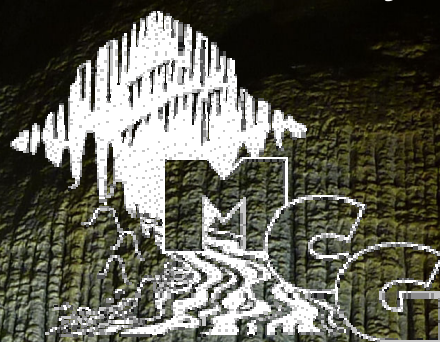


MCG NEWS

Number 367 January 2012



Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

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Founded 1954

CONTENTS:

1. A Weekend in South Wales
2. In at the Deep End
3. Five go mad in Fermanagh
4. OFD History
5. Library Additions
6. Holy Stalagmites!
7. La Grotte de la Roque Bleue
8. New Members
9. AGM Notice
10. Upper Flood Guest Wardens
11. Bookings & Calendar.

Photo: Russ Porter abseils into Sala GIEX, Sima de Cacao. Chris Binding

EDITORIAL

It is with some sadness that I present to you my final edition of MCG News. The decision to resign was a difficult one, as I have very much enjoyed editing the newsletter, and I remain a firm believer in the benefits that a good publication brings to our group and the caving world at large.

I think the time is now ripe for the Group to seriously consider what it wants from its publication(s). Clearly with the revolution in information technology the time is long gone since the newsletter was the prime vehicle for organising group events. To my mind it has become more of a formal record of what the Group has been up to. The meat of the Newsletter has to be material submitted by the membership, the editor is just that – not an author! If we rely on the editor to write every issue of MCG News it not only ensures a knackered editor, but a very one dimensional publication. So, before you complain that you haven't received a newsletter for a while, stop and think what you can write and send it to the editor!

Finally I would like to thank very much all those who have submitted articles, photos, or snippets of information whether they were long, short, funny or informative, MCG News is all about your contributions.

Ed Waters

A WEEKEND IN SOUTH WALES

Emma Lambert, Debbie Lambert and Angus Leat (MCG) Alan McBride and Mark Hill (WCMS and soon to be MCG), Helen Ransley.

Friday 14th October:

After driving across what felt like all of Wales due to every road that we needed being closed, Debbie (Mum), Alan, Mark and I finally arrived at Wealden Cave and Mine Societys 'Stump' – just over the field from SWCC. We met Angus and Helen who had arrived about an hour before, had a quick night cap then bed.



Outside Pant Mawr Pot, Photo: Emma Lambert.

Saturday 15th October: Pant Mawr Pot. Debbie, Emma, Alan, Mark, Angus.

We had a leisurely breakfast, got our kit together and headed out on the approx 3 mile walk to Pant Mawr Pot (note to self: wetsuit socks + wellies + long walk = big blisters). The entrance to the Cave is hidden away in a shakehole which we had been told is very difficult to find if weather is bad, but fortunately it was a lovely day and we found it without any problems. After some hanging around waiting for a group to descend the 15metre pitch on wire ladders, we rigged off a stake quite a distance back, with a 40m rope and made it down the simple pitch – just one deviation – and headed down stream.

The passage was mostly large and over boulder collapses with a few chokes. We then reached the aptly named 'Straw Chamber', down into the 'Great Hall' where we carried on to the sump – as far as we could go. On the way back we entered the large passage with the some of the prettiest formations that I've seen; lots of helictites, straws, stalactites and flowstone (another note to self: slippery rock + 'tricky for small people climb down' = very painful elbow and a lot of swearing).



Helictites in Pant Mawr Pot, Photo: Emma Lambert.

After a quick snack stop we headed back to the entrance and past the pitch to have a quick look upstream at the waterfall. Kitted up, all back out in quick time ready for the walk back.

I cooked a chilli for dinner, and then too many ciders later it was time for bed. Apparently Pant Mawr gets kept quite (probably because of this, helping to preserve the fantastic formations) but I would very much recommend it.

Sunday 16th October: OFD2 Top Entrance Round Trip. Pot. Debbie, Emma, Alan, Mark, Angus and Helen.

After another fairly leisurely start we headed off on the same route as yesterday (although thankfully nowhere near as far!) Angus went with partner Helen, a 'non caver', for a gentle stroll around the Entrance Chamber and a walk above ground after; whilst the rest of us set off on the round trip.

We passed through the Entrance Chamber, past the..erm.. 'Elephants Vagina' and into 'Gnome Passage'. We then reached 'Edwards Shortcut', the part of the trip that I wasn't looking forward to, due to being a big wuss when it comes to traverses. Alan attached a rope across that I clipped a Krab to, to give myself a bit of extra (much needed!) confidence. All safely across we headed down onto the 'Elephants Trap' then got a bit lost trying to find 'Shatter Pillar' (much discussion ensued about banning Alan from being chief navigator, adding to his 'interesting' efforts on Fridays drive down).

