I spent two weeks there a couple of years ago, as indeed did Sue and Mike Haselden. If you would like me to I'll put you in touch with the appropriate person in SMCC who organised their event which was a family camp as part of their 50th Anniversary celebrations. However, as a useful start you should obtain a copy of "Cave Guide - Slovenia" by Ian Bishop (1997). It cost £9.00 and was probably bought from Tony Jarrat, but I notice the inclusion of an email address on the title page [cavman@globalnet.co.uk](mailto:cavman@globalnet.co.uk). It offers much more than caving information and would be recommendable at twice the price.

A visit to Slovenia is really worth some effort to get right; I can safely say that anyone who goes there will long remember the trip. Plan to visit the main city, Ljubljana, early in the stay in order to get the large-scale maps you'll need for caving and walking activities. If you decide to stay at the Speleocamp sit at Laze (just south off the main motorway, near Postojna) the warden Frank Facija is a mine of information; and the campsite is very good too.

Early booking of the most popular guided visits is essential, and you might think about investing in a suitable inflatable boat or two.

**Best regards, TonyK**

## Library Additions

Over the last few months I have not been able to do much apart from keeping up with filing of exchange newsletters. However, there have been a few new books which are listed below.

**Hans-sur-Lesse et ses Grottes (1989)** has no less than seven authors and contains over 100 photographs by *Guy Deflandre*. One of the chapters reproduces some lovely old prints and posters of the caves, but there are also descriptions of formations, exploration history, cave development etc. The text is French but for those of us who have to struggle with the language the pictures are worthwhile in themselves.

**Caves and Karst of Peninsula Malaysia (2001)**. *Liz Price* has produced a register of cave and limestone sites with a brief description and reference to associated publications, if available. There are the usual chapters on history of exploration and a three-page bibliography. Obviously a useful starting publication if visiting the area.

**Beneath our feet – the caves and limestone scenery of the north of Ireland (2001)** by *Pamela and Tim Fogg*, published by the Environment and Heritage Service in Belfast. The publication is a result of the Earth Science Conservation Review of Caves and Karst and costs a very reasonable £10.00.

It is not a cave guide book, but contains much of interest to the visiting caver. The chapter "Our limestone scenery above and below" is arranged area by area so is easy to use; geological map extracts and cave location maps are useful and the whole book is well illustrated with photos and diagrams. Our copy is soft-back so I hope it will stand up to the use which it deserves!

**Moors, Craggs and Caves** by *E.A. Baker* (a facsimile of the 1903 edition) is a useful addition to the library. It contains classic accounts of early walking, climbing and caving in the Peak District, including Speedwell, Peak cavern, Blue John Mine and Bagshawe Cavern.

Closer to home is the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of **Box Freestone Mines (2002)** by *Cotham Caving Group*. This is an attractive little A5 publication produced to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the original "Box Stone Mines". *Part 1* includes chapters on history, the military, Bath Stone today, geology and methods of working.

*Part 2* is a brief description of routes followed by a bibliography and glossary. Readers are recommended to use Shepton Mallet Caving Club's surveys for underground trips but this very readable companion book will lead to a much greater appreciation of the mines and a more interesting trip.

The club has purchased **O.S. Explorer Map Sheets 141, 142 and 153 (Mendip Hills West, Mendip Hills East and Weston-super-Mare & Bleadon Hill)**. These are to replace maps which appear to have gone walkabout. Please will you make sure these ones stay in the library as they are reference copies for use on Mendip.

**Wessex Journal, (Vol 26 No 280, June 2002)** contains an article by Jim Hanwell entitled Memories of Twin T's, a discussion. It starts with Luke Devenish's blasting during 1969, continues through NHASA's digging operations in 1985 and ends in 1992 when the dig was closed down. Jim includes schematic drawings showing his interpretation of the development of the cave - red sandstone pebbles found in the bottom of the dig were tested and are typical of Mercia Mudstone sediment which had buried Mendip in late Triassic times. Twin T's was associated with a neptunian dyke to a depth of more than 40m. A number of Mendip caves are thought to have been developed along neptunian dykes; for a lucid description of them, read the Wessex article.

**Axbridge C. G. Journal (June 2002)** contains a couple of articles on the history of mining at Shute Shelve cavern and reports from Mick Norton and Doug Harris on digging at Carcass Cave. (*How about writing some more for the MCG News too, Mick and Doug?*)

*Joan Goddard*

## CAVE NEWS

**Hunters Lodge Inn Sink** 'went' on the Wednesday night of 17<sup>th</sup> July. Tim, Julie and Richard popped down on Sunday (the third trip in). The diggers have found circa 150ft of stooping / walking sized passage that descends gently down the Mendip bedding. It's well decorated with stalactites and flowstone. Uphill is a boulder choke which reaches almost to the surface and lies just underneath the edge of the Hunter's car park extension. Down-slope ends in a roof collapse but draughts reasonably well. It's quite 'clayey' so undoubtedly the dig will get muddy very quickly. The survey and photography was knocked off late Sunday afternoon.

