



MCG NEWS

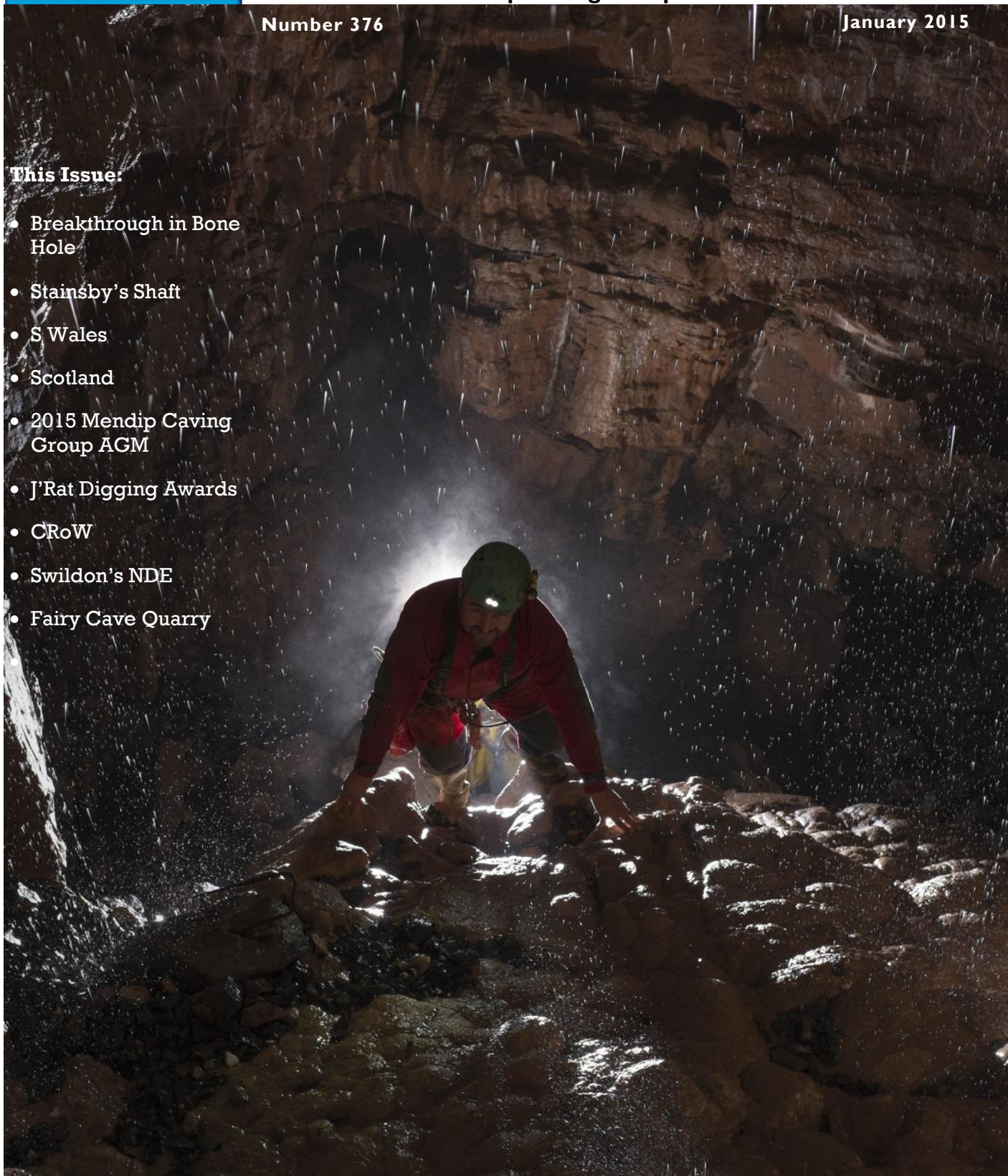
Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

Number 376

January 2015

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- Breakthrough in Bone Hole
- Stainsby's Shaft
- S Wales
- Scotland
- 2015 Mendip Caving Group AGM
- J'Rat Digging Awards
- CRoW
- Swildon's NDE
- Fairy Cave Quarry



HAPPY NEW YEAR INDEED!

EDITORIAL

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ON THE COVER: Ed ascending one of the pitches at Tunnel Cave. He was particularly pleased with being asked to spend a little time in this cooling shower in the interests of getting a photographic record.
By Andrew Horeckyj



(Left)
In the Breakthrough Squeeze of Happy New Year, Bone Hole.
By Graham Price

Happy New Year!

Hope everyone is enjoying 2015 so far. It has certainly been a good start to the year for the MCG in the digging stakes as a breakthrough was made in the "Old Cave" in Bone Hole. The "Old Cave" being that part of Bone which was dug in the 70s and not that dug most recently!

Another long running MCG dig, is that at Blackmoor/Stainsby's shaft. A Cornish mine with some karst features, some more 'ancient' mining workings and most intriguingly; stories and reports of a yet to be re-found Cavern. I've been investigating those reports to find out more.

The AGM is fast approaching and the AGM dinner details are announced in this quarter's Club News. Please save the date, the 18th April, for both the AGM and the Dinner.

We also have Club News with the goings on of the last few months. A story from Geoff Beale of how not to take on Sump 1 in Swildon's and a visit to Scotland reported by Group Secretary Brian Snell

Ever noticed the Plaque in the cottage toilet and wondered why it's there? Alan Mellon has the answer!

Andrew Horeckyj provides another fine set of photos from a very wet South Wales trip and I report on Chris Binding's continuing work in Fairy Cave Quarry, this time in Shatter Cave.

Finally we have a report from November's J'Rat Digging awards and the results and what is next after the BCA's CRoW survey.

Look forward to seeing everyone at the AGM, if not before then!

Tom Harrison January 2015
editor@mendipcavinggroup.co.uk

A "HAPPY NEW YEAR" AT BONE HOLE

By Tim Francis



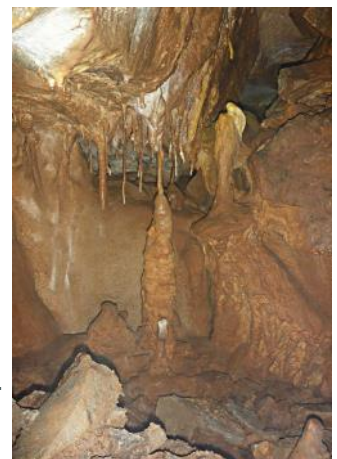
Tim and Ben have a poke in the floor in the new bit where a draft was detected

By TH

At the beginning of the year we have had a small but potentially very significant breakthrough in Bone Hole. And remarkably this was not in "New" Bone Hole but in the old cave. The first new stuff in a generation in the old cave. The extensions have been dubbed "Happy New Year". The next steps are to run a survey through the new bits and tie it back to the main survey. We can then work out what we have. It feels like we have moved out into a blank area off to the side of the known cave with potential at both ends and in the floor. And it all drafts very nicely. The relationship with the surface will be critical but it does seem that there is more cave to discover if we put in the effort. Bone Hole high up in Cheddar Gorge has always been a strange enigma. It's a fascinating place with a rich archaeological heritage. But, unlike the swallet caves on the top of the hill that we are more familiar with, Bone Hole is an extremely old cave which has long since been abandoned by active streams. Most of the cave is dry, and all ways on are blocked by enormous, ancient boulder chokes. There is very little actual passage and indeed no obvious 'way on'. So in essence it is very much a relic feature and at first glance of little interest to the cave digger. And yet there are indications that Bone Hole has more to reveal. The draft throughout the cave is almost always a strong one, what passages that do exist are sizeable in cross section and there is the tantalising knowledge that a river burst up through the floor of the gorge nearby during the 1968 flood.

For many decades Bone Hole has been the site of numerous MCG digs, most recently the Perforation Choke project that has created a "New Cave" off to the back of the entrance rift. Work continues here but it's a tough dig by anyone's standards. Projects in the old cave, most notably the Bottle Bank dig of the 1990s and the rusty scaffolding dig in the lower levels of the 1980s, never extended the cave by much. Despite this lack of reward recent discoveries in other caves in the gorge have kept us going back. Just in case.

The advantage of Bone Hole is that it is an easy cave and near to the road. So on Saturday 3rd January we didn't need to do too much to talk ourselves out of cold,



Ancient Stal By Graham Price

wet and grim alternative trips into Stainsby's and Upper Flood. After a brief sojourn at Stainsby's to drop off some scaffolding it was a merry band of cavers that assembled at Bone Hole later on in the morning. The rough plan was to look at anything that was deemed interesting but with a particular focus on two specific locations that myself and Peat spotted back in November. We had a hilti kit and a half with us plus a load of digging tools borrowed from the new cave so there was plenty to keep everyone amused. In particular I was keen to look at 'Site A', a tantalising spot in the roof of the mini round trip at the bottom of the cave not far from top of The Bottle Bank. I felt that this was the best one in that it emits the strongest draft. What we'd seen in November was a wet flowstone blockage just out of reach in a reasonably solid looking bit of choke. It's never been seen before because you tend to look down when climbing underneath and an awkward twisting squeeze needed to be negotiated to get a decent line of sight.

In the event it only took us a few hours to dig our way along a drafting tube in the choke through a mud, rock and stal blockage. Graham P, Mike M. and myself did the honours; the others were beavering away at the other interesting sites which we know now probably have a relationship with the new extension. The lowest dig was within the dropzone so we had to be a bit cautious when dropping rocks down a convenient chute. Some hilarity was had when I managed to seal myself in on the wrong side of a large boulder which needed some close hilti attention from the dig side to remove. The final breakthrough was through the flowstone window mentioned previously which only needed a bit of hammering for everyone to pass.

We have popped out into a classic piece of old Bone Hole passage. This consisted of a solid rift wall, a rubble slope, ancient stal, large passage and a draft. We half expected to see the bottom of the West Rift Ladder but no this was definitely a new lead. We all quickly piled in and went to explore. What we have is 20 – 30m of rift controlled passage, maybe more, with the breakthrough intercepting mid-way along. On the left, heading in, is a solid wall with a loose rubble slope on the right. Much of this rubble slope is rather loose but I imagine it will settle after a bit of traffic. Initially it looks like the passage is choked but a wriggle under a boulder leads to a bit more. It ends in a drafting blockage which from the presence of roots, dead flies and rabbit skeletons suggests that we are very close to the surface. In the floor are voids which look more promising. Behind the breakthrough point the rift can be followed upslope for a few metres. Again it is choked but it also drafts here at 'floor' level where the choke is a little more solid looking.

