

MCG NEWS

Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

Departure Lounge, Upper Flood (by Charlie Allison)

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Taking tea with Gus Hiddink and other stories of Korea

by Tim Francis

This is another one of those 'we were looking for an excuse to go there' caving trips. Korea had always been in the back of my mind after having caved with Yong Shik Park and Dong Woo Kim over the years but it's a long way and the known caves are not internationally renowned. However, last year we found out that the 13th biannual Vulcanospeleology Conference was to be held in Jeju Island, a volcanic island to the south of the Korean peninsula. Ed Waters from the SMCC had told us that the 12th conference in Mexico had been a laugh so we thought, 'why not'?

Words have no wings but they can fly a thousand miles

You don't get a lot of lava caves in the Mendips, let alone the UK (apparently there is one in Scotland about 8ft in length) so our involvement in the conference was not going to be of domestic interest. Rather, it was a tenuous connection to the MCG expeditions to Argentina. We've been focusing upon the small outcrops of Jurassic gypsum and limestone on the edge of the Andes near Malargüe, Mendoza province. In reasonably-close proximity is a huge area of lava flows associated with the Payun Matrú volcano. This area is extremely remote, the terrain and weather challenging and with only about 20 known caves. None are of any great length. But the vastness of the lava flows suggests that there will more discoveries in the future. I felt sure I could cobble together a few slides for a talk so off we went.

If you want catch a tiger, you have to go to the tiger's cave

Somewhat battered after a long flight via Dubai we landed at Incheon Airport, Seoul on Sunday 31st August. Right after exiting the gate we were greeted by Yong Shik, and we hardly recognised him all dressed up in a smart suit. He works for United Airlines so has an 'access all areas' pass. He guided us across Seoul via the train link to the domestic Gimpo airport where we were able to catch an earlier flight to Jeju than planned. On our arrival we were soon made aware that the conference was exceptionally well organised and exceptionally well funded. Colour co-ordinated conference staff met all the delegates at the airport and free buses were laid on to take us to the venue; "The Sunshine Hotel". We arrived in time to snaffle down a few canapés and complimentary drinks before heading to bed, our bodies not quite knowing where we were or what time of day it was.

Even a fish wouldn't get into trouble if it kept its mouth shut

I mentioned that the conference was exceptionally well organised. And indeed it was. The conference pack included bound copies of the proceedings and a field-guide, a poster, and several books. And despite the best efforts of the large British contingent it was also a serious science conference. Add on the effects of jet lag and we did struggle a bit in some of the lectures. But we stuck to the 'experienced cavers, enthusiastic amateurs' storyline which I think was sufficiently compelling to explain our presence. The prize for the dullest lecture went to the overrunning "A short history of the UIS" and the most original were two lectures from a 'Malcolm-esque' chap from Japan who spoke no English at all apart from chirruping "very good" after each slide of dense data during "Studies of XRF Analysis, X-ray Analysis, K-Ar Age Determination and Polarisation-Microscope for Lava, Jeju Lava Caves, Korea". Other lectures were on diverse topics such as the Dodo, tree moulds and Immanuel Kant.

From the Editor



Sorry for the late arrival of this newsletter – my fault, as I've had articles and snippets sent to me (thanks to you all) but my elderly mother took ill so I went to help her for a couple of weeks. I then had three days work training on my return home. As a result I've only just caught up with myself.

Membership numbers continue to rise thanks to the website and Jeremy's care and attention. The digs are as interesting as ever and seem throw up as many questions as answers. I am also starting to get articles again which is not only good for the newsletter, but good for me too as it saves me trawling through the newsgroup for reports etc. Keep it up please!

Yvonne

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You will hate a beautiful song if you sing it often

Ah, the socialising. The conference opening was a very formal affair with addresses by various local dignitaries, conference organisers and UIS gravy-trainers. And on the first evening we had a formal open-air banquet on the hotel lawn overlooking the sea. The Governor of Jeju even gave the opening speech. The buffet was huge, the



The open-air banquet with the Governor

soju flowed, fireworks lit the sky, the soju flowed and the Governor was last seen being eased into his limo. The hotel food was ok but our best food experiences on Jeju were at local restaurants on the fieldtrip days. Yong Shik and friends also took us out to a Korean sushi restaurant which was excellent. Traditionally, meals are partaken cross-legged at low tables which play havoc with western calves, thighs and knees. And bear in mind this was a conference attended primarily by aged cavers. Eating is fast and furious which is tricky to manage with Korean chopsticks – these are metal rectangles rather the usual wooden variety and are thus much harder to master. Many evenings were spent in the hotel basement bar. Beer came in huge jugs and Soju came in teapots. The conference was concluded with a karaoke evening. Our

Korean hosts were extremely professional singers and none of the international delegates came close to matching their expertise. The Beatles and mournful love songs featured predominantly. The Brits managed to murder a few numbers; Richard did us particularly proud with his noted enthusiasm. It's the taking part that counts.

