

MCG News

Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group



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Founded 1954



Cave actually discovered: Argentina Report 2003

By Tim Francis

Our fourth visit to the caves of Malargüe and finally we've found something for the press to write about:

La cueva hallada sería parte de un gran sistema de ríos subterráneos Walter Aquindo (Los Andes): *La expedición anglo-argentina de espeleología que descubrió la caverna de yeso más extensa del país (Los Andes de ayer) y posiblemente de América Latina, espera poder profundizar los estudios de esta "maravilla", como ellos la definieron. A su regreso a Malargüe uno de los integrantes, Ariel Benedetto, detalló aspectos del descubrimiento que abre distintas posibilidades de investigación y se agrega a recientes hallazgos similares en las inmediaciones. El descubrimiento lo hicieron el martes 11 de febrero, los espeleólogos Tim Francis, Rubén Cepeda, Richard Carey y el mismo Ariel Benedetto durante la tercera Expedición Anglo-Argentina en el sur mendocino.*

This year our key goal was to try and push the end of Brujas as we had managed to obtain permission from the park authorities to explore it. This was to be the first time in years that cavers would be able to obtain access to the system and both the MCG and INAE were keen to take advantage of this opportunity. However we also wanted to tick off a few loose ends we left at Poti Malal last year and perhaps even explore new areas of gypsum if the weather and transportation permitted. As it turned out our two days caving at Poti Malal rather than Brujas were to be the most fruitful.

Cueva del Tigré Just a bit of housekeeping here really. Since the removal of the fixed ladder in 2002 there was no suitable rigging point for the entrance pitch apart from some extremely dodgy homemade bolts, a few shrubs and blocks of lava. I put in three 8mm bolts to allow a nice free hang for either ladder and line or SRT. A slight flaw was that I'd remembered the bolting kit but left the hangers at home. These were posted to Rubén, INAE tackle master, after our return to GB. An interesting point to note is that there were considerably more bats roosting in the cave than we had seen in all of the previous years. One can speculate that this is due to fewer disturbances to the colony as the tourist visits have been restricted by the removal of the ladder. Perhaps an annual count should be conducted to monitor trends?

Caverna de las Brujas We had previously made a cursory visit to Brujas in February 2000 as part of the Caving Conference but we had seen no more of the cave than the standard tourist route. And above ground we had made a half days visit to the valley of Chacay – Co in 2001 but only spotted one small fossil remnant. This year we wanted to look at some of the extreme ends of the cave to see whether



From the Editor

Well, almost another year over - where has the time gone? It's been a very busy year for me and for one reason or another I've only published eight newsletters instead of the usual ten.

Thanks to those of you who have regularly sent me articles and snippets. If I haven't included your article yet, I promise to do so early in the New Year. I am often pushed for space each month and have to do quite a bit of jiggling to include as much as I can.

Next year promises to be an exciting one for MCG with all our planned 50th Anniversary events, and it looks likely that we will see a lot of past members at our 50th Dinner. You can almost feel the nostalgia!

I hope you all have a good and peaceful Xmas.



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Brewing tea since '53

Friday the 14/11/03 was the 50th anniversary of Malcolm Cotter's first caving trip on Mendip. It also represented the initial stage leading to the founding of the MCG. (So, it could be said, that MCG have been "brewing tea since '53"). Malcolm celebrated with a trip down Swildons Hole, which was the cave visited all those years ago.

Malcolm says he is having a 70th birthday "party" at Priddy Village Hall on the evening of Saturday 10/01/04. No presents but members presence would be much appreciated, he says.



The more members who can come the better. A response from anyone coming would be appreciated so that the quantity of food and drink can be gauged. Malcolm can be contacted as follows:

✉ malccotter@yahoo.co.uk
 ☎ 01784 252643
 ✉ 249 Feltham Hill Road,
 Ashford, Middlesex, TW15
 1LU

Yv's droppings

TF: I've got crabs and everything.

JH: I need a man.

DT: Never return to a lit twig.

YR: We preefrood the Newsletter 3 times but mistakes still get

there was anything worth pushing. The cave is located in a sizeable chunk of Jurassic limestone and at 2500m + is currently the longest cave in Argentina.

Arcita Fossilizada In the event we only made two trips into the cave itself. The first was a scramble around the northern and eastern corners. From the entrance several fossil galleries run northwards with a strong geological control determining the passage direction. We followed the most easterly gallery which is accessed by dropping straight down in the floor below the tourist route just after the entrance chamber. This area is quite confusing but the survey is pretty good once you've worked it out. After checking out every hole we headed off down Arcita Fossilizada, which is the main route to the back end of this part of the cave. This proved to be quite a sporty rifty section and nice and sharp which made for some pleasant climbing. Richard had a good play with his new digital camera. At the far end the rift closes down at an aven but it does seem to draught well. There were a couple of climbs in the roof, which I didn't tackle so there might be a way on. On the way out we spotted a bolt and a pitch down in the floor. All our kit was back at the tents so we didn't descend this but it's not on the survey. The national park guides at Brujas reckon that there is connection between this and the next rift at Chimenea de Arcilla.

Sala de la Madre This must be the best tourist trip underground in Argentina. The route into the Western part of the cave is via a nice tube on the left after the entrance chamber, Galeria del Tigre. The way in is not that obvious but is a small flowstone squeeze on the left, very reminiscent of the Mendips. This is a fine bit of passage and becomes progressively larger. The floor starts to drop away and one is forced to traverse along at roof level passing some fine formations on the way. Later on we discovered that we were probably the first people to head in by this route. The normal route is to follow the floor down and then slip down a chimney just above the entrance to Sala de la Madre. We carried along at roof level making some 'interesting' climbs before finally dropping to floor level at Galeria del Pez. As this roof traverse is not marked on the survey we were a bit confused and didn't actually pin point where we were until we got to the far end of the Galeria. After a quick consultation of the survey I pushed a rift at the far end along a very narrow section. This does draught but finally ends in some tight tubes with a cluster of nice helictites. We then spent a merry 30 minutes looking for the way on to Sala de la Madre. This is actually at a lower level than we'd expected. From here it was tourist time with Richard's camera going into overdrive. There are some fantastic stalactite grills at the far end, which are nothing like anything else in the cave. The sumidero marked on the survey at the end of Madre is definitely not a canyon and definitely closes down. There is therefore no other way out of the chamber.

