

# MCG News

Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

Number 316  
November 2003

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

Founded 1954

## Macondo Caving Group

By Richard Carey

I have been in Argentina just over a month now and would like to tell to tell you how things are.

I arrived in Buenos Aires on time after a 16-hour flight. It now stops in Sao Paolo and is no longer a direct flight. You can take 32kg of luggage with BA but only 15 on the flight on to Mendoza so I had to pay excess baggage. It wasn't much given the current exchange rate of 4.5 pesos to the pound. I had to stay overnight as it is winter here and the bus was full of skiers going to Las Leñas. I arrived in Malargüe to find that it was warm and windy. Tim can tell you about the dust storms but they are worse this time of year, its like abrasive fog. The warm wind was due to La Zonda, which comes in off the Pacific Ocean and dumps its rain in Chile. It doesn't always blow but when it does, it is very pleasant apart from the dust that is. I understand that Europe is experiencing some extremely hot weather and it is unseasonably warm here too. There is very little snow and the ski season is likely to close sooner than normal. The sky is blue, the sun is hot and the days are warm; not quite T-shirt weather but I don't need to wear my RAB jacket during the day.

**Cueva Pequenco 1.** This is about 5 miles from Malargüe on the way to Los Castillos de Pincheira so Reuben Cepeda and a new member Eduardo and I cycled some dusty roads to reach the cave. It is a very small cave only 120 feet long but was interesting in the fact that it is a limestone cave and is so close. The entrance is only 10ft from an old quarry so the most notable feature is boulders that have fallen from the roof. It is called Cueva Pequenco 1 because they believed there must be others in the area. We had a surface exploration but did not find anything.

**Cueva del Tigre** an old MCG favourite. Transport here is a real problem and fuel is expensive. Malargüe is quite small and the nearest city is over 100 miles away so you don't really need a car. The distances here are huge and most people travel by bus but we managed to persuade Eduardo's father (20 pesos worth of fuel from club funds - treasurer beware - seemed to do the trick) to take us. I descended the 5m entrance using a ladder while the others used SRT. We had to use the old hangers because Reuben forgot to bring a spanner. A complete rummage was had, even to the point of excavating the sand at the end to push into a small chamber, with a continuation 5" high. Going to need some digging here because there is a substantial draught but bring facemasks as it is very dusty work.

We had a small rescue practice on the way out to assist a tired caver at the entrance pitch. Eduardo's father passed the time making a fire and drinking *mate*. We had a look around the surface to see if we could find where the draught was entering but to no avail. It will need to be well organised with plenty of bodies for a proper search.

I have now bought a Renault 12 with a gas conversion. The bureaucracy has to be experienced to be believed but unfortunately, it does have a certain logic to it. Everything has to be verified, engine number, chassis, address and so on. It makes sense although it is time consuming and expensive, well at least 250 pesos. No signature on the VRN and that's it here. As I said, it runs on gas and to try it out, myself, Reu-

### From the Editor

*At last!* I hear you say. Seems ages since we had a newsletter. It is, and I apologise. You don't usually get one for August due to members having their holidays, but because of the EGM and the fact that I did have a few bits and pieces, a newsletter *was* published. Since then stuff has been trickling in (thank you), but I have been going through the unbelievable stresses and extra work that an Ofsted inspection brings about and my life has not been my own for a few weeks. Thankfully, it is all over now and life is returning to normal once again. We've even managed to get up on the hills again, just catching the last of the lovely Autumn weather (it seems to be going on for ever up here in the Lakes). There is quite a mixed bag of articles and snippets in this newsletter so I hope you find it worth waiting for... and that the postal strike doesn't add further delays.

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**MCG doings...****On the move:**

**Mike Gould** is spending a year travelling, beginning in Nepal, then SE Asia before moving on to Australia. He can still be contacted at:

✉ [mike@meph.net](mailto:mike@meph.net) or  
✉ 2 Druids Close, West Parley, Ferndown, Dorset, BH22 8RU

**Pete Mullins** new details are

✉ 66 Barn Meadow Close, Church Crookham, Fleet, Hants GU52 0YB  
☎ 01252 626285  
✉ [Peter.MULLINS@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:Peter.MULLINS@networkrail.co.uk)

Coincidentally, **Marcus Ward**

has moved out of Barn Meadow Close to  
✉ 1 Garrow Drive, Lymington, Hants SO41 9LP  
☎ 01590 677541

**Doug Harris** new e-mail

✉ [dougharris31@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dougharris31@yahoo.co.uk)

**Barry Clements** new details

☎ 01293 511749  
✉ [bazclements@aol.com](mailto:bazclements@aol.com)

**Vacant committee post**

Tim Francis has said that he is willing to fill the vacant post of Recorder/librarian. Problem is, he is currently the Caving Secretary and can't hold two posts - only women are capable of multi-tasking!

Assuming Tim's resignation is accepted, he will become Recorder/librarian at the next committee meeting.

This means that the Group now requires a volunteer to fill the post of Caving Secretary. (This is not an onerous post as not many MCG members cave nowadays!) Nominations to any committee member please.

ben, Eduardo and a novice called Matias decide we would go to **Poti Malal**.

The plan was to go to San Agustin first and then Federacion and a quick shuftie in Miranda. Best laid plans and all, we went to Miranda. Even though it is the driest part of the year, the resurgence was still flowing. I kitted up Mendip style and we entered. The stream wasn't that cold, its amazing the difference a fleece makes and we made good progress. Unfortunately, it was all too much for Matias and he and I turned back at the Mud Bath we encountered in February. It was his first trip after all. Quite a baptism! He did enjoy it though and will begin some training. Reuben and Eduardo continued while Matias and I enjoyed the sunshine. They pushed on to the bitter end and found the pile of stones that Tim had left when we discovered the cave.

