

Number 378

MCG NEWS

September 2015



A SHORT WALK FROM THE COTTAGE

Editorial

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Well first off, I must start with an apology! I was hoping that you would be reading this around a month ago. I won't bore you with the reasons why, but the delay has brought some positives with it!

It has meant that you can now read all about a breakthrough in Sandford Levvy. A whole 86 m has been added to the surveyed length, but this discovery offers more than new passage, and will change the whole understanding of the history of the mines and their development. Ed Waters fascinating piece is inside and the survey will be published in due course.

Talking of surveys, Ben Cooper has told me that the new survey of Bone is also nearing completion, I've had an advance preview and it is a very impressive work, especially considering the complexities of illustrating a very long thin cave, with multiple layers of passage. This is something to look forward to in MCG News 379.

As reported in the 2nd MCG Update, in this issue we celebrate the life of Ron Saunders who sadly passed away in May. Ron has been a big part of the Group and I often see his name mentioned in Newsletters and Log-books from all throughout the last six decades. I know from the stories and from other members that he gave a great deal in many, many ways to the MCG. Pete Matthews, who first caved with Ron in the late 1960s has written a lovely piece which is a fitting tribute to a man who has helped to shape the MCG we know today.

With some interesting articles currently being worked on by some of the group for future editions of MCG News, I decided to put something together for this one. Inspired by some photos Mike Moxon has taken, some articles that Tim Francis has written and by recent MCG activities, I have started a series about the caves closest to the cottage. Taking a short walk in the beautiful countryside around the cottage, it is staggering how many Karst and Mining related features can be spotted.

The Hole in the Garden/Lawn Dig and Cow Hole are the first I have researched and written about in this series and I'd be pleased to hear of any stories any of you have about either of these, or any of Pine-tree, Ubley Warren, Nordrach Cave or Nordrach Mine!

This edition we are again fortunate to have some more impressive photos sets from Andrew Horeckyj, from trips to Thrupe Lane and more from Dan Yr Ogof.

Henry Davies-Ball has also set up a YouTube channel for the MCG, so any videos of any trips you have made, please let Henry know so we can get them online for all to see.

It is the 1st ever MCG Photo and Video competition in November so I'm really looking forward to seeing what everyone comes up with! I hope to be able to share some of them with those of who aren't able to attend in November, in the next newsletter.

Ed and Hayley Clarke have also worked very hard to organise some very fun and enjoyable social events throughout the summer, from a French night to a Bond night. For any of you that are reading this and haven't been at the cottage for a while, I would highly recommend trying to get along to a members weekend, even if you are no longer caving!

Check out the Coming up page for information about what's on over the next few months and look out for MCG Update for any news before the next newsletter is published.

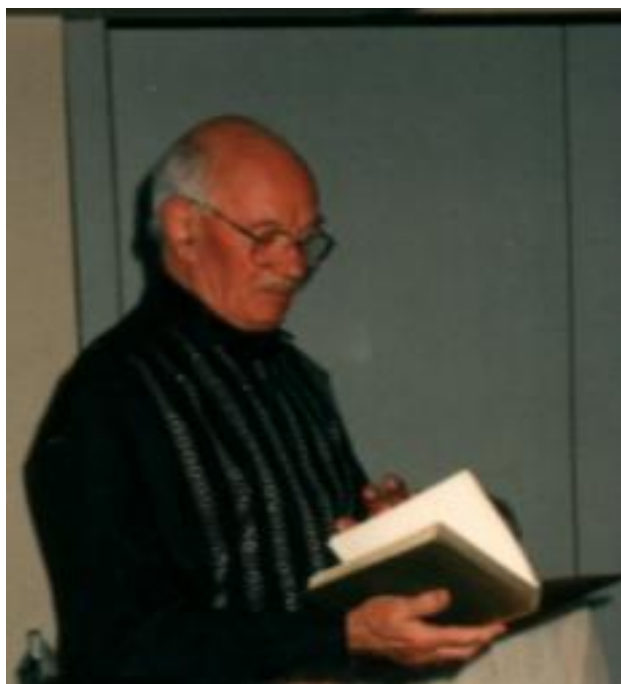
Please continue with all your much appreciated contributions. I hope you enjoy this edition, and please send any comments, corrections, criticisms or creations to the email below or to the address on the back page!

Tom Harrison August/September 2015

On the Cover:
Henry Davies-Ball in Thrupe Lane Swallet, taken by Andrew Horeckyj

VALE: RON SAUNDERS

By Pete Matthews



Ron Saunders becoming an Honorary member in 1990

Our good friend Ron Saunders passed away on Monday, 11th May at the untimely age of 94. He joined the Group in 1968 and was Treasurer from 1969 – 79. He was also a Custodian Trustee until he retired from this position in 1994.

We first got to know Ron in 1968 when we met him by chance in Burrington Combe with his children Roger and Helen and his old friend Rob Penn. They were exploring some of the local caverns and slockers popular with beginners on account of ease of access. As a trip for the casual visitor Goatchurch was an awe inspiring experience – and still is if you browse the description in Balch. But as we chatted, we caught his interest with our accounts of GB and Longwood which proved much too temptingand he was hooked.

What do we remember of Ron in those early days....? For a start he was much older than anyone else. For the most part, we were a scruffy bunch of lads in our 20's, driving down in ex GPO vans and dossing in an ex RAF hut (MCG Cottage Mk II – the wooden hut which can still be seen from the kitchen window of Nordrach Cottage). Ron, in contrast, was a gentleman in his late '40's, he wore a cravat, cruised down in a Jag and stayed at a nice B&B. Perhaps, the most remarkable thing about Ron is that he took up caving at an age long after most people have given up.



Ron in Eastwater 1967 by Helen Ingold

After savouring the delights of Mendip, where delights are tight passages and mud filled crawls, Ron greatly enjoyed discovering caves in other parts of the country where passages were generally larger and horizontal and far more appropriate to a gentleman of his years. And, so Ron became a regular visitor to South Wales and Yorkshire. One of his favourite bases in The Dales was The Gamecock in Austwick where food was simple, but perfect – very much to his taste.

Join any club and before you know where you are you are involved in doing all sorts of things which have no apparent connection with why you joined in the first place. The dream of purchasing a plot of land from Jim Fry and self building a cottage might not have been possible without the services of a tame solicitor. And, Ron was senior partner with Reynolds, Parry-Jones & Crawford, the most eminent firm of solicitors in High Wycombe.

The build would not have been possible without grant aid, and this might not have been forthcoming without the 'right letter'. Our main grant came from The Sports Council and offered 50%



Ron (left) Rich Norris and J MacMillan 1971 from the MCG Archives



Ron Saunders' 60th Birthday Swildon's? Sept 1980 from the MCG Archives.

support based upon satisfactory stage reports. The Sports Council had never funded a caving group before, and doubt if they have since, and a self build project was a new one for them too. We had considerable cash flow problems. Somehow, The London Playing Fields Association came on board - "...we don't support projects of this nature, and certainly not outside London... but, we do have some unallocated funds and could offer a short interest free loan if that would help?" It helped! A key step in all of this was gaining status as a Charity at Law. This arose as a result of a change in VAT regulations which meant that we could not reclaim VAT on our building materials without temporary registration for VAT and we could only do this if we were a Charity. So that was the next step.....

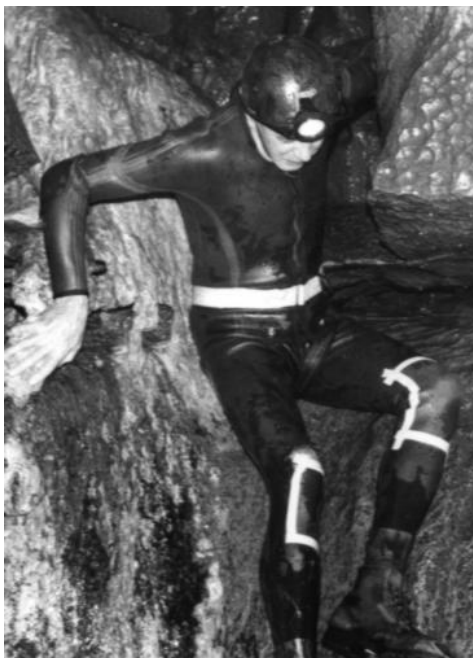
As our Treasurer, with his cautious legal background, Ron insisted that the building project be fully insured at all stages of construction. So, we reached a point when the cottage was completed, albeit briefly, before being totally destroyed in a gas explosion - instantly making MCG the wealthiest caving club on Mendip. The insurance settlement was more than sufficient to fund a replacement cottage, erected this time by a local builder, and leave a considerable reserve for future contingencies.

