



# MCG NEWS

## Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

Number 370

April 2013

### This Issue:

- 60th Anniversary News
- Cutler's Sink
- Win £75!
- Caving in the Canaries
- Digging News
- Flooding

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### MCG AGM 2013

The Annual General Meeting of the Mendip Caving Group was held at The Hunters' Lodge on the 23rd of March 2013. It was a bitterly cold day on Mendip and a light snow was falling while the meeting took place. 25 members attended, with Ed Waters chairing; keeping order and preventing the conversation drifting too far off of the agenda!

Here are **Bob Templeman's** AGM highlights

"The new Committee line up is as follows, Treasurer: Sue Speight, Caving Secretary: Richard Carey, Cottage Warden: Russell Porter, Tackle Master: Biff Frith, Recorder/ Librarian: Robert Templeman, Social Secretary: Andrea Russe. The posts of both Secretary and Editor remain vacant, as there were no nominations. However, Brian Snell indicated

that he would be happy to be co-opted as Secretary and Tom Harrison offered to be guest editor and perhaps subsequently offer to be co-opted subject to a ready and continuing supply of material being submitted to him from the membership. The next move is for the new committee to formally co-opt Brian at their next meeting.

The following member was specifically mentioned as follows. Steve Porter for donation of his time and professional services in transferring the deeds of the cottage to the new line up of Trustees and registering the cottage with the Land Registry.

The difficult question of Cottage Fees was raised and it was evident that a new pricing model was long overdue to ensure that all members using the cottage paid a fair contri-

bution to cover its running and maintenance etc. If you have any bright ideas, please pass on to a Committee member in the usual brown envelope.

It is the Group's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next year and as agreed at the AGM, and subject to a suitable venue being available, the date we are working to is the 26<sup>th</sup> April. The AGM will also be held that weekend."

*So here we are with my first attempt at a newsletter! (First attempt, 9th or 10th draft.)*

*Any comments or suggestions about format or content will be gratefully received. But without articles, trip reports, photos and ideas for topics, then it will end up being a very thin (and boring) publication!*

**Tom Harrison**  
[Get2\\_Tom@Hotmail.com](mailto:Tom@Hotmail.com)



Upper Flood by Tom Harrison

## Mendip Caving Group - 60th Anniversary

***Mendip Caving Group  
60 Year Anniversary  
AGM Dinner***

***The Batch Country House  
Lympsham  
Near Weston Super Mare  
Somerset  
BS24 0EX***

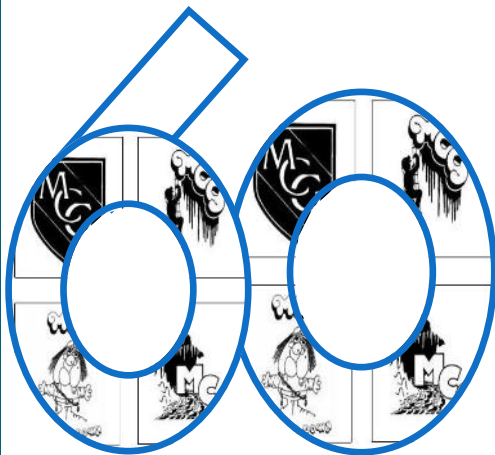
***On Saturday the 26th April  
2014***

2014 brings the 60th Anniversary of the formation of the Mendip Caving Group. From humble beginnings of 8 members on the first membership list, the club now has 122 members and has been pivotal in the extension and exploration of many famous Mendip caves.

With the first recorded trip to Swildon's taking place in Feb '54 and the first dig recorded as being Timber Hole in April '54.

To celebrate this auspicious occasion, the MCG will be holding the 60th Anniversary AGM dinner at The Batch Country House, Lympsham, on the 26th April 2014.

All members past and present will be very welcome, **please make a note in your diaries now!**



The Batch Country House, Lympsham

## Cutler's Green Sinkholes at The Old Foundry, Chewton Mendip

### Part 1

#### Report by Mike Moxon

Back in July Phil Henty posted on the Mendip Diggers' Facebook page that a landowner (less than 4 miles from the Hunter's Lodge Inn) had been in touch, after reading one of his reports in the Mendip Times, to say that he had some holes on his land that he wanted investigating. Phil's team were too busy at Templeton to take this on and the various geologists and archaeologists that Kevin Clinton had contacted previously hadn't shown much interest, so Estelle Sandford, Trevor Hughes, Stu Lindsay, Stu Gardiner and James Begley headed over for a look see at the start of August.

