

MCG NEWS



August 2021 Issue 387

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ON THE FRONT COVER:
Photo: Duck Under Boss Curtains,
Upper Flood by Mark Burkey.
Reproduced here with his kind
permission.
People: Duncan Simey



MCG News Information

MCG News is the Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group. It is emailed free to all members of the group who have provided a working email address on their membership form. If you are not receiving the Newsletter then please contact the editor.

It is also sent to all those other caving clubs, groups and societies who the MCG have an active Newsletter exchange with. If you wish to join our exchange, then please get in touch via Editor@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk.

The Newsletter is also made available online approximately 1 year after publication. See www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

The newsletter is usually produced 3 or 4 times a year, but this is dependant on content and at the discretion of the Editor. All contributions are gratefully received. The MCG Update is a separate publication to keep members up-to-date with news and events in between newsletters.

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New Members Welcome

For Joining Enquiries Please Contact secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

ON THE BACK COVER:
Photo: Duck Under Boss, Upper
Flood by Mark Burkey. Repro-
duced here with his kind permis-
sion.
People: Bill Chadwick



Welcome

A few weeks ago I found myself on Mendip with a few hours to kill before a planned evening exploration trip. Not wanting to venture too far underground I decided to take the opportunity to have a poke around on the Charterhouse and Ubley Rakes in the old mine workings that litter the grufffy ground SW of the Cottage.

Solo trips of any length or complexity should always be undertaken with an extra level of caution and I must add that the BCA recommends always caving with at least 2 other people. A call out and a good description of where you are planning to go is imperative!

I know of one MCG member who got stuck in Passchendaele, Swildon's while on a solo trip. (Read the MU5 description for many good reasons not to visit this area!)

Anyway, with that disclaimer out the way, exploring Rift Mines, I was again reminded about what a fascinating area the Rakes are and why the MCG has been drawn to it. From those earliest days of the Group's formation in the 1950s and the camps and 1st hut being situated there, through to the '68 floods, the opening of the 'Flood' caves, the big club breakthrough and Upper Flood successes, through to the loss

and finding of Charnel Shaft.

Recent chatter on the group message boards has been about potential digs near the cottage, and although projects at Upper Flood, Bone Hole, Ubley Warren, and Sandford Hill have taken our interest in recent years, perhaps a new group project would be a great way to mark (hopefully) the end of a difficult and frustrating period for everyone.

Words by Tom Harrison (Guest Editor)

Below Left - Rift Mine Entrance
Below Right - The Shaft in Rift



NEWS

Editor Wanted!

The committee would like to extend our thanks to Richard Carey for his work in editing and producing 2 excellent Newsletters and for his contribution and participation on the committee and at meetings during this very difficult year.

Richard is sadly stepping down from the role due to extra work commitments.

Therefore, we are now

looking for someone to step up and join the committee and take on the role of Editor. Responsibilities of this role include gathering and collating articles and photos from members; helping and encouraging communications in the group on the facebook and google groups; and assisting with decision making as part of the committee.

Committee Zoom

meetings, means that attendance on a member's weekend is no longer as important, just an enthusiasm to help to share and communicate information, stories, trips and dig news with the members.

If you are interested, then please speak to Bill, directly or via email secretary@men-dipcavinggroup.org.uk



New Members

A very warm welcome to following new and returning members:

Rebecca Vials, Marc Richards, Craig Robinson, Gary Laver, Cameron Turley, Mike Teale, Christopher Binding & Carly Hynan

Cottage Access

As you should be aware, the cottage is now fully reopen. The latest details about access and requirements for users can be found on the website -

<https://www.mendipcaving-group.org.uk>.

The obligations for cottage users are based on government guidance and the track and trace check in obligations. If you do not use the NHS App, please either swipe your key card on entry, (even if the door is already open), or use the

MCG QR code or complete a slip of paper with your name, date of visit and telephone, depositing this in the Hut Fees box.

Please continue to be considerate to other cottage users and observe the cottage rules.

We do not have a cleaner, it is the responsibility of all members to keep the cottage clean and functional and report any issues to our cottage warden or one of the committee.

Jason and others have worked extremely hard over the last 18 months, both to make the cottage "covid compliant" and to improve the existing facilities, so once again thank you to him and to all those who have helped with this.

If any new (or existing members) have skills or ideas on how we can further improve the cottage then please let us know.

Important Dates

The first post lockdown **Member's Weekend** will take place on the **6th - 8th August 2021**.

A reminder that the **67th MCG AGM** will be held on the **4th September 2021**.

This is a particularly important AGM as we look to change the Constitution and convert the MCG into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) which we believe will give advantages in how the Group is run.

Please visit

<https://www.mendipcaving-group.org.uk/mcg-constitution/>

Here you will find:

- A draft of the new consti-

tution;

- the accompanying notes, with the rationales for the wording used and changes made;
- the notes of the advantages to converting to a CIO;
- Draft initial CIO rules;
- Membership Feedback (**new**).

If you cannot attend in person, you can attend virtually, (technology and cottage internet permitting!) using [Zoom](#) and a link will be emailed to you or can be found on Facebook and the Google Group. The meeting ID and passcode, if not using the link is:

Meeting ID: 836 4028 7902

Passcode: 617642

Unfortunately, due to the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, we will not be having a formal dinner this year, but hope to have a full dinner celebratory event in 2022.

Also to note is the **MCG Cottage Work Weekend**. This will be the weekend of the **15th & 16th October 2021**.

We really need member's help to complete some key tasks; maintenance, tidying, possibly painting and sorting out.

We usually accompany this with a special social event, and it would be great to see many of you there! More info. to follow.

Mendip Cave Registry & Archive

The MCRA website (MCRA.org.uk) is an excellent resource for all things underground in Somerset and it's surrounding counties.

Here you can find the most comprehensive set of information about underground sites and access a bibliography which contains references to where you can discover more about many different subterranean features.

Also hosted are numerous log-books, newsletters and diaries, as well as information and links about geology and archaeology, as well as surveys and photos.