We remember his surprise 60th Birthday in The Old Grotto in Swildons and later at The Hunters. We remember his 70th Birthday when he was made an Honorary Member. Ron and Margaret greatly enjoyed our social events, the barn dances and dinners, and were regular supporters. We might not remember Ron for cave discovery, the fastest 'round trip' or any other such



Ron in Goatchurch 1966 by Helen Ingold.

caving feats - but we do remember a **true gentleman who played a very big part in making the MCG what it is today.**



Ron in Alum Pot 1978 from the MCG Archives.



Ron's 60th at the Cottage from the MCG Archives Sept 1980.

RON'S CELEBRATION

Wednesday 27th May 2015



Margaret and Ron in 2004 at the MCG 50th by Martin Rowe.

Helen Ingold (his daughter) and Margaret (his wife) wrote this piece for the newsletter.

Well what a turn out by MCG members for Dads Celebration of Life and Final Farewell. You came from far and wide.

He would have loved you all being there and we know that those of you who weren't there were thinking of us.

Phil as usual after a rattle of his urn came up trumps with the weather. A beautiful warm sunny day, and we as a family really enjoyed catching up and reminiscing, with all our friends from the Mendip Caving group.

It was far from a sad occasion, and will help us all go forward without Ron.

Margaret, Helen, Roger and Anne would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks and appreciation to you all and for the many kinds words and expressions of sympathy received over the past few weeks.

We found a few very old photos of our first Caving trip in Goatchurch Cavern in 1966 and a couple in the MCG Cottage.... Can't believe the For-man's Lounge ever looked that "Posh"... but it did.



Ron and Margaret in 2001 by Bernard Reeves.



Helen, Roger and Ron in the Cottage by Helen Ingold.



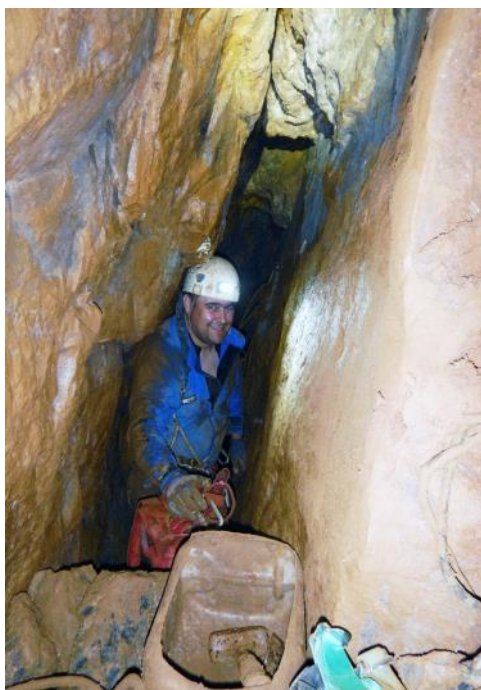
Maribell Penn (wife of Rob Penn), Ron and Helen in Goatchurch in 1966 by Helen Ingold.



Helen, Ron and Phil 1971 from the MCG Archives.

A MINE IGNORED AND UNDERAPPRECIATED

A Significant Discovery in Sandford Levvy by Ed Waters- Photos by Graham Price



Ed in Sandford Levvy, August 2015 .

My first visit to Sandford Levvy was way back in 1989 or 1990 during a whistle-stop tour of some of the gems of Western Mendip, the gems being a mixture of caves and pubs. I don't remember visiting again, until in 2003 it seemed like an ideal venue for training in surveying prior to an expedition I was running to Iceland later in the year. The idea was that the main tunnel would provide an easy introduction to cave surveying for the majority of the expedition personnel who had never mapped a cave before. We could then retire to the pub and compare our results with the published survey.

It was at this last point that the plan fell down somewhat, in that it turned out that no one had ever carried out an accurate survey of the mine before. The only published map being that of Willie Stanton included in Balch's "Swallet Caves & Rock Shelters" [Reference 1], which is clearly stated to be to C.R.G. Grade 1, i.e. no more than a sketch. Stanton stated that the mined tunnel was some 1500 ft (450m) long, but our survey showed it to be only 313m. We were confident in this figure as we had three parties traverse the tunnel, and the length agreed within a few tens of centimetres between all three.

With the tunnel now surveyed, it seemed only right and proper that the survey was completed by including all the various side passages. On the face of it this would appear to be a simple job, but in fact it turned out to be a major project including some bold climbing, and by the end of it we had more than made up the loss of the length of the main tunnel by adding previously unrecorded passage, and nearly doubled the vertical range of the system. Of most significance was the "discovery" of about 60m of mined passage above the 20m high shaft to the left (looking into the tunnel) at First Crossroads [Reference 7].

No previous description of these passages could be found [References 2 to 6] , though they had clearly been visited by a very few cavers at some point. These passages appeared to come very close to the long lost Pearl Mine (entrance blocked in 1970) [Reference 8] and with the shotholes clearly driven down towards the Levvy, it was clear that there must be a way in from above. One particular passage ended at a tight choke, through which a stemple could be seen and a steady draft blew. It was clearly a promising dig, but by then we were getting bored with the Levvy, and frankly I did not have the skills needed at that time to dig it safely.

Fast forward a decade, and although I had frequently thought about Sandford Levvy, no action was taken bar a couple of desultory digging trips that achieved little. Last summer (2014) it dawned on me that the ropes we had installed during the survey work had now been in place for ten years, and the ropes themselves were originally bought for an expedition in 1986. It seemed then that it was either time to strip them out or replace them. Buddy and I therefore found ourselves testing and then ascending the old ropes in June 2014, armed with a cordless drill, new ropes, bolts and carabiners. One trip saw the old Bluewater II rope and spit anchors replaced with Mammut 10mm rope and brand new stainless steel throughbolts.

We also took the opportunity to scout out the old dig, and to our surprise it even seemed more promising than we remembered. That discovery along with the need for a little light relief after six years hard graft at Bone Hole, meant that enthusiasm was rekindled.



Mark 'Buddy' Williams, Sandford Levvy, Sept. 2015 .

Several trips were spent with Buddy and I improving the approach to the dig by moving a vast quantity of deads from the narrow passage so that we could actually work at the sharp end. Progress was quick, and soon Buddy was able to get up under the stemples we had seen a decade before. These quickly disintegrated to dust. Ahead was about 2m of open passage to a further choke, but the real horror was the discovery of what the stemples had been doing. They had been placed across the bottom of a shaft, at roof level of the passage we were in.

Note that the 2nd and 3rd editions of Mendip Underground [References 4 & 5] refer to a Shepton Mallet Caving Club Grade 6 survey of the mine carried out in 1977. No such survey was in fact ever undertaken.



Left: Looking along passage with the boulders that had been held up by a now disintegrated Stemple.



Right Top: Looking directly up the shaft at the same boulders. Note the black mark from the wood of the Stemple.



Right Bottom: The same boulders, post stabilization.

The “Old Man” had then backfilled the shaft with many large rocks. These were delicately wedged in the roof, and the choke could be seen to extend upwards at least two metres between the solid walls of the shaft and the boulder fill.

Clearly we could not contemplate working under such a lethal obstacle, and we discussed how best to deal with it. In the end we asked Graham Price if he could persuade the boulders down from a safe distance. After a bit of a wait, Graham and I headed up to the dig in early August 2015 armed with the technical equipment required to give the boulders a “jolt”. On close inspection however, Graham suggested that he may be able to shore the roof up with cement, this would have the advantage of not creating a vast quantity of rubble that we would then have to stack in the limited space available.

