

MCG News

Newsletter of the
Mendip Caving Group

Golden Chamber, Upper Flood Swallet

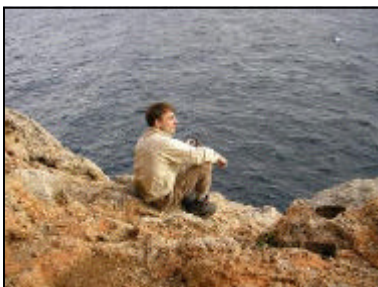
Number 335
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Larguese de mi tierra!* - MCG in Mallorca, December 2005

by Tim Francis

The usual fun and frolics in Mallorca. This year's visit was just before Christmas so no surprise that it was quite cold and blustery. Luckily the villa is now extremely civilised with the wood burning stove working well. Again it was the case that actually finding the caves was far more challenging than exploring them. But we have managed to add to our repertoire of caves visited over the years since the "Tour of Individuals" in 1992.



Cova Tancada A gentle introduction to Mallorca in a cave that we had last visited in 2001 [newsletter 304], so it was interesting to see how well the woodland had recovered after the storms of that year. I had attempted to go to the cave a few years ago but was beaten back by a collapsed cliff. Certainly the trees have been thinned out considerably since 2001 and the path has been re-routed around the scattered tree trunks. The cave itself has seen an increase

in traffic and whilst we were there we bumped into two groups on an afternoon jolly. We fed sandwiches to the dog of one party who had been left outside on guard duty. Inside visibility was low and air quality poor due to the numbers of candles that had been lit, but the cave remains as pretty as ever. In common with other sea level caves in Mallorca the humidity in Tancada is exceptionally high so nearly all of us slipped over on the wet polished floors. Finally Peat and I re-acquainted ourselves with the high level aven above the main chamber. This is accessed by a sketchy climb so not surprisingly it is still in pristine condition.



The Na Burguesa National Park, Palma I still had a one or two faded photocopies of local cavers maps with a few sites marked on them so we thought it might be a good idea to try and track some of these down. We weren't really that sure as to what the different symbols might indicate but at least there were dots on the page marking what appeared to be caves. One of these maps was of the Na Burguesa Mountains between Palma de Mallorca and Calvià, an area that we have visited several times in the last few years. Almost 1000 hectares of the hillside was burned down during forest fires in 1991 and 1993 revealing several new caves. The mixed pine and oak woodland is slowly starting to recover but it will be many years before it is back to normal.



From the Editor



There has been a very positive feel about the Group lately. There is a slow but steady trickle of new members; some excellent social events; a strong and reliable committee; some very keen and active members; a lot of productive digging; a marked increase in the number, party-size and variety of caving trips; and planned training and novice weekends.

I hope this is a good omen for the group's future.

The committee is actively trying to spread the good name of MCG by advertising it's many qualities... so here's to the next fifty years.

Yvonne Rowe

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* *Larguese de mi tierra!* Please depart my land

MCG Doings

On the mend

Jonathan Roberts liked Frenchay Hospital so much the first time that he has returned for more. As a result of another car crash late on 05/07/06 he badly hurt his already injured hand but otherwise had another lucky escape. I understand that he was in hospital for a few days. Once again we wish him a speedy recovery.

On the move

Mick Norton has a new email address:

✉ bullbrook@btinternet.com

Welcome back

to Eric Dowley who has rejoined as a Full Member.

Welcome

to the following Probationary Members:

Giles Martin

☏ 2 The Mount,
Cranleigh, Surrey
✉ gilesmartin@hotmail.co.uk

Karen Fendley

☏ 13 New Road, Church
Crookham, Fleet, Hampshire. GU52 6BH
✉ karen.fendley10@ntlworld.com

Congratulations

to **Mike Richardson** on becoming a Full Member

Cave leaders

Mark Ward, Sonya Cotter, Doug Harris and Mike Richardson are new Upper Flood leaders.

Mick Norton is a new SRT leader.

Cova de Mabre The most enticing was a cave, just based upon its name, was called Cova de Mabre. This was marked as being in a side valley of the main Boronat Valley, S'Alige, over at towards Calvià. The Boronat valley is a delightful setting: full of orange trees and olive groves and lanes bounded by traditional Mallorcan dry stone walls. It's a real "Snowball Oranges" type area and you kept expecting



rustic tractors and goats to appear around every corner. We stopped at a lay-by by the Benatiga Nou finca at the 3km marker which seemed to offer the best prospect of walking into the hills. Unfortunately just as we were about to blithely walk past a very obvious 'no entry to anyone or anything' type sign the owner was heading out in his car. A quick request for permission and I was told very clearly, although politely, that we could not cross his land. Plan B. Further along the road we spotted a track which seemed to offer the prospect of getting onto the hillsides behind all the fincas without actually crossing anyone's land. At first it looked like we would have to pass through an agro-tourism property called Son Boronat but at the last minute the track skirts to the left. A path meanders into the pine woods before fragmenting and petering out. So there was nothing to it but thrash along the scrubby hillside along the back of all the farms until we could drop down into the valley we were aiming for at the start.

Once in the valley it is just a simple case of following the old quarry track right up to the entrance. The quarry doesn't look like it has been active for a while and certainly there was nobody about. At the back of the quarry itself and right at the

top is an enormous portal. Behind this is only a chamber with little to offer other than the odd scramble. The main cave is at the foot of the quarry and right at the top of the track. Initially we just rummaged around in the dusty upper levels which although pleasant were not particularly exciting. We pushed one ascending rift to a tiny entrance that pops out in the quarry floor above but that was about it. The real fun is in the floor not far inside the entrance. A



steeply descending boulder climb opens out into a fine fault controlled rift. This is



well decorated with the usual Mallorcan ancient columns and a roof festooned with stal. A great find and not at all what we had been expecting based upon the entrance. An impressive, and steeply descending, passage can be followed down until it closes down when the rubble is stacked up against the back wall. This is typical of caves in the area but the none the less was an ideal spot for some dramatic photography.