Afterwards we decided to check out some of the question marks in the blank area on the survey between Pez and Galeria de Los Pinitos. In this area the survey is incomplete and to be honest needs redoing. For instance, both passages in the area of Galeria de los Fósiles close down and do not connect with Sala del Libro. There is C.A.E. graffiti and an I.N.A.E laminated sign at the end of the low level passage, so I'm reasonably certain that there is no connection here. But there is definitely one connecting passage at the Tigre junction as we bumped into the two chaps from the National Park who had come in for a wander to see what we were up to. They lead us out via an alternative route to Tigre. Volunteers for a survey?

Other sites in the Brujas national park Above Brujas is a large lump of limestone. We spent a couple of days wandering around looking for other caves. We covered the whole of the limestone block nearest to Brujas including the cliff face over looking Canada de los Enamorados. There was absolutely nothing here apart from a small 8m tube, the home of a chinchilla. But one area that at first seemed extremely promising was a large dry valley above Brujas to the North West. Long lines of fault controlled rifts run along the bottom, several of which draught strongly. We hoped that they might provide a top entrance to Brujas but it soon became apparent that this was not to be. A few needed digging

into whereas one was huge. None showed any sign of cave potential and I think what we've got are a series of windypits.

Brujas itself sits at the end of bowl shaped valley with limestone hills all around. One evening Tim and Ruben went for stroll along the south and eastern side. We covered all of the hills but didn't find anything other than a few cracks and well known existing caves – Las Cabras, del Viento and Tucu-Tucu. These are very small ancient caves and not of great interest. The steeply bedded limestone in the area means that most of the modern rainfall just runs straight off so I don't think there will be any more recent caves.

Cueva de los Jotes On the same evening as the 'Tim and Ruben' ramble the park guards showed us an entrance about 30 minutes walk from Brujas, on a bearing of 195° from the house. The entrance is right at the top of the cliff overlooking the Chacay-Co River and really is an ancient piece of cave. The following day we all returned to explore and knock off a survey. The cave is an 80m remnant of an old system but well decorated throughout. Much of the stal has been broken as a result of earthquake activity but still very attractive. The end is completely blocked and probably still lies very close to the cliff edge. (All that remains is for me to draw up the survey, perhaps in another article in the future).

Poti Malal After all the fun at Brujas we only had a couple of days to spare to do some more exploration in Poti Malal. Our first rip was to look at the two huge new chambers discovered in San Augustin by the Croatians. These are extremely impressive and a great discovery. Again this is something that needs surveying but we didn't have time to do this on this year's trip.

Cueva Miranda In the afternoon after our visit to San Augustin I thought I'd show the others some of the features in the Miranda valley. Little did I guess that we would make our best Argentinean discovery so far. Last year myself, Peat and Jules spent over a week wandering all over the gypsum at Poti Malal but failed to find anything significant. On the last day we nosed around in a small resurgence near the Miranda farmhouse as the log reveals:

"On the way down just across the road from Miranda's farm we spotted another resurgence. This was larger than the one by the cars and looked pushable. So reluctantly I dumped my rucksack and went for a look. I suppose the best way to describe the thing is that it was an Argentinean version of Springwell Rising, Fermanagh. I wriggled up the resurgence for a couple of body lengths but lacked the enthusiasm or energy to continue. Next year?"

As soon as we caught sight of the resurgence from a different angle the obvious location of where a cave entrance might be became apparent. Ruben nipped around to the back of the small cliff face where the water emerged and shouted that he'd found a cave. It was literally 20 feet away from the horrible thrutch I'd pushed in 2002. Essentially it was a window into the streamway that bypasses the final low bit.

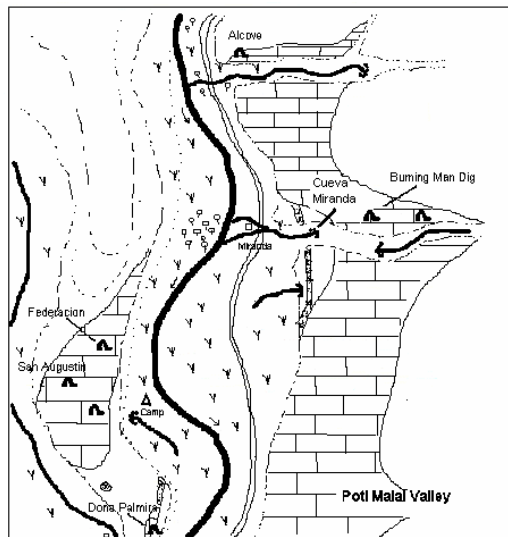
Myself, Richard and Ruben crawled up the resurgence for 10 minutes or so before the water was found to emerge from a 3 inch bedding plane. But a dry over-flow carried on for a bit further until it too was stopped by a too low bedding.

Eastwater extension



"I missed another breakthrough - and in my favourite cave! Babies, grrr, humbug!"

So said Ben Copper, when he heard that Graham Johnson, Phil Rowsell, Paul Brock and various helpers, (Ed: WCC or BEC diggers, presumably?) had broken into the blank area beyond Morton's Pot in Eastwater Cavern, on Saturday 22/11/03. There was debate as to whether this was the biggest or the second biggest question mark left on Mendip.



MCG controlled caves

In the light of the lack of a cavers' public liability scheme, the implications of access to the caves administered by the MCG was discussed by the committee. It was felt that we should be cautious but not over-react to what is a changing situation. Access arrangements were agreed as follows:

Bone Hole: closed as public liability insurance is required for access.

Pinetree Pot: remains open. Access to bona fide caving clubs only.

Waterwheel: remains open. Access to bona fide caving clubs only.

Upper Flood: remains open but leaders need to be aware that there is no insurance.

