

MCG News

Newsletter of the
Mendip Caving Group

Golden Chamber, Upper Flood Swallet, 2004

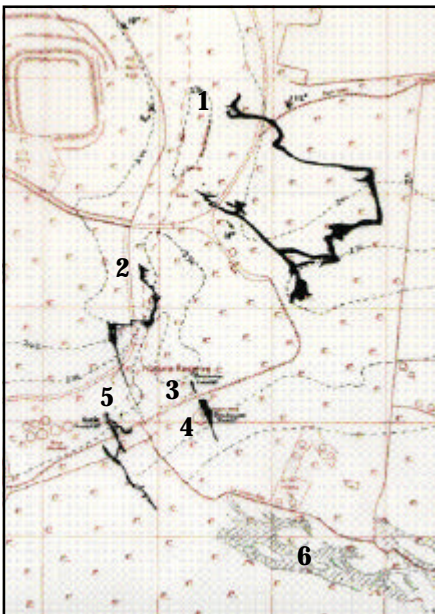
Number 327
April 2005

www.m-c-g.org.uk
Founded 1954

Golden Chamber: the story so far

By Tim Francis, photos by Ben Cooper

"Only a slender stream of water trickles down the Blackmoor Valley, and before it has travelled far a series of swallets reduces its volume still further, until by the time it reaches the Priddy road it has completely disappeared." (Gough, 1967).



Caves of Blackmoor Valley

- 1 Upper Flood
- 2 Waterwheel Swallet
- 3 Blackmoor Swallet
- 4 Blackmoor Shaft
- 5 Grebe Swallet
- 6 Charterhouse Rakes

The Mendip Caving Group and the caves of the Blackmoor Valley have been intrinsically linked since the early 1950s. Of these, Upper Flood Swallet in particular has held a peculiar fascination for several generations of MCG cavers. I think I would describe this as a love-hate relationship, and for good reason. Despite the wonders of Midnight Chamber, much of the cave is pretty grim at the best of times – relentless crawling, flat out squeezes in cold water, chokes of suspect stability, and oodles of gritty, black, lead tailings thrown in for good measure. But there is something intriguing about the place that keeps dragging us back for more. Where does that streamway go?

Since 1987 the boulder choke at the back end of the Red Room has proved to be an extremely stubborn obstacle. Efforts have been made on and off since then to get under, over, around and through the choke but to no avail. The lower levels had always been rather disconcerting. On occasions you can hear the streamway ahead but the further you dig the keener the rocks are to rattle down and hamper your efforts.

At the end of the old dig you can still see a

crow-bar trapped underneath the collapse at the face. The intimidating nature of the place, plus the fact that you get a thorough soaking in Puddle Lake just before the Red Room, has meant that, to be honest, in recent years the club had pretty much avoided another serious attempt to pass the choke.

However, a few of us could never quite give up although admittedly this was more in the form of long ramblings in The Eclipse, Castle of Comfort, Nordrach Cottage and other venerable armchair-caving venues. The long sought-after breakthrough came on the 29th August 2004 after a session of particularly sporting digging by Peat Bennett and I. But actually, the way on had been noted way back in 1988 and flagged up in the Upper Flood journal, Occasional Publication No.4:

"It may be recalled that a strong air current had been noted emanating from a hole in the boulder choke in Andrew's Grotto when it had first been entered. The writer [Malcolm Cotter] had made an attempt at digging there but had been put off by the way rocks had tumbled from above".

Just above the old dig face was what appeared to be a small, mud filled crack that headed over the dig. The right-hand wall was the fault and to the left and above appeared to be boulders. I had often sat shivering in the void in the choke below

From the Editor



Well, here I am again for another year. I always say, "Just one more year....!" I was getting a bit concerned last month because there was bit of negativity about the Group's future and membership numbers. This coincided with very little for the newsletter (only 6 pages-worth if you remember). However, thankfully things have taken a turn for the better and I have received more material than I can publish in this month's newsletter.

What those of us at the AGM have agreed is that it would be nice to hear what some of our newer members are up to. There are now quite a few of you and presumably you cave mid-week, but whatever, we would like to know about your caving trips (or anything of interest), even if it's only an entry in the log book?

Yvonne

In this issue

- 1-4 Golden Chamber
- 4-6 AGM report
- 6-7 Logbook extracts
- 8 Working at height regs
- 8 Box mines
- 9 BCRC conference
- 10 Group information

MCG doings

On the move

Peter Mullins

✉ 21 Chesilton Crescent,
Church Crookham,
Fleet, Hants., GU52 6PA
☎ 01252 627255

Dave Tooke is now in the Sudan but you can try contacting him at

✉ dtook@landmineaction.org

Welcome

to **Richard Lunn** and **Neil Larsen** who have been accepted as probationary members.

Congratulations

to **Louisa Minahan**, **Simon Stevens** and **Martin Peck** who have been accepted as full members.

An application

for prospective membership has been received from **Richard Perry**

✉ Oakwood Cottage,
36 Mantle street,
Wellington,
Somerset,
TA21 8AR

Proposed by: Lee Hawkswell and Doug Harris.