In summary we have a fine piece of passage which could well be quite an important interim find that leads to further discoveries. The draft certainly indicates that there must be more, and there is potential for both fossil and active cave somewhere under Bone Hole. "High Country" through to "The Frozen Deep" in Reservoir Hole, which is very similar to Bone Hole in terms of passage morphology, shows what might be out there. And of course somewhere down below us are the furthest reaches of Charterhouse.

Team: Ben Cooper, Tim Francis, Biff Frith, Tom Harrison, Mike Moxon, Graham Price



Tim explores

By Graham Price



(Left)
Biff having a look at the ceiling

By TH

(Right)
Ben pleased with the new discovery

By Mike Moxon



STAINSBY'S SHAFT



The Entrance in Winter
Facing NE TH

Stainsby's Shaft is a Cornish Mining Shaft dug in the 1840s by the Mendip Hills Mining Company and named after the Manager and Treasurer of the company; Peter Stainsby.



The Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining

Stainsby's shaft is almost certainly Blackmoor shaft, identified as such by Willie Stanton and A.G. Clarke in their UBSS paper; 'Cornish miners at Charterhouse-On-Mendip' written in 1984. Until then, and sometimes since then, it was known as Blackmoor shaft and named as such after the adjacent Blackmoor swallet, a now usually dry sink. In 1977, before further investigation by Dr Stanton, he refers to the purpose of the big entrance shaft being "unknown; it post-dates the other mined passages and may have been a slag-smelters' investigation of the spar vein, about 1870." (Mendip The complete caves and a view of the hills. Barrington and Stanton)

The MCG have been interested in this site since the Group's inception. First the swallet and then the shaft being dug, intensively so in the 60's, in order to attempt to find the Blackmoor master system.

It was the MCG's digging here and Willie Stanton and A.G. Clarke's fascinating UBSS paper, that have ultimately inspired this piece. Much of the historical references contained in Stanton and Clarke's publication were from snippets in the Mining Journal, a weekly trade newspaper founded in 1835. Here, from 1845, regular reports appeared about the progress of the Mendip Hills Mining Company.

Caver's and my own interest, were piqued over the years because of reports of miners in Stainsby's shaft breaking into Cavern. The MCG's own Tony Knibbs reports in MCG News 46 (1966) when digging in Blackmoor Swallet that, "The old miners' legend of a richly decorated cavern on Blackmoor looks like being substantiated."

Stanton and Clarke used the mining journal reports to produce a tantalising sketch of shafts and caverns.

Following discussions with MCG members and in particular Biff Frith and Tim Francis who have dug in Upper Flood and Stainsby's Shaft, I felt the time had come to see the Mining Journal reports for myself. Since the UBSS publication in 1984, Upper Flood has been found to be what is likely to be the Blackmoor Valley Master Cave, Stainsby's Shaft has been dug further and technology has greatly assisted us in surveying both. In Upper Flood, there are places you can see the distinctive black tailings, waste from the mining and smelting process, that are abundant in Stainsby's Shaft. They are found washed in at Walk the Plank inlet, the closet part of Upper Flood to the Shaft. Are these, as some MCG members have suggested, washed through from Stainsby's Shaft?

Technology has aided our understanding of the valley and the karst and mines in the vicinity. Surveying visualisation software such as Survex/Aven and Therion, and computerised mapping and survey overlaying, such as that at produced by Bill Chadwick at <http://www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk/sections/upperflood/surveys.html>, allow us to visualise the dimensions of mine more accurately. Importantly we can also see the position of the various caves and known mines and their relationships to each other and to the known parts of Upper Flood. Could the Cavern breached by miners be an inlet to and therefore, maybe one day, part of Upper Flood? Is it directly related to Blackmoor Swallet? Could the Cavern even be related to Waterwheel or Grebe?

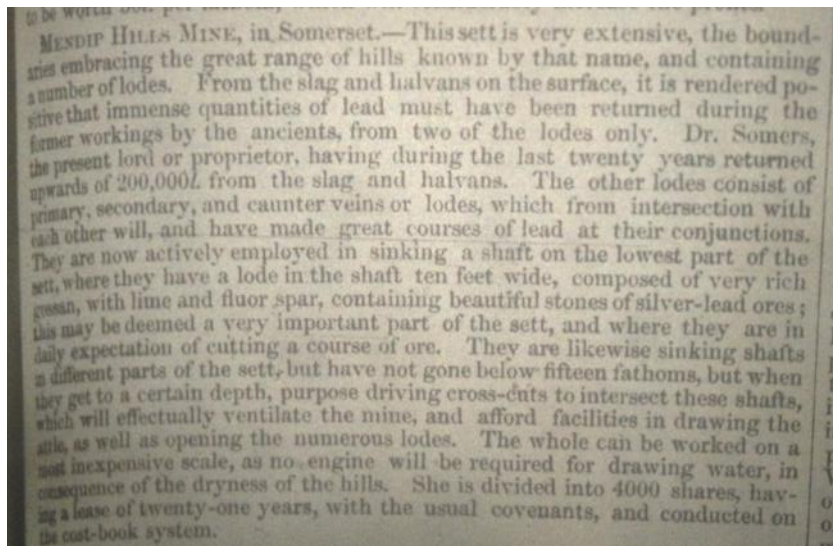
I wanted to purely focus on Stainsby's Shaft. I wanted to see the reports for myself and see if I could draw any conclusions that might, with the advantage of more modern techniques and technologies, compliment Stanton and Clarke's excellent work. On the 25th November, after some research assistance from Joan Goddard and Tim Francis, I visited the Institute of Materials, Minerals and Mining in London to try to answer my questions.

The Institute is in the grand Carlton House Terrace on a street parallel to Pall Mall in London. The building was designed in part by John Nash and I have been informed by one of the institutes' employees that the freeholder, Crown Estates, plans to convert the building into apartments for which they expect to receive upwards of £75 million for each. Soon the Institute will have to find a new home. The library of the institute is in the building's basement, a small room crammed with books and records from the last 150 years, an old computer, and a microfiche reader. It is situated beside the kitchen, so throughout the morning I watched plates of food being carried to the lift, whilst I sat looking at the reports.

The original journals had been bound and as the book of them was disintegrating, it was decided in the 1970's to get them onto microfiche film. I was given a quick lesson on how to use the reader. After a number of minutes of dial twisting and scanning through weekly Mining Journal's of 1844's, I came across correspondence dated August 21, from a Mendip Hills Mining Company share purchaser, unhappy at paying a fee to register the shares at 1s per share! An ominous first mention of the MHMC whose financial difficulties and discrepancies are well documented by Stanton and Clarke. I photographed the entry and continued the hunt.

I was soon rewarded with the report (shown right), from an unknown source, which describes the "great range of hills", a "number of lodes," fissures in the rock where the valuable ores occurred, and an assessment that due to the amount of "slag and halvans on the surface, it is rendered positive that immense quantities of lead must have been returned during the former workings by the ancients."

The following report gives another positive description of the prospects for the investors in this mining endeavour. "The stratum, as far as it has been developed, is composed of limestone; which, in various parts of England and Wales, has proved productive of great courses of lead." Interestingly, the reports also note that "several centuries have elapsed since any workings have been made in the Mendip hills." This perhaps indicates that the mining remains and dated signatures found at Grebe from the 18th Century were not widely known, were conveniently ignored, or that the author of the report was ignorant of them!



A few months pass and then we get into what are a series of mostly weekly reports firstly from G Paynter and then from F C Harpur, who we find out from a later AGM, is the mining Captain. I have compiled these reports into a list so that they will be available to anyone who wishes to study them further. You may well read them and draw different conclusions to my own!

With my focus on Stainsby's for this particular article, I would refer you to Stanton and Clarke, [CHERT.org.uk](http://www.chert.org.uk) and the reports I will make available, for the rather interesting stories of the Company, the other mines that they dug and the resmelting of Slags, (which proved to be profitable). There you will also find out about the poisoning of Cheddar's water supply, embezzling, angry mobs, and a lot of unsuccessful mining. The UBSS publication can be found at [http://www.ubss.org.uk/resources/proceedings/voll17/UBSS Proc 17 1 29-54.pdf](http://www.ubss.org.uk/resources/proceedings/voll17/UBSS%20Proc%2017%201-29-54.pdf).

At this point I should give some description of the terminology used regularly throughout the reports. I have compiled these both from an article in the Mining Journal in 1843 and from my own research. The list on the right gives a basic glossary of terms.

I wanted to get as much description of the dimensions of the mine as possible along with any mentions of natural features. They are of course aiming, as much as possible, to be following and digging the natural feature of the lode, hoping to find Galena.

So how deep did the entrance shaft get? By March 1847, work is suspended in the shaft having reached an impressive depth of 57fms 3ft from surface. Reports previous to that in December 1846 mention water, "a small stream" encountered somewhere around 45 fms, with a "slight increase in water" making it more difficult to obtain depth, mentioned in January 1847 when they are at 48fms and 4ft deep. This water and the lodes width "diminishing in size for several fathoms past," is Harpur's reason for stopping at this depth.

Other interesting features of the shaft are the report from Harpur in June 1846 of "sinking through a very large hollow", this being "5fms below the 18fm level." Our first description of what might possibly be a natural feature in the mine.

We learn in the September 1846 AGM that the shaft "has been sunk 38fms by 9 men." They are cutting a "whim plat" at this point before they will continue digging down a 9ft wide lode, with the belief that they would find more lead at depth. This working area would have assisted with the construction of the 38fm levels which we look at shortly, and with the sinking of the remaining 19 fm 3 ft of the shaft, which is cut later. The lode in Dec 1846 at 45 fathoms is described as having "two very regular walls underlying west about 2 ½ ft per fm" This gives a good indication of the Shaft at this depth being not vertical but at an angle of between 25 and 40° off the vertical.