One of the most useful facilities is the cave registry search. Here you can search either by cave name or location, and the ac-

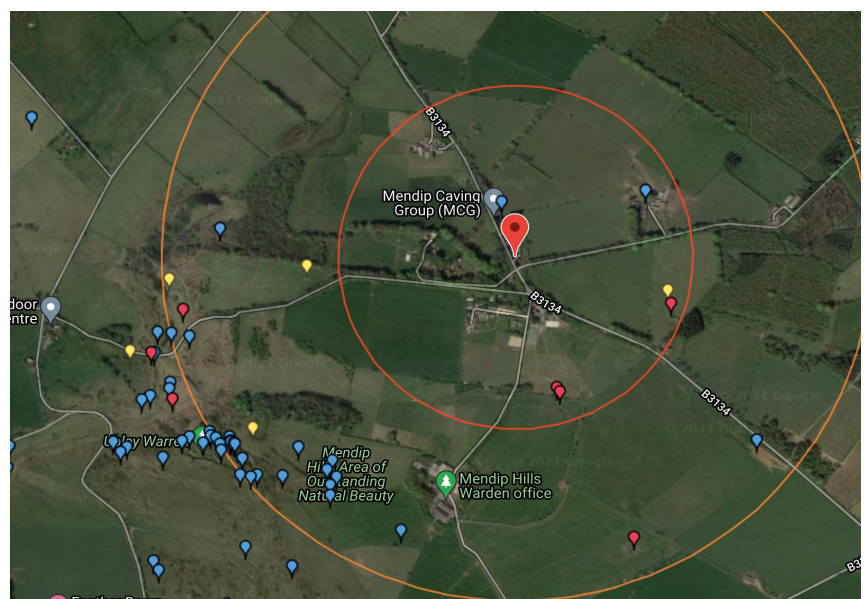
curacy is usually good enough to allow a cave entrance to be found (provided that you can get a mobile phone signal if you are out on Mendip!).

New additions to the website include the ATLAS digging logs for 2020, detailing progress at Rock Farm, Viaduct Sink, Carrion Slocker, Thrupe Lane and others.

You can also now find a google map/Earth overlay showing where Dr W I Stanton recorded depressions over years of surveying and wanderings over the Mendips. Many of these features have been lost, filled in, ploughed or forgotten, but could be important Karst features and the next major Mendip find! Several can be seen close to Nordrach Cottage!



- Garden Dig** (shaft)
MCG Garden, Nordrach
ST 51473 56069 (128 m)
- Hazel Warren Farm Collapse** (collapse)
Ubley
ST 5188 5610 (398 m)
- Nettle Pot** (cave)
Ubley Warren, Charterhouse-on-Mendip
ST 51625 55527 (435 m)
- Ubley Warren Pot** (cave)
Ubley Warren, Charterhouse-on-Mendip
ST 51633 55516 (447 m)
- Treble Chance Dig** (dig)
Nordrach, Ubley
ST 5194 5581 (448 m)
- Pinetree Pot** (cave)
Nordrach, Ubley
ST 5195 5577 (471 m)
- Nether Wood Swallet** (dig)
Nether Wood, Charterhouse-on-Mendip
ST 50921 55890 (595 m)
- Sycamore Mine**



Cleaning Up in the Tackle Store



For those who have not yet been able to visit the cottage this year, there have been a number of changes and improvements made to the cottage and facilities.

One such improvement has been the installation of a new separate Shower, Toilet and wash basin into the old tackle store.

This was made possible thanks to the initiative and hard work of Jason Cardwell, with assistance from Russ Porter, Steve Church and Jason's son Ryan and was paid for by the National Lottery Sport England's Return to Play Grant. Our thanks to them for supporting this

much needed project!

The improvements benefit both the membership and guest groups, providing improved privacy, separate facilities from the existing communal shower arrangements and a more Covid secure/compliant wash space!

Having tested the shower myself, I am thoroughly impressed!

All the tackle store items have been moved into the secure shed, and thanks to Dan we now have an improved booking system to help to monitor the condition and location of tackle.



Vale, Roger Wallington



Roger started caving with the 1st Slough Scouts. He joined the MCG in 1966 as it was meeting locally at the Royal Oak in Brentford on Thursday evenings.

Roger was an architect and his skills came in useful for MCG's self build project for a permanent cottage at Nordrach on Mendip. Roger drew up the plans for the Cottage and obtained the necessary planning and building consents. He was a key member, along with Wayne Hiscox, Peter Mat-

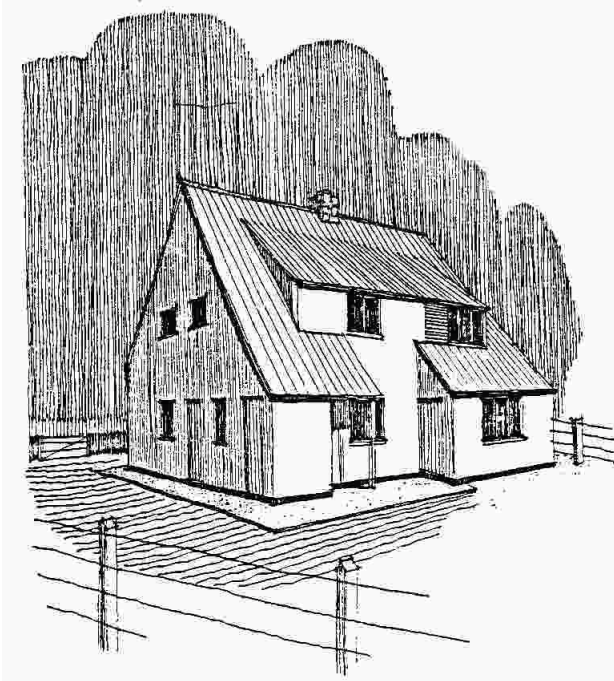
thews and Ron Saunders. of the committee which organised the self build project. Following the sad demise of the Cottage by a gas explosion, Roger supervised the building of the present cottage by a professional builder.

Roger was a keen caver. He was a leader for Dan-yr-ogof for many years and enjoyed exploring the Lancaster/Easegill system in the Dales. Along with Greg Smith he was first to explore Upper Flood and Grebe following the great flood. Roger went

on several MCG expeditions including Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia where he met his wife Trisha.

Following an MCG trip to the Isle of Skye in the 1970s, Roger developed a love of scrambling and visited Skye and the Lake District with friends from the MCG most years. His last visit to Skye was in May this year.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to his daughters Anna and Kaye and their families and his partner Ros.



"It was Roger Wallington however, who carried the responsibility for designing our cottage, preparing plans, obtaining Planning Permission, and drawing up specifications with great care, considerable detailed paper work, and an everlasting patience towards those of us who were just novices in this new venture."

Ron Saunders, MCG News 139
April 1989

He will be very much missed by his many friends.