We then spent several trips, now assisted by Mike Moxon, and on one occasion by Julie Hesketh, lugging heavy bags of cement up to the dig, whilst a very brave (or stupid!) Mr Price carefully inserted handfuls of cement into the interstices between the boulders, whilst the rest of us held our breath. Graham’s bravery was repaid as the finished job is superb, he even had the nerve to leave a hole so that future visitors can see up into the shaft above!

With the roof secure, we could return to the end of the dig. The way on looked almost open with a single large block barring further progress. On Wednesday 26th August, Buddy, Graham and I made the usual journey up to the dig. The big boulder was drilled and “pop” it was gone. The fumes cleared and Graham edged forward up the narrow slope beyond, and then he disappeared. I followed up the slope to pop up in a narrow mined passage. Behind was another passage almost full of deads



Left: Graham Price beside a comparatively small stack of deads
Right: Mike Moxon belaying Ed down a newly discovered shaft



which obviously connects to the shaft beneath which Graham had applied all the cement. Ahead was a small drop and an enlargement into a small boulder chamber.



Cave Pearls from which Pearl Mine originally got its name, in the newly discovered Pearl's Den



Buddy exploring in a rather snug crawl

The boulder chamber ended at a choke, but to the right a step up and a small hole led to another large void. Immediately through the hole on the right was a shaft, lined with deads on two sides, leading down to who knew where, and to the left a section of walking height passage sloping upwards for about 10m or so. This passage was clearly natural and had been modified by the miners with walls of deads. The floor was also covered in delicate formations including cave pearls and a miner's stemple covered in stal. This section of passage was named "Pearl's Den" after Dennis Vincent's wife Pearl who have been family friends of Hayley and I for many years. Den had passed away a few days before this discovery was made.

At the top of Pearl's Den, the passage lowers, with an opening on the right leading to a major shaft heading up out of sight. This shaft has obviously seen much traffic and seemed to provide the answer to where the miner's had made entry. Straight ahead a low crawl led to an enlargement, with a rabbit or hare skeleton showing that a surface connection could not be that far away. The passage was now quite large, and the Old Man had backfilled most of its volume with deads. Buddy found it was possible to crawl between the natural roof and these deads for some metres, showing that the original natural passage is of considerable width.



Ahead the passage is large, and we were becoming very excited as Pearl Mine must now be very close indeed. But a few metres ahead, the passage ended at another shaft down. We reckoned we had explored about 50m of "new" passages and started to head back to the Crown for well earned beer and medals. We had one more surprise on that first trip though. As Buddy headed back first past the big climbing shaft, he made an exclamation of surprise and said, "Ed, you need to have a look at this...". What we had missed on the way in was some miner's graffiti. It was difficult to make out, but we now think it says "A. Hancock, 17xx". This indicates that these workings are from the 18th Century, and as such predate the driving of the Levvy which began in 1830.

'A Hancock 17**'? Evidence of the workings predating the Levvy

an ongoing task for some time). Both shafts proved to be about 5m deep to where the Old Man had backfilled them. This left the big climbing shaft as the last obvious lead. On Friday 4th September Mike Moxon, Graham Price, Keith Knight, Brian Snell and I headed back into the extensions. Graham and Keith to do more grouting, Mike and Brian to climb what I am now calling Hancock's Shaft and I to carry out the survey.

We returned the next week (Wednesday 2nd September) to descend the two downward shafts, and to place some cement in some of the looser deads (this will be

It was anticipated that Hancock's Shaft would head straight up toward the surface, and probably represented the downward continuation of an obscure surface shaft recorded as "Rift C Shaft 3" back in 1950 [Reference 10]. If so we could expect it to choke about 15m below the surface. It also seemed very likely that the shaft would intercept a cross gallery, the right hand

branch leading towards the enigmatic Pearl Mine. According to the survey the closest point in Pearl Mine is marked "Unexplored Very Unsafe" [Reference 9]. However, after a skilful climb of about 25m Brian was surprised to encounter a solid rock roof! No obvious passages were noted, which means any continuation is hidden behind dead.



Keith Knight descending a shaft in Sandford Levvy

Keith and Graham completed the cementing and then took photos, and eventually I completed the survey. This shows that the new extension totals 86m, but more interestingly it shows that Hancock's Shaft terminates at approximately the same depth as the lower gallery in Pearl Mine, which appears to be only 9m away along the vein. Rift C Shaft 3 also terminates at the same depth, but seems to be offset from the vein by about 20m. This suggests that there is likely to be a working in the vein running between the known end of Pearl Mine and Hancock's Shaft, and a crosscut leading to Rift C Shaft 3 and ultimately the surface. Interestingly this mirrors the situation found in the 2004 extensions almost exactly, with the expected connection to site No.6 in Reference 8.

With the new extension of 86m, Sandford Levvy has increased in length from 588m (as stated in Mendip Underground) to 674m and the vertical range has increased from 43m to 67m.

At present these represent a significant hazard to those not used to dealing with them. There are a number of delicate and vulnerable features that need to be protected for the future. This work is underway, and we would ask that anyone who is interested in visiting the extensions has the courtesy to contact the explorers for now, as many of these features relate to the mining and many cavers may not recognise their importance. All of the obvious leads have now been pushed, but we still need to go over the whole extension with a fine tooth comb. We have the prospect of a fine sporting through trip involving a number of pitches of 20m or more and the possibility of regaining Pearl Mine for the caving community.

At the time of writing there have been only three trips into the extensions, and a total of six cavers have visited them. The new extensions, and the pitches up from the Levvy, are full of tottering piles of miner's deads that desperately need

stabilising. All this is not bad for a project that was intended to divert our attention for a short while whilst we regained enthusiasm for Bone Hole. Including the re-rigging of the pitches in June last year it took only seven trips to achieve a breakthrough. Hopes are high that we can wrest a bit more out of this before we are finished, and Sandford Levvy certainly seems to be a far more interesting place than most cavers seem to consider it!

Ed Waters, 14th September 2015

Note that the dig at Bone Hole has not been abandoned! It was just that a change is as good as a rest for a short period.

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CAVES CLOSE PART 1

Caving in the vicinity of the Cottage by Tom Harrison

With a gap in this month's newsletter, I was thinking of different articles that I could write, when Mike Moxon was kind enough to send to me some photographs of many of the entrances within a short walk from the cottage. This tied in very nicely with the resurrection of the Cottage Garden Dig, some recent furtles in Ubley Warren Pot and a regular interest on the newsgroup for places like Cow Hole and Pinetree Pot.

By coincidence, I had also come across Tim Francis' newsletter article in MCG News 263, describing the Cave Sites around Nordrach and so I felt it was about time we re-visited some of these sites, at least in print, to update the progress and potential of this, sometimes quieter, part of Mendip!

Geography and Hydrology

As many of you know, the simple explanation of the geology of the Mendips is that pressure from continental drift to the south of the region caused great mountains to form as rock was thrust upward into anticlinal folds. As the top layers of limestone (the youngest rock) were stretched and weakened, they eroded and exposed the older rock underneath; the old red sandstone, that forms the peaks of Blackdown, North Hill, Pen Hill and Beacon Hill. (BGS.CO.UK)

Caves readily occur near to where the impermeable old red sandstone meets the permeable limestone. At the cottage we are in a geographically interesting area situated close to the crest of the Blackdown anticline. Here, the limestone still sits on top of the older rock and as we are at this crest, the limestone is flatter at this point and so the bedding planes tend toward the horizontal. As you get further south and north the bedding plane becomes less horizontal and steeper. With the horizontal bedding planes nearby, some more 'pot' like features can form in some of the caves. A prime example being Cow Hole

Hydrologically, of those caves that have been tested, Ubley Hill Pot flows to Rickford risings to the North West, while Pinetree Pot flows to Cheddar to the South West. (Limestone and Caves of the Mendip Caves, D.P . Drew and D.I. Smith.) It is interesting to note that all other caves to the west of Ubley Hill Pot that have been tested, feed both Langford and Rickford, while Ubley Hill Pot purely fed Rickford when tested. There has been some discussion as to whether at some point in the past Pinetree flowed to Rickford before it later flowed south. Indeed as we are on this crest, water could well have flowed north at one point and then south, as geological, and hydrological changes occurred.