At the 18 fathom depth, 2 levels are cut north and south. Not much of interest is said of these levels but at the first AGM, the lengths are given as being driven 10 fms north and 44 fms south. No mention is made at this point of the cavern found in this level, which is referred to in later reports.

The 38 fathom level is the really interesting one. It is the November 30th 1846 report, where I find the first mention of a Cavern. Harpur advises that he is removing men from Somer's shaft and that the ground south of Stainsby's shaft in the 38 fathom level is "favourable for driving" "my object for driving this level is get under a large cavern, we have gone down in the level above; below these caverns large deposits of lead are often found in lime rock formation—to accomplish which, we have to drive about 20fms."

When work is suspended in the shaft in March 1847, the reports refer to being within 5 or 6 fathoms of where they believe they will be below the cavern, "gone down in the level", having driven 15 fms along the 38 fm level. Instead, they actually encounter in May what they believe is "the continuation of the large cavern gone down in the bottom of the 18fm level" The next 2 reports both mention the cavern again; May 17: "I have this morning

Lode—The vein containing the metal being dug for. The Mendip Hills Mining Company (MHMC) reports, give regular updates on the dimensions and appearance of the Lode.

Country Rock—The rock in which the lode sits.

Shaft—being the vertical part of the mine, sunk either on the lode or through the country rock to get to the lode.

Fathom—The unit of measure equalling 6 feet/1.82metres

Level - the horizontal driven from the shaft. In Stainsby's, 2 levels are described, the 18 fathom level and the 38 fathom level. Both are reported to have intercepted "Cavern."

Winze—A shaft, smaller than the main one, dug from one of the levels. Only 1 is described in Stainsby's..

In the MHMC reports the lode is often described as containing Flookan, white spar and quartz along with the Galena that they are looking for.

Flookan- is the Clay fill White Spar-likely Calcite material Galena-Ore of Lead and Silver

The hanging wall is the side wall of the country rock that would overhang the dig with the foot footwall being the wall underneath

placed some men to prepare for sinking a winze below this level, about 30 fms south of shaft, in order to get under the cavern gone down from the 18fm level." May 24: "the lode in the winze, sinking below the 38fm level is at present in a disordered state, occasioned by the large cavern we have gone down in this part, ground favourable for sinking." Intriguing!

In the week to July 5th 1847, they encounter a large stream at the bottom of the winze, then by November 1 they have "a quantity of water issuing from different parts of the end with operations suspended there in mid November. At the half yearly meeting, March 1848, the most detailed description of the position of the Winze, and therefore the cavern, is given, being at 34 fms from shaft. It also lists the Winze as having been sunk 18fms 3ft and gives us the length of the level south of shaft as 90 fms.

To aid mapping the direction that the southerly shaft in the 38m level is taking, there are a couple of interesting reports. The first in Dec 1847 talks of the expectation that they would intersect with a lode visible on the surface, but they did not. Harpur attributes this to the lodes, "not underlying as fast as we expected." Just over a month later we get the expected turn in the lode. The lode, "has taken a more easterly direction than we have hitherto seen it in this part, it's present bearing being about 35 degrees east of south; this alteration I consider arises from the intersection of the lode mentioned in my report of the 7th last."

After March 1848 some work continues underground, with only 4 engaged actually mining. eventually in May 1848 they report a branch in the lode heading 30 degrees west of south. They only drive this for a couple of weeks. There are still less frequent reports appearing in the Mining Journal throughout 1848 until they switch focus to Somers shaft at the end of the year. There is no mention of Stainsby's Shaft during the first half of 1849. A few mentions are made of Somer's shaft but mostly reports refer to reworking of the Slag. I hope to get the opportunity to return to view more reports in the future. I also have got some company papers being sent from the national archives and I am working on seeing if I can find out if there is any paperwork to be found anywhere else. The search for more information continues!

So what can be drawn from all this information?

The first thing I wanted to do was to use the described dimensions of the mine to create a plan and elevation of Stainsby's. Stanton and Clarke's elevation showed all 4 shafts dug by the MHMC. I wanted to draw just one. I had the advantage of being able to use survey data which can be found online. Aven, a survey visualisation program using the cheddercatchment.3d data gives us a base for the current known dimension. Alan Gray kindly gave permission to use his data. Here are the key points from the mining journal reports of Stainsby's shaft::

- The reports suggest the Shaft got to a depth of 57 fms 3 ft. The reports suggest that it was not vertical but sloped west following the lode vertically. A very large hollow was encountered on the shaft at 23fms.
- I have the description of 2 levels, dug approximately north and south of shaft at 18 fms and 38 fms deep. If the shaft is sloping and not quite vertical, this would place the 38 fm level slightly further west than the 18fm level.
- According to the reports the 18 fm level went north 10 fms, South of shaft it went 44 fms.
- In the 38 fm level, south of shaft was dug at least 90 fms and probably over 100. A winze was dug 34fms from shaft, to a depth of 19fms 3ft from this level.
- We know the lode was running 10° east of south and the 1960's digs seem to confirm this. The surveyed plan of Stainsby's Shaft shows the direction of known passage. The projection of the levels as they head south along the lode is purely conjecture; there are precious few reports, although I do believe it to continue this bearing. This is backed up by the single description of the expectation that they will turn to a more easterly bearing as they reach the lode seen on the surface, and also by the description that the lode does turn onto 35 degrees east of south before they have reached 90 fms along the level. There was a southwesterly running branch in the lode, sometime after 90fms.
- I was unable to find any direct descriptions of a cavern in the 18 fm level. Instead Harpur refers to wishing to drive the 38 fm level underneath the cavern they found in the 18 fm level. He expects to find the cavern between 20 and 21 fms from the shaft, so I am assuming that this expectation is based on the position in the 18 fm level. I am still trying to find out when they made the breakthrough into this cavern.
- Although the cavern in the 38fm level is first described as being 30fms from shaft where they dig the winze, the AGM later describes the winze as 34fms from shaft.
- One benefit of using 'Aven' Survey mapping software is that it gives you the ability to measure the distance between cave entrances but also between any point in one cave compared to any point in another. Using this tool I could mark on my elevation the relative position of Walk the Plank inlet in Upper Flood, a likely candidate

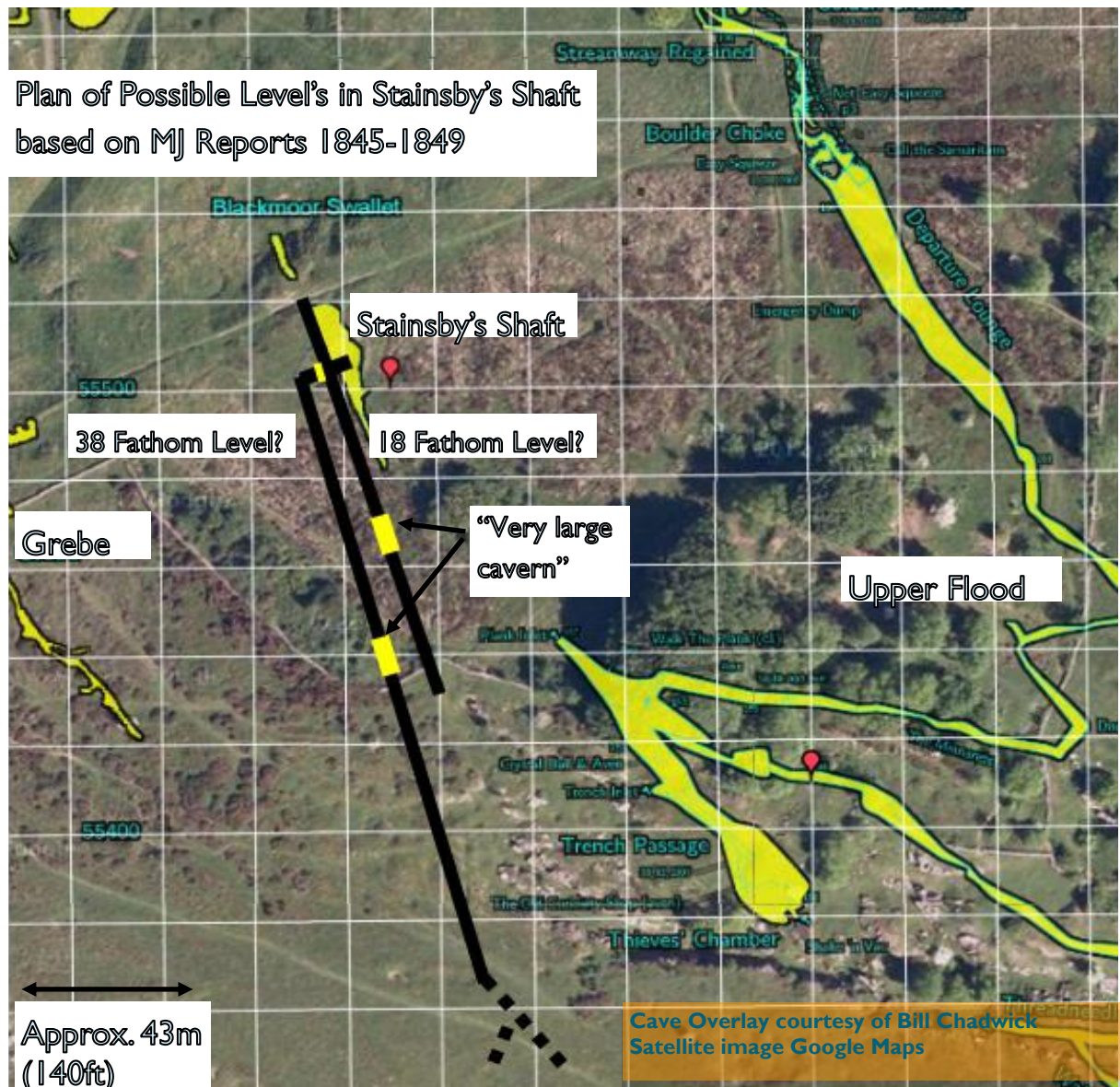
for a connection with the mine.