The return back to the road proved to be almost as eventful as the climb up. We wanted to avoid going near the Benatiga Nou finca so cut right the where the side valley broke out into the main Boronat valley floor. We managed to follow a faint track up-valley which, although very sheltered, started to get ominously close to another farm. A few dogs started yapping – they could hear us but not see us – so we were relieved to be able to follow the main farm track back to the road and nip over the fence. On the way up to the quarry we had spotted that a path does come down the head of the valley from Burguesa National Park so perhaps this might be the best way to walk in if you want to avoid disturbing the locals.

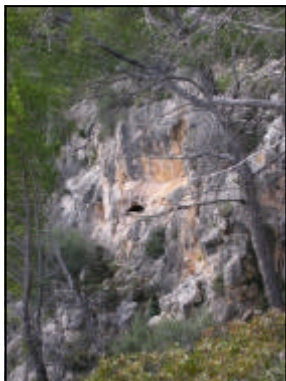
The hunt for Cueva 3 This is where our optimism got the better of us. We had another sketchy map and a description of a cave over on the hills above Pollensa at a location known to British cavers and climbers as the Mortix Gates. There is a pull in after the 11km marker on the C710 and a well used path into the valley. Again we had been in this area before but we should have realised we were in for trouble as it had taken us two attempts to find Avenc des Llorer which is further

along the track. Our objective this year was Avenc des Portuguesos. What we didn't realise was that the survey we had of the cave wasn't actually the survey of the cave marked on our map with a dot and a number 3. As it turned out the latter was a recent discovery that didn't really go anywhere. The cave is extremely well hidden and difficult to see even if you are standing next to the cairn right over the entrance.

So off we went down the valley on the usual route to Avenc S'Aigo. But instead of continuing down the red paint splashed / cairned path across the flat valley floor you bear left not far after the small hut and up a side valley. The cave is actually cairned to the entrance but we spent hours wandering around looking for the damn thing. We only discovered the cairns on the way back. We soon realised that it was not the deep pot of Portuguesos but in fact a single 40 foot pitch to a too tight rift and a pretty side aven. We made the most of it by running off a few photos but it really did not look like more than one party had been there previously.



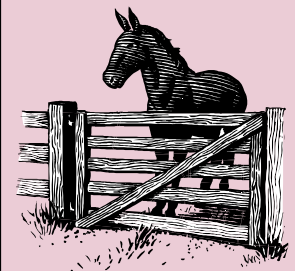
Cova des Gours and Covota des Puigs Gros Somewhat chastened by the visit to the Mortix gates area we thought we'd try and find another pencil dot on the photocopied map over at Na Burguesa. This time we knew exactly where to park as the cave is located within the boundaries of the National Park at Ca na Burgesa, near Palma. From there it looked like a reasonably straightforward, if not lengthy, walk in around the forestry tracks. The route goes on for several kilometres and passes Covota des Puigs Gros and Avenc de S'Embut on the way. You get fine views across the Bay of Palma and even for the walk itself I would absolutely recommend a visit to this area. Once we were near the cave the track disappeared into an area of scrub and we were left to wander around looking for the entrance. Peat went off on a mission, traversing miles along the headland, but the cave is actually just tucked under the main cliff in a steep valley, Ses Vinyes. From a distance it looks like a cascade of fossil gours, but up close the cave is actually only a through trip of a couple of metres or so. And full of animal droppings. It then started to become clear that a pencil dot on the map was a site of speleological interest. A formal cave shape was the indicator of an actual cave worth visiting.



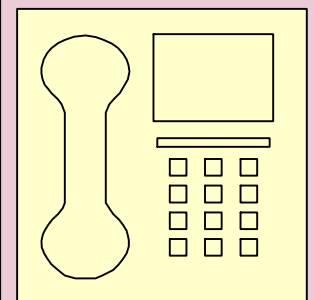
However, and unusually this time, we had a back up plan. We had a brought along a rope and kit to do Covota des Puig Gros if everything went belly up. We knew exactly where the entrance was and it was only a 45 minute walk back up the track. Louisa and I had visited this cave in 2004 [see newsletter 325] but it was new to the others and its well worth a second trip. The highlights of the cave are the extremely bright yellow stalagmites just above the pitch and a large colony of bats. As in the previous year we rigged a 20m rope from some stal to help the descent but on the way up it's pretty much of a free climb. At the bottom of the pitch to the left drops down into a large, boulder strewn chamber with excellent stalactites high up in the roof. To the right is a high fractured rift which you can scramble along to a sandy-floored final chamber. We saw even more bats than last year and these accompanied us out as by now it was very late in the day. You can ask Mike about how confusing the entrance choke can be to the unwary!

Avenc de Fra Rafael And then there were two. A heavy night limited our intrepid team to just me and half of Peat. Fra Rafael is a real Mallorcan classic but I had only been there once before and that was back in 1996 [newsletter 259]. The walk in was always a bit tentative then in terms of whether you were actually supposed to be on the land, and certainly the situation has become even more restrictive. The starting point is the car park at the 16km marker on the C710. That's still the same but you now have to pass at least two private property signs to get to the cave. The walk in is certainly not for the faint hearted. There is now a large dry stone wall blocking the track down from the lay by. We had to drop into the dry bed

Cottage doings



After Bob Templeman's observation about there being no front gate and the Green Gathering approaching, Doug Harris has purchased and fitted a new shiny gate for the car park. The bottom hinge has been turned upside down and rewelded to the gate post, to stop anybody taking it away. It is currently tied to the other post with a length of retired caving rope.



