

# MCG NEWS

Number 363 August 2010



**Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group**

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**Photo:** William Morris in Black Hole Series, Swildons Hole.  
Ed Waters



## EDITORIAL

Firstly I must apologise for the long gap between Newsletters #362 and #363. I had hoped to get this issue out at the start of July, but unfortunately this got delayed due to my moving house.

Excuses aside, this is my fourth Newsletter and I am starting to think I am getting the hang of it. However, I am still more than happy to take onboard any constructive criticism and good ideas. For instance several members had noted that the calendar and cottage booking information on the last page were a bit difficult to read, and so the presentation of this information has been simplified in this issue. What do you think?

Hopefully MCG News Number 363 has at least something of interest to every member. However, if it doesn't, then why not write something to interest everyone else! As always I am looking for material, however long, short or comical for inclusion in the Newsletter. In particular I would appreciate good quality pictures for the front cover, else I might have to drink the liquid prize yet again!

A new feature is the inclusion of snippets from past newsletters. This is intended to give new members a little club history, and also to raise the odd chuckle. Items will be included from publications from 10 to 50 years ago in ten year steps. As always let me know what you think, but also please do not be shy in suggesting items that can be included.

### Ed (the Ed) Waters.



The Editor in Cueva Sobrado, Tenerife. Hopefully there will be more about this trip in the next Newsletter. Photo: Ed Waters

## TRIP TO BLACK HOLE SERIES, SWILDONS HOLE 8<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2010

Giles took the initiative, got Ed to come along because he actually knows the way and Will and I (Evert) tagged along as relative novices for what would prove to be our biggest trip yet. We were excited about getting beyond the twenty foot pot and seeing some more of this cave where we made our first introductory trip just over a year ago. And this was to be our first experience of going through a sump. Whatever anxieties there might have been about that were kept bravely hidden beneath manly bravura. And of course we felt safe following our leader, self proclaimed fat b---d in tight fitting wetsuit.

We went in through the zig-zag and I felt I was beginning to get a sense for the layout of the entrance to Swildon's. Down Jacob's ladder and on to the twenty foot pot. On we went to the double pots where Ed heroically plunged into the water to catch us if we should fall. (We didn't.) As it was our first time down here we were taken on a scenic excursion through Barnes' loop with its very fine formations. Then on down the streamway to the sump.

There it was: the sump. Time for a chat, said Ed. 'Lie in the water, acclimatize, stay calm, take a deep breath and pull yourself through'. As the cold water seeped through my undersuit I was hyperventilating, gasping for air, briefly thought this was a completely ridiculous thing to be doing, took the plunge and I was through. What great feeling.

We continued down the streamway to a right turn to the black hole series. Leaving the lively water behind for a muddy ascent we came to a ledge. The rope we found lying at the bottom of the ledge would presumably have been tied to the scaffolding pole wedged up above the ledge, but it wasn't. One of us would have to get over the ledge without a rope. Ed had a go. Giles had a go. Will was firmly told to stop having a go. Ed had another go and managed to get himself over the ledge and tied a rope to help us up. Even with the rope it is a tricky ledge. You get to a point where it seems impossible to get over it, then as you move forward it turns out to be quite simple.

As you get to the actual black hole you realize why not many people go up through the black hole series. There is a big, deep hole in the way. We had to go down a ladder to then traverse across the hole into the passage leading up into the black hole series. Ed seems to know what he is doing when rigging ladders and lifelines and so we all stepped across pretty confidently.

There are fabulous and fairly unspoiled formations up the black hole series. I was impressed. Giles thought they were alright, refusing to be overly impressed. Will had his picture taken with some very pretty helictites [See the cover – Ed]. Ed said he could happily spend a day here taking pictures.

However, time was ticking by and we realized that we might not get back to the cottage for our stated return time. Will was also worried he might be late for a party. We spent a good half hour in the black hole series and then started our return journey.

We set a reasonably good pace on the return. Will attempted to dive back through the sump from standing. Not a good idea! As we climbed up towards the exit I was getting quite exhausted and I was glad to be out. I think we were down for about five hours, the longest trip Will and I have done so far.

Aching all over as I write this I am quite chuffed with myself: Great variety, first sump, first trip involving some quite technical ladder and lifeline work and first trip deeper into Swildon's, a seriously impressive cave. A big thank you to Giles and Ed for a great trip.

**Evert. Willbrenninck**

### **A WELL DESCENT**

The BDCC received an inquiry on its web site asking whether any of our members would be interested in descending a well and possibly pulling up an old stove that was said to have been thrown down it in the past.