Basically, the cave ends with a small stream entering on the left in a small chamber. Reuben the "espeleoloco" had a look at the stream and managed to push it a bit but only reached a small cascade, which will need a bit of persuasion to continue. However, on the right was a low continuation which yielded to his perseverance, and a chamber some 3m high, 3m wide, and perhaps 5m long. Two leads were followed. One at high level, which quickly closes down and one a low level that continues but will need enlarging for anyone bigger. Work will continue. The cost of the gas for the 180km round trip was 6.5 pesos, less than £1.50. No wonder gas cars are so popular!

**Cueva Las Salinillas** A gypsum cave about 1hour from Malargüe in the direction of San Rafael near El Sosneado. It's a 45 minute walk from where the track becomes too sandy for the car to continue, near an old quarry. It has a sizeable entrance depression and there were some caving paintings, now obscured by graffiti. A short drop reveals a large chamber (20m by 20m by 5m high) with some flowstone. The remarkable thing about this chamber is that there are some large phreatic tubes heading towards the surface. These were explored only to end in chokes. One was impossible to enter as it was in the roof.

The way on was a descent through boulders and some fairly tight squeezes to yield yet another chamber (10m by 5m by 5m high) with a lake. There were some very nice formations here with stalactites to compete with the best. There were even some columns below the water level. It remains unsurveyed and we will return. *Chau.*

**Another breakthrough in Carcass**

By Tim Francis

Carcass went another 8m at the weekend of 11th/12th October which takes the length to 130m+ and depth 25m. The current way on is a sand filled rift right on the fault. Digging is extremely pleasant - dry, sandy and spacious - and there is still a reasonable draught.

Mick Norton, Doug Harris and Allan Gray pushed into a nice bit of phreatic passage up-slope from the scaffolded shaft. (That's the bit we were digging at the other weekend for those that were there). There are some fine ochre deposits in there and great passage cross section. I was really surprised, as I was expecting a void in the choke but its actually an entirely separate piece of passage. There are indications that the passage continues down-slope but I think it would probably connect with the newer passage lower down. It might be worth a rummage if anyone ever has nothing to do and perhaps that small phreatic tube on the left would be worth excavating.

We (myself, Mick and Linda) dug at the end of the usual dig on Sunday. Shifted a shed-load of spoil and it is draughting quite well. We've back-filled the ledge at Bi-Curious that was emptied out a few weeks ago, but I've left the hole into Bi-Curious open. The next trip should be a doddle. The floor is just more of the sandy ochre stuff and you can almost crouch at the dig face which is large and pleasant.

## Caving then and now

For those who remember Sonya Carruthers from the early days of MCG, you will be pleased to know that she has been in touch with Linda Milne by email from overseas. She writes:

I did a fair amount of rope-work in Virginia and West Virginia where the caves are larger, deeper, and much drier than those in the Mendips. Probably I could still rappel using two carabiners, or prussik with three short ropes cunningly knotted with one-way knots. Glimpses of climbers on TV suggest that fancy gadgets in bright colours now replace the simple gear. Clothing, too. Climbing attire seems to be skin-tight and bright now. We wore boiler suits over several layers of warmth, firmly tied with string at the ankles. The latter was a safety precaution. If a low or narrow passage proved after all to be impassable, it was usually necessary to back out. If the legs of the boiler suit were not tied to the ankles, they could ride up as one squirmed backward. The bunched cloth thickened the leg area, so one could get stuck, unable to move forward or backward.

Modesty in those long-ago days was not a problem. When we changed, we simply turned our backs on one another and didn't look. No need to find a clump of bushes. The clubhouse then was co-ed, with a row of beds along each side of the long wall of the building. Again, no problem. What brings the thought of modesty to mind? Is this a problem nowadays? Many social attitudes have changed since the late 50's, and I'd be interested in how they have affected caving. Are there more women in the sport now? I think I was the only woman member then, though Malcolm's journal could tell us that with certainty. Perhaps the article you mention could touch on our changing social mores and their effect on our sport. *Best regards, Sonya*

## Public Liability Insurance

With this newsletter you will find a copy of the minutes of the recent EGM held to discuss the forthcoming changes in Public Liability insurance. You may also be aware that as of 31<sup>st</sup> October the Group and its members will no longer have the insurance cover that we have benefited from through membership of the BCRA.

In the past, you have been covered for Public Liability as part your MCG membership fee. However, at the April 2003 AGM, a motion was passed to separate out the insurance element from the Group membership fees.

Unfortunately the Group can no longer purchase block cover for its members, so it will now become the responsibility of the individual to insure themselves. We hope that shortly, a suitable policy will be available for individuals, and will forward any information as it becomes available. *Lee Hawkswell*

## Yak cheese, chocolate cake and mountains

Tim forwarded me an e-mail from Mike Gould who is currently in Nepal. Mike says,

"Just a quick note to say that despite being threatened by Maoist kids with hand grenades, attacked by leaches, enduring the worst bus journey on earth, walking for 3 weeks, eating mountains of fried potato and yak cheese and attempting to breathe at 5.5km above sea level. I'm still alive and considerably fitter than when I left. Oh, and I have a big intrepid wild-man beard."

An interesting account of his adventures, with pictures of mountains, yaks and video clips can be found at <http://mike.meph.net>. (Ed: and it's worth a look.)

### Earwig in on...

...the committee meetings held August, September and October

**Central heating:** As the Group wants a warmer cottage in winter, the storage heaters are being upgraded and heating extended to more rooms. As there are now more heaters than before, a timer system has been added so that only half the heaters are on at any one time (in effect, two lots of Economy 3½)... **Increasing the electrical supply:** As this would cost about £4000 it is not being pursued... **Loft insulation:** The committee have agreed to proceed with additional loft insulation... **Shed guttering:** Following the renovation of the shed, guttering will now be added... **Payphone:** Calls to 118xxx numbers are now barred.

### Gift Aid

Malcolm Cotter has successfully claimed £786.94 for the Group under the Gift Aid Scheme. Our thanks go to Malcolm.

As a charity, MCG is entitled to a 28% tax reclaim from the Inland Revenue on every £1 given by members who are UK taxpayers. If you have not yet Gift Aided your subs, the Group is unable to reclaim the £8.40 you paid in taxes and you should contact Malcolm now, before your subs fall due again, to complete a Gift Aid form.