The cottage phone has been out of order again recently, although by the time you read this BT should have repaired the fault. The problem lies with the BT box under the lounge window which has been knocked again. Doug Harris intends to make a metal cover for this, to prevent reoccurrences of this problem.

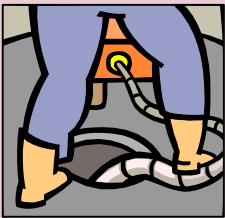
More cottage doings

Camping fees



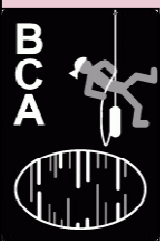
A reminder that Camping Fees are currently £2.00 for members and £3.00 for guests. Camping Fees are payable by anyone staying overnight but not sleeping in a bunk.

Cess pit



For the first time in ages, the cess pit was emptied at the beginning of June and 3000 gallons of sewerage was taken away.

BCA insurance



M C G members are reminded that BCA insurance cover applies whenever you go caving with, but if other members of the same trip do not have caving cover, then you may be more at risk of an uninsured claim than you would otherwise be. The safest position to be in is to ensure that all other members of your caving trip are caving members of the BCA scheme.

of the Torrente d'Alqueda and duck under some chicken wire to get through. There was no-one at the hunting shack in the woods so we were able to nip into the wooded doline and from there you are out of sight. The cave is extremely well cairned these days so actually the entrance is much easier to find now.

The entrance shaft is a sporting 61m pitch leading to a cone of rubble, but a window in the shaft at -18m gives access to a well decorated series of galleries, the Sala de l'Orgasme. The entrance rigging is now very straight forward with oodles of bolts although of course a little exposed. The galleries of the higher level section that you access from the window are big and well decorated so well worth a visit. They terminate in the final 117m, called the Gran Pou. Not having vast amounts of rope with me I followed the same route as last time which is a scrappy gully on the left. If you have a monster rope you can rig the whole thing right from the top without too much hassle. On the gully route a steep calcite slope leads to a rubble ledge and the start of the real pitch. Descent of the left hand wall leads to a y-hang from two 8mm spits. This gives a fantastic airy descent past some impressive formations. I was unable to locate a deviation so opted to continue the descent to a large calcite ledge. I then rigged down a crack on the left hand side using stal and a few sneaky naturals to pass the flowstone coated walls. Unfortunately I ran out of rope about 3m short. I found myself huddled on a tiny ledge contemplating a sporting climb to the bottom as Peat descended after me. Common sense prevailed and we returned back up the ropes, slightly frustrated that we hadn't actually touched the bottom.

To be honest I think Peat was very relieved to be heading out as by now the after effects of the night before were really starting to kick in. The adventure was not over yet though. It was dusk as we emerged and all around we could hear the crack of shotguns. Our quiet walk in had become a hunting ground for anything that flew. We snuck out of the doline and back through the wood. Up ahead someone yelled out from behind a screen. I said hi in my best Argentinean and muttered something about the cave and was it ok to pass. That seemed to do the trick and we quickly hurried past. That's us done at Fra Rafael for another ten years so someone else can go for a look instead.

Team: Peat Bennett, Tim Francis, Louisa Minahan, Mike Richardson, Kirsty Stroud (Old Mole)

Upper Flood update

by Tim Francis

11/07/06 This week (Sunday) the upstream piece was pushed beyond the jammed rock. It's all very tight and wet but quite pleasant in the warm weather we're having. In the winter it will be much too desperate. It's extremely well decorated throughout - I broke a few straws - and will not take traffic so please avoid. I am not proposing to return except for when we knock off the survey so the jammed rock has been left in place. The passage terminates in a reasonably roomy, wider bit of passage where the water emerges from under a flowstone bank. I assume this must be extremely close to the end of the stream below Andrew's Grotto. It would not be suitable as a choke/Golden Chamber bypass if someone wanted to bang it through. You also pass a sharp right bend where a tiny muddy rift heads off. I think this must be the extension of the fossil rift that Peat Bennett pushed the other month.



Downstream we (well Peat!) dug out a huge volume of rocks and mud from the choke. It's all very spacious in there now. The right hand side is solid and we are following an undercut. We've left it at a narrow squeeze between a boulder and the wall. I squeezed though a little way and can see the choke continuing upwards. There is a nasty looking boulder in the ceiling that we will need to be aware of. The next trip should see us through but we need a Hilti to make it a bit wider. The streamway is lost in the floor immediately below the choke. We may