About 12 years ago a large carp pond disappeared overnight with all the fish, the surface is mostly clay so Kevin tried to block the leaks several times before giving up and totally clearing the field and emptying the shafts as far as his digger would reach.

The site is where the Mendip Motor Car was built, so he found plenty of iron ores and many fine fossils (*more on this next month in part 2—TH*) as well as about 9 large (2 metres wide) fluted sink holes in a limestone pavement and a deep wadi just downstream in the shallow valley which heads north before joining another shallow valley going west to Chewton Mendip (the nearest main spring). Picture shows the site in 2006 (from Googlemaps), however, the wadi has been re-landscaped and the new pond is now over that, leaving the sink holes (bottom left) exposed.



**Hole 1 early days**  
by Léonie Woodward

As I have been digging with this crew at White Pit - <http://mendipdigging.blogspot.co.uk/> - I joined them for the first Wednesday evening when we collected the tripod we had used to haul rock out of White Pit and set it up over what became Hole number one at Cutler's Green (fortunately there were 8 of us present to carry the tripod across the fields as Mark Denning and Henry Dawson joined us from the regular digging team). We chose this shaft as it appeared to be the most solid (and the tripod wouldn't fit over the largest hole!), so digging commenced with the removal of a loose block that Mark had dislodged from the lip and 4 skips of rubble before it was time to head to the pub. (White Pit had been hard work after collapsing the approach route to Talus 4 at the start of the year (ending up with negative cave gain for several months - there is a reason it was originally called Klingons on the Starboard Bow) and affected by bad air at the dig face over the summer.)



**Hole 1 bottoming out**  
by Estelle Sandford

Digging then continued on Wednesday evenings with Kevin bringing real coffee over for the diggers most weeks (numbers varying between 4 and 8), lowering the first hole and putting steel stemples into the rock to aid entry/exit as it got deeper. We have had various visitors over the weeks (mostly BEC and Shepton) and made rapid progress (except when the heavens have opened) despite breaking several spades and having to put an additional pulley on the ground to prevent the tripod being capsized by over enthusiastic haulers.



**General view of site** by Estelle Sandford

Léonie Woodward, Jo Denning and Ben Wetherill have joined us for occasional forays, so we have started on additional holes when enough people have been present. In mid September Léonie and I started on the middle hole (the last one to be opened by Kevin and subsequently dubbed the MCG Hole) as the first one started to bottom out, and later we brought the tripod over from Stock House Shaft to set up over it.



**Coffee anyone?** by Mike Moxon

At the end of September I invited Joan Goddard over to have a look and although it had been too wet to dig earlier in the day it was quite a pleasant evening whilst we inspected the holes and Kevin's collection of fossils - it was quite impressive how well the holes had drained despite the torrential rain earlier. We also arranged to dig on the first Sunday in October when we started on the big hole (hauling up an inclined plank), continued with the MCG hole clearing it of most of the mud, and banged the slot that had been exposed at the bottom of the first hole - exposing only a body sized space before the water disappeared down a tiny hole. Roy Vranck (local geologist and friend of Andy Farrant) and Joan had a good look at the geology and Kevin's collection, identifying the vertebrae (*More on this next month—TH*).



**Middle (MCG) Hole, getting started** by Léonie Woodward



**Middle (MCG) Hole, nearing conclusion** by Léonie Woodward

We continued on Wednesdays with Kevin now using his digger to lift bags out of the largest hole (about ½ a tonne at a time, phew, because we hadn't worked out how to get a tripod over that one) until we hit rock again (holes are 15 to 20 foot deep) and we now had a pretty impressive spoil heap! He also has an electric supply at the edge of the field so ran a cable across and we have lighting as well! Various amphibians have been found in the holes and rescued during the warmer periods or left in situ more recently as the temperature's dropped.

The Chewton Mendip fireworks distracted digging at the start of November (we were on site) but finished early enough to move the original tripod to the hole nearest the drive, and we would have shifted the digger to one of the



**Estelle & tripod on Hole 1**  
by Joan Goddard

holes nearest the pond, but it had a flat battery. The MCG hole started to angle under the rocks and much fun was had beating the shattered material out with a hammer (helping to keep us warm as the evenings chilled) until it too disappeared into tiny cracks.