- To go about drawing a projected plan and elevation I used Bill Chadwick's Cave overlay and data from the survey of the known Shaft.
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Below and on the next page are the projections of what Stainsby's shaft might one day look like Although of course, until we dig we will not know for sure.

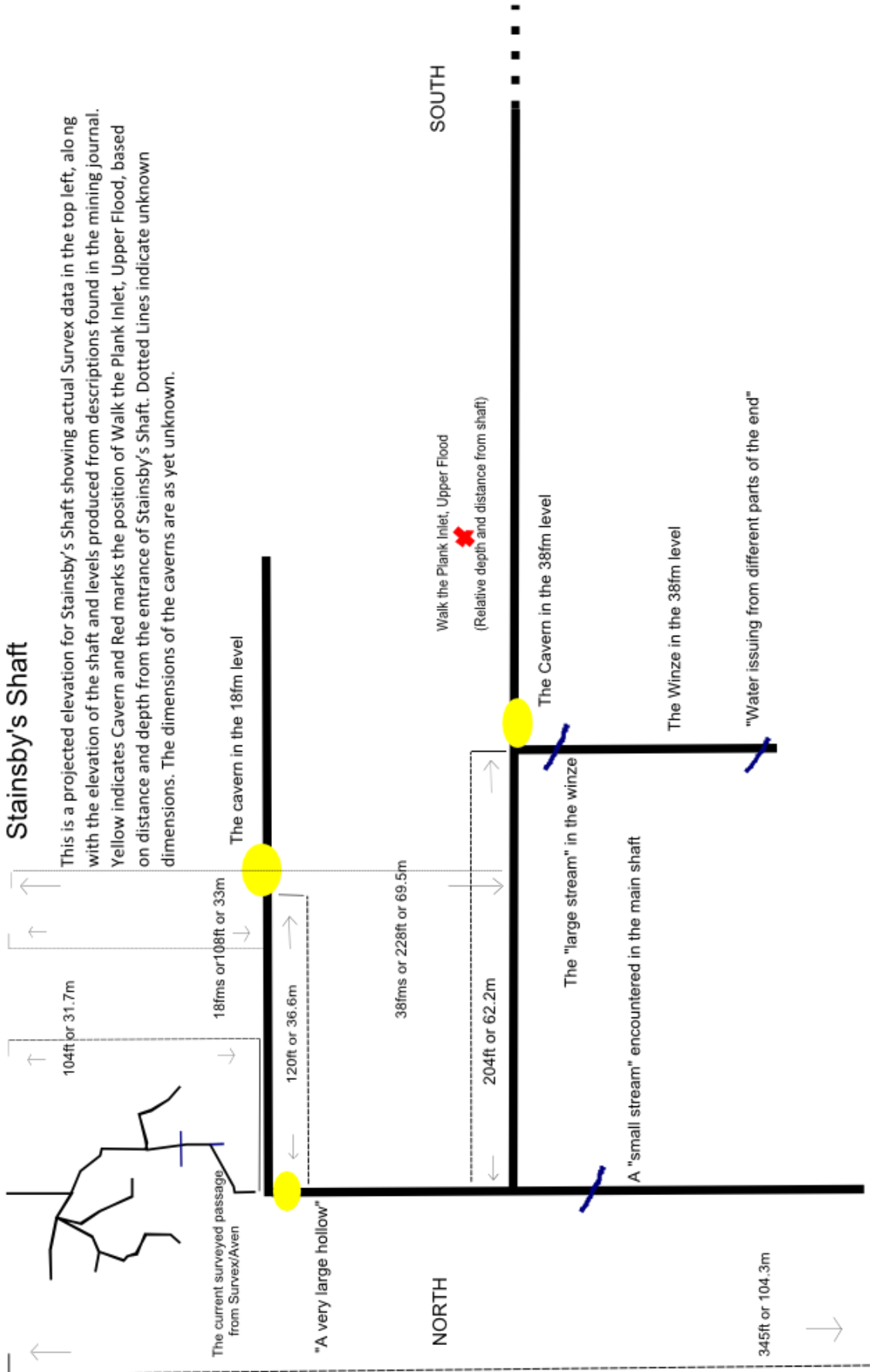
In conclusion, I found this a productive and interesting exercise that I hope I can add to in the future. I now have many more questions. We seem to be tantalising close to the 18 fathom level. Below this, might the 'very large hollow' be natural or old men's workings? How choked are the levels and how much of the shaft is backfilled? Might we find more void as the tailings washed in have settled in some areas and not others? (Evidence from digs seem to suggest this.) Is the very large cavern in both levels, a single, directly related feature? If it is, could it be part of a series of Steep Aven's related to Blackmoor Swallet? Or is it 2 separate features one related to Walk the Plank inlet and the other related to the deeper Trench inlet. "Very Large Cavern" is a very interesting term to use. (Although in candle light, very large could be quite a lot smaller than it sounds.) Was it open space or a boulder choke with large voids and the miners being unable to see all of the walls, describing it a cavern? As they sank the winze it was described as being in a "disordered state", "occasioned" by the cavern, perhaps suggesting a choked feature. **I'm looking forward to future excavation. There are some features of the known Shaft that I think are particularly interesting, but I will save discussing them for another time!**

Plan of Possible Level's in Stainsby's Shaft based on MJ Reports 1845-1849



Stainsby's Shaft

This is a projected elevation for Stainsby's Shaft showing actual Survey data in the top left, along with the elevation of the shaft and levels produced from descriptions found in the mining journal. Yellow indicates Cavern and Red marks the position of Walk the Plank Inlet, Upper Flood, based on distance and depth from the entrance of Stainsby's Shaft. Dotted Lines indicate unknown dimensions. The dimensions of the caverns are as yet unknown.



MCG CLUB NEWS

An MCG Christmas

Another wonderful MCG Christmas was enjoyed by all at Nordrach during the December members weekend.

The highlight of which was the delicious Christmas dinner cooked by our treasurer Karen Fendley and her team of chefs including Jackie Chadwick, Bob Templeman and others. Joan Goddard provided pigs in blankets, Mike Richardson, a washing up bowl trifle, and Biff Frith, the music and a Cooker!

We had crackers with dinner, with the obligatory bad jokes and a drop or two of alcohol to wash the dinner down with! Hayley Clarke supplied some games, including twister and snakes and ladders. We even had a game of drop the pennies, involving carrying coins to a collection cup in a most unusual way!



Christmas Dinner (Above left) Snakes & Ladders (Above Right) by Charlie Allison

Guide to the MCG

New to the MCG? What have you learnt that would have been useful to know when you first joined? A long standing member who knows the group inside and out? Could you think of something which might be good for a new member to know?

Over the next few months we hope to come up with a short guide to help new members to integrate and feel more a part of the MCG. We hope this can allow new members, whether they have previous caving experience or not, to understand the workings of the MCG. From using the Call Out Board, to what should be done before leaving the cottage, I would be grateful for any ideas about what should be included.

And for Christmas 2015 from Charlie Allison

"Fairytale of New Mendip" Based on the Pogues & Kirsty McCol's Fairy Tale of New York: Sung to the same tune

*"It was Christmas Eve babe
In the Lav Trap
When old Malcolm said to me
We'll dig another one
And then he sang a song
The rare old Mendip dig
I turned my trowel away
and dreamed about stal
Got on a lucky one
came in a mile if none
I've got a feeling this dig's for me and you
so Happy Christmas
I love M C G
I can see a better time
when all our digs come true*

*They've got stal tall as towers
They've got rivers of lead
But the beer goes right through
you
It's no place for the mild
When it first wrecked my knees
On a cold Christmas Eve
You promised us
Cheddar was waiting for all*

*You were muddy
You were ragged
Queen of all that's bedraggled
When Hilti's finished popping
They shelled out for more
Ladders were swinging
All the drunks they were singing
We kissed the pub floor
Then caved through the night*

*The boys of the C S C C choir
Were singing shut the caves
And the bang was blowing out
On Christmas Day*

*You're a bum
You're a punk
You've drunk all our beer
Lying there almost dead in the
mud in the sump
You scumbag, you maggots
You cheap lousy faggot
Happy Christmas your arse
I pray this dig's the last*

(Continues on the next page)

Gloop—Sounds Iffy, Tastes Great

The January Members weekend is often a quieter one, being the weekend after the new year but this Jan., Charlie Allison lured a decent number of us up to the cottage for what he described as paprika gloop. In between giving a lift to Tabitha and Elena and visiting the gorge to take pictures for his forthcoming book, he was able to cook up what was actually a very tasty Beef and Chorizo Stew with a Parsley Mash. Just what was needed after a great days caving. The recipe is available on the MCG Yahoo! Group.

From the Archive

From MCG news 30, 1965 and a list of New Years resolutions after what I guess was a quiet 1964!

“A pint for the secretary "for each of these resolutions you break?"

1. visit Somerset at least once a month.
 2. Visit a few of those caves you talk about so often.
 3. Dig a few new ones
 4. Go surveying - Browne's hole is just waiting for you.
 5. Talk to EVERYONE on Thursdays WHO IS A PROSPECTIVE MEMBER. Unless they receive encouragement and benevolent interest there will not be much of a group in a year or so.
 6. Read something from the Library.
 7. Attend the Annual and half-yearly meetings.
 8. Do this first... pay your subscription!
- Arthur Cox”

The Plaque in the Privey



The Plaque
by Michael Perryman

by Alan Mellon

A friend of mine was in the RAMC reserves based in Kingston upon Thames. He asked Adri- an Duckett and I to take them caving which we did.

It was a typical Army (to me) event. Very much "Yes sir no sir" We turned up at barracks and "Sir" said we're not ready, come back in an hour - so we went to the pub. He planned the route from Kingston to Mendip via the M4, we said why not M3, A303 - much quicker!!!

Got back, loaded up in the minibus with "sir" in the Landie in front navigating. Of course we had confused him, so we ended up heading to Southampton!! The driver didn't want to flash the landie to tell them they were wrong, but eventually did so. At this point we declined the empty beer can to piss in due to the aforementioned beer, grabbed a wee on the hard shoulder and I jumped in the landie with "sir" and navigated us to the pub / club.