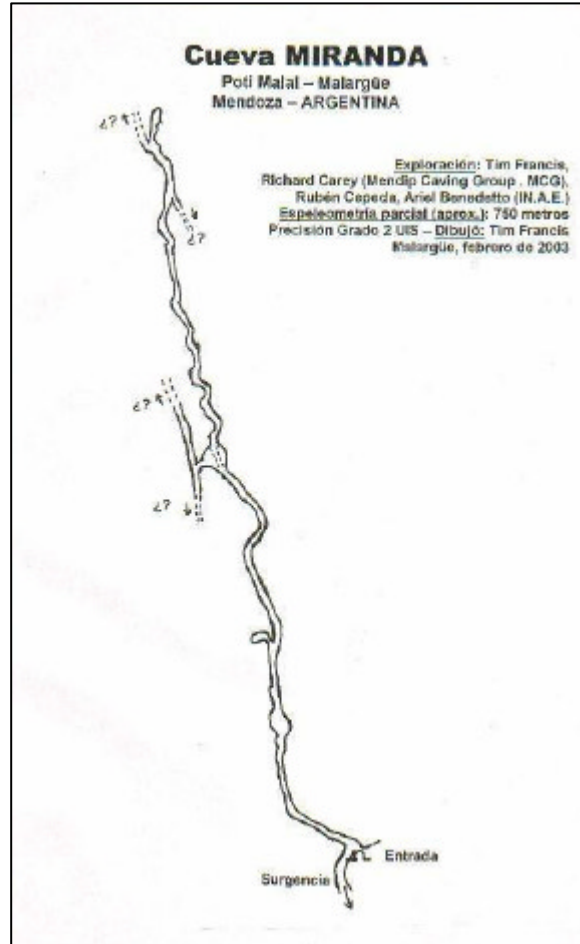
Earwig in on...

...the committee meeting held on 08/11/03.... **Bone Hole lid** to be completed in stages, as and when people are available; the top needs to be reinforced and concreted and the site needs to be cleared of debris... **Water Heater** will be descaled and the tank cleaned on a quiet weekend... **Loft insulation** will be increased... **Storage heaters are progressing** – the lounge has already been fitted and wired in; the library and changing room have been fitted but are not yet wired in; the six room and foreman's lounge need to be fitted; and a time switch is required... **Shed** to have addition of guttering at a cost of approximately £50... **Security box** to be tried out for the collection of cottage fees... **Payphone** to be barred from making 118 phone calls... **BCA draft constitution** was presented and has been sent to clubs to be voted on... **Committee members** present were happy to carry on in their posts during the delay between the old policy ending and the new policy starting.

Vacant committee post

The post of Caving Secretary remains to be filled. It is going to be really embarrassing if we can't find a volunteer to do this in our 50th Anniversary year!

If no-one volunteers by 01/01/04 then I'm going to put all your names in a hat, draw one name out at random, and announce the lucky winner in the next newsletter!



Back from the end we spotted a way on off to the right that looked interesting. Unbelievably this continued on and on and on. The passage was like nothing we had encountered in Argentinean gypsum caves before. Low, crawly, wet and muddy. Ugghh. After 15 minutes of hard going passing a few roots in the ceiling the passage popped out at the top of an aven. We could hear a streamway! A 30ft free climb and we were able to peer through a low grovel into the stream. Reluctantly we wriggled though to enter a parallel passage, perhaps crawling in height. Both upstream and downstream were given a cursory look but both seemed a bit desperate for us with only our minimalist caving gear.

We elected to climb back up the aven and follow the roof. This carried on and on with some fine sharp flakes and chossy traverses above a deep rift. Eventually the floor

rose to meet the ceiling and it became tube like again. We soldiered on, determined to push it to the end despite our aching knees, and so we were rewarded with another short piece of stooping sized passage. The streamway was re-joined with low continuations continuing upstream and downstream. At this point we called it a day as we were in bits and further progress looked desperate. (Ruben has since pushed on a little bit further to a cascade). It's hard to tell how long the cave is but it took over an hour to exit so I guess we're looking at 600-800m. Once all the passages have been explored I should think the cave would be longer than 1km and the longest gypsum cave discovered so far in Argentina.

Other sites at Poti Malal Whilst the others looked around the 2002 extensions in Dona Palmira I started a dig at the end of the phreatic bore, just beyond the breakthrough crawl. This didn't go so I think we'll need to dig in the vadose trench at the end of the old cave.

We spent half a day looking around the other sites in the Miranda valley. Ruben and I chiselled away at Burning Man dig, and eventually he was able to squeeze in. He reported that it doesn't go far. But after the discovery of Miranda anything on this side of the valley will be worth a look.

Valenciana Ruben had spotted another piece of gypsum further along the Pincheira road, about 2 hours drive from Malargüe. Unfortunately it involved a bit of a soaking crossing a river to reach it. We literally had only an hour of surface recce before we had to head back. At first glance the gypsum didn't look that good, and very weathered like at Pincheira. But the gypsum does head off southwards out of sight so it may be worth another year.

Thoughts for 2004 Richard has been out in Argentina since August and is putting in some excellent legwork (see MCG newsletter 316) for our next trip. Undoubtedly he will have additional ideas to add to the following:

The Chacay-Co River Presumably there is an air connection between Brujas and the valley side in the area beyond Galeria del Pez. There is also the question of where the Brujas water ends up. I haven't quite got my head around the geology but it might be worth looking for resurgences in this area.

Brujas The main problem here is that the survey of known and rumoured passages needs to be completed before we can be sure where to look. But the cave seems to be essentially made up of three parts. A section to the North and East, which consists of a series of fault controlled rifts; a section to the West with a large chamber (Sala de la Madre) and rifts running East/West where the water would have joined the main cave and resurged at Brujas; and the modern active cave, which we didn't visit. Apparently the Croatian cavers tried to follow this route but didn't get too far so it might be worth another look.

Jurassic Limestone I think we might be able to access the Northern end of the limestone by walking in from the Pincheira / Malargue road.

Miranda The major objective of 2004 will undoubtedly be to push the cave to a conclusion and complete a full survey. To this end we will be taking out Mendip style caving clothing so we will be able to cope with the cold water and long sharp crawls.

