

MCG News

Newsletter of the
Mendip Caving Group

Number 333
May 2006

www.m-c-g.org.uk

Founded 1954

Golden Chamber, Upper Flood Swallet

Vale: Malcolm Owen Cotter – 1934-2006

Malcolm's first experience of a cave was gained in 1948 by a visit to Kent' Cavern show cave, while on holiday in Devon. He followed this up with further explorations of Devon caves during a period of residence in the county. He was obliged to do a two-year period of military National Service, and chose to serve in the RAF, as had his father. His first posting in 1953 took him to Lytham St Anne's from where he visited the Craven Dales. A further posting took him to Little Rissington in Gloucestershire. From here, the Mendip Hills were the nearest caving area and he wasted no time in making their acquaintance



It is fitting that Malcolm's name heads the list of members. His date of joining is noted as January 1954. It was while caving on Mendip with a small group of friends that Malcolm proposed the formation of the Mendip Caving Group. In early 1954 Malcolm met Tony Crawford by pure chance as he was walking with his rucksack on the road between the Hunter's and Priddy. Tony mistook him for someone else, but gave him a lift to Main's Barn on his motorcycle. The two became friends and the birth of MCG was assured: Malcolm providing the enthusiasm. Tony was already a member of a caving club (the BEC) and an experienced caver, he was also a talented engineer. The combination of Mal-

colm's boundless enthusiasm and Tony's practical abilities provided a formidable partnership from which the MCG drew its initial strength.

In the early days, committee meetings were held in members' houses. Malcolm had a passion for making his own wine which was liberally served on these occasions. The discovery of the shakehole which became Pinetree Pot was made during an excursion which we made to pick elderberries for winemaking.

Some of the existing Mendip clubs were less than ecstatic that a club which drew its members chiefly from West London and the Home counties should call itself the Mendip Caving Group. Nevertheless the Group flourished and took its place among the various clubs caving on Mendip.

My own personal memories of Malcolm are of a completely committed caver whose enthusiasm knew no bounds. He had a sound caving technique and an abundance of energy. For a man of modest height, he possessed an incredible walking speed and endurance. While I had to concentrate to avoid being left behind, he would be striding along explaining his theory about some aspect of caving. On Mendip two main topics occupied his thoughts: whether Cheddar Gorge was an unroofed cave, and the possible existence of a Cheddar master cave. Moving our Mendip rendezvous from Main's Barn to camping in Velvet Bottom launched the Group on a long period of prospecting and digging in the Cheddar catchment area from which we have never recovered. Malcolm's interest in digging in the Blackmoor area can only be described as feverish.

In 1962 Malcolm married Norma Hurst, also a member of MCG. They soon left the UK to live in the Far East for a few years. Malcolm's first trip on his return was entirely predictable; Blackmoor in February 1966. The great flood of 1968 brought major changes to the upper (Blackmoor) area of Velvet Bottom, opening Waterwheel Swallet, Grebe Swallet and Upper Flood Swallet. Upper Flood looked the most interesting, so work began immediately. It is probably fair to say that the excavation of Upper Flood occupied more of Malcolm's thoughts and energies than any other aspect of caving. The level of his involvement in this ongoing project can be readily appreciated by reading the MCG occasional publication "Upper Flood-exploration to 1996".

Malcolm died of a heart condition (he had already survived a heart attack and subsequent bypass surgery a few years ago) on his way out of Upper Flood on April 30th last. We have lost a major personality from our midst: caver, trustee, fund raiser and devoted father. Our heartfelt condolences go out to Norma, Sonya, Lorna, Andrew and all other family members. A moving funeral ceremony took place at Priddy on 12th May, where he was buried on his own land in the St Cuthbert's minery. Without Malcolm there would have been no MCG.

TonyKnibbs

Malcolm's funeral took place on 12/05/06. This is the text of the address given on behalf of the Group by Tim Francis:

I've known Malcolm personally for around sixteen years, which normally might be considered a long time. But put against the context of someone who has been caving on the Mendips for over 50 years that's only a small period of time. So I have spoken to a wide number of people within the club to collect their thoughts and anecdotes on Malcolm's caving life. What clearly stands out was Malcolm's real love for caving, particularly his support of the MCG, his enthusiasm and tenacity, and his constant conviction that the "Cheddar Master Cave" would be found. I just wanted to touch on a couple of these.

Firstly his **enthusiasm for caving**. This is something that comes through in nearly all the comments that people have made. Whether that meant walking for miles to reach a cave entrance, hauling skips of spoil for hours on end or sourcing new bits of digging kit, his enthusiasm was undiminished. He was always keen to try out new things such as taking up SRT in Mallorca in his late 50s or experimenting with snappers in 2006. Of course I have to mention Malcolm's spartan 'make do and mend' approach to equipment – the famous green overalls, patched knee pads, the cars and the motorcycles. I'm sure we'll be swapping tales about these for many years to come.