Finally the JRat Digging Award weekend saw another (short) Sunday session when the bags were finally lifted out of the hole nearest the pond and a bit more thick mud removed from the one near the drive. After this we went for a walk with Kevin, Roy and Joan to look at the other sink holes marked on the old geological map (many have been filled in by the farmers). Last Wednesday Kevin was unable to stay so gave four of us a quick digger lesson and we filled and each lifted a bag whilst the other hole was too wet to dig after overnight rain. Excavations will continue but probably not as frequently over the winter...

**Mike Moxon**

*Next Month: Joan Goddard's report on Cutler's Green*



**The largest hole**  
by Estelle Sandford



**Lifting with the digger**  
by Estelle Sandford



**The orange clay filled largest hole**  
by Estelle Sandford

See <http://mendipdigs.blogspot.co.uk/> for further updates.



**The hole nearest the drive**  
by Estelle Sandford



**The two holes nearest the pond**  
by Estelle Sandford

CAVES & CAVING BENEATH THE MENDIPS

# The Netherworld of Mendip

Photos:  
 Stan Gardiner  
 Alan Gray  
 Mark "Gonzo" Lumley  
 Steve Sharp  
 Bob Templeman  
 Clive Westlake

Graphics by Gonzo: Mark@creativeedge.me.uk 01761 419246

WELLS & MENDIP MUSEUM  
 and Visitor Information Service  
 "Home of Wells City Archives"

**A New Exhibition from April 27**

8 Cathedral Green · Wells · Somerset BA5 2UE · 01749 673477 · [wellsmuseum.org.uk](http://wellsmuseum.org.uk)  
 Open Mon - Sat 10am - 5pm · Museum admission from £3 Adult, £1 Child & £6 Family.

## NEW CAVING EXHIBITION IN WELLS

THE NETHERWORLD OF MENDIP is a new, permanent exhibition at Wells Museum, portraying 'the fascinating world of caves that lie hidden beneath the Mendip Hills and charting the development of caving and cave diving that has led to their discovery and exploration'. It opens at the end of April and promises to be a first-class display, having been designed and assembled by a team of local cavers including Mark "Gonzo" Lumley, Martin Grass and others. They have been helped by a wide range of cavers from across Mendip, including some of our own members. Featuring prominently will be the recent discovery of the 'The Frozen Deep' in Reservoir Hole, hailed as the 'largest known underground chamber in Britain'\*\*.

As a volunteer at Wells Museum I have been watching the exhibition's progress and have noticed large quantities of limestone appearing for the construction of authentic cave features, a developing cave dig and an incipient sump. I can't wait for the official opening to see it in its final form and hope other members will visit it too.

Joan Goddard

\*\*In the latest *Descent* (No. 231, April/May 2013) northern caver John Cordingley congratulates Mendip cavers for discovering Britain's second largest chamber. **Rivalry continues!**



## Rapid Progress Being Made at Battery Swallet

### By Mark Ward

A lot of chemical persuasion activity has moved us rapidly forward lately at Battery.

The natural formation of the cave has dramatically changed from 'rifty' in mudstone to an almost 'vadose trench' type tube in conglomerate. Work continues to enlarge this natural passage!

Diggers, Charles Head, Ed Shellard, James Hall, Miguel Tome, Mark Ward



## Over a 100 days of digging at Grebe Swallet

### By Chris Binding

Some MCG members have been helping out with a dig at Grebe Swallet over the last couple of years and although no great discovery has been made, plenty of fun times, mud and exercise has been endured in the name of squalid hardship. So far a hole has been dug and a rich seam of mud has been unearthed. The chief protagonists aren't very clever so they'll no doubt continue this foolish pursuit until the cows come home. There are no cows, though, and no home, so that could take a while.

Diggers:	Sessions
Chris Binding	100
Graham Price	35
Ed Waters	22
Kev Speight	16
Carmen Smith	13
Steve Culverwell	11
Mike Moxon	6
Chrissy Price	5
Paul Hadfield	4

John Storey	4
Steve Tarrant	3
Bruce Blagden	2
Jack Overhill	2
Russell Porter	2
Warren Rhodes	2
Mark Williams	2
Leonie Woodward	2
Josh Bratchley	1
Richard Carey	1
Pete Hellier	1
Biff Frith	1
Doug Harris	1
Mark Ireland	1
Paul Jiggins	1
Beth Logan	1
Aidan Moyce	1
Daniel Needham	1
Sarah Rowlands	1
Andrea Russe	1
Rich Savill	1
Andy Sparrow	1
Sue Speight	1
Matt Tuggey	1
Mike Waterworth	1

NUMBER OF DIGGING DAYS	102
TOTAL PERSON HOURS	557

Most of the work began in November 2010

### Where and when will TGED go?

The Garden of Earthly Delights will lead through humungous and stunning passages straight to Cheddar, via the Longwood Master System, embracing the Bone Hole Gorge and Spider Hole Inlet Avens, successfully completing a good digging season around November-ish, 2013, and trouncing all competition for the Diggers' Award for the next decade and a half.