## Cottage Doings

**Cottage maintenance:** Following her recent retirement, Joan Goddard can now visit the cottage midweek. Needless to say, there is no one else at the cottage so she can get lots of work done! So far she has sorted some stuff in the library, and got a bit carried away with domesticity too - she cleaned the downstairs windows (and some of the upstairs) which meant she saw the state of the window sills, so sanded them down and applied some wood stain hoping it'll keep the weather out for the winter months. Thanks Joan!

Perhaps this is the answer to all our problems. The generation that built the cottage is now retiring so they have plenty of time on their hands. This means they can do all the cottage maintenance and cleaning for us! After all it was their idea to build it in the first place!!!

Seriously, though. Maintenance and cleaning of the cottage is everyone's responsibility and should not be left to the few like Joan.

**Furniture maintenance:** We may soon have a fine new table to christen - Mike Norton has offered to make a new wooden table for the cottage which will seat more people. I have been led to believe that it might be ready for the Christmas dinner?

## Extracts from the MCG log

By Joan Goddard

**02.08.2003 - Carcass Cave (Ben Cooper, Fiona Crozier, Tim Francis, Lee Hawkswell).** Put in 7 hilties. Pretty promising but will need plenty more to reach the crawl at the bottom. Big draught. *(TF)*

**02.08.2003 - Upper Flood (Tim Francis + 3 Cerberus).** Tourist trip. Air 12°, Water 15°. Lavatory Trap nearly sumped, only 1" of air *(TF)*.

**03.08.03 - Hunters Lodge Inn Sink (Tim Francis with BEC members & others).** Very exciting! 300' breakthrough on Monday night including the top of a '100' pitch'. Spent a few hours removing huge rocks above the pitch. I had to leave by 5pm but it's definitely going to go. This will be one of Mendip's biggest caves!! *(TF)*.  
[08.08.2003 - A postscript: 60' pitch to a sump found on Monday night. Dig slopes 1-3 dug in the week - slope 2 passed to 150' of walking sized stuff. Another inlet. Downslope will need diving. We'll check this out on Sunday.]

**09.08.2003 - Carcass Cave (Pete, Tim Francis & Paul).** My Hilti-ing in Bi-curious still needs some more widening but we managed to make a start on the crawl (lost a pair of goggles, if you're passing). Can now see for 6-8' over the top of dry sand. Incredible draught which clears Hilti fumes in about one minute. I think the crawl will be diggable once we actually get into it! *(TF)*.

**10.08.2003 - Pinetree Pot (Tim Francis, Peat Bennett).** Followed a bunch of UBSS down. The sump at the dig face was open so we cleared out all the digging kit, 11 large and 3 small skips. Oh! And the dig mascot - a gnome brought by Ralph in 1992 - and a plastic 'hand' from Joe (1996). The dig's still there if you want it! *(TF)*

**24.08.03 - Draenen (Peat, Julie Hesketh, Tim Francis).** Digging at Pontypool-Or-Bust. I hadn't seen the new extension which, to be honest, was the only thing urging me to go through the horrid squeeze to the dig. Water was very low in the streamway and we had a trouble free trip to the dig and no problem with the squeeze. Impressed with the new extension to chamber - well done chaps! Dug about 30 buckets out - a bit awkward as the dig goes very slightly downhill. Tim got a bit excited towards the end as we thought we were nearly reaching a bit of airspace but, alas, despite his blitzing the end of the dig all we have is more of the same - airspace above dry sandy spoil; can see ahead. Trouble-free trip back out - I was a bit knackered - first long trip post baby so not surprising really. Missed the pub. Still looks promising with a very healthy draught. *(JH)*.

**26.08.03 - Carcass Cave (Peat Bennett, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh).** Therapeutic trip after Draenen to loosen the old bones. Put another 2 Hilties to enlarge the space at the bottom of the rift, then had a go at drilling along the offending flake of rock constricting the bottom of the dig. It wasn't having any of it though so will have to return with the air chisel. The way on can be seen, which drops away at a lip. Looks like we may have to start digging downwards before we retrieve the goggles that were lost 2 weeks ago *(PB)*.

**15.09.03 - Carcass Cave (Mick Norton, Doug Harris, Biff & Duncan (from Bracknell District Caving Club with compressor and air chisel), Alan Gray (ACG)).** Pneumatic excavation at bottom of cave. Nine hours digging with compressor and air chisel running non-stop for 8 hours. Rock very very hard - perhaps one foot deeper and a foot further south but now plenty of room for a larger person to stand and we can now easily move forward or downwards. Rift seems to be 3m long and 4m high but only 125-150mm wide (a bit wider at the bottom). Looks like a little bit of void at end and bottom but no draught *(MN)*.

**20.09.2003 - Carcass Cave (Peat Bennett, Ben Cooper, Tim Francis, Doug Har-**

ris, Lee Hawkswell, Julie Hesketh, Mick Norton). All keen and thousands of drums pulled up from the bottom of the final rift. A small chamber above it has also been mostly cleared out. Perhaps 5' in depth and some forward progress achieved. A brilliant day's digging. If we get organised and put this much effort in again we will soon be in the Axbridge master system. Left when the air got scarce at 6pm (MN).

**21.09.2003 - Swildons Hole (Peat Bennett, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh).** Just to the pitch, very dry.