Words by Mike Lovell

Photo on facing page, Roger in Czechoslovakia (from MCG Archives)

Photo Below by Tony Knibbs



1983 DAN YR OGOF, FAR NORTH Roger Wallington, Ian McKechnie, Roy Kempston, Denise Samuel, Geoff Barton, Martin Rowe

[TK]

LOCKDOWN LIFTED

A person in a red jacket and black pants is rappelling down a dark, moss-covered rock face. A bright light source from above illuminates the scene, creating a strong contrast between the dark cave and the illuminated rock and person. The person is suspended by a rope, and their legs are extended outwards. The rock face is covered in green moss and lichen, and the overall atmosphere is dark and mysterious.

MCG Get Back Underground
Trip Reports from Facebook and the Log

James Major & Miranda
Litchfield

PANT MAWR POT, BRIDGE CAVE & WHITE LADY CAVE.

Sat 05/06/21

After parking on the Little Neath side of the hill a 45min hike across the moorland up to the cave in hot weather ensued. After changing and kitting up we SRT'd a lovely free hanging pitch into the darkness, before de-kitting and headed down to the streamway. For those that haven't visited it's essentially one main route following the streamway with a few boulder chokes and decorated side chambers thrown in for good measure. We made progress downstream, detouring from the streamway to bypass the boulder chokes to a lovely bit of decorated streamway, passing the Sabre formation and reaching the Great Hall. We headed off to visit The Graveyard, The Vestry and The Organ Loft (sense the naming theme...) before rejoining the streamway and heading down to pass the fire hydrant and eventually to the terminal sump.

After some refreshments back by the fire hydrant, we retraced our steps to visit The Chapel on the way out. After finding what looked like the right calcited climb up we found The Chapel. We returned to the main route, up through the oxbow



to enter Straw Chamber...only it was identical to the chamber we'd just been in. It turned out we didn't have the right calcited climb and so visited Straw chamber from two directions! Once back below the entrance pitch we wandered

upstream the short distance to the waterfall, before finally exiting the cave. Thankfully it had cooled down for a much more pleasant walk downhill to the car. On our arrival we were greeted by a few members of

Gwent CC who had just finished a trip, before we did a short trip down Bridge Cave, and an even shorter trip down the gorge in White Lady Cave to cool down.

Words & Photos by James Major

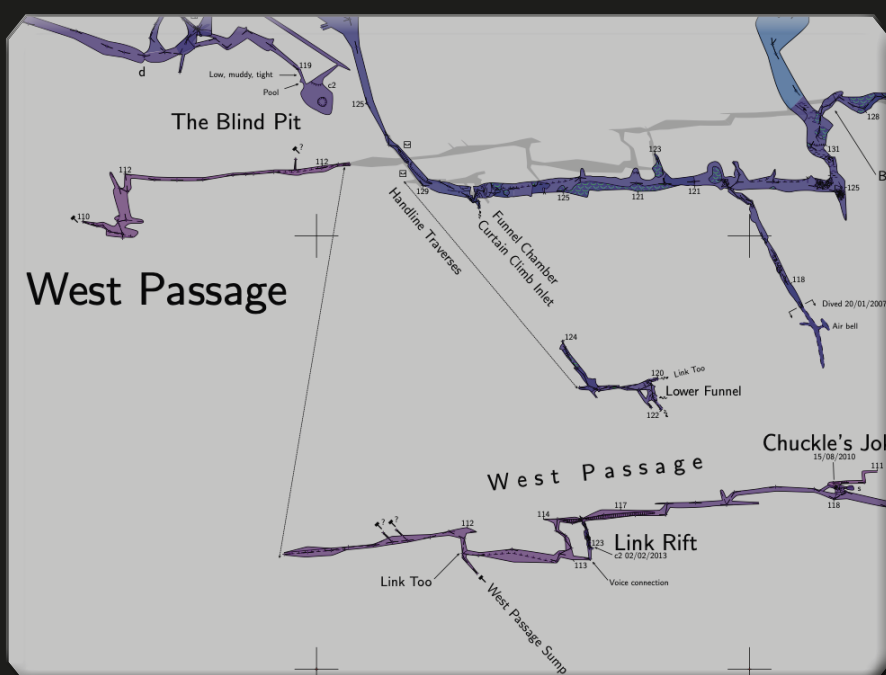
UPPER FLOOD

Joe & Ben Cooper, Bill Chadwick & Tim Francis

Sat 05/06/21

The last bang in Zig Zag Inlet hasn't done much. Bother. Then down to West Passage. Bang placed in possible (Neverland) Link 2 and 3. We also had a rummage in West Passage Choke and a tourist trip to the the Pork Pies for Joe.

Tim Francis





SHATTER, 1/2 WAY UP, 1/4 WAY UP & FERNHILL CAVES



Jason Cardwell
(Middle Centre),
& James Major
(Middle Left)

A sunny day tootle
around the quarry.

Mike gave a tour of
Shatter cave.

Visit to 1/4 Way Up Cave
to look at the various digs
and the terminal squeeze.
V. Tight and even our slim-
mest caver gave it a miss.

Then into 1/2 Way Up
Cave to see the connection
to the other side.

Finished up in Fernhill -
Wow! Formations! Lots of
photos.

Finished off with a trip to
Oakhill Pub for a pint in
the sunshine.

Words & Photos by Julie

Sat
26/6/21

Julie Hesketh (Top Left),
Eva Hesketh-Laird (Top
Right and Middle Right),
Mike Moxon (Bottom Left),

SWILDON'S



Sat 3/7/21

James Hazell (Top Right and above centre), Keri Smallwood, (not pictured), Leigh Slomer (Bottom Right), Sean Garland (Middle Left) & Aaron Phillips (Middle Right).

Leigh and Aaron's first trip underground for 2 years and Sean's first ever Caving Trip.

We went down the wet way, avoiding the 40', through Sump 1 and to the

base of the Ramp where the steamway is regained on the short round trip. On the way back we took the dry way. James also took Sean up the oxbows as well on the way back.

Sat 4/7/21

We went to Goatchurch the following day. We took the standard route in, down to the drain pipe and came out through the Tradesman's exit.

GOATCHURCH



Words & Photos by Leigh

BATH SWALLET TO ROD'S POT

Sun 13/6/21

Jason Cardwell, Marc Richards, Cameron Turley, David Vidal & Becky Vials

Jason rigged a fixed rope and we abb'ed down Shower Pot, decided to forgo getting down and dirty in Vagina Rift, and carried on towards Purple Pot.