Congratulations



to **Ben** and **Lindsay Cooper** who are proud to announce the birth of Josef Elliot Cooper at 01:56 on Saturday 26th February. Both mother and baby are fit and well.

whilst waiting for rocks and mud to be passed back and wondered about this crack. Strangely, once back in the pub, the crack always seemed to be remembered as a much more promising lead than it looked in reality. Something like ten years elapsed before I finally got around to actually doing something about it, after all other avenues had pretty much been exhausted. (Entries in italics are from the author's logbook; numerous non-digging trips and trips curtailed due to high water excluded).

06.10.01 "Still very low water. Temp 11°C so almost a pleasant stroll to the Red Room. Carried in three scaffolding bars that Lee had left at the Lavatory Trap. Started a new dig in a mud filled rift in the choke. Is it solid or is it boulders? The next trip will see." (Team: PB, TF)

This was a bit of an understatement though. We put a small cube of wood under a car-sized boulder for some psychological scaffolding, although I don't think either Peat or I were convinced of its life-saving properties. But ultimately, digging up into the crack did not prove as dangerous as Malcolm had predicted. We could see a void over the top, so theoretically by digging underneath the boulders for a few body lengths, we might pop out into the air space.

17.02.02 "Myself and Julie did some more work on the promising dig in the boulder choke in the Red Room. This looks like we could finally have found the way out of the terminal choke." (Team TF, JH).

It was starting to look like we had a mud-filled tube that was at least solid on the right-hand side and the boulders up the left looked large enough to be staying put. Cottage theories were expounded that we may be digging up a choked inlet. It was starting to look like an awkward body-sized tube but at least the ceiling wasn't going to collapse.

02.03.02 "Milled around the cottage until Lee and Jacky turned up. Down a rather wet Upper Flood for a spot of digging in the Red Room. Continued to work on the new lead in the choke. We were just starting to head out when Ben arrived. I carried on digging with Ben whilst the other two headed out. It looks small but still worth pursuing." (Team JA, BC, TF, LH).

After this trip it became apparent that an extended dig in the choke was going to become a real hassle. We had filled up our alcove in the choke with mud, and without a quick breakthrough the spoil was going to have to be dragged back past Andrew's Grotto and all the way to the Red Room. No-one was that optimistic so it was a long time before we made another proper digging trip.

27.03.04 "Post AGM crawl to the pretties for myself and Louisa. The others carried on to the end to look at the dig. Water 9°C. Air 11°C." (PB, BC, TF, SG, LM).

06.06.04 "A digging trip in the muddy tube in the boulder choke. Very low water levels. So actually it wasn't that cold or wet in the crawl or even at the dig. We're now in about ten feet." (TF, MP)

This was actually a successful trip in that it confirmed that the tube was definitely formed in solid rock rather than an extension of the boulder choke. It seemed to be meandering off to the right but I was starting to think that we were following an inlet. But at least it was somewhere to dig which was better than nothing.

11.07.05 "Digging in the boulder choke. This muddy rift still looks worth pursuing. We left a load of spoil that needs tidying up on the next trip." (TF, LM).

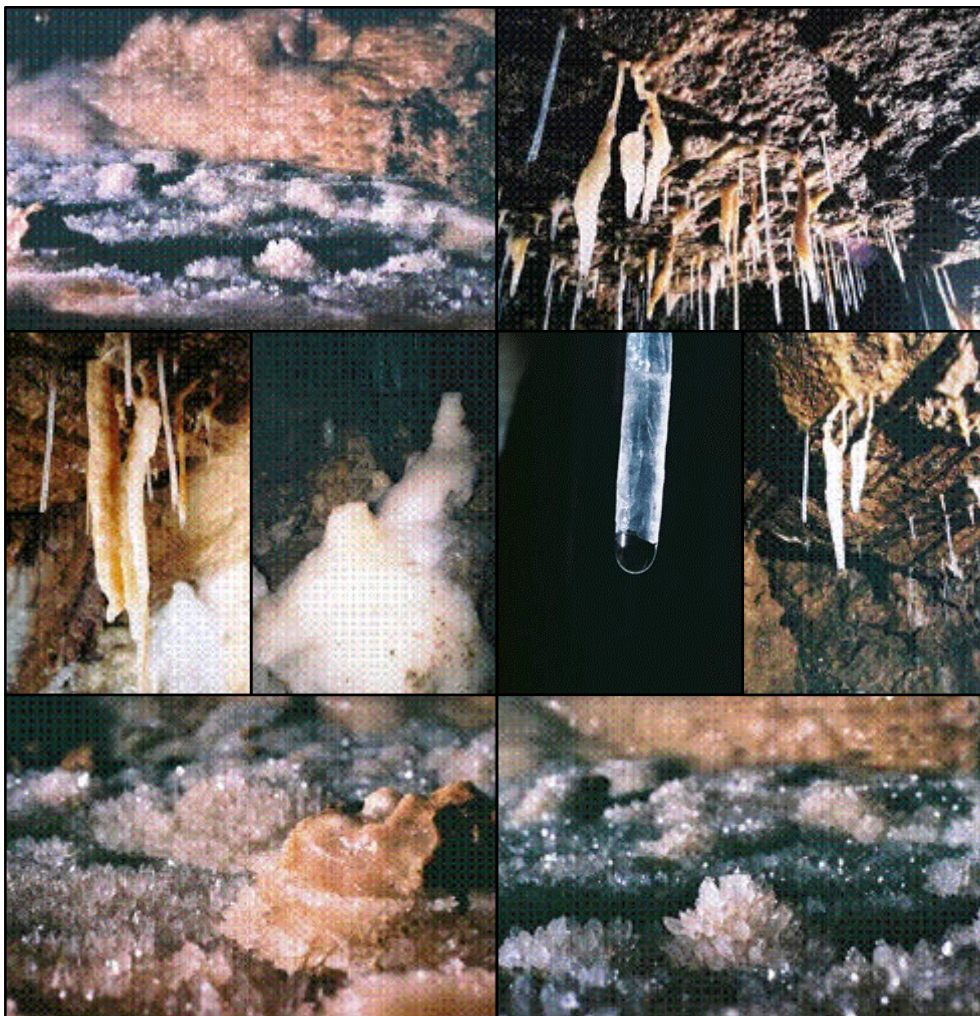
We were now coming up against spoil removal issues. With just two of us the dig was becoming a two stage operation just to get spoil back to Andrew's Grotto. The dig though was looking good. We'd excavated a duck-under on the left hand side and we could see some air space only a metre or so ahead. However the dig on this side seemed to be trending back into the choke which wasn't exactly the plan.

