

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

1st April 2006



www.m-c-g.org.uk

Founded 1954

Notice of Annual General Meeting, 2006

The Annual General Meeting of the Mendip Caving Group will be held in the Back Room of the Hunters Lodge Inn on Saturday 1st April 2006, commencing at 10.00am.

Agendum

(Chairman: to be confirmed)

1. Apologies for absence
2. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 09.04.05

MINUTES OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 9TH APRIL 2005 AT THE HUNTERS LODGE INN



The Mendip Caving group is a Registered Charity No. 270088

Chairman: Jonathan Roberts
Present: 23 Full members
Others present (non voting): 2 probationary

1. Apologies for absence

Andrew Brander, Lynn Furneaux, Tony Knibbs, Denise Knibbs, Mick Norton, Brian Snell

2. Minutes of the AGM held on the 9th April 2004

An amendment was made to the comments on the Editors report. The Yahoo site is moderated by Martin Rowe rather than controlled.

Accepted *nem con* as a true record of the meeting. Signed by the chairman.

3. Minutes of the EGM held on the 9th October 2004

Accepted *nem con* as a true record of the meeting. Signed by the chairman.

Outstanding actions: Malcolm Cotter to draft a paper for the newsletter, which provides a considered analysis of the issues surrounding why there is a need to update the regulation of the group and how this might be achieved by a change in Committee structure.

4. Matters arising from the AGM and EGM

Matters arising from the AGM: None.

Matters arising from the EGM: it was felt that further investigation was required on whether gift aid can be reclaimed on behalf of the full subscription. Or does the insurance element need to be separated out for full caving members?

Action: Malcolm Cotter and Fiona Kempston to investigate and report back to the Committee.

5. Officers reports and matters arising from those reports

These were circulated in advance of the meeting with the newsletter except for the Tacklemaster's and Caving Secretary's report. Both officers had resigned towards the end of the year. Each officer gave a brief summary of his or her report and highlighted key points of interest. The Group expressed particular appreciation to the Secretary and Treasurer for sorting out the BCA Insurance and leadership of the 50th Anniversary celebrations.

Secretary

It was pointed out that it is even more important than in previous years for subscriptions to be paid on time due to the deadline imposed by the Public Liability Scheme. Members were reminded that all members must pay insurance, whether they are active cavers or not. The Secretary indicated that after the disruption caused by the insurance scheme the next challenge will be to increase membership numbers again: we are now at less than 100 members. It was felt that the website needed to be up to date to help encourage new members. And we need to be caving more often so please use the facilities and caving equipment and especially on members' weekends.

As a general point it was felt that more active cavers were needed to spread the load particularly with respect to beginners. Bob Templeman offered to take novice groups underground. It was clarified that non-members are not covered by the MCG's Public Liability Insurance policy.

Treasurer

The new system of collecting bed night fees is working well and considered by the Treasurer to be a great improvement on the old method.

It was clarified that the Group does not subsidise 'phone calls but does pay charges and line rental. It is important for there to be a 'phone at Nordrach Cottage in case of emergencies and specifically a cave rescue. A suggestion was that line rental should be shown as a separate line in the accounts.

Editor

Invariably the Editor has received plenty of articles for the newsletter this year apart from the last edition. Peat Bennett was thanked for providing the photo of Golden Chamber that is now the new masthead.

Cottage Warden

Major cottage work will be required this year due to the increasing age of the cottage. In particular the woodwork is starting to decay, and without the protection of the beech trees the cottage will potentially be more vulnerable to the weather. The cottage now looks very 'open' from the road and it was suggested that we replace the trees with hedging that could act as a screen. The drains have now been sorted (Malcolm Cotter, Doug Harris, Mick Norton).

Projects that remain uncompleted are: replacement of the fascia boards, the lounge floor and enhanced drainage for the car park. These jobs are being costed up. Potential projects for the future were discussed:

- splitting up the Foreman's Lounge into two rooms to help with guest bookings.
- putting photos on the website of each room of the cottage.

Tackle Master

A verbal report was provided by the Secretary on behalf of the Tackle Master. The backlog of old ropes that needed replacing has been sorted. Additional tethers and pulleys have been purchased.

Recorder / Librarian

Between 50 and 55 newsletters go to other clubs on exchange and the backlog has now been cleared. A signed copy of the caves of New Zealand has been donated (Tim Francis, Louisa Minahan).

Caving Secretary

The Caving Secretary has resigned and no report was submitted either in writing or verbally.

Social Secretary

A quick round up of the 50th Anniversary events was provided. A publication to commemorate the year is under way. £670 was raised from the auction and raffle and the Committee are looking for ideas on what to spend the money on. Ideas were sought from the wider membership. Suggestions included a scaffold tower that could be used for ladder and line / SRT training.