Too many rowers make the ship go up the mountain

Conference fieldtrips were a mix of show caves and geological sites. These were all attended en masse by conference delegates, staff (including 'Camera Girl' and 'Waving Man') and various hangers-on all driven around in two coaches. Think Saga with torches. We were also constantly followed around by the local TV camera crew and newspaper journalists. Thus those unable to attend the conference could get a resume each night on the local news! Jeju Island is known as the Love Island as it is very popular with honeymooners so all the tourist sites tended to cater for that particular target audience. Jeju also seems to be very popular for school trips so we were often swamped by massed hoards of schoolchildren; and I mean whole secondary schools not classes. At every location we were stopped for group photos presumably for each of the conference sponsors.

The caving highlight was the Manjang-gul lava tube. This forms an important part of the Jeju World Heritage Site and it is certainly an impressive site. One kilometre of its total 7.4km length is open to the public. It's just like you'd expect a lava tube to be: huge stomping passage, rounded passage walls, globules of lava, weird shapes, very sharp and very black. The show cave section ends in what is apparently the world's largest lava column. It was difficult to photograph but apparently looked impressive on the evening news. The other lava cave we did that week was in Hallim Park, a large swathe of botanical gardens in the West of the Island. The main path of the gardens dips underground in a couple of places and you wander along 500m worth of The Hyeopjae and Ssangyong caves. It was quite pleasant.

Above ground we visited such delights as



Tim Francis in Manjang-gul lava tube



Left to right: Seongsan Ilchulbong, Daepodong, and Suwolbong

the Seongsan Ilchulbong Tuff Cone, columnar joints at Daepodong, sweeping sea cliffs of tuff at Suwolbong and the Jeju Stone Park. In the distance Mount Hallasan dominates the landscape of Jeju wherever you are and there are secondary fumaroles all over the place. Indeed Hallasan is actually the highest point in Korea. Overall Jeju is a fascinating landscape and not something I'd really experienced before. I would definitely recommend a stop over in Jeju Island if you are ever in the region.

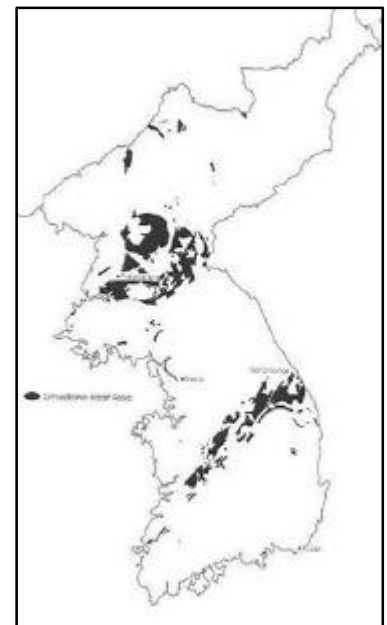
There is a hole to escape through even when the sky collapses on us

In the second week the MCG representatives elected to head back to the mainland, rather than attend the post conference fieldtrips. Yong Shik had planned a packed schedule for us and along with various members of his caving club we did a representative mix of limestone caves. After a quick stop at his apartment near Gimpo airport we drove across the country to the limestone region of Yeongwol-gun.



Yeongwol bunkhouse

This is a four to five hour drive depending on how horrendous the Seoul traffic is. Dong Woo came along as well for most of the week but travelled up by coach. What strikes you as you travel around Korea is how hilly the country is, even Seoul. Beyond Seoul the country is extremely rural and most of the hillsides are heavily wooded. Think of it as an Asian Slovenia (if that helps!).



Map of Korea - karst in black

The first couple of nights were spent in a sort of bunkhouse type accommodation, which makes for an excellent cavers' base for the area. Each night we were treated to some fantastic cooking by Yong Shik's club members. We certainly tried a huge variety of different dishes. It soon became apparent that every meal occasion in Korea involves chilli, most involve soju, and if you can't take hot food, even at breakfast, then Korea isn't for you.