Going by proximity alone, might Cow Hole's 'little' stream, like Ubley Hill Pot flow to Rickford, while Ubley Warren Pot like Pinetree Pot flow to Cheddar?

In this first part of this series of caves around the cottage we look at 3 of the sites:

Unrecorded Pipes

Cow Hole

And

The Garden Dig



Google Earth Image of the area closest to the cottage.
Copyright: Imagery - 2015 Getmapping plc. Map data - 2015 Google

The Garden Dig, The Lawn Dig or the Hole in the Garden

Intro by Tom Harrison Dig Report by Keith Knight



Ed Waters in the Garden Dig by Mike Moxon

ST 5147 5607

Why go traipsing around Mendip or driving to get changed beside a major road or in some exposed chilly field, when you can dig right in the cottage garden, with regular cups of tea and a warm cottage right beside you.

In the 1990s when the soakaway was dug a small rift was unearthed. This nicely drains the wash area and the ground around the cottage.

In spring 2010, Biff Frith and others were doing lots of work at the cottage.

Biff wrote in Newsletter 362 that over a very busy weekend, they installed the current gate, levelled up the car park, removed an old tree stump and installed new pipe in Pinetree Pot.

With Biff's digger available, they decided to have another look at the rift under the lawn!

A 10 feet deep hole was dug to expose a side of the rift. A wall was built, level with and opposite the rift to allow pipe to be placed. This had to be replaced and reinforced with scaffold the next day as the wall partially collapsed. A round wall was built over the pipe resulting in the hole that can be seen in Mike's photo left.

For 4 hours water was run from a hose into the hole, and Biff reported that a little stream way flowed down through the rifty floor and that there must have been 'void down there to take all that water.'

Fast forward to the approach to the July members weekend 2015 where it was suggested to have another poke!

Keith Knight takes up the story.

"Diggers—Ed, Mike R, Mike M, Bill, and Keith

Saturday morning hung over from Friday night, I joined the discussion on the Cottage Garden Dig. Ed was promoting the dig so having nothing better to do, I joined in, along with, Mike R, Bill, and Mike M.

First up was to clear the accumulated mud that had slumped in from the bottom of the pipe. The builder's ladder had to be pulled up and put back at the change of digger, as there is no room to dig with it in there.

First to dig if I recall was Bill but after a short time it was evident the CO₂ level was rising.

What to do?

Plan A

- Get out the Dyson
- Find a long length of pipe
- Some bodge it tape

Bill found a long length of ribbed pipe which was adapted to fit the Dyson. The very loud whistle generated by the ribbed pipe was unpleasant to the ears to say the least. This was abandoned.



Mike Moxon takes a rest while Keith, Mike and Brian decide on the next move. Photo by Charlie Allison

Plan B

Another length of pipe was found and suitably boded to the Dyson and we were back in business.

We worked in relays as it was hot work but mud and stone came out quite quickly. The marquee was got out of the loft and assembled for the BBQ. We moved it over the dig so with shade and large amounts of squash the dig continued. Then we hit big bits of stone. Time to send in Ed [he was the only one to put on an Oversuit]. After a capping session some manageable size stone came out. These are arranged around the earth rods by the front door.

Digging in the direction of the arch cut in the pipe which faces the depression in the field next door the dig hit solid rock. At this point the large blue barrel from the back of the cottage was filled with water then tipped directly into the silt trap discharge pipe to see if the sound of running water could be heard from the bottom of the dig. NO LUCK, so it was agreed to continue down through more mud and stone.

Mike M discovered a large wrecking bar under the bottom edge of the pipe which had to come out. After much swearing pushing and pulling it was recovered. That ended the day's digging. The mud is tastefully arranged along the wall and the wall height raised a bit and I bet Mr Dyson never envisaged his vacuum cleaner being used for this!

Right: Since the July weekend and some heavy rains over the summer, a collapse has occurred and the garden dig looks like this. Photo by Tom



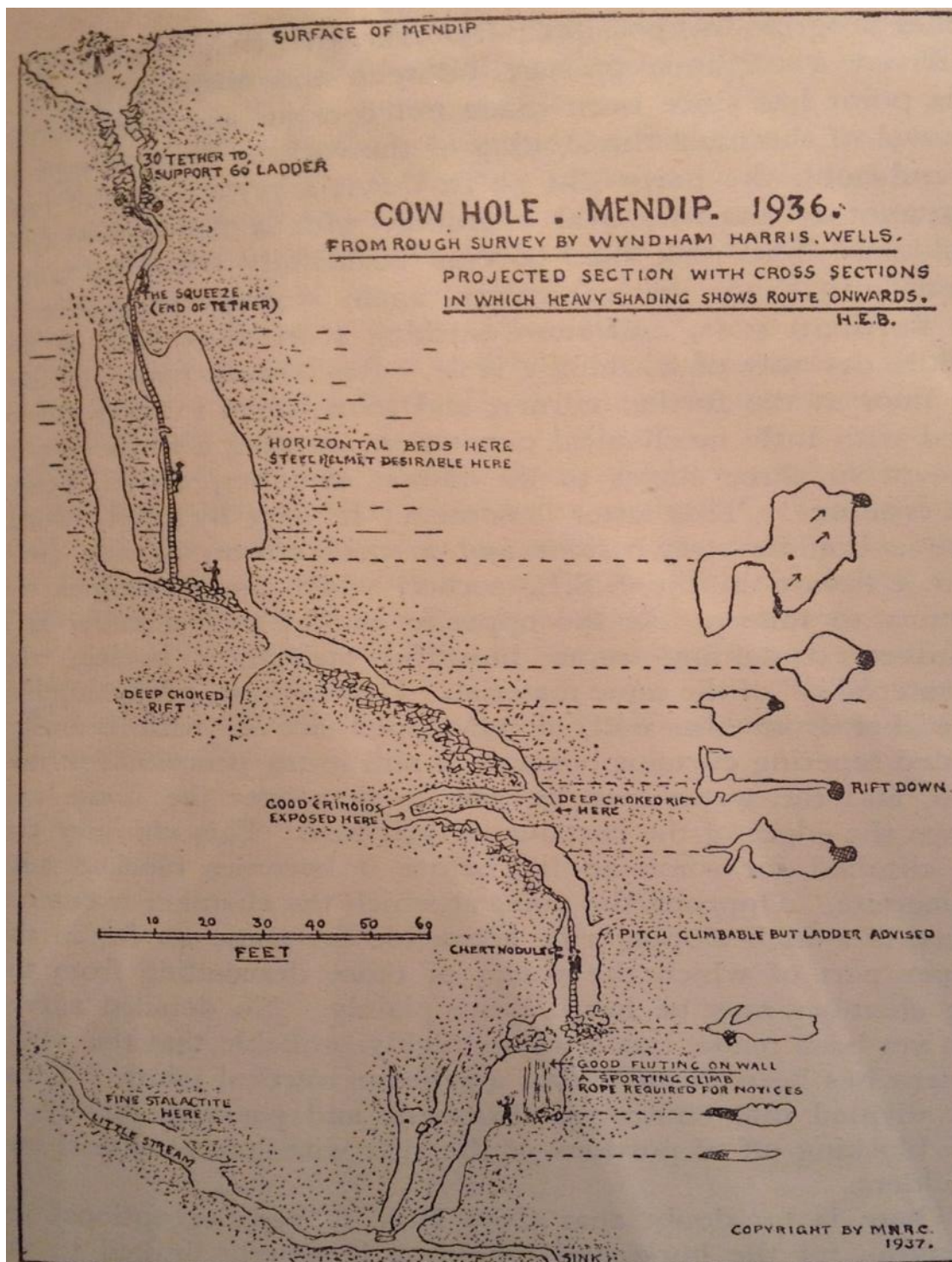
The cave was opened up and collapsed or filled in at various times over the years.

COW HOLE

Described by Tim Francis in MCG News 332 as a Mendip Classic and like a miniature Yorkshire Pot, this cave gets regular mentions on our newsgroup.

