

Notes from the MCG Half-yearly Forum held on Saturday October 7th '06

The meeting started late, understandably and as was expected, due to the 'Upper Flood team' wanting to do more digging etc. down Upper Flood. When it finally got under way there were 26 members present, but this eventually dwindled down to just the committee and those involved with the discovery of the new Upper Flood extensions – about 12 in all.

The Training weekend was the only other topic besides Upper Flood to be discussed:-

John Crowsley has offered to conduct a training weekend, free of charge to members, on one weekend per year. This year it is to be held over the November members' weekend and John is to be joined by MCG member Kev West. Kev, who lives in Ireland, is also a professional caving instructor. The weekend will consist of classroom-based instruction on the Saturday and will include topics such as environmental factors, cave awareness, callout, rescue, weather conditions etc. Sunday will involve a trip underground and can include whatever members want to do to suit all levels of ability (with two instructors they should be able to comfortably cover anything, including SRT practice). Also, Charlie Alison has offered to conduct a photographic session in Upper Flood (but not in the new extensions).

Upper Flood Swallet was discussed at length and this was when people started drifting into the kitchen, or into little groups separate from the main meeting. The members remaining were the committee, those involved in discovering the new extensions, and/or those interested in contributing to future plans. The medium and long term goals agreed were:

- Les Davis, Mendip Warden (Charterhouse Centre) has been told what's happened and where we're at in the cave. John Baker, Somerset County Council's caving officer(?), will be taken down at some stage (when everything's stabilised and taped). He hasn't been down since 2001. He is happy for us to carry on with stabilising, surveying, conservation etc.
- Who should hold a key? – MRO? Charterhouse Centre? Who can go down? We need to ensure we maintain and conserve the cave (pretties etc.) We need to take photographs before we take others down, and tape what needs conserving and protecting. Charlie volunteered to do some photography. We need to arrange proper photography workshops – get a team together, maybe using Yahoo Groups to get people together. Priority is to photograph stuff at risk of damage, dirt, the parts walked on, for future reference and comparison. Most think digital photography would be best, but Charlie will not be using digital.
- If anything does get muddied, it is assumed that it will get cleaned if/when the cave floods in the winter (e.g.. the boulder choke is very muddy).
- The boulder choke needs making safe. It needs a good team to do this.
- Another area that needs making safe is a big slab above the breakthrough squeeze in Golden Chamber.
- Scaffolding for safety work is already in the Red Room.
- We need to produce two articles - one for Speleologist and one for Descent. Tim volunteered to do this and is to include photos.
- Upper Flood leaders that were involved with the digging and breakthrough know the route and areas of danger. Other Upper Flood leaders need to do a trip with these diggers to get familiar with the new extensions before leading trips themselves.
- 'When do we start allowing other clubs down?'. The answer, after discussion, was:
 1. When everything has been made safe.
 2. When the necessary photography has been undertaken.
 3. When all conservation measures have been completed (taping etc.).
 4. When all leaders have been re-trained.

When all this has been completed satisfactorily, we then need time to assess what winter conditions in the extensions are like.

- Naming new areas and passages: It was unanimously agreed that 'Cotter' has got to be in there somewhere. Tim Francis has identified a suitable place and will liaise with Sonya Cotter (who has been down to see the extensions).
- People need to be aware that it is not an easy trip - 6-8 hours there and back or a 12 hour digging trip. It is very tight in places and very tiring. Being slim and not too tall is preferable. However, it's not difficult once in the new passage, but would make a very serious 'tourist' trip.

- People must not underestimate their ETR (as is happening at present). After much discussion it was agreed that cavers must put their **callout time** on the destination board, i.e., estimated trip time plus 2 hours, so we all know exactly when to call the MRO. Also, specify what type of trip is being undertaken and how far you intend to go. Yvonne Rowe to make 2 new signs for the destination board (see below) – one reminding members what needs to go on their ticket; the other changing ‘ETR’ to ‘**CALLOUT TIME**’.
 - The callout procedure to go on the notice board and by the phone, but awaiting clarification from MRO.
 - People doing the full trip need to take plenty of spare lighting, drinks (e.g.. Ribena) and Mars bars as it’s a long and tiring trip.
 - It was suggested that we get a darren drum to put in the cave for rescue purposes, with silica gel to keep it all dry.
 - It needs surveying. Martin Rowe is keen to see a high grade survey and is willing to survey up to Black Shale Rift. Bob Templeman has offered to help.
 - We need to get proper survey pins to hammer in.
 - Charnel Shaft is worth opening up and having a look as it could produce a second entrance to Upper Flood.
 - Joan Goddard volunteered to provide the digital mapping.
-