We eventually found the right way – after some more 'hairy' traversing (thanks, Alan!) and then into the pretty Selenite tunnel before continuing on. We passed over the top of 'Maypole Inlet' up and into 'Salubrious' passage. We stopped for a quick mars bar at the 'Trident' and 'Judge' formations and then headed up stream to try and find the 'muddy men' (lots of looking, no luck – have they gone?).

Having had enough excitement for one weekend we headed out up the 'corkscrew' and back into 'Gnome Chamber'. We were soon back into the entrance chamber and out into the sunshine. A quick walk back to SWCC to remove the call out and hand back the key, then to the 'Stump' for a quick clean (the cottage, mainly), cup of tea and drive home.

A very enjoyable weekend, thanks to all involved.

Emma Lambert



Formations in OFD II, Photo: Emma Lambert.

IN AT THE DEEP END

It has been about a year and a half since I joined the MCG and to be honest I didn't know what to expect in terms of the people I would meet and the caves I would subsequently visit. However what I did know was that I enjoyed caving!! Now that's all well and good enjoying caving, but caving is not just about going underground "well that's my view" it's all about the people I caved with as well as the social side to it.

Now let me explain something that will make the title of this article make sense. Prior to joining MCG I had been caving for three years leading youth groups in caves that I like to call the usual suspects, Goatchurch, Pridhamsleigh, Bakers and Swildons upper series. If you are not familiar with this type of caving the trips normally last for two or three hours max and we all go home happy with our day's endeavours.

So after some thought I became aware that I needed more than a trip round Prid or Goatchurch. So I decided to join the MCG. Now the only way I can explain the difference between the two it is like playing Sunday league footie and then Alex Ferguson invites you play in the united first team! So here you are on a trip to a cave you have never been in, with people you don't know and a copy of Mendip Underground tucked under your arm. In my case the book was turned to the page where it says MC, DC, VDC, or SSC and after looking up these strange abbreviations having a feeling of pure terror!!!

Well that was a year and half ago and yes I have been scared especially when I was taken on my first SRT trip in Yorkshire. Jangling pot, comes to mind - wow what an experience that was! As too was my first trip in Cuthbert's, looking up at the cascade (and that bloody entrance rift I still struggle with it even though I have been in there five times). On my first trip into UFS I came out with a cracked rib (what a plonker I was) but you know what I have never felt like I was holding anyone up in all the caving trips I have done with the Group. I have always had great support from whoever I have caved with, but there is one quality that I believe the Group has and that is a level of honesty.

I once wanted to go on a trip and the guy who was leading politely said this trip may be a bit too much for me, and he was right! That is a quality that as a Group we should hold dear, because taking on a trip that is too much only puts the whole party at risk. Since joining the Group I have caved in Wales, and Yorkshire, I have seen some amazing passage but most off all I have had a great time with all who have caved with me. So yes in at the deep end it's the only way to go happy and safe caving to you all.

Ross Wheeler

FIVE GO MAD IN FERMANAGH: 24TH - 27TH JUNE 2011

All the way back in June, an intrepid band of MCG'ers crossed the Irish sea for a long weekend of caving in Northern Ireland. In no particular order, the gang were Julie Hesketh, May Yap, Russ Porter and Sue and Kev Speight.

The idea was conceived after a short visit back in 2010, when Sue and I enjoyed trips in Marble Arch and Boho Caves, during a week's holiday traveling around the Emerald Isle. We were lucky to have a bit of local knowledge, courtesy of Ian Wilton-Jones, who provided us with surveys and even came with us for a trip up the Legnabrocky Way in Marble Arch. We had a great time and vowed to return.

We all flew across from the mainland, albeit from different airports, and hired a couple of cars. Our accommodation was the Cladagh Glen Scout Hut, near to Blacklion. It's a great little facility right on the banks of the Cladagh river, which rises from Marble Arch caves, just a short walk upstream. A perfect base then, and at a fiver a night, brilliant value too!

Arriving late on thursday night, our first priority was to get some supplies. This task was delegated to May and Julie, who proceeded to buy enough pizzas, wine, beer and Chilli Con Carne ingredients to last five normal folk about six weeks! Naturally, we'd already managed to put a dent in it by bedtime!

On the friday, we headed up to Marble Arch caves. Julie's old uni pal, Les Brown (A Hydro-geologist now living and working in Fermanagh), had greased the wheels with the showcave staff, meaning getting hold of the key was no worries. A quick change in the carpark (much to the amusement/bemusement of the tourists!) and we were off to find the shakehole behind the visitors centre, which contains the 'cavers' entrance.