Poti Malal Dona Palmira might be worth another dig if we have time.

Richard mentioned the possibility of another slab of gypsum in the valley beyond the border post at Poti Malal. It would be great to open up a new area of potential.

Team: Richard Carey, Tim Francis (MCG), Rubén Cepeda, Ariel Benedetto, Carlos Benedetto, Diego Sánchez (INAE)

Books for sale



British Caving, an Introduction to Speleology edited by C.H.D.Cullingford, 2nd Edn (1962 printing), dustwrapper, ex library copy. **£18.00 ONO**

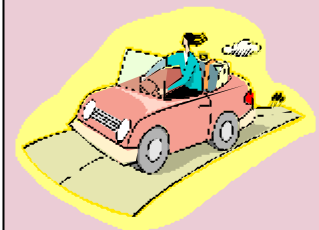
Limestone, their origins, distribution and uses by F.J.North, 1st Edn 1930, ex library copy. **£15.00 ONO**

The Seaboard of Mendip by F.A.Knight. Rarely available. Spine repaired **£20.00 ONO**

If you are interested in buying these books, please contact Joan Goddard on 01993 882446 or email

pejogoddard@waitrose.com

Car for sale



Nissan Primera 1.6l Equinox 5 door hatchback. L Reg (1994). Mileage 68000. Silver colour. 4 months tax remaining, MOT due April 04. Full Service History. 2 previous owners. Central locking, electric windows, radio cassette. Price: £1200 ono. Reliable car – acres of boot space. Middle aged bodywork hides a purring and sleek engine. Ring Ross Laird or Julie Hesketh on 0208 340 2458 or Julie on 07960 359240



Earliest British cemetery dated

Aveline's Hole, Burrington Combe, has been revealed as the earliest scientifically dated cemetery in Britain. The site contained human bone fragments, now confirmed to be between 10,200 and 10,400 years old. The 21 individuals were originally removed from the cave in the early years of the 20th Century and were held in UBSS museum in Bristol but the collection was largely destroyed in a World War II bombing raid. Recently, scientists have returned to the surviving bone and teeth samples to give them a proper assessment using modern methods. English Heritage which commissioned the dating, said: "The dates show that people in Britain were burying their dead in a cemetery 4,000 years earlier than had previously been thought. Although late Mesolithic cemeteries have been found on the continent, none have been recognised over here. The age of the specimens means Aveline's Hole is now of international significance, and will revise our ideas about the organisation of society in Mesolithic times"



The age of the cemetery makes it an important European site

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/sci/tech/3130348.stm>

Cantabria Spain, September 2002

By Bill Chadwick

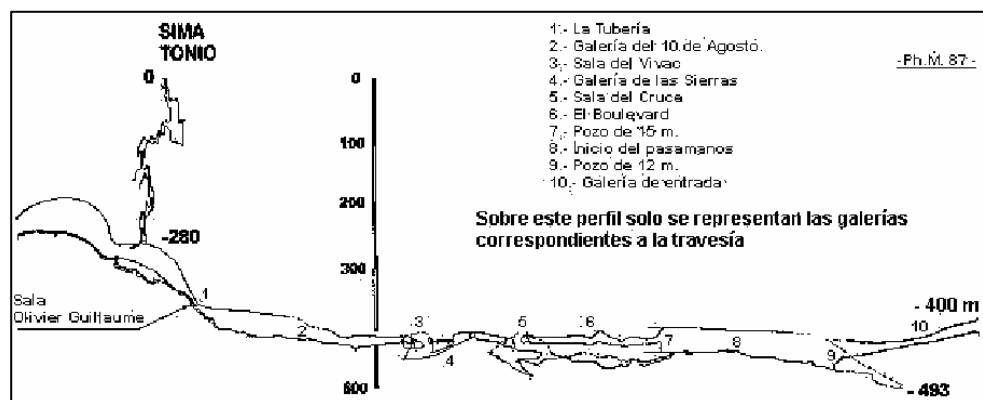
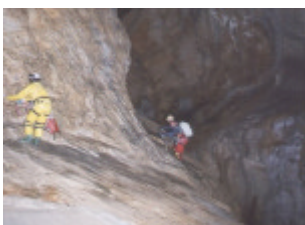
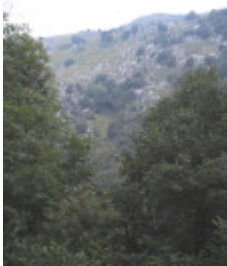


Mick Norton, Doug Harris and Bill Chadwick (MCG/BDCC), together with Biff Friith, Karen Goodman, Mark Pearson, (BDCC), made a two week trip to Cantabria in Northern Spain at the beginning of September 2002. Simon Kay, also of BDCC, joined them in Spain for the first week. Thanks to Richard Carey of MCG for liaising, in Spanish, with the hosts of our accommodation before our trip.

Local details We stayed at the Casa Tomas in Oggario (tel 00 34 942641120, where they speak a very small amount of English), close by to Ramales. This is a Bar / Restaurant / Rooms establishment, used to cavers. There is a caving shop in Ramales where the staff are very friendly and speak a little English. They lent us their own local cave guide books which we photocopied in a shop in town. They have some interesting own brand under- and over-suits. Their address is MTDE-Espana, Barrio El Mazo, 14 39800, Ramales de la Victoria, Cantabria, <http://www.mtde.net>. The local caving club can be contacted via their web site at <http://www.aer-espeleo.com>, some of which is in English. Access details will be found there. None of the caves we visited had controlled access.

Caving We visited a number of caves. The four larger ones are described in the following sections. None were far from Casa Tomas.