We had the following over the weekend—"sir" asking underground if anyone had ever died in the cave (Longwood) - unfortunately someone had died in the cave a month prior. A private (the big brash gungho type) freaking out at the bottom of the Manor Farm entrance pitch. Had to escort him out before he decked someone! Compo rations which were really not enough for big blokes caving all day

The RAMC carried the sedan chair for us around part of the Wessex challenge which was on that weekend. They had to take the chair over a swing bridge while they waded through water that was over the top of their wellies and a mix of water and slurry!!! Yuk A really good game of Sofa rugby.

We were asked "how much will you charge" - we said "If we charge there are expectations, so as long as we don't have to put our hands in our pockets (for cash) all weekend - we'll be happy"

The Plaque says on the rear "Operation Deep echo" and Sir had wanted to call the weekend "Operation Death" but opted to change as that wasn't necessarily appropriate. We chose to put the plaque in the loo as we felt it was appropriate!! We had a good weekend and as you can see many memories!!

Hope this whetted your appetite on the background of the plaque.

*A Fairytale of New Mendip Con-
tinued*

*"The boys of the C S C C choir
Were singing shut the caves
And the bang was blowing out
On Christmas Day*

*I could have dug some more
Well it's such a chore
You took my drill from me
When I found the motor died
I kept your hammer dry
I put it in my bag
Can't shift mud all alone
I've built spoil walls around you*

*The boys of the C S C C choir
Were singing shut the caves
And the bang was blowing out
On Christmas Day"*



An old mine?
By Charlie Allison

Mine Shafts on the Rakes Walk

In November Joan God- dard, Charlie Allison and I went up on the Rakes to enjoy the winter sunshine and to revisit Tony Knibbs' description of the loca- tion of Charnel Shaft.

We identified some interesting depressions for both their location and their size.

Areas that may well be revisited in the near future.

AGM 2015 Dinner

We are pleased to announce that the venue for this years AGM dinner will be the Wedmore Golf Club taking place on the evening of the AGM, Saturday the 18th April.

Provided that there is sufficient demand, there will be a coach from the cottage to the venue and back. For those who do not wish to stay at the cottage, there are several accommodation options locally to the golf club.

The committee will be sending an email shortly with more details and the menu options.

We hope to see you all there.



Mendip Caving Group Annual General Meeting Official Notice

The meeting will be held at 10 a.m. on Saturday the 18th April 2015 in The Hunters Lodge Inn, Priddy. Nominations for Office and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules must be submitted in writing by first class post to the Hon. Secretary's home address (Brian Snell, 38 Serpentine Road, Fareham, Hants PO16 7EB) with the signatures of full members proposing and seconding at least 25 days before the meeting (24th March). A nomination for Office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand for election by the nominee. Nominations are sought for all posts. Job Descriptions of all Committee posts will be available, on request, from Bob Templeman, Librarian/Recorder in due course.

Brian Snell, MCG Hon Secretary

The Constitution states: GENERAL MEETINGS.

(a) The Annual General Meeting shall be held in the Spring of each year to:

- (i) receive the minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting,
- (ii) receive the officers' reports and examined accounts,
- (iii) elect officers for the following year term,
- (iv) appoint honorary examiners for the following year / term,
- (v) discuss formal motions and any other business.

(b) An Extraordinary General Meeting may be requested by a majority of the Committee or by five Full Members.

(c) Notice of any General Meeting, together with the agenda, shall be given by the Secretary to members at least 14 days before the date of that meeting.

(d) The chairman of each meeting will be appointed by the Committee.

(e) Nominations for office and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules must be submitted in writing by first class post to the Secretary's home address with the signatures of Full Members proposing and seconding and at least 25 days before the meeting. A nomination for Office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand for election by the nominee.

(f) Votes at General Meetings shall be counted by two tellers appointed at the meeting. The election of officers shall be by secret ballot.

(g) The Committee may grant a postal vote to any member who applies in good time to the Committee.

A COUPLE OF WEEKS IN SCOTLAND

By Brian Snell

One evening late in Autumn we had been crushing apples in Alan and Linda's apple shredder and press, with the intention of making cider. During operations the conversation turned to Scotland. Alan told me he was planning a little expedition to the Western mountains the following May to celebrate his 50 years on this planet. Later in the evening Alan asked me if I would be interested in joining his group. A little thought and a glass or two of wine later and I tentatively said yes. I figured I was fit enough but my main concern was whether my feet could take the pounding of long walks. I had left the long days in the Alps and winter climbs in Scotland far behind me.

The winter went by and all too quickly. The 2nd May arrived and Alan and I were driving north with the plan that Linda would meet us a week later. Linda needed to stay behind to look after her sick pet dog Tilley and arrange to get her to the vet. After an overnight stop in the Lakes we arrived at Fort William around lunch time. We soon met up with Gareth a friend of Alan's and later Pete and Caroline turned up. After a reasonable night's sleep in a bunkhouse we had a big breakfast at the local Wetherspoon's, followed by packing enormous rucksacks, then catching a taxi to the Corran ferry. The day didn't look good with heavy clouds in the sky and the prospect of rain a certainty. After the short ferry crossing we walked up the ramp and the first day's walking began. This was going to be about 18 miles to GlenFinnan and I was hoping that my training walks earlier in the year were going to stand me in good stead. Before long it was raining gently as we walked up the coast road north to a point where the river Scaddle enters Loch Linnhe. Here we turned off of the main road and began the long walk up through estate tracks following the river some 10 miles up the valley to its source. So this long never ending track began, disappearing out there on the horizon into the mist and rain. After a couple of miles we came across a bridge made up of three cables and Pete couldn't resist having a go.



The wire bridge

Almost all the way up the valley we heard the sound of cuckoos. The rain although light was constant and after a couple of hours trudging I was rather pleased to come across a bothy.

The bothy

Entering it I found it empty and it became a perfect haven from the weather allowing us to eat lunch in the dry and sort ourselves out for continuing the walk. Time was pressing and after about half an hour we got on our way again. The valley just kept continuing into the horizon and seemed never to end. Occasionally we noted the very unpleasant smell of the rotting carcass of a deer. Apparently the long wet winter had been too much for some of them. Some hours later we finally came to a point where the track gave way to a path which ramped up the side of the hill towards a pass and would give us access down to GlenFinnan. Keen to push on and get over the pass I trudged on up the slope, but halfway up the path I was amazed to come across an adder. It became just a little bit jarred off that I wanted to pursue it down the slope. In such



weather conditions it behaved somewhat sluggish so it coiled up and proceeded to hiss at me. We figured that it was the abundance of baby frogs all around that provided a food source and a reason for it to be there. I couldn't help wondering how it could have survived the winter snows. Having played around with it enough we carried on and we were soon over the pass and at last descending for the first time in the day. The path became indistinct in places and turned to bog and slowed progress, but by now the weather had eased off and the clouds had lifted giving us view all the way down to the main road in the valley. It was some relief that we finally walked down a farm track to reach the road surface of the A830 and then short walk up the road to the B&B we had booked.

On Monday morning the weather was sunny. After a great night's sleep and a big breakfast we set off down the road to the Glenfinnan monument, then on to the railway station where we had a cup of tea while we waited for the train to take us to Mallaig. The journey on the train was pure pleasure with wonderful scenery and the knowledge that there would be just short distances to walk that day. At Mallaig we booked a boat to take us to Inverie on the Knoydart peninsula, and then took refuge in a local bar to sup a lovely pint of beer while we waited for the departure time. The wind had begun to get up a bit as we set off in the boat. Once out of the harbour the swell made the going a bit rough and sea sprayed over the cabin we were huddled in. At Inverie the wind was now blowing quite stiffly as we hoisted sacks onto our backs again and walked about a mile down the road to the lodge we were staying at. En-route we passed the famous pub 'The Old Forge'. It's probably famous because it is the only one there and later that evening we went back there for a meal and more beer.

Tuesday morning and another big breakfast, then we were hauling big sacks back onto our backs, which were now dry again, and trudging up the track which would lead us up and over the Knoydart peninsula and down into Barrisdale at the head of Loch Hourn. Pete, who was clearly very fit from bike riding every where, often disappeared off ahead. I caught him up at one point as we approached a dome like monument sat on a small hill about 300ft above the track. He was intrigued as to what it was and I was rather pleased to see him scrambling up the hill to get a closer look at it, as I figured that this might burn off some of his energy and slow him up a bit. Unfortunately it made no difference and once we were all together again heading up the track to the waters of 'Loch an Dubh Lochain' it wasn't long before he was a speck on the horizon again. The day wore on and the threat of rain loomed in the distance but apart from a brief shower it stayed away. At the pass we had spectacular views of surrounding hills capped with clouds and still bearing patches of snow in gullies. Behind us the views back down the valley past the lake and in the distance Loch Nevis, and with a sky filled with white cloud but with patches of blue, were equally beautiful.



The view back to Loch Nevis

An hour or so later we arrived at the 'White House' a ranger controlled bunk house set in fabulous scenery. All around us there were groups of unconcerned deer. I was happy enough not to be walking any more and flaked out on the grass while some of the others went off to the ranger's house to get the key.

Wednesday morning dawned another reasonable day as again we heaved on towering sacks and headed off towards the waters of Loch Hourn. The Loch was beautiful, surrounded by towering mountains with sharp ridges. A possible option for the day was to climb Ladhar Bheinn (pronounce I believe Ladder Van) but the main ridge looked very wet and uninviting. It was just as well because the 6 mile walk up the Loch to Kinloch Hourn was more than enough for me. After about an hour the sky became very black behind us which encouraged the rapid donning of waterproofs. We got them on just in time as a hail shower followed by stair rods of rain for about half an hour, then it was gone, and the day went back to being pleasant again. The path undulated quite painfully but the surroundings made up for it. I spent some time lost in my own thoughts but later in the afternoon I was more than pleased to see the farmhouse we had booked appearing at the end of the road. Another satisfying evening meal followed by a good night's sleep helped me prepare myself for another gruelling 18 mile day.