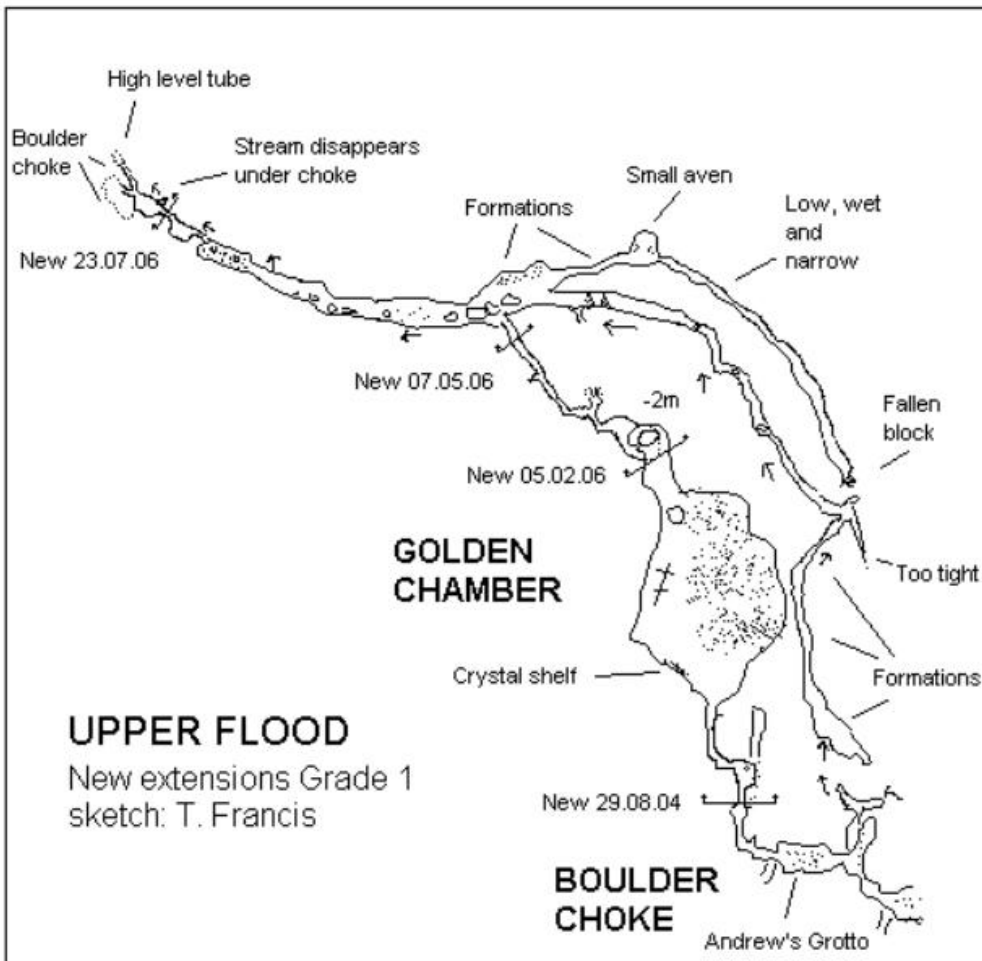
be able to dig down in the floor at the end but it looks a bit narrow. So the main choke is our best bet. The draught is very strong in places but it seems to come in from the left rather than from straight ahead. I wonder if this is the back end of the Red Room choke. Time will tell...

28/07/2006 Last Sunday Doug Harris, Mike Richardson, Mark Ward and Dongwoo and I did some work in the terminal choke. After more clearance work we pushed through the squeeze between the choke and the right hand wall. (A route down through the boulders before the squeeze was also explored but the stream was finally relocated later on). Straight ahead is a roomish void that you can easily stand up in. It's quite well decorated with flowstone as well. Up ahead gets horrible and chokey but there is a small tube that follows the wall on the right. It's reminiscent of Bypass Passage. This gets too tight but there is an airspace at the end which will be diggable. It looks like an old stream level. Back from the tube, if you look up in the roof between boulders, there is quite a sizeable void in the choke. We should be able to get into this, either by pulling down a few rocks or Hilti'ing the side wall. This will definitely gain us quite a bit of height.

Just after the breakthrough squeeze a way was forced back down to the stream. The water disappears under the choke. I think the way downstream is diggable but there isn't any stacking space. It's a bit loose so we need to tidy it up a bit. Just next to where you drop down are some nice formations associated with an old gour pool. Stalactite has reached the surface level of a gour and you get a bulbous end of calcite crystals.

Next plans are: 1. Hilti the breakthrough squeeze. 2. Tape the chamber. 3. Take some photos. 4. Get into the chamber higher in the choke. 5. Decide where to dig a) In the roof, b) in the tube or c) in the streamway.

Survey below (I think my scale has gone awry as the choke area should be bigger) and see you on the members weekends for more fun and frolics.



Dear MCG

Our thanks to all the MCG members for all the many phone calls, cards and letters we received during Eric's illness and stay in hospital. He is now home and slowly recovering but still very weak. He is working hard to regain his strength, paying special attention to the arm that holds his drinking glass.

With best wishes,
Joan and Eric Dowley

Roman Rake update

Mark Ward, Mick Norton and Tim Francis have cleared the debris from the double snapper. A large boulder blocks the way on but there could be a diggable mud filled crack below. Tony Jarrett has volunteered to liberate the boulder when he gets his next delivery of free persuadables. We also haven't forgotten that the pointing needs finishing...

Yv's droppings

Anon: "I don't know who keeps washing muddy caving gear in the hosing down area and blocking the gully."

LM: "I'd like a bedroom shot."

LM: "You wake up in the morning and there it is."

Anon1: "For young people staying at the cottage there is not much garden for play, no gate either and it's close to the road;
Anon2 "And for older people there's no pub!"

KF: "Make me dirty"

Earwig in on the committee meeting held on 09/07/06

Ben Cooper has been appointed as the new Custodian Trustee.

Martin Rowe has agreed to take over the Gift Aid administration.

New Upper Flood leaders will be taken down the cave by two existing leaders for their 'history' trip.

Training weekend on November members weekend – maximum 8, underground 6 if GB.

Lectures and practical. Theory - talk first about rescue – what to do, call-out procedure etc.; flood hazards; boulders; environmental awareness; survival; bats; conservation.

Practical – by a professional instructor. Open to MCG members only. Contact Linda.



Now that we have a nice new tiled floor, members are requested not to bring axes into the Lounge. There should be ample firewood in the trays under the lounge furniture. If wood needs chopping, please do this outside. And no bottle-walking either, please!

Yvonne's & Tony's joint 130th birthday bash – July 7/8/9th 2006

by Yvonne Rowe

What a cracking weekend! It was a bash to celebrate Yvonne's 60th and Tony's 70th birthdays. They both agreed that a barrel, copious amounts of wine and a barbeque would be a great way of having a good party. Yvonne also decided that a nostalgic trip from the early 80's, when she first started caving, would be a good idea. Tony was secretary of the Group at the time so it was sort of fitting for him too.