29.08.05 "Thought we'd do a spot of digging in Upper Flood. Barely any streamway flowing. Carried on the choke and forced a way through the choke to enter a new chamber. This was well decorated with straws and a flowstone flow. To the left is a nice ledge covered in crystals. We've definitely passed the choke. The left hand wall is on the choke and it does draught from somewhere. At the far end is a

mud fill wall right up to the ceiling. Too knackered to remove the spoil so we headed back to the cottage to celebrate.” (PB, TF).

Peat and I had been planning to go to the P.O.B. dig in Draenen but Duncan had bailed out on us. So thank you Duncan! For most of the afternoon we’d furtled around in the dig and probed the arch on the left as far as our arms could reach. Eventually I decided to squeeze underneath the arch and ‘encourage’ the roof down. I had soon buried myself up to my waist in spoil but the roof started to look reasonably solid. Peat was able to clear the spoil back to keep my legs free and so I carried on probing ahead. There seemed to be a way underneath a flowstone shelf, and much to our surprise a black space appeared up ahead. With encouragement from Peat who was still frantically trying to find somewhere to dump the spoil – eating it seemed to be the best option – I forced a way over a pile of mud and belly flopped into a small chamber.

This was extremely well decorated. The roof is covered in fine straws, typical of Upper Flood, and there is a fine flowstone cascade on the right hand side. The highlight of the chamber, and unique to the cave, is a small ledge that is completely covered with calcite crystals. On account of the 50th anniversary of the MCG and the pretties Peat came up with the idea of “Golden Chamber”. The chamber is extremely vulnerable but we’ve taken several rolls of film and Malcolm has it on video so if there is any damage it’s been recorded for posterity.



Since the breakthrough we’ve completed seven digging trips to Golden Chamber. Initially it wasn’t that clear where the way on might be. The back wall is completely made up of mud fill with no airspace or discernable floor. But in the floor we could hear the streamway rumbling away somewhere below. Since then we have dug down in the floor in the far corner and the streamway seems closer than ever. The fill is a made up of large boulders and gritty mud somewhat reminiscent of the good old days in Pinetree. But digging is the easy part. Hauling out the

More MCG doings

Meets

Following my co-option onto the Committee as Caving Secretary I am now expected to arrange some caving trips but need your input as to what you would like organised on Mendip. Additionally I would like to be informed of any planned out-of-area meets. Once I have gathered this information, I will endeavour to ensure that those attending a members’ weekend are guaranteed at least one pre-organised trip, be it tourist, moderate etc to severe!

Hopefully I will be able to soon publish a forecast of events in forthcoming issues of the newsletter, updated as required and last minute alterations announced on the Yahoo newsgroup. Meanwhile, I will attempt to contact you all individually, by email and additionally, ask for your preferred means of communication.

Bob Templeman, Caving Secretary

Charterhouse Cave

Martin Peck has taken over as MCG’s Charterhouse leader from Richard Carey.

O.F.D.

MCG’s permit for OFDI, II, & Cwm Dwr has been renewed. For OFD I a certified OFD leader is also required.

Waterwheel Swallet

MCG contributed £50 (one third of the cost) for a new lid, as the old one was deemed unserviceable.





New regulations on the manufacture and storage of explosives

The Manufacture and Storage of Explosives Regulations 2005 (SI Number [2005/1082]) have been signed by Minister for Work, Jane Kennedy, and were laid before Parliament on 5 April. The new regulations will come into force on 26 April 2005.