Malcolm in Blackfield Hole

But it wasn't just his personal enthusiasm for caving that shone through. It was also that Malcolm was exceptionally welcoming to new cavers, potential members or not. All projects, however mad cap, were encouraged and he loved to get involved. I mean what other retired man would actively wish to spend two weeks on a foreign expedition to Italy with a bunch of foreign students? Those who turned up at the cottage or pub meet for the first time were always met with a big grin and a warm welcome. And he kept in touch with many MCG members who had moved abroad and always encouraged them to keep on caving whatever country they happened to live in.

Clearly the **Mendip Caving Group** was central to Malcolm's caving life and he was passionate about the club and its future. I remember asking him during the 50th anniversary celebrations whether he had really expected the club to carry on this long. He answered that it had always been certain of its longevity right from the start. Indeed such was his enthusiasm that all members of the Cotter family have in some shape or form been active in the club over the years.

Malcolm supported the club throughout the years in many different guises: as Secretary, as a Custodian Trustee, keeping an eye on our investments, running the shop, managing the Gift Aid Scheme. One can't talk about Malcolm's involvement with the MCG without mentioning his tenacity. I'm thinking here of fighting his corner in AGM's and challenging Committee meetings. Less formally Malcolm always supported the social activities of the club such as running an annual geology trip or stripping the willow at barn dances.

Finally no eulogy of Malcolm would be complete without making reference to his passion and obsession for the **Blackmoor Valley and Velvet Bottom**. Ultimately it is Upper Flood, a cave with which he will always be intrinsically linked, that stands as a legacy to Malcolm's caving life on the Mendips. Malcolm was an exceptionally keen digger both on the surface and underground. Many a member will recall being coerced into a digging trip and shivering with cold in the Red Room whilst waiting for a bucket to appear. Indeed he was still heavily involved in work at the furthest reaches of Upper Flood, beyond Golden Chamber, right until the end. He was also keen to pass on the history of the cave to future generations. Thus all Upper Flood leaders have been taken through one of Malcolm's informative history trips before being signed off as a leader. But it wasn't just about digging and exploration. He was also concerned about the conservation of the cave. The pristine quality of the stal is testament to his efforts.

So, to conclude my thoughts: Malcolm, who has always been at the heart of the MCG since its inception in 1954, will be greatly missed. As a club we will do our best to live up to the high standards that he has set us and build upon his legacy in the future.

Tim Francis

Tim Francis and Linda Milne reflect on the funeral and wake:

Unusually for the Mendips it was a bright sunny day, which made for a great setting for Malcolm's big send off. The sun was quite fierce for some with a few sunburned heads at the end of the afternoon. The funeral cortege started off at Unwin's Funeral Directors on Wookey Hole Road, just outside of Wells. A long stream of cars followed along a route that passed Wookey Hole and Ebbor Gorge before heading up onto the hill. Malcolm was driven around Priddy Village Green so as to pass The New Inn and Main's Barn, the first watering hole and accommodation of the Mendip Caving Group respectively. The car then continued along the Priddy - Hunter's road as far as where the track from the Shepton Mallet hut meets the main road. A large crowd of mourners were waiting at this point and it was evident that a large number of Malcolm's caving friends from both within the MCG and wider caving community wanted to give him a good send off.

From here teams of bearers - four from the MCG, one from the MRO and one from the Shepton - carried the coffin along the track and up to the leadworks near St. Cuthberts. Unwin's were concerned about the number of animal burrows that could trip up the unwary bearer but the cavers coped admirably as one would expect. The actual funeral was held on a patch of gruffy ground just outside the tree plantation. The plantation is primarily made up of Christmas trees that Malcolm and family planted themselves many years ago. The funeral was a short non-religious service with the agenda co-ordinated by Arthur Spain.

Several individuals said a few words. Rita, Malcolm's cousin, talked us through the highlights of Malcolm's life in a piece written by Norma. Don Searle, as one of Malcolm's oldest friends, spoke of the early years of the MCG. Tim Francis, as MCG Secretary, spoke on behalf of the Group and highlighted Malcolm's enthusiasm and love for the sport. Richard Woollacott talked about Malcolm's personal qualities and vision for the Group. Finally Sonya and Norma spoke on behalf of the family with Norma rounding things off with a poem (see opposite).

After the funeral everyone headed back to the Hunters for a wake in the Long Room. The Dors had laid on a fine beer and sandwiches spread. Tales of Malcolm's life abounded and amusing anecdotes were remembered particularly as several photograph albums were circulating around the room. The day was concluded with a barbecue and photo evening at Nordrach Cottage. A lap top and litepro were made available so that we were able to project slides. Many slides were of MCG characters of the 1950s and 1960s but Charlie also brought us up to date with a mini slide show on trips to Europe that Malcolm and Norma had been on in the 1990s.