*Work continues by members of the MCG at other digs including Upper Flood, Bone Hole and Stainsby's Shaft.*

**Next edition of the newsletter, I hope to bring news of possibly the longest continuous dig in the UK! And it's an MCG Dig! TH**



## Cavers to the rescue for Cheddar Gorge

As most of you will know, Cheddar Gorge was closed to traffic for three months this winter after a very wet summer and severe storms at the end of November resulted in the Longwood Valley stream emerging from Black Rock Gate to flow down the Gorge. Gravel, cobbles and small boulders were strewn across the carriageway, road edges were damaged and a stream flowed down the road. The Gorge is a major route across Mendip so local residents were understandably frustrated and Cheddar businesses were suffering badly (**and we had a long detour to get to the Hunter's!!**).

The main sink just downstream of Longwood Swallet had become totally blocked with silt so the

whole stream flowed further down the valley to Longwood Valley Sink which has less capacity and also overflowed. The highways authority couldn't effect repairs until the water stopped flowing down the Gorge and there was much discussion between the landowners (Natural England & Somerset Wildlife Trust).

Eventually, on the 13<sup>th</sup> February when the stream flow had reduced, a small group of cavers took the initiative and together with two others from NE and SWT spent an afternoon digging out Longwood Valley Sink and constructing a dam to divert the stream into it. Within a week road repairs were completed and the Gorge road re-opened.

This is only a temporary solution and, although it is not their legal responsibility,

SWT with assistance from cavers will dig out the main swallet and enlarge the rift at Longwood Valley Sink. Both sinks will require grills to stop tree debris from trapping silt and blocking them up again. Costs up to £5,000 will be underwritten by Sedgemoor District Council. Work should take place late April/early May. **Joan Goddard**



**Longwood Valley Sink dig after the stream had been diverted down the rift**



## Lava Tubing in the Canaries

### Report by Ed Waters

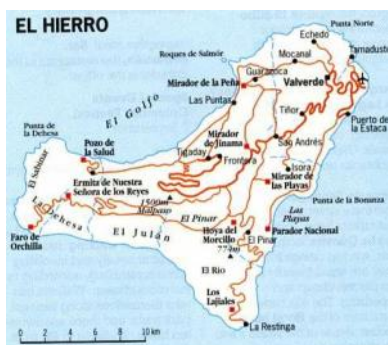
Present: Ed Waters & Hayley Clark plus Andy Morse, Ian Timney and "Tommo" from the Wessex Cave Club and Carmen Smith (Craven Pothole Club). Wendy Morse surface cover.



Ian Timney basking in the heat in Cueva de Don Justo  
by Ed Waters

Hayley and I have had a fetish for volcanic caves going back well over 10 years now. We have visited lava tubes in a number of countries, including making several trips to the Islands of Lanzarote and Tenerife which boast the longest and largest caves in the Canary Islands. Though most of the other islands (with the exception of La Gomera) do have significant caves recorded on them, one cave really does stand out, this is Cueva de Don Justo on the relatively remote island of El Hierro, and as of the middle of 2012 I could find no account of any British visitor to this cave and a plan was hatched to remedy that situation.

The Wessex Cave Club make regular visits to Tenerife, organised by Andy Morse, and have built up excellent relations with the local cavers. This allows them privileged access to the extensive lava tubes on the island,



which include the longest known lava tube outside the Hawaiian archipelago. Hayley and I have been fortunate enough to join in one of these trips and planned to join Andy in Tenerife in June 2012. Prior to the trip we discussed the possibility of taking a few days to travel to El Hierro and attempt to visit Cueva de Don Justo, which we ultimately did.

El Hierro lies at the south westerly limit of the Canaries, and is the smallest of the major islands. In addition it has been the most volcanically active of late with a major submarine eruption just off its coast in late 2011 through to early 2012. As an aside the island was considered to lie at the end of the world until 1492.