Copies of the published regulations will be available to purchase from the Stationery Office (<http://www.tso.co.uk/site.asp>). The text of the regulations will be available to view and download from the HMSO website (<http://www.hmso.gov.uk>). A copy of the pre-publication draft of the regulations is available at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/explosives/draftregs.pdf>

HSE is supporting the new regulations with an Approved Code of Practice and guidance document (ACOP). The ACOP will be published at the end of April, when it will be available for purchase from HSE Books (<http://www.hsebooks.com/Books/default.asp>). In the meantime, a copy of the pre-publication draft of the ACOP may be viewed and downloaded here:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/explosives/draftacop.pdf>

Further information about the new regulations will be added at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/index.htm>

spoil is a nightmare. You have to cautiously carry small skips up the slope of the chamber and drop them onto a tray. The tray is dragged along the breakthrough dig and then spoil dropped down into the choke. On subsequent trips we've been passing the spoil through the voids in the choke back to a temporary spoil heap in Andrew's Grotto. Finally we're hauling large skip loads back under the squeeze and into the Red Room where a new spoil dumping area has been created. Volunteers always welcome.

The team are extremely optimistic about the potential for another breakthrough. We've taken a bearing along the passage and its trending towards the end of Waterwheel. However the considered consensus is that we expect the cave to take another sharp left before too long. There has long been a theory of another old swallet lying somewhere in the valley between Black Shale Rift and Blackmoor Swallet, which suggests that we may meet up with another small streamway coming in from the right. But enough of the armchair hypothesising, lets get on with the digging. And it is fingers crossed though because knowing Upper Flood it could be another ten years before we get any where. Here's hoping...

(Team on the 8 trips: Jacky Ankerman, Peat Bennet, Ben Cooper, Tim Francis, Simon Goddard, Lee Hawkswell, Julie Hesketh-Laird, Louisa Minahan, Martin Peck)



After the last year's well-attended 50th AGM, the number of members at this years was back to around 30-or-so; mostly the "usual suspects", with a few new faces. The meeting was chaired by Jonathan Roberts.

The minutes of the AGM held 9th April '04 were agreed with only minor changes. Martin Rowe wanted to point out that he only administers the MCG Yahoo Group and does not control it. The minutes of the EGM held 9th October '04 were also agreed.

The question of whether Gift Aid can be reclaimed on annual subs (currently £48 for full caving members) was discussed. Martin thought that subs and insurance should be separated and collected as two payments with Gift Aid reclaimed on the basic subs of £30 and insurance treated as a "personal benefit". Malcolm Cotter would like it looked into further.

Bob Templeman offered to to take novice groups underground but asked if novices/non-members were covered by the Group's BCA insurance. It was pointed out that they could cave with MCG as guests but were not insured.

Lee Hawkswell and Jackie Ankerman stepped down as Secretary and Treasurer. There was a round of applause for their busy year in the posts. They had done excellent jobs, especially with, for example, BCA insurance and the Group's 50th Anniversary.

Roy Kempston asked if we were subsidising the phone/phone calls. We are not subsidising phone calls, but the line rental is paid by the group as the phone was installed for emergencies like cave rescue. The cost of calls from the phone is covered by the charges. Roy thought that line rental should be shown separately in the accounts

It was thought that Lee's collection system for cottage fees is much better. The accounts are thorough and diligent and earned Jackie a round of applause.

The Cottage Warden, Doug Harris, said that major cottage work will be needed

this year due to its age. There is lots of decay, especially woodwork. The drains have now been sorted – a major task tackled by Doug, Malcolm and Mick Norton. Now the beech trees have gone you can see more of the rot, and the cottage will now be more exposed to the weather. We don't plan to replace the trees but may plant a hedge along the front of the property, either of beech or mixed. Fascias, lounge floor, drainage in the car-park are jobs still to be done. Doug is pricing up these jobs and will arrange a couple of work weekends. There was talk of a partition in the Foreman's Lounge to separate the sexes in scout groups etc.. There are more of these types of groups staying at the cottage. There was also talk of partitioning the showers to allow individual showers. It was agreed that it would be too expensive and the changing room would then need partitioning too. Apparently, plans were drawn up years ago so we could dig them out if it really becomes an issue. It wasn't felt that it would increase guest or membership numbers.

This year saw two other committee members stand down. Richard Carey (Caving Secretary) has left the group and Dave Tooke (Tackle Master) is working in the Sudan. Lee said in Dave Tooke's absence that the lifeline had been updated and that ladder is well stocked. Julie Hesketh asked if we are going to replace the SRT rope and was told that we will replace it bit by bit as agreed at the EGM.

Tim Francis, the Recorder / Librarian, said that due to work commitments he was concentrating on the Recording part of his post and keeping up with the committee minutes. Between 50 and 55 newsletters go to other clubs on exchange. The backlog has been cleared and it is now up to date.

The Social Secretary, Linda Milne, reported on the social events of the MCG 50th Anniversary: The Journal is on the way which Yvonne Rowe and Malcolm Cotter have done work towards. £670 was raised from the raffle and the auction. Suggestions for its use include a scaffold tower for caver training, but it would need inspecting and testing annually. We need to check on the cost of testing as it could be expensive? A scaffold tower would be good for beginners who have never tried rope or ladder before. Jonathan said it fits in with the aims of the Group. John Crowsley brings groups to the cottage who would use it and we need to encourage new and younger members.

A major project this year has been the removal of the diseased beech trees. The usable wood has been planked and is being seasoned. It will be sold to cover some of the cost of felling. Other bits can be used to make tables etc. The planks could make a table for the cottage – we have needed a new one for years. The planks are no more than 2 feet wide and 1 ½ inches thick. It was suggested that they need to be at least 2 inches thick for a refectory table.