Anyone who has caved with me before might be aware that I'm not exactly blessed with perfect recall, so will understand when I say that there was a bit of a false start while we checked out a few likely looking holes! Eventually, we found a gated entrance whose lock accepted our key and we were in... to a boulder choke, through which I was now expected to navigate!

Wishing I'd paid more attention last year, we split up and probed the likely spots, until Sue eventually stumbled across the crawl towards yet another gate, through which we entered the showcave. After a little stomp along the concreted route, a wade across the river saw us into the bypass passage which leads from Skreen Hill 1 to Skreen Hill 2. From this point on, conservation signs are dotted, bringing to your attention the particular conservation issues pertinent to that area of the cave. An interesting alternative to widespread taping, although it can feel like being preached to.



Russ Porter in the elusive entrance to Marble Arch. Photo: Kev Speight.

There really isn't much to Skreen Hill 2, although there are some nice stalactites in the roof. The only way on for the 'dry' caver is through a gravel in the stream into the Legnabrocky Way, which is a fabulous kilometer or so of varied caving, including some very large and impressive chambers, not to mention fine formations. We followed it to the bitter end, where a calcited climb leads to a small, very strongly draughting slot in the roof.



Legnabrocky Way, Photo: Kev Speight.

On the way back, we took a quick de-tour into the bouldery and occasionally tight, Mexican Passage. This ends in a jumble of boulders which would be prime real estate for the Hilti fiends were it on Mendip! Rather than do the boring thing of exiting the way we'd come in, we opted to walk to the end of the showcave and swim out of the resurgence.

That evening, Les Brown came over to the Scout Hut, where a team effort on our part had produced a completely obscene quantity of Chilli! The way to a caver's heart is usually his stomach. With Les being no exception, we were all soon very good pals and had arranged to go out for a curry with him and some other local cavers from the Shannon Group the following evening!

It's worth noting at this point that by nightfall, the river had swollen to more than double its size that morning, owing to heavy rain that afternoon. Had we been in Marble Arch just a few hours later, we would have found our exit complicated by an extra sump in the showcave section of Skreen Hill 1!

Having been provided by Les with information and, very generously, rope and tackle, we decided to have a go at Shannon Cave on the Saturday. The original entrance (as shown on the survey in the guidebook), which was never exactly stable, is now completely collapsed. Thankfully, the Shannon Group have engineered a connection from the nearby Poltullyard Cave. All we had to do was find it!

Armed with a map and a description, we bravely headed off into the teeth of the boggy moorland, looking for the entrance which was described as being at the base of a small cliff. After a couple of false alarms, I more or less fell off a small cliff and sure enough, found a cave entrance at its base. Signaling to the others (who were some way away), I noticed a couple of blokes who appeared to be out fell running, with dog in tow, beckoning us back to an area which we'd established was devoid of anything remotely speleological!

On seeing that we weren't for moving, they eventually came over to us. One of them had the most outrageously red hair I've ever seen on a human. I swear, if we weren't in Ireland, I'd have said it was dyed! He introduced himself as 'Red Jim'. Red Jim informed us that he was a big noise in local cave rescue, and that we were definitely in the wrong place for Poltullyard.

Obviously we were chuffed to have found this out before wasting our time on the scrot-hole I'd found, and gratefully accepted his offer to be shown the entrance! It turned out that Red Jim's 'entrance' was in fact a tiny, spider infested hole which went precisely nowhere and that in fact, the hole I'd found at the base of the cliff, where we'd been stood ten minutes earlier, was in fact the entrance to Poltullyard!

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given his willingness to offer his advice as an experienced member of local cave rescue, the colour of Red Jim's face managed a fair approximation of his hair! Oh how we all laughed... through gritted teeth! (Only kidding, they were both embarrassed and very apologetic! An easy mistake to make, given the nature of the terrain).

Having bidden our new friends 'fond' farewells, we slithered into Poltullyard and got on with some caving!

A short walk/stoop in a small stream quickly led us to the head of an absolutely magnificent 40m pitch. This was pre-rigged, so our rope was surplus to requirements. The pitch had almost perfectly smooth walls and was free-hanging the whole way down. Wonderful stuff! At the bottom, we ditched our SRT gear and headed off into the bouldery connection with Shannon.

The incredibly strong draught made route finding fairly straightforward, although negotiating the 8m long squeeze and z bend of the 'Rebirth Canal' proved interesting to say the least! Immediately after this followed some very delicate caving through scary boulders, which led us into the winding streamway of Shannon Cave.