Herbert Balch in Mendip, Its Swallet Caves and Rock Shelters, devotes 6 pages to it. Balch describes how in the 1930s Gerard Platten, had "heard of a rift into which a spade had slipped during the process of burying a dead cow." This burial hole was at the bottom of a 20ft deep and 90ft diameter depression. Members of the Mendip Nature Research Committee and the Wessex Caving Club then proceeded to dig open the cave with relatively little effort in 1935, finding the Interesting Oval Shaped main chamber and the sloped lower passages with some vertical pitches coming below this. A 'little' stream was encountered at the lowest point sinking into gravel.

The hole was surveyed and the wonderful plate of the survey appears in Balch's book.



Cow Hole. 1936 from Rough Survey by Wyndham Harris, Wells. Used with kind permission of the Mendip Nature Research Committee.

Many attempts have been made to reopen it. Some successfully and some unsuccessfully.

In his logbooks, published online at mcra.org.uk, Stanton describes his visits in May 1963 to help to dig the cave reopen. The entrance at this time was described by Stanton as, "quite a masterpiece, about 15 feet of sewer pipes, then 3 feet neatly bricked up, then a lot of shoring mostly by slotted angle irons, finally entering an unstable boulder choke." Although he goes on to say that there appears to be one solid wall, "all the way down".

At this point in Cow Hole's history there was a boulder in the roof of the main chamber preventing a drop of the big pitch. Above this boulder were a roof of boulders. A Steel Frame of girders was built to protect the diggers, so that they could attack the pitch blocking boulder. Stanton blew up this boulder in June 1963, but no one dropped the pitch as everything was still so loose. .

In July 1963, Stanton returned and describes laddering the pitch to go down into a "big vertical cylinder." He goes on to describe that this cylinder, the main chamber, is plugged by a "simply colossal rock," " supporting the whole boulder floor of the depression above."



A depression in the field north of Cow Hole by Tom Harrison

Stanton goes on to describe that at the bottom of the main chamber, "there is a fairly flat floor with relics of laminated clay fill capped by layers of angular gravel. A crawl over the top of the fill leads into a high Aven with some stal. It looks climbable." Stanton notes that a fellow caver, Phil Davies, had told him of "a strong draft in this crawl when he was there."

Stanton continues, "When all were down we plunged down a hole between one wall and the boulder floor. This, it turned out, was to be the rule for most of the descent, crawling among boulders apparently filling the downward continuation of the main shaft. Some of the boulders don't look particularly safe.....we reached the head of a 12 foot pitch in solid," (Balch's 12 foot pitch, "ladder advisable"). "It turned out to be easily climbable so we dumped the ladder for a rope. A few boulders below was the 'sporting climb down which we abseiled. It too was about 12 foot, a nicely fluted rift in the solid. The same rift lead on down past a rather tight bit alongside a jammed rock and then there was a short connecting passage into a roomier level passage, the bottom of the Cave.

There was no stream today. Fred and I explored up-stream finding a boulder choke after a short distance, and looked at a narrow Aven further down while Mike T true to his nature squeezed down to the lowest possible point to look at the "sump." It is a damp little rift, probably impassible, choked with mud and gravel.....a very pleasant trip."

After Stanton's 1963 visit, a further collapse had occurred in 1965. Graham Price then of the Cerberus Spelaeological Society, heard that as no one ever visited the cave, the farmer intended to fill the depression. Graham convinced the farmer of the need to keep access to it and with a little help reopened the cave successfully in late 1977. Graham surveyed the cave in 1979 and this can be found in the CSS newsletter Vol 9 No. 3 or in Mendip Underground.

The last, logbook recorded, MCG visits to Cow Hole in the 20th Century occurred over the winter of 1988, into 1989 where Cow Hole is described as not, "as bad as everyone has said, quite a nice little trip", while Ubley Hill Pot is described as, "worse than could be imagined" by an unknown author. The cave was closed again sometime after, before substantial piping was installed in 1990 by the CSCC. The depression was then partially filled in by the farmer around this piping.

It seems that a suggested collapse caused by this filling in, had put off potential visitors for a number of years.

In late 2005 MCG investigations were initially unable to find the Hole.

In 2005 an obituary was even written by persons unknown to me, (please make yourself known for credit for this!)



The Entrance to Cow Hole by Mike Moxon
ST 5196 5676

“RIP Cow Hole Born 1947 (sic). Seriously Injured 1990s, following attempted infill. Resuscitated, but later expired. Died peacefully but unnoticed. No flowers.” Tony Knibbs adding a comment about it being “dreadfully loose over most of it’s depth.”

Another search, late in 2005, this time by Martin and Yvonne Rowe, Bob Templeman and Linda Milne, found what is left of the depression flooded, with the entrance shaft itself on the side of this feature.

Mick Norton and Doug Harris descended it in January 2006 to get as far as the Main Chamber pitch head.

A few weeks later Tim Francis, Peat Bennett, Doug and Mick then visited. When requesting permission from the farmer to visit the cave, it appears that the farmer had advised that the farmer’s wife had filled it in.

They found, as Mick and Doug had, that it wasn’t filled in and the entrance boulder choke after the entrance pipe was passable but much of it was highly unstable, old rotting timbers and rusty metal propping it all up. Tim describes that Stal had formed over the timber giving it a little bit more strength. The metal work could well be the angle irons and the steel frame described by Stanton, the timber possibly earlier, so it needs to be treated with a great deal of respect.

The pitch was carefully rigged and the main chamber descended into. It was described by Tim Francis in his MCG logbook entry as, “a fantastic pitch and a Mendip classic.” The party rummaged in the chokes at the bottom and mention seeing some nice formations. I understand that they didn’t get all the way to the bottom where the water sinks into gravel.

In newsletter 332, Tim gives a good account of what needs to be done to make it safer. Well worth a read before anyone makes another visit.

I do hope that Cow Hole can be re-stabilised, so we can all enjoy this Gem of a Cave so close to the cottage.

Unrecorded Pipes North of Cow Hole

Whilst photographing entrances, Mike came across a pipe near to Cow Hole. Neither of us can find out anymore about what is to be found at the bottom of it. If you are reading this and know, then please get in touch.



Location of unrecorded pipe north of Cow Hole
ST 5192 5694. Photo by Mike Moxon



Close up of pipe Photo by Mike Moxon

References

https://www.bgs.ac.uk/mendips/geology/Geological_Structure.htm
[Mendip Underground A Caver’s Guide by Alan Gray, Rob Taviner and Richard Witcombe Cow Hole PP102—103, Ubley Warren Pot PP420](#)
[The Mendip Caves—H E Balch PP 50-55, 140](#)
[Limestone and Caves of the Mendip Hills—Compiled & edited by D I Smith, Assisted by D P Drew PP 186-197](#)
[Mendip The Complete Caves and a view off the Hills—N Barrington and WI Stanton](#)
[MCG News 362 Editor Ed Waters. Car Park and Pinetree Pot by Biff Frith,](#)
[MCG News 263 Editor Jane Baldwin. Cave Sites around Nordrach by Tim Francis](#)
[MCG News 332 Editor Yvonne Rowe. Return to Cow Hole- Access report by Tim Francis](#)
[MCRA.—Dr Stanton’s Caving Logbook 10 P35-36 P41-42 P71-74](#)
[Various MCG Logbooks including:](#)
[Logbook 14 November 2005 to February 2006—Various](#)
[Tim Francis & Graham Price through correspondence](#)

Thrupe Lane Swallet

Trip Report and Photography by Andrew Horeckyj

Henry Davies-Ball, Dave Ball, Steve Church, Michael Kousiounis and Andrew Horeckyj - June 15

A dry day with no streamway entering the cave, just a little water on the entrance climb. Direct to the top of Wuthering Heights and descent to the marble streamway. Some of the group climbed Perseverance Pot, whilst the others had a poke around as far as the bridge choke above Avalance Pot.

Lots more to be done in a great cave.





Previous Page: Mike K. Above: Steve C, Dave B, Henry D-B, Mike K and Andy H. Below Left and Right: Dave B.