Several posts for the new committee had attracted no nominations. After some arm-twisting, the committee emerged as follows:

Secretary	remains unfilled
Treasurer	Martin Rowe
Tacklemaster	Martin Peck (to be co-opted by the committee)
Recorder/Librarian	Tim
Cottage Warden	Doug Harris
Editor	Yvonne Rowe
Caving Secretary	Bob Templeman (to be co-opted by the committee)
Social Secretary	Linda Milne

Malcolm Cotter agreed to continue as Gift Aid administrator. He was applauded for his work. Keith Knight continues as Rescue Warden and Lee Hawkswell fills the vacancy for Access and Conservation officer. The group's new Examiners are Fiona Kempston and Anne Pittman. Until we can co-opt a Secretary, Malcolm will liaise with the Charity Commissioners

We need ideas for the Group's Hidden Earth '05. Louisa Minahan and Martin Rowe are to co-ordinate and have some ideas already.

Tim Francis proposed that we re-instate the London pub meet to help invoke interest in the Group – a point of contact. Numbers have dropped since pub meets



The National Caving Association (NCA) was formally dissolved at the Special General Meeting held at Alvechurch on Saturday (12 March).

All functions, assets and liabilities have been transferred to the British Caving Association (BCA) and a new governing Council has been elected.

The BCA website is: <http://www.british-caving.org.uk/>

The new BCA Secretary is:

PAULA GRGICH-WARK
The Rock Centre
Station Hill
Chudleigh
DEVON TQ13 0EE
<mailto:secretary@british-caving.org.uk>

Paula is a member of the Devon SS



The MCG cottage is now on a kerbside recycling scheme. All members and guests are requested to separate waste and use the recycling box for:

Paper - newspapers, magazines, telephone directories & junk mail, (but unfortunately not cardboard).

Glass bottles & jars. Please wash out first.

Cans (both drink and food-cans). Please wash out first.

Aluminium foil.

Clothing - Please place in a separate plastic bag to keep it dry and don't put clothes out on wet days.

Pairs of shoes / trainers.

A local member will place the box at the kerbside on collection days.

Earwig in on the committee meeting held on 09.04.05

Brian Snell and Wayne Hiscox are planning to finish the roof gully in June.

Some window frames, fascia boards and an apex are rotten. Doug has got prices for plastic, wood and hard-wood and will put together a cost estimate.

Hot water situation was sorted by re-setting the thermostat although it still needs watching.

We should quarry-tile the whole of the lounge floor.

The wood from the felled beech trees should not be burnt until next year. There is plenty of old wood in the shed.

More mattress covers are to be bought, for the 8 room.

The drains were investigated and pipe repaired and reconnected. Inspection covers have been added at both junctions. The covers used are rated at 17.5 tonnes.

96 membership renewals, 4 resignations (Simon Goddard, Eric Dowley, Stephen Jones and Richard Cary), 8 non payers: Paul Craddy, Fiona Crozier, Stephen Duckworth, Phil Eliot, Roy Oxlade, Andy Tizzard, Roger Wallington and Marcus Ward.

Yv's droppings

DT: "Tim, was it you that was blowing the biggest?"

DH: "I haven't done much lately – only the beech tree."

(Those who have seen the results from the tree coming down will know what an understatement this is).

ceased. Tim will announce a venue, evening and time in a future newsletter.

If subs/insurance is not paid promptly, members become lapsed members. Lapsed members are ex-members, but can rejoin. If someone joins the Group mid-way through the year, he/she pays a reduced rate with the year being broken down into four quarters for this. Mike Lovell said there should be a penalty for late payers, e.g. a re-joining fee, as it creates a lot more work for the committee, especially the Treasurer. Direct Debit would be more flexible. Standing orders are fixed. To be looked into by the committee.

The 2006 AGM will be on 1st April 2006 at 10:00am at the Hunters Lodge Inn, and the informal half-yearly meeting will be on 8th October at Nordrach Cottage.

It would be nice to see some new faces at these meetings. The MCG is run by its members, for its members. The current generation of meeting attendees is getting older and we need new blood to make the meetings representative of the membership. Remember—if you don't attend, your views won't be heard. **Yvonne**



Following the AGM, yet another successful AGM dinner took place at Lyncombe Lodge Hotel.

At the risk of sounding repetitive we enjoyed good food and good company. With only 34 guests the atmosphere was cosy and we were entertained by Alan (Goon) Jefferies (above, centre), from the Grampian Caving Club who gave us an hilarious potted history of his caving career. Our thanks to Alan.

We had a particularly good collection of raffle items which raised £65. Thanks to everyone who donated items.

The evening ended with the usual rounds of flaming liqueurs, over imbibing and spontaneous sociable behaviour!

Linda Milne

Logbook Extracts, February - April 2005

Week commencing 14.02.05 – Doug Harris felled two of the beech trees outside the cottage.

