



# MCG NEWS

Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

Number 372

October 2013

**This Issue:**

- Upper Flood;

How and why the Neverland Link was found, surveyed and dug and what next for Upper Flood

- Spain and Yorkshire

MCG Members Cave in Andalucia, and spend a weekend up North

- Club News

Christmas and the 60th Anniversary info

- Mendip News

41m left to link a 2nd Cave to Rod's Pot

Sludge Pit reopened

- Hidden Earth

Photos and report

- Mendip Underground 5

What's in and all the latest details



Sala Giex Sima de Cacao ( Photo Chris Binding )

# AUTUMN 2013

## EDITORIAL

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**The Neverland Duck (Photo Tomas Leung)**

**Neverland is more accessible now thanks to the new Neverland Link**

Another busy summer and early autumn for the MCG concluded with a very successful and enjoyable Barn Dance and delicious buffet at Priddy Village hall on October 5th. It was good to see such a good number attending the event.

The 5th, 6th and 7th's events had also included the Work Weekend, where Russ Porter choreographed an energetic team of workers. (I must admit that I deliberately broke my thumb at football, just to avoid damaging the cottage with my shoddy DIY skills.)

The group have been busy Caving at home and abroad, an exciting trip to sunny Spain and an exhilarating couple of days SRT'ing and exploring in misty Yorkshire as well as plenty of tourist trips to all parts of Mendip.

Some of the members ventured to Wales to attend Hidden Earth at the leisure centre in Monmouth. Mendip featured prominently throughout the weekend, with the more information given about Mendip Underground 5, news of digs including the MCG work in Battery, Grebe, Upper Flood and assisting elsewhere.

This months leading article is Ben Cooper's piece on the quest to access Neverland without having to pass and damage the incredible formations that reside there. Ben tells the story of evolving surveying techniques, cryptic surveying notes, digging in the rifts and the final breakthrough in Febru-

ary 2013. Also discussed are the intriguing future plans for West Passage.

As always without these interesting and informative contributions there would no newsletter. Please, please, keep the articles, snippets, news items coming in.

I'm particularly interested in getting hold of any photos that you may have. With digital photography too many photos seem to end up on people's hard disks and memory cards and don't end up being seen by the members! I am scraping the barrel with my photo collection to illustrate some of the articles in the newsletter and I would really like to have some of the photographer's of the club published in the newsletter!!

Also on the topic of photos, there has been some recent controversy over the photo board in the lounge at the cottage. Personally I feel this emphasises the need to get some more photos in circulation and perhaps it would be good to get some photos from recent events and trips to compliment the humorous, informative and interesting photos already displayed. Thoughts??

See you at Nordrach!

Tom Harrison October 2013  
[Get2 tom@hotmail.com](mailto:tom@hotmail.com)

# MCG Club News

## MCG Christmas

The festive season is approaching and the MCG Christmas weekend is always a very popular. Last year we had a Christmas dinner which was oversubscribed so this year the plan is to have a festive buffet on the 7th December so that everyone can attend. Please note - we need to know who's coming a week in advance in order to sort out food so don't forget to put your names down on the list. If the numbers permit we can revert to a dinner format. To secure your place contact Linda ([linda.milne@btinternet.com](mailto:linda.milne@btinternet.com) or 07767 267849)

See Poster on Page 11 for more information

Linda Milne

## 60th Anniversary Dinner

The 60th Anniversary of the MCG and the celebratory dinner is fast approaching. Places at this not to be missed event will be limited. **The menu for the dinner is on page 18**, The cost for the evening is £26 with the optional coach £6. Menu choices not required at this time but an idea of numbers for the dinner and coach would be welcome. Please Contact Richard Carey [richardmcarey@btinternet.com](mailto:richardmcarey@btinternet.com) to reserve your place including your intentions to use the coach or not.

## Work Weekend & Barn Dance

TH

Cottage warden, Russ Porter would like to say a big thank you to all those who contributed to a very successful Work Weekend. Lots of important repairs, cleaning and maintenance were carried out, the benefits of which will be experienced by members and guests in the coming month. The Barn Dance was also a great success, with good food, music, lot's of MCGers and plenty of alcohol! There was even a party game thrown in for good measure. (See the photo!)

TH

## A very warm welcome to the following new MCG members :

Jane CROWTHER, Ian CLARKE, Matt MEARS, George CLARKE, Neil MAINE, Ryan GILSON, Dave BARROW and Michael KOUSIOUNIS



MCG 'Ladies' at the Barn Dance  
(Photo TH)

## MCG Digging

### Battery Swallet — Digging on hold during the summer.....

There had been no activity at Battery since June this year.

What with the Summer, working commitments and moves, the team almost disbanded.

Battery is a hugely labour intensive dig.

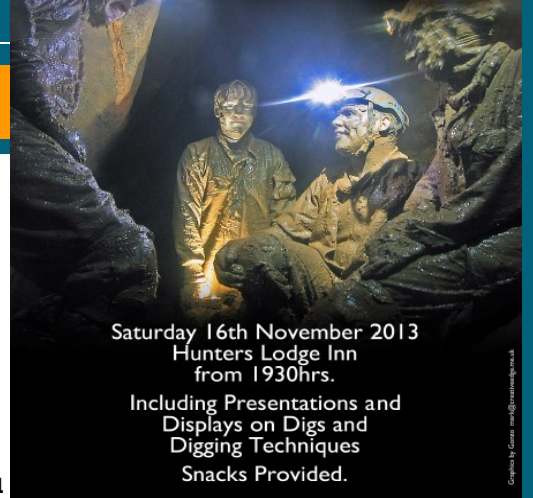
A renewed effort is being made starting this month. We are still confident of that elusive 'breakthrough'!

Mark Ward

Anyone wishing to help the team, please contact Mark

[wgs1td@btconnect.com](mailto:wgs1td@btconnect.com)

## J'Rat Digging Award 2013



Saturday 16th November 2013  
Hunters Lodge Inn  
from 1930hrs.

Including Presentations and  
Displays on Digs and  
Digging Techniques  
Snacks Provided.

Poster for this year's J'Rat Digging Awards, featuring MCG members just after the Muddy Hell Breakthrough in Upper Flood 2012.

# NEVERLAND REGAINED

How Neverland was linked to West Passage by **Ben Cooper**

Following five years of speculation and effort, a route into Upper Flood Swallet's Neverland was finally opened on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2013. Tourist trips to view parts of this spectacular passage and its Pork Pie formations are now possible for the first time since 2007. Ben Cooper describes the history of the dig, and the surveys that made it possible with extracts from his personal caving log.

Neverland was first entered by Julie Hesketh and Bill Chadwick on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006, and was immediately recognised to be an area of outstanding beauty in need of strict conservation measures. After a small number of initial exploration trips in 2007, including a full survey of its 750m length, the passage was closed to further access. Ever since then, the Upper Flood wardens have been looking for alternative routes into the further reaches of the passage that would avoid access through the stunning white formations at its start.

Although there had been speculation about an alternative route ever since Neverland was first surveyed in February 2007, it was not until December that year when a side rift in West Passage was surveyed and a serious contender became apparent. At that time, according to the survey, the side rift intersected Neverland by several metres, but that was clearly impossible! Surveys are never perfect and always contain some degree of error; but was the error in the Neverland survey or the West Passage survey, and how big was the error? It was to take a long-term campaign over five years to finally answer that question.

## *The Surveys*

Since the discovery of the cave in 2006, West Passage was surveyed three times, and Neverland twice.