Tim Francis

It actually turned out to be a lovely day (if one can say that about a funeral). It was beautifully sunny and the drive to the Mineries was awe inspiring. The coffin was carried by lots of different people in turn as we walked over the rough tussocky grass. The whole atmosphere was calm and serene. The service was held amidst the sound of birds singing and there was a light breeze blowing. Butterflies and insects fluttered and buzzed around while we were all quiet apart from the readers. We heard from Rita, Malcolm's cousin, Tim, Don Searle and Sonya and Norma, and after we paid our respects to Malcolm in turn.

After, we all went to the long room at the Hunters – which was packed. In complete contrast to the burial, the wake was a loud, bustly, lively affair. Photos albums were circulated and everyone chatted happily. It went on for quite awhile and then we eventually filtered away.

As always the BBQ at the cottage was a team affair which seemed to just happen....There were a couple of barrels of beer and plenty of food. The bats came out at dusk and the evening finished with a few slides from the 50th archives and from Charlie who had put together a great slide show of his personal photos of Malcolm. I felt the whole day was such wonderful way to both say good bye to, as well as remember, Malcolm.

Linda Milne

"The Life That I have"

by Leo Marks

The life that I have
Is all that I have
And the life that I have
Is yours

The love that I have
Of the life that I have
Is yours and yours and yours

A sleep I shall have
A rest I shall have
Yet death will be but a pause

For the peace of my years
In the long green grass
Will be yours and yours
and yours

(Marks played a major role in Special Operations Executive in World War II as the chief designer of ciphers used by agents behind enemy lines. Agents' ciphers each hinged on a separate poem or prose (such as the Lord's Prayer). No one else noticed that the enemy might know the poem, and so be able to break the cipher. He took to composing agents' poems himself. "The Life That I have" was written for a girl with whom he was in love, the news of whose death in an air crash he heard on Christmas Eve 1943. This he later gave to the agent Violette Szabo.)

Gift Aid Declaration

Name of Charity..

Details of donor
 Title
 Forename(s)
 Surname
 Address

 Post Code

I want the charity to treat the enclosed donation of £ as a Gift Aid donation

You must pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the appropriate tax year (currently 28p for each £1 you give).

Date:
/...../.....

Notes:

1. You can cancel this Declaration at any time by notifying the charity.
2. If in the future your circumstances change and you no longer pay tax on your income and capital gains equal to the tax that the charity reclaims, you can cancel your declaration.
3. If you pay tax at the higher rate you can claim further tax relief in your Self Assessment tax return.
4. If you are unsure whether your donations qualify for Gift Aid tax relief, ask the charity.. Or, refer to help sheet IR65 on the [HMRC web site](#).

Please notify the charity if you change your name or address

If anyone wishes to make a donation in memory of Malcolm, the family have asked that the following good causes should be supported:

British Heart Foundation Donations can be made online at <http://www.bhf.org.uk/>
 If you'd like to send a cheque instead, please send it to: Brenda Mole, British Heart Foundation, 14 Fitzhardinge Street, London W1H 6DH

Upper Flood Digging Fund MCG will set up a separate fund within the Group accounts. Monies donated will be used to promote the continued digging and exploration of Upper Flood and related features in the Blackmoor Valley. Donations can be sent to Mendip Caving Group, c/o 11 Church Hill, Arnside, Carnforth, Lancs, LA5 0DB. Please make cheques payable to: "Mendip Caving Group Upper Flood Dig".

In addition any donations should also be "Gift Aided" as Malcolm would have wanted! (see column on the left).

From the very beginning of MCG, Malcolm was active in every aspect of the group. It is impossible to adequately reflect on more than 50 years of his contributions in a short newsletter . For the rest of this issue, we simply reprint a selection of articles involving Malcolm taken from the Journal, Newsletter and Logbook. We begin with Journal No. 1. in which references to Malcolm abound— not only digging and cottage building, but theorising on the origin of Cheddar Gorge:

MENDIP CAVING GROUP JOURNAL No. 1. JANUARY, 1959 (abridged)

LOG OF EVENTS AT THE AUGUST MEET AT CHARTERHOUSE COTTAGE

Present:-Tony Crawford, Robin Goddard, Malcolm Cotter, David Dilly, Bob Knott, Chris Reynolds, Pete Goddard, Paul Green, Anne Wollacott, Mike Butterfield, Richard Woollacott, Bob Johnson, Don Searle, Tony Knibbs, Rob Charnock, John Coles, John Green, Fred Lyons, Brian Cheyney, Jennifer

The main purpose of this meet was to introduce the new members and the visitors to the art of caving and for the other members to work on the cottage. Of the work on the cottage, it was felt by some that members who had been working there for the week should have a rest and allow others to do some work although this did not altogether meet with their approval. The floorboards were laid in the kitchen by Malcolm and myself - mainly Malcolm. The dry stone wall in front of the cottage was built up where it had fallen down. The 'smallest—room-in- the-house' was completed save for the roof, and a gate post was cemented into the ground at the top of the 'drive'. A dry stone wall was then built which curved in a quarter—round to a tree. ...R. CHARNOCK.