**22.09.2003 - Hunter's Hole (Doug Harris, Mick Norton).** SRT trip and nearly all grovels. My! What a lot of 'P' bolts! And 5 sets of 'Y' hangs. We did all the squeezes and crawls except Sanctimonious (as we have had enough CO<sub>2</sub> lately). A good trip but slow as we had not encountered this 'P' bolt set up here before (MN)

**23.09.2003 - Shute Shelve Cavern and Carcass Cave (Doug Harris, Alan Gray (ACG) and others).** Tourist trips.

**24.09.2003 - Hunter's Lodge Inn Sink (Doug Harris, Mick Norton, Tony Jarratt & others).** Down 20m ladder pitch and in to the big stuff. Very impressive. Helped collect prehistoric bones to be sent for Electron Spin Resonance dating. (MN)

**25.09.2003 - Digging (Doug Harris, Mick Norton, Alan Gray (ACG)).** 5 hours digging in 'Top Rift' which is 250m above Carcass Cave and not named yet. 35 drums out and several very large rocks. This is probably going to be very big. (MN)

**28.09.2003 - Carcass Cave (Doug Harris, Tim Francis, Mick Norton, Alan Gray (ACG)).** Not much air at the terminal rift so we dug at the bottom of the scaffold shaft. A great effort opened up a good chunk of airspace. Can see another 10 feet but it could just be an alcove under the choke. One more trip should see us in. Doug found the goggles (TF).

**28.09.2003 - Shute Shelve Cavern (Doug Harris (leader), Norma and Malcolm Cotter, Tim Francis, Mick Norton, Alan Gray (ACG)).** Malcolm and Norma's first trip in to cave, very impressive passage. Old 'fossil' system just shows what may be available in outcrops which no longer have active swallets. Shute Shelve Hill caves may have been formed by swallets derived from Old Red Sandstone and shale now eroded away from the Winscombe area. (MOC)

**10.10.2003 - Digging (Doug Harris, Mick Norton, Alan Gray (ACG)).** Digging up at ACG 'top dig' 100m higher up Shute Shelve Hill than Carcass. 50 drums out, going well- a bit of void (MN).

**11.10.2003 - Carcass Cave (See article on page 2 of this Newsletter - Ed.)**

**12.10.2003 - Carcass Cave (Tim Francis, Linda Milne, Mick Norton).** Finally got down to see what all the fuss is about. Had a look at the breakthrough and saw the ochre seam in pristine condition. Dug the floor of Bi-curious down by about 2' - tiring stuff, although I'm told this is very easy as dugs go! (LM).

## Beer and skittles

This year's half yearly was followed by a beer and skittles evening at the Waggon and Horses, Douling Beacon. The food was very good although it did take a while to arrive for some. Famous for its game dishes, Mick Norton decided to go all out and order the Wild Boar, whilst others settled for quail and partridge. As for the skittles, JP's team beat Tim's in the main team event and Joan and Lee surpassed themselves for the second year running in the Killer event. Top scorer was Keith who only just beat Mick in a close run thing.....



## Bone Hole

Work on the Bone Hole lid has been completed although the top needs to be reinforced and concreted. The metal reinforcing rods and cement need carrying up, and the site needs to be cleared of debris.

MCG has an access agreement with the land owner (The National Trust) which makes MCG responsible for access to and maintenance of this important archaeological site.

It is important that we complete the tidying up of this site. Tim Francis has agreed to co-ordinate the work, but needs people to volunteer their help. Please contact Tim on ☎ 0208 3922572

✉ [t.francis@research-int.com](mailto:t.francis@research-int.com)

## 50th Anniversary Dinner

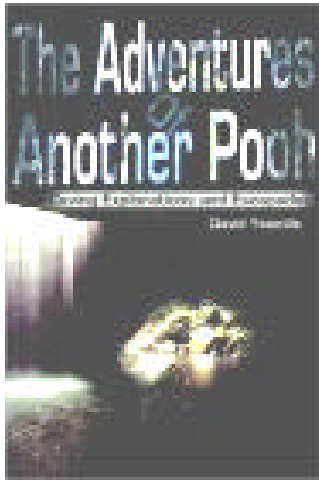
Tickets for the dinner at Coombe Lodge, Blagdon on 27th March 2004 are now available priced £25 each.



Numbers are limited, so please book early to avoid disappointment. Send a cheque payable to Mendip Caving Group, to Linda Milne, 40 Harts Leap Close, Sandhurst, Berks, GU47 8PB. Alternatively you can hand over your dosh to any committee member.

## Library Additions

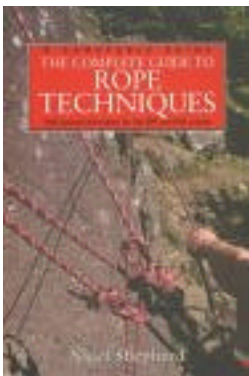
By Joan Goddard



**The Adventures of Another Pooh – Caving Explorations and Escapades** by *David Yeandle*. (2002) - This book was published after Dave (Pooh) Yeandle's death as a result of a paragliding accident in Spain in 2002. He started his caving while at school and joined Axbridge Caving Group and the BEC (where he became "The Belfry Boy" immortalised in the song of that name). He chose Leeds Uni because of its proximity to the Dales and from then on caving and cave diving became his *raison d'être*. His book relates numerous escapades and hair-raising situations. Suffice it to say that this book is an exciting read . . .

**Pennine Underground** by *N. Thornber* (revised edition 1965) - Surprisingly the club didn't have a copy of this little red book, so I was pleased when a member donated a copy to the library. It's a classic.

**Wind Cave – an Ancient World Beneath the Hills** by *Arthur N. Palmer* (2001) - This is a beautifully produced book with excellent photographs and diagrams of Wind Cave in the Black Hills of South Dakota.

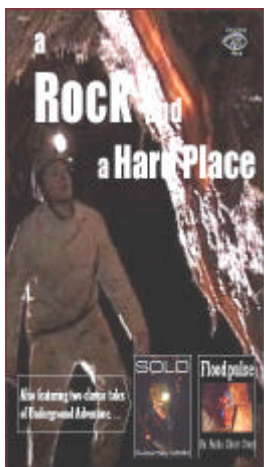


**The Complete Guide to Rope Techniques** by *Nigel Shepherd* (2001) – a book 'for climbers and mountaineers' but should be useful for cavers too.

**The Geology of the Matlock Mines** by *Trevor Ford* (2001) (produced by the Peak District Mines Historical Society and the East Midlands Geological Society) – another donation to the library. The geological information may be a bit too detailed for non-geologists but the second half of the booklet is useful with descriptions of each of the Matlock mines, often accompanied by a survey.