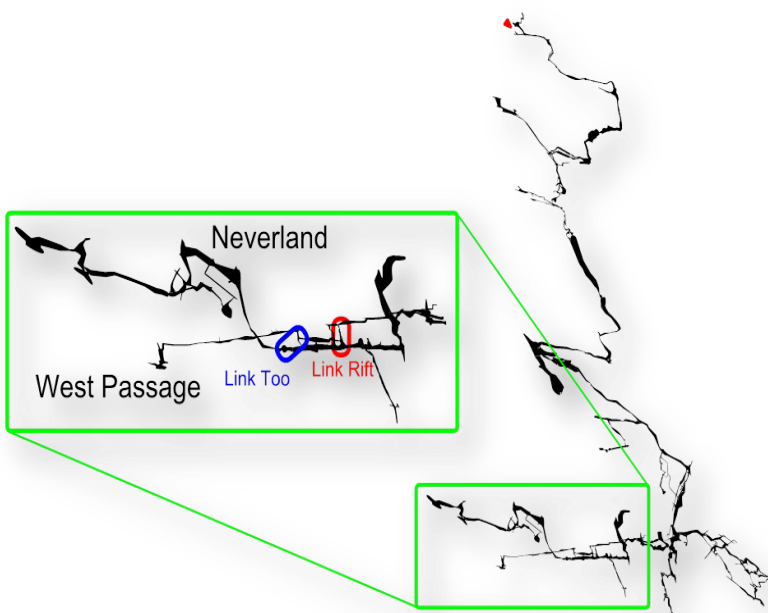
The first survey of West passage was

conducted by Tim Francis and Dongwoo Park on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2006 as part of the initial exploration of the cave, using the MCG compass, clino and tape.

Meanwhile the first survey of Neverland was conducted by Ben Cooper, Tim Francis and Richard Carey on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2007 using Ben's compass, clino and Bosch laser range finder. While only completing just over half of Neverland, this surveying trip took a mammoth 12-hours, which was thought to be the longest trip ever undertaken into the cave at the time.

Because the 2006 West Passage survey only recorded a centreline with no passage details, Mike Richardson and I re-surveyed it on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2007. This time we used the Shetland Attack Pony and Bosch laser range finder, and included for the first time a survey of the rift. Unfortunately, the two surveys differed significantly: the 2007 survey placed the Rift some 10m South and 4m above where the 2006 survey put it. According to the Pony survey, the rift appeared to intersect Neverland, as mentioned at the start of this article.

While the centreline survey didn't suffer from this obvious flaw, at that time, the evidence was against it and in favour of the Pony survey. Earlier that year in August, I had surveyed East Passage with the Pony, including a large loop. Surveyors like loops because they provide a measure of the accuracy of the survey. If a survey is 100% accurate, the drawn survey of the loop will close perfectly. In practice, there is always some amount of error, and the drawn survey will have a small gap: the smaller the gap, the better the accuracy. Compass and clino surveys are generally considered good if the gap is less than 1% of the loop length, and 3% is not unusually bad. The Pony survey of East Passage achieved a closure gap of 0.3m over its 86m length, or an accuracy of 0.37%, so this was an outstanding result for the Pony that



boosted our confidence in its performance. In contrast, Tim had cast some doubt on the accuracy of his 2006 clino survey, as he explained that the MCG clino was very hard to read, and could well have had false readings. This was indeed the case and in a number of places the elevation view of the survey showed slopes that looked shallower or steeper than we knew the passage to be; whereas the Pony survey looked about right.

But if the Pony survey was correct, then was the Neverland survey in error? The question was not helped by a lack of detail in the Neverland Survey. A cryptic note was made against the survey station closest to the West Passage rift. It said: "rift", but was that a general description of this part of the cave, or was it a side rift, and if so which side? The survey sketch provided few details of the passage shape. At that time we were more interested in determining the centreline accurately with only approximate passage dimensions, anything else would have taken too long. Indeed it was this very survey trip into Neverland that had already taken 12 hours and was giving the cave a reputation as being arduous and long.

By December 2007, when we surveyed the West Passage rift, access to Neverland was already being restricted for conservation reasons, so it was no longer possible to pop back in to take a look; but in 2008 it was agreed that a team should enter Neverland to find out what "rift" meant. Unfortunately enthusiasm ruled. A team went in perhaps with a different understanding of the question posed and failed to do a voice test in the right place (which with hindsight I believe would have been successful), and spent the day exploring underneath the Traverses. All was not lost, as this lower section had not been previously explored and appears to head towards another known tube further along West Passage, suggesting the possibility of another link route (now proposed as Link Too).

For reasons I never understood, there was little enthusiasm to dig the rift; and I was still busy surveying other parts of the cave. Meanwhile, my other survey work with the Pony was starting to cast doubt on this instrument's accuracy (see my article in MCG News No 369,

December 2012), and in turn was starting to cast doubt on the 2007 West Passage survey.

Then in 2009 technology improved again and I obtained a DistoX. Mike and I once again re-surveyed West Passage, this time with the help of our Australian guest Ray Deazy. I now had three surveys of West Passage, as follows, none of which agreed!

The 2006 Compass Survey, indicating a gap of 5m horizontally and 4m vertically from the rift to Neverland

The 2007 Pony Survey, indicating a 6m (impossible) intersection of the rift and Neverland

The 2009 DistoX survey, indicating a gap of 1m horizontally.

Sections of the new DistoX survey matched very closely with sections of Tim's original compass survey, but the differences suggested that either or both suffered from "blunders". This is a technical surveying term meaning that one or more survey measurements were incorrect. I believed there to be clino blunders in Tim's survey, but I couldn't rule out the possibility of blunders in my DistoX survey. Only a fourth survey would resolve these questions, but committing a surveying team to undertake yet another survey of West Passage while there was still so much else to do in the cave, was not going to happen any time soon.

#### *Digging commences*

Despite the uncertainty in the survey, the rift remained the best opportunity for a conservation by-pass route into Neverland. Eventually, during 2010, I saw a fantastic deal on a Bosch 36V SDS hammer drill, including 3 batteries. It was on offer from Screwfix, including a 10% discount voucher bringing the price down to 'just' £270 (similar drills typically retail for about £500). Of course I bought one, and emailed the voucher to Mike, who also bought one, but unluckily missed the discount voucher! It gave us 6 batteries, and Mike managed to obtain a capping kit from Biff Frith, so on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> June 2010 I took the day off work, and with Mike Richardson and guest Andrew Atkinson entered the cave with the

drill, batteries and capping kit. I wasn't to know it at the time, but Andrew was to play a key role in our eventual success.

*"We dithered a bit about what we were going to do - but finally took the drill and a stack of batteries (too many!) for a mix-and-match digging session. Our first target was the prospective Neverland Link, the high rift off West Passage just before the first dog-leg. This proved to be a comfortable dig for the digger, kneeling on a ledge and leaning into the rift; but not so comfortable for the others who stand below in confined conditions ducking debris falling from above. We made significant progress removing a number of horizontal ribs of rock, widening the start of the rift to ease access. The rift continues another 3 or 4m to the South from where we were working, and a lot of work is required to widen the rift to make an attack on the back wall possible where the current survey indicates the connection will be. Confusingly, a heavy drip (not quite so heavy on Friday) comes from above and to the North..."*

*We then moved back up the passage and had a go at Chuckle Choke. We removed quite a bit of debris, and then Mike drilled off some more rock. When we left it was just possible to push an arm through the 2-foot high by 4-inch wide opening to feel that it widens to the right. There's a lot of speculation whether the sound of water is too light to be the main*



The Shetland Attack Pony, or Pony for short, is an electronic combined compass and clinometer with laser pointer, developed and built by Dr Phil Underwood in 2007. It was the first "mass-produced" product of its kind, and inspired, and was quickly replaced, by Beat Heeb's DistoX.

stream way, but the potential widening of the rift is encouraging, and makes it worth removing some more rock to get a look. In fact, even now it may be possible to get a camera through.

Both digs will require a long-term strategy, but are both potentially very exciting.

We made our way out and back to the sunshine after more than 7 hours underground. Many thanks to Mike and Andrew for a fabulous trip."

But other digs got in the way – first Chuckle Choke, which fell quickly a few weeks later to a massed (frenzied?) attack by virtually the entire MCG (or so it seemed), and then the Waterworks – and I had other surveys to do (Charnel and South passages), so it was not until 2011 (5<sup>th</sup> February and 11<sup>th</sup> March) that Mike and I dug Link Rift again with caps, both trips lasting an exhausting 9 hours underground.

**Another survey**

It was becoming clear that Link Rift would be a long term dig, and conscious of the effort that would be required I wanted to be sure about how far we needed to dig. So on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2011 Andrew and I entered Neverland to resurvey it. Equipped with Andrew's DistoX and PDA we produced a detailed survey of the passage walls to just beyond Link Rift. At last, I was able to see that the cryptic "rift" was indeed a deep intersecting rift on the right hand side. Unquestionably, this was the same feature that we were digging in below. There was no sign of any holes downwards, but climbing up into the rift revealed plenty of holes going up, and I had every confidence that these connected with similar holes in the ceiling of the rift below.