So on Saturday the fifteenth of May three BDCC/MCG members, Paul Ketcher, Bill Chadwick and myself met at Peasmore house in Peasmore village to meet the owner and investigate his well.

The well was inside what appeared to be a purpose built building about twenty feet square and high that was attached to the main house. The well itself was covered in old woodwormy wood and a steel plate. There was a 5ft x 4ft x 2ft deep water tank over one half of the five foot diameter shaft, dated 1856, also the winding gear was still in place and had a very unusual pulley of about two feet in diameter with segmented self acting clamps around the outside. These would presumably grip the rope when under load, an ingenious mechanism.



**Paul Ketcher about to descend.**  
Photo: "Biff" Frith

Bill had mentioned the possibility of bad air, and just as well because we lowered a naked flame down three times and it went out near the bottom each time. This test also eliminated the possible presence of methane.

We then took a depth measurement and found the well to be 92 feet deep. The top 20 feet in good brickwork and the rest in good solid chalk with flint layers.

I had brought along an industrial vacuum cleaner and hoses to pump any bad air out. This only took about twenty minutes ( This might interest some readers as this would also work for bang fumes, the suction at the end of over 100 feet of hose being no less than at the machine itself ).

Strangely the others thought it would be a good idea if I went down first, in spite of my offers to defer the privilege. I have to admit it didn't look very inviting. So after rigging off two nine-inch square roof trusses I set off to the bottom. It should be noted that we attached a separate line to the person descending and ran it through a pulley jammer system at the head of the well. This was to enable the person to be pulled up if they became unconscious.



**Paul near the bottom of the well. Note the brick lining.**  
Photo: "Biff" Frith

There were a few bottles and other rubbish perched precariously on small ledges at least 25ft from the floor. On reaching the said floor I found it to be made up of old household rubbish' somewhat decayed. This dated to around 1970-80 and must have originally filled the shaft up to the level of the debris found on the Ledges.



Paul enjoying the ascent.  
Photo: "Biff" Frith.

This, I concluded, means that the total depth of rubbish must have rotted down more than 25 feet in the last thirty years. There was no sign of water or even damp. There was no sign of the stove that is said to be wedged in the shaft, and jumping up and down on the rubbish didn't achieve much either.

We removed a few bags of rubbish for interest, but it was obvious that to clean the well out would be a major undertaking. The owner still would like this done even when I quoted a four-figure sum as a possible guestimate of the cost.

The result is that we three intrepid explorers had a good day out, and I am now planning how to efficiently clean out a deep well. something that probably hasn't been done for years by anybody else, I think it is a unique challenge. The well could go down another 100ft or more as it is situated at 270 feet above sea level. The depth of the water table is not at present known.

There are other wells in the village so I may be able to plumb one of those to get a better idea of the possible depth.

"Biff" Frith

## COMMITTEE NEWS

Kevin and Sue Speight have kindly volunteered to act as the point of contact for beginners interested in joining the group. This role has become increasingly important due to the success the group has had, largely due to the efforts of Jeremy Gilson and Jenny Plumb, in attracting new members.

This has resulted in a large volume of enquiries which has been difficult for the various club officers to deal with efficiently and keep on top of their other duties. Given the volume of enquiries, it has also been decided that there will be a beginners trip pencilled in for the Saturday of all members weekends for up to six people. Kev and Sue will **not** be taking these trips, but will allocate prospective members to a weekend, and seek volunteers to lead each trip (at least two). Introducing people to caving is one of the most enjoyable parts of the sport. However to prevent the same people taking novices every weekend two or three volunteers are needed to take these novices underground every members weekend. **Please have a think and let Kev and Sue know when you will be available to help.** In future the name of the leader(s) will be added to the calendar at the end of the Newsletter.

## COTTAGE WORKING WEEKEND

Doug has arranged a working weekend for the October members' weekend. Doug will circulate a list of jobs that need doing, and this will appear in the next Newsletter.

## BOOK REVIEWS

Is That So? - Compiled and edited by Rob 'Tav' Taviner, 2010. A selection of Tales from caving's legendary 'Nutters, Characters, Pissheads and Selfless, Generous, Rough Diamonds' - to quote the late Tony J-Rat. Illustrations are by 'Reg' (Robin Gray) and via numerous photos. It contains over 100 caving tales, some of which are already legendary. One of the items explains the details behind a story which I have heard many times, concerning cavers falling through the roof of the Fry's pigsty while trying to plant a local pub sign on the old wooden MCG hut. Featuring strongly are alcohol, explosives, injury, food and embarrassing moments - typical pub tales. Also, and I'm sure this is an unintended bonus, the numerous photos of caving characters have enabled me to put a few names to faces!