We opted to head downstream and soon found ourselves amongst fabulous formations. Straws, Helictites and pristine stal in abundance ensured that the cameras got a serious workout! Time was pressing, so we only explored a short way further at stream level, which soon ended in a miserable sump. The way on was obviously in the ceiling, but we were forced to leave it for another time, at least if we wanted to get back in time to meet Les and the Shannon Group for curry in Enniskillen.



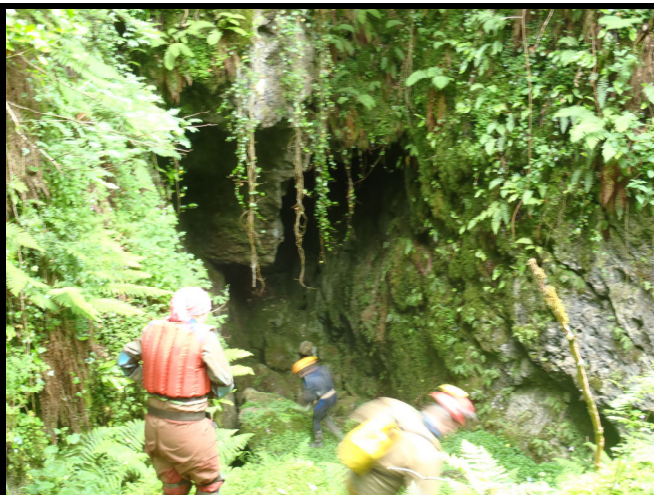
Pillar in Shannon Cave, Photo: Kev Speight.



Sue with formations in Shannon Cave, photo: Kev Speight.

Over a sumptuous Indian Buffet, our new friends explained that the way on was indeed in the roof and led to plenty more passage. Les and I made a plan to do a 2 man speedy evening trip the following day if time allowed. After the meal, the Shannon guys ended up coming back to the Scout Hut to have a few beers and stay over with us. We even managed to palm off a few bowls of chilli! We had a great laugh and learned that there's still masses of potential for discovery pretty much all over Ireland, North and South.

On Sunday, Les and his partner, Aileen, met up with us for a trip in Polnagollum of the Boats. This impressive, but fairly short river cave is hydrologically linked to the Marble Arch system. The entrance was like something from Jurassic Park, with curtains of intertwined foliage cascading everywhere, followed by a descent through a choke of massive boulders into the main river itself.



Entrance to Polnagollum of the Boats, Photo: Kev Speight.

This trip can only be described as absolutely fantastic fun, particularly if you're a water baby! Plenty of swimming meant that wetsuits and buoyancy aids were a must! As a little side attraction, Aileen showed Russ and I a little oxbow, featuring a short sump. Despite it only being a metre or so long, I almost cocked it up completely, getting disorientated while underwater! Thankfully, I found air again before too much panic set in and I got through fine on the second attempt. At the upstream end of the cave, the water got much deeper as it emerged from the sump. Les and I were able to penetrate quite a long way in by ducking into airbells between arches in the roof. When we'd gone as far as we dared, both of us thought we could hear the rumble of falling water nearby. Les, who knows the area better than most, found this most intriguing!



Streamway in Polnagollum of the Boats, Photo: Kev Speight.

Later that evening, once we'd stuffed ourselves silly on the seemingly never ending pan of Chilli, Les and I headed back up to Poltullyard/Shannon for a speedy trip. I was keen to see the sump bypass in the roof which had eluded us the previous day, and to see as much of the cave as possible. Traveling light, and with Les' knowledge, we seriously motored along. After the pretty section we'd seen the previous day, the cave lacks formations, but gains in scale as you progress. The passage shapes are straight out of the textbooks, and multiple short boulder collapses add to the sporting character of the trip. Perhaps most fun of all, is the rope swing over deep water at 'Swinger's Corner'!

We got as far as 'George's Choke', which has proven to be an ongoing challenge to maintain in a safely passable condition. After a quick look to check that all the shoring was present, correct and doing its job, we turned tail and stomped back the way we'd come in. Les may have mentioned something about 'breaking the record' for the time taken to exit from George's Choke, but of course I'm above such petty considerations.....

We beat it by three minutes! While changing, we got absolutely annihilated by midges. So much so, that we were forced to replace lost nutrients with yet more Chilli back at the Scout Hut!

On Monday, Julie and May sadly had to leave early to catch flights home. With our flights being in the afternoon, Sue, Russ and I didn't exactly have a huge amount of time to play with either, but wanted to squeeze in one more trip before leaving. Les offered to take us up to Noon's Hole, just for a quick bounce down the 100m entrance shaft.



Noon's Hole entrance shaft, Photo: Kev Speight.

Sue decided to sit this one out, so the three of us left her to admire the scenery while we followed Les down this absolutely fantastic pitch. At the bottom, Les pointed out the way on for next time, but we were forced to make a hasty retreat and head for home, although not before Russ and I befriended the local wildlife on the surface!