Cross even a stone bridge after you've tested it



Seopdong team

The first trip we tackled was Seopdong cave. This has been open for about 10 years and was intercepted by a stone quarry. The quarry entrance is a hot 10 minute hike up the hill from the road so it wasn't too bad an introduction. We headed off in several groups into the cave as the initial crawl is decorated with some quite nice helictites. Beyond are a short ladder pitch and a jumble of Burrington style passages. The highlight though is a big fossil conduit hidden around the back. There are some flowstone banks, wriggly chokes in the floor and some good formations in places. We climbed up one rock slope to see some mud pillars on the floor. Richard took a bit of a tumble on the way down but there was no damage done.

The next cave we tackled was Eummundong. The walk into this cave was a very different affair. It is located half way up a thickly

wooded hillside and is desperately difficult to find. The last time our hosts had tried to find the cave it had taken them seven hours. It's also a mosquito magnet especially when six sweaty cavers arrive as the starter and main course rolled into one. Eummundong is almost entirely vertical straight from the off. We did three of the four pitches and all were in the 30-50m range. A few dropped pebbles told us that the last pitch would have landed straight into a deep pool so we didn't bother with it; I think it dries up in the dry season. Most ledges still have a liberal coating of rocks so we spent a lot of the off-rope time huddled under rock lips trying to keep out of the firing line.



Eummundong - Yong Shik Park



Jeongseon lodging



Mindungsan hills

After Eummundong we moved areas to Jeongseon. En route we did a bit of hill walking and doline spotting in an area of rare pampas type grasses called Mt. Mindungsan. On arrival we had a banquet style meal at an historical village / tourist attraction; Ararichon Folk Village. The food was the best so far but again it was taken cross legged. The last two nights were spent in holiday lodges. Each lodge had the traditional under-floor heating complete with log fire. We were absolutely sweltering but the owner seemed very keen to keep the fire going in case we got cold.

Starting is half the task

Our last wild cave was Sanho Cave (Pop corn cave). This had a serious walk in that took an hour and a half to two hours. The first hour was a slog up a boulder strewn gully. A typhoon a few years ago had created a massive torrent that had brought down huge tree trunks, boulders and all manner of debris. This ended at the base of a waterfall. From here it was a dispiriting scramble up wooded scree slope. Again this showed how tricky it is to find caves in Korea despite the large entrances. There is a huge expanse of limestone hills to explore but these would require a great deal of manpower, time and energy to reward the explorer.

Sanho Cave starts off as a really big cave broken up into several large chambers by small pitches. The second pitch can be bypassed by a crawl in the floor; we all went one way in and one way out. Beyond the third chamber and third pitch the cave changes character. A heavily boulder choked rift can be followed at a high or low level. The higher level has some invigorating climbing and terminates in a large flowstoned choke. There are plenty of bat bones as well. The whole area drafts well so I'm sure more passage will be found in the future. The lower route is a bit 'more squeezey' but again closes down in an area of formations.

The return back down the hillside and gully was a race against time. As dusk descended we scrambled down the scree slope and boulder hopped down the gully. In the fading light we heard Buddhist chants echoing around the hillsides. A reclusive Buddhist / spiritualist was playing chants out over a loud speaker which was a very atmospheric experience. When we arrived the music was turned off and her and her husband came out and served us tea.

Remember, even monkeys fall out of tree

The last evening in Jeongseon was a soju fuelled affair and your author rather over-did things. Ouch. The next day, after washing the ropes, we decamped and headed off to visit Hwanseon Cave. This is apparently the finest streamway cave in Korea and is now a dramatic show cave. Ask the others what it looked like; I stayed in the car sleeping off the night before. The further reaches are entirely off-limits to cavers other than during special events such as the regional conference a few years ago. This is a shame as the cavers tell us that there is potential for more passage.

I t's darkest underneath the lamp stand

At the end of our stay we had a couple of days in Seoul, staying with Yong Shik and his family. Fantastic hospitality – many thanks! Yong Shik took us on a bit of a tour of Seoul and mostly to places he'd not bothered to visit as a local. We went to the caving club room

Yong Shik's son and
Paddington Bear



A temple in Seoul

at his old university. A couple of current members were there and we were able to browse their surveys, hear tales of prowess, ooh-and-ah at their kit store. Elsewhere in Seoul we tramped some of the usual tourist haunts. On the Friday night we were taken out for one last meal in a popular Korean restaurant followed up by tea in a tea house apparently frequented by Gus Hiddink of World Cup fame. Despite us only ordering tea, even this involved chilli flavoured nibbles. On the Saturday Richard and I followed this up by spending a pleasant few hours in what must be the most expensive tea house in Korea. The tea pouring ceremony was exact and elaborate, and the green tea flavoured waffles made for an unusual accompanying snack. More shopping, more tramping the streets and then the long grim flight home. What a trip.