The beech tree has been planked and is being seasoned. It was suggested that the planks could be used to make a table for the lounge. The planks are two feet wide and 1½ inches thick. Concern was expressed as to whether the wood would be thick enough – at least 2 inches is required for a refectory table.

Custodian Trustees

One of the Custodian Trustees aims is to protect our investments against inflation and if possible gain a bit as well. It was noted that where possible it is advantageous to reinvest any dividends received. It was suggested that the Custodian Trustees meet up to review the performance and range of the investment portfolio.

Gift Aid Administrator

An excellent system is currently in place whereby new members are immediately sent a Gift Aid form.

Rescue Warden

Nothing extra to report.

Conservation and Access

Nothing extra to report.

6. Election of Honorary Officers

The following officers were elected unopposed and unanimously:

Treasurer: Martin Rowe

Cottage Warden: Doug Harris

Editor: Yvonne Rowe

Recorder/Librarian: Tim Francis

Social Secretary: Linda Milne

The following have agreed to be considered for co-option at the next Committee meeting:

Tackle Master: Martin Peck

Caving Secretary: Bob Templeman

No nominations or volunteers were received for the position of Hon. Secretary. It was agreed that the Treasurer would act as a temporary point of contact until the post is filled.

Action: the Committee to seek a volunteer.

7. Election of other officers

The following were elected unopposed and unanimously:

Rescue Warden: Keith Knight

Conservation and Access Officer: Lee Hawkswell

Gift Aid: Malcolm Cotter

8. Election of examiners 2005/2006

Fiona Kempston and Anne Pittman were elected unopposed and unanimously.

9. Motions

No other motions were proposed.

10. Any other business

- It was suggested that we revive the pub meet in the London area.

Action: Tim Francis to co-ordinate dates and venue.

- BCA insurance rates for new members are set by calendar quarters. There was discussion around what methods could be used to help ease the burden on the Treasurer. Direct debit, although flexible, was deemed as being too expensive. Standing orders have the disadvantage of being fixed and any automated system needs to be sufficiently flexible to allow for changing insurance rates.

11. Date and venue of next Annual General Meeting

This was agreed as being on the 1st April 2006 at 10.00am in the Back Room of the Hunters Lodge Inn.

(The half yearly will be on the 8th October 2005)

3. Agreement that the minutes (above) are a true record of that meeting

4. Matters arising

5. Officers reports and matters arising from those reports.

5.1 Secretary's Report 2005-6 *Tim Francis*

Well I wasn't expecting to be writing this report this time last year, but in the absence of anyone else volunteering, I offered to step into the breach after the 2005 AGM. Other commitments mean that I don't have the greatest amount of time these days, so please accept my apologies if I haven't been that active as I was in previous years in the role. I have attended key CSCC and CCC meetings on behalf of the MCG to maintain representation on key access bodies.

Underground

Although of course we love the cottage the MCG still manages to get underground on a regular basis. Thanks to Bob for his sterling work in getting a meets programme together. There is now something of interest for everyone on a monthly basis. We've also been doing a lot of surface research. Charnel Shaft has been almost certainly been relocated. A re-opening and descending ceremony is to follow. Cow Hole has been checked out and found to be open and even descendable for those of a sporting disposition. Ubley Hill Pot is still blocked and the air quality rather poor.

Upper Flood of course has remained the focus of digging activity and it was great to see that again the Group has made progress at the end of the cave. It seems strange to be talking about 'beyond Golden Chamber' as an actual entity and the diggers are confident for lots more passage to come. Several new faces have been involved in the project and enthusiasm is high. I would recommend that the doom and gloom merchants in cyber space take a look for themselves to see what the fuss is all about.

The second new project started in 2005 was Lime Kiln dig / Roman Rift / Roman Rake. This lies upslope from Waterwheel and should make for a nice summer surface project. The Group were extremely saddened to hear that John Cornwell, the initiator of the project, died of a heart attack. I have passed on our condolences. I need to pin down English Nature for a site visit to discuss spoil removal so digging has been delayed a few months I'm afraid. So far we are faring better than the Big Roman Dig team who were chased off by Arsenic

The MCG donated monies for a new lid to be installed at Waterwheel but this never actually happened. A bit like the MCG chain for Blue Pencil which still hasn't be installed by the CSCC after nearly ten years. The old chain is down to a few millimetres so take care. Finally we have leaders for the (no longer) Lost Cave of Loxton. Ask Tim or Doug if you want a trip.

Overground

The cottage of course is the focal point for the Group. It is now showing its age so considerable efforts have been made by many members to keep our facilities in top condition. Doug has covered this in greater detail in his cottage warden's report but the main projects have been the removal of the beech trees, sorting out of the drains, painting of the foreman's lounge and new floor in the lounge.

Members attended the Cave Rescue Conference at Priddy in July and the BCRA Conference at Churchill in September. At the latter Peat Bennett entered the photographic competition with a portfolio of prints from the Group's 50th Anniversary Expedition to Slovenia. And I gave a talk on the MCG's activities over the last 5 years in Argentina. No foreign club meet was held this year but there were trips to Mallorca and Argentina organised by MCG members.