Russ and his new friend, Photo: Kev Speight.

I'm sure the rest of the gang would agree that Fermanagh is an absolutely fantastic caving region. We were made to feel really welcome by Les, Aileen and the Shannon Group and I'm very keen to return next year. Although things are very much in the planning stage, I'm looking at potentially going across for the first week of June 2012. Ideally, I'd like to re-visit Fermanagh, but also head south to Co Clare for a day or two. Keep an eye on the newsgroup for updates...

Kev Speight



The MCG in Pollnagollum of the Boats, Photo: Kev Speight.

OFD HISTORY

In August last year South Wales Caving Club celebrated the 65th Anniversary of the first entry into the cave since the unfortunate individual who fell down the skeleton pit. In addition a plaque was placed to the memory of Peter Harvey, one of the original explorers, long term president of SWCC and well known to many members of the MCG. The wording of that plaque is reproduced below.

P.L.W.Harvey
 27-5-1921 : 29-10-2009
 SWCC President 1976-2009
 On Aug. 3rd 1946 Peter, of
 the newly formed
 South Wales Caving Club
Clwb Ogofeydd Deheudir Cymru
 Discovered and first entered
Ogof Ffynnon Ddu
Cave of the Black Spring
Peter was accompanied by Bill Weaver, Ian Nixon, a girl called Joan and a man from Yorkshire who's name was never known.
 Many thanks to Geoff Beale for the report.

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

The Story of Banwell Caves, by John Chapman, 2011. This 44 page booklet is an interestingly written little book with beautiful pen and ink drawings by John Haynes, one of the owners of the cave. It includes a survey, numerous colour photographs of the Bone Cave and Stalactite Cavern and a series of short descriptions of the follies which are to be found in the grounds of "The Caves".

Belfry Bulletin, No 540, April 2011. Items include the Mendip Cave Rescue report for May 2010 - March 2011 (1 missing person search, 2 'overdue' callouts and 1 dislocated knee) and Part 1 of a report on Kingdown-OFD (Old Farts' Dig) which is in an area of reclaimed gruffy ground just south of Ubley Warren reserve.

Blind Descent - the quest to discover the deepest place on earth, by James Tabor, 2010. Recently someone asked me if we had this book in the library. Well, we do now! It's not my cup-of-tea but Pete read it and said 'it's a bit like a continual disaster movie', albeit with plenty of caving interest. The 300+ pages describe the "race" to find the deepest cave - Bill Stone was committed to Cheve Cave in Mexico while the Ukrainian Alexander Klimchouk targeted Krubera in Georgia for the depth record.

The Archaeology of Mendip – 500,000 years of continuity and change, by Jodie Lewis, 2011. This long-awaited book is full of information, too much to assimilate in one go and more useful as a reference source. Chapters of most interest to cavers are probably Mapping and Making of the Mendip Landscape, by Jim Hanwell), Iron Age Cave Use on Mendip by Abigail Bryant and Roman Mining of Galena at Charterhouse in the 1st Century AD by Malcolm Todd. Each chapter has a comprehensive bibliography. For members interested in archaeology the book brings together information from many sources. It is expensive (£35) but worth buying if you want a deeper understanding of Mendip's history.

Lanzarote Lava Caves, MCG June 2011 Rescue Practice, Wheal Jane Mine - DVD by Chris Binding and Carmen Smith. Eight interesting short films of lava caves. The rescue practice sequence is of the above-ground part of the 'rescue'. (*donated*). Also **A Cavers Guide to Lava Tubes of Lanzarote** compiled by Carmen Smith. (printed from www.cavesoflanzarote.co.uk)

UBSS Proceedings Vol 25 No 2, May 2011 Archaeology papers on an excavation of Priddy circle No 1, 2010 excavations at Read's cavern, and an historical documentation of Aveline's Hole. For cavers there is the 2010 expedition to Montenegro and Cave notes on Counties Clare and Galway.

Gruta de Las Maravillas, Arcena – Huelva, by Mario Rodriguez Garcia, 2005. A superb coffee table book about this beautiful cave in Andalucia, S.W. Spain. Text is in Spanish and there's not a lot of it, but that doesn't matter as the pictures are brilliant, especially the close-ups of formations (*donated. Thank you Miguel*)

Matienzo; 50 years of speleology edited by Juan Corrin and Peter Smith with contributions by many others, 2010. This book (305 pages) is a credit to everyone involved. As its title suggests it contains mainly expedition reports but it also has a number of small 'stand alone' articles dotted throughout the text. There are short chapters on geology, diving, archaeology and it comes with a loose geological map and a DVD. Each page is laid out with two columns, one English text and one Spanish. Because so much has been packed into this book the text is rather small (at least, for 'crusties' like me).