Dress the monkey in silk and it is still a monkey

After our enthusiastic stories of the lava fields of Argentina there is now talk of the 15th Vulcanospeleology Conference being held in Malargüe in 2012 (the 14th is in Australia). If so we'd get out there beforehand and find some caves so that the delegates have something to visit. Well it's a good excuse anyway.

MCG team: Peat Bennett, Richard Carey, Tim Francis, Caroline Suter. (Other Mendipians present: Phil Collet, Hayley Clark, Martin Mills, Christine Mills, Ed Waters, Chris Wood)

Sub Brit on Mendip

by Bob Templeman



On Friday 18th July a party of 7 Subterranea Britannica members gathered on Mendip to visit Charterhouse on Mendip where some of the most important remains of ancient mining in Western Europe are to be found.

Lead on Mendip was found near to the surface in long narrow horizontal veins – known locally as rakes - with its greatest concentration in the Charterhouse valley. Thus it was easy to initially exploit, by simple digging or indeed picking it up from the surface.

Mining operations spanned the pre-Roman era, through Roman, medieval, Tudor and finally early modern times. The exploitation commenced initially with the digging of trenches to expose the veins of lead ore; the digging out of the entire load or rake; construction of conventional shafts and the ill fated period of Cornish miners sinking deep shafts to find non-existent lead below the previous workings and latterly the re-smelting of the existing slag heaps and slimes resulting from previous workings. Pre-Roman activity has been confirmed with the finds of lead weights for fishing nets found in the vicinity of Glastonbury Lake village together with the discovery of two British silver coins at Charterhouse.

The mining activity of the Romans has been well documented following various archaeological excavations, together with the finds of 19 or so inscribed lead ingots or pig weighing from 34.5 kilograms to 101 kilograms. The furthest away discovery was made at St Valercy-sur-Somme. Whilst no evidence of the Roman name for Charterhouse has been found, some of the inscriptions on these pigs contain the letters VEB possibly a reference to Charterhouse.

Over two days various archaeological sites of the valley were visited as detailed below:

Lead condensing flues. These were probably built circa 1867-73 by Treffry's Company who may have enlarged existing flues belonging to the Mendip Hills Mining Company, which had also built flues at Charterhouse 1 mine before 1861. The flues were in use until 1878. Dressed materials, slags and slimes – that is fine-grained ore and mud as recovered from the dressing floors - were smelted in reverberatory castilian furnaces in which fans driven by a steam engine forced hot air over the slag. The vapourised lead collected in the flues and subsequently removed by hand. There were two sets of flues, each with four tunnels. The flues survive as partially roofed limestone rubble structures. Blocking walls in some of the tunnels date from 1939-45 when they were used for storage.

Bleak House and adjacent tenements. Now no more than earthworks and ruins. Was the house of the manager of the Charterhouse Lead Mines

Pattinson plant and stables In October 1833, a Mr Hugh Lee Pattinson patented a process involving the extraction of silver from lead by allowing molten lead to crystallise while pouring off still molten silver-rich lead into separate containers. The plant at Charterhouse may date to 1858 when 36.7 kg of silver was recorded to have been produced.

All that remains are the foundations. The plant consisted of a range of four rooms, with a flue running northwards up a slope behind the buildings to the site of a chimney. The rubble from excavations of 1967-68 were

inadvertently bulldozed for rebuilding the causeway breached in the 1968 flood. Lying 9 metres to the NW of the plant. an open-fronted stable was excavated between 1968-70

Roman Rake The site of an archaeological dig where the excavation of a long narrow rake which are similar in character to other known Roman mines. Five trenches were excavated which showed the rake to be the surface of narrow cuts down into the limestone for a great depth. At some point a natural cave system was encountered. The filling in of the top of these fissures could be firmly dated to the second half of C1 AD and was probably associated with the digging of other rakes. Now a caving dig.

Barwell Shaft and adjacent horse whim A typical deep square Cornish mine shaft, now filled in. The circular floor of the whim is to be found over the dry stone wall. The horse whim winding engines of Charterhouse were apparently able to raise loads of up to 150 kg.