This book has been published by the Mendip Cave Registry and Archive to help raise money towards a new Mendip Underground. I believe the first print run may already have been sold, so if you haven't already bought a copy you'll just have to take your place in the queue to borrow the Group's copy or wait for another batch to be printed.

UBSS Proceedings for 2010 Vol. 25 No. 1 contains articles on Montenegro, Ritual protection marks in Wookey Hole and Long Hole, and on Human bone assemblages in Totty Pot, Cheddar)Craven Pothole Club "Record" April 2010 contains a diary for 1972, including entries for the classic Ghar Parau, Iran expedition. Also an interesting article on caving in Australia.

Other recent additions include "The Biology of Caves and Other Subterranean Habitats, by David C Culver and Tanja Pipan". Additionally, for the Cold War enthusiast, the Subterranea April issue is dedicated to the story of the Central Government War Headquarters near Corsham. It is well documented and illustrated with both plans and over 100 photographs.

Joan Goddard & Bob Templeman.

### EVER READY PASSAGE – ROD'S POT

Though not an MCG discovery, your editor has been involved in a reasonably significant discovery in Rod's Pot. Digging with members of the Cheddar Caving Club for about a year has resulted in about 30m of passage being discovered just above the pitches that are traversed over to reach the main part of the cave.

As first investigated, a body sized tube led to a too tight constriction through which black space could be glimpsed. This was enlarged to form a squeeze, "*The Resistor*" which led into a small steeply dipping passage parallel to the main passage. A mystery here was the discovery of an ancient battery, though to have been pushed through the resistor many years ago, hence the name "*Ever Ready Passage*".



Rachel Sparrow (Cheddar CC) in "*The Resistor*" Rod's Pot.  
Photo: Ed Waters.

Ever Ready Passage started off small, and got smaller to reach a too tight constriction that even the skinny types could not pass.

Many trips were spent enlarging our way forward, until we were surprised to hear spoil dropping a considerable distance through another too tight constriction. This constriction was finally removed in May to reveal a fine 50ft (15m) pitch, "*El Capitoff*" named after the techniques used to enlarge the approach to it.

Below the pitch is the sizeable (for Burrington) "*Bone Chamber*", named for obvious reasons! This has a vocal connection with the Main Chamber above. A low continuing passage "*Skull Passage*" is currently being dug. This has a strong draft, but is degenerating into a typical Mendip mud-porridge mine.

For anyone interested there is a short video if the exploration online at;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdGa4EyA5hc>

Ed Waters

### GETTING MY FIX

Over the last twelve months, my burgeoning interest in Speleology has become a huge and inspiring part of my life, as have all the associated social occasions. I'd almost go as far as to say I live for caving and it's wonderfully eclectic and eccentric participants. My non-caving friends and family are no doubt bored to tears by my effusive accounts of subterranean exploits, but I just can't seem to stem the flow of my enthusiasm. So, when I learned that I was to be posted for four months to Kuwait (A country described in *The Underground Atlas* as being of, "No Speleological interest") I was more than a little crestfallen. Being in the Armed Forces, I inevitably spend time working abroad, so it didn't come as a massive shock, but my life has changed enormously since my last 'det'. Quite apart from caving, I'd also fallen in love with and married my wonderful wife, Sue. Putting my life on hold this time was a far more bitter pill to swallow.

Thankfully, I learned that I'd be entitled to a week off to return home in the middle of my detachment. The thought of R&R, the marvel that is Skype and borrowing more books from the MCG library than was healthy for my baggage entitlement would keep me sane. (Well, mostly!) Following encouragement from the Editor, as well as Julie Hesketh and others on the newsgroup, I also resolved to have a little poke around in an effort to disprove the "No Speleological interest" line in the *Underground Atlas*. After becoming familiar with the country over a couple of weeks, I determined to have a closer look at an area 5km north of 'Al Jahra', a town to the west of Kuwait city. While most of the country is utterly featureless desert plateau, this area steeply gains approximately 500 feet of elevation from the nearby coast and has exposed rock. A little research had shown that much of Kuwait's bedrock is limestone, albeit buried under 210 meters of sand!

I reasoned that if there was exposed limestone anywhere, then it would be here. I can't claim to have done a completely thorough grid search of the area, but in the searing heat, it became apparent that I was on to a loser. I'm certainly no geologist, but the rock seems more like sandstone to me; parts of it seemingly eroded by wind action.