We took a side trip to explore a dig, an awkward featureless rift climb, with a horizontal slot at the top leading into a Calcited tube carrying on vertically with a good breeze, a bit constricted and I couldn't bend my knee enough to gain purchase, so gave up, another time maybe.

Up Purple Pot which Becks

managed without assistance, then Bear Pit for some of us. I slid down smooth rift just before. Becks, Marc, and Cameron all managed to climb out of Rod's unaided, out into the heat. Cameron and David retrieved the rope from Bath.

Words by Mark Edwards

BULL POT OF THE WITCHES, LOST JOHN'S, SWINSTO PULL THROUGH, GAPING GILL MAIN SHAFT AND DICCAN POT

Mon 14/06/21 - 16/06/21

Kev Speight & Gary Laver

Superb four days up North, introducing Gaz to the delights of the Dales.

We didn't mess about; trips included Bull Pot of the Witches, Lost John's, Swinsto pull through, Gaping Gill Main Shaft and Diccan Pot.

By the way, Gaping Gill main shaft was done on the Or-

ange club rope. Trust me, if you were finding it bouncy in Hunters Hole Jason Cardwell, you need to eat less pies!

Words by Kev Speight

EASTWATER CAVERN

Sat 19/6/21

Jason Cardwell, David Vidal & Mark Edwards

The plan was to do Unlucky Strike but the general enthusiasm dwindled after the Upper Traverse, even more so as we approached Hallelujah Hole.

I went through head first, it seemed tighter than I remem-

bered, then as no one else fancied it, I returned. Harder on the way back, not much leg purchase, may not have been helped by a large karabiner penknife and whistle in my chest pocket.

I decided we would leave via the Woggle Press. At the base of Baker's Chimney Bypass I directed Jason into a crawl that I thought was the Wind

Tunnel. Suddenly the air was filled with some very bad and quite frankly hurtful language! He had got his chest stuck. After taking a moment, he managed to backtrack and we exited with no more ado, to the Hunters where I bought Jason a conciliatory pint of Potholer and a veg pasta.

Words by Mark Edwards

G.B. CAVE

Sun 20/06/21

Mark Edwards, Mike Teale,
Marc Richards & Jason Card-
well.

We took the main route in as
Mike forgot his belt.

We went across the bridge
then down to the Ladder Dig.
Up into Great chamber then
down to Bat Passage and

back out by following our foot
prints!

Good Trip. 3hrs no rushing!

Words by Jason Cardwell

EASTWATER CAVERN

Sat 10/7/21

David Vidal, Craig Robin-
son, Becky Vials & Jason
Cardwell

Hallelujah Hole - nice,
Dolphin Chimney and Pitch
- without a hitch well apart
from the Italian!

Practice Prussik on Dol-
phin Chimney, out via the
Woggle Press

13 Pots Trip.

Upper Traverse - lovely!

Bold step - without mishap,
Muddy Oxbow, then clam-
ber up 13 pots - fun, then
back.

4hrs 15 mins

Words by Jason Cardwell

LONGWOOD SWALLET

Tues 13/7/21

Chris Barrington, Becky
Vials, David Vidal & James
Major

First time trip to Longwood
for Chris, Becky and David.

Not too much water going
down the chimney climb,
and all successfully passed
the letterbox squeeze.

Route down to top of Swing
Pitch via Christmas Crawl,

then back up the wet way
through the August stream-
way.

David and I went back
down to retrieve the bag
and handline we took for
the great chamber traverse,
whilst Chris and Becky start-
ed the way back out.

We caught them up just
as Becky had got herself

wedged above the ladder
due to deciding to cut a
corner off, taking the very
narrow route to the base of
the letter box.

After much cursing she got
through and we all made
the way back out of the
cave. Trip time just under
2hrs.

Words by James Major

SWILDON'S



Tues 20/07/21

Becky Vials (Below) and
David Vidal (Opposite Top)

We completed our first self
navigated trip of the Upper
Series and got out in one
piece!!

Down the wet way then
continued to the 20ft pitch
turning back here.

We explored the
long dry way on the
trip back including both
the old and new grotto,
climbing Jacobs ladder
and doing a few cir-
cles, generally ex-
ploring around going
into bits (that I have
no clue of the name
of!)

Great fun and all
done in under 2
hours... Let the ad-
ventures continue!!



WHITE PIT



Sun 11/07/2021

Becky Vials and Mike
Moxon (Both Right)

A nice trip for Mike
and I down white pit, to
complete the weekend!



SANDFORD LEVVY & PEARL MINE



Sat 03/07/21

Tom Harrison, Mike Richardson (Opposite Top Left) & Mike Moxon (Opposite Main in the tight connection in BFMR)

SRT up to the bottom of the shaft that we assume joins Fern Mine. Mike and I went up to look for the run in. The breeze wasn't

coming from there only a slight draught and no sign of daylight.

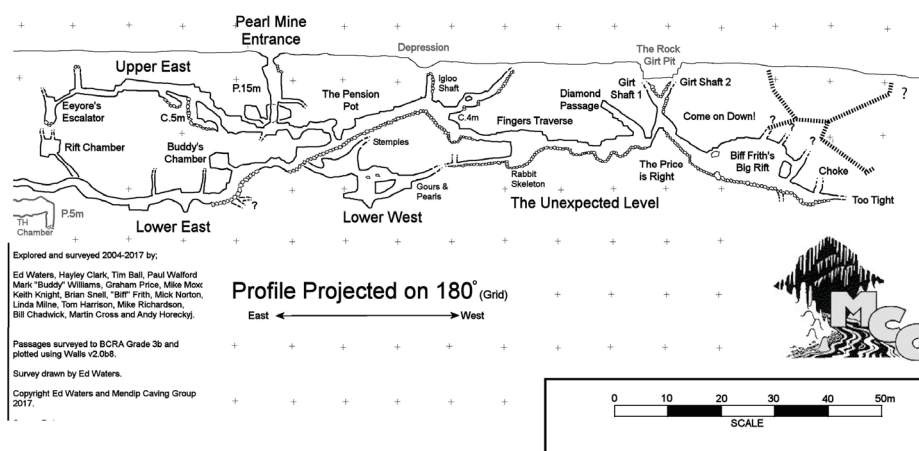
Most of the Air was coming from near where Graham cemented in the boulders (according to Tom who went to look at TH Chamber).

Out of Sandford Levy and up the hillside to Pearl.

Mike R pulled out after getting a little hung up on the rebelay, so Tom and I went to Biff Frith's Mid Rift where the shaft at the very end had run in again.