Dan-Yr-Ogof

Trip Report and Photography by Andrew Horeckyj

After a week that started pretty wet, the entrance lake levels presented refreshingly low, so despite the forecast of showers throughout the day, we decided that the trip was 'on'. The plan was to go to get to the Far North if time permitted it, with Jeremy having some specific photo stops pencilled in for the Great North Road. We didn't quite get there, but did get some nice pics in The Mostest, so I suppose we'll just have to go back and have another go at it!





Route:

Show Cave - 1937 series —
 Long crawl - DY02 - Gerard Platten
 Hall - Grand Canyon - Monk Hall -
 Cloud Chamber - Green Canal - Go
 Slower Passage - Go Faster Passage
 - The rising- (put on SRT kit) up to
 The Windy Way - Birthday Passage -
 pitch 2DY03 - Great North Road -
 Pinnacle Chamber - The Meanders -
 The Mostest

Photos:

Previous Page: Dave Ball in The
 Mostest

Above: The Group in The Mostest

Right: In Birthday Passage
 Top to Bottom:
 Jeremy Gilson
 Dave Ball
 Ed Waters



MCG GOES GARLIC

June Members' Weekend French Night by Tom Harrison

The instructions for the June weekend were to bring a stinky cheese and dress like an extra from 'Allo, Allo', and so on a lovely weekend, the cottage was filled with berets, stripes and a fairly pungent aroma of fromage.

Monsieur Waters and Mademoiselle Clarke, assisted by various sous chefs cooked up a magnifique coq au vin, mopped up with more baguette than you could shake a French stick at, and washed down with large quantities of vin! This was followed with the stinky cheese board!

Before dinner, we had the 1st annual inaugural yearly petaque/petong/boules?? Tournament, which was won by Karen Fendley. We quickly learned that the key to a good throw is to shout, "PETONG" as loudly as possible!

After dinner a re-enactment of the battle of Waterloo was carried out on the cottage table and the fun and games continued on into the night.

Top Left– Andy H, Kev S, Jeremy G, Hayley C, Angela G and Tom H before dinner. By an unknown photographer.

Bottom Left—Petanque in the Car Park by Charlie Allison

Top Right—Ed and Hayley recreate Waterloo by Charlie

Bottom Right—Bill Chadwick: Le Umpire by Charlie



BONES AND BOND

July Members' Weekend: Part 1 by Keith Knight

Photography party: Joan, JP, Mary and Charlie
Caving party: Jeremy, Mike M, Leonie, Brian and Keith

Joan gave us a quick history of the cave before we went in. The Stalactite Cave was discovered in 1757 by local miners, and the Bone Cave was found by miners who were paid £1 each to find another way into the Stalactite Cave in 1824.

The bones in Bone Cave are believed to have been washed into the cave at the beginning of the last Ice Age.

The bones discovered include bison, reindeer, brown bear and wolf. To me most looked to be made up of large leg and vertebra bones but I could be wrong. The main chamber has been excavated and the bones unearthed arranged around the cave. Charlie and JP stopped here to take pictures.



Some of the many piles of Bones. By Keith Knight

Outside the entrance to Bone cave there is a semi circular wall with niches and just recently a barn opposite this wall was demolished and revealed another part of the same wall just about standing. I believe this is to be restored in the near future.



Charlie Allison setting up to take some photos which will appear in a future edition. By Keith Knight

We, the cavers, went off to investigate the various side chambers. Ruby Chamber is the biggest, so called because of the rust coloured walls; even the flow stone was red. These side chambers show signs of digging but this has been discontinued due to CO₂ I believe.

We returned to the main chamber for a group picture. I may have acquired a nickname here, as at this point I took off my helmet which resulted in a release of steam, apparently from my head!

A short walk through the house garden took us up to The Stalactite Cave. Old stone cut steps led us down to the large Main Chamber with an enormous fallen boulder. This part of the cave was once open to the public and I did wonder if they got to climb the rusty iron ladder down past the boulder to see the Bishops Chair? There are some interesting formations in small side grottoes off the main chamber.

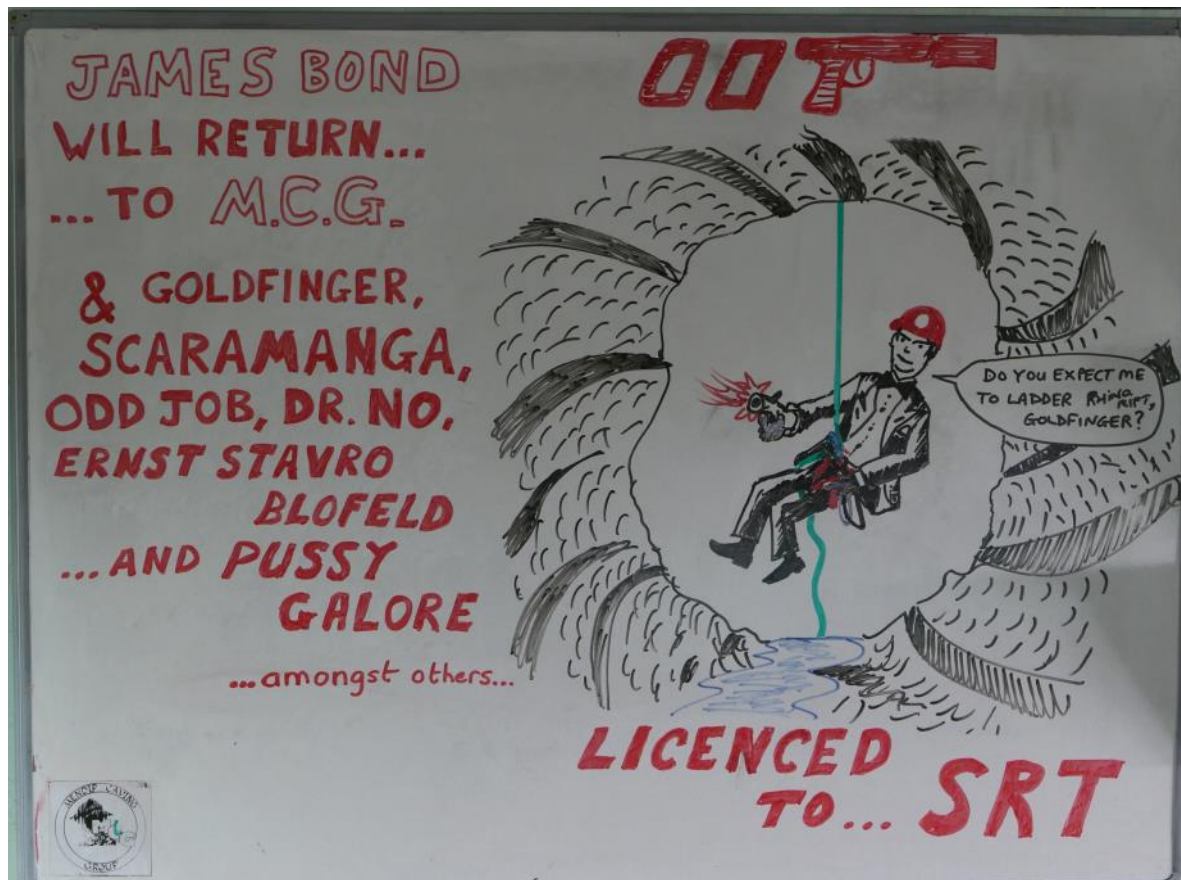
There are several ways on from this chamber. All looked quite dangerous due to unstable boulders but a short squeeze (for one member of the party) took us through to the Great chamber again with very large boulders to climb over. At the lower part of this chamber there is a way on to The Green Lake and Suicide Chambers. Brian did a bit of exploring but came back due to the unstable boulders in the floor. This is about 200ft down from the surface. There are signs warning of the dangers but we only found them amongst the boulders, after Brian went exploring. There is a side grotto with examples of calcite ice.

On the way back out we encountered water running in from the ceiling where there had been none before; we guessed it was raining top side and we would have to get changed in the rain.

A nice leisurely trip for a Sunday morning.

BONES AND BOND

July Members' Weekend: Part 2 by Karen Fendley



The MCG White Board Ready for the Bond Night Artist Andrew Horeckjy

Photo by Charlie Allison

The Bond evening was held in July and was a huge success.