A packed schedule of formal and impromptu social events, care of Linda, was enjoyed by the regulars (more people please!). The AGM was notable for the thoroughly entertaining talk given by Alan Jeffreys and an admirable performance by the Hon Sec post dinner. The less said the better on that score. Armchair enthusiasts who didn't make it to the cottage slide shows were kept entertained in the year by two caving films – "The Descent" and "The Cave".

Miscellaneous

I have received and sent countless emails in the year, some more interesting than others. The more unusual enquiries have concerned topics such as the origins of the name "Coopers Hole" and a request for information on the progression/regression of ice in Grotte Casteret. Much of the correspondence has still been concerned with the machinations of the BCA and insurance. Martin has dealt admirably with many of these and I am extremely grateful to him for this. The workload involved in sorting this out is still much too onerous although this year was less painful than the last.

Membership (102 at 15/03/06) has remained stable across the last 12 months with new members replacing those who have lapsed or resigned. Club finances remain very healthy and we are constantly monitoring club income and investments to ensure the club's future. We do have an ageing membership profile but I remain as optimistic as ever that the club will still be here in another 50 years time. However the Committee have not rested on their laurels. Beginner's weekends will feature as part of the calendar but we are actively looking into new ways of getting new members. Please speak to Linda if you have any suggestions. For example the MCG now has an entry on the Blagdon Village website to encourage more local interest in caving and new communications materials are being designed.

Income and Expenditure sheet for Year ending 31st December 2005

2004		2005	2004		2005
£	Cottage income	£	£	Cottage expenditure	£
276.99	Changing room donations	19.94	835.32	Building Insurance	893.88
140.00	Cotag deposits	100.00	41.10	Coal	40.29
31.00	Day fees	15.00	46.50	Cotag refund	25.00
1451.50	Guest fees	251.00	220.91	Cotags/keys purchased	254.04
	Guest groups	1269.00	546.77	Electricity	943.09
847.00	Members fees	502.00	33.88	Gas	42.62
60.00	Season tickets	120.00	89.39	Household	94.60
470.00	Subs 2005	456.53	549.43	Maintenance	470.97
	Subs 2006 (17%)	85.00		Phonecalls made	6.28
55.80	Telephone	<u>34.10</u>	125.64	Phone line rental	125.97
3055.30	Sub totals	2852.57	173.28	Rates (NNDR)	183.57
			198.69	Rates (water)	234.26
			263.54	Refuse collection	<u>290.68</u>
			3124.45	Sub totals	3605.25
	Cottage renewal fund			Cottage renewal fund	
	Subs 2005	456.53			
	Subs 2006 (17%)	<u>85.00</u>			
	Sub totals	541.53	0.00	Sub totals	0.00
	General income			General expenditure	
5031.38	Annual dinner	909.10	50.35	Access/keys	10.44
15.90	CCC permits	30.00	49.25	Admin Committee	107.15
	Donations	238.29		Admin General Mtgs	43.72
1.68	Other	113.70		Admin Membership	111.87
1401.00	BCA m/ship 2004	1254.00		Admin Trustees	2.53
	BCA m/ship 2005	190.00	5448.68	Annual Dinner	911.70
44.75	Shop	43.00	1549.00	BCA m/ship for MCG	155.00
1955.00	Subs 2005	1824.44		BCA m/ship members 2004	1254.00
	Subs 2006 (66%)	340.00		BCA m/ship members 2005	190.00
754.21	Tax refund (GAD)	<u>747.84</u>	354.40	Caving equipment	0.00
8449.71	Sub totals	5690.37		CCC permits 14 days	20.00
				CCC permits annual	6.00
			27.38	Cottage Improvement	1200.07
	Investment income			Entrances and digs	46.00
238.45	Bristol Water	146.54		Goodwill	15.00
78.54	Credit Suisse	83.40	98.67	Library books	266.43
91.03	Henderson NPI Global	99.77		Library storage	60.02
69.78	Interest COIF Cotag	77.57		Website	5.50
55.98	Interest COIF Cottage	86.47	1.68	Other expenses	7.50
128.31	Interest COIF General	153.85	293.99	Newsletter	137.93
180.43	Interest COIF Trustees	200.56	123.00	Subs to other clubs	<u>45.00</u>
205.51	M & G Charifund Acc	223.03	7896.80	Sub totals	4595.86
199.87	M & G Charifund Inc	206.38			
74.73	New Star	90.73		Invest inc reinvested	
81.45	Rathbone	83.87		M & G Charifund Acc	223.03
6.20	Solus	<u>32.15</u>		New Star	<u>90.73</u>
1171.83	Sub totals	1484.32		Sub totals	313.76
12676.84	Grand totals	10568.79	11021.25	Grand totals	8514.87
		-8514.87			
	2005 Excess inc over exp	2053.92			