Tom surveyed the new bit (dotted line on Ed's survey) and then we headed out. Rain started pouring into the middle of Mid Rift (by the Mud Formations) just before we left, but had fortunately stopped by the time we got out.

Tom in a rush to get to his mates for the start of the Euro 2020 quarter final match!



Words by Mike Moxon
Photos by Tom Harrison

SIDCOT SWALLET

PIERRE'S POT

Cameron Turley

Marc Richards

Stephen Hawkins

David Vidql

Mike Teale

Becky Vials

Tues 27/07/21

Photos by Becky Vials

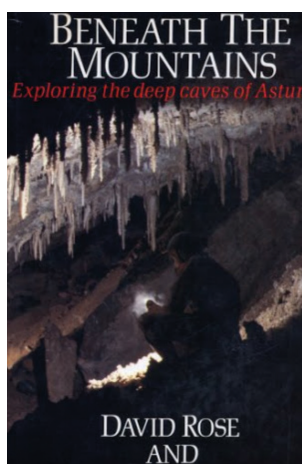
Cameron Turley

Becky Vials

Lockdown literature – A Baker’s Dozen

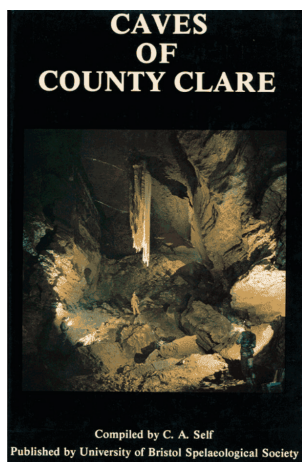
by Tim Francis

The lack of caving has been something of a challenge during the pandemic and especially when like me you live far from what might be claimed as a daily exercise distance from cave-bearing rock. I can see some chalk hills from my study but the springs at the bottom have no potential. Under such circumstances the mind wanders to reading about the ‘world beneath’ and I’m fortunate in having a pretty hefty library of caving books to draw upon. I’m often asked which caving books are actually worth reading as many of them don’t exactly make a vital contribution to the speleological canon. So below is a selection of books and articles that could be worth hunting out to fill your time before you can eventually get back to indulging in the real thing.



1. The page turner - “Beneath the Mountains” by David Rose and Richard Gregson, 1987

If there is one caving book of daring-do that you should read, then this is it. It’s all about the exploits of Oxford University Caving Club in the Asturias, Picos de Europa in Northern Spain. It’s crazy, exhilarating stuff. This was in the early days of SRT when a fresher who’d probably only done a couple of Yorkshire trips beforehand was pointed at the entrance of 500m+ deep cave and left to get on with it. These days the whole mountain is effectively one massive system but at that time classic caves like Xitu, Jorcada Blanca and Conjurtao were there for the taking. And certainly, this book inspired me to take on my own Alpine challenges and tackle seemingly improbable shafts.



2. The guidebook – “The Caves of County Clare” by Charlie Self, 1989

Of course, a guidebook is normally only of interest if you are actually going to visit the area. But this is one of those guidebooks that inspires you to pick up a map and plan a trip for yourself. There are now updated UBSS publications of the region, but this edition has a really nice exploratory feel to it. There is something about the hardback feel to it, the clean layout, the methodical alpha-numeric naming convention and the allure of caves like The Coolagh River Cave, Faunarooska and Polnagollum-Poleva that really bring to life the romanticism of the Burren. My copy is full of illegible marginalia made in 1989 but trust me the caving is as fantastic as its sounds in the guidebook.

3. Cave diving adventure – “Down to a Sunless Sea” by Mike Boon, 1977



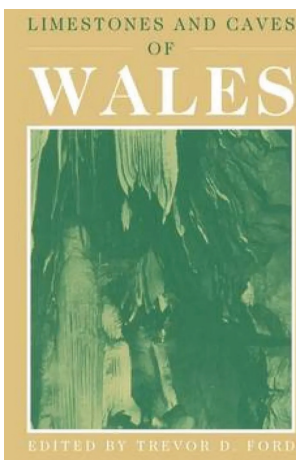
Back in the 80s and 90s there was a whole raft of cave diving books recounting tales of extreme underwater exploration. Sumps were wide open, equipment was primitive, techniques were evolving, and the life of cave diver was an extremely short one. If you see a copy of his book, don't baulk at the price just buy it. The reason being it includes the definitive account of the original exploration of sumps 5, 6 and 7 in Swildon's Hole: "...as the panic built up I started to struggle, kicking vainly against the roof and scrabbling with my hands....I remember telling myself 'this time you've really done it, you've really done it this time'...". Mad stuff. If you can't borrow a copy of Boon then go for "The Great Caving Adventure" by Martyn Farr or "Deep into Blue Holes" by Rob Palmer.

4. A French classic – “One Thousand Metres Down” by Jean Cadoux, 1957



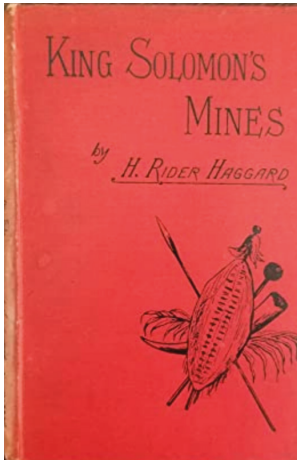
This is my pick from the genre of caving classics written by the original explorers of the golden era of French caving which also includes Casteret (of course), Attout, Siffre and de Joly. I've gone for Jean Cadoux because his book describes the first exploration of Gouffre Berger, a cave which has almost mythical status amongst generations of British alpine cavers. Aldo's, the Starless River, the Hall of the Thirteen, Claudine's, The Great Rubble Heap, it's all in there as it was being discovered in the early 1950s. On ladders. In old clothes. It's a great cave to visit but I can vouch for the rigours of such a trip having spent a rather uncomfortable twelve hours in a bivvy bag stuck at the bottom of Aldo's waiting for a severe flood event to subside. Great fun.