There appear to be no direct flights from the UK, and we used the fast ferry from Tenerife, which travels via La Gomera. The crossing takes a couple of hours and is quite expensive, tourist tickets are used to subsidise the heavily discounted local fares. Another warning is that most of the car hire companies do not allow their cars to travel between islands, we ended up having to hire a car in El Hierro.

The small island of El Hierro is almost triangular in plan, the northern coasts rise steeply in dramatic fashion to a plateau that slopes gently down to the south. There are few beaches to speak of, but there are a series of amazing natural swimming pools that have formed in the rugged lava shores.

Cueva de Don Justo is gated and locked to protect both the cave and the fauna in it, and our friend Alfredo Lainez had called the keyholder on our behalf prior to leaving Tenerife. A message was received from Alfredo, but it was in somewhat confused Spanglish and we were far from certain we would be able to pick up the key. In typical Spanish fashion the meeting with the key holder were late and rearranged multiple times. We cursed Spanish punctuality (or lack of it) as we flitted between tourist information offices, bars and finally a petrol station where we finally got hold of the key and a great wedge of further information on other caves.



**Trouble with the locks, key and keyholders!**  
By Ed Waters



**Andy Morse with a small lava cascade at a junction deep in Cueva de Don Justo**  
By Ed Waters

We later found out that the reason we had had so much difficulty in getting the key was that the keyholder was in the process of being rushed to hospital on Gran Canaria whilst he was making the arrangements!

Cueva de Don Justo is located close to the town of La Restinga which lies at the southernmost point of the island. This town had just started to build up a specialist tourist industry around sports diving when it was evacuated due to the eruption, less than a kilometre offshore in 2011. In mid 2012 most of the businesses were struggling but this meant accommodation and eating houses had plenty of room and were relatively cheap. We had been attracted to La Restinga by the oft repeated phrase by the local tourist board that the town basks in 360 days of sunshine a year. However, they don't mention that as it sticks out into the Atlantic Ocean with a fetch of many thousands of miles, that the average wind speed appears to be about 50 knots!



**Large Passage with a junction**  
by Ed Waters

The reason we came to the island was the cave. Cueva de Don Justo is very extensive, with over 6.3km of passage. This makes it the third longest cave in the Canaries and according to Bob Gulden is the 14<sup>th</sup> longest known lava tube in the world. In addition there is very little information on this cave available online, no decent photos and as stated before no evidence of anyone from Britain ever descending the cave.

The entrance is located only a few metres from the road, at the base of a volcanic cone locally called Montaña Blanca, and in an area of spectacular pahoehoe lava flows. Despite its proximity to the road the entrance is not easy to find, being only a small pit in the lava. The cave is obviously not visited very often, and the secure locks required liberal coatings of lubricant before they could be opened.



**Hayley with a lava ball**  
by Ed Waters



**Carmen in Typical passage for Cueva de Don Justo.**  
Note the roots penetrating the cave roof

Once inside the complex nature of the cave is immediately apparent, with several passages leading off the low entrance chamber. These passages set the tone for the majority of the cave, with tiring alternating stoops and hands and knees crawling on sharp lava. The internal temperature is also quite debilitating at something like 25°C. We later found out that local cavers only ever descend the cave at night, since most of the passages are fairly shallow the cave is heated by solar radiation on the black lava during the day, but is noticeably cooler at night.

The cave is somewhat complex, making navigation difficult, and it must be said that there is relatively little variation in the passages. Most as stated before being stooping to crawling height tubes, with the odd larger chamber at the various junctions. There are however many interesting features to be seen including a few lava stals and may "lava balls". The latter being rocks that rolled along in the lava river when the cave was active and gaining layers of molten lava in much the same way that a snowball can be rolled around to make it into a snowman.



Delicate lava straw



A complex junction in Cueva de Don Justo

At the extreme eastern end of the cave, the passage suddenly deteriorates into a body sized tube emitting a strong draft. At this point is a logbook, which we dutifully filled in. Andy and I braved the squeeze, which leads into a fantastic piece of passage, the small tube enlarges and then drops vertically for 2m or so, with a narrow frozen lava fall and may small lava straws and white secondary formations. Below here the passage continues low and painful. Unfortunately both I and Andy were not masochistic enough to push this further. However the survey indicates that it doesn't continue very far.