Once back at home I was able to compare the new Neverland survey with the original compass survey of 2007. The results were excellent – the two surveys agreed at the two fixed survey stations to within 1m. The length from the start of Neverland to Link Rift is 150m, so considering the two surveys as a loop, the loop closure between them is 1m over 300m or an error of 0.33%. This is an amazing result – both for the DistoX and also for the original 12-hour compass survey: it shows that it pays to take your time when surveying!

The more exciting result was that it

contributed significantly to confidence in the DistoX as an instrument, and hence to confidence of the 2009 DistoX survey of West Passage. By now I had accepted that the Pony was not reliable and the 2007 Pony survey of West Passage should be ignored. Also, the 2006 compass survey, with its known clino problems, was also best ignored. Conversely, we had the 2009 DistoX survey, and all the evidence suggested that it was our most reliable survey of West Passage. The indicative gap between the two passages, according to the DistoX surveys of each one, was 1m with an error of about 1m.

The drawing below is an elevation of the cave slicing through the plane of the rift at a bearing of 165-degrees (North is to the right). The direction faced into the paper is approximately the view you would have walking into the passages. The stick figures are more-or-less to scale and show a 6' tall person (in practice, we're all smaller than that and the passages seem bigger!).

**The Second Dig**

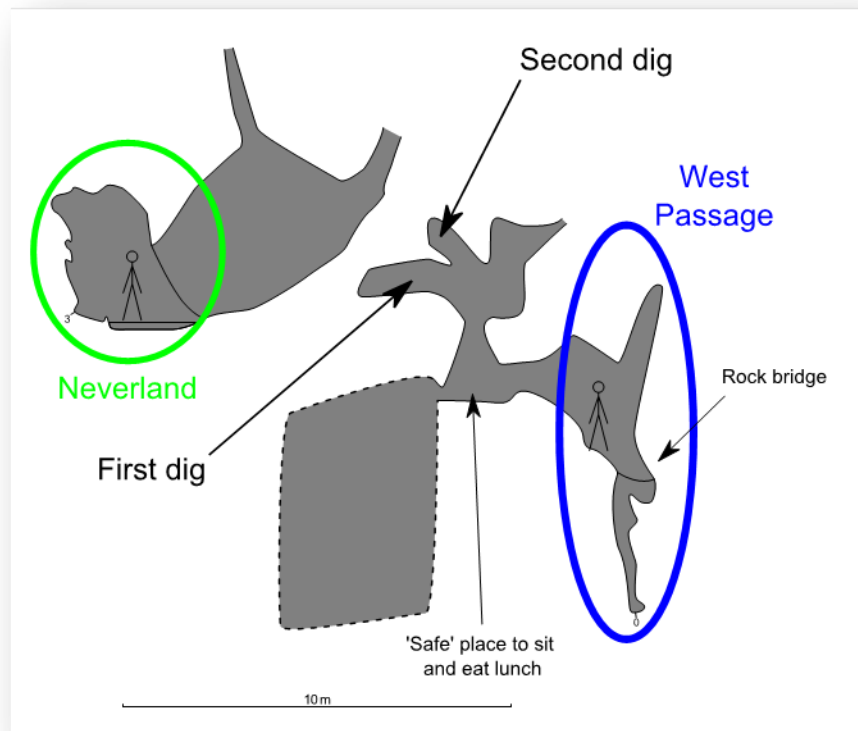
Spurred on by the results of the survey, Mike and I were back digging on

2<sup>nd</sup> April 2011:

"After an initial abortive attempt to go up from the end of the rift, we eventually came back a couple of metres. Remember the original flat roof at head-height? From there looking south there is an alcove 45-degrees upwards. This looks promising, but from the survey is too far North. Then ducking under and into the rift, there is a similar alcove, with a height just a little lower than the flat roof, but perhaps 2m further south than the flat-roof alcove. It's not quite as far South as the end of the rift, but is about 1.5m higher so appeared to be the better option.

We made really good progress opening the entrance to the alcove, using four batteries and about 60 caps, mostly by cleaving off lovely dark-grey limestone from the left-hand wall. It's now possible to stand up and get shoulders into the alcove and touch the roof. Probably just one further digging session is needed to further widen the alcove to facilitate digging access to the roof.

The roof looks so much like the underside of that stall boss in Neverland! There's a fist-sized hole, and the air remained very fresh!



**Figure 2 – Cross-section before digging commenced (based on the 2013 closed-loop survey)**

Leica Disto A3. Component part of the DistoX



The DistoX is an electronic combined compass, clinometer and laser distance meter with Bluetooth connectivity to a Windows PDA. The two instruments together effectively provide a "total station" for the cave surveyor. The DistoX daughter board was "mass produced" by Beat Heeb, Switzerland, and available on mail order for a short period from 2009. A Leica Disto A3 laser range finder also had to be purchased. Opening the unit to install the daughter board invalidated the manufacturer's warranty! Beat Heeb is working on a replacement product, which is dependent on successful interworking with the currently available Leica disto. The world awaits with baited breath!

*Based on the survey, we could have as little as just a few tens of centimetres of stal to break through. We plan to continue cleaving off the limestone from the wall to weaken the stal; until we try, it's really not clear how easy or hard breaking through will be. Also, we will need to widen the hole for human access once broken through. So, I'm guessing at least two-more trips to break through, plus one further to widen for reasonable access.*

*Of course we may find the survey error is unfavourable, in which case we may have a further metre of digging to go!"*

*7<sup>th</sup> May 2011: "Mike and I continued with widening the entrance to the alcove. I felt tired and hungry so offered Mike first go while I sat and had lunch. Sitting on our two boxes at the foot of the chimney was uncomfortable today. Every bang was accompanied by a shower of rocks, one or two big enough to be of concern (2" or more in size). Mike seemed to be making good progress by the amount of debris accumulating at my feet (mostly on my feet). After what felt like an interminable age, Mike called a halt and offered me the baton (drill). He'd make excellent progress widening the entrance to the alcove, but it was clear that we would need to widen this more than I had realised. I continued where Mike had left off, and both Mike and I had another go each*

*using up our four batteries and about 70 caps (these are the "long" black ones - very powerful).*

*By the end we had significantly widened the entrance of the alcove, but only made a little progress into it. I now think we will need 2-3 more trips if we continue to use caps; partly because without removing a lot more rock, we will end up setting the caps at a very shallow angle in order to have room to hit the firing pin. I think we might now need to migrate to snappers, if only to save having to remove so much rock!"*

*I managed to buy ten snappers for £50, and got set up with appropriate 12mm drill bits and dry sand for compacting. For the firing cable, I used an old 20m long lawnmower cable that I happened to have lying around. I'd never used snappers before, so this was going to be a bit of an experiment.*

*4<sup>th</sup> June 2011: "Capping & snappers with Mike. Broke the firing pin during the first battery. We drilled at arm's length two 12mm holes into the right-hand side of that stal hole, and fired off two snappers. Too smoky to see what happened. I wired them in parallel - is that correct?"*

*On a subsequent trip into the cave, I visited the rift to see what had happened. The results were rather disappointing, with one of the snappers not having fired, and the other*

*having mostly just blown out of its hole with little damage, though there was a crack in the rock. I was advised that wiring in series is best practice reducing the chance of a snapper not firing.*

*3<sup>rd</sup> September 2011: "Capping with Mike Richardson. Used up the last of the big black caps, then continued with small ones. Made good progress initially, but then hit a stubborn bit of rock. During the second drill battery, I managed to snap the firing pin, again. We placed three snappers around the stall shelf on the left hand side. Wired in series this time. A very satisfying Boom! Too smoky of course to see anything. It was a long hard trip out. 7 hours."*

*Once again, the results were very disappointing, with the snappers having only put cracks into the rock which remained solidly in place.*

*By 2012, we'd accepted that we needed a bigger hammer. Fortunately Andrew Atkinson, who had accompanied us on our first trip and helped with the Neverland survey, had now not only acquired a bang certificate, but was willing to use it. But it meant we needed to buy yet another drill bit (12mm x 3' long), which Mike kindly paid for.*