DOWNEY'S CAVE.

Some considerable time ago now, I met Malcolm Cotter in South Wales. It was obvious from the moment that we met that Malcolm was a caving fanatic and that made two of us, so we rapidly developed a bond of friendship which has stood the test of time. When I suggested that we might survey Downey's Cave (he) jumped at the chance. We finally ended in a chamber one half of which consisted of a large pool. The survey being over, there was no need to keep dry so I waded into the pool and found that the passage was half full of water and appeared to close down. Malcolm had an idea. He started bailing the pool furiously. I don't know how long we continued in this fashion, but it seemed ages before we made any impression on the water level. Just when I felt I could go no further, the passage widened and I found myself after a few tugs and wriggles in O.F.D. It was decided that since there would be no one to bail the pool for Malcolm, he would have to return to the surface the way we came in. His parting statement was "Well I won't get half as wet as you."

We returned quickly to the surface and were soon joined by a very wet and bedraggled Malcolm. We roared with laughter when he told us what had happened. While we had been occupied with the pool bailing to lower the water level in the O.F.D. passage, the narrow squeeze between Bailit Chamber and Column Chamber had refilled with water until it was once again half full. We had forgotten to bring a bailing implement through with us and so Malcolm was forced, after all his efforts, to get soaked in order to get out. It was 3 a.m. the next morning before they finally left the caving club cottage, after what can only be described as a monstrous hoosh. And so ended a fine and exciting caving day.

NOEL DILLY.

CHEDDAR GORGE Collapsed Cave or Not?

One often hears the theory that Cheddar Gorge is a collapsed Cave but recently more people come out with the statement that it is just an ordinary valley. Following through with questions seems to draw a blank, so to stimulate thought in this direction I have decided to put some of my ideas to paper. I, myself, do not believe Cheddar Gorge to be a collapsed Cave. Just for a start, ask yourself if you know of any Cave which without a roof would provide a Gorge anything like the size of Cheddar. G.B. certainly would not; its size would account for only a small fraction of the Gorge. Again, do you know a Cave which has a gradual descent over a distance of six miles with large tributaries coming in at the base of the main valley. Cheddar Gorge starts at Priddy and has a tributary which joins it at the Bath Road turning looking towards Yoxter Rifle Ranges. Lower down, another tributary joins at Black Rock Gate. The latter bifurcates itself into Longwood and the continuation of Velvet Bottom. The streams which start at the head of the valleys now enter Swallet Caves at G.B. Longwood Velvet Bottom and Swildons Hole. They all drop very quickly to a region close to the water table.

Now Wookey Hole Valley is often given as an example of the way that Cheddar Gorge was formed. In reality there is no similarity. The floor of Wookey Hole Valley has a very slight gradient while that at the mouth of Cheddar Gorge is steep. I stress the mouth because after the water had run steadily down to Mendip edge it suddenly speeded up; with this increase it was able to take a greater load so steepening the profile. Wookey Hole water on the other hand has already reached the bottom contour of Mendip edge. Valleys which have started as Caves all have the same plan as Wookey Hole, i.e. low gradient which if it could be taken upstream would end up very steeply. A valley, on the other hand, has a steady gradient which may steepen when it reaches the edge of high ground. Goughs Cave, itself, gives adequate proof to what a cave would be like in the area - should this collapse, it would make no difference to the surface topography. In the same way I would say that Burrington Coombe is a dry valley. Ebbor Gorge on the other hand is like a dry valley for the first half and then like a collapsed cave.

Balch seems to think that Cheddar Gorge should have started forming before the Triassic but I see no reason for this - after all, we still have ten million years or so left to do the work in! There are no indications in the Gorge itself that suggest a cave - for instance, stalagmite deposits.

There is one point which remains to be cleared up. What is the nature of the deposits which the village of Cheddar is built on. The Ordnance Survey shows an area of raised ground at the mouth of the Gorge which could be some of the matter eroded away. While you ponder the question, I intend to make further investigation and prepare a fuller and more comprehensive account.

MALCOLM COTTER. Hon. Meet Secretary.

LAMBS LEER EXPEDITION. 2nd August 1958

A.Crawford, M.Cotter. D.Dilly. P.Goddard. R.Knott C.Reynolds.