Saturday started with Yvonne and Linda Milne (who started caving with Yvonne in 1983) getting two parties ready for a nostalgic trip down GB Cavern. In 1983 Linda, Yvonne, Gill Warren and Jo Davies were taken on their first caving trips by Geoff Barton, Ian McKechnie, Roy Kempston and Dick Housego. One of those trips (when we were no longer deemed novices) was down GB where we'd had a group photo taken (see opposite) looking out over the Main Chamber from the Gallery. This time, because of the access restrictions, we had to go down in two separate groups. We arranged to meet at 12 noon at The Gallery, Yvonne, Martin, Tony and Denise on their way out, Linda and her party on their



way in, when we would have another group photo taken. Well, we waited and waited. After a photo of just us four, we decided to finish the trip and make our way out. We finally (and much later) met the others at the Bridge when they were only just on their way in so we had a group photo taken of us all sitting on the Bridge instead. It was funny because the lads said it was the girls faffing about in the changing room that made them late starting, but the girls said it was the lads!



The evening barbecue was a great success and grateful thanks go to the willing helpers who provided food and/or helped with the preparations. As well as the barbecue outside, we had a huge spread of food in the dining area - not forgetting the barrel and wine, of course. We also played music from the 80's which went down surprisingly well. Yvonne made a big cave cake – a pile of (melted chocolate) muddled chocolate rock cakes with a coiled rope, a ladder, and with



a caver emerging from a stalactited cave entrance holding a birthday candle.

Over fifty people came to help us celebrate – friends of both Tony and mine from past and present. I was particularly pleased to see Ian McKechnie and Geoff and Morag Barton as Ian and Geoff were two of the original four who started Linda and I off caving back in 1983. Roy and Fiona Kempston were on holiday and Dick Housego no longer belongs to MCG.



The evening finished with the obligatory cottage games like the table traverse, broom trick, and a newer addition – the reverse bow-saw through-trip. In 1983 this was done using a wire coat-hanger or toilet seat, but now the 'volunteer' has to pass bodily through the bow-saw, starting from the head and upper torso – with the teeth of the blade turned inwards!!! I am pleased to report that no blood was shed.

On the Sunday, after a committee meeting, some went caving and some, Martin and I included, went for a walk. A big thanks to everyone who helped Tony and I to have a weekend bash to remember.

PS: It's Martin's 50th next January and I feel another party coming on!

MCG Library additions

by Joan Goddard

Speleological Abstracts, 42-43 (2003-2004) published by the International Union of Speleology - the essential starting point for overseas caving trips.

UBSS Proceedings, Vol 23(3) 2005 is devoted to a long overdue report on the archaeology of Aveline's Hole.

Northern Caves 2 – The Three Peaks, 1996 reprint, by A Brook, D. Brook, J.Griffiths, M.H.Long. This is a replacement for a copy which disappeared from the library a long time ago. If anyone finds the original (first edition 1991) we would be pleased to have it back!

Out of the Darkness by J Scott and G. Gray, undated., This small paperback is a brief history and description of the Old Quarry, Beer. Anyone interested in the Bath Stone workings at Box Mines would also enjoy this publication. The Beer underground workings are open to the public. Donated.

Bristol Industrial Archaeology Society - Journal No. 26 (1994) has an article on Winford Ochre and Oxide (Redding Pits), and we also have photocopies of articles from Volume 4 (1971) on Singing River Mine (by Chris Richards), Ubley Rakes (Bob Burgess) and the Pattinson Plant at Blackmoor (Frank Hawtin).

Secret Underground, February/March 2006. Those members lucky enough to live in the South West were able to see this series of programmes on ITV1 West. The first programme featured the Severn Railway Tunnel, the second was on the Clifton Rocks Railway in Bristol and underground WW2 shelters (included a short bit on Sandford Levvy), the third was about mining in the Forest of Dean (iron) and Shipham (calamine – Singing River Mine) and the last was about caves; it showed digging at The Rift on Axbridge Hill (with Alan Gray, Axbridge CG), dowsing and digging at Rose Cottage, Priddy (Tony Jarrat, BEC) and some excellent filming by Gavin Newman down St Cuthbert's - historical perspective by Dave Irwin and Brian Prewer talking to presenter Chris Searl on the surface. Donated.

A Visitor's Guide to Clearwell Caves, May 2001 – 19 page tourist guide. Donated.

Planet Earth – Caves, narrated by David Attenborough. I was slightly disappointed after all the hype as I thought the film was rather slow-moving and the Lechueguilla shots could have done with better lighting and something to indicate the scale of the formations. However, other people I have spoken to thought it was very good. There is a donated video in the library and also a DVD which was kindly donated by Peter Ireson (GSG).

Subterranea, Issue 10, April 2006 – contains an article on Emmer Green Chalk Mine, Reading (the mine Geoff Beale is always trying to persuade you to visit). It is one of three mines near an old brickworks rediscovered in 1977 during development of the site.

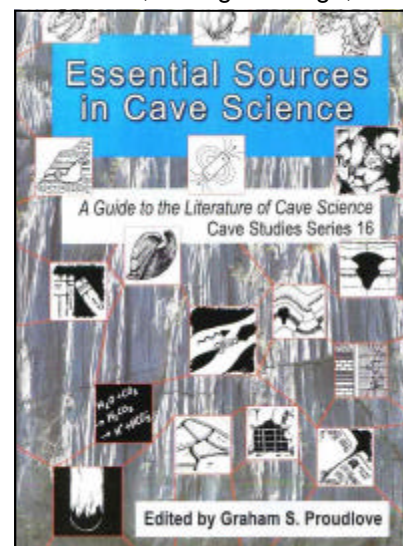
Cave Minerals by Carol A. Hill, 1976 - Although rather dated in style and content, this book fills a gap in the library and provides an interesting starting point for anyone interested in cave formations and their mineralogy. Lots of mainly black and white photos - but more of a reference book than a coffee table offering.