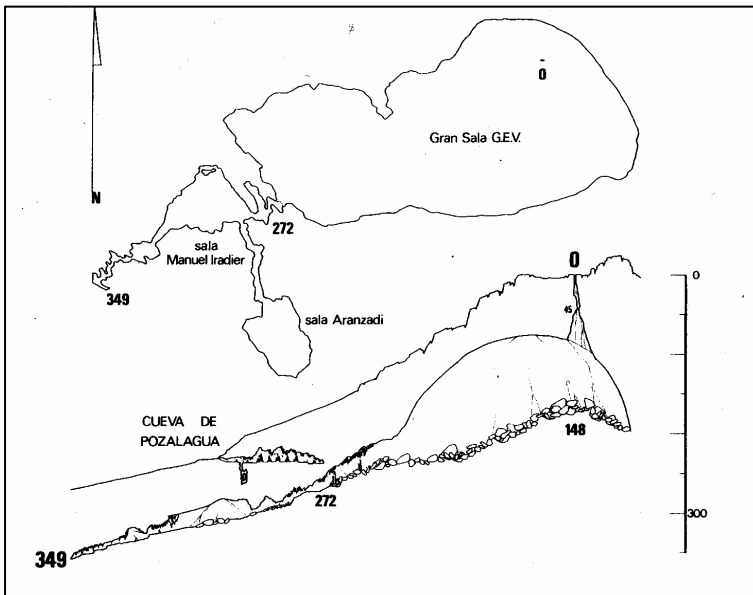
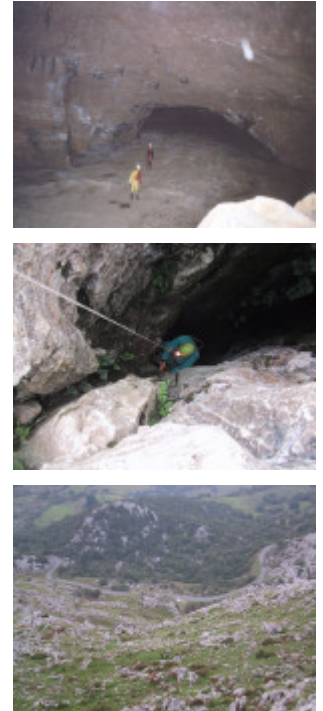
Cueva Canuela or Cayuela The entrance can be clearly seen from across the valley but is hard to find. It's the black hole at the top of the steep grassy slope in the middle of the picture (left). The co-ordinates of the cave are 30T 449660 4791720 at an altitude of 305m. We parked by the south side of the Arredondo to Bustablado road at 30T 0449195 4792133 where the photo (left) is taken from. We asked permission from the house up on the left just back down the road towards Arredondo. We crossed a bridge over the small stream at the bottom of the valley side and climbed a well-worn path diagonally up the side of the hill. Then we went wrong. We could hear the woman from the house shouting at us and see her waving but understood nothing. As if my magic, a herdsman appeared and offered to show us the way. We passed around two cowsheds and then regained a small path that led horizontally along the hill. Finally, we turned a corner to be hit by the enormous cold draught that blows from the entrance. The route is roughly marked by the yellow line on the photo. The cave is not near the bottom of the cliff seen in the middle of the photo. The entrance is the 'Galeria de Entrada' on the survey below.



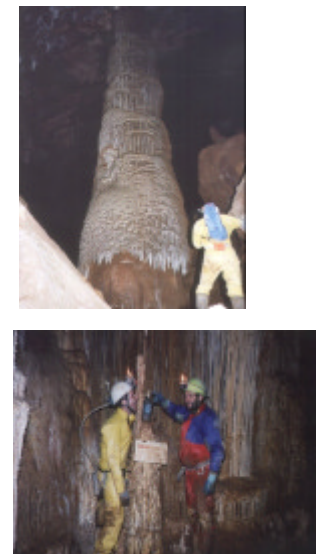
Once at the entrance we had to don our harnesses straight away as a grand traverse appears almost immediately. This had a fixed line in good condition. After the traverse, the going was all easy. Fixed aids are installed wherever needed, at one point there is a 15m climb up a good but very thick rope. This needed a figure of 8 to descend, as it was too thick for our Petzl Stops. Progress and route finding were not hard, with way-marking reflectors appearing often.

The climb up in to the final large chamber was quite strenuous. We observed a very dubious looking bit of rope hanging down from where the Sima Tonio through trip enters high up in the roof. On the way, there are some spectacular formations and enormous passages. The trip to 'Sala Olivier Guillaume' and back took us about six hours with plenty of photo stops.

Torca Del Carlista This was the hardest of the caves we visited. It boasts the largest natural underground chamber in Europe, some 500m x 200m x 120m high. The entrance is near the top of the hill named Picon del Carlista. There is a good approach road, which has recently been resurfaced. It leads to the Pozalagua show cave. This itself is well worth a visit. It has a large area of flat roof covered in the most amazing helictites growing in loops that descend a foot or more. We parked in the lay-by, just next to the start of the path up the hill. There is an ageing wooden sign at the start of the path. We followed the path up the hill until we reached the saddle. Then we turned left and traversed around the hill. Finally we followed some cairns and climbed up a slot in a small limestone cliff. The entrance is a small chasm a little below the top of the hill towards the saddle. We needed lights for the walk back down the hill, which we made in the dark. At one point, the path passes close by the edge of a deep quarry! The view, right, is of our van in the (very distant!) lay-by from the top of the hill and a shot of the entrance. The cave descends well below the level of the van. The published coordinates are 0468465, 04790150 (700m) but we recorded 0468456, 4790288 (707m).



There are about three simple pitches to the head of the big one. We used an 80m rope for these, a little longer would have made for an easier changeover to the main drop. At the small ledge at 45m there are two beefy bolts for the main 100m drop. For a man on the big drop rope, the

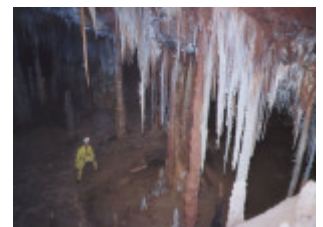


ledge is big enough to wait at,. We used an 110m rope for the big drop, which reached the floor with a bit to spare. The pitch hangs in free space and is awesome.

It took us on average half an hour each to prussik out. We were all out by about 10:00pm having entered the cave at about 11:00am. Once at the bottom, the floor is littered with enormous boulders, some the size of houses. There is a guideline leading through this maze to the lower well-decorated part of the cave. It saved us a lot of time.