Caves of the Peak District by Iain Barker & John Beck on behalf of the Derbyshire Caving Association, 7th Edition, 2010 A high quality production with good photos and clear surveys. The Peak District has been divided into areas shown on a map on p8; each cave's name / alternative name / grid reference / length and depth are in a coloured box, the background colour indicating the area in which it occurs. Further references are given at the end of each cave description where appropriate. The major omission is lack of an index but a loose one was produced subsequently and is kept with the book.

Any regular visitors to Derbyshire should buy a copy - £21.60 incl p&p from Derbyshire Caving Association or caving outlets.

Penwyllt by Peter Burgess, 2010 This book (136pp) does not purport to be a caving book but it is of interest to members staying at SWCC and wishing to spend a day of their weekend walking. The book's subtitle is 'The Story of a South Wales Community' and it explains the history and industrial archaeology of the area around the SWCC cottage – the tram-roads, the Neath & Brecon Railway which had a station (still visible) at Penwyllt, the remains of silica brickworks and the lime burning industry. There are brief chapters on OFD and local caving clubs and three field walks each accompanied by a sketch map.*

Craven Pothole Club Journal No 102, April 2011 has an article on a visit to Cova des Pas De Vallgornera, Mallorca. This well-decorated cave was discovered in 1968 during excavations for an hotel cess pit, 67km of passage having been surveyed so far. There appear to be no natural entrances to the cave. Only 12 permits per year are issued. Is this one for you, Tim?

Cave and Karst Science, Vol 38 No 1, April 2011. (*Transactions of the BCRA*). This is a thematic issue about Ogof Draenen, Britain's longest cave at over 70kms. The paper on the cave's speleogenesis by Andy Farrant and Mike Simms is interesting and accompanied by a series of plans showing development phases. There are shorter papers on the hydrology, bat distribution and landscape evolution.

The West Mendip Way, a walk across the Mendips by Andrew Eddy, 1983 (donated)

Joan Goddard

HOLY STALAGMITES!

Returning to St-Julien-en-Vercors at the end of a short walk I was amused to notice that a huge stalagmite is situated at the side of the main door of the little church in the middle of the village; at first glance it resembled a sculpture surmounted by a rusty iron cross. At the time of our Visit the village appeared to be deserted, so there was nobody whom I could ask about the origin of the stal. I assume the church was dedicated to Saint Julien. We didn't try entering the church; maybe there were straw stalactites hanging from the ceiling? The nearest cave, which might have been the source of this stal. is La Grotte de Choranche show cave in Gorge de la Bourne, an uphill journey of several kilometres. Perhaps divine intervention was available to help with transportation.

Tony Knibbs



The stalagmite in St Julien en Vercors, Photo: Tony Knibbs

LA GROTTTE DE LA ROQUE BLEUE

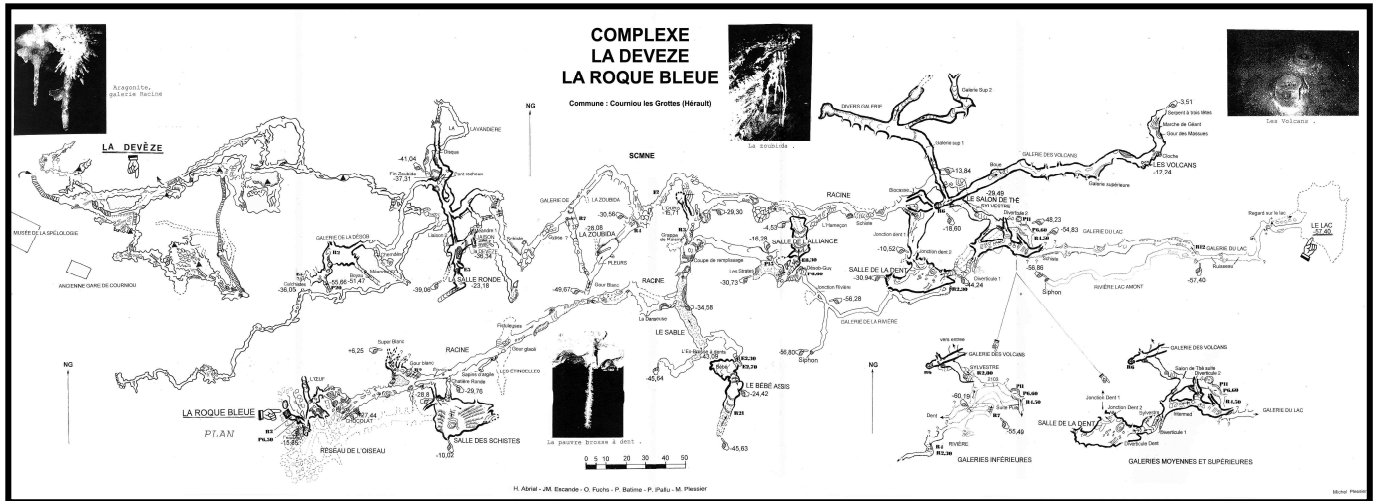
Tucked away in the hills of the Hérault département (France) lies the little village of Courniou les Grottes. Within the small area of this commune is situated the complex cave system of Grotte de la Dèvèze, which is a show cave. Linked to the show cave are two other caves, well-known for their fantastic formations; Lauzinas and Roque Bleue. Access to Both of these associated caves is strictly limited in the name of 'research' on the basis of their extreme fragility.