*On Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2012 Andrew, Mike and I headed into the cave with the 3' long drill and some lengths of cord. We put in five holes. It was hard work, drilling at arm's length at an angle upwards into the ceiling. One light hearted moment happened when Mike was drilling and he suddenly got covered by a spray of water. He pulled back the drill to keep it dry, and a jet of water, like a tap running, spewed out of his 12mm hole. There was a tense split second, as images of "77 hours" flooded our minds, and then reality took hold - he hadn't just broken into the Mendip aquifer - and we both laughed. Mike was soaked! The tap reduced to a dribble and then a drip. Eventually we handed the holes over to Andrew to set the cord while Mike and I tidied up and prepared to evacuate. The surprise was that Andrew deemed my short length of lawnmower cable more than adequate as a firing cable, the constricted double bends of the rift satisfying the criteria for blast protection. So it was with slight trepidation that we stood on the rock bridge back in West Passage, the*

entrance to the rift just behind us, as Andrew completed the wiring, and with mouth open, pressed the button. There were no burst ear drums, no nose bleeds, no noticeable shock wave – though the boom reverberated up and down the passage a few times much to our satisfaction. But we were a bit close, and was that a smell of cordite? It was time to make a hasty exit.

Meanwhile, Biff Frith had made me a capping set all of my own, complete with all the latest developments: a 7.5mm hardened pin, a 7.5mm blast collar and washer (to avoid those embarrassing, and I'm told painful, finger perforations), and a handle with bolt for easy removal of the pin.

3-Mar-12 debris removal *"Mike's sick with his children's cold, so I go in with Tim and Peat and three guests from Combined Forces: Tracey, Steve and Connor. Tracey has an injured arm (operation 6 weeks ago), but out-caves everyone. We visit last month's bang site. I'm impressed. The two right hand shot holes have blown out completely, removing a cubic foot of rock and leaving another couple of cubic foot of shattered rock that easily picks-out by hand. The three left hand holes have shattered the rock, but a pillar of stal on the left has held firm. I let Peat have a look and he takes most of the easy pickings, then I try a couple of caps. Peat, Tim and Connor leave us for Wall Street;*

*Steve and I continue to pick away at the hole. It is difficult reaching up into the hole with two hands - the rift is just too narrow. We both manage to place caps that make it almost impossible to strike with a hammer. Two are left unfired in holes. Eventually, concerned for Tracey sitting idle below, and thwarted by the lack of progress from caps we call it a day. Perhaps four or five cubic feet of rock have been removed, including a large volume of mud sitting behind the left-hand pillar of stal. I reach in with a stick to prod the ceiling I can't see behind the column. I feel a hole, up to the left. Good news - we have something to follow. Next time only snappers or more bang will be of any use."*

I left my new shiny pin and handle in the cave expecting to return the following month.

The summer passed. I surveyed AWOL Aven, and Kev Speight discovered, and I surveyed, Muddy Hell. It was not until Oct 2012 that I managed

a return trip to Link Rift, this time with Peat Bennett and a handful of snappers. I think I placed four of them, my intention to bring down that stal pillar left by the bang. But it was not to be – once again the snappers made a big noise, but did very little to the rock. My shiny pin was rusty (sorry Biff), and came out with me for some TLC at home.

The following month (3<sup>rd</sup> November 2012) I returned with Andrew and now with the additional help of Ali Moody, John Cooper and Pete Buckley. Mike leant us his batteries and waterproof case. In addition to cord, Ali had two sticks. In fact, the sticks proved to be the cheapest method so far at under £5 each. The sticks are about 1" in diameter and 6" long. It meant we needed yet another (fatter) drill bit – this time Andrew stumped up the cash for the largest drill bit he could find. Drilling at the back of the dig was very difficult. I was very glad of Ali's help – her slim stature and iron physique enabled her to chimney into the narrow slot and actually do something useful, whereas when I tried my arms were pinned uselessly against rock while my legs kicked uselessly against thin air. I retreated, leaving the hard stuff to Andrew and Ali while I chewed the fat with John and Pete in the relative comfort, if not a bit chilly, West Passage. Eventually the two emerged, Andrew complaining of a headache from the fumes while stripping off a pair of surgical gloves – what the hell is this stuff? Andrew finished the wiring while the rest of us packed up, and much to my consternation Ali legged it to the far end of the passage before Andrew pushed the button. Once again I was left wondering about the wisdom of this peculiar substance; but not for long before my thoughts were shattered by the familiar woomph-boom-boom-boom of the bang.

Fed up of dragging drill and batteries in and out of the cave, and inspired by Gonzo who leaves his drill in East Passage for months on end, I had come prepared with 250g of dry silica gel conveniently held in a vapour permeable white pop-sock. These are a slightly unusual addition to my cave clothing purchases, but rather than raid my wife's stockings (again), I had found these socks readily available on eBay for a pound or so. Appreciatively, I cleaned off the beloved capping handle and drill as best I could, sealed them in the Peli case with their pop sock, and left them to

fend for themselves for the next month on the rock bridge in West Passage.

Two weeks later, on the 17<sup>th</sup> November, Andrew borrowed my batteries and another 250g of dry silica gel, and with the assistance of Si Flower, returned with a massive six sticks. Perhaps the fumes had really affected his sanity last time? I'd bought another Peli case off eBay – because Mike's leaked – and leant this to Andrew to keep my stuff dry. It all came out soaked; the air vent valve on the case had fallen off, leaving a 3mm diameter hole through the otherwise waterproof and indestructible case. Of course I complained to the guy on eBay, but when he offered to drive over to my place from Maidenhead with a replacement, I forgave him and fixed it with a 3mm screw.

I was busy caving with the children that day, and when Andrew came back to the cottage in the evening he reported that the stal boss had been converted to snow by the previous bang!

#### *The breakthrough*

We were really rocking – on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2012 I returned with Andrew, Ali, John, Pete, Mike and Bill Chadwick. Ali had brought another six sticks. This time my makeshift repair of the new Peli case proved waterproof and everything came in dry. And the silica gel was working wonders too – the drill and capping handle were bone dry and free from rust. In the rift, after removing spoil, and craning my neck in a rather awkward way, it was just possible to see through a small (arm sized) hole into black void. Ali placed the sticks strategically, and we retreated.

Xmas and New Year 2013 came and went. Meanwhile Tim Francis had taken a look at the dig, and (kindly) reported that more work was required. By now Andrew had gone off on extended vacation (again), this time to South America, so I planned a trip with Ali for 19<sup>th</sup> January, but heavy snow fell and we pulled out at the last minute. Plans were rescheduled for the member's weekend on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, with Ali, Pete and John, and armed with yet another six sticks. Others were in the cave: Tim and Peat were digging in East Passage, Bill had a guest group.

*"We expected this to be our last bang trip. Ali climbed into the dig and started to pull out lots of broken rock, and*



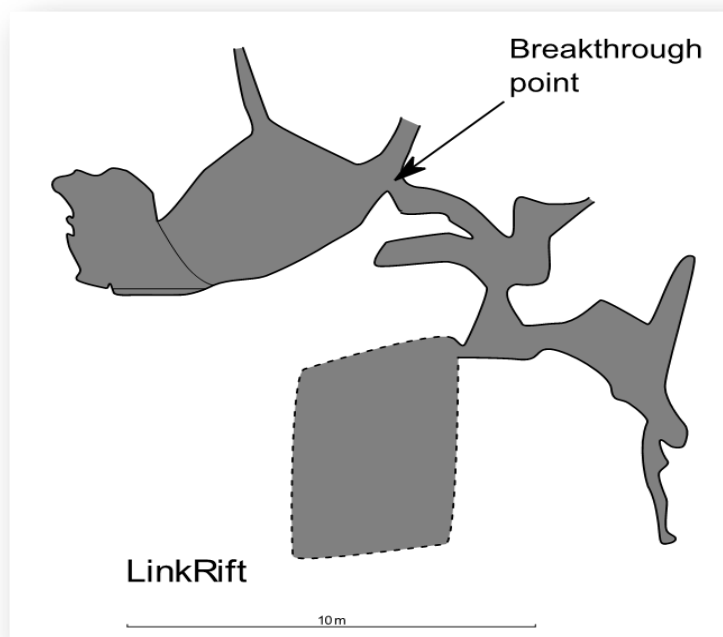
then called back to say she thought she be able to squeeze through. I climbed up after her, and without further ado watched her feet slip through the hole with a crash as she slid head first down the slope into Neverland. Within moments a smiling face peered back at me through the hole and now from the other side she was able to pull out more and more broken rock, passing it back to me, and making the hole big enough for me. Within a few minutes I was standing in Neverland."