Many characters were seen in the MCG garden from Oddjob to Daniel Craig.

Miss Money Penny tried to keep Daniel in check but to no avail! Daniel was, at one point, seen to be running around in front of the cottage trying to catch a spy (ably assisted by Baron Samedi).

Oddjob's hat was seen to be flying at various villains in the marquee which made eating interesting!

Solitaire predicted the future for a few people, all of whom seemed slightly bemused by them!

The BBQ was, as usual, greatly enjoyed by many more people and was accompanied by music (Bond themes through the ages). The music maestro spent many a happy hour sorting through all the available options and I think it would have continued much later if it weren't for the fact that Baron Samedi and Solitaire decided that NOW 90 was a better mix to dance to!

Oddjob supplied Martinis (shaken, not stirred of course) with a slightly more vodka than James probably enjoyed but it all helped the party go with a swing. There were even olives and ice!!

Many thanks to Ed and Hayley for organising the evening and to all the BBQ cooks and salad makers! Thanks also music maestro (Charlie), it must have taken ages!!

(I apologise if I have missed any other characters from the evening!)"



Top Left: Ed as Odd Job Middle Left: The Bond Disco in Full Swing Bottom Left: Hayley as Baron Samedi
 Top Right: Bill works the BBQ, Jeremy as Bond Middle Right: Ed with Karen Bottom Right: An atmospheric shot
 All Photos by Charlie Allison

CHEDDAR & CHIPS

August Member's Weekend by Keith Knight

Long Hole & Great Oones Hole



Above: Chips in the Gorge
Photo by Mike Moxon



Right: The steep slope up to Great Oones
Photo by Graham Price



Hayley in Great Oones Photo by Graham Price

Ed & Hayley organised fish and chips for us all. These were consumed in the lovely setting of the gorge.

We all got kitted up and walked to the show cave entrance where we were met by Chris Castle our guide. He went off to get changed and reappeared in a boiler suit. We were all of course in fleece and over suits which subsequently proved to be way too much kit.

We set off for Great Oones Hole up through the very steep vegetated slope to what felt like the top of the gorge. I can't speak for the others but I arrived very hot, breathless and sweaty at the cave entrance. Bob gave it a miss and stayed to look after the cars.

Chris led the way in. The local goats had obviously been in residence judging by the crap they had left behind. The cave is old roomy fossil passage robbed of any decoration by locals in years gone by to flog to the tourists.

The roomy passage led in and subsequently down a steep slope to a bit of a squeeze for some of us to the termination of the cave. I must thank Buddy for the leg up to get me back through the squeeze. I will leave Charlie to describe any markings that were found.

There are several abandoned digs in the cave. I am not surprised they were abandoned climbing that slope every time they went digging. It makes the walk to Bone Hole a stroll in the park.

We regrouped and again set off through the vegetation on a long traverse above the show cave to Long Hole. A handy rope across a rocky ledge lead to a sort of path through loads brambles and shrubbery to a big ledge above the gorge which gave magnificent views out to the west and the setting sun



Above: The view out of Long Hole Right: Ladder rigged to reach more passage. Photo by Charlie Allison

Traversing further along the gorge we came to the entrance to Long Hole. This faces down the gorge but is partially hidden by hanging vegetation. It is thought to have been inhabited by pre-historic man but as yet no evidence of this has been found. Chris did say that some archaeological digs had taken place in the past but had not found anything significant.

Again, this was walkable sized fossil passage. Almost every flat surface was covered in graffiti some old some new, Chris pointed out a scratched date of 1676 which Charlie said looked genuine. But I will leave Charlie to elaborate on the scratching. With 20 odd people looking for marks and calling "Charlie come and see this" he was dashing here and there taking loads of pictures and getting quite a sweat on.

At the end of the passage there is a climb up to a higher level passage; it looked quite strenuous so I gave it a miss. Tim and others climbed up and dropped a ladder down the pitch which some of the party made use of.

Sorry I don't know what they found but with my now duff knee playing up I gave the ladder a miss as well. On the way out we encountered a Greater Horse Shoe bat flying along the passage. Others of the party at the entrance had witnessed a large number of bats exiting the cave, quite a sight they said.

In the company of Chris, and Karen, I set off back along the trail of crushed vegetation in the dark to get to the slope back to the bottom of the gorge. After the traverse I stumbled my way back down falling over several times and got my over suite dirty. Then off to the pub for a very welcome pint.

We had a prospective new member with us that Dave Lossel had taken down Swildons upper series earlier in the day and he came along to the gorge. We had to explain we did not do the every member's weekend. He said he had enjoyed his day caving and was a little knackered!

Many thanks to Chris, Ed and Hayley for an enjoyable trip.



At the Long Hole Entrance. By Charlie Allison

Inside Long Hole. By Graham Price

COTTAGE WORK SAUSAGES AND CIDER

September Members Weekend by Tom Harrison



Karen sorting out the Windows. By Charlie Allison



Everyone working hard in the lounge. By Charlie Allison

A weekend, (mostly) above ground for September with the annual work weekend brought forward a month by our cottage warden, Keith Knight for better weather for the outdoor jobs. In the end it did rain a little and was overcast, but the temperature meant that it wasn't too unpleasant.

I arrived on Saturday morning to find that some had already worked the evening before, putting up new kitchen cabinets, so the mugs will no longer have a film of kitchen grease on them!

Fuelled by Tea, cake and biscuits the team worked extremely hard to complete nearly all of Keith's job list that was published in last months MCG Update. There are still some tasks to be completed, (see below). If you can help, then please let Keith know.

In the evening we had a Sausage and Cider Festival and a special Quiz, all organised by Ed and Hayley. There were 4 delicious ciders to choose from, with Summer's Gold being the winner of taste test, and at least 6 different sausages to try including Wild Boar, and a delicious Venison one.

The Quiz was a Mendip Underground special, with each round having different difficulties of questions. It included matching the names to the correct location in Swildon's, Naming a cave from part of its description, Survey questions, more general cave knowledge and even a film round!

The quiz was won by Joan's team, while Joan was busy doing all our washing up!

Thanks to everyone who worked so hard and again to Ed & Hayley for some delicious food and drink and for putting together a very interesting and enjoyable Mendip quiz.



Geoff Beale, Ed Waters and Keith Knight and some of the Cider to try! By Charlie Allison

WORK STILL TO DO...

- SWEEP CHIMNEY
- CLEAN BBQ
- MATTRESSES: BEAT & VACUUM
- CLEAN BUNK ROOMS
- DEEP CLEAN LOUNGE

CAVE RESCUE REPORT

By Mike Moxon

May Bank Holiday Tuesday – Gough’s Cave – 22 volunteers, from a mix of clubs including the BEC, Wessex, Shepton, MNRC & Cheddar, arrived after the show cave had shut & once Phil had been located to let us in, two scenarios were set up around Black Cat Chamber. One had a caver with a broken leg from a fall among rocks, the other a collapsed caver who needed stretching through a low passageway. It was another useful opportunity to get familiar with MCR kit before requiring it for a real rescue.



Broken caver simulation. Photo by Mike Moxon.



The stretcher carry. Photo by Mike Moxon.

June 13th – Dean Field Studies Centre – British Cave Rescue Council conference, jointly organised by Gloucestershire Cave Rescue Group & Midlands Cave Rescue Organisation with talks and demonstrations including hauling techniques and rigging equipment. This was followed by a party at Clearwell Caves that night & the BCA AGM and a rescue practice at Old Ham Mine on the Sunday. MCR’s latest practice session was using their new Larkin Frame at the Wessex. To be continued!



French hauling techniques using a counterbalance. Photo by Estelle Sandford



Accessing a “dangerous” pitch head using the Australian Larkin Frame. Photo by Estelle Sandford

COMING UP

Jeremy Gilson, our Caving Secretary and Hayley Clarke and Ed Waters, our Social Secretaries have put together some great trips and events over the last few months, many of which you can see in this newsletter!

If you want to be included on any of these trips, then please contact the organiser. It is also worth checking out the newsgroup in the week before the member's weekend for more information. Don't forget to let Ed & Hayley know if you plan to be at a weekend for any of the food events so that they know how many are attending!