**Beneath the Cloud Forests – A History of Cave Exploration in Papua New Guinea** by *Howard M. Beck* (2003) – 352pp packed with descriptive text, attractively presented surveys and plenty of photos; also appendices listing major caving expeditions, deepest and longest caves and a short bibliography. I have only 'dipped into' the book but it looks to be a good read; from the photos, the caves and topography are superb with mega-dolines, big passages and pitches – and plenty of water. Perhaps someone might like to review this book for the newsletter?

**A Rock and a Hard Place – "The quarry giveth . . . The quarry taketh away"** written and directed by *Andy Sparrow*. (2003) – We hold the DVD version of this hour-long film. It is billed as 'a dramatised depiction of real events based on the recollections of two of the original explorers, Brian Prewer and Bob Whittaker and relates the discovery and subsequent partial destruction of the caves of Fairy Cave Quarry. After a short sequence explaining the historical context we are taken on a journey through the stages of discovery and exploration of Fairy Cave, Balch's, WL, Shatter and Withyhill caves. The photography is excellent and the characters become more believable as events unfold. The destruction of Balch's Cave and the decision by the quarry owner to cease quarrying is convincingly portrayed. Also on the disc is **Solo**, the 1998 film (with Brian Murlis) which attempts to explain what drives a caver to cave and **Floodpulse** (audio only), which is a short story about two cavers who meet by chance and explore a deep, wet, vertical system. I should think this DVD will be in great demand. It can also be purchased from Andy Sparrow on Video.



**Moorland Caver – a guide to the caves and windypits of the North Yorkshire Moors** by *Jerry Gibbs & Rick Stewart*. (2003). Windypits are fissure caves formed in Jurassic rocks, on or near the tops of steep valleys, by gravity pulling jointed blocks of rock away from the main mass [*they also occur in similar strata near Bath*]. The longest cave is 436m and as well as being graded for difficulty they are also graded for Entertainment Value ('I is as entertaining as a bus ride to work and V is like a night at the strippers'). If you're in the area and fancy going underground this will be a

useful little reference book (76pp plus bibliography).

**Exploring the Limestone Landscapes of Upper Wharfedale** by Phillip Murphy. (2003) Cave Studies Series No. 13. The subtitle is 'a walking, cycling and motoring guide'. I'm not sure that the recent trend in Cave Studies Series booklets to try and widen the scope to include cyclists, motorists and quote: *"the non-caver, would-be caver, the never-will-be caver and the just-plain-interested visitor"* is a wise move. (However I am happy to be proved wrong). There are short sections on geology, glaciation, cave development and mineral extraction but most of the booklet is taken up with walk and bike ride itineraries.

**Diving in Darkness** by Martyn Farr. (2003) – 126pages. Produced on high quality gloss paper and with an abundance of excellent photographs it describes cavern diving, with appendices on ice diving and wreck diving - collectively referred to as 'caving in the overhead environment'. Chapters cover the overhead environment, equipment, lights, guidelines, air management, depth considerations, stress, dive planning, techniques and emergencies. Appendices provide information on further reading, training organisations worldwide, calculating gas requirements, glossary and index. Although obviously aimed at the diving fraternity it nevertheless makes interesting and informative reading for all cavers and is a useful addition to the library.

Two A4, computer-printed publications with surveys were purchased from the Derbyshire Caving Association. **Cumberland Cavern and Wapping Mine** by John Barnatt and David Webb (2002) is divided into two sections, firstly - detailed descriptions of features of interest ([a] natural passages, speleothems and sediments [b] mineralisation and mining [c] past use of the cave), secondly - issues relevant to a Conservation Plan. **Jugholes Interpretation Pack** by Gordon Fiander and David Webb (2002). Contents have been divided into an introduction, the Lower Series, the Upper Series (with surveys), mine workings, surface features and appendices. Both publications locate, describe and explain the various features in the cave. Although some may feel this is a little OTT, the aim is 'to promote conservation through education' and the inclusion of itineraries in the Jugholes Interpretation is useful, particularly for novice groups. Reading these descriptions before a visit would make the trip much more interesting. I found Jugholes fascinating when I visited a few years ago but this publication has whetted my appetite for another trip – to see what I missed the first time!

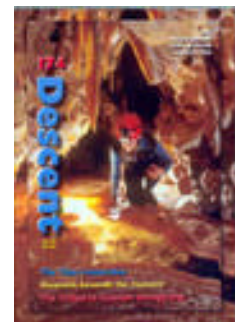
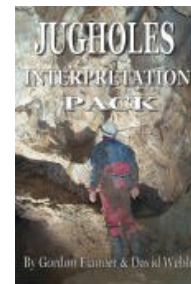
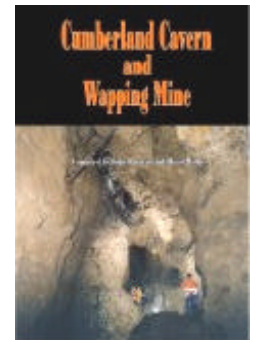
We subscribe to Descent, Cave and Karst Science, Speleology (which has replaced Caves and Caving), Subterranea Britannica, Compass Points (cave surveying) and the Cave Radio and Electronics Group Journal.

**Descent No 174 (Oct/Nov 2003)** has an interesting article 'Under the Hunters' describing the latest extension to Hunters' Lodge Inn Sink. **CREG Journal** is usually far too technical for me to understand but I am impressed by the results obtained from some of the equipment; for example (No 53, Sept 2003) an ultrasonic detector and data logger used by Stuart France of Chelsea SS for monitoring bats in Aggi suggests that a few bats fly reconnaissance sorties and then return to the roost to share information about conditions outside the cave (weather, temperature etc). If conditions are bad the bats appear not to leave the cave to hunt for food.