Grottes et Abîmes by Pierre Boulanger, 1966 – a classic book, in French.

Folk Songs – MCG songbook in the late 50's, early 60's. This book of songs was donated by Richard Woolacott who was an early secretary of the MCG. It is beautifully bound by another member, George Savage, and we are very fortunate to have it in our collection. Thank you, Richard. Having joined the Group a little later when caving songs were at their peak, I was surprised that all the songs in this book are very respectable!

Mendip - Cheddar, its Gorge and Caves by H.E.Balch, 1st Edition, 1935. – We already have the 2nd Edition but this is the 1st and a bit of a classic.

Essential Sources in Cave Science – a guide to the literature of Cave Science (BCRA Cave Studies Series No.16), ed Graham Proudlove, 2006. Previous Caves Studies were A5 so this one, at A4 size, rather messes up the filing system! However it would not have worked as A5 as it consists mainly of lists of references arranged by subject (Geomorphology, Chemistry, Biology, Conservation, Speleogenesis etc), each section being written by a specialist in that subject. The aim of the work is to "allow anyone to obtain sufficient information to understand the basics of any discipline within cave science". I think it succeeds in doing that. Each section begins with a short introduction to the subject and ends with useful internet sites. The best three sources (for those who require a short cut) are listed. I like the cover design, too.



Logbook Extracts 4th February 2006 – 15th April 2006

04.02.2006 Eastwater (Julie H, Tim F, Peat, Mike Richardson). Finally got round to doing Eastwater after many years caving. Wittered mightily at the end of the First Traverse; full marks to Julie, Tim and Pete for persuading me not to wimp out. Tim poked about a bit, then out via Hallelujah Hole and over top of Baker's Chimney. I'll crack the claustrophobia bit yet. *[MikeR]*

05.02.2006 Upper Flood (Tim F, Peat, Mike Richardson). Golden Chamber – was written up by Mike in Newsletter No. 332.

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]*

19.02.2006 – 17.03.2006 Replacement of Lounge floor, mainly by Wayne Hiscox, Bryan Pittman, Doug Harris and Arthur Spain (with help from Martin Rowe, Joan & Pete Goddard and Bookham Scouts). Cottage 'closed' so not much caving over this period.

05.03.2006 Bowden Hill Mine, Scotland (Julie Hesketh, Alan Jefferies (Goon) [GSG], Gary Summerfield [?GSG]) Good fun – old limestone mine dug open by the GSG in the 80's or 90's. Mostly crawling acrobatics. Goon knew the through trip so spent about 2½ hours playing. Gary appeared to have fun and even threatened to come up to Sutherland one day. Not the most exciting of underground trips but "needs must ..." *[JH]*

05.03.2006 Upper Flood (Malcolm C, Ben Cooper, Doug H, Tim F, Mike R). 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]*

18.03.2006 Upper Flood (Lee Hawkswell, Mark Ward). Trip to see progress past Golden Chamber, very promising. Cleared all mud and rocks from Andrew's Grotto back to red Room - good job. *[MW]*
P.S. Warning: Second squeeze in Boulder Choke - the boulder has moved/split!! *[LH]*

24/25.03.2006 Louisa had a stab at cleaning the dust left over from the new floor. **Tim's** excuse was a knackered back so no cleaning or caving for him. *[TF]*

25.03.2006 Hunters Lodge Inn Sink (Mark Ward, Sonya Cotter). This is a really surprising place - interesting crawl over flat boulders ('Pub Crawl'); over a hole in the floor leads to the beautifully decorated 'Happy Hour Highway'. A hole down to the right takes you to a wet, rifty fun climb and this narrows down eventually, through a cowshy duck and crawl, to the end of this passage. Saw frogs in the streamway of this 'Inn-let'. Following the 'Highway' further takes you past more stunning formations. We looked at the 60ft pitch - will do another time - and explored the 'Barmaids' Bedrooms' - more stunning flowstone - there are bones on the right-hand side at the far end of this passage which can be squeezed along to its narrow, low conclusion (but small chamber visible). The 'Drip Tray Sump' does look very clear and promising. Really, really impressive. Fab trip. *[SC]*

01.04.2006 Swildon's Hole (Giles Martin, Julie Hesketh-Laird). Post AGM potter around the Upper/Entrance series. Lots of water. Explored places you wouldn't normally bother with - particularly beyond a small climb close to the water Chamber - lots of small crawly stuff - plenty of it and quite tight. Good fun trip. *[JH]*

02.04.2006 Upper Flood Swallet

(First party: Mark W, Tim F, Mike R, Doug H). 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: Julie H, Giles Martin, Linda Milne). Got to end. Too fat to get into Golden Chamber but I believe the others had a smashing time in there. *[GM]*

(Third party: Sonya C and Malcolm C). 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.