Thursday morning the weather was overcast but settled as we began a long route march, which would eventually end at the very welcomed bar of the Cluanie Inn on the A87. The original plan had been to go north up a valley to a pass, then head east beneath the south side of the long Glen Shiel Ridge and its five sisters of Kintail. But after a some discussion the plan was altered to make it a little easier by following the road to Loch Quoich, then head north up a valley to join the route

about half way along. That said, walking 8 miles on a tarmac road is not good for the feet and I was only too pleased to get this section out of the way and be back on tracks again. Once we had joined the original planned route it developed into another long walk up a valley flanked by sharp mountains on both sides. Snow was still prominent on Spidean Mialach to the south and further up the valley a crag I had been looking at just kept getting bigger and bigger. What initially looked to be about a rope length high, grew to well over 200 metres when we stopped beneath it for a bite to eat. I couldn't help wondering if any routes had been put up this crag, as your average climber probably wouldn't bother with the long walk to get to it. I found myself visualising the view from one of the big grooves which cut through overhangs. How I miss being on steep rock. With a big sigh and accepting that my rock climbing days were over, I got back to trudging along the track again. It was with some relief that we got to the top of the pass to begin the descent down to the A87. We were able to get phone connections at this point so whilst taking a rest in the most peaceful of spots where the silence was so loud I could hear ringing in your ears, phone calls were made. It still took at least another hour's pounding down a metalled road to finally arrive at the Inn. That evening a big meal and few pints were enjoyed, followed by a comfortable bed and a very welcomed night's sleep.

On Friday morning we caught a bus down to the Kyle of Lochalsh then a train to the delightful village of Plockton which nestles in a quiet cove of Loch Carron. We found a pub for a bite to eat and of course a pint of beer. It was here that Linda and Alan had spent their honeymoon and I quite understood why it was an ideal place to rendezvous with her. We were sat at a table enjoying the scenery and the sunshine on our backs when a familiar 'Hiya' was heard to announce Linda's arrival. Linda had caught the overnight train to Fort William then picked up Alan's car from the railway station car park and driven from there to meet us. After bringing her up to date on the previous days experiences, we somehow bundled 6 of us into the car with Pete in the boot and drove to Torridon and the Torridon Hotel, or in my case the Inn which was much cheaper but still horrendously expensive compared to a tent. But then my bones deserved it. Here, other friends of Alan and Linda's had turned to join us.

Saturday arrived with threatening weather again. The forecast was for rain coming up from the south. Our plan was to do the traverse of Beinn Alligin, something I had wanted to do for over 16 years since I had first seen it on a previous walking/climbing holiday. Breakfast done, we set off in the car to the car park below the mountain, got ourselves sorted out and then started the day. With the plan to do the route in the usual clockwise direction the walk was very pleasant and height was gained easily. But after about a half an hour's walking we realised we were on the wrong side of the river. So we altered the plan to doing the route anti-clockwise and before long we arrived below the main buttress containing the famous (or infamous) Horns. These are prominent peaks on the steep ridge/buttness. They can be bypassed but it is far more satisfying to take in a little rock scrambling and go over them. We crested the first of the three horns, with drops on either side being very prominent.



Descending off of the first horn

A steep climb down the other side regained the ridge again. The second horn wasn't too bad and it wasn't long before we were on top of the final horn with striking views across to the next main summit Sgurr Mhor.



Looking across to Sgurr Mhor.

Down in the Torridon valley we could see signs of a weather front arriving with white steamers of showers falling out of them. I was concerned that might get caught out in foul weather and looking around the ridge it was clear that there were few places from which to escape from it. Another steep descent led us to the continuation of the ridge on up to the summit of Sgurr Mhor where we got fabulous views back over the route we had taken.



Looking back down to the three horns with Beinn Dearg in the background

On the summit the clouds were beginning to descend so after a quick bite to eat and drink we pushed on down to the col, passing the famous notch in the ridge so visible from the valley. At the col the climb began again up to the final main peak Tom na Gruagaich. Cloud continued to threaten on the way up to this final summit but the rain maintained its distance and we managed to get some good views all the way back along the route we had followed. After messing about in a patch of snow we began the long descent down to the car. Near the bottom my legs started to morph towards a jelly form and frequent rests were needed to stop me dissolving into the hillside.

That evening was the big dinner at the Torridon hotel, a grand event organised by Alan and Linda. Later that evening after a great day on the mountain and a wonderful classy meal, sleep came relatively easily.

Sunday arrived and Pete and Caroline had left early by taxi to get across to Inverness and catch a train home ready for work in the morning. What remained of our party now travelled north again to Dundonnell via a pleasant 2 hour stop at the Gardens of Inverewe. We had booked into a youth hostel which turned out to be very nice.

Monday arrived with blue skies and a great forecast. Our plan for the day was to do another mountain that I had always wanted to do after I had first seen it in 1998. An Teallach is a stunning chain of summits along a spectacular ridge, which combine to make a long day out. It was just going to be Alan, Linda and myself for this one so I was hopeful that we would be able to maintain good pace. The route began with gentle but long ascent to get to the start of the first mountain Sail Liath a large whale back of a hill. The hill opposite us to the east Beinn Dearg Mor looked stunning as we gained height.



Beinn Dearg Mor

Arriving at the summit we got our first close views of An Teallach's main summit. It looked impressively sharp with some big drops on either side.



Looking across to An Teallach's main summit and Lord Berkeley's Seat

We dropped down into a col and began the steep climb up towards the main summit. It was about now that I realised that leaving my rope behind in the valley to save weight probably wasn't a good idea. Once we were beneath the steep face which lead up to the crest it became clear that the rope was needed. Although happy to do it myself I wasn't happy to put Alan or

Linda into a dangerous position so we opted to bypass this summit to the left. Further around we found a nice soft grass covered ledge to stop for lunch. After lunch we continued a bit further to a point I felt we could get all of us back onto the ridge again. We followed some steep sheep tracks up and finally came out below a prominent peak called Lord Berkley's Seat. Linda took the safer option of bypassing it. I reconnoitred the route and then got Alan to follow me over its crest in a pretty exposed position to its top. Looking over the side there was a 600ft shear drop. Again I found myself wondering if any routes ran up this big cliff face.



The crest of Lord Berkey's Seat

After that it was another long haul up to the final summit of Bidein a'Ghlas Thuill where we had great views looking back along the ridge we had followed.



Looking back along the ridge with Lord Berkley's Seat just above the 'Y' shaped snow filled gulley

The views were stunning. Out to the West we could easily make out the Isle of Lewis on a blue sea. To the North we could see the prominent mountains of Suilven and Cul Mor.

Then began the long descent of several miles and again it was with some relief that we finally arrived back on the road and short walk to get to the car. My Achilles tendon on my left foot was now really giving me some aggravation and I was a little concerned that it now was twice as thick as my right foot. We drove to Ullapool and got ourselves established in 'The Ceilidh Place'. After doing a bit of shopping for provisions in preparation for our last walk we finally got to sit down to a hearty meal and relax over a coffee in a lounge while I applied ice to my tendon.

On Tuesday morning we set off on the final walk which was to cover 20 miles. This was to be broken into two stages of 12 miles to the Knockdamp Bothy then a final 8 miles to the Oykel Bridge Hotel. The weather was still warm and sunny but all I could think of was how I was going to nursemaid my tendon over the next couple of days. We made our way out of town and joined the start of the track which leads up past a quarry before breaking out into uninterrupted views up a long valley.



Alan and Linda with the waters of Lock Achall behind

For me the journey needed to be broken up into sections and my first target was to get the waters of Lock Achall, then get to its far end. The scenery was again beautiful which helped take my mind off of my ankle. Up on the left and way in the distance there was a large outcrop of red sandstone crags. It seemed to take hours to get up the valley and to eventually be standing beneath them searching out potential routes. But the pain in my tendon encouraged me to push on and get this section of walk done. The valley turned NE and the next target of Loch an Dairmh came into view. At the other end of this was the bothy and it was with great relief that I was finally able to drop my rucksack to the ground and walk in.



Knockdamp Bothy

It was already occupied by a couple of Icelandic guys who were doing the Cape Wrath trail. The others arrived and we busied ourselves sorting out an evening meal. After that, they decided that as the beds left something to be desired they would rather sleep outside in tents. I couldn't be arsed so I laid my sleeping bag on the floor and sank into sleep. Around 2 am I needed to get up to water the grass and whilst standing outside listening to the ghostly sounds of snipe make a strange warbling sound with their wings as they flew in mating displays I could see the first light of dawn arriving in East.

The next morning again dawned fine with blue skies and wisps of clouds. The Icelandic guys had already left at about 6 am. We had a quick brew and breakfast then got the tents dropped and packed. This last 8 miles was fairly uneventful and the scenery although

lovely lacked the back drop of big hills. So when we finally walked up the last bit of track to the hotel I was just pleased to have got it done and there would be no more walking. That evening we had a fabulous meal and finished the evening sampling the whisky.

Wednesday morning we headed off back south to Inverness where we dropped off Linda who wanted to fly back and get back to her dog Tilley. Tilley was a delightful and affectionate dog which was full of fun. Sadly her illness was incurable and she later had to be put to sleep.

After a stop over at Lockerby Alan and I arrived back at their house on Thursday afternoon.

It had been a fabulous couple of weeks and quite possibly my last in the remote hills of Scotland but I wouldn't have missed it for the world.

THE DAY I THOUGHT I WOULD DIE

By Geoff Beale

Several newsletters ago, our esteemed editor asked for recollections or caving anecdotes for future newsletters. This is my story of what happened to a small party of two at sump 1 in Swildons Hole back in the 1980's.

In those days before I joined the MCG I was caving with Newbury & District CC. I had seen some published photos taken at the end of the canal in Little Neath River Cave in South Wales of cavers emerging from deep water, just head shots back lit for dramatic effect. I cannot remember if these photos were published in *Descent* or *Caves & Caving*. My then regular caving partner—for the sake of argument lets call him Arthur—thought that we should try to recreate these photos with us as models, and so arranged a trip into Swildons Hole in the hope that our efforts would turn out to be good.