**National Geographic, October 2003** has an article about the Yukatan cenotes - underground pools and rivers - many of which are thought to have formed as a result of a huge meteorite striking the earth 65 million years ago. They were used by the Maya civilisation as sacred sites .

**Adventure Wales** published by the Wales Tourist Board has a short section on caving - and an atmospheric photo of the entrance shaft to Pant Mawr Pot.

Finally, for those who fancy a spot of regression, the club has been donated Enid Blyton's **Mountain of Adventure** and **Island of Adventure**, both containing politically incorrect underground sequences!



### Separated at birth?

Paul Vickers was on Mendip recently, and reports that Chris Whittle was at the cottage with a few mates.

As Paul had his camera with him he was able to send me these rather disturbing pictures.

I think Chris should get out more, he's looking rather pale these days!



Chris Whittle



Harold Steptoe

## Hidden Earth 2003

By Joan Goddard

*(MCG members present included Jackie Ankerman, Geoff Beale, Pete Bennett, Bill Chadwick, Joan Goddard, Tim Francis, Lee Hawkswell, and Julie Hesketh with Eva Rose)*

The conference had to be relocated from the planned venue half way through the year due to the late imposition of somewhat onerous conditions:

*i.e. "No fun, no food, no camping, no stomp, no beer!"*  
**Hence the prospect of no cavers!**

However, Hanley Castle High School provided an excellent alternative with three lecture rooms, video suite and large sports hall for the trade and club stands as well as SRT races, photography and art competitions and displays. The sports hall also hosted the Hidden Earth Show where models from the caving fraternity minced provocatively up and down the catwalk wearing the latest gear – but were the 6 month old twins representing the latest in caving accessories or the future market?

Saturday: With three lecture programmes running simultaneously it was difficult to choose where to go. There were talks/slide shows on *Slovenia 2003* (Imperial College Caving Club), *New Zealand cave diving*, *Digital Photography Underground* (an excellent presentation by Pete Collings-Wells using examples from his virtual tour of OFD – look at [www.ogof.net](http://www.ogof.net) if you haven't already done so, also he gave some useful tips on taking your digital camera underground), *The Lost Cave of Cheddar* (an interesting talk by Dave Irwin which suggested that the "lost cave" may in fact refer to Wookey Hole - research is ongoing), *St Cuthbert's Swallet* (a photographic tour of the cave by Pete Glanvill, to celebrate 50 years since its opening), *Dachstein 2003, Austria* by Joel Corrigan (a slide show and talk about 'Gowling Hale' and how they pushed it to a depth of 550m).

To round off Saturday's presentations there was a showing of Gavin Newman's excellent film *Wookey* which told the gripping story of its exploration using superb photography both above and below water. Another film shown was *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* by Andy Sparrow (which has been bought as a DVD for the club library).

Unfortunately, we couldn't stay for Sunday's lecture programme due to other commitments but if it was as good as Saturday then everyone will have enjoyed an excellent weekend.



## MCG Christmas Dinner 6th December 2004

This year we will be celebrating the festive season in the comfort of our own cottage.

### Menu

*Roast Turkey, with all the trimmings  
 followed by Christmas pudding.  
 Veggie option  
 Party Hats and crackers*

*Please bring your own drink*

Volunteers needed for cooking and preparation! We need to know numbers by the morning of the 6th but advance notice would be appreciated! Contact Linda for further details.



## MCG 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary News

By Linda Milne

### The ones who started it all.....

A lot of effort has gone into contacting some of our original club members, some from as far away as Canada and Brazil, many of whom will be joining us for the March Weekend. So far we have managed to contact: Richard Woollacott, Sonya Carruthers, Bob Templeman, John "Jack" Green, Margaret Fieldhouse (nee Openshaw), Paul Green, Brian Mee (Pedro), Ian Leake, Mick Brace, James Gibb, Mike Rennie, Robin Gibson, Christopher Reynolds and Ian Chandler.

### And those who kept it going.....

We would really like to contact members who were around during the 70s and 80s. Are you still in touch with any of the following members.....John Beauchamp, Gordon Lister, Andy Bear, Ian Parry, Leslie Robins, Steve Conquest, Alan Dougherty, Paul Merron, Mike Mintram, Gary Pairaudeau, Adrian Thomas, Clive and Gill Towner ? We would really like to contact them or indeed anyone else you may still be in touch with.

### Stop Press!!!!!!! A Special Guest at the Dinner

We are pleased to announce that Sid Perou will be joining us for the anniversary dinner. Sid is well known for his caving films during the 70s when he brought caving to the masses with his TV series 'Realm of Darkness'. Sid will be presenting one of his films especially for us on the night!

### Accommodation

A cottage booking sheet is now available for the dinner weekend and beds can now be booked for the weekend and the week preceding and following it. Coombe Lodge, our venue for the dinner, also offers high quality accommodation at a very good price (£25pp B &B). Rooms are starting to get booked up so get yourselves organised folks.....Contact Wayne (our cottage warden) for cottage bookings and 01761 463355 for Coombe Lodge.



### Tickets

Tickets for the dinner are now available priced £25 each. Send a cheque payable to Mendip Caving Group, to Linda Milne, 40 Harts Leap Close, Sandhurst, Berks, GU47 8PB. Alternatively you can hand over your dosh to any committee member.



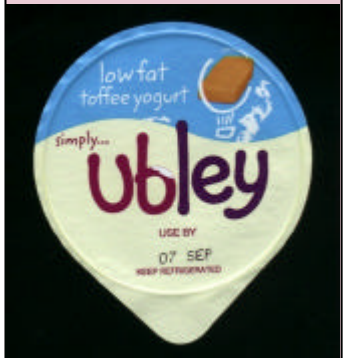
### Don't forget the caving.....

The weekend starts on Friday with the main commemorative trip down Swildons. We will be attempting an authentic 50's themed trip open to everyone. If you need gear let us know and if you have gear to lend get in touch! Contact Lee Hawkswell for details. There will also be trips available on the Sunday down Upper Flood, Fairy Cave, Shatter Cave and others. Some will require leaders and have limits on numbers so it would be a good idea to get your name down in advance, and we can lay on extra trips if need be. Contact Tim Francis or Lee Hawkswell.