Another potential avenue I considered was trying to find some of the sinkholes mentioned in an article I stumbled across.

[\(http://www.springerlink.com/content/g4l3n6t6u7547271/\)](http://www.springerlink.com/content/g4l3n6t6u7547271/)

Despite scouting around, I never did find one. My impression was that, even if I did, it would likely be no

more that a sandy depression in the ground, as opposed to a yawning chasm!

I gave up searching for caverns measureless to man and started to make plans for R&R. The main thing was obviously spending time with Sue, but I was obviously extremely keen to fit in as much caving as I could. If we could combine the two, then so much the better!

A bout of emailing saw a plan hatched for an OFD II to I trip on 15 May. Nothing else was set in stone, although I really fancied doing another Swildon's round trip, with the addition of a descent of Blue Pencil Passage to have a play in the Swildon's four streamway. I reasoned that it would be a good trip to gauge how effective all my hours in the gym had been. I also wanted to squeeze in some SRT, ostensibly just to keep my hand in, but also to maybe get a little bit of hands on rigging practice. On top of all this, I wanted to play some squash, do some fishing and enjoy a little fine dining; it would be tough, but I was willing to give it a real go!

Mother nature almost threw a spanner in the works when Iceland's Eyjafjallajokull (Try saying that with a plum in your mouth - Fnar fnar!) volcano sparked back into life, spewing more ash which loitered threateningly at the edge of UK airspace. Fortunately, I was able to make it back, even gaining a day thanks to my extremely good natured Sergeant who allowed me to depart 24 hours early!

I got home on the Wednesday after a surprisingly slick two-leg flight from Kuwait and reveled in the explosion of colour that had taken place in my absence. After months of monochrome, featureless desert, the sight of the UK in full spring bloom was a magnificent assault on the senses. It was looking like being a good week!

After a day's relaxation, Sue and I wasted no time and headed over to Mendip on the Thursday. After some surface ladder and lifeline practice, we drove to Burrington Combe and scabbled around by the roadside, looking for the entrance to Lionel's Hole. Once located we slithered in, with me armed with the guide from Mendip Underground and leading.

It quickly became apparent that I had been a little ambitious. Sue wasn't comfortable in the small, steeply descending entrance and I can't say I was overwhelmed with enthusiasm either! We backed out and decided that Goatchurch would be a better proposition. A nice gentle warm up for me, and perfect for Sue who hadn't caved for a while either. Having only visited this cave once before, I still had plenty to see and was delighted to 'tick off' the Drainpipe. In actual fact, despite its status as a 'novice' cave, I think Goatchurch provides a unique challenge. It's incredibly polished surfaces making for an entertaining time on the steeper sections!



**Sue Speight in Goatchurch.**  
Photo: Kev Speight.

The next trip was to prove the highlight of my caving 'career' to date. Saturday morning saw Myself, Russ Porter and Russ Hunt rendezvous at Gilson towers for our OFD II to I traverse. On the journey, Jeremy told me of the recent successes in no less than four Mendip digs, including one involving our esteemed editor! Congratulations to those whose hard work paid off.

Arriving at the SWCC HQ, we wasted no time in getting changed and pre-positioned a car at the bottom of the hill, anticipating that we'd probably appreciate this forethought after the trip! This little exercise served to highlight quite what a distance this trip covers; would I be 'cave fit' enough?

After packing the few bits of tackle required, plus plenty of caving fuel, we set off up the hill. Nearing the top entrance, Mr Hunt was struck by the realisation that he'd left the key for the pre-positioned car in the boot of mine, parked below at SWCC HQ! No matter, the rest of us were quite happy to take in the views while he trotted back for it. None of us could quite believe he didn't run all the way back up. Complete lack of moral fibre...



**The OFD Trip Crew.**  
Photo: Kev Speight.

The trip itself passed in something of a blur, although my overwhelming impression was of things being somewhat different to your typical Mendip 'ole! Without doubt, the highlight of the trip was the Marble Showers series in the main streamway. Utterly stunning ribbons of white in stark contrast with the black limestone made this a place I will not forget in a hurry.

The through trip took us under five hours, during which we saw no-one, until we came across a party heading in the opposite direction, just before we emerged into glorious mid-spring sunshine.

After a few days of relaxation above ground, I was once again yearning to cave. Happily, Paul Davies had heard I was home for a while and we had exchanged emails and set a date to do the Short Round Trip. Being mid-week, we had the cave entirely to ourselves; always preferable to enduring the weekend traffic jams at the Twenty!