Stainsby's Shaft Another Cornish mine shaft, originally 108 metres deep and gradually filled in following falling into disuse. The existing 10 metre shaft with large visible shotholes is now the site of a caving dig.

Waterwheel Swallet Discovered after the great flood of 1968. Was found to contain the remains of a 6 metre diameter water wheel together with its associated gearing. Now thought to have been the power source of a saw mill.

Grebe Swallet This was discovered after the great flood of 1968. A swallet utilized by 18th century miners as a lead mine.

Additionally The opportunity was also taken to walk through a former railway tunnel under Shute Shelve hill. Part of the Great Western Railway line from Yatton to Wells, it was completed in 1869 and finally closed in 1965. The tunnel is now used both as a footpath and cycle route. The tunnel is unusual in that the southern half is unlined whilst only the northern portal and section is brick lined with appropriate refuges for gangers.

And finally, we had the good fortune to be able to visit and see the Mesolithic attributed engravings in Aveline's hole, Burrington Combe. These were discovered in 2003, following the discovery of Palaeolithic cave art at Church Hole, Cresswell Crags in early 2003. The engravings comprise a lattice work of two rows of engraved crosses, six in the upper row and four in the lower row, measuring approximately 25 cm wide by 20 cm high.

Acknowledgements: GJ Mullan and LJ Wilson for the visit to Aveline's Hole; The Mendip Caving Group, for use of their Cottage

References: *The Mines of Mendip*, by JW Gough. David and Charles: Newton Abbot 1967; *Cornish Miners at Charterhouse-on-Mendip* by WI Stanton and AG Clarke, from the proceedings of Bristol Speleological Society, 1984, Vol 17 No1, pp29-54; *A possible Mesolithic engraving in Aveline's Hole, Burrington Combe, North Somerset*, by GJ Mullan and LJ Wilson.

Fragments from France – 25

by Tony Knibbs



In the autumn of last year, the editor of a well-known English-language caving magazine was asked by a French caver if he could help with translation from French into English in connection with submissions for the 4th European Speleological Congress scheduled to take place in Lans-en-Vercors during the last week in August 2008 ([Vercors 2008](#)). He was understandably unable to undertake the work required. On being pressed to name a possible English-speaking candidate for some voluntary translation, he generously mentioned my name. It was late in 2007 therefore when I received an email from Olivier Vidal, a caver from Lyons, who was responsible for much of the congress organisation.

Since the deadline was almost a year away, I felt the task was reasonable and accepted it even though there was no description available of the scope of the task. I usually incline toward optimism (at my age it's obligatory!) In due course text files of preliminary congress publicity announcements began to arrive on my PC. All went well for several batches of translation but a warning note was sounded when one batch of pages arrived on a Monday. On the Tuesday I received an email asking for the translation to be available by Friday of the same week. Whilst I am not averse to working under pressure, there are physical limits to my abilities, which I quickly pointed out. Whatever words I used to politely decline to meet the precipitate deadline must have served to pass the message, for I had no further such request and the work proceeded smoothly into the start of this year.

The last caving conference I attended would have to be that of the Cave Research Group in Wells back in the late 1950s or early 1960s, at which Dr Bob Picknett gave a paper entitled "Calcite Solutions at 10°C". Although I didn't gain a favourable impression of such events, reading the material for "Vercors 2008" prompted me to suggest a week's holiday in the Vercors. The impressive Vercors limestone massif was the first French caving region I visited on an MCG 'expedition' in August 1960.

I informed Vidal of my/our intentions and suggested deciding a firm cut-off date for the translation work. This was duly decided upon, but he did ask if I could do some text correction up to the printing submission date for the congress proceedings. Again, optimism ruled. However, I almost came to regret my decision. The first text pages arrived as a batch of about 300 un-numbered pages without any guide to sequence (I therefore invented my own page-numbering). The correction process rapidly became a journey of discovery; I never realised that there were so many different versions of the English language. Because the corrections were to be incorporated by a French caver, I took great care to ensure that my corrections were clearly legible. However at least 100 pages were so heavily corrected in red pen that I had little choice but to retype them. By the end of July my right wrist was showing signs of repetitive strain injury!