BALANCE SHEET YEAR ENDING 31 DECEMBER 2005

	2004	2005
Other Accounts		
Alliance and Leicester (Treas)	£3,362.07	£4,265.65
less unrepresented cheques		-£272.01
COIF Cotag Account	£1,709.57	£1,787.14
COIF Cottage Account	£1,533.99	£2,146.46
COIF Deposit Acc (Treas)	£3,390.82	£3,544.67
COIF Deposit Acc (Trustee)	£4,420.28	£4,620.84
Petty cash		£377.90
Total Other Accounts	£14,416.73	£16,470.65
Investments		
Bristol Water	£436.80	£567.04
Credit Suisse	£2,045.82	£2,358.51
Henderson NPI Global	£2,721.44	£3,106.32
M&G Charifund Acc	£4,285.44	£5,397.53
M&G Charifund Inc	£4,552.95	£4,849.88
New Star	£2,247.54	£2,647.72
Rathbone Income Fund	£2,185.62	£2,600.12
Schroeder US	£2,103.24	£2,493.63
Solus UK	£1,432.39	£1,674.54
Total investments	£22,011.24	£25,695.29
Other Assets (insurable value)		
Cottage and land	£213,369.00	£222,676.00
Cottage contents	£38,000.00	£38,000.00
	£251,369.00	£260,676.00
Year end total	£287,796.97	£302,841.94
2005 Increase in cottage value	£9,307.00	
2005 Increase in investments	£3,684.05	
2005 Excess inc over exp 2005	£2,053.92	
	£302,841.94	£302,841.94

5.2 Treasurer's Report 2005-6 Martin Rowe

2005 was a good year financially for the Group. The increase in Subs from £25 to £30 helped, as did the increase in Member's cottage fees from £1.50 to £2.00. As 2004 was our 50th anniversary, it is hard to make comparisons between 2004 and 2005. Overall, our income exceeded expenditure by £2053 (compared to £2545 in 2004).

Cottage income and expenditure. £5 of your subs (£2.50 for Associates) goes towards running the cottage. Income from Member's bednights was down, as expected, but fees from Guests have held up well.

There were big increases in the cost of building insurance, electric, and refuse collection. There was a 73% increase in our electric bills last year, and electricity prices are about to rise by another 20% or so. By the end of 2006 we are facing a 100% increase in our electric costs since 2004. Some of this increase is due to the

trend for people to expect the cottage to have full central heating. As a result, storage heaters are often left on the maximum settings, even when the cottage is unoccupied mid week.

The cottage is currently running at a loss of £750 per year. There are 3 ways to deal with this:

There were about 800 bednights at the cottage last year. Cottage fees could be increased to £3.00 for members and £4.00 for guests

Subs could be increased by £7.50 per member

There were only 251 member's bednights last year. Add to this the bednights for each of the 3 season ticket holders, and the total is about 350. So the average number of bednights per member is about 3.5 per year (less than 2 weekends). We could encourage more members to use the cottage more often (and more guest groups as well).

Cottage renewal fund. £5 of your subs (£2.50 for Associates) is set aside in the expectation that major work will be required on the cottage in the future. I have shown this in the accounts this year.

General income and expenditure. £20 of your subs (£10 for associates) goes to the general fund. Malcolm Cotter added £747.84 by reclaiming tax under the Gift Aid scheme. Several members made donations to the group during the year, totalling £238.29. This is eligible for Gift Aid. All moneys collected for PLI were passed directly to BCA. The annual dinner made a slight loss of £2.60. Cottage improvements set us back £1200 but £100 has been recovered from the sale of timber from the felled beech trees. Overall, there was a surplus of about £1100.

Investments The Custodians report covers the performance of the investments. No new investments were made. Most of our investments pay dividends or interest; however, 2 of the investments are different. Income of £223.03 was assimilated directly into M&G Charifund Accumulation and income of £90.73 was used to automatically purchase new shares in New Star Higher Inc. Fund. The reinvestment value is directly reflected in the list of investments.

5.3 Caving Secretary's Report 2005-6 *Bob Templeman*

With the publication of the 2006 Caving Meet Calendar for 2006, I trust that I have managed to cater for all individual tastes and competencies. I have restricted my activities to arrange meets to those caves, which require prior arrangements to obtain access and or provision of non-club leaders. However, I still rely on the membership to forward both requests and ideas especially I would like to hear from those who are prepared to organise/lead trips off Mendip.

To this end, I would like to thank Geoff Beale for his standing offer to take members when he visits OFD and additionally Arthur Spain for arranging the recent trip to the Box Freestone mines.