Paul's previous limit of exploration in Swildon's was Barne's Loop, so the Short Round Trip would be quite an advancement! Despite my best efforts at putting him off with tales of the Troubles, 'not' Birthday Squeeze and sump one, he remained keen. I must mention the leeches in sump one next time! We made good progress to Paradise Regained and I was hopeful that I could crack another first and drop down through Blue Pencil to have a butchers around Swildon's four. Arriving at the first of the Troubles, we found it almost completely dry. More of a puddle than a duck. We decided to temporarily separate, with me wriggling off down Blue Pencil while Paul had a play around with his camera. I set myself a 30 minute time limit and dropped into the infamous passage.

Having read numerous colourful accounts of the torturous nature of Blue Pencil, I descended carefully and deliberately. While I found it awkward in places, I was largely surprised to find it something of an anti-climax! I wasn't actually sure that I'd passed the infamous dog-leg bend until I found myself slithering down the chain and plopping into the main stream.

Noting that it'd taken me seven minutes to get down, I reckoned on ten for the return trip and stomped off upstream for a look at sump three, pausing to take the odd snap. I was impressed by the change in character which takes place in the short distance from sump two to downstream of sump three; the rock seeming much sharper and more jagged than in Swildons one and two. Having gotten a feel for the place, I elected to claw my way back up the chain and Blue Pencil for a re-union with Paul. Lucky I did really, as I found the return considerably more strenuous and time consuming. I just about made it though, averting a rescue call out!

After a breather and a refuel, Paul and I pushed on through the (mercifully very low) Troubles. We soon arrived at 'not' Birthday Squeeze, which certainly wasn't for Paul, but still is for me, although I can now get through without outraging public decency!

After a fun slide down the landing, we arrived at sump one, where Paul wasted no time in dismissing that particular psychological obstacle. Tired, but still with plenty in reserve, we made our exit, passing a group who had rather annoyingly over-rigged us at the Twenty. Once again, we emerged into a glorious

afternoon, after four and a half hours of fantastic sporting caving.

With my time in the UK all too quickly running out, I just managed to squeeze in one more trip before the barren wastes of Kuwait beckoned me back. I'd really wanted to do some SRT, just to keep my hand in and maybe to do some rigging, so Russ Hunt and I borrowed the required ropes, scrounged around for a selection of krabs and headed off to Hunter's Hole for an evening trip.

Yet again, I bagged another underground first in that I did all the rigging, albeit with Russ' invaluable advice over my shoulder! It was fantastic to have a dangle again and extremely gratifying to discover that, given time, I can be trusted to rig a simple pitch for SRT and not kill anyone! We were only underground for maybe an hour and a half, but the sense of accomplishment and satisfaction at having ticked off all the things I wanted to achieve in my brief window of opportunity, more than compensated for the brief nature of the trip. We even had time for a good scoff and a pint in the Hunter's, where we chatted with the assortment of wednesday night diggers and managed to secure Russ a place on a Dan Yr Ogof trip for which I would sadly be unavailable.



**Kev & Russ Hunt in Hunters Hole.**

**Photo: Kev Speight.**

While my week off allowed me to temporarily slake my thirst for caving, as soon as I got back to Kuwait my frustration at not being able to get underground once again reared it's head. That's why I decided to bore you to tears with this article! I find that I can get at least some of the satisfaction I glean from caving, just by writing about it and it certainly helps to pass the time! At the time of writing, I am only a couple of weeks from returning to the UK and being driven to keep fit by the thought of all the enormous pitches I will be negotiating in our upcoming Spanish expedition. A couple of weeks may not sound like a long time, but believe me, when there ain't no caving to be had, it can seem like a lifetime!

**Kev Speight.**



## DALES TRIP IN OCTOBER?

Hi everyone,

I have been thinking about organising a trip to Yorkshire this October (probably around the last weekend of the month).

It could be a weekend or the whole week (depending on demand) and I happy to sort out the logistics but I would need help with organising the caving. I am keen to go for a week so that I can combine some caving with walking. This could be a good opportunity for some new members to do some SRT training as we would be near Ingleborough Hall who can provide instructors. This would free up our more experienced members to do some harder stuff.

I don't plan to stay at YSS (no offence), but i'll look into staying at some other bunkhouse/hostel in Clapham or thereabouts. So, if you are interested in any shape or form or have any ideas for accomodation or caving please let me know.

I can then judge whether or not to go ahead with it. Cheers!