5. A spot of science – “Limestones and Caves of Wales” by Trevor Ford, 1989



There are of course hundreds of dense scientific tomes on karst, caves, limestone, hydrology and suchlike, most of which are totally impenetrable to the club caver. However, the regional Limestones and Caves series were, and still are, the more accessible of the genre. I've picked the fourth in the series because it was the first to be published in a large, hardback format. The cover is surprisingly gloomy but inside are some nice cave surveys, hydrological maps, well written text and excellent supporting black and white photos. The surveys, and in particular those of the Llangattwg escarpment, are great for staring at and imagining what's next to be discovered. At the time Ogof Draenen was

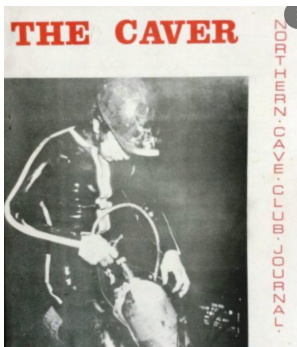
nothing more than an insignificant dig only known to a hardy few and is not referred to at all. 'Caves be where you find them'.



6. Fiction for young and old – “King Solomon’s Mines” by H Rider Haggard, 1885

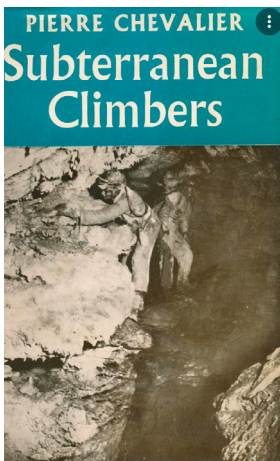
My copy is just a Penguin paperback – I don’t think my budget would stretch to an original Victorian hard back. But that doesn’t matter: this book is for reading and re-reading not for collecting. There are, of course, plenty of fiction books with caves in them, from Enid Blyton onwards, but King Solomon’s Mines is my favourite. A true masterpiece of adventure in colonial Africa – mountains, mines and maps; battles, witchcraft, diamonds and of course the famous solar eclipse that saves our heroes from a nasty fate. And despite being written well over a hundred years ago the storytelling within still holds up well to this day.

7. The club journal – “The Caver” Volume 5, 1985 Northern Caving Club



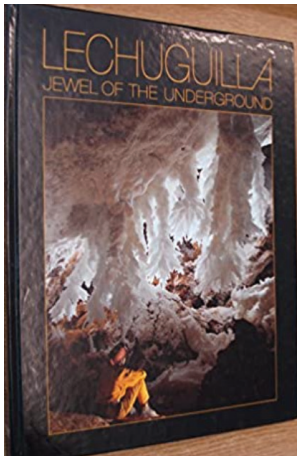
Where to start with a recommendation? There are so many good caving club journals and most of which I won’t have read. I used to be an avid reader of club journals, but you really need to have a microscopic knowledge of the subject matter or be a club member to properly enjoy the content. ULSA, the TSG, Crewe CPC, SWCC and Bradford all spring to mind but this NCC volume for me is the most memorable and readable. The anarchic nature of the club, its infamous characters, notably Luggar, and their grim Kingsdale Valley cottage really shine through in these accounts of the early 1990s – New Rift Pot, Brown Hill, Kingsdale Master Cave. They don’t make ‘em like that anymore. And I’ve now realised I can’t find my copy buried in all these shelves of dusty journals. Ah well.

8. Unlocking a cave system – “Subterranean Climbers” by Pierre Chevalier, 1951



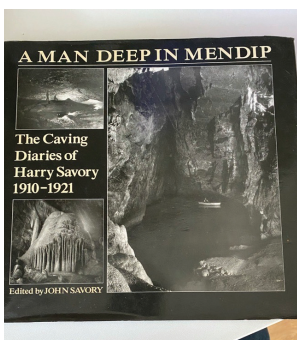
I have a few editions of this book and it’s definitely worth a read. It’s all about the exploration of the Dent de Crolles system in the Chartreuse, France in the late 1930s and during the Second World War. I’d suggest having a modern survey of the system to hand, printed in A3, so you can more easily follow their exploits as they link up Trou de Glaz with Guiers Mort and Grotte Chevalier. It’s pioneering stuff as they had to cobble together various bits of homemade kit and solve the problems of this complex cave. The Mendip Caving Group tackled the system in 1995 and you’ll find our write up in Occasional Publication Number 3. It’s a thoroughly enjoyable system and I would strongly recommend

a trip or two if you in the area. Take plenty of rope and an accurate survey.



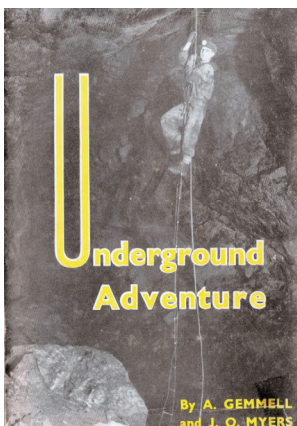
9. For the coffee table – “Lechuguilla: Jewel of the Underground” by Michel Taylor, 1991

When this book came out it caused a sensation in the world of caving. No-one had ever seen such extravagant, enormous and yet extremely delicate formations. The book tells the tale of the initial years of exploration following the discovery of a howling cold draft blowing out of a grotty dig called Misery Hole, New Mexico. But although the explorations are exciting enough what you are looking at the book for is the exquisite photography not the text. The unusual thing about the cave is that it was formed from the bottom up by sulphuric acid and the formations are mostly gypsum and unusual sulphur deposits. The Chandelier Ballroom is the pièce de résistance.



10. For the Mendip historian – “A Man Deep in Mendip” by John Savory, 1989

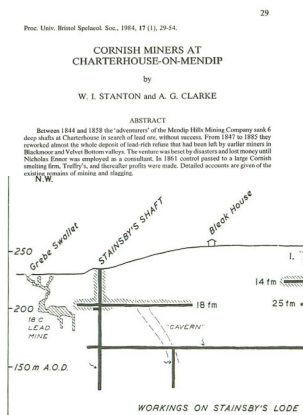
This book is sub-titled “The Caving Diaries of Harry Savory, 1910-1921”. Savory was one of the early pioneers of underground photography and in this book you’ll a huge wealth of photos from the golden era of Mendip exploration. All the famous photos are in there – General Whitby in Banwell Stalactite Cave, The Witch of Wookey, The Beehive in Lamb Lair, Baker and co in The New Inn, Balch in Swildons, Tratman excavating at Aveline’s and a boat in a lake in Wookey Hole. Its all there and to be honest saves you having to read Balch and Baker’s accounts of the same episodes in long form.