19.02.2002 Upper Flood (Lee Hawkswell & Jacky Ankerman). Stream in good spate. 10½°. Lavatory Trap quite low, but canal quite high! No thanks [JA]

25.02.2005 Riwaka resurgence, New Zealand (TimF, LouisaM) Whilst we were in New Zealand we met up with a few of the local cavers from the Nelson Caving Club plus picked up a copy of New Zealand Caving from Moira Lipyeat (the author) of the Marlborough caving Club. Popped into the Nelson Caving Club hut which is up on Tanaka Hill near Harwood Hole. Joel and Lump (Martin Graves) are out there on a two week expedition diving in Riwaka Resurgence and climbing avens beyond Sump 3.

We went in Riwaka for a tourist jolly as there's now a dug second entrance that bypasses the entrance sumps. Pretty, wriggly sort of stuff pops out in a huge chamber. The route further in is a bit tricky to find but Joel had left us with a little hand drawn map. A huge boulder pile hides the route to a fantastic stomping passage which apparently floods horrendously in wet weather. A six hour trip for us – it shouldn't take that long though if you know where you're going. [TF]

27.02.2002 GB Ladder Dig (LeeH, Doug Harris, Richard Perry). General tourist trip into Gorge, over Bridge, down White Passage, up into Ladder Dig. Back out

via Waterfall. Richard (new member) enjoyed himself. [DH]

05.03.2005 Swildon's (Geoff Beale, Mick Norton, + Bracknell & DCC). I went as far as the 20 ft ladder pitch to test out my elbow which had an injury several months ago. It passed the test! Water very cold but not much of it. [GB]

19.13.2005 Upper Flood (Louisa Minahan, Tim Francis). Air 10.5°C, water 10°C. Lovely sunny day but caving as usual. Heaved out all the spoil left in the choke on 5th Feb. Andrew's grotto is now full up so on the next trip we'll have to pull back to the Red Room. We then went into Golden Chamber and rigged up a scaffolding frame to protect the floor. This needs finishing plus the bolts are only finger tight. Please take in a spanner and tighten.

Easter 2005

25-26.03.2005 Sewer investigation and repair (DougH, MickN, Malcolm Cotter) Over the work weekend (Feb 5/6th) a blockage had been located at the cess pit end of the sewer pipe and an inspection hole was needed. Doug excavated the site half way through the month and found that the bend had fractured and the pipe had subsided about 3". On Good Friday the weather was fine, a trench was dug to expose the entire pipe length and a spare bend section was fitted – I don't want this report to put too much emphasis on the nature of the job, but it is someone else's turn if it happens again!

We realised that an inspection pit was desirable at the pipe bend but it was not possible to obtain a suitable half pipe bend so we decided to leave the linkage as before but put an inspection hole above. At the cottage end the main electricity cable was encountered. Doug and Mick prepared footings for inspection holes at each end of the pipework while Malcolm started to infill the trench. [MOC]

[Note: Doug has continued to build the inspection pits and one had been completed by the AGM weekend. [JG]]

Foreman's Lounge (LouisaM, TimF) Helped by Joan on the Friday, we painted the Foreman's Lounge (16 room) – more fun than investigating and repairing the sewer! (Ivory isn't the most exciting colour but it is very easy to live with) [LM]

27.03.2005 OFD Columns Open Day (Martin Peck, LeeH, JackyA, LouisaM, TimF). Tour of the fossil stuff via the Labyrinth to the Columns. We avoided the puddle on the way back. Did a spot of touring down Salubrious, The Judge etc. Supper back at the Westminster c/o Jacky [TF]

28.03.2005 Upper Flood (TimF, MalcolmC, DougH, MickN). Down to the Red Room. Malcolm and Mick moved rocks and spoil from the crawl down to Andrew's Grotto while Tim and Doug removed the stocked up soil from Andrew's Grotto to the bottom side of the squeeze in the crawl. Then we went into Golden Chamber, Tim and Doug assembled scaffolding at the bottom of the chamber. A streamway could be heard from the dig site. [DH]

29.03.2005 (Mick Norton) On visiting the 'free' Axbridge Museum I was pleased to see that the two pieces of human skull that I excavated a few years ago from White Cliff Cave, Axbridge, are now on display. No walks as extremely wet, so I am going home. Nordrach Cottage car park flooded! [MN]

AGM and Dinner Weekend

09.04.2005 Blackmoor Shaft (TimF, LouisaM) Viewers: Doug, Malcolm and Norma. Laddered down the verdant shaft to go and look at Malcolm's dig - moderately interesting but seems like bang will be needed. Good luck. Then popped over to check at the archaeological dig. It's a rift/fault so I suppose water might have gone down there. [TF]

09.04.2005 Pierre's Pot (Peat Bennett, Julie Hesketh). Good quick sporty trip after the AGM to go and look at hanging gardens. Couldn't quite remember the way but got there eventually. Julie had fun on the way up the slot. Were planning to walk back but luckily Keith gave us a lift. [Peat]

10.04.2005 G.B. (Martin Rowe, MartinP, Cara Allison). Usual round trip with one detour to a side passage and boulder choke. About 2 hours. [MR]

10.04.2005 Longwood (Peat, JulieH + 2 Grampian members). Did round trip down wet way and down Swing Pitch. Out via dry route. Good sporty trip was enjoyed by all [Peat]

Cottage work weekend

Thank you to all members who attended the March work weekend. A lot of jobs were completed. Thanks also to Jacky for cooking us a curry on the Saturday evening.