Having collected our two patient guides from the M.N.R.C. who were waiting for us, we all walked over to Lambs Leer and descended in good order the first pitch



Malcolm at MCG's 40th in 1994

of 60 ft. in iron ladders, which was vertical but on a side angle. This lead to a couple of very interesting chambers. Then the change is sudden straight into the beehive chamber. The actual beehive occupies the whole floor and al-though now dull it must of, in its time, glinted like a myriad stars. Directly after, is the main 26. pitch of 80 ft. The climb of the main pitch to the floor was done in the time of just over two minutes per person. The Descent was precision in it-self. With the help of the others we rigged an electron ladder on an endless wire cable put up by M.N.R.C. and Malcolm and I climbed up to Valentines Shelf. A mud bath all the way up and on the shelf as well. Facing us is a mud choke leading slightly upwards, a tube in fact. Having looked around I left the shelf and joined the others in the main cave. P. Goddard then left by means of the main pitch so that Malcolm could take some photos of the ascent. On returning to the main cave we ascended in turn as easily as we had gone down. Malcolm, darn him, was still wallowing on Valentines Shelf. He must like mud! From our high view we saw him leave to examine the rest of the cave with the guide. The others now left to return to the surface leaving just the two needed for the winch. We had all taken turns with the winch so it was quite in order for them to leave us at this point. In about fifteen minutes, Malcolm and our friend the guide joined us on the top of the main pitch. A muddier pair it has never been my privilege to see. The remaining four of us now returned to the surface coming out at just 1900.hours. Having got out of our dirty gear we thanked our two friends for spending their whole afternoon with us, when they could have, no doubt, spent a more interesting day following their own devices. TONY CRAWFORD



In July 68, a great flood scoured the floor of Velvet Bottom, revealing the entrance to what became Upper Flood, beginning a near-40 year search for the Cheddar Master Cave:

MCG Logbook N0. 2

4.8.68 Peter Anderson – Our Hero! The finder of the natural entrance to BLACKMOOR SWALLET.

First descent – Greg Smith
Roger Wallington
Richard Peat
Malcolm O. Cotter

While looking for a camping site on Friday 3.8.68 Peter and friends nearly fell down an open shaft near the oldcotage. Seing us digging on the Saturday he came over and asked if we knew about it!

Explored approximatly 300' passage.

The full story of the exploration of Upper Flood was described in 1996, largely written by Malcolm:

MCG Occassional Publication number 4, 1996 (editor Charlie Allison)

The entrance to this cave became known to us on 3rd August 1968, three weeks after the flood.

A digging party composed of Richard Peat, Greg Smith, Roger Wallington, and the writer (Malcolm Cotter) were exploring a leat near Middle Flood Swallet (Waterwheel), when a camper named Peter Anderson enquired about a 'mine-shaft' higher up the valley. The party were unaware of any such mine and asked to be taken to it. I remember walking up the valley with curiosity dosed with a degree of scepticism. On seeing the hole, however, all such doubts were lost. The shaft did bear a superficial resemblance to a mine, being almost a perfect rectangle. Near the bottom, on the North side, a number of timbers were visible. At the bottom itself; a square flat roofed tunnel led away...

It was with rising excitement that I entered the cave, realising that in it lay the key

to the Blackmoor drainage. After all the hard years of digging it seemed that at last we would be able to explore the great cave which collects the waters of the valley. A short way in a drop of 3 metres (now the first flight of steps) offered a small but sporting climb. From ahead came the voices of Roger and Greg, "*this is it!*" At the bottom of the drop a hole which, had just been cleared, gave access to a flat out crawl along a drainpipe. Progress along this could, unfortunately, only be made by breaking small straw stalactites. We then came to another short drop where we emerged at the side of a small stream passage. This section was well decorated and was named 'Stal Pot' (now the second flight of steps). On this visit there was a heap of sand and turfs on the floor.

Downstream the passage rapidly turned from a crawl into a mud wallow; upstream the way looked fairly large. The downstream passage revealed 17 metres of passage; the way on being blocked by a flowstone barrier behind a shallow pool. At roof level a slit only inches high continued; it contained a few straws bearing traces of flood debris.

Exploration upstream revealed a roomy boulder chamber, the walls of which contained numerous protruding fossils. A side passage gave hope of continuation. Progress at one point was stopped by a band of chert completely dividing the passage. This was easily broken and progress continued to a small chamber containing a chert bridge and good calcite formations. It ended at an impenetrable sump. Blackmoor had closed its secrets yet again.

Our exploration for the day had ended leaving us somewhat disappointed. The following day a survey was undertaken and this showed the cave was 83 metres long and 13 metres deep.