By far the most notable article was one from a Bulgarian author. It dealt with Bulgarian caves used since pre-history for religious and cult rituals. Reference to "itifalical scenes" had me reaching for my dictionary. The first word didn't seem to exist, but the sentence seemed to make perfect sense without it. Mention of the "Chalcolithic Age" also had me reaching for the dictionary. It turned out that the first word should have been spelt chalcolithic, which refers to 'Copper Age'. However, another Bulgarian author wrote "Chalcolithic Age (Bronze Age)", which seemed to clarify the mystery. The process of correcting was also one of learning. It must be said that authors are very ambitious to present submissions in a language, which is not their mother tongue. There was the occasional howler to laugh at; a suggestion that caves could be better conserved if they were "under pubic service ownership" seemed to need a small correction.

An interesting aspect of the actual presentations to a live audience was the eagerness of the audience to understand. Simultaneous translation into French and English was available via radio broadcast to personal earpiece sets.



The 500-seat Speleobar marquee

The chosen venue in the village Lans-en-Vercors possessed all the right ingredients to make the congress a great success. There was adequate space to put up marquees, civic buildings to house the various events, and the atmosphere was most welcoming. One of two huge marquees (each about the area of two rugby pitches) was dedicated to film and slide projection. There were too many events to take in everything. Perhaps the most striking projected presentations were those in 3D. The other huge marquee was designated as the 'Speleobar', which offered tables and seating for probably 500 people. Here, a good variety of food and drink was available from stalls run by caving organisations; one stall advertised a Belgian beer called Delerium Tremens, which we carefully avoided. The Speleobar provided a good meeting place for cavers. Everybody wore name badges, which also indicated the country of origin. There were about 2,000 attendees from dozens of

countries within Europe and beyond. We bought some good tee-shirts.

One aspect of the organisation, which we found rather amusing was the very plentiful distribution of portaloos around the village. There were probably enough for one for every ten attendees.

Throughout the week (23rd –30th August), the weather remained very good. We took advantage of the sunshine to do several walks and a caving trip. Our first thought on the choice of cave was the Grotte de Bournillon. This spectacular cave needs no tackle and the approach is a modest walk of about a kilometre up to the vast entrance arch. Michel, one of our French colleagues was recovering from hepatitis E, so was looking for an easy trip. Unknown to us Bournillon had been incorporated into the official Vercors water supply and access is denied (as is now the Grotte de Brudour). Twenty or so caves (including Gouffre Berger) had been pre-rigged for the convenience of congress attendees. However, old age and/or infirmity militated against undertaking anything serious, so we set about finding an easy cave to visit.

After a discussion with the congress caving organisers we selected Grotte des Ramats at St Martin as our objective. An interesting local travel problem currently existed (and will persist for a couple of years to come). Extensive ongoing roadworks in the Gorge de la Bourne resulted in intermittent road closures between Villard-de Lans and Pont-en-



View north (Chartreuse and Mont Blanc) from Pas de Bellecombe

Royans. Reaching Bournillon from Lans would have been very difficult. Half-an-hour's drive from Lans brought us into the Forêt d'Herbouilly on a narrow forestry road from which the cave entrance was reached by a steep, loose approach scramble up a dry streambed. The 1.0m diameter entrance led quickly beyond dry, pebbly going to clean-washed passage with some nice formations and the first of two low crawls through pools. One aged caver had no seal between his wellies and oversuit legs – hence I got slightly wet! After a few more minutes we reached an 8.0m pitch where several bolts and hanging French rope tat attested to the use of rope. Not having rope, we were obliged to find a way of free-climbing the pitch down a rift on the left, which offered some rather slippery holds. From here the going became quite roomy. Soon the second wet crawl presented itself and the going remained quite wet until we reached the area of the sump where we turned back. The cave is popular as a novice trip – it was not unlike Goatchurch in the general level of effort required. It admirably met our needs for an easy caving trip.



Ian Ellis Chandler

The congress was also a great occasion for meeting old friends. A pleasant surprise was to meet old MCG member Ian Ellis Chandler in attendance at the cave art exhibition. Ian now lives in Matienzo, Cantabria, Spain, in the middle of karst country where he has his [studio and gallery](#).