In June of this year, a colleague in the local Airbus club managed to persuade one of the 'authorised researchers' to take us on a trip into Roque Bleue. Our leader for the trip was Patrick Cabrol of the Club-Spéléo de la Montagne Noire et de l'Espinouse (SCMNE). Progress through the cave had been described as, "il faut crapahuter", which suggests crossing difficult terrain, i.e. considerable scrambling up and over blocks (but nothing specifically strenuous). There were no pitches involved and no mention of significant water. In all, then, a gentle bimbble.

The entrance had a padlocked steel lid, which revealed a 5m scramble down rocks to the first of several handlines. Pressing on into to a series of intricate passages, it was evident that a huge amount of effort had gone into taping the route. After an hour of 'crapahuting' and admiring numerous rather spiny formations we reached a big chamber Salle de L'Alliance where some members of the party went off in various different directions to look at different features of the cave. Sitting here, talking to another member of SCMNE made me realise that I probably could not find my way back through the maze of passages to the entrance unaided. The taping was admirable for its ability to show the positions of vulnerable formations but didn't show the direction of travel inbound or outbound. As soon as everyone had seen all they wanted we set off out.



Denise Knibbs in la Grotte de la Roque Bleue , Photo: Tony Knibbs.



Survey of la Grotte de la Roque Bleu / Grotte de la Deveze System
 (After H. Abriel, J.M. Escande, O. Fuchs, P. Balme, P. Pallu & M. Plessier)

C

easy. I had expected the name of the cave to have referred to some of the formations, but it actually refers to the rock itself, which occasionally took on a pale indigo colour. The formations themselves were either pure white or a creamy off-white colour; most resembled crystalline hedgehogs of different shapes and sizes.



Grotte de la Roque Bleu, Photo: Tony Knibbs.

With hindsight, it is questionable whether the copious taping has been truly worthwhile because many of the formations are actually out of immediate reach. From what we saw of Roque-Bleue, it would suggest that a visit to Grotte de la Dévèze show cave would be worthwhile.

It seemed to us that 'research' in the cave was mainly a process of taping-off fragile formations considered to be at risk.

Tony Knibbs

NEW MEMBERS

Please give a warm welcome to the following who have become members since the last newsletter;

- Sarah Crowsley
- Ray Deasey
- Leonie Woodward
- Lee Collis
- Andrew Flemming
- James Hall
- Chad Slalabor,
- Carla Gutiennee Mere
- Przemek Skowron
- Irene Garcia

ADVANCE NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2012

The MCG AGM will be held at the Hunters Lodge on Sat 24th. March 2012 at 10.00 am Nominations for Office and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules must be submitted in writing by first class post to the Hon. Secretary's home address (50 Greenbank Avenue West, Easton, Bristol, BS5 6ET) with the signatures of full members proposing and seconding at least 25 days before the meeting (Monday 27th February). A nomination for Office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand for election by the nominee. Nominations are sought for all posts. Job Descriptions of all Committee posts will be available, on request, from Bob Templeman, Librarian/ Recorder in due course.

Andrea Russe, MCG Hon Secretary

GIFT AID

One of the benefits for MCG of being a registered charity is that we can claim 25% tax back on membership subscriptions. To enable us to do this we need a signed gift aid declaration in place from each member.

You can only sign a gift aid declaration if you pay tax to HMRC equal to the amount of tax claimed on your donation. This doesn't need to be tax deducted from your salary. If you do not pay enough tax the Revenue could claim back the difference from you. If you have any doubts check out the information on the Revenues website

at <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/giving/gift-aid.htm#3>

The more members that sign a declaration form the more income the group can claim back. In the membership renewal information coming out later this month there will be details as to whether you have already signed a declaration for the group. If you have but are no longer paying sufficient tax please let us know. If you are now paying tax or have not yet signed a gift aid declaration form please download the form from the website, sign this and return it to the group.