5.4 Cottage Warden's Report 2005-6 *Doug Harris*

At the beginning of the year, the sewer pipe was still giving trouble. So over the Easter weekend, I dug a trench to investigate the cause of the problem! The pipe had sunk about 6" and the 120 degree plastic bend had been bugged by constant rodding. So the sewage wasn't reaching the cess pit. I would like to thank Malcom Cotter and Mick Norton for their assistance in this grim task.

The pipe has now been raised. A new bend fitted and two access pits for maintenance over the bends for future maintenance. This took a lot of hours of my free time over the next few weeks.

On the same weekend, the Foreman's Lounge had a coat of paint and freshen up. Thanks to Louisa Minahan and Tim Francis.

The work weekend was attended by some new faces. The rotten timber above the back window of the Foreman's Lounge was replaced and lots of other jobs done. We are now burning the logs from the Beech tree. The lounge floor work is due to be replaced by the 2006 Agm. Thanks to Bryan Pittman and Wayne Hiscox and helpers.

Cotags- I have issued nine to date.

5.5 Tacklemaster's Report 2005-6 *Peat Bennett* (report will be given verbally)

5.6 Editor's Report 2005-6 *Yvonne Rowe*

Hello again. I have had many positive e-mails and verbal comments about the new-look newsletter (although not so new now); not only about its look but also its content. Martin and I trawled through magazines and other publications to see how they did things and we took some ideas from them. What members seem to like in particular are the inclusion of photos throughout and the shaded text boxes down the sides of the pages containing Group news, information and other snippets. Thanks for your positive com-

ments and constructive suggestions, for example, larger photos, the continuation of the page 1 article to follow on page 2 rather than elsewhere in the newsletter, and articles following straight on from one another rather than trying to make each one fit a page, or half a page, exactly (easier for me too).

Since the 2005 AGM I have only been able to produce six newsletters plus the special AGM publication- This has been due to lack of material, especially in the late summer/early autumn period. I was thinking of resurrecting the single page MCG Bulletin, used years ago during a similar period of quiet, so at least members would still receive current news, event details, and important dates. However, as you will all have seen more recently, things are picking up again with the February newsletter being a 12-pager! There are quite a few little Group projects taking place at the moment so I'm hoping for more material to come trickling in as progress (or lack of it) is made. We are all interested in anything you are doing - caving, digging, equipment notes etc., whatever and wherever, so please, an article and/or photos, no matter how brief (but no longer than two pages if possible) would be very welcome and much appreciated.

I missed two meetings during this year. I missed the Half-yearly Forum because I couldn't change my weekend shift at work, and the February committee meeting because I was unwell. The August meeting didn't (and rarely does) take place due to holidays, and the March meeting was cancelled because the floor tiling cement wouldn't set due to the unexpected and extreme cold, rendering full collage use impractical.

It just leaves me to thank some very important people who work quietly behind the scenes for the benefit of me and the Group - Mike Lovell who prints the newsletter (and has been doing so for as long as I can remember), Geoff Beale who envelopes, stamps and posts the newsletter, Brenda Wybrow who fills in for Geoff occasionally, and Martin Rowe who helps me with Microsoft Publisher and e-mailing the newsletter to those who receive an electronic copy (I'm still a sad technophobe!). Last but not least, thanks to everyone who sends me articles, news, information, snippets and photos—it really is much appreciated. Thank you.

I always say and will say again that the post of Editor could do with some new blood. You younger-than-me members are probably much more adept at using the computer and all its attributes than I am. However, if no-one else comes forward to fill the post I am happy to be nominated for another year.

5.7 Recorder/ Librarian's Report 2005-6 *Louisa Minahan*

Over the past year I have taken the minutes of our committee meetings and continued to distribute the MCG newsletter to our "exchange" clubs/organisations. Joan has continued her sterling work in the library.

5.8 Social Secretary's Report 2005-6 *Linda Milne*

This year we were back to our normal round of social events having 'come down' from a year of celebrations. There is always something going on over the members weekends, be it just a pub session or a cook in, so if you're at a loose end there will always be a welcome at Nordrach.

Last year

The AGM dinner was held at Lyncombe Lodge and where we were entertained by our guest speaker Alan (Goon) Jeffreys of Grampian Speleological Society. The half yearly was in November last year so we tried something different and went to the Fireworks at Priddy. It was a bit damp but it didn't put off the crowds! The Christmas dinner, again held at the cottage, was for me the highlight of the social calendar.

This year

We have re-instated the meets list this year and in line with this we have a social diary, currently on the notice board at the cottage, but it is also hoped to include it on the Web. Regular updates are posted in the newsletter and on Yahoo Groups.

The Annual Dinner is at the City Arms, Wells, a new venue. I hope that the lower than usual ticket price of £16.50 will attract more members along.

Finally, I would like to thank all those members who consistently support our social events and look forward to seeing a few more of you soon!