Upper Flood Swallet - East Passage Digs

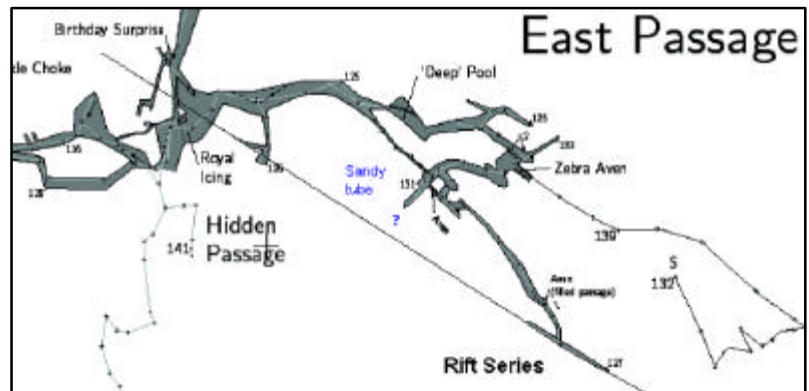
by Tim Francis

Although there has not been a great deal of exploration and survey activity in Upper Flood Swallet in recent months we have been doing a little bit of work in the East Passage area.

Attention has focused upon a sand filled tube at the entrance of the Rift Series. Most of Rift Series seems to draft well but passages are constricted. The sandy tube is different in that it is easily diggable and with a small air space to follow. Over the course of 4 trips we have excavated just over 8m of descending crawl. The air always stays fresh even when two or three people are in the tube.

The prospects for this dig are intriguing. We are only 6 metres away from intercepting the probable extension of a fault that is encountered at the end of Rift Series. We expect then that the character of the passage will change significantly although quite what will happen is anyone's guess.

All being well it should take us only another two trips to reach this point. There is quite a large gap between Rift Series and Royal Icing Passage to play with. Note also that both Hidden Passage and the dogleg in Royal Icing (that unsurveyed pretty rift beyond the helictite pocket that closes down) have strong draughts.



Royal Icing, photo B Chadwick



Rift Series, photo T Francis



Royal Icing, photo B Chadwick



Rift Series, photo M Richardson



Rift Series, photo M Richardson

Library additions

The Caves of Meghalaya by *Brian Kharpran Day* - 90pp glossy hardback with photos, surveys, lists of longest and deepest caves in India (in 2006) all of which are in Meghalaya. The Meghalaya Adventurers' Association first started investigating the caves in 1992 but the level of exploration increased from 1994 with the inclusion of British, European and American cavers. There is a good introduction to the geography and geology of the area, which puts the "Abode of the Clouds" into perspective, for me at least. Julie was a member of the 2001 team.

13th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology. Tim has donated a number of items from his visit to this symposium held on Jeju Island. They include the Symposium Proceedings, the Field Guide, a short DVD and a beautifully produced book of photographs. Jeju is a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site and 48 pp of the book relate to the lava tube caves. The lava tubes are unusual because carbonate rich sands which were blown onto the island have been dissolved by rainwater which percolates down to the caves to form calcite speleothems. The surface scenery of the island is amazing, too.

Who was Avaline Anyway? - Mendip's cave names explained by *Richard Witcombe, 2008 (212pp)*, published by *Wessex Cave Club* This second (revised) edition explains the origins of over 1400 Mendip cave and passage names (and even a few caver's nicknames, too). It surprised me how often Mendip Caving Group gets a mention. The book is clearly laid out, well researched, with over 50 photographs and a chatty and informative text. £10 from the Wessex or from the new caving shop in Cheddar (near to Cheddar Cross).

Speleology (Bulletin of British Caving, Issue 123, Summer 2008) contains an article "Are your Cow's Tails Safe?"

Cave and Karst Science, Vol. 34 No. 2 (for 2007) has articles on drainage development in Agen Allwedd, Mulu, China, salt caves in Iran, 'hongs' in South east Asia (don't ask!, read the article)

Great Caves of the World by *Tony Waltham, Natural History Museum, 2008.* Large format, glossy, coffee table book – 28 caves are featured, Gaping Gill being the only British representative. Numerous photos accompanied by concise but informative text.

Stainsby's Shaft update

by Biff Frith

6/7th Sept 13 diggers on Saturday, and 8 Sunday. A concrete lintel was cast in place and 101 drums/rock bags were brought out Saturday with another 100-plus on Sunday. We broke through to a small chamber with a stream and found stemples in place, as well as on the floor. There is a stemple slot cut in to the wall, made by the miners by hand drilling three holes close together in a horizontal line, then the rock above was chiselled out. We can see down another 4m, but it is horribly loose. We are about 4-5m lower than the digging shaft bottom making the total depth about 29-30m.