And..... we really do need your help, so if you can run a trip, help with food, cook a dinner or have a good idea for a social event then please get in touch!

| Date | Event | Location | Contact/ No. of Beds Booked |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|---|
| 2nd/3rd/4th October | Member's Weekend | Nordrach | See Yahoo! Group |
| 3rd October | Longwood | | Brian Snell secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk |
| 3rd October | Goatchurch | | Charlie Allison librarian@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk |
| 3rd October | Curry and Intellectual Conversation | | Ed & Hayley social@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk |
| 9th/10th October | Sutton School | Cottage Guest Group | 16 Beds Booked |
| 16th October | Croydon Caving Club | Cottage Guest Group | 12 Beds Booked |
| 6th/7th/8th November | Member's Weekend | Nordrach | See Yahoo! Group |
| 7th November | Rods/Bath Pull Through | | Dave Lossl |
| 7th November | Photo and Video Comp | | Ed & Hayley social@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk |
| 13th/14th November | Sutton School | Cottage Guest Group | 9 Beds Booked |
| 20th/21st November | Sutton School | Cottage Guest Group | 18 Beds Booked |
| 28th/29th November | Hampshire Scout Caving Group | Cottage Guest Group | 10 Beds Booked |
| 4th/5th/6th December | Member's Weekend | Nordrach | See Yahoo! Group |
| 5th December | St Cuthbert's Swallet | | Jeremy Gilson caving@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk |
| 5th December | Christmas Dinner | | Ed & Hayley social@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk |

October:

Curry night and normal MCG intellectual conversation until the wee hours.

November:

Food to be decided (suggestions and volunteers welcome), first MCG annual photo and video competition. A chance for MCG members to show off their best cave related photographs and videos with the potential to win a prize or two.

December:

The unmissable MCG Christmas dinner with post food silly games. Numbers will be limited, so let the Social Secretary know if you would like to attend.

The MCG's Yahoo!
Newsgroup can be found at:
[http://
 uk.groups.yahoo.com/
 group/mendip-caving-
 group/](http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/mendip-caving-group/)

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

By Joan Goddard

Library Additions [all donated]

Derbyshire's Old Lead Mines and Miners by J.H.Rieuwerts, Moorland Publishing Company, 1972

A Geevor Miner's Tale by Ian Davey, 1999. This is a 25 page photocopied leaflet by Ian Davey who worked in Geevor Mine from 1970 to its closure in 1990. The mine is now run as an educational and tourist attraction and is well worth a visit if you are down that way – although I found the underground tour disappointing when I visited a couple of years ago.

Paranormal Somerset by Sonia Smith, Amberley Publishing, 2010.

Journals received since last newsletter

Bradford Pothole Club Bulletin, Vol 7(5) Dec 2014

Cave and Karst Science, Vol 42(1), April 2015

Cave Radio and Electronics Journal, No 89(Mar 2015) & 90 (June 2015)

Chelsea Speleological Society Newsletter –Varley Swallet (above Cheddar), Otter Hole film project, trip reports

Descent, 243 (April-May 2015) & 245 (June-July 2015)

Grampian Speleological Society Bulletin, 5th Ser. No. 3 March 2015

Mendip Times, Vol 10(12), Vol 11 (1 & 2) – May, June & July 2015

NSS News May 2015 & July 2015

Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club, June 2015

Shepton Mallet Journal Series 13(3) Spring 2013 & Series 13(4) Autumn 2013 – Lava tubes in Sicily & Caving in Thailand

Shropshire Caving and Mining Club, Below Issue 2015.2

University of Bristol Speleological Society Vol 26(3) for 2015 includes 'Small Children in Grebe Swallet Mine in 1753, Charterhouse-on-Mendip' by Chris Binding and 'Further possible discovery of engravings within Cathole Cave, Gower' by George Nash

Wessex Journal 333, April 2015 – Home Close Hole, Croatia and Lechuguilla

Westminster S.G. Newsletter 2015/1, Jan 2015

MUSELETTER

The Ballad of Nancy Camel by Rodney Allen

Charlie Allison found this song on Soundcloud recently, written by one of the residents of Shepton Mallet; Rodney Allen about Nancy Camel. The piece was written for a radio show entitled, "The peoples songbook of Somerset," hosted by musician Matthew Priest. The ballad can be heard at <https://soundcloud.com/the-somerset-songbook/ballad-of-nancy-camel-by-rodney-allen> and the whole radio show can be heard at <https://soundcloud.com/the-somerset-songbook/the-peoples-songbook-of-somerset>.

An interesting suggestion made by the ballad's writer; Rodney Allen is that her name came about as she was Nancy who was regularly found sleeping drunk in the Shambles; the medieval market's open storage sheds. Nancy of the Shambles, later being corrupted to Nancy Scamels then Nancy Camel. The rather catchy Ballard, is well worth a listen, and Mr Allen has kindly given permission for the lyrics to be published in MCG News for those that are unable to access it.

The Ballad of Nancy Camel by Rodney Allen

At the turn of the 18th Century,
By the foot of the Mendip Hills,
In the place that they call Sheeptown,
Was the deal of all deals,
Nancy Camel was her name,
And drinking was her game,
In a hovel off the market square,
She would put the men to shame,

Some say she was a banshee,
Some say she was a crone,
Because she never took a husband,
And cause she lived alone,

Nancy Camel, Nancy Camel, Nancy Camel,

They banished her from town,
When her drinking got no good,
She lived in a cave with her mule and cart under shelter of
Ham Wood,

Some say she was a hag,
Some say she was a witch,
They said she rode with the devil,
And ended in Hell's ditch,

Nancy Camel, Nancy Camel, Nancy Camel,

It was in the midst of Winter in 1703,
The month of November not long after Halloween,
A tempest was raging and sulphur filled the air,
The parish church it nearly fell into the market square,
The Devil was in Shepton,
And he was looking for his own,
He went straight to the woods and the cavern home,
Of the wizened old crone,

Some say she sold her soul,
Some say she made a pact,
That she was never seen again,
Remains the only fact

Nancy Camel, Nancy Camel, God rest you

Copyright Rodney Allen

MCG has a YouTube Channel! Henry Davies-Ball has set up a channel for the groups films to be shared. Check it out at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChMYISO7Z9qc-GnTGEK-XA> or by searching YouTube Mendip Caving Group. Perfect for an evening of Armchair Caving!

Contact Henry directly for further information.

And Finally.....

Andrew Horeckyj took the picture left of Ed Waters emerging from Attborough Swallet. We agreed that this would make a good photo for a **caption competition** to win a small alcoholic prize or the cash equivalent!



Entries Included:

Ed auditions for the new Clangers series

Limestone Submariner coming up from a dive!

Attborough the Hun

Poking his head out of the conning tower, Ed realised the navigation system in the new MCG mini-submarine needed updating.

“Ship Ahoy”

Ed somehow falls into the worlds smallest chimney.

“Not that toilet roll, I need the big one!!”

“First we take Bone Hole, then we take the Cheddar Master Cave.”

But the winner by a unanimous decision of the only judge was Keith Knight with the entry:

“WHO BURIED MY TANK!”

A prize will find its way to you shortly!

Founded 1954

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

Get2_tom@hotmail.com or Flat 21, Benellen Towers
9 Benellen Avenue
Bournemouth
Dorset
BH4 9LT

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.)

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

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Thanks to all the contributors.

Special Thanks to;

- Joan Goddard
- Ed Waters
- Andrew Horeckyj
- Keith Knight
- Graham Price
- Tim Francis
- Pete Matthews
- Margaret Saunders
- Helen Ingold
- Karen Fendley

And to all the photographers' contributions, as acknowledged.

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Mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

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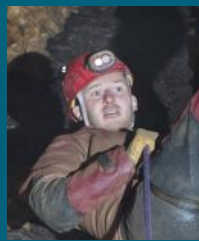


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Photos of Karen, Charlie, Hayley and Keith by Ed Waters, Photos of Jeremy, Dave, Brian and Myself by Andrew Horeckyj.