Easter turned into a mini work weekend as well. Doug, Mick and Malcolm excavated the sewage pipe across the car park, unblocked the pipe (not a pleasant task) and repaired the broken joint. The mains cable was found as well. To help with future access they've installed inspection chambers above each of the two bends. Doug is soldiering on with this but he may well welcome some help/company with the bricklaying - the second inspection chamber by the wood shed is much deeper so needs quite a few layers of bricks. If anyone thinks they have some spare time to help please could they ring him.

Tim and Louisa, with help from Joan, did two full days of decorating in the Foreman's Lounge. Crawling around under those bunks for hours on end was not the easiest task. Anyhow all the walls, ceiling and skirting boards were sanded down and given two coats of paint. Don't worry about the colour - the walls are in ivory so they are totally inoffensive. We may carry the theme on into the other bedrooms so take a look and see what you think.

More Yv's droppings

YR: "It's not a club, it's a society."

JG: "Did you see that clip on the radio?"

J*: "Get off me I don't want to be kissed." (to DH's dog, Buddy, honest!)



The Beech Trees have now been felled. Anyone who would like to have some of the wood, please could they contact Linda Milne or myself to arrange a convenient time for collection.

We are asking for a Donation towards the payment of the job, to be put back into Club funds.

Doug Harris (Cottage Warden).

Guest Groups: Lads, Lasses and Leaders

Some of the guest groups using the cottage are youth groups who are required to provide separate sleeping accommodation for boys, girls and leaders – so they need to use of all three bunk rooms. Any members turning up are asked to liaise with the leader with regard to which bunks are available for them to use. These bookings will be appear as “M/F/Leaders” (male/female/leaders) on page 10 of MCG News. Other bookings where separate rooms are not required will appear as “Unisex”.

We will try to email MCG ‘regulars’ when this situation is likely to arise but you can check on the MCG website which has a link to www.caver.plus.com/MCG and then click on ‘MCG Current Bookings’ which leads to a regularly updated chart.

We need guest bookings to help finance the cottage for members, so your cooperation in this matter would be appreciated.

Working at Height regulations

Representatives of the outdoor adventure sector have welcomed a decision in principle by Minister of State at the Department for Work and Pensions, Jane Kennedy to allow for the development of sector specific Temporary Working at Heights Directive regulations in relation to specified adventure activities such as climbing and caving.

The sector and MPs had lobbied the Minister following lengthy negotiations with the Health and Safety Executive, on the grounds that the Directive was not aimed at sporting activities, and that imposing it in its entirety could have severe and damaging effects on safety and businesses.

Alistair Burt MP for North East Bedfordshire accompanied John Cousins and Doug Jones of Mountain Leader Training UK, Tom Redfern of the British Caving Association and Brian Lamb of the Institute of Outdoor Learning to a meeting with the Minister and Health and Safety Commission Chairman Bill Callaghan on March 8th.

Alistair Burt MP said “We are very pleased with the outcome. The sector always recognised the point of the Directive in relation to those whose work temporarily involved working above ground, as in scaffolding or construction, but felt very strongly that it was never intended for sport. This view is held throughout the EU, and was confirmed in a legal opinion prepared for the Minister last November, which offered the opportunity that we had been seeking of allowing National Governing Bodies in climbing and caving to remain the key guardians of safety, a responsibility they have exercised superbly over the years. This decision finally lays to rest the threat of inappropriate safety provisions”

John Cousins, Executive Director of Mountain Leader Training UK said “we set out to ensure that adventure activity providers could continue their activities unhindered and believe that the proposal to exempt us from specific elements of the Regulations is an excellent outcome. We are grateful to everyone who has made their views known and for the support of the media and politicians, especially Alistair Burt and Jane Kennedy. We can return to the business of developing good practice and enjoying our sports.”

Box Mines

English Nature are to install gates on all entrances to Box Mine during 2005. EN are concerned about the possibility of a "catastrophic event" (such as the lighting of a bonfire within the mine wiping out large numbers of bats). There is NO suggestion that cavers/mine explorers have participated in any antisocial behaviour that might threaten the bats. The gates are being installed to protect wildlife, not to stop interested parties from having access to this fascinating underground complex.

The CSCC is participating in consultations over the proposed future access policy and feedback from the wider caving/underground community is now being sought.

CSCC is strongly urging EN to allow unrestricted BUT CONTROLLED access throughout the year. A combination lock or multiple keys being available at, say, the Quarryman's Arms have been suggested, as has use of the CSCC standard padlock for which many clubs have a key. The CSCC also urged that having insurance should not be a pre-requisite for visitors to the site.

Two online discussion forums have been started and may be accessed through the links below. If you have a view (Should gates be installed? How should bats be protected? What's the best way of securing the site? Who should have keys/combination? Should it be "access for all"? Access versus conservation...etc), please make it known.