Everything seemed to work out with us snapping each other as we dived from Swildons 2 back through Sump 1 to the sump pool. We must have dived through about 6 times each to try and emulate the published photos and achieve images we would be proud of.

Remember in the days of print film before digital cameras, there was no way to check each picture until it was developed, so we took a variety of photos with differing speeds and settings etc. hoping for that elusive good shot.

We eventually decided to pack up and turn for "home" when I decided to try one more time. Arthur sat in the sump pool whilst I dived back through the sump to Swildons 2 for our last try, which was when things went horribly wrong. I was about to set off back and forgot the cardinal rule when free diving sumps i.e. take up the slack in the guide rope before setting off. Most of you reading this story will know that Swildons Sump 1 can be tightish for normal sized individuals and those of larger girth, so this was a major error on my part. We had both done the requisite "gardening" to remove gravel and larger cobbles in the sump to try to make it more spacious. However I set off with the supreme confidence of youth only for my passage to be jolted and terminated mid way through the sump. Bloody hell I thought, this is no place to get stuck, what has gone wrong? In the stygian blackness of the sump (I had my eyes closed as neither of us had brought goggles). I could neither move forward or back, and I thought 'that's it.' I managed to feel the sump rope which had wound itself tightly around my Oldhams headset and was not easily coming off. With thoughts of an early end to my caving career and self preservation, I managed to unclip my caving helmet chin strap and battery belay belt (the roll bar buckle type) and was able to eventually back out of the sump into Swildons 2. Then by leaning forward I was able to un-wrap the sump hand line from the headset and retrieve my kit and drag it back. I felt like a James Bond Drink—shaken and stirred. I put my kit back on and prepared to free dive back. In those distant days most cavers were still wearing lined wet suits which were warm when you were moving but you could get cold if you were in water or not moving about. We were by then getting bloody cold.

Meanwhile whilst I was nearly drowning Arthur was still sitting in the sump pool and had witnessed my near death predicament but did not realise what was happening, only that he was sat in water poised and waiting to take a photo. This time I pulled the slack on the guide rope, composed myself and dived through to be greeted with—you took your bloody time, what happened? And then with a come on, stop bugging about, lets get out the pubs are still open!

I learnt a lot from this trip—not to cave with someone who seems indifferent to caving predicaments and always to take up the slack in the sump guide rope before setting off, when free diving sumps.

Arthur and I ended our caving partnership and went our separate ways. Oh and the photos? They all turned out rubbish—Such is life!

Does anyone else have a similar story to tell? I would love to publish it! Editor@mendipcavinggroup.org

Tunnel Cave and Dan Yr Ogof

by Andrew Horeckyj

Tunnel Cave and Dan Yr Ogof, Saturday 30th August 2014

Participants: Jeremy Gilson, Ed Waters, Russ Porter, Andrew Horeckyj

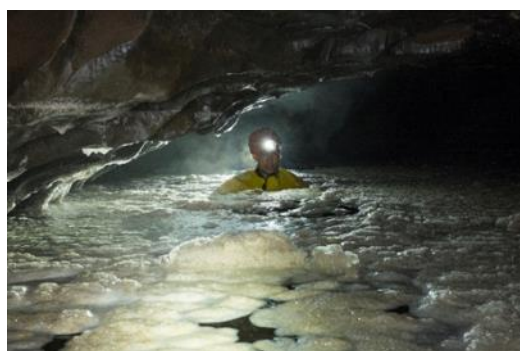
Jeremy had been planning a visit to Dan Yr Ogof for some time and we had already had one trip cancelled earlier in the year – by mutual consent- when life's other issues just got in the way, so there was a certain pressure to *get on with it* this time.

We arranged to meet-up at the Show Caves of Wales car park around 10:30am and take-it from there. I'd arrived a bit earlier, to allow me to enjoy a coffee and doughnut amongst the plastic dinosaurs and it was clear from the drive down from Leicester, that the area had received plenty of rain in the last 24 hours. All the streams were high with discoloured water, so it was with something approaching resignation that we discussed the options.

Given that we'd driven there, we decided that we might as well wetsuit-up and have a look at the entrance lake, if only to confirm that it wasn't going to happen today. Since I've not even visited the show cave I was happy with this and there was even the prospect of having a paddle around and getting a few pictures.



The walkway at the end of the show cave- with the water somewhat higher than normal.
By AH



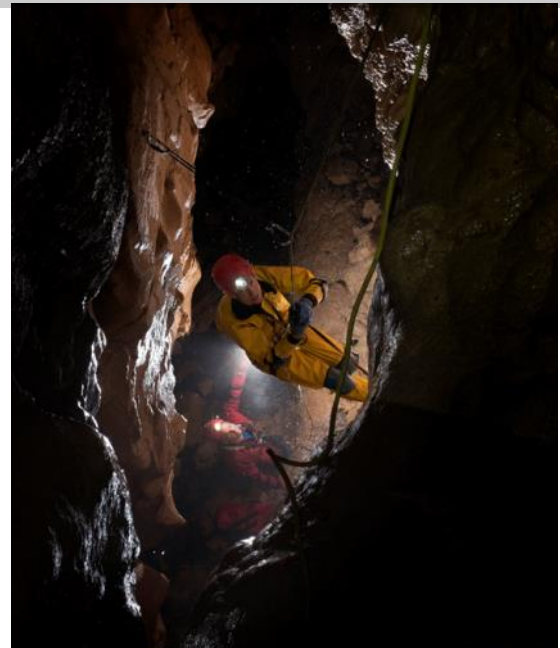
Ed and Jeremy had a look a little further round the corner in the lake, which had a better froth on it than the cappuccino I enjoyed in the café. You can see in these shots that the foam line tells how high the water has been in the recent past and though it was *probably* falling, it would only take a little more rain on the already soaked hillside to cause issues. So we decided that although considered "marginal but do-able" as it was, the uncertainty of the forecast prompted us to look for something a little higher and drier for the day.



It pays to tread with care—the floor is quite uneven in places! (Look carefully at this picture!)

After a brief discussion of the options, it was decided to have a look at a little of Tunnel Cave, further up the hill and not so susceptible to high water. A quick journey up to The SWCC cottages acquired the necessary key and we were set.

Jeremy ascending one of the upper pitches. (Below)



Russ with some formations that clearly show traffic damage. (Below)



(Above) Ed preparing to lead the way down the entrance pitch. (Below) Russ on a high traverse.





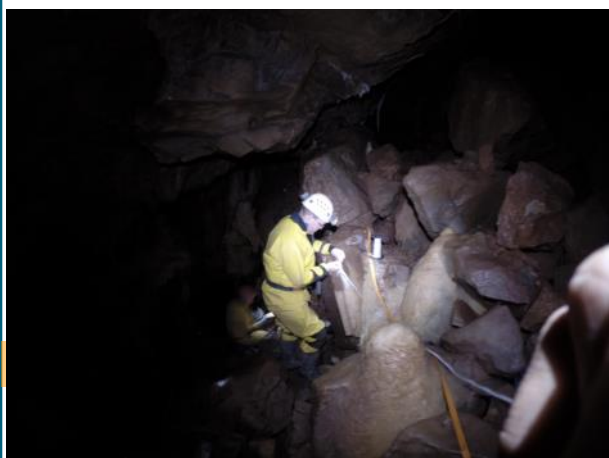
Jeremy, Russ, Ed and Andrew.
 Back at the car park after a day that even Welsh rain couldn't ruin!

MORE CAVE CONSERVATION AT FAIRY CAVE QUARRY

By Tom Harrison

Chris Binding has been busy over the winter with more cave conservation work in Fairy Cave Quarry, for which he has volunteered a great deal of his time. I came along to one of his retaping sessions in Shatter, partly to visit a Cave in the quarry that I hadn't been to before!

Shatter Cave is extremely well decorated with some very beautiful formations. I would guess that the cave is named Shatter, for the shattering of the rock that has occurred there, most of it from blasting during the quarrying operation.



Chris has been ably assisted by Jon Da'Casto and Tom Kawka during this retaping exercise. I came along to join Chris and Jon for one session in December. We got quite a production line going in the end and managed to get as far as Pisa Passage, where there is the impressive Leaning Tower formation. I cannot recommend this trip highly enough, for those who enjoy the pretties or who want to do some photography in a relatively accessible cave.

Chris has since reported that the Shatter re-taping project is now finished. "It used 400 metres of tape, 300 risers and approximately 35 person hours of work. All of the old tape has been removed from the cave. Visits are not calendar-dependent, unlike Balch Cave, Fairy Cave and Hilliers. The next caves at Fairy Cave Quarry on the re-taping list are Fernhill (which should take half a day, thankfully!) and another big project.... Hilliers, which is long overdue for some loving care."

Please get in touch with Chris if you would like to assist with either.



(Above Left) Jon and Chris Taping in Shatter Cave
 (Left) Helicities in Shatter TH



MENDIP NEWS



Tony Jarratt Silver Shovel Award 2014

By Joan Goddard

On 22nd November, Tony Jarratt's birthday, six MCG members joined a smaller crowd than usual in the Long Room of the Hunters to find out who had won the annual digging award.

Upper Canada Cave was disallowed on the basis it had all been found on previous occasions.

Scotland came in with 40m of new passage in Skye but **the winner was the Charterhouse Digging Team (CDT) for 100m of new passage in Charterhouse Cave.**

After climbing a high aven they entered a rift (Puff-Pant-Rift) which in turn led to the top of a 'phreatic riser' with a pool at the bottom.



Formations in the roof above the Frozen Deep by Mike Moxon

Peter Glanvill gave a quick résumé of Reservoir Hole progress. The Silo has bottomed out at a solid rock floor and has been abandoned, Magic Smoke dig has been mothballed and Skyfall is currently being dug. Skyfall is an ascending phreatic rift with a good draught. A series of fixed ladders have been installed and digging continues upwards into a choke.

Windsor Hill Swallet, originally dug by NHASA but now an ATLAS dig, is 30 feet deep. It takes a good stream in winter but dries up in the summer. Water only takes 24 hrs to reach St Andrew's Well in Wells whereas Thrupe Lane Swallet takes twice as long. St Andrew's Well has been dived by Duncan Price during the last year but closes down rapidly.