The great chamber is quite stupendous. After passing through the boulders of the main chamber, the formations begin. The very best are at the final chamber. There is no stream way in the cave. To make up for it there is a Soda Syphon and a sign reading 'Sifon Terminal Del Complejio Del Carlista', Sifon being Spanish for sump.

Cueva Coventosa This is a popular cave. A major SRT through trip exists from





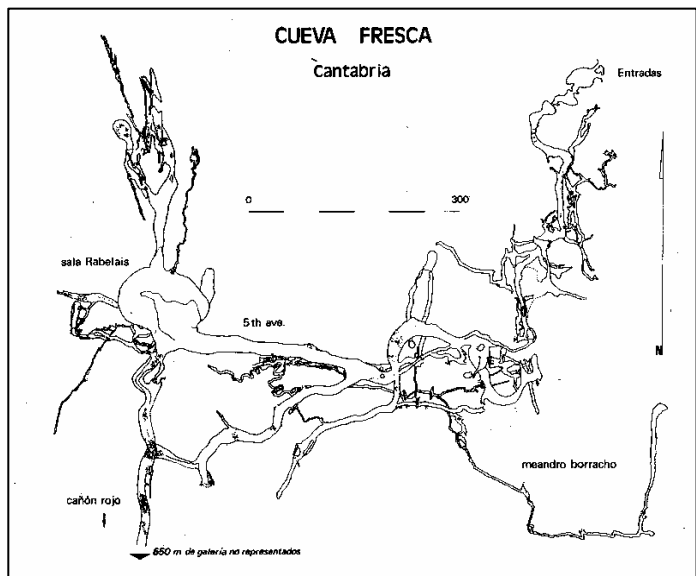
the high altitude Cueva Cueto entrance. Coventosa is easy to find. Take the right turn just before the road up the Ason valley from Arredondo crosses the river. There is parking at the hamlet of Valdeason at the end of the road. From there, a well-worn path along the side of the valley reaches the entrance in about 10 minutes (passing a few cow sheds oozing noxious slurry). A huge cold draught blows out.

We made two trips into Coventosa. On our first trip we went to the first of the lakes. These are on the Cueto – Coventosa through trip. They can only be passed by dinghy. There are various small climbs and traverses on the way to the lakes. All were permanently rigged. The streamway is splendid. The trip took us about 6 hours.

Our second trip was just to view the formations near the entrance (20 minutes in). Just inside the entrance there is a 10m pitch with a shallow approach. It needs SRT kit, though there is a place for a ladder.

After our first trip, Mick had Bill help him re-find a cave he had 'found' 10 years previously. He had been unable to explore its blackness at the time, alone and with no light. After much scrambling on the very steep hillside it was duly rediscovered. By UK standards it was a large cave with enormous chambers. It had been well visited by both man and beast, having many bones and fire remains on the floor. Mick can now rest easy in his bed without dreaming of caverns measureless to man awaiting him in Spain !

Cueva Fresca This is a hard cave to find. It took us all morning and the help of some passing local cavers (we did not have the GPS with us). It's main entrance is at 30T 0468465 4790150 and an altitude of 610m. We parked by the church in the hamlet of Bo San Antonio off the Ason valley road. Then we followed a track south, over the river and passed some meadows. After the meadows, we took a fairly indistinct path on the right, straight up the side of the valley, through some woods. This crossed a small gully before emerging at the large, strongly draughting entrance. It is quite an arduous climb.



We did not come across as many formations as in the other caves. It is more sporting however with a number of traverses and bold steps. There is a through trip from Sima Tibia, high on the hill. We reached the huge, deep Sala Rabelais chamber and then the junction with the through trip route. There are fixed aids in place wherever necessary but some were a bit old and worn. We spent about 6-7 hours in the cave. On our return we found three new born kittens ensconced in the bumper of the van! We returned them safe and sound to the farm next to Casa Tomas where we assumed they had come from.

Ed: MCG visited the same area in the late 1980's with Dave Elliot, and completed the Cueto - Coventosa through trip, dinghies and all!!

Public Liability Insurance

Due to problems with insurance, the keys for many caves have been removed from the tackle store until further notice. This affects access to the following:

Pen Park Hole
Fairy Quarry Caves
St. Cuthbert's Swallet

All Chaterhouse CC Ltd caves
All CSCC padlocked caves
Bone Hole

Prior to 07/11/03, the Group insured all MCG members against public liability claims up to £2million through the BCRA scheme. BCRA was unable to find alternative cover for the scheme when it ran out and so all MCG members will be uninsured until alternative arrangements can be put in place. The previous policy will continue to provide cover for actions which took place up to the end of the cover period, in perpetuity. For example, diggers may have generated liability for themselves by opening caves which are now visited by other people, but they will continue to be covered for any activities which took place up to 07/11/03. Clearly, they will have to make their own minds up as to whether they should suspend digging activities until satisfactory alternative cover is in place.

BCRA have put an enormous effort into trying to find replacement insurance with suitable cover and costs for the UK caving community but all leads have ultimately drawn a blank. While on the face of it there are many people offering cover, in practice many of these schemes are underwritten by the same insurers and in fact there are very few places who will even consider covering caving, and none will consider it properly. Some who say they can provide cover will only do so on the basis of terms which do not satisfy any of the needs of cavers. It is little comfort that caving is not the only sport which is having problems, having fallen victim to the general chaos in the UK insurance market.

The result of the withdrawal of cover is that caves in some areas of the country will be closed until the situation can be resolved because landowners require indemnity insurance to be in place before they will permit access for caving on their land. Regional Caving Councils including CSCC will be providing access information via their web sites. A useful directory of these may be found on the internet at www.caves.org.uk/directory/organisations/national.html

Some MCG activities may have to be curtailed. BCRA is seeking formal advice on the status of MCG committee members, Trustees, cheque signatories (who may not be committee members) and non-committee post-holders such as Rescue Warden and Examiners. Ideas of places that individuals and clubs may be able to use as sources of cover will be posted on the BCRA website (www.bcra.org.uk) once it is confirmed that the information is accurate and that the cover provided is likely to be of use. There is also an e-mailing list which will be used to send out information quickly so please contact www.bcra.org.uk/contact.html if you would like to be added to this list.