**Linda Milne**

## DISH OF THE DAY?

We've recently been to Crete on Holiday and saw the attached sign outside a taverna in Rethymnon. I had thought about posting it on the news group but maybe you could use it in the newsletter. I was going to say something like: 'Has anyone seen Biff lately, or has he been very unwell?! If he's gone I expect that he would be very tough and require long slow cooking' - either way we decided to eat somewhere else, as we couldn't face waiting ages for him to tenderise, although it could be seen as being good value with chips!



Roy & Fiona Kempston

## NEW MEMBERS

The following new members have been accepted into the group since the last Newsletter. Please give them all a warm MCG welcome.

John Botham  
Peter Dennis  
Michelle Gigg  
Stephen Liam  
Steve Fearnley

Contact details will be found in the membership list which will be included with the next Newsletter.

## FROM THE PAST

Part of being a member of an august institution like the Mendip Caving Group is knowing a little of what has gone on in the past to make the Group what it is today. Therefore I thought it would be of educational interest to include a few snippets from past Newsletters to pass on some of the significant events from our history...

### 40 Years Ago – Newsletter No.84

Jim was quite impressed by the lightweight toy ladder (as he described it) and his only criticism was that on long pitches of 1,000ft or so...one-eighth inch wire tends to make for a bouncy climb.

### 30 Years Ago – Newsletter 132

#### NEW COTTAGE REBUILDING CONTRACT SIGNED

The contract for rebuilding the New Cottage has been signed! Work will begin at the end of June, and will be completed in November.

### 20 Years Ago – Bulletin Number 10

John: "What type of rope is this?"

Anon: "It's an 11mm...er..."

John: "...Bungy?"

### 10 Years Ago – Newsletter 290

#### **SLIPPERS!!!**

During a certain weekend in May, I noted that slippers were worn by a collection of cavers. Is this the way on for cottage footwear? I feel a meeting must take place after supper on the next appropriate members weekend to discuss this important matter. *[Ed. There was a pair of slippers lying next to the hearth in the lounge over the weekend of 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> June. No-one would admit to owning them!!]* A concerned caver

I hope to continue to add a few such scraps of MCG history in future Newsletters if there is space and people think that it is a good idea. Please feel free to provide me with quotes and/or anecdotes for inclusion.

**Ed Waters**

## **CHARTERHOUSE & VELVET BOTTOM PUBLICATION?**

At the AGM in March it was discussed that it was about time that the Group produced a definitive publication covering the major extensions to Upper Flood in 2006. As editor I volunteered to start to put some ideas together on this.

Since the AGM I have discussed this project with a number of people, and I have come to the conclusion that perhaps the group should aim to produce something a little more ambitious than just an "Upper Flood Report". Though this cave is undoubtedly the crowning glory of the group's recent work, it represents only part of the significant research carried out in the Velvet Bottom and Charterhouse Rakes area over many years.

I therefore propose that the group could produce a high quality and detailed publication describing all of the underground features of Velvet Bottom and the Rakes. Much of the information needed is already held in the MCG library (or members heads) though I have a positive reaction to access to information from at least one non-member who holds much useful data.

To date I have a rough idea of a skeleton of the publication, which I would see looking something like;

### **Introduction**

#### **Background**

*Why is this area interesting? Why now is the time to put something down in black and white. Not a guidebook, historical record of what has been done. Much of the information is available in bits and pieces, but this draws it all together. Intended to be useful for future explorers. MCG at heart of explorations in Blackmoor area, but others involved too – need to make this clear.*

#### **Geography**

*Area covered, boundaries (Upper Flood down to Timber Hole?) etc. Altitude, climate etc*

#### **Geology**

*Rock types, limestone contact ore bodies etc*

#### **Archaeology**

*General outline of archaeological sites in the area*

#### **History**

*Pre-History*

*Early Mining*

*Golden Age of Mining*

*End of Mining*

*Cave Exploration – 1968 flood*

### **Gazeteer of Underground Sites**

*Google earth type map showing all sites?*

*List of all known sites of speleological importance, by location or alphabetical?*

### **Surveys**

*Describe surveying methods, how they have been evolved, and where surveys have been published. Bill's google map stuff with caves overlaid on surface. Individual surveys of all caves. Will need to get permission of people/organisations outside MCG for this.*

### **Hydrology**

*Where the water flows from and where it goes to!*

### **Digging**

*List digs carried out, techniques used and effort put in.*

### **Future Potential**

*Sites yet to be pushed. Andy Farrant's predictions for the Cheddar catchment?*

The above outline is purely a first pass from my point of view, and I would welcome any feedback about what should be included. The crux of this however is that it will need MCG members to work together to put together. No single person (least of all me) has the knowledge to write this on their own. I would therefore urge every member to have a think about what they could contribute to this, whether it is words, pictures, research or proof reading. Ideally I am looking for a volunteer to take on each of the sections. The group has carried out an awful lot of good work here, and it is time we shouted a bit about it!