It was exhilarating and a little strange to be back there. Much to my surprise, even this far in, the walls and floor are still covered in white crystal. Previously, having come through Neverland, I think we had become blind to it; but coming here straight from West Passage was a culture shock. So much for a conservation bypass; this was hardly a bypass, but would be an accessible route to permit tourist trips into a stunning section of cave and to see the Pork Pies.

#### **The conclusion of the survey**

I had already arranged a return trip the following week on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2013. With Richard Carey, Bill Chadwick and guest Alistair, we visited Neverland via Link Rift. I completed the survey from Neverland to West Passage with some help from Richard – thank you. Meanwhile, the others (also with Richard's help) taped a path down to Curtain Climb, fixed a bolt and ladder above Curtain Climb, and finished off with a tourist trip to Pork Pies. The route of the path has been chosen to localise wear to a single path and reduce the chance of touching walls or low ceilings. We used rawlbolt wire ties to fix the tape in places, in one or two cases, better placement could be achieved with stainless pigtailed in the floor, but it's good enough for now.

The survey closed the loop between West Passage and Neverland and answered the long posed question on the accuracy of the DistoX West Passage survey. It was indeed 1m over a loop of 264m, or 0.37%, and our dig had been about 1.5m long. Unusually, most of the error was in the vertical plane – West Passage was higher in relation to Neverland than previously indicated, and as can be seen in the cross section shown in Figure 2,



**Figure 3 – Cross-section of the Link Rift breakthrough**

above, our first dig would in fact have been the shorter option, had we pursued it.

#### **The Future – Link Too**

Access to the deeper reaches of Neverland from Link Rift requires squeezing past a massive bulbous crystal stalagmite just before Funnel Chamber, and then climbing over Curtain Climb. These beautiful features will be trashed if digging trips are permitted via this route. Another bypass is needed. Luckily a potential option exists from the lower un-surveyed passage in Neverland that doubles back from the Traverses to underneath Funnel Chamber. It was believed to connect with the West Passage sump tube, and to prove it, we attempted a voice connection on 6<sup>th</sup> April.

*"2013-04-06 UFS Neverland Link Too: Me, Peat, Bill, Thomas Leung (OUCC); Richard, Tim Rose (Wessex)*

*Took in batteries with the plan of popping the boulder in Chuckle's Joke; but discovered that the only drill bits were 12mm. So we left the batteries in the cave with the drill (which has been there for some months now). Completed the missing survey profiles for the Link Rift survey; then attempted the voice*

*connection with Peat and Bill – nothing. From West Passage, the second link was thought to be the sump tube with an inconvenient low ceiling about 2m in. After a further 2m is a boss on the left hand wall constricting access to a pool of water, which itself is perhaps 2m long and seemingly ending in a sump. But this is perched about a metre above the floor of West Passage, and I soon realised that much of the floor of the tube was rock and clay infill. I set to with a chisel and was soon making good progress removing the floor. After an hour, hunger got the better of me and I went back to Link Rift where I'd left my lunch. There was still no sign of the others, so after eating my sandwiches and all my chocolate, I collected a couple of crowbars and went back to the sump. I continued digging out the floor and in the end made a channel about 1' wide and 15" deep, from West Passage to the stal floor, a distance of about 2m. By now my arms were jelly, so I made my way back to Link Rift and thankfully, as I turned the corner of West Passage, I saw the lights of the others who had just emerged after an exploration in Neverland."*

The low-level tube in Neverland is very constricted. Tim and Peat have pushed through the stal-fattened rift-walls below the Never-

land Traverses into the small chamber below Funnel Chamber, and Peat has pushed a second squeeze, twice, and twice had to remove clothing to get back out! A second option from the chamber appears to point down towards West Passage. Tim has now proposed a new theory that a connection may exist from here to a small tube in the ceiling of West Passage, just above the entrance to the sump tube. Tim described this in an email to the group on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2013 as follows:

*“On the 4th May, Peat, Ben and I started to piece together the possibility of a second Neverland to West Passage connection. From below, the focus has been on gaining access to the West Passage Sump. The idea is to excavate the floor and drain the water back into West Passage. Note that the sump does actually dry out to a muddy tube in the summer months. Up top in Neverland we re-familiarised ourselves with the tight passages that lie underneath Funnel Chamber, accessed by a hole in the floor under the traverses. See below for a sketch of the area. This is an updated version of a drawing I did back in 2010 now including last weekend’s observations. The passages outlined in red dots sit underneath Curtain Climb and Funnel Chamber, with a visual connection to the latter.*

*New things in Neverland:*

*after some hammering of the flow-*

*stone Peat managed to push a ridiculously tight squeeze at the back end of the chamber. Beyond he entered a muddy tube which continues off into the distance but would need digging out to pursue for any distance. Not an enticing prospect but it does have air flow.*

*In the floor of the chamber we were able to look along a small drain hole noted back in 2010. This descends quite steeply and clearly takes the water that sometimes runs into the chamber. Indeed I have seen the chamber filled up with water. There is a big draft entering here, one assumes from West Passage. The tube will need banging if that’s the route but it does look extremely promising from this side.*

*Hammering sounds from the West Passage diggers were clearly heard coming from the Western side of the chamber. We think we also heard Lee shouting. Bill, Lee and Thomas below did not hear our shouts.*

*New things West Passage:*

*There was only the odd drip falling out of the roof above West Passage Sump but the sump was still full.*

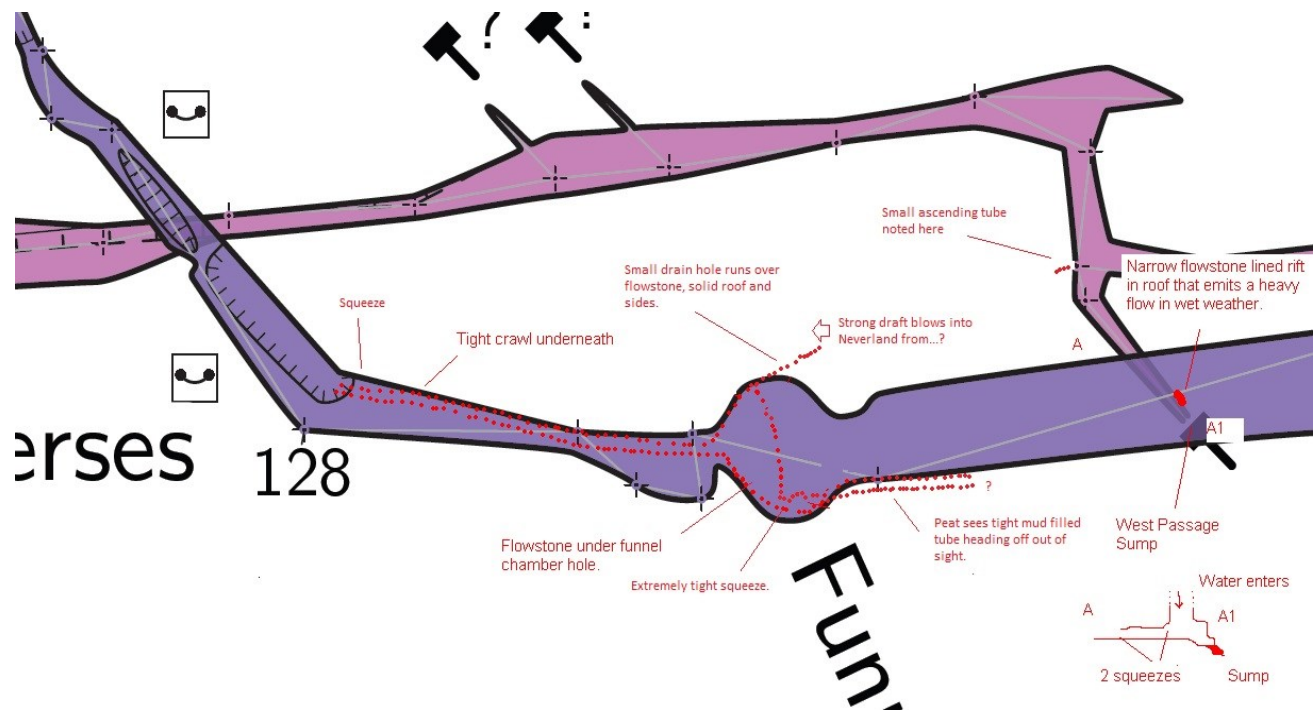
*Further digging out of the floor should drain the sump back into West Passage or as a minimum allow us to divert the heavy splash from the roof.*