If BCRA have not managed to obtain cover for a national scheme by 01/12/03 then BCRA will try to obtain cover specifically for the decisions and actions of the National Body officers (i.e. NCA and BCRA). This will not include cover for clubs, landowner indemnity etc and is intended simply to allow the national bodies to continue to function.

If BCRA have not obtained cover for a national scheme by 07/12/03, then BCRA will try to provide clubs and access bodies with guidance on what alternative steps they should be taking to minimise their liability and to obtain cover individually.

Oh how we laughed!



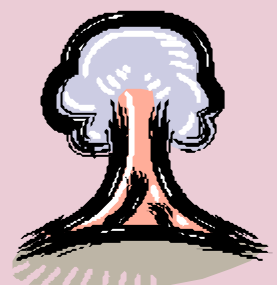
A vampire bat came flapping into GB Cavern from the night, face all covered in fresh blood and parked himself on the roof of Bat Passage to get some sleep.

Pretty soon all the other bats smelt the blood and began hassling him about where he got it. He told them to piss off and let him get some sleep. But they persisted until he finally gave in.

"OK, follow me", he said and flew out of GB with hundreds of excited bats behind him.

Down through Longwood Valley they went, on past Blackrock Gate, across Axbridge Reservoir and into Cheddar Wood.

Finally he slowed down and all the other bats excitedly milled around him, tongues hanging out for blood.



"Do you see that large oak tree over there?" he asked. "YES, YES, YES!!!" the bats all screamed in a frenzy.

"Good!" said the first bat, "Because I f***ing didn't!"



GROUP INFORMATION

Weekly Meeting	At The Hunters Lodge, Somerset, Tuesday at about 10pm
Monthly Meeting	At the Group HQ on the first Fri/Sat/Sunday of the month
Accommodation	Available at the Group HQ (for members and guests)
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 £30.00
Subscription 2004	Full and Probationary (excluding BCRA insurance) £25.00
	Associate Members (excluding BCRA insurance) £12.50
Reciprocal rights	MCG members have reciprocal rights with SWCC and NPC
	NPC bookings Nic Blundell tel 01203 713849 (hm) or 01203 838940 (wk)
	SWCC bookings Ian Middleton tel 01703 736997 email ian_m@tcp.co.uk

Group Headquarters

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

Monthly Member's Mendip Meets

Due to the uncertainties about insurance, we are not arranging meets on members' weekends for now.

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

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

THE 2003- 2004 MCG COMMITTEE

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

Booking the Cottage

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

COTTAGE BOOKINGS

Who	Date Arrive	Date Leave	Nights	Beds
1st Bookham Scouts	Fri 30/01/04	Sun 01/02/04	2	?
1st Bookham Scouts	Fri 12/03/04	Sun 14/03.04	2	?

Mendip Caving Group - Constitution and Rules

27.01.03

Part One: Administration

1. **NAME.** The full name of the Group is the MENDIP CAVING GROUP.

2. **OBJECT.** The object of the Group is, for the benefit of the public, the furtherance of all aspects of the scientific study and conservation of caves.

3. **MEMBERSHIP.** Membership shall be open to anyone over the age of 16 years with an interest in the objects of the Group. There are four classes of membership as follows:

(a) **FULL MEMBERS,** i.e. people who have been probationary members for at least six months, who have completed a training trip (as defined by the Committee) and who have been approved for full membership by a majority vote at a Committee meeting.

(b) **PROBATIONARY MEMBERS,** i.e. people who have been proposed by two full members, who have attended at least one Group meet where Committee members were present, who have been advertised in the newsletter or notice board (together with their sponsors) for at least one month and who have been accepted as probationary members by a majority vote at a Committee meeting.

(c) **ASSOCIATE MEMBERS,** i.e. either:

(i) former full members who are unable to play a full part in Group activities, but who wish to continue their association with the Group. Their change of membership requires the approval of a majority vote at a Committee meeting. Or:

(ii) persons who wish to become members of the Group, but who are unable to take part in the regular caving activities and who have been approved by a majority vote at a Committee meeting.

(d) **HONORARY MEMBERS,** i.e. people who have given exceptional service to the Group. Election to this class of membership requires a unanimous vote of the Committee.

Note: Persons aged under 16 years may be sponsored by a member and attend meetings as their guests.

4. **PRIVILEGES OF MEMBERSHIP.** Use of the Group's cottage at reduced rates, use of Group equipment and the library, free publications and advice of meetings and activities. Full members may stand for election to the Committee and vote at general meetings. Associate members have similar privileges except that they have no vote at general meetings, and not more than one at a time may hold office on the Committee. Probationary members may have the same privileges as associate members except that they may not stand for election to the Committee.

5. **EXPULSION FROM MEMBERSHIP.** Membership may be terminated by the decision of two - thirds of the Committee (all being present). The member shall be notified of the intention of expulsion, and shall be given reasonable opportunity of attending the meeting and presenting a case. A full or associate member may appeal against the Committee's decision to a general meeting called for this purpose by the Secretary.

6. **SUBSCRIPTIONS** are payable on January 1st each year. Members failing to pay by January 31st may have their membership terminated. Members joining after June

30th in any year shall pay reduced subscriptions at pro-rata rates. The amount of subscription shall be determined at a General Meeting and notified to members in time to take effect from the next due date of subscription. The Associate Membership fee shall be half the Full Membership fee. Members may apply to the Committee for consideration of a reduced personal subscription, in three circumstances:

- (i) Members aged 60 or over,
- (ii) Members living overseas for at least 6 months a year,
- (ii) Members on low income.

7. **COMMITTEE.** The Group's business shall be regulated by a Committee of eight members. They will normally be elected at the annual general meeting to serve for a period of twelve months. If a post falls vacant during the year, a substitute officer may be co-opted for the remaining period. The honorary officers shall be: Secretary, Treasurer, Caving Secretary, Cottage Warden, Tackle master, Editor, Recorder/Librarian, and Social Secretary.