<http://ukcaving.com/board/viewtopic.php?p=6213#6213>

<http://www.darkplaces.co.uk/phpBB2/viewtopic.php?t=345>

Alternatively you may email the CSCC Conservation & Access officer at: <mailto:canda@csc.org.uk>

MENDIP RESCUE ORGANIZATION

MRO



**British Cave Rescue Council
CONFERENCE**

**PRIDDY
2005**

**July 1st - 3rd 2005
Eastwater Farm. Priddy**

**Tickets (Conference Activities, Food & Stomp):
£20 in advance, £25 on the gate**

Hosted in 2005 by the Mendip Rescue Organization the conference will look at various aspects of cave rescue, with demonstrations and talks from other cave rescue organizations from around the UK. Recent developments, new techniques & equipment, rescue practices, workshops etc., together with the ever-popular Rescue Race! Many activities will be hands-on, and underground where practical. Delegates are expected from overseas and interested parties are welcome from all caving clubs and further afield. The venue will effectively be a 'tented village' with conference facilities, bar and food available. There will be a live band/stomp on the Saturday night. Camping is available locally, together with accommodation at local Caving Clubs, Inns, B&Bs etc. Check the website for more details.

- Talks
- New Equipment
- Demonstrations
- Rescue Practices
- Workshops
- Rescue Race
- Bar & Food
- Stomp
- Live Bands



Access will be by ticket only.

For more details and advance bookings contact

www.mendip-rescue.org

Bob Cork, MRO Secretary on 01749 679458 Bobcork57@aol.com

**Group Headquarters**

Nordrach Cottage,
Charterhouse-on-
Mendip, Blagdon,
Bristol BS40 7XW
☎ 01761 462797
Grid Ref ST.5147.5606

**Custodian Trustees**

Pat Walsh
Malcolm Cotter
Jon Roberts
Pete Matthews

Rescue Warden

Keith Knight
01329 280386

Conservation Officer

Lee Hawkswell
01985 212690

Examiners

Fiona Kempston
(MCG member)
Anne Pittman
(External)

Gift Aid Administrator

Malcolm Cotter
01784 252643

Booking the Cottage

Please make bookings
for Groups (whether MCG
or Guests) through [Joan
Goddard](mailto:Joan.Goddard@btinternet.com) 01934 732760
to avoid double bookings.

**GROUP INFORMATION**

Weekly Meeting	At The Hunters Lodge, Somerset, Tuesdays at about 10pm		
Monthly Meeting	At the Group HQ on the first Fri/Sat/Sunday of the month		
On-line Meeting	http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/mendip-caving-group/		
Accommodation	Available at the Group HQ (for members and guests)		
Cottage Fees	MCG members, members' children, SWCC, NPC	£	2.00
(per night)	Guest clubs and member's guests	£	3.00
Season Ticket	Available to members only £40.00		
Subscription 2005	Full and Probationary (excluding BCA insurance)	£	30.00
	Associate Members (excluding BCA insurance)	£	15.00
BCA Insurance	Cavers £18.00 Non-cavers £6.00 (all members must have cover)		
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		

CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR 2005

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TELEPHONE
May 6/7/8th	Mendip	Members Weekend		
Jun 3/4/5th	Mendip	Members Weekend		
Jul 1/2/3rd	Mendip	Membs. w/e and British Cave Rescue Council Conference		
Jul 8/9/10th	Surrey	NAHMO conference		
Aug 5/6/7th	Mendip	Members Weekend		
Aug 21-28th	Athens	International Congress of Speleology		
Sep 2/3/4th	Mendip	Members Weekend		
Sep 23/24/25th	Mendip	Hidden Earth 2005	BCRA / BCA	
Oct 7/8/9th	Mendip	Members Weekend		
Oct 8th	Mendip	Half-yearly meeting, Nordrach Cottage		
Oct 8th	Mendip	Evening social t.b.a	Linda Milne	01420 562315

THE 2005—2006 MCG COMMITTEE

Secretary	vacant	secretary@m-c-g.org.uk
Treasurer	Martin Rowe	m_rowe@btopenworld.com Abingdon, 11 Church Hill, Arnside, Cumbria LA5 0DB
Tacklemaster	Martin Peck	martin@mvpeck.co.uk 116 Rutten Lane, Yarnton, Kidlington, Oxford OX5 1LS
Recorder/Librarian	Tim Francis	t.francis@research-int.com Flat 6, 16 Lambert Avenue, Richmond, Surrey, TW9 4QR
Cottage Warden	Doug Harris	dougharris31@yahoo.co.uk 2 Lynch Crescent, Winscombe, Somerset BS25 1AS
Editor	Yvonne Rowe	yvonne.rowe@btopenworld.com Abingdon, 11 Church Hill, Arnside, Cumbria LA5 0DB
Caving Secretary	Bob Templeman	bob.templeman@btinternet.com 11 Ebury Road, Rickmansworth, Herts WD3 1BL
Social Secretary	Linda Milne	Linda.Milne@btinternet.com Woodfalls, Abbey Road, Medstead, Alton, Hants GU34 5PB

COTTAGE BOOKINGS

Latest updates at <http://www.caver.plus.com/MCG/>

Who	Date Arrive	Date Leave	Nights	Beds	Rooms
Lindeth College	Fri 20/05/05	Sun 22/05/05	2	24	M/F/Leaders
John Crowsley	Sat 11/06/05	Sun 12/03/05	1	7	Unisex