*A small ascending tube was noted on the right hand wall just at the entrance of the sump passage (marked on sketch). It looks remarkably similar to the drain tube in the floor of Neverland referred to above although I’m surprised they didn’t hear us shouting if it is indeed the same one.*

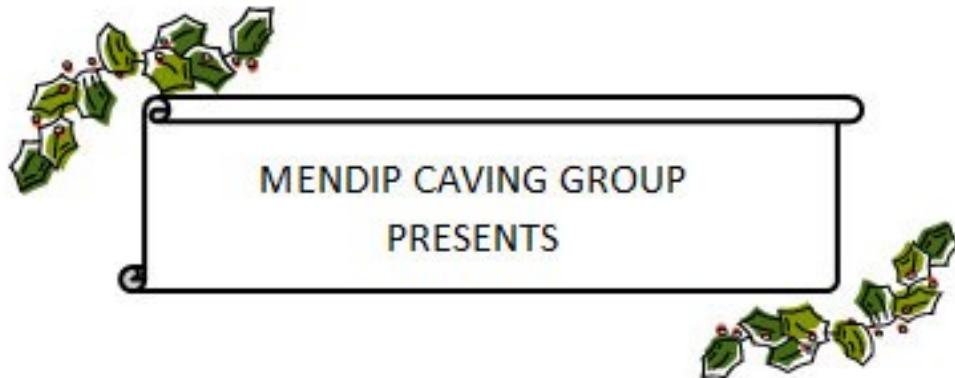
*Next steps are to complete an accurate survey of all the various bits and pieces to inform the best digging route. A few squeezes in Neverland will need some caps.”*

*My next project is to cap the low level tube to permit access to normal sized cavers (that would be me); and survey the route from the Traverses. Hopefully, I will be able to demonstrate that the two tubes point towards each other, and measure the distance.*

**Ben Cooper**



**Figure 4 – Tim’s sketch of the lower Neverland passages**



A Festive  
Christmas Buffet

**Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December**

**From 7pm**

**Approx. £5 per head**



Contact Linda Milne to get your name on the guest list  
[Linda.milne@btinternet.com](mailto:Linda.milne@btinternet.com) or tel. 07767 267849

# HIDDEN EARTH 2013

MONMOUTH LEISURE CENTRE

My first experience of H E started on the Thursday night in the Hunters where I was accosted by Buddy and talked into getting up at 8am to head over to the Wessex to help them load up the vans. At 11am!! on the Friday we started the loading.

Saturday I arrived in Monmouth, have parted with £6.20 for the crossing and taking in the Wye Valley scenery en route. Parking was a little bit of an issue, but I eventually found a space near the leisure centre.



The Hidden Earth Welcome in Lecture Hall 1 (Photo TH)



Exhibition Hall (Photo TH)

After a quick look round the exhibition main hall, I went to the first of the four lecture halls for the welcome and introduction.

It was noted that the vast majority of the attendees were above 30 and that clubs should try and do more to encourage the next generation of cavers. Perhaps through, the "Adopt a caving club, link to a student caving club," and through the try caving website. We were then treated to the welcome video the Joy of Caving, put to the words by a poem by Kei Miller.

Click or go to the link to the right to see it, well worth a watch!

I attended a couple of lectures including one about Cave; flow markings and scallops given by David Checkley.

David discussed factors such as Velocity of water, Wall roughness, Temperature and viscosity, and Water saturation affecting the amount of rock dissolved and the size of the scalloping.

I also attended Andy Farrant's lecture; "How old are Britains Caves?"

Andy discussed dating techniques; dating things in the cave to find the minimum age of the cave. These could be archeological artefacts, Flora and fauna, Sediment or Stal. Bones of animals give a good guide too. Hippo Bones give an age of roughly 120k years old. Mammoth 70-90k. Bison 60-70k. Rhino 24-60k. Horse, deer and human 24k to present.

Andy talked of Paleomagnetic techniques, looking at the reversals of the magnetic poles! (GB has evidence of the last reversal 786,000 years ago). Radioactive dating from Uranium samples and even using Cosmogenic Isotopes dating the Cosmic rays which have affected atoms in quartz washed into a cave.

Amongst the other highlights of the event were the surveying and cave

### The Joy Of Caving

<http://youtu.be/L7WVTItvwM>

photography exhibits and competitions, the chance to scuba dive in the pool, demonstrations and numerous stands, stalls and opportunities to spend money on new gear! By all accounts (UKCaving.Com) the social side was pretty lively too.

TH



Andy Sparrow demonstrates SRT on minimal kit (Photo TH)

Upcoming Trips and Events



Curtains in Manor Farm  
(Photo TH)

1/2/3	November	Members' Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
2	November	St Cuthbert's Swallet	Contact Jeremy Gilson <a href="mailto:mendipcaver@googlemail.com">mendipcaver@googlemail.com</a>
2	November	Sidcot Swallet	Contact Andrea Russe <a href="mailto:andrearusse@rocketmail.com">andrearusse@rocketmail.com</a>
16	November	Upper Flood	Contact Richard Carey <a href="mailto:richardmcarey@btinternet.com">richardmcarey@btinternet.com</a>
16	November	<b>JRat Digging Awards</b>	The Hunters Inn
6/7/8	December	Members' Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
7	December	TBA	
7	December	<b>Festive Christmas Buffet</b>	Contact Linda Milne <a href="mailto:linda.milne@btinternet.com">linda.milne@btinternet.com</a>
14	December	Swildon's Hole Black Hole	Contact Richard Carey <a href="mailto:richardmcarey@btinternet.com">richardmcarey@btinternet.com</a>

The MCG  
Newsgroup is  
another place to  
hear about future  
trips:

[http://  
uk.groups.yahoo.c  
om/group/mendip-  
caving-group/](http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/mendip-caving-group/)

Above ,are the upcoming  
trips for the next 2  
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](http://www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk)

[p.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:Tom@Hotmail.com)



Formations  
in Upper  
Flood  
(Photo TH)

## September's Yorkshire Trip By Karen Fendley



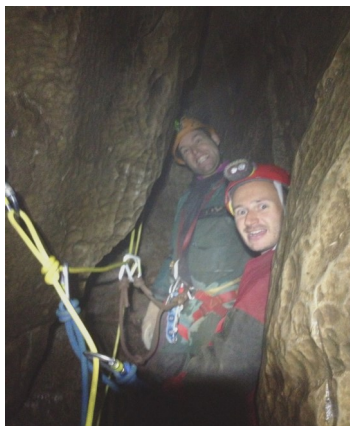
Off to Lancaster Hole!

(Photo TH)

The latest trip to Yorkshire was undertaken on 20 September 2013 when an intrepid 11 people met at Inglesport to descend into Lost John's (Friday) and then Lancaster Hole (Saturday).

Those on the trip were Jeremy and Angela Gilson, Debbie Lambert, Alan McBride, Mark Hill, Kev Speight, Russ Porter, Dave Ball, Steve, Tom Harrison, Hayley Clark, Ed Waters and myself.

After a large cooked breakfast there followed a bit of organis-



Russ Porter and Tom in Lost Johns

(Photo Dave Ball)

ing as the permit only allowed 3 cars at the parking point. The group split into two groups with Kev, Mark, Ed and Tom going ahead to rig Centipede route. The remainder rigged the Cathedral route. Jeremy went first to rig and then Russ went next and instructed me down through Vestry and onto Cathedral. They were both fine. A little bit of caving later and we all got to Dome junction. Candle and Shistol (what DOES that mean??!) were next and again, with instruction, tackled with comfort. I stopped at the start of Battleaxe while the others went on (something for me to do next time!). Russ and Dave went on with Debbie and Alan to do the traverse, Valhalla and the final 30 with the intention of meeting up with Kev, and Tom. Ed had met up with Mark and they had done a bit of caving too.