8. **COMMITTEE MEETINGS.** Any officer may call a Committee meeting. The quorum for the Committee shall be more than half the number of posts filled.

The decision of the Committee shall be binding on all members unless varied by a majority vote at a General Meeting.

9. **GENERAL MEETINGS.**

(a) The Annual General Meeting shall be held in the spring of each year to:

- (i) receive the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting,
- (ii) receive the officers' reports and audited accounts,
- (iii) elect officers for the following year term,
- (iv) appoint honorary auditors for the following year term,
- (v) discuss formal motions and any other business.

(b) An Extraordinary General Meeting may be requested by a majority of the Committee or by five Full Members.

(c) Notice of any General Meeting, together with the agenda, shall be given by the Secretary to members at least 14 days before the date of that meeting.

(d) The chairman of each meeting will be appointed by the Committee.

(e) Nominations for office and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules must be submitted in writing by first class post to the Secretary's home address with the signatures of Full Members proposing and seconding and at least 25 days before the meeting. A nomination for Office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand for election by the nominee.

(f) Votes at General Meetings shall be counted by two tellers appointed at the meeting. The election of officers shall be by secret ballot.

(g) The Committee may grant a postal vote to any member who applies in good time to the Secretary.

10. **FINANCE**

(a) The Group's funds shall be placed in such account, or accounts, with banks or be otherwise invested as the Com-

mittee shall direct.

(b) The Treasurer shall keep proper accounts and receipts of all transactions.

(c) The signatures of two members, as nominated by the Committee, shall be required on all cheques and notices of withdrawal. Any signatory not already being a member of the Committee shall by virtue of being a signatory also be a trustee within the meaning of the Charities Acts 1960 and 1992.

(d) Two independent examiners shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting to serve for a period of one year. They shall examine the books up to the end of each financial year, and may conduct examinations at such times as they may deem necessary and report them to the Committee.

(e) The signatories may require the authority of the Committee before signing cheques etc. for sums in excess of £200.

(f) A member may not hold more than £150 of Group funds in the form of cash for more than 28 days.

(g) Any member of the Group not already being a member of the Committee, who is appointed by the Committee to be a manager of the Group's shop, shall by virtue of that appointment also be a trustee within the meaning of the Charities Acts 1960 and 1992.

11. THE CONSTITUTION AND RULES of the Group may be changed only if approved by at least four-fifths of the members voting at a General Meeting. No amendment may be made which will cause the Group to cease to be a charity at law.

12. NEITHER the Mendip Caving Group, nor the Committee of the Group, nor any member, can accept responsibility for any loss, injury or death arising from a Group activity, howsoever caused. In particular, members and guests stay at the cottage and camp and cave with the Group entirely at their own risk. Nor is responsibility accepted for the loss, or any damage to personal property. Members of the Group and guests are deemed to know of, and accept without qualification, this rule.

13. THE COMMITTEE shall have full powers to deal with any matter that might arise that is otherwise provided for in the Constitution and Rules.

14. CUSTODIAN TRUSTEES. There shall be four custodian trustees of the Group. The first custodian trustees shall be appointed by the Committee, and the Group's real property (land and buildings) shares, unit trusts and such bank accounts and other investments as the Committee shall decide shall be vested in the custodian trustees to be dealt with as the Committee shall direct by resolution (of which an entry in the Minutes Book shall be conclusive evidence). The custodian trustees shall be indemnified against risk and expense out of the Group property. The custodian trustees shall hold office until death or resignation or until removed from office by a resolution of a four-fifths majority of members present and voting at an Annual General Meeting. Where necessary the Committee shall by a resolution of a quorum of the Committee present and voting at any meeting, nominate the person or persons to be appointed the new custodian trustees and, for effecting such nominations, the Secretary is hereby nominated as the person to appoint the new or additional custodian trustees of the Group within the meaning of Section 36 of the Trustee Act 1925. He shall, by deed, duly appoint the person or persons so nominated by the Committee as the new or additional custodian trustee or custodian trustees of the Group.

The provisions of the Trustee Act 1925 shall apply to any such appointment. Any statement of fact in any such deed of appointment shall, in favour of person dealing bona fide and for value with the Group or the Committee, be conclusive evidence of the facts so stated.

15. DISSOLUTION OF THE GROUP. In the event of the dissolution of the Group, and after satisfaction of all due debts and liabilities, any remaining assets may not be distributed amongst the members but will pass to a body with similar objects established for exclusively charitable purposes or to some other charitable body.

Part Two: Caving. THE GROUP recommends that all members read and act in accordance with the National Caving Code as published by the National Caving Association, enclosed with this Constitution and Rules.

NATIONAL CAVING ASSOCIATION - The National Caving Code

Always include experienced cavers in the party.

Pick a cave or pothole within everyone's capabilities.

Leave a note of your trip and latest time of return with a responsible person and report to them on your return.

Ask for, and act on, local advice.

No less than four in the party and keep together.

Take notice of the local weather forecast.

One reliable cap-lamp for each person: without light, you're lost.

Boots, helmet and warm clothing are essential.

Emergency lights, food and first aid kit should always be taken.

See that ladders, belays and ropes are inspected and rigged properly before hanging your life on them.

Accident underground is always easy: rescue is sometimes difficult, sometimes impossible.

Falls, loose boulders, rising water and exposure cause most accidents.

Exit takes more effort than entry. Plan with the return in mind.

Clumsiness can wreck cave formations.

Observe marked routes - they are there to safeguard the cave.

Never leave litter or spent carbide in a cave - pollution kills cave life.

Set others a good example when caving - persuade them to follow it.

Enlist the help of the Regional Caving Council in passing on scientific information to be recorded nationally.

Responsible leaders will avoid taking novices where they may accidentally cause damage.

Vandalism means damage to stals, mud floors, rimstone pools, etc - help prevent it.

Alert your Regional Caving Council to any developments which may possibly damage caves.

Take care not to disturb cave fauna or remains which may be of archaeological interest.

Invite help in taping off formations to keep caves in their undamaged state for the generations to follow us.

Organise a trip to clear up litter now and again.

Nature needs YOUR help to safeguard her interests NOW!