11. Yorkshire escapades – “Underground Adventures” by Arther Gemmell and Jack Myers, 1952

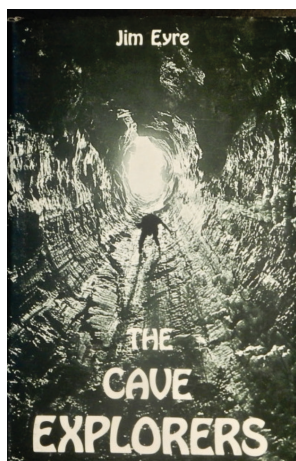
Fortunately, this English classic had a more recent reprint in paperback so it should be much more readily available. This is one for those bored of reading continental tales of huge systems and who struggle to identify with descending massive pitches and rowing boats across vast Stygian lakes. Here, we are taken through all the great discoveries in Yorkshire of the late 1930s and 40s: George Cornes at Lancaster Hole, Leakey passing the duck in Disappointment Pot, and Hensler’s Crawl in Gaping Ghyll: “My spirits sank even lower when Hensler blandly announced that we had covered no more than half the distance to junction, and bleakly added that the lowest and wettest part was still to come”. And not a wet-sock in sight.

12. One for the MCG – “Cornish Miners at Charterhouse-on-Mendip” by Willie Stanton, 1984



Not a caving article as such, but this is for you if you want to know why the Blackmoor Valley looks like it does and why the mud in Upper Flood and Waterwheel is sometimes black. Its Willie Stanton's influential paper in the Proceedings of the UBSS, Volume 17, number 1. You'll regularly hear MCG members debating the accuracy of his sketch of Stainsby's Shaft, inferred from mining reports; whether the "cavern" is a cavern, a rift or a boulder choke and what all that means for a potential system that joins up Upper Flood with Grebe Swallet and Blackmoor Swallet. A joy for the 'crayonistas', a nightmare for the diggers and a frustration for the historians. If anyone knows the whereabouts of an original, contemporary survey of Stainsby's Shaft from 1849, do tell.

13. Just a great read – “The Cave Explorers” by Jim Eyre, 1981



Finally, if all else fails and you just want a good book full of yarns then look no further. The original one had a small print run but in 1998 Mike Boon found a few boxes of unbound copies at the Stalactite Press offices in Canada. So, there are plenty in circulation, but the later bindings are in red with no dust jacket. Why is it so good? It's a hilarious, loosely autobiographical account of Jim's caving antics in Yorkshire and foreign expeditions of the 1970s to France, Spain, Yugoslavia and Greece. When the MCG went to Greece in 2002 we went for a bit of a pilgrimage to Epos Chasm in the Pindos Mountains. This was the site of the tale in the book of huge ladder pitches, winches and lightning strikes. Whilst there we bumped into an old farmer in the bar in the nearby village Kapésovo who actually remembered his family hiring donkeys to the expedition. We took a photo of the farmer and I gave Jim a copy at the BCRA Conference later that year.

Most of the above can be found in the MCG Library. MCG's Recorder/ Librarian, David Loss1 tells us all about the Library and the other Gems within.

We have about 850 books in the MCG library, as well as periodicals, occasional publications, MCG Archive material, and loads of cave surveys. Many of the surveys are large scale and are hung in a large cabinet.

Some club members have a detailed knowledge of what books we have and where they are stored – ask Mike Moxon about a cave, topic or location and he will disappear into the Library for 10 minutes then reappear with all the books and archive material

you would want. For us lesser mortals, the library is a store of hidden gems to which access is often limited to Mendip Underground.

The main issue about accessing the library content is there is no searchable booklist, although

The library has an amazing range of caving and non-caving material: guides, stories, outdoor pursuits, novels, dictionaries and many more. You can literally travel the caves of the world from the MCG Library.

- Living Underground - a History of cave and cliff dwelling
- The Caves of Mid Argyll - An

- Archaeology of Human Use
- Canyons du Vercors et alentours
- Descente-Sportif 2: Gorges et Canyons en Languedoc-Roussillon
- Caves & Tunnels in South East England Part 1
- Giant Caves of Borneo
- La France des Grottes et Cavernes
- Gaping Gill 150 years of exploration
- ANYTIME...ANYWHERE: The first fifty years of the Upper Wharfedale Fell Rescue Association
- Classic Rock - Great British Rock Climbs
- Madagascar 1991/2 and 2003
- Rock, Fossil & Mineral Map of GB

- A Walker's Guide to the Geology and Landscape of Eastern Mendip
- CNCC Rigging Guide. Vol 1
- Pictorial History of Swildon's Hole

As Librarian I would like to make the Library much more accessible. I have gone through the booklist and rationalised the descriptions to make them searchable. The primary search column is Region, the secondary search column is Topic. The intention is to make the booklist available in a new Library section via the Member's Area on the website. I am expecting that this facility will result in more books being borrowed.

My intention is to carry out a stock-take of all books, and while I am doing this the books will be numbered 0001 to 0850.

Borrowing and returning books will be via a mobile phone friendly online form – Just enter your name, email address and book number and press send. This will enable me to easily track books and send out overdue reminders. If people are not comfortable with an online form, booking-out cards will be available in the Library.

Tim Francis and Mike Moxon have kindly offered to go through the book list and identify any rare or valuable books so that we can give these additional care.

Eventually surveys, periodicals and archive material will be added to provide a searchable database that all members can access.

David Lossl



A full-page photograph of a person rappelling down a steep, grey rock face. A powerful waterfall flows vertically down the center of the rock. The person, wearing a blue jacket and red pants, is positioned to the right of the waterfall, suspended by a red rope. The background shows more of the rugged rock formation.

What happens
when you say,
“no Caving!”

The first serious waterfall
met in Frauenbach and
where Christopher went
upside down- briefly!

Having stated to a keen teenager that I wanted a holiday in Europe in 2018 and didn't mind what activities we did, bar no caving, the following occurred. Beware! photos and words by Nicky Pearce

Christopher identified Canyoning as the new pursuit which was quoted as a combination of climbing, jumps, water in stunning scenery, suiting experienced climbers/ cavers/ mountaineers and I agreed it sounded good. I pictured trips I had seen in North Wales and thought a scramble down a gorge/ stream looked fun, hmmm! Christopher soon googled, bought a guide and viewed YouTube and picked the extreme trips to show me, though I was reassured these were "Black" trips and we would not be doing those.

So on a summer morning we parked in a quiet car park in an Austrian Valley for Frauenbach and walked a track uphill to a stream monitoring station. The trip started easily and pretty boringly as there was little water and the 8ft climbs didn't seem worth the effort of the SRT gear.

We got to the stage where we could abort, as the next stretch was more difficult, but as it had been very easy so far, I said continue. Immediately the drops were 20ft plus, often in the waterfall and

the rig points were more interestingly located, though still well within our capability, even if Christopher briefly went upside down in one waterfall!