20/21st Sept Mick, Paul, Buddy, Biff, Ed, Mike and Pete from ACG. The floor of the lower passage was dug out to expose large timbers 9"x 11" that are not rotten, with the same size cut outs in the wall. These may be the roof supports of the 18 fathom (33 metre) level. Much mud was removed and scaffolding was installed. This gave us enough confidence to enlarge the hole into the water chamber with a lot of hilti's.

4/5th Oct Mick, Linda, Geoff, Mark Ireland and Biff fitted lots of scaffolding in the water chamber, which was bone-dry all weekend. Mick and Mark exposed another hole in the floor going down about 3m with another stemple across it. On Sunday Mick, Mike, Ed, Hayley, Alan Wicks and Biff finished the scaffolding and dug down about 1m. We also had to remove a six foot long timber with an iron nail in it, I have washed and photographed it and put it by the coal bunker behind the cottage.



Eric Dowley

September was the second anniversary of Eric's death and Joan Dowley thought it would be nice to celebrate his life. There was nothing that gave him more delight than a barrel of free beer on his visits to the cottage, and Joan has kindly donated a barrel of beer. As there has not been a newsletter for a while, we thought it would be best to save the barrel until all members could be invited to join in with the celebration. All members are therefore cordially invited to the cottage on the December members weekend when the beer will be flowing freely. I am sure Eric will be smiling down on his many friends.

Cottage booking

We have a regular scout group booked in for Jan 16-18th, and the number of members places is down to 4.

On the move

Kerry Howard has a new email address
k-howard2@sky.com

Apologies

In the last newsletter we published 2 photos to go with the vale for JRat. These should have been credited to Sean Howe of the SMCC (photo of JRat in Caine Hill) and Tony Audsley of Thrupelite (JRat playing shove ha'penny). Apologies to Sean, Tony and their clubs / websites for the omission.



Group Headquarters

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[Ben Cooper](#)

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[Keith Knight](#)
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Conservation Officer

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Examiners

[Fiona Kempston](#)
[Roy Kempston](#)



Cottage Bookings All Groups (MCG or Guests) should be booked via Mike Richardson or email to bookings@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

The Mendip Caving Group (MCG) is a UK registered charity number 270088

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Group information

Weekly Meeting At The Hunters Lodge, Somerset, first Friday of month from 9pm
Monthly Meeting At the Group HQ usually on the first Fri/Sat/Sunday of the month
On-line Meeting <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/mendip-caving-group/>
Group websites www.m-c-g.org.uk and www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Cottage Fees per night: MCG members, members' children, SWCC, NPC £ 2.00
 per night: Guest clubs and member's guests £ 4.00
Camping Fees As for Cottage Fees: MCG, SWCC, NPC: £ 2.00. Guests: £ 4.00
Season Ticket For 12 month's cottage fees - Available to members only £40.00
MCG Subs 2008 Full or Probationary member: £30.00. Associate member: £15.00
BCA Subs 2008 Club Caver £16.00, Club Non-caver £5.00, DIM £pay to BCA

Caving and social calendar 2008

Date	Area	Event	Contact	Telephone
Nov 7/8/9th	Mendip	Members Weekend		
Nov 8th	Mendip	Pinetree Pot	Bob Templeman	01923 773973
Nov 8/9th	Mendip	Training days (TBC)	Linda Milne	01420 562315
Dec 5/6/7th	Mendip	Members Weekend		
Dec 6th	Mendip	Eastwater Cavern	Bob Templeman	01923 773973
Dec 6th	Mendip	GB Cave	Bob Templeman	01923 773973
Dec 6th	Mendip	Xmas dinner at cottage	Linda Milne	01420 562315

The 2008 committee

Secretary: **Mike Richardson** secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
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 01420 562315 15 Woodfalls, Abbey Rd, Medstead, Alton, Hants GU34 5PB

Cottage bookings

When under-18s are present, members should co-operate with teachers / scout leaders with respect to sleeping arrangements

For latest updates go to www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk/sections/cottage/availability.html

Group	Day of arrival	Day of departure	Nights	Beds	Rooms
Bicton College	Sun 23/11/08	Fri 28/11/08	5	12	2
Wilts Scouts	Fri 16/01/09	Sun 18/01/09	2	26	3
Marie&Tony F	Fri 30/01/09	Sun 01/02/09	2	20	2
SSCC Scouts	Fri 27/02/09	Sun 01/03/09	2	18	2
Majendie-Steep Scout	Fri 20/03/09	Sun 22/03/09	2	12	2