03.04.2006 Rhino Rift (Giles M, Mick N, Duncan, Biff [Bracknell C C]) Right hand route. We decided to revive the right hand route in Rhino Rift. All on spits - Biff was rigging. Last time he used spits was in the Berger with Doug two years ago. No problem. This is an airy route, much more exciting than the 'P' bolted left hand

route. You are more exposed, get right up in the roof and are much closer to the formations – also less ammunition underfoot. Three hour trip. This was Giles' first Mendip S.R.T. trip. [MN]

04.04.2006 G.B. Cavern (Giles M, Mick N, Doug H, Duncan, Biff). Nearly all passages covered. Good air today. [MN]

05.04.2006 Bone Hole (Doug H, Mick N, Biff). [MN]

06.04.2006 Coral Cave (Giles M, Mick N, Sonya & Malcolm C). 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]

07.04.2006 Loxton Quarry Cave / Lost Cave of Loxton (Peat B, Mick N, Giles M, Doug H, Tim F). Tim, Mick and I went into Loxton Quarry Cave and the others went into the Lost Cave of Loxton to see if we could do a sound connection. Even after lots of shouting we couldn't hear anything. Then popped over to the others to look round and have a guided tour of the lost cave. This even included the 2 birds scratched onto the wall which seem to be fading, corduroy marks under some planks and a clay pipe. Formations were pretty good just to the right of the entrance pitch. Then tried to get into the other caves in the area - which was all to no avail as the locks had rusted up. [Peat]

08.04.2006 Ubley Hill Pot (Peat B, Tim F). After failing to find the key for Upper Flood, decided to go to Ubley to see if we could open the entrance series with a spot of digging. (Upper Flood did turn up but we had sorted all the kit out by then). Called at Ubley farm but no one was in so traipsed across the field with the curious cows rushing over to see what was going on. Once in the cave, Battle of the Somme commenced. Everything got stuck. Trying to get clay off the spade was a two-man job. Once the floor had been dropped looked to see if we could get through the crawl - called it a day at this point as it was impossible to get mud out of the floor. Probably the best way to get through is via a water hose. Everything got messy on the way back up the pitch, not helped with my light going out. [Peat]

15.04.2006 Upper Flood (Malcolm C, Charlie Allison, Mark Ward). 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]

18.04.2006 Phil Elliot's table delivered. One of the lounge tables has now been put in the library so you can have bigger Committee Meetings. [BP]

The ghost of MCG

Don Vosper was chatting to another vintage caver recently who recalled the story of the original MCG cottage (Netherwood Cottage) being haunted. Stories of a man murdering his wife and possibly kids as well. He asked if anyone remembered what the story was and were there any facts behind it?

Joan Goddard recalled the story of a murder of a wife by her husband – she can't remember the date but it was during the 19C mining on the slopes of Blackdown (up near the amphitheatre) - at a cottage by the stream which runs down from Blackdown to Longwood. The cottage was just above the road crossing where the footpath goes up to Blackdown. A member of the archaeology group she belongs to has researched the murder (Weston newspapers reported it and there are official records). When he publishes it or gives a talk about it she will get the details. Apparently the husband was told one day by one of the other miners that his wife had "been with 100 men in Hundred Acres Field". He came home in a jealous rage (the miners had probably been drinking cider) and murdered his wife, but not the children. This may, or may not, be the origin of the story associated with Netherwood Cottage.

Tony Knibbs also remembers the story of the original MCG cottage being haunted. He understands that Netherwood Cottage was referred to locally as 'the gardener's' cottage - obviously an association with The Willoughbys (an old name for what we all knew as 'the country club, and prior to that 'the sanatorium'). Walking down the track on a pitch black windy night, he says, could be an unnerving experience (no mere rustle of spring, indeed). Even a little imagination made the situation very spooky. On hearing the 'ghost' story, (which he does not recall involving the kids, 'just' the wife), he recalls a comment about smelling a woman's perfume if the wind was in the right direction! He never heard of anyone seeing the ghost or anything else suspicious and feels that the story was simply a bit of a local tale. However, he is going to ask ex-MCG members Tony Crawford, currently in New Zealand, and to Jack Green in Canada. They may have interesting comments to make.

WBCRT rescue Landrover stolen



SWCC recently suffered its first major break-in and theft for a number of years when the West Brecon Rescue Landrover was stolen. The break-in occurred between 7.15pm on Sunday 14th May and tea-time Monday 15th May. The break-in was discovered on a routine visit to the club. Entry was gained to the premises by smashing a way into Rescue through the hatchway bit of the garage door. The lock held, but the door broke. From inside Rescue, a way was forced into No.1 Powell Street through the upstairs door. The padlock to the Lab was broken and the door of building stores was forced open. Unfortunately they appear to have found the key safe, ripped it from the wall and forced the padlock. An attempt was made to force open the filing cabinet which holds the drugs, but this attempt appears to have failed, as did the attempt to open the filing cabinet in the Lab.

Apart from the West Brecon Rescue Landrover, they took mostly tools including 2 petrol generators, a hydraulic ram, a large toolbox of hand tools, an orbital sander and a jigsaw, an old circular saw from building stores, and perhaps an old electric drill and some old hand tools. Also taken were some wet suits and diving torches, a pair of two way radios, some AA batteries and charger, a bicycle, medical gases, a flectalon blanket and other stuff inside the Landrover, some soup dragon gear, teabags, coffee, squash and chocolate! There does not appear to have been any vandalism and many 'valuable' things were overlooked. A few things were taken out of the Landrover before it was taken, including the 20 or so OS maps, and the radio mast and stretcher platform which had been lashed to the roof. The lock on the dumper shed was forced, and a failed attempt was made at the door to digging stores, but no other parts of Powell Street were entered, and there is no sign that forced entry was tried. Police report that there was a major cluster of incidents in the area on Sunday night, including others where tools were taken, and another vehicle.

Quite amazingly, the Landrover was recovered, in remarkably good condition, the following weekend. It was found in the Forestry above Banwen/Glynneath by a guy attending the Red Dragon Rally stage at Glynneath. The vehicle had been driven down into the trees and so would not have been found easily – it was very lucky that it was stumbled across on the weekend. The medical gases were still on board - it was even locked and the alarm set! It was transported to the Police workshops for forensic examination then to Landrover in Swansea for a thorough check over and to have new locks and a Tracker System fitted. Replacement steel garage doors have been ordered and should now be in place. The WBCRT consider it will cost about £2,500 to get the Land Rover back in service, which the team hoped to do within a week.