I would hope to have a meeting about this publication at the October members weekend, preferably over a pint in the pub. My plans (perhaps ambitious) are to be in a position to launch the publication at the 2012 Dinner, that gives us a little over 18 months to complete it (compare that to the time it took the Wessex to publish the Swildons book). I would propose that we use a "Print on Demand" service to prevent the Group having to shell out on a large print run, and would expect a price in the order of £15-£20 for a high quality product.

So please have a think about what you could contribute, and let me know if you have any ideas. Not least would be a catchy title to replace the working one of "The Caves and Mines of Velvet Bottom and the Charterhouse Rakes", which is a bit of a mouthful to say the least!

### **Ed Waters**

## GOATCHURCH CAVERN 5<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2010

Leader Brian Snell. Other members Sue, Jenny Plumb, Karen Fendly, Karen's friend, Steven Smith, Luke Smith, John, Aaron, Michelle Gigg

A large team including 5 novices embarked on a leisurely caving trip down Goatchurch Cavern. There was some apprehension in the air as we made the steep climb to the main entrance.

Brian gave some reassuring words of wisdom including the fact that the cave was used as a show cave in the early 1900's. The novices mixed with the more experienced cavers entered the cave as a team.

We made a descent down a large stepped passageway which kept descending into narrower passageway. The cave was dry and well travelled as we constantly found smoothed areas making some parts of the cave a little tricky.

Luke (age 12) with his short legs overcame every obstacle with relative ease including some minor assistance on the slippery areas.

We bottomed the cave into a small chamber where we met another group. It was here that the entire team turned their lights out. It was dark! It was here that we took a brief look at the Drain Pipe (obviously with our lights back on!) and whilst Luke was keen to attempt it, we couldn't be bothered to wait for the cavers already in that part of the cave.

Brian put a rope on the final climb out upon exiting the cave, this was appreciated by many as the rocks were extremely smooth and no one fancied falling down to the bottom of the climb.

We exited via the Tradesman entrance after approximately an hour and a half all having had a fantastic experience. All the novices were intact and Luke was particularly keen to get underground again.

The group made their way back to the cottage for lunch with a trip to Waterwheel Swallet was planned for the afternoon.

By Michelle Gigg

## WATERWHEEL SWALLET 5<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2010

Leader Brian Snell. Other members Karen Fendly, Steven Smith, Luke Smith, John, Aaron, Michelle Gigg

After lunch the novice group plus a few experts moved onto a harder and wetter cave, an introduction to the padlocked opening and straight descent down through initially man made pegs. Straight away it was noticeable that cave would not be as smooth and polished as Goatchurch Cavern.

This cave required the novices to watch their footing a lot more ensuring they picked the best routes, we were

now getting to see our first pretty's a few straws on the ceiling. Brian warned us to keep our heads down so to not damage them!

We did meet with a more technical part of the cave which proved to be a challenge for most, especially for those with shorter legs! It involved sliding over a large boulder on our stomachs, quite a daunting experience as we were unable to see the foot hold beneath. Brian was there to lend a hand/spot for us. Once on the small ledge we then had to spread our legs across a wide gap in order to climb down.

As we came to the first plug Luke was confident that he would follow Brian, but on seeing the height of the water decided against it, once the plug was pulled he shot through getting to feel the cold of the water for the first time.

Everyone found the water very cold and was keen to get through it as quickly as possible, only to find more cold water experiences to follow! We carried on descending until the point of where a ladder was required to drop down to a large pool; this was as far as us Meer novices would go on our second cave.

As we ascended Karen was tasked with placing the plugs back in, it was surprising how much less water there was on the way back up. Luke with confidence high was now flying back up the cave!

The only tricky part of the ascent was at the same point as on the way down but everyone still passed this with relative ease with only the odd bit of help for some. Luke lead the way till the man made entrance where Brian took over to open the lid.

Once out everyone was chuffed at trying something a little harder/wetter and were hopeful of moving onto some other caves in the future.