At this point, Jeremy and I went back up Shistol and caved through to the bottom of Centipede. A good prusuck back up,

followed by Mud Pot and Hammer where we met with Ed and Mark. Ed and I then went back through the traverses and out to the surface. I was so high I wanted to go straight back in again!

Fortunately every one was out (complete with all the rigging) in time and ended up in the pub where the group took up most of the eating area! Food and drink later, everyone retired happy and tired to sleep. The



Dave and Jeremy

(Photo Dave Ball)

Bunk room was cozy (!!), warm but comfortable.

The next day started overcast which was a good thing as it meant I went caving again rather than walking over the hills! The group was reduced with Kev returning home (via another cave on his own? And Ed and Hayley also leaving)

This next cave was Lancaster Hole. Two pitches, the first of

which was the big pitch. No problems!! This cave involved more caving and a lot of mud so I didn't feel it was quite so exhilarating as the previous days caving .

A slight diversion into the side of the cave to look at the Collonades (absolutely amazing!) and then it was onto Fall Pot (?). I spent a while trying to get off the bolt (lots of very good instruction and the whispered conversation of how to effect a rescue!). If I had realised that all I had to do was to



Karen admires the Collonades, Lancaster Hole (Photo TH)



Karen in Bull Pot, Lancaster Hole (Photo TH)

put my foot in the connecting loop from the previous bolt, I would have been off the bolt a lot quicker!!! A quick drop and a bit of caving and the others went on down to the stream way. I took the opportunity to have 5 minutes in the cave by myself and then it was back up the way we had come. I managed the pitch that I had had problems with earlier with no problems. Zooming up the big pitch and it was out to the top again.

A quick drive back, shower and it was into the pub again for a couple of us for yet another large meal and many drinks for all of us!

Sunday again dawned misty and overcast but it was still hard to leave to come home. Another good weekend with very good friends.

Karen Fendley



Day 2—Ready to descend into Lancaster Hole

(Photo TH)

# MCG go wild in Andalucia 2013

## By Richard Carey



The Caving Team

(Photo Chris Binding)

Team flying from Bristol: Chris Binding, Jack Overhill, Dave Barrow, Mike Waterworth, Mike Moxon, Leonie Wo0dward, Ross Wheeler, Josh Bratchley, Andrea Russe and Richard Carey.

Digging team flying to Gibraltar: Miguel Tome, Tim Francis and Peat Bennett.

Overland from Santander: Noel Cleave

25/8/13

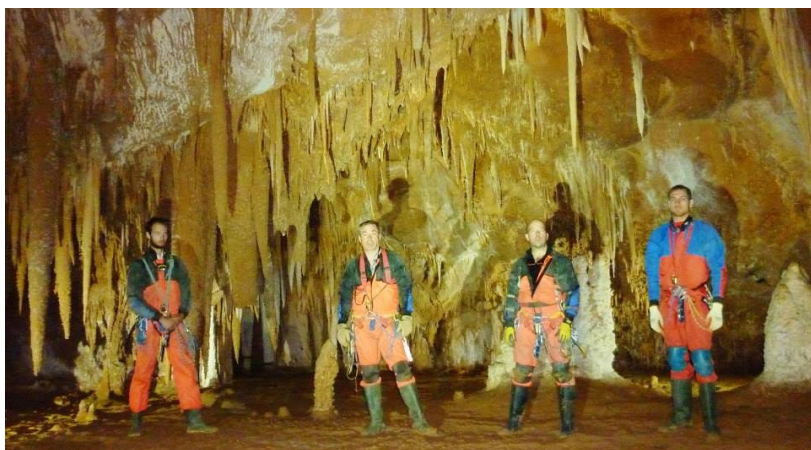
Rising at insane o'clock I travelled to Bristol airport to take the flight to Malaga. This went without too many problems and saw us safely to sunny Spain. Noel who had driven non-stop from Santander collected half the team whilst I drove the hire to Villaluenga. We arrived to find that Tim and Peat were already underground at Sumidero De la Olla. We kitted up and went to Sima de Villaluenga en masse. We only descended as far as the Boulder chamber which involved very airy 50m

pitch. Chris had incident which involved a freefalling camera nut but that is his story.

26/8/13 Sistema Republicano-Cabito

This is a monster trip as you are on

rope for almost its entirety. If you are not abseiling you are traversing reaching a depth of 198m before climbing up to the extensions. I went as far as Galeria Tanzania before deciding to return to the surface. A Fantastic day out.



Sala Giex Sima de Cacao

(Photo Chris Binding)





Ross rigging Sima De las Lepiotas (Photo Chris Binding)

#### 27/8/13 Sumidero de la Olla

This is a 1000ft deep cave and is covered in mud for almost all of it. Tim and Peat had explored it, Chris's team derigged to -100 and we completed the tackle removal. I would not be planning a return here.

#### 28/8/13 Sistema Hundidero- Gato

It appeared that our permit actually belonged to someone else but it was decided to risk the €200 fine and go for it. Fortunately nothing went awry.

#### 29/8/13 Sima de Cacao

This is the cave I had come to visit. This time I rigged the 97m entrance shaft. It is surprising how focussed you become when you are suspended 300ft above the floor. At -70m I swung over to the ledge to allow Chris to continue the rigging to descend to Sala Giex. This is a fantastic chamber with 20m organ pipes amongst the formations.

See Chris Binding's Andalucia short video at <http://youtu.be/b392L1kWjZl>

#### 30/8/13 Sima de Villaluenga

This time we did the Big pitch alternative and managed to find Chris's camera. Completely destroyed but the memory card was intact. Rather than 50m direct there are multiple pitches.

#### 31/8/13 Sima de Cacao

Ross had missed out on a previous trip having lent equipment to others so we decided to go again. It seems to be becoming a habit for me to come here twice. But the one hour walk yields amazing views and the cave is SO spectacular.

Sala Giex, Sima de Cacao (Photo Chris Binding)

We then moved from Villaluenga to Ronda and the caving did suffer as it Feria time. This said however much was done. There is a fantastic canyon that goes through the middle of Ronda that was descended courtesy of our hosts Pangea. There are quite a few videos on youtube. Although we had turned into tourists we visited Sima de las Lepiotas and Sumidero de la Nava. The accommodation at Villaluenga and Pangea in Ronda was very comfortable although the standard of the food seems to have dropped and I did feel a bit homesick for Navasilla. However that said it was a fine expedition and I must add that without Noel Cleave driving and transporting all the ropes it could not have happened so as Caving Secretary it falls to me to thank him publicly on behalf of the Mendip Caving Group.

Richard Carey



Relaxing at Pangea

(Photo Chris Binding)

# Mendip Caving Group - 60th Anniversary

The 60th Anniversary of the MCG and the celebratory dinner will be in April 2014. The cost for the evening is £26 with the optional coach £6.

**Places are limited.** Please Contact Richard Carey [richardmcarey@btinternet.com](mailto:richardmcarey@btinternet.com) to reserve your place including your intentions to use the coach or not. Thank you.



## 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY DINNER MENU\*

**Starter:** *Roasted butterscotch squash and sweet potato soup  
Grilled goat cheese, roasted peppers and mixed leaf salad*

**Main course:** *Roast Pork with apple sauce  
Home made steak and ale pie topped with puff pastry and gravy  
Aubergine bake*

**Pudding:** *Sticky toffee pudding with creamy custard  
Trio of sorbet*

*Tea, coffee, mints*



\*Subject to Change

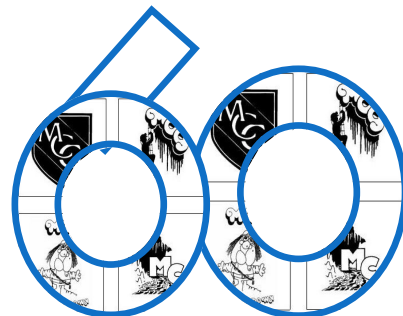
**Mendip Caving Group  
60 Year Anniversary  
AGM Dinner**

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

**On Saturday the 26th  
April 2014**



**The Venue—The Batch Country House, Lymsham**



# MENDIP NEWS



## Digging in Rod's Pot Puts MU5 out of date already!

The digging team from Cheddar Caving Club trying to connect Rod's Pot to Drunkards Hole, put bang amongst the pigeons and upset the caving cart in September, by finding approximately 40 m of new passage, leaving 41 m left in the mission to create a Bath/Rod's/Drunkards system.