Malcolm wrote regularly for the newsletter, including this first report of Upper Flood:

MCG NEWSLETTER NO 67 JULY/ AUGUST 1968

A SYNTHESIS OF THE NEW SWALLETS AND FLOOD ALTERATIONS IN CAVES, OBSERVED BY THE MCG IN THE BLACKMOOR AND VELVET BOTTOM AREA

It has always been my dream to try and picture Blackmoor and Velvet Bottom as they were before mining activity almost completely changed the topography and obliterated the various swallets. The great torrent which swept down on the night of the tenth and the morning of eleventh of July has helped to remedy the situation, by removing embankments and reopening covered swallets.

The floods have now revealed the positions of two swallets, Middle Flood Entrance and Upper Flood Entrance, high up in the valley.

The first to be investigated (Middle Flood) was noted by Arthur Cox. He reports attraction to it by "Glouping" sounds. It lies just below the breach in the track to our old cottage. Don Searle was attracted to it and with Simon Knight he dug it to reveal an interesting length of passage. (See Don's account). We had long known there was a swallet near, as water can be seen entering a leat above the track. Water was only evident in very wet conditions rising lower down the valley. Although Upper flood (just off the track nearer the cottage) has no water in it, it should dip back under the valley. (Upper Flood: See Greg's Account). Theoretically it should here intercept the Middle Flood.

Lower Flood. Lower down the valley a very impressive hole has been opened several feet below the Excavated shaft and, more in the centre of the valley. This consists of a shake hole 30' across with a circular hole 7' deep in the bottom. This hole leads to a rift passage some 3' – 4' wide and, 8' high, with several small inlet passages. A squeeze then leads to a continuation of the rift which is now some 20' high. At the end of the rift one can turn left, either above or below a rock



Malcolm and Norma at MCG's 50th Dinner



Malcolm's 70th birthday

jumble. The lower way was also the main course of the water; as to one side there is a jumble of loose rocks, with sods of turf and grass indicating direction of flow. Digging here would prove difficult. Forwards however one comes to a small chamber then a squeeze and Aven. The aven rises approx 25'—30' and probably closely reaches the surface. There is a lot of stal and it appears that it could be an original swallet entrance shaft. There are patches of stal in other parts of the cave; generally one is left with the impression that most of the fill was removed by the flood.

The flooding has not changed the appearance of the Excavated Shaft and it is reported that the cave beneath the shaft has also remained the same. Lower down Velvet Bottom a long depression (swallet?) does not appear to have taken any more water than any other part of the valley. Timber Hole appears to have taken some water, as too the hole a little up the valley on the same side. Also interesting to note, the depth of water below the rain gauge where MCG used to camp was about 2'6"! Malcolm Cotter

Malcolm continued to be involved in the recent Upper Flood discoveries. These are the last MCG Logbook entries for his trips:

MCG Logbook Extracts



1999, AGM

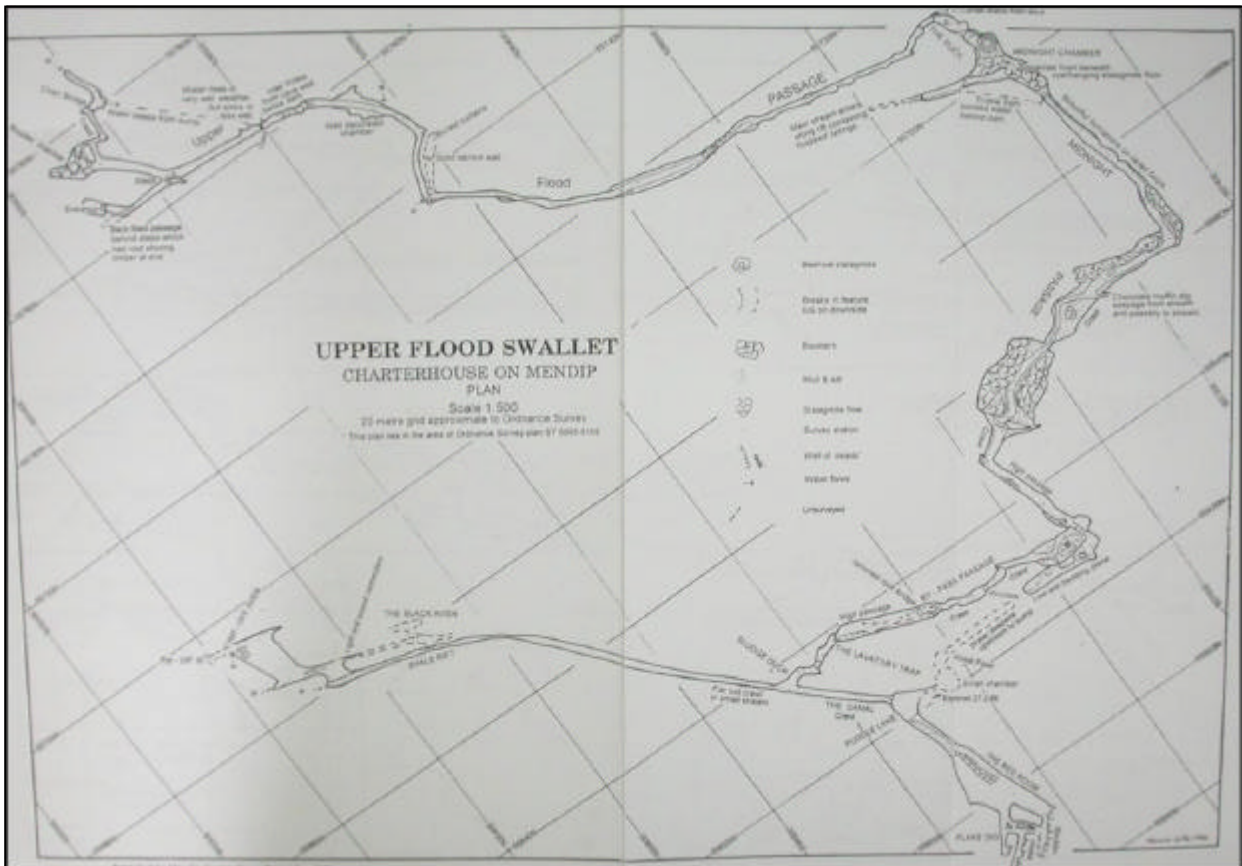
19.02.2006 Upper Flood (Mike Richardson, Mark Ward, Sonya & Malcolm Cotter) Mike having been on the 'breakthrough' trip, outlined the requirements! First job was to rearrange rocks in Golden Chamber. We then commenced cleaning mud from the temporary dump in the Boulder Choke - generally a good cleaning operation. We all had a look at the new passage and were very pleased with progress. More removal of mud and testing of large rock lodged in mud on right desirable. Very loud noise from stream. May still be in Lower Limestone Shale. [MOC]

05.03.2006 Upper Flood (MalcolmC, BenCooper, DougH, TimF, MikeR). Started work on the rifty aven below Golden Chamber. Made good progress with Hilti caps but we didn't really have the right [?]bar. The battery ran out of juice before we could finish the hole for a snapper. But now the corner has come off it doesn't look that far. It might only need two or three sessions depending upon how cold and wet it is. [TF]

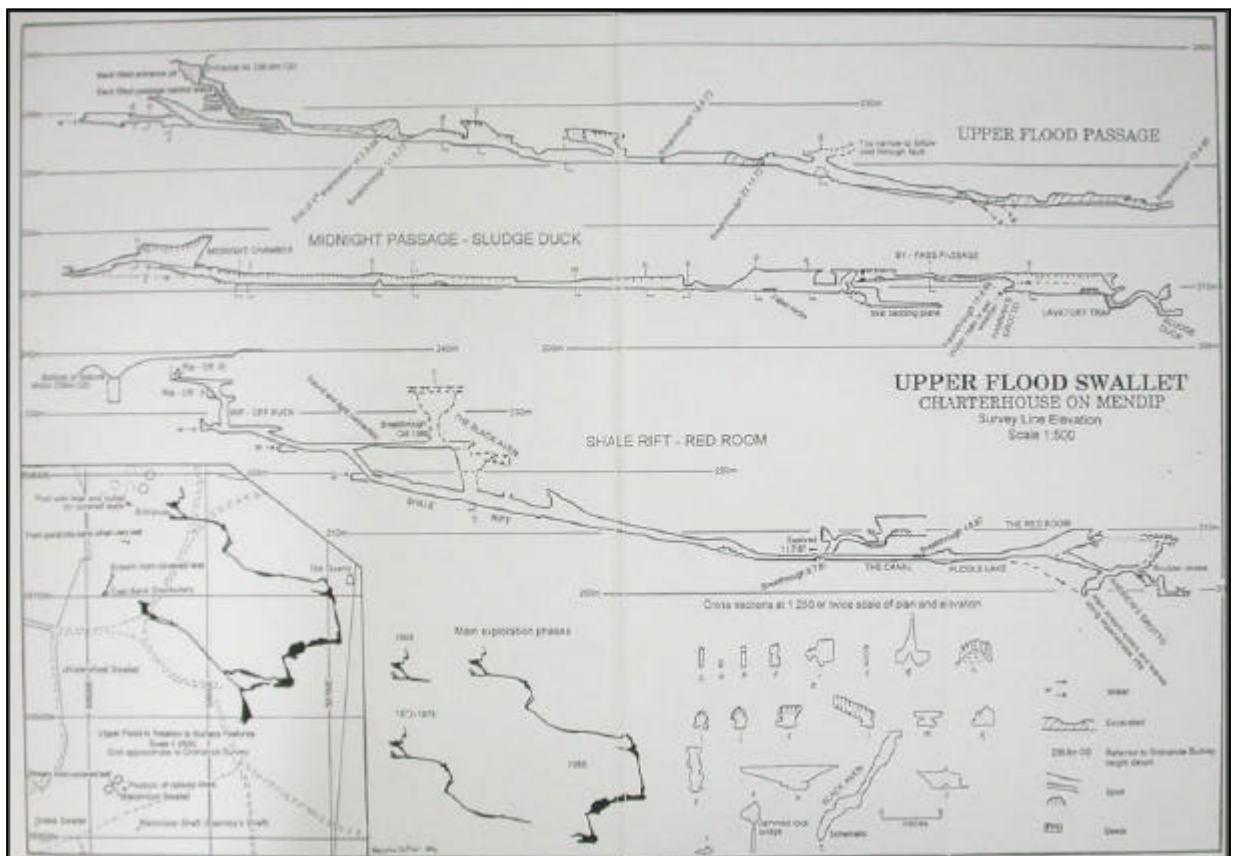
02.04.2006 Upper Flood Swallet (First party: MarkW, TimF, MikeR, DougH). 2nd part of History trip for leadership. Went up to Rip-off Aven. Then down to digging area and removed several large loose rocks. Drilled one hole, then the drill stopped working. Tim fired one hilti - lots of rocks moved out of Golden Chamber back to Andrew's Grotto. Lavatory Trap water level slightly higher than usual. Good trip. [DH] On removing side wall in terminal chamber, wall decided to pin Doug into the terminal rift. Doug proceeded to smash the boulders to extricate himself. Amusing at the time!! Roof of terminal chamber needs shoring? [MW] **(Second party: JulieH, Giles Martin, LindaMilne).** Got to end. Too fat to get into Golden Chamber but I believe the others had a smashing time in there. [GM] **(Third party: SonyaC and MalcolmC).** Joined others in Boulder Choke where large quantities of rocks were passed back. Nice pretty stream down Upper Flood Passage. Main stream had good volume. Strong air current noticed in Bypass Passage - outward. P.S. Did not see any indication of boulder slumping.