5.9 Other Officers' Reports

a. Trustees' Report

b. Gift Aid Report

c. Conservation and Access Officer's Report

d. Rescue Wardens Report *Keith Knight*

Well another year passes a still I have to arrange a rescue week end for the MCG members. Last year I attended the BCRC Cave rescue conference on Priddy .1st July The whole event was well organised and well attended the MRO did a grand job. The Friday evening there was a film show and much beer drinking. Saturday was a day of work shops both above and below ground. I did the Swindon's trip this was casualty diagnosis, splints, and a short carry section. Also got to try the dragon air breather, oxygen, and the nitrox. We also

did a spectacular haul practice from the entrance of Templetons during the afternoon. That's one big digging operation. The evening stomp and pig roast was attended by many locale cavers and a good time was had by all.

Sunday I took part in an above search for a missing casualty, but this aggravated my hay fever to such an extent that I had to leave the search and return to Nordrach Cottage in search of Piriton. Many thanks to Joan who came to my rescue.

I regret that I am currently getting over a bout of BPP vertigo and have consequently not been down to Mendip since the Christmas bash. I am happy to continue as rescue warden but if any body else would like to take over then feel free to take up the reins.

e. 2005 Guest Bookings Report *Joan Goddard*

Guest bookings have not been very good during 2005. We are at a disadvantage, certainly with respect to University groups, because we are not within walking distance of the Hunter's, or indeed of any pub.

A breakdown of 2005 bookings is as follows:

Scouts: 2 groups made 4 and 2 bookings respectively, numbers ranging from 6 to 16 beds.

Caving Clubs: 5 (usually only a small number of people turn up).

University Clubs: 1 (made 2 visits)

Schools: 1 school made 1 visit. Another college booked but withdrew due to health and safety concerns.

Red Cross: 1 weekend – not successful from our point of view as the youngsters were unruly and caused some minor damage.

Members: 4 members have brought groups of friends down (ranging from 6 to 14 beds). One member has run courses from the cottage on 4 occasions, sometimes midweek.

Outlook for 2006

The cottage is closed for 6 weeks for the lounge floor to be replaced.

The school which has been coming for many years has a new headmaster who has decided that the trips must stop because of health and safety concerns. They had made a 2006 booking but have cancelled it.

We have been approached by a 'new' scout group, so I hope they will decide to come to stay.

Scout and youth groups often require 3 bedrooms (lads, lasses and leaders) in which case MCG members have to be prepared to sleep in the leaders' room. Normally there is no problem as I try to give members advance warning via Yahoo Newsgroups. However, on one occasion there was a problem (due to a misunderstanding over the number of rooms required) and the scout group found alternative accommodation. I hope they will return to MCG next time they come to Mendip.

Youth groups require three rooms but they sometimes only book a dozen or so beds. This ties up the cottage for a weekend but brings in only a moderate income. I don't see a solution to this apart from putting up their fees, but as most of the groups have close links with MCG I am reluctant to suggest this.

6. Election of Honorary Officers for 2006 / 2007

	Nominee	Proposer	Second
Secretary:	No nominees	-	-
Treasurer:	Martin Rowe	Yvonne Rowe	Bob Templeman
Caving Secretary:	Bob Templeman	Martin Rowe	Yvonne Rowe
Cottage Warden:	Doug Harris	Martin Rowe	Wayne Hiscox
Tacklemaster:	No nominees	-	-
Editor:	Yvonne Rowe	Martin Rowe	Bob Templeman
Recorder/Librarian:	No nominees	-	-
Social Secretary:	No nominees	-	-

7. Election of non-Committee Posts

(Nominations for non-Committee posts may be accepted at the meeting.)

	Nominee
Rescue Warden:	No nominees received in advance
Conservation:	No nominees received in advance
Gift Aid:	No nominees received in advance

8. Election of Examiners 2006 / 2007

(Nominations for Examiners may be accepted at the meeting.)

9. Amendments to Constitution and Rules

a) Proposal to alter the Constitution and Rules with regard to the application procedure for new members.

Under point 3(b) PROBATIONARY MEMBERS delete “who have been advertised in the newsletter or notice board (together with their sponsors) for at least one month and”

The new point 3(b) to read as follows:

(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, and who have been accepted as probationary members by a majority vote at a Committee meeting.

Proposed by Martin Rowe

Seconded by Tim Francis

b) Proposal to alter the Constitution and Rules to clarify the circumstances upon which a member may apply to the Committee for reduced subscriptions from three to two.

Under point 6 SUBSCRIPTIONS:

delete: “(i) Members aged 60 or over,”

replace: “(iii) Members on low income” with “(ii) Members experiencing financial hardship.”

The substitute text to read as follows:

...“Members may apply to the Committee for consideration of a reduced personal subscription, in two circumstances:

Members living overseas for at least 6 months a year,

Members experiencing financial hardship.”