Ian Timney enjoying a low crawl in Cueva de Don Justo

All in all this is a fascinating cave and well worth the effort to visit. Furthermore I think El Hierro is now my favourite Canary Island, and I would really like to return to make further visits to Don Justo (to see the bits I haven't seen yet) and some of the other caves on the island.

Ed Waters

References:  
 Waters, E, 2010, Lava Tubing on Tenerife, MCG News No.364 November 2010, pp14 to 18.  
 Gulden, Bob, 2013, World's Longest Lava Tubes, <http://www.caverbob.com/lava.htm>.  
 Puch, Carlos, 1998, Grandes Cuevas y Simas de España, Federacion Española de Espeleología

## Trip Reports Prizes - Your chance to win up to £75!!!



My photo archive Wezzit! TH

**Sick of reading his own name in the trip log book, Ed Waters has offered a £50 prize to encourage MCG cavers to record their trips in the logbook. Joan Goddard has also generously offered a £25 best trip write up prize.**

"The Logbook provides a fine record of the activities of the Group, and is of great value to both historians and the nostalgic caver. However, the logbook is only as good as the stuff that gets written in it, and I know that there are a lot of people not writing up their trips. Some people seem to think that only exploratory trips should go in, but any trip (or even caving related activity) is well worth recording. A write up does not need to be as long as War and Peace, nor as eloquent as a Jeffrey Archer novel. Simply recording who has been where will be of interest to other members of the group, and possibly yourself in years to come.

I would like to encourage everyone to use the logbook as a matter of course after every trip. To this end I intend to put my money where my mouth is and offer a £50 cash prize for the person with the most mentions in the logbook between 1st March 2013 to 1st March 2014 (yes the competition has already started). The prize will be presented at the annual dinner next year. Just to prevent the obvious cheating (yes I am talking to you Miss Plumb) there are some basic rules.

1. The winner will be the person whose name appears in the most logbook entries from 1st March 2013 to 1st March 2014. Note that this is not the number of entries you write, but how many times your name appears, so it is in your interest to make sure that someone records the trip.
2. Any caving trip, cave related activity or group related activity will count.
3. A single write up counts as one entry, even if more than one cave is visited.
4. The winner will be decided by counting up logbook entries shortly after 1st March. Once counted no retrospective entries will be considered.

I (Ed Waters) reserve the right to discount any entries considered to be cheating or "gamesmanship".  
Let battle commence!"

**Ed Waters**

"A look at the Logbook when I visit the cottage is a "must" to keep up to date with MCG caving activities. The diggers regularly write up their trips and I enjoy reading them. However, it seems there are not many tourist trips taking place – or are they just not being written up?

To encourage everyone to put pen to paper I will award a £25 prize to the person writing the best account of a tourist trip between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014. The winner will be chosen by a panel of three."

**Joan Goddard**

**"£25 prize to the person writing the best account of a tourist trip"**  
**"£50 for the person with the most mentions in the logbook"**

## Windmill Hole

A friend facebooked me at Easter to say that while walking his dog on Felton Common (next to Bristol Airport) he had come across a hole that he hoped was "an undisturbed pre-roman burial or maybe a new cave network!" Now this was an area with no known caves, although the extensively mined Brockley Combe is not too far away and it is on top of the limestone, so I went up for a look.

The entrance was a body sized crawl in the earth which

showed no signs of anyone having been in and it opened up beyond, with a tripod of sticks and warning tape set up over the top to warn the locals of it's presence.

But I'd come straight from work and didn't have any caving kit with me, so a couple of days later I returned with Estelle Sandford (BEC) and James Begley (SMCC), as we didn't have enough people for hauling spoil in White Pit, for a better look.

It turned out to be an angled crawl of 1m into a 1m long by 2m wide by

3m deep hole in the earth, although water worn limestone was exposed directly below the entrance.

I provisionally named it Windmill Hole, as it is near the Round House (which is commonly known as the Windmill) in the SW corner of Felton Common (ST 5160 6481). There are Bronze Age Barrows on the Common, hence the hope of it being a burial site <http://www.megalithic.co.uk/article.php?sid=2258>

**Mike Moxon**



## SRT trip with MCG's Chris Binding

Anyone who was along on my first ever SRT trip in January will know that I really needed some more practice before going anywhere without someone highly qualified to check everything I did!

From forgetting to put my helmet back on, to not clipping my cowstails in properly, I was an accident waiting to happen!

I knew some professional I to I training was the way forward, Mr Binding had been recommended to me by a number of people and having spoken to him, he kindly offered me a very generous MCG rate!