By Steve Smith



In the photo above Steve Smith (left) Luke Smith (right)  
Photo: Michelle Gigg



## Group

### Headquarters

Nordrach Cottage,  
Charterhouse-on-  
Mendip,  
Blagdon,  
Bristol **BS40 7XW**

**Tel. 01761 462797**

National Grid. Ref.  
**ST 5147 5606**

### Mendip Caving Group

Reg. Charity no.  
270088

### Custodian

#### Trustees

Pat Walsh  
Jonathan Roberts  
Pete Matthews  
Ben Cooper

### Examiners

Roy & Fiona Kempston

### Cottage Bookings

All groups (guests and members) should be booked via Mike Richardson, email [bookings@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk](mailto:bookings@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk)

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Material for MCG News can be submitted to the Editor, Ed Waters, via email, [editor@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk](mailto:editor@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk)

Or via the cottage address above. Submissions are preferred in electronic format, but any material, in any format, is always welcomed.



## Group Information

**Monthly Meeting:**

At the Group HQ, usually on the first Fri/Sat/Sun of the month.

**Online Meeting:**

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/mendip-caving-group/>

**Websites:**

[www.m-c-g.org.uk](http://www.m-c-g.org.uk) & [www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk](http://www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk)

**Cottage Fees:**

MCG members, members children, SWCC, NPC £2.50 per night.  
Guests £5.00 per night. Camping at same price as cottage fees.

### 2010 Caving & Social Calender

Date	Location	Activity	Contact
Sep 03/04/05	Mendip	Members' Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
Sep 04	Mendip	St Cuthberts	Jeremy Gilson
Sep 04	Mendip	Chilli Night	Jenny Plumb
Sep 04	Mendip	Beginners Trip	Kevin Speight
Sep 04-19	Spain	<a href="#">SIMA Gesm</a>	Miguel Tome
Sep 24/25/26	Leek, Staffs	Hidden Earth	<a href="#">BCRA</a>
Oct 01/02/03	Mendip	Members' Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
Oct 01/02/03	Mendip	Cottage Working	Doug Harris
Oct 02	Mendip	Skittles Night	Jenny Plumb
Oct 02	Mendip	Beginners Trip	Kevin Speight
Nov 05/06/07	Mendip	Members' Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
Nov 06	Mendip	Firework Night	Jenny Plumb
Nov 06	Mendip	Beginners Trip	Kevin Speight
Dec 03/04/05	Mendip	Members' Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
Dec 04	Mendip	Christmas Dinner	Jenny Plumb
Dec 04	Mendip	Beginners Trip	Kevin Speight

### Nordrach Cottage Bookings

Booking Group	Arrive	Depart	Nights	Beds Booked
MCG Members Weekend	Fri 03/09/10	Sun 05/09/10	2	
MCG Members Weekend	Fri 01/10/10	Sun 03/10/10	2	
OUCG (Sat. Only)	Fri 15/10/10	Sun 17/10/10	2	20
MCG Members Weekend	Fri 05/11/10	Sun 07/11/10	2	
MCG Members Weekend	Fri 03/12/10	Sun 05/12/10	2	
MCG Members Weekend	Fri 07/01/11	Sun 09/01/11	2	

### COMMITTEE CONTACTS:

Secretary – Mike Richardson  
Treasurer – Karen Fendley  
Tacklemaster – Brian Snell  
Recorder/Librarian – Bob Templeman  
Cottage Warden – Doug Harris  
Editor – Ed Waters  
Caving Secretary – Vacant  
Social Secretary – Jenny Plumb  
Rescue Warden – Miguel Tome

The above can be contacted via the email addresses to the right, or via the contact details included in the membership list circulated to group members with this Newsletter.

Secretary	<a href="mailto:secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Treasurer	<a href="mailto:treasurer@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">treasurer@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Tacklemaster	<a href="mailto:tackle@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">tackle@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Recorder/Librarian	<a href="mailto:recorder@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">recorder@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Cottage Warden	<a href="mailto:warden@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">warden@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Editor	<a href="mailto:editor@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">editor@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Caving Secretary	<a href="mailto:caving@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">caving@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Social Secretary	<a href="mailto:social@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">social@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Rescue warden	<a href="mailto:rescue@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">rescue@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Conservation & access	<a href="mailto:access@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">access@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Auditors	<a href="mailto:examiners@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">examiners@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>
Cottage bookings	<a href="mailto:bookings@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk">bookings@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk</a>

*A caving trip is an adventure, and as such appeals to that restless spirit which resides in some form in the heart of every man; the same irresistible urge which carried men from this little island to the far corners of the earth. It is that same lure of the unknown which has inspired men to cross widest deserts and climb the highest mountains, and which finds its greatest satisfaction in the ultimate ambition of every explorer – to set foot where none has been before.*  
Arthur Gemmel & Jack Myers, Underground Adventure, 1952.