Proposed by Tim Francis

Seconded by Louisa Minahan

10. Other Motions

Cottage Usage

Cottage fees pay for certain basics - background heating only, to be topped up by wood and coal which is provided. (Members should of course replace the wood they have used by bringing in more from the shed, and if necessary wood in the shed should be replenished by chopping up more from the woodpile). But where members use more than the basics, notably extra heating from electric heaters not supplied by the club, then they should contribute by putting a donation into the box.

Proposed by Joan Goddard

Seconded by Martin Rowe

11. Any other business

a. Roman Rake / Lime Kiln Dig

What is the access position regarding digging and spoil disposal at Roman Rake dig?

Mick Norton

b. Cotag deposits

Every 5 to 7 years the battery in the cotag will wear out. The deposit for a key and cotag is £15.00 (originally £10.00), thus if a cotag fails an extra £5.00 deposit is requested from a member. If a member subsequently leaves the club they will be refunded their £15.00. However if a member has already paid a £15.00 deposit then an additional £5.00 is not applicable. In effect the club's policy is to fund the replacement of cotags. Is this a feasible long term policy as more cotags begin to wear out?

Martin Rowe, Tim Francis

c. Number of guests per member at the cottage

Does the club have a policy regarding the number of ‘free’ guests at the cottage without prior booking with the Cottage Warden (for accommodation), or Secretary (for a meeting)? 2 per member?

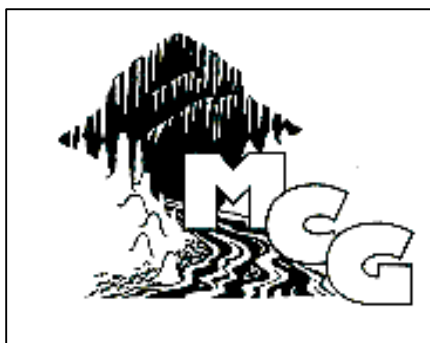
Joan Goddard

d. Developing and enhancing the Mendip Caving Group website

Martin Rowe

12. Date and venue of next Annual General Meeting

(for information: Easter Sunday 2007 is on 8th April)

MINUTES OF HALF YEARLY MEETING 2005**HELD ON 05.11.05 AT NORDRACH COTTAGE**

The Mendip Caving Group is a Registered Charity No. 270088

Chairman: Roy Kempston

1. Apologies for absence

Mick Norton, Martin Peck, Yvonne Rowe and Bryan Pittman

2. Reduced Subscriptions

Section 6 of the Constitution and Rules ("SUBSCRIPTIONS") provides that members may apply to the Committee for *consideration* of a reduced personal subscription in three circumstances: Members aged 60 or over; Members living overseas for at least 6 months a year; Members on low income.

An application made under this section is subject to the Committee's discretion and the Committee has traditionally interpreted the section as a mechanism to allow the Committee some flexibility in the amount of subs demanded from any member in 'time of hardship'. However, in recent years, a number of applications for reduced subs have been received from members that refer to the first circumstance (i.e. aged 60 or over) as the sole/primary reason for the application. The Committee is concerned that the increasingly aged membership of the Club means that the Club would struggle to cope with everyone who was over 60 applying for reduced subs.

A wide range of discussion points were made, including the following:

These days many people continue working well into their 60s and the finances of persons over 60 (whether retired or not) vary considerably. Thus, it does not make sense to have age as a basis for making an application for reduced subs.

Low income does not in itself mean that a person is financially badly off (i.e. if they also have low outgoings).

However, "low income" was originally included in section 6 because it was seen to be a more objective category than "hardship".

Although being aged 60 or over does not automatically entitle a member to reduced subs, by having this as an express category for making an application it may suggest, and create an expectation, that a reduction will be granted on this basis.

Non-active members (which older members are more likely to be) in a sense already pay less as they pay less insurance.

Members have traditionally been very generous towards the club and have not applied for reduced subs unless they have genuinely been suffering financial hardship. Indeed, on the rare occasions a member has been granted reduced subs, he/she has often repaid the reduction when his/her finances have improved. If everyone is made aware of the income needed to ensure the club's survival, and the consequences of too many people applying for reduced subs, then it is unlikely that anyone will apply for reduced subs unless they really need a reduction.

In the long term, will more and more older members apply for associate membership? Is this a category that needs to be phased out or re-evaluated? Can the club afford for lots of members to become associate members?

The general consensus amongst those present was that the conditions for applying for a reduced personal subscription do need revision (i.e. the removal of the "Members aged 60 or over" category and a focus on financial hardship rather than low income). It would be helpful to obtain the views of the membership as a whole. Action: The Committee to draft an appropriate amendment to the constitution to present at the AGM. The issue could also be raised in advance in the Newsletter.