He took be down Hunter's hole and I had a very enjoyable day learning a great deal, at a pace that suited me, i.e. slow!

Even at my 'steady' pace we managed to cover a wide range of techniques, including changeovers, deviations, and rebelays, all taught in Chris' reassuring and encouraging style, with some great tips to help me thread my Stop correctly (don't laugh) , tying knots and more.

A very useful day!

**Tom Harrison**



Practicing changeovers at the top of the 20m Main Pitch



Swildon's Blockhouse

Tom Harrison

**“Our weekend in Yorkshire is getting nearer, is there anyone else who would like a bunk?”**

**Contact Jeremy  
'mendipcaver@  
gmail.com'**

Netherwood Cottage  
Jan 1963

## Upcoming Trips

20 April	GB Main Chamber	Contact Richard Carey <a href="mailto:richardmcarey@btinternet.com">richardmcarey@btinternet.com</a>
3/4/5 May	<b>Members' Weekend</b>	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
18 May	Charterhouse Cave	Contact Richard Carey <a href="mailto:andrearusse@rocketmail.com">andrearusse@rocketmail.com</a>
8-20 May	8th Euro Speleo Forum	<a href="http://www.millau.2013.ffspeleo.fr/">www.millau.2013.ffspeleo.fr/</a>
7/8/9 June	<b>Members' Weekend</b>	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
8 June	Lionel's Hole	Contact Andrea Russe <a href="mailto:andrearusse@rocketmail.com">andrearusse@rocketmail.com</a>
7/8/9 June	Yorkshire Meet	Contact Jeremy Gilson <a href="mailto:mendipcaver@googlemail.com">mendipcaver@googlemail.com</a>
15 June	Eastwater Cavern Unlucky Strike	Contact Richard Carey <a href="mailto:richardmcarey@btinternet.com">richardmcarey@btinternet.com</a>

Above are the upcoming trips for the next 3 months. Please contact the trip leader in advance to reserve your place on the trip.

A more comprehensive list of trips, digs and events can be found at

[www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk](http://www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk)

Don't forget to record your trips in the logbook at the cottage, especially with the logbook prizes now on offer!

And any trip reports, photos or even videos that you have, I would gratefully receive for future editions of the news letter!

[Get2\\_Tom@Hotmail.com](mailto:Get2_Tom@Hotmail.com)

## From the Archives.....

### 25 Years Ago - Upper Flood

“.....work is continuing at the choke beyond the long duck. A new bang wire has been laid and chemical persuasion has been applied.

Over Christmas, it was noted that in very wet weather the beginning of the long duck (the Lavatory Trap) will almost sump—beware! Also the rift passage between Hannah's Grotto and the lavatory Trap takes a small stream. If entering the dig in bad weather this should be borne in mind.”

**MCG Newsletter No. 198**

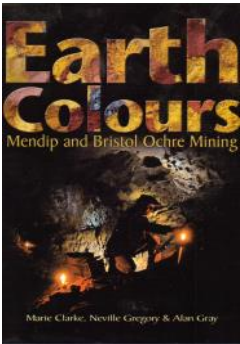
### 50 Years Ago—Severe Snow

The winter of 1962/63 was the coldest over England and Wales since 1740. A belt of rain on 24 December turned to snow as it moved south, reached southern England on Boxing Day and became almost stationary. The following day, snow lay 30 cm deep in much of southern England. A blizzard on 29 and 30 December brought snowdrifts 6 m deep. Villages were cut off. Roads and railways were blocked. Telephone wires

were brought down. Farmers couldn't reach their livestock. Thousands of sheep, ponies and cattle starved to death. A snow plough sent to clear the Cheddar Valley railway line got stuck in a 15ft drift. December to February saw 37 falls of snow. The cold weather only ended on the 4<sup>th</sup> March.

**[www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk](http://www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk) &  
[www.thisisbristol.co.uk](http://www.thisisbristol.co.uk)**

## Library Additions



**Earth Colours – Mendip and Bristol Ochre Mining** by Marie Clarke, Neville Gregory and Alan Gray, 2012. This book is the result of detailed research undertaken by Marie Clarke and Neville Gregory and completed in the early 1980s. Marie died in 1994 and the manuscript remained dormant until her daughter and Alan Gray took the project forward under the umbrella of the Mendip Cave Registry and Archive. The book contains details of Mendip and Bristol ochre mines, the men who worked them, the companies who managed them, and a great deal more. . . .