Of course the whole of Mendip is at your disposal so make sure you make the most of the weekend and squeeze in a caving trip in between the socialising and drinking!

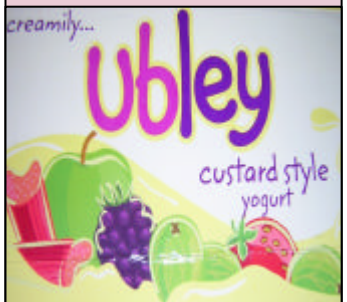
### Ubley Pot

No, not the cave but a yogurt! Now you can get down an Ubley Pot without going underground.



The yoghurt is made at Lag Farm which is half way between Blagdon and Ubley. Joan Goddard discovered these yogurts in her local shop.

Below is another pot worth getting into - full of custard! Yvonne Rowe found these in the Lake District.



At present, there are no plans for a limestone flavour, but we understand a mud-sump style yogurt will be available soon.



### Group Headquarters

Nordrach Cottage  
Charterhouse-on-  
Mendip, Blagdon,  
Bristol BS407XW  
01761 462797  
Grid Ref ST51475606

### Monthly Member's Mendip Meets

Sat 6th Dec 03  
Shute Shelve

Meet MCG Cottage at  
10.00am

### Non-committee Posts

#### Rescue Warden

Keith Knight  
01329 280386

#### Conservation Officer

Peat Bennett  
01223 2406333

#### Examiners

Ben Cooper  
01344 776306  
Mike Lovell  
0118 966 3747

#### Gift Aid

**Administrator**  
Malcolm Cotter  
01784 252643

### Booking the Cottage

Please make bookings  
for Groups (whether MCG  
or Guests) through the  
Cottage Warden to avoid  
double bookings

## GROUP INFORMATION

<b>Weekly Meeting</b>	At The Hunters Lodge, Somerset, Tuesday at about 10pm
<b>Monthly Meeting</b>	At the Group HQ on the first Fri/Sat/Sunday of the month
<b>Accommodation</b>	Available at the Group HQ (for members and guests)
<b>Cottage Fees</b>	MCG members, members children, SWCC, NPC £ 1.50
<b>(per night)</b>	Guest clubs and member's guests £ 2.50
<b>Season Ticket</b>	Available to members only £30.00
<b>Subscription 2004</b>	Full and Probationary (excluding BCRA insurance) £25.00
	Associate Members (excluding BCRA insurance) £10.00
<b>Reciprocal rights</b>	MCG members have reciprocal rights with SWCC and NPC
	Nic Blundell tel 01203 713849 (hm) or 01203 838940 (wk)
	Ian Middleton tel 01703 736997 email <a href="mailto:ian_m@tcp.co.uk">ian_m@tcp.co.uk</a>

## 2003/04 CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
Members W/Es	Mendip	Digging in Carcass Cave	Bill Chadwick	0118 9691812
26th March 2004	Mendip	Swildons 1950's style	Lee Hawkswell	01985 212690
27th March 2004	Mendip	50th Anniversary Dinner	Lee Hawkswell	01985 212690
28th March 2004	Mendip	Upper Flood	Lee Hawkswell	01985 212690
28th March 2004	Mendip	Fairy Cave	Lee Hawkswell	01985 212690
28th March 2004	Mendip	Shatter Cave	Lee Hawkswell	01985 212690
2/3/4 July 2004	Mendip	Social events	Linda Milne	01344 774589
Summer 2004	Slovenia	Summer overseas meet	Julie Hesketh	0208 340 2458

## THE 2003- 2004 MCG COMMITTEE

<b>Secretary</b>	01985 212690	<a href="mailto:secretary@m-c-g.org.uk">secretary@m-c-g.org.uk</a>
<b>Lee Hawkswell</b>	48 Deverill Road, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9QR	
<b>Treasurer</b>	01985 212690	<a href="mailto:jacky.ankerman@blueyonder.co.uk">jacky.ankerman@blueyonder.co.uk</a>
<b>Jacky Ankerman</b>	48 Deverill Road, Warminster, Wiltshire BA12 9QR	
<b>Tacklemaster</b>	01784 244479	<a href="mailto:dave.tooke@futureelectronics.com">dave.tooke@futureelectronics.com</a>
<b>Dave Tooke</b>	12 Ashdale Cl, Long Lane, Stanwell, Staines, Midx TW19 7BA	
<b>Caving Secretary</b>	0208 392 2572	<a href="mailto:t.francis@research-int.com">t.francis@research-int.com</a>
<b>Tim Francis</b>	Flat 6, 16 Lambert Avenue, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4QR	
<b>Cottage Warden</b>	01749 671282	<a href="mailto:cottage@m-c-g.org.uk">cottage@m-c-g.org.uk</a>
<b>Wayne Hiscox</b>	3 Keward, Glastonbury Road, Wells, Somerset BA5 1TR	
<b>Editor</b>	01524 762664	<a href="mailto:yvonne.rowe@btopenworld.com">yvonne.rowe@btopenworld.com</a>
<b>Yvonne Rowe</b>	Abingdon, 11 Church Hill, Arnside, Lancs., LA5 0DB	
<b>Recorder/Librarian</b>	Vacant	
<b>Social Secretary</b>	01344 774589	<a href="mailto:Linda.Milne@btinternet.com">Linda.Milne@btinternet.com</a>
<b>Linda Milne</b>	40 Harts Leap Close, Sandhurst, Berkshire, GU47 8PB	

## COTTAGE BOOKINGS

Who	Date Arrive	Date Leave	Nights	Beds
Boreatton Scouts	Fri 21/11/03	Sun 23/11/03	2	?
1st Stoke Row Scouts	Fri 28/11/03	Sun 30/11/03	2	?
1st Bookham Scouts	Fri 30/01/04	Sun 01/02/04	2	?
1st Bookham Scouts	Fri 12/03/04	Sun 14/03.04	2	?