The stolen and damaged equipment was bought with charitable donations and grant funding. To make a donation to WBCRT, you can send a cheque directly to the WBCRT Treasurer, Rhys Williams, c/o 2 Powell Street, Penwyllt, Pen-y-Cae, Swansea, SA9 1GQ or donate directly online at their [donation page with CAF](#)



Notes of the MCG AGM held on 1st April 2006

Minutes of the AGM will be available in due course. In the meantime, here are brief notes of the meeting:

People who aren't at the AGM get a mention in the minutes (apologies for absence), but those who make the effort to attend are not mentioned. It was agreed that the attendance list would be included in the minutes.

The proposal for the committee structure will be circulated to members (but not published in the Newsletter) in draft form.

We have received advice from accountants who deal with charities who said you cannot claim gift aid on insurance as it constitutes a personal benefit. However, members are not purchasing insurance, they are subscribing to BCA. Insurance is a service provided to all BCA members. So it may still be possible to gift aid the combined MCG and BCA subscription.

Members felt the cottage was adequately insured (despite the building of the library extension).

The committee will keep the membership up to date on heating/water/electric issues, and progress on renewable issues.

Members and guests are requested not to bring axes into the lounge.

Promoting MCG: Novice weekends will be arranged and advertised. We receive lots of enquiries for membership via the web site – both beginners and experienced. We have a link on the [Blagdon.org website](http://Blagdon.org). Linda is involved in ads promoting MCG – leaflets, caving websites, scouts, universities, locals.

10 years ago, MCG paid for a new chain, to be placed in Swildons. The chain it was to replace in Blue Pencil is about to disintegrate so the new chain is at the top of CSCC's list. Julie volunteered to go down Blue Pencil but would need another person to do the technical stuff (fitting etc.).

The replacement Waterwheel lid (MCG offered to pay one third of the cost) never materialised. Pat Walsh reminded the meeting that he can make lids if required.

When the cottage bookings say 'guest bed available – none', on the MCG website, it doesn't mean there are no beds available for members – there are always 6-8 beds available for members. Cottage bookings need to be more easily accessed – maybe with a 'Book here' icon on the menu.

Elections for committee and other posts: see page 10 (or this month, page 12) of the newsletter

Amendments to the constitution and rules: The meeting agreed to abolish the category of Prospective Member. New applicants for membership will automatically be Probationary Members. The meeting also abolished Reduced Subscription for members over 60, although such members may still apply annually to the committee if they are on low income.

The practice of bringing electric fan heaters to the cottage is discouraged as these are expensive to run, especially during peak times (7 am to midnight).

We made a good start at Roman Rake (Limekiln Dig) but the location, an SSSI managed by English Nature (EN), means we are restricted on what we can do. We have asked EN for permission to make any changes and on what to do with the spoil.

Members paid a £15 deposit for their original Cotag fob. They will need to pay a deposit for a replacement when the old one runs out. They will still get their deposit back if they leave the Group. We don't want to give members second-hand Cotags, but it is wasteful if we don't use old ones with a bit of life still left in them. To be debated by the committee.

Some Associate and Probationary Members wish to become Full Members, to be able to vote at AGMs, but do not want to undertake a training trip. The meeting asked the committee to look into this.

Information on caves for which insurance is needed is available on the CSCC website.

Date for next AGM – 24th March 2007, and half-yearly – 7th October 2006

Beginners Weekend!

2nd & 3rd September 2006

Do you know anyone who might like to come along?

We'll be organising trips and a meal/BBQ in the evening.

If you'd like to lead a trip or know some one who wants to come along, please contact Linda or Bob.





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Examiners

Fiona Kempston
(MCG member)
Anne Pittman
(External)

Booking the Cottage

Please make bookings
for Groups (whether MCG
or Guests) through [Joan
Goddard](#) 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
Camping 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 2006	Full and Probationary (excluding BCA insurance)	£30.00
	Associate Members (excluding BCA insurance)	£15.00
BCA Insurance	Cavers £15.00 Non-cavers £5.00 (all members must have cover)	
Reciprocal rights	MCG members have reciprocal rights with SWCC and NPC	
NPC bookings	secretary@northernpennineclub.org.uk	
SWCC bookings	Keith Goodhead, tel 01874 610080 hutbookings@swcc.org.uk	

CAVING AND SOCIAL CALENDAR 2006

DATE	AREA	EVENT	CONTACT	TEL
Aug 4/5/6th	Mendip	Members weekend		
Aug 5th	Mendip	Cave photography	Bob Templeman	01923 773973
Sep 1/2/3rd	Mendip	Members weekend		
Sep 2nd	Mendip	Novice weekend	Bob Templeman	01923 773973
Oct 6/7/8th	Mendip	Members weekend		
Oct 7th	Mendip	Half yearly forum	Tim Francis	0208 392 2572
Oct 7th	Mendip	Grebe Swallett	Bob Templeman	01923 773973
Oct 7th	Mendip	Cheddar Caves	Bob Templeman	01923 773973
Oct 7th	Mendip	Beer and skittles	Linda Milne	01420 562315
Nov 3/4/5th	Mendip	Members weekend		
Nov 4th	Mendip	Reservoir Hole	Geoff Beale	
Nov 4th	Mendip	Fireworks		

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COTTAGE BOOKINGS

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

Who	Date Arrive	Date Leave	Nights	Beds
Border CG Scouts	Fri 27/10/06	Sun 29/10/06	2 nights	3 rooms