(Left) Windsor Hill Lid (Right) Mark "Gonzo" Lumley inside the Cave by Mike Moxon



The Lid at Templeton November 2014 by Mike Moxon

Phil Hendy spoke about Templeton's Pot, but so rapidly that I couldn't take decent notes! Progress has been slow but at the bottom of South Pot a small horizontal stream passage 20cm wide and 45 cm high is being enlarged. They are also digging at North Corner.

Chris Binding was off on holiday again so a recent video of progress in Grebe Swallet was shown. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B8nVwUAtDLQ&feature=youtu.be>. The previous dig ended in a boulder ruckle so they moved to a new site, Project Perdition, which is running in a straight line in the direction of Upper Flood.

Alan Gray (ACG) spoke about Upper Canada and associated caves near the 'Lost Cave of Hutton'. They have started a new dig nearby called Croc's Pot where they hope to find more bones originally unearthed by miners in 1756 but subsequently lost.

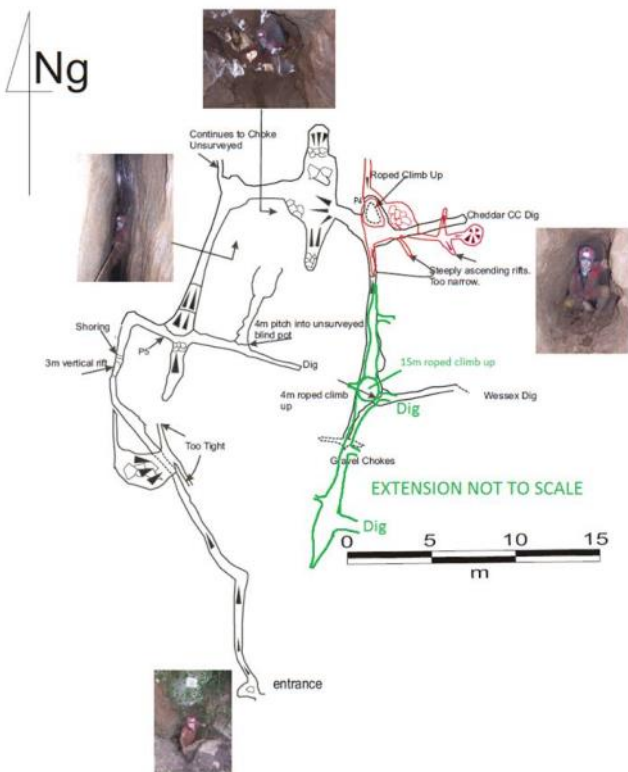


The Digger in Upper Canada Cave
October 2013
 By Mike Moxon

Rod's Pot/ Drunkards Hole Update by Peter Hall

Smoke testing before Christmas gave encouraging results in Rod's Pot and further testing in Drunkards Hole sparked some interest in the 2nd Rift Chamber where a very strong draft was detected.

A New Year's Eve trip saw us climbing the rift above the old Wessex dig to a narrowing which was blocked by boulders from above. A possible route below the boulders proved too tight, but gave a glimpse of larger open cave beyond



Drunkards Hole, Burrington Coombe
 ST 4714 5840 Altitude 164m
 Surveyed Dec 2007

PLAN
 Length 198m Depth 36.5m
 Drawn by CS

Thinking thin all week, we returned last night to attack it afresh. After another failed attempt on the squeeze, a different tactic was needed; removing the boulders. This proved to be easier said than done as movement was very restricted and great care was needed to prevent the whole lot coming down.

Eventually with all but the largest rocks removed, "The Trapdoor" was just passable, though still bloody tight! Above The Trapdoor, "The Attic" has a vertical range of about 5m and continues in both directions at a caveable size to an overall length of around 15m.

To the north, a small calcified grotto is climbed to a shattered area of the rift with a possible dig site to the east. Shortly after this the rift closes down in another calcified grotto.

To the south, the rift continues much further and opens out to walking size passage on a boulder floor. After around 10m, this suddenly closes up into a very narrow rift, with a wide low phreatic passage leading off to the east. This is part filled with sediment and provides the most promising new dig site.

Back at The Trapdoor, another low, wide phreatic passage leads off to the east, also partially blocked by silt. Several small phreatic passages also head off to the west, but these are generally smaller and more choked than those to the east.

CRoW—A Yes Vote

As I'm sure a lot of you have read in the last few weeks, the British Caving Associations vote has now been completed. The question: Should BCA, on your behalf, campaign for The Countryside and Rights of Way Act to apply to going underground? From the 6,085 eligible voters, 1,402 voted yes (61.9% of valid votes), 864 voted no (38.1% of valid votes) with 4 ballots deemed invalid. The voting turnout was 37.3% The BCA's website gives the details decided upon at their January meeting on how to take things forward, they list that they will:

- “continue our dialogue with DEFRA, NE and NRW, including seeking advice on successfully limiting access to our most fragile sites or to sites which might represent a danger to the public;
- consult with landowners and open communication with the Countryside Land and Business Association;
- seek further legal opinion to support our case;
- liaise with other like-minded organisations, such as the BMC and the BCU;
- continue to explore ways to effectively protect our more fragile sites;
- seek to change Section 4.6 of our Constitution at the June 2015 Annual General Meeting;
- work with Regional Councils, affected landowners and Access-controlling Bodies to ease the transition; lobby MPs and other persons of influence to push for CRoW to apply to going underground.”

Photo Competition

There is currently a Photography competition being run, as part of the Mendip Hills AONB unit's 'Discovering Black Down' project. £50 is up for grabs for the winning photo, highlighting the landscape, wildlife or historical heritage of Black Down and Burrington Commons. The competition closes at the end of October 2015. Full entry details can be found at www.discoveringblackdown.org.uk

The Archaeology of Mendip Caves and Karst

Well worth a read is Vince Simmond's new publication. Looking at Caves and Karst from an archaeological viewpoint.

The publication can be found at http://staticweb.mcra.org.uk/publications/Mendip_Archaeo_Simmonds.pdf or via MCRA.org.uk. There will also be a copy available in the library shortly.

Dates for Diaries

The Joint BCA/ BCRC Party Weekend, BCRC Conference and BCA AGM will take place at the Dean Field Studies Centre, in the Forest of Dean over the weekend of the 12th-14th June.

Hidden Earth is down south this year. 25th-27th September at Churchill Academy, in Churchill.

No news on Digfest 2015 yet.

CSCC have their AGM at the Hunter's Lodge, Priddy 9th May

And most important our own AGM/Dinner 18th April!

An overview of the archaeology of Mendip caves and karst. Compiled and edited by Vince Simmonds.

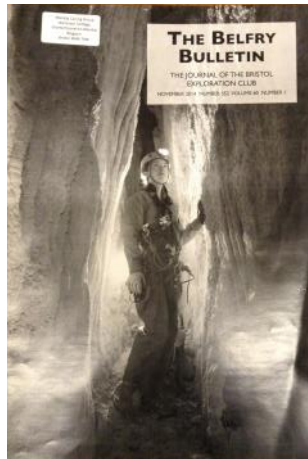
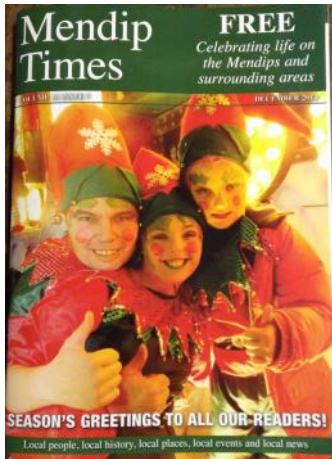


Looking out to Blackdown, the highest point on Mendip, from Burrington Ham

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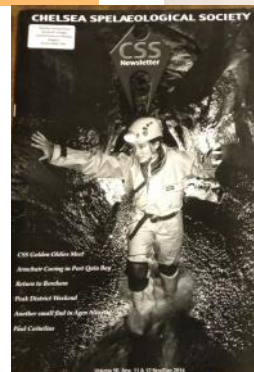
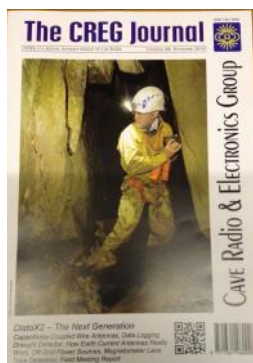
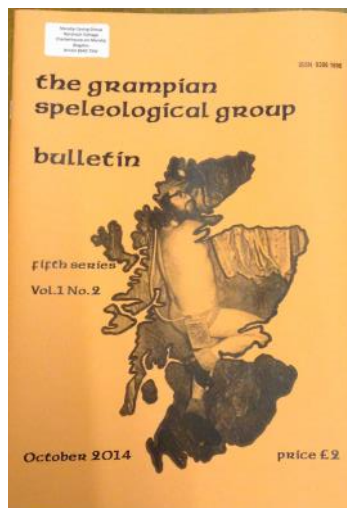
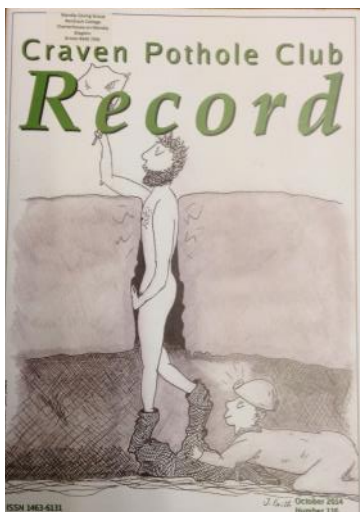
LIBRARY ADDITIONS



NEW NEWS FROM NEW NEWSLETTERS

Don't forget that we have a very active newsletter exchange with other clubs on Mendip, from the UK and from further afield too.

These are a selection of covers from the newsletters received by the club over the last few months. They can all be found in the library, if you don't know where to look then please ask!



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And to all the photographers' contributions, as acknowledged.

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Mendipcavinggroup.org.uk



Founded 1954

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The Mendip Caving Group consists of some 100+ members of all abilities who have banded together to share resources such as ladders, ropes, a 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.) We have an active internet forum and a web page the address of which is below.

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