3(a) Membership application procedure

It was suggested that the MCG might wish to reconsider the requirement for prospective members to be advertised in the newsletter for one month before they can be accepted as probationary members. Arguably, the period of advertisement adds little to the membership procedure as, so far, no prospective members have been refused probationary membership as a result of objections received during this period. Depending upon the date of the application and date of the next newsletter, the requirement can also add considerable delay to the membership procedure. If the requirement was removed, a prospective member would still need to be proposed by two full members and to have attended at least one group meet (where Committee members were present) before he/she could be accepted as a probationary member. Thus, there would still be

some safeguard against an “unsuitable” person joining the Club. The Club would continue to advertise those accepted as new probationary members. The majority of those present at the meeting appeared to support the removal of this requirement from the constitution or – at least – wished to see the matter raised at the next AGM. If the advertising period was removed, it was suggested that perhaps the application procedure should be revised so that probationary members actually undergo a ‘true’ probationary period i.e. after six months (for example) the Committee reviews whether they are suitable for membership of the club.

Action: The Committee to consider and draft an appropriate amendment to the constitution to present at the AGM. .

3(b) Voting rights for long-standing probationary members

The idea of allowing long-standing probationary members (for example persons who have been probationary members for over 6 months or a year) to vote at AGMs was presented to the meeting. It received a mixed reaction from those present.

On occasion there are probationary members who – for whatever reason – do not complete their training trips. These members are often very active within, and make a valuable contribution to, the MCG and they are not necessarily ‘non-cavers’. Importantly, these members also pay the same subscription rate as full members.

It is possible to argue that, in the circumstances, it is unfair that these members are denied the right to vote at an AGM. Furthermore, given the typically low turnouts at meetings, if such a member has demonstrated their interest in the club by attending it would seem sensible to allow them to vote. Some of those present were opposed to the idea of allowing long-standing probationary members to vote on the basis that the MCG is ultimately a caving club and, therefore, only people that have reached a minimum level of caving proficiency should be able to vote. It was also suggested that the completion of a training trip outwardly demonstrates a certain level of interest in the club and caving.

Counter to the first argument is the fact that most of the matters members are called to vote upon are actually unrelated to caving, but concern the general well-being of the club (as the agenda to this meeting aptly demonstrates!). The split appeared to be between those who believe that members that have demonstrated a long-standing commitment to the club should be able to vote, even if they have not completed a training trip, and those who believe that it is important to restrict the right to vote to people that have made the effort to obtain full membership. The constitution states that membership shall be open to “anyone over the age of 16 years with an interest in the objects of the Group”. This suggests that what is most important is a person’s interest in the Club’s activities as a whole not their caving ability. Associate members are also denied the vote but they pay reduced subs. In addition, associate members are either former full members who are unable to play a full part in Group activities or persons who wish to be members of the Group but are unable to take part in the regular caving activities. This is not the case for long-standing probationary members who often play a full part in Group activities and take part in regular caving activities. Action: The Committee and the membership to consider further.

4 Showers

Linda was keen to gather the membership’s views on cubicle showers versus the current layout. A wide range of comments were made, including:

Any alterations would need to be of a high quality – we do not want an amateur DIY job that spoils the existing changing room/showers;

The number of members staying at the cottage on a regular basis means that queuing for the shower is rarely a problem (i.e. only on busy members weekends);

To increase privacy separate shower cubicles would need to be accompanied by separate changing areas; and

It would be useful to know if the cottage is currently losing any guest bookings as a result of its communal showers.

If so, the number of lost guest bed nights would need to be considered against the cost of making the alterations.

The needs of, and the benefit to, the membership would also have to be taken into account.

Overall, most of the members present appeared to find the current arrangements satisfactory and to feel there was no pressing need to adapt the showers at this point in time. As a side issue, the possibility of dividing the Foreman’s Lounge into two separate rooms was discussed. Four bedrooms (rather than three) would provide more flexible sleeping accommodation and would be better suited to the needs of guest scout and youth groups. These groups need to be able to sleep females separately from males, and children separately from adults.

5. Scaffold Tower

The idea of erecting a scaffold tower to assist with ladder and line and SRT training was presented to the Club. A scaffold tower could be a useful addition to the facilities on offer to the membership. However, doubts were raised over whether erecting a tower would be possible or appropriate given the location of the cottage (i.e. near the road – in contrast to the WCC’s hut) and its limited gardens. Concerns were also expressed over the need for planning permission; safety, insurance and club liability (for members and guests); and maintenance requirements etc. Action: Linda Milne to further investigate costs, feasibility etc.

6. Overseas Meet 2006

Those present discussed whether there was support for an MCG overseas meet next summer. Overall, there seemed to be a sufficient number of members interested in participating to make organising such a meet worthwhile. Various location ideas were put forward including Greece, France and Matienzo.

7. Any other business – lounge floor tiles

There is a localised area of damaged floor by the kitchen; the decision has been taken to resurface the entire floor. Doug, Bryan P and Wayne have very kindly agreed to lay the new floor next spring (dates to be arranged). Those present at the meeting were shown a selection of possible floor tiles and they selected large, non-slip, pale quarry tiles.