Another abort point, and we passed onto the last obstacle of the grand waterfall, 70ft high broken into 2. The first part landed us into a bowl of the waterfall, with steep smooth sides and a grand view of the valley below. The rigging point for the next was at the lip of the second waterfall, so for Christopher's safety, I acted as the counterweight as he moved to the lip (although I was not attached to anything and being positive that it will not be needed). The main rig point was around the rock and initially led to a heart beating 20 minutes while Christopher tried to reach it and then rig it.

Myself, I was admiring the view of the valley below; noting the very smooth non-climbing walls out of the Pot I was in, that there were a couple of tourists nearby admiring the waterfall, and working out what the German for help was, if it became needed.

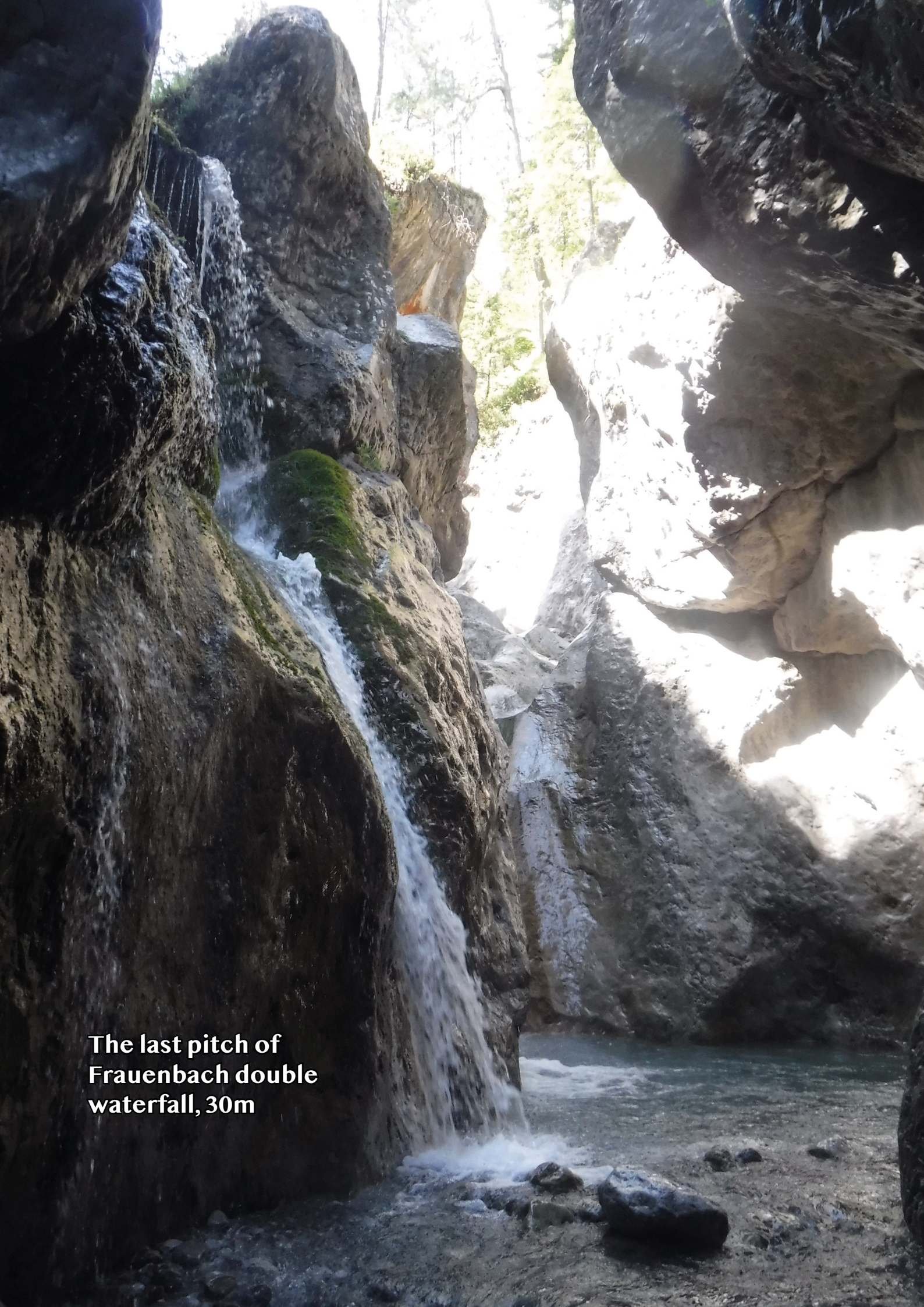
Fortunately after a moment

of regrouping, the rigging happened and off Christopher descended. Now unfortunately we hit a snag, he was trying to tell me the rope was not long enough and with a waterfall in my ear and the hidden drop, I couldn't hear what he wanted. I guessed the rope had not reached the bottom, so started releasing the rig to lengthen the rope, to be greeted by a son who was trying to climb up the rope faster than I was releasing it.

The rope was re-rigged and off Christopher went again. I then descended to find the retrieval rope was not long enough, so after the smoothest mid-rope change ever by me, the rope was re-rigged again and we descended to the bottom.

On trying to pull the retrieval rope it was soon apparent it was stuck, I was all for moving on and leaving it, Christopher aghast as such costly waste, soon SRT'ed up the rope, re-rigged again, then descended again, enabling the rope to be pulled clear.

Future trips went so much better having reflected on the many lessons learnt!



The last pitch of
Frauenbach double
waterfall, 30m

Caveatron - Grebe Swallet Results

In MCG News 386 I described the rough process of building the Caveatron LiDAR surveying device. These are some of the results of the 1st surveying trip conducted in Grebe Swallet in October 2020 with Michael Perryman. Words & Photos Tom Harrison

In MCG News 386 I offered to share the results of the 1st surveying trips using the Caveatron device that I'd built.

Unfortunately, but perhaps unsurprisingly I did have a few teething problems. An errant number in the calibration file, resulted in a day's scanning in Read's Cavern being wasted, as the device completed all the scans perpendicular to the survey and I wasn't able to correct the error in the processing. A trip down into Charnel Shaft was also unsuccessful with too few scans to build up a usable point cloud mesh.

With some lessons learnt, a trip into Grebe Swallet proved to be the most fruitful. As Michael Perryman has recently completed an updated survey of Grebe, I'd spoken to him on one of our digging trips about completing a partial Caveatron survey of Grebe together. This would enable a comparison to try