**Swildon's Mud Sump** is now open again. Alison Moody and chums have rigged up a complicated bucket and drainage system. Tim and Co. went through to Shatter Pot and beyond. But be warned there is BAD AIR below Shatter Pot. They were forced to turn back when breathing became extremely laboured. Presumably, because Mud Sump has been closed for 3½ years, the system hasn't been ventilating properly.

**GB Cavern** - Parking is available at Charterhouse Farm (turn left just prior to GB gate). Leave £1.00 at the farmhouse and make sure you park off the driveway (to allow access for cows and tractors). You can get to GB by cutting across the fields by the derelict stone barn (on the left as you return towards the road). It seems that no one has been parking here recently following an occasion when the farmer, annoyed after someone left a gate open and let all his cows out, had "words" with the offending cavers. However, when MCG members approached him recently he said he was very happy for people to park there when visiting GB – so long as you do so sensibly and **CLOSE THE GATES**.

**MRO Rescue Practice** - The current plan for this year was to join in on an MRO organised event in Longwood. As we have done two in there already Brian Snell was not sure that we would get many takers for this one. It is likely that those interested just need to turn up on the day.

**MCG Rescue Warden** - Due to issues with his job which will keep him occupied for most of the Autumn, Brian Snell will be unable to spend any time organising the rescue practise this year. He thinks it is probably time that someone else took over anyway so he has therefore resigned as the MCG Rescue Warden. *Any volunteers to replace him?*

**Carcass Cave** - Bill and the rest of the diggers are at the dig on every members' weekend. All members are welcome to join them, either on a digging trip or just as tourists. See MCG newsletter no.307, page 3 for a map showing the entrance. If you haven't got that newsletter, the entrance is located at grid reference 42374.55265



Left: Entrance to Carcass Cave

Right: Digging In Carcass





I think you'll agree that he's made a splendid job of it.

## THROUGH THE KEYHOLE - WHO WOULD CAVE IN A COTTAGE LIKE THIS?

Many thanks to Brian Snell, who not only bought the quarry tiles for the porch, but gave up several weekends to prepare the screed and lay the tiles.

The quarry tiles were being sold off as end of range for about £40. There was no point in trying to match the existing tiles, so he made the decision to aim for a contrast. As we have currently chosen a "Changing Rooms" style of decor *darlings*, he bought red tiles to go with the terracotta walls and blue skirting/architrave. All that's left now is a bit of skirting board and the porch is done. At last.

## MCG REUNITED

Some of you will know about [www.friendsreunited.co.uk](http://www.friendsreunited.co.uk). This website began life as a way for old school friends to contact each other again. I emailed them a while ago to suggest that they expand the site to provide a similar facility for members of clubs/societies to make contact again. I obviously wasn't the only one who wanted this facility, as the website has now been expanded with this exact feature. I have therefore registered MCG on their site. There is no category for caving groups, so I have listed MCG under Charities and voluntary bodies/southwest england/somerset/mendip caving group. You may wish to visit the website and add your details.

I also posted a notice about the 50th dinner in 2004, and had a reply in less than 24 hours from Genie Hancock about Peter Hancock and Gordon Peckham. Sadly, Peter passed away in 1998. Hopefully, word will spread and more former members will turn up. *Martin Rowe*

## MORE EXCUSES NOT TO GO CAVING!

Linda is doing a good job as Social Secretary. The weekend of 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> August was most enjoyable, even though the rounders match didn't happen due to:

- Not many people were fit enough to play - Simon and Joan couldn't, nor others)
- It rained
- We couldn't find the rounders bat and ball!
- There was welly throwing instead.
- Mick Norton and his lovely daughter Kathleen went on a long cycle ride and got very dirty.
- There were a couple of caving trips on Saturday.

Brian and Keith worked really hard all day Saturday to lay the tiles in the front porch. It looks great!

However, the BBQ and accompanying salad went down well (in both senses of the words). And all that from only about 13 people (I think). Here are a few more excuses not to go caving:

- October 5<sup>th</sup> pm - Half yearly meeting at the cottage
- October 5<sup>th</sup> 8pm - Beer and Skittles Wagon and Horses Doultling Beacon. Private room upstairs, with own bar. Bar food is optional (service may be slow as it is a Saturday night). Food is also available in the restaurant downstairs but reservations are essential (01749 880302). No transport provided as numbers attending are not known until the night.
- November 2<sup>nd</sup> - Quiz night at the cottage
- December 7<sup>th</sup> - Christmas dinner at Cox's Mill