## MINUTES OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP EGM

### HELD ON THE 11TH OCTOBER 2003 AT NORDRACH COTTAGE

*The Mendip Caving Group is a Registered Charity No. 270088*

Meeting called by a majority of the Committee and by the following five full members: Jacky Ankerman, Tim Francis, Lee Hawkswell, Wayne Hiscox, Linda Milne

Chairman: Geoff Beale  
Present: 13 full members.

**1. Apologies for Absence:** Doug Harris, Lynn Furneaux, Tony Knibbs, Denise Knibbs, Clive Maybury, Pat Newman, Martin Rowe, Yvonne Rowe, Pat Walsh

**2. Public Liability Insurance** Background: enclosed with the agenda was a document from the BCRA outlining potential changes to Public Liability insurance. The Committee drew members' attention to the fact that as of 1<sup>st</sup> November 2003 it is anticipated that all members will cease to be covered by Public Liability insurance. The EGM was called primarily to obtain the views of members as to how the Committee should proceed if this projected scenario should happen.

The Secretary outlined the background to why the BCRA may no longer be able to provide Public Liability Insurance and implications for the future. The meeting discussed two potential scenarios:

- 1.No public liability insurance will be available
- 2.Public Liability Insurance will be available but at a markedly increased cost

It was felt that in the short term *scenario 1* may be possible but in the long term a policy will be negotiated between the BCRA and its broker/an insurance company. In the short term this would have implications for caver access as the access agreements for many major caves (e.g. Charterhouse Caves, Dan-yr-Ogof, OFD, and Peak Cavern) were negotiated on the basis that cavers would have Public Liability Insurance. Inevitably there would no longer be access to some or all of these sites. Some landowners may also be concerned that they are no longer covered by the policy and restrict access to other caves. The BCRA have indicated that the landowner element of the Public Liability Insurance policy will be their priority if they are unable to negotiate a policy on the existing terms and conditions.

The meeting requested, that in the event of no public liability insurance being available via the BCRA, the Committee:

- 1.Seek out an alternative source of insurance for all Committee members and Custodian Trustees. The Charities Commission was suggested as a potential source of advice.
- 2.Advise members that they are no longer insured and recommend that they try to arrange their own insurance.

If *scenario 2* - Public Liability Insurance available but at a markedly increased cost – the meeting was informed that indi-

vidual members would be responsible for arranging their own insurance. The meeting felt that membership of the Mendip Caving Group should not be linked to whether or not a caver possessed Public Liability Insurance. It was felt that in the unlikely instance of a 'caver-on-caver' litigation the club would be not at risk. The issue of MCG cave leaders such as for Upper Flood, who are in effect acting on behalf of the club, was discussed. The Committee were directed to recommend that members took out Public Liability Insurance, and circulate information on the available BCRA policy, but not make this a requirement of membership.

**3. Co-option of Honorary Librarian/Recorder** Background: Jane Baldwin has resigned from the post and the Committee sought a replacement at the meeting. No volunteers were forthcoming at the meeting. In recognition of the relative importance of the Librarian/Recorder Committee post to the running of the Mendip Caving Group, the Caving Secretary indicated that he would be willing to resign from his post and be considered for co-option as Librarian/Recorder. The meeting agreed to this course of action and the Caving Secretary indicated that he would send a letter of resignation to the Secretary. Subsequent to the receipt and acceptance of the resignation letter at the next Committee meeting a volunteer for the position of Caving Secretary will be sought.

#### **4. Any other business**

**Shute Shelve Cavern:** Doug Harris is a key holder of Shute Shelve cavern. He wished to publicise this in the newsletter and is available to run trips once the cave reopens after the bat season.

**The Wessex Dinner:** One guest ticket was available for an MCG member to attend the Wessex dinner on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> October. The Secretary asked if anyone was interested in going. No firm commitment was made at the meeting.

**Guest dinner tickets:** At present the MCG invite two guests from the BEC, Wessex and Shepton Mallet to the annual dinner. The Wessex has indicated that they would prefer to invite only one guest from each of the clubs to their respective dinners. The BEC have not invited any guests to their dinner this year. The meeting considered the advantages of inviting two guests and the importance of maintaining strong links with our fellow clubs. After discussion the meeting directed the Committee to invite only one guest from each club as of 2004. Malcolm Cotter mentioned that he would investigate the potential for a gift aid claim against guest dinner tickets for the 50<sup>th</sup> dinner.

**Members' weekend:** It was felt that, where possible, the club should try and coincide members' weekends with major caving events on Mendip, particularly Mendip 2004. The Committee agreed to keep an eye on the caving calendar and encourage support of such events.

**Council Tax discount:** It was pointed out that clubs will be entitled to a discount of 80%, and may be considered for up to 100%, on their council tax from April 2004. At the moment, as the MCG is a charity as well as a normal caving club, we receive a discount of 80%.

**Lounge table:** Mick Norton asked whether the club would be interested in an alternative design to the existing two tables in the lounge. The meeting expressed an interest in his suggestion and he was asked to discuss the size of the table and budget with the Committee.



This year we will be celebrating the festive season in the comfort of our own clubhouse.

*Menu*

*Roast Turkey, with all the trimmings followed by Christmas pudding.*

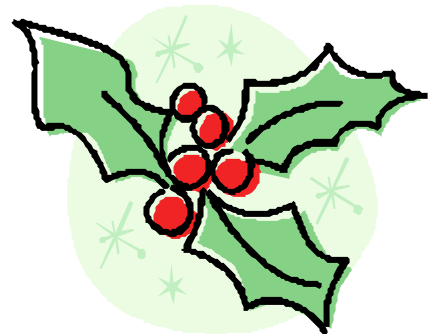
*Veggie option*

*Party Hats and crackers*

*Please bring your own drink*

Volunteers needed for cooking and preparation!

We need to know numbers by the morning of the 6th but advance notice would be appreciated!



Contact Linda for further details