Sue Fennell

UPPER FLOOD GUEST WARDENS

After many years of discussion within the committee and the land owners, it has been decided that there will be the availability for a limited number of non-MCG leaders for Upper Flood Swallet. The scheme has been developed by Kev Speight after much hard work, and has the full backing of the Council of Southern Caving Clubs.

It should be noted that access is still controlled by the MCG, and we retain responsibility for conservation of this fine cave system. Potential wardens will have to undergo a number of assessment trips, and their prime responsibility will be for conservation of the cave.

Further details of the scheme can be obtained from Kev Speight.

Ed Waters



Jeremy Gilson in Pant Mawr Pot,
Photo: Ed Waters



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Pat Walsh
Jonathan Roberts
Pete Matthews
Ben Cooper

Examiners
Roy Kempston
Linda Milne

Cottage Bookings
All groups (guests and members) should be booked via Andrea Russe, email bookings@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

MCG News is published by the Mendip Caving Group, Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse-on-Mendip, Blagdon, Bristol BS40 7XW

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Material for MCG News can be submitted to the Editor, via email, 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 & www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Cottage Fees: MCG members, members children, SWCC £2.50 per night.
Guests £5.00 per night. Camping at same price as cottage fees.

2010 Caving & Social Calendar				
Date	Location	Activity	Contact	
Feb	3/4/5	Mendip	Members' Weekend	
Mar	2/3/4	Mendip	Members' Weekend	
Mar	2/3/4	Wales	South Wales Weekend	
Mar	23/24/25	Mendip	AGM Weekend	
			AGM 10.00am Hunters Lodge (venue TBC)	
			Annual dinner	
Apr	6/7/8/9 Easter	Mendip	Members' Weekend	
May	4/5/6/7	Mendip	Members' Weekend	
Jun	1/2/3	Mendip	Members' Weekend	
Jul	6/7/8	Mendip	Members' Weekend	
Aug	3/4/5	Mendip	Members' Weekend	
Sep	7/8/9	Mendip	Members' Weekend	
Sep	TBC	Spain	Andalucia Expedition	

Please note that there are also many informal caving trips, particularly digging trips, organised online.

Nordrach Cottage Bookings							
Booking Group	Arrive		Depart		Nights	Beds Booked	
Sheila Woodcock	Fri	13/01/12	to	Sun	15/01/12	2	12
Mid Wiltshire Scouts	Sat	21/01/12	to	Sun	22/01/12	1	26
MCG Members Weekend	Fri	03/02/12	to	Sun	05/02/12	2	
Surrey mountaineering Club	Fri	17/02/12	to	Sun	19/02/12	2	24
MCG Members Weekend	Fri	02/03/12	to	Sun	04/03/12	2	
Felcham Scouts	Fri	09/03/12	to	Sun	11/03/12	2	24
MCG Girlies	Fri	16/03/12	to	Sun	18/03/12	2	
MCG AGM weekend	Fri	23/03/12	to	Sun	25/03/12	2	
Ministry of life	Fri	30/03/12	to	Sun	01/04/12	2	10
MCG Members Weekend (Easter)	Fri	06/04/12	to	Sun	08/04/12	2	
MCG Members Weekend	Fri	04/05/12	to	Sun	06/05/12	2	
MCG Members Weekend	Fri	01/06/12	to	Sun	03/06/12	2	
Surrey Scout Caving Club	Fri	29/06/12	to	Sun	01/07/12	2	30
MCG Members Weekend	Fri	06/07/12	to	Sun	08/07/12	2	
MCG Members Weekend	Fri	03/08/12	to	Sun	05/08/12	2	
MCG Members Weekend	Fri	07/09/12	to	Sun	09/09/12	2	
MCG Members Weekend	Fri	05/10/12	to	Sun	07/10/12	2	
MCG Members Weekend	Fri	02/11/12	to	Sun	04/11/12	2	

COMMITTEE CONTACTS:

Secretary – Andrea Russe
Treasurer – Sue Fennel
Tacklemaster – Brian Snell
Recorder/Librarian – Bob Templeman
Cottage Warden – Russ Porter
Editor – Vacant
Caving Secretary – Kev Speight
Social Secretary – Jenny Plumb
Rescue Warden – Vacant

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	secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Treasurer	treasurer@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Tacklemaster	tackle@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
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Cottage Warden	warden@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Editor	editor@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Caving Secretary	caving@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Social Secretary	social@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Rescue warden	rescue@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Conservation & access	access@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Auditors	examiners@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Cottage bookings	bookings@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

"And then we'll light the gas and run like hell."

From "The MCG Song" by P. Goddard, S. Knight & P. Walsh. Taken from They Words, They 'Orrible Words" by Nick Cornwell-Smith.