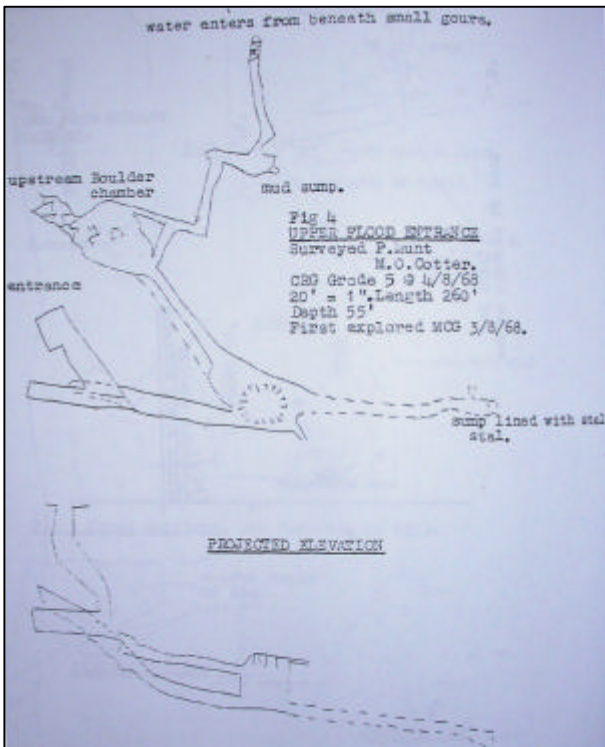
06.04.2006 Coral Cave (GilesM, MickN, Sonya & MalcolmC). SRT trip to test Mick's rigging technique. Everything went well! Not a particularly easy SRT cave owing to tightish entry and traverse to rebelay. Much larger void than expected with large, steep, boulder strewn passage. [MOC] This was Giles, Sonya and Malcolm's first time in this cave. [MN]

15.04.2006 Upper Flood (MalcolmC, Charlie Allison, MarkWard). Trip to the end to clear Andrew's Grotto of spoil. Shifted 40 buckets removing all the boulders back to the Red Room, so there's plenty of space now! Water levels not very high, cave as unpleasant as ever!! [CA]



Upper Flood survey 1996 (Malcolm Cotter)





Above: Malcolm, camping in the 1950's (photo by Pete Goddard)

Left: The first survey of Upper Flood. (Malcolm Cotter, Pete Munt, Journal No. 1)

Below: MCG Occasional Publication no 4, 1996

Bottom: Latest discoveries, Upper Flood, May 2006