The book has been produced in the same format as the Swildon's and Wookey Hole books with design again expertly undertaken by Mark Gonzo Lumley - so all three will look good together on your bookshelf! It is nicely presented with a selection of historic and modern photos and some beautifully drawn maps and diagrams. Chapter 1 is an overview of the ochre and iron ore industries. Chapters 2 to 10 are concerned with specific areas of mining and Chapter 11 explains the uses of ochres and iron oxides. The final chapter 'Research and Discoveries 1980 to 2011' is a miscellany of information and includes the rediscovered 'lost caves' associated with old ochre mines – Shute Shelve Cavern, Carcass Cave, Axbridge Hill Ochre Pits, Loxton Cavern and others.

**Earth Colours – Mendip and Bristol Ochre Mining** by Marie Clarke, Neville Gregory and Alan Gray, 2012

Don't be tempted to look only at the cave discoveries. The rest of the book is very readable and contains much of interest. It costs £20 and can be obtained from the Mendip Cave Registry, some cave clubs (including MCG) and Wells and Mendip Museum. Proceeds will be used to finance other MCRA publications including a long-awaited new edition of Mendip Underground

**Cave Biology – Life in Darkness** by Aldemaro Romero, 2009. This American book is well presented with clear text and numerous photographs and many, but not all, examples given are from the United States. I found the first Chapter 'A brief history of cave biology' very interesting. Chapter 2 basically goes through the various groups of organisms found in caves, Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are about evolutionary biology and adaptations, ecology, and cave conservation and management. There is a useful glossary and a comprehensive bibliography. This is quite an advanced book but should be useful in our library as a reference source.

**The Sid Perou Story** by Martin Baines, 2010. This DVD makes fascinating viewing. It lasts for 1 hr 10mins and was produced as a tribute to Sid when he retired to Thailand in 2010. Sid introduces clips from his films, and his caving friends who were involved in the filming chip in with their anecdotes. I really cannot précis the DVD – you'll just have to look at it yourself! (*donated*)



**Two surveys: La Cueva del Gato (Sistema Hundidero – Gato) and Sistema Republicano – Cabito** published by Federación Andaluza de Espeleología. These two are colourful 'poster' surveys with photographs and associated text. They are folded so will be filed on the shelves (Spain). (*donated*)

**Speleo Vertical: DVD** by Andy Sparrow & Pete Isaacs. This DVD replaces Andy's three Cave Safe videos which he produced in the early 1990s. The information on the videos has been updated, the DVD is fully indexed and runs for 2 hours. It should appeal to beginners and experienced cavers alike. (*The replaced Cave Safe VHS videos from the library are now available to anyone with the relevant technology in exchange for a small donation to Group funds*).

*“(This DVD) should appeal to beginners and experienced cavers alike”*

Joan Goddard



## MENDIP CAVING GROUP

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**Mark Ward**  
**Chris Binding**

And to all the photographers contributions, as acknowledged.

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[Mendipcavinggroup.org.uk](http://Mendipcavinggroup.org.uk)



### Founded 1954

The Mendip Caving Group consists of some 122 members of all abilities who have banded together to share resources such as ladders, ropes, caving library and accommodation on Mendip.

The Group is registered as a charity in the UK, and our objectives are: For the benefit of the public, the furtherance of all aspects of the scientific study and conservation of caves and their related features.

Membership is open to anyone over the age of 18 years with an interest in the objects of the Group.

Members have use of the Group's cottage at reduced rates, free use of Group equipment and free access to the library. They also receive the newsletter of the MCG and Occasional Publications (a journal-type document published infrequently.)

A very warm welcome to the following new MCG members :

**Jack Overhill, Robin Harris, Tim Brown, Richard Turley, Neal Langson, Russell Hunt, and Katherine Naumann**

### The future of surveying, a laptop and a Kinect for Xbox?

The image below is not captured by an expensive LIDAR system, but with the use of a Kinect (above right), and a piece of software called Kintinous.

The Kinect is an £80 accessory for the popular gaming console, the Xbox and has a depth sensor consisting of an infrared laser projector combined with a monochrome CMOS sensor, which captures video data in 3D under any ambient light conditions.

Kintinous has been developed by teams from the university of Ireland and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and allows

continuous 3D mapping of huge environments, perfect for speedy accurate underground mapping perhaps?!

The technology is in its infancy but the applications could be very exciting.



Tom Harrison