Andy Sparrow at Hidden Earth described the breakthrough into a "Sizable Cavity" now cheekily named

## Reads Choke Bypass Connects Browne Stewart Series to Zed Alley

Digging by the Wessex at Reads has recently connected the Browne Stewart series to Zed Alley. Bypassing the choke that nearly killed two in 1994 and put one caver off caving for life.

The connection has allowed a diver to check the terminal sump and access to Dig in Lads luck Main drag and Alzheimer's pool, so named as it's a place you'd rather forget!

## Upper Canada Cave, Canada Combe

Is this the lost Hutton cavern? Lots of bones and teeth aged between 30,000 and 200,000 years old have been found in back fill. Initials on one of the wall's are believed to be that from 1763 of a son of a miner. The Dig is described as a Labyrinth and the next stage is to bring in a machine to empty the pit to check nothing has been missed.

## Spider Hole

23m of shaft has been dug and 5 Tonnes of Cement used in shoring the shaft as team head toward Goughs!!!

-News from Mendip Roundup at Hidden Earth 2013

the Erratum Extension. The new void has a drafting rift 15-20ft high, where future digging is likely to take place.

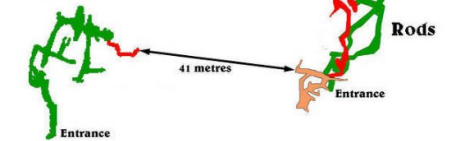
There was a casualty during the digging with Chris Smith taking a knock to the nose.

Having helped to shift spoil down there on one occasion before Christmas, I can attest to the amount of hard work that has gone in to the dig, having witnessed the sizable stack of spoil piled up back then! TH

**2013**

**Erratum Extension**

**Drunkards**



**Rod's to Drunkards (Nearly)**  
Image courtesy of Andy Sparrow

There's a new website about the land recently fenced at Blackmoor, here: [www.charterhouseminingreserve.org.uk](http://www.charterhouseminingreserve.org.uk)

## Sludge Pit Reopened From Chris Binding

"Long considered an ideal introductory ladder and line trip, SPH was always a classic "gem", with a bit of everything you love about Mendip Caving, and even a handful of places where you can stand up. Re-opened recently after a 30+ year closure, following its purchase by an erstwhile Mendip Caver, David Nicholl, SPH offers a good half day of challenge, navigation refreshment and exploration - effectively the cave is in two parts - the eastern side, after descending the pitch, is a series of branches, mostly dead-end, but some which require caution and a good amount of effort - and the western quarter which contains the bulk of the cave; there is a maze - which creates some enjoyable route-finding adventures - and some rewarding gnarly interconnecting passages: SPH is also an excellent primer for ladder and line as the short pitch (bolted with 4 p-anchors - 2 for an approach traverse and 2 over the pitch itself) provides a free-hang with a good stance for getting on and off at the top.

Access is via a CSCC key and all visitors are required to write in the log book stowed at the entrance and pay £1 each into an accompanying collection barrel chained to the wall; BCA insurance is also a pre-requisite. Some of the passages are quite grabby so you might not want to wear your bestest most expensive oversuit!

There was a short video (less than 15 minutes) shown at Hidden Earth, filmed at Sludge Pit Hole, link here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JOp7umClvD0>

If you are planning a visit you will find a useful survey here: <http://www.lancock.co.uk/mcra/live/surveys/Nine%20Barrows%20Swallet.pdf> "

## Mendip Underground 5 - Rob Taviner

Fourteen years have elapsed since the last edition of Mendip Underground, and in that time cave exploration beneath the Mendip Hills has taken several dramatic leaps forward.

Available November 2013

Full colour  
34 New entries  
485 pages  
Hardback

Special pre-order price  
**£20**  
(excl p&p)

For more information and to order **YOUR** copy visit  
[mendipunderground.co.uk](http://mendipunderground.co.uk)

Now, following a collaborative effort lasting three years, a new edition is finally about to roll off the presses. Lavishly illustrated, with full surveys and dozens of specially commissioned photographs, this thoroughly revised publication contains no less than thirty-four new entries, plus innumerable extensions, including of course the big three of Upper Flood Swallet, Charterhouse Cave and Reservoir Hole.

Also included are a few well known caves and mines omitted from earlier editions, plus a handful of sites previously considered lost to Mendip caving, but which have since been re-discovered. These include Axbridge Hill Cavern, Balch Cave, Banwell Ochre Caves, Cloford Quarry Big Cave, Fernhill Cave, Loxton Cavern, Sally's Rift and Triple Hole, among others.

And that's by no means all. As part of a thorough revision of the text, every single entry has been revisited and checked for accuracy, as a result of which, many, including the ever popular Swildons Hole, Eastwater Cavern and Goatchurch Cavern, have been either heavily revised and expanded, or entirely rewritten. Several other entries, including Rhino Rift, Hunters Hole and Thrupe Lane Swallet, have been updated to reflect more modern caving techniques, particularly in regard to their popularity for SRT.

Mendip Underground 5 by Alan Gray, Rob Taviner and Richard Witcombe

To cater for the vast number of new additions and alterations, the format has been upgraded to a full colour, hardback publication, 485 pages long. This not only enables larger and much clearer maps and surveys to be included, but also allows for rigging guides and SRT Topos, both of which appear here for the first time.

***“ for a limited time period the MCRA is happy to offer those who pre-order their copies the discounted price of £20.”***

### ***New Caves***

***Axbridge Hill Cavern***  
***Bath Swallet***  
***Caine Hill Shaft***  
***Carcass Cave***  
***Gibbets Brow Shaft***  
***Hunters Lodge Inn Sink***  
***Loxton Cavern***  
***Ore's Close Folly***  
***Rose Cottage Cave***  
***Spider Hole***  
***Templeton***  
***Thrupe Swallet***  
***Upper Canada Cave***  
***Withybrook Slocker?***

Mendip Underground will retail at £25 and as usual the proceeds will go towards financing future MCRA publications, including a thoroughly revised History of Mendip Caving and a detailed guide to the underground quarries beneath Bath and Wiltshire. However for a limited time period the MCRA is happy to offer those who pre-order their copies the discounted price of £20. To reserve your copies go to [www.mendipunderground.co.uk](http://www.mendipunderground.co.uk). Please note that all prices exclude P&P.

The book is currently with the printers and fingers crossed it will be back in time for the JRat Digging Award, where they will also be available at the introductory price. The award takes place this year on Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> November, at the Hunters.

(STOP PRESS) Mike Moxon reports that the book maybe delayed and is unlikely to be available for sat 16th. Check with the MU website for more information.

### **Known Caves New to MU**

Balch Cave  
 Banwell Ochre Caves  
 Cloford Quarry Big Cave  
 Fernhill Cave  
 Grebe Swallet Mine  
 Murhill Gull Caves?  
 Rushing Farm Pot??  
 Sallys Rift  
 Swiss Valley Cave  
 Triple Hole

### ***SRT Caves***

***Hunters Hole***  
***Mangle Hole***  
***Rhino Rift***  
***Star Shaft***  
***Thrupe Lane Swalle***

### **Major Extensions**

Charterhouse Cave  
 Eastwater Cavern  
 Manor Farm Swallet  
 Pierre's Pot  
 Rod's Pot  
 Upper Flood  
 Wigmore Swallet??  
 Wookey Hole

## MENDIP CAVING GROUP

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Mendip Caving Group is a registered Charity  
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Thanks to all the contributors.

Special Thanks to;

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



**Founded 1954**

**The Mendip Caving Group consists of some 120+ 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.)**

Please send any submissions, photos, comments, letters to Tom Harrison

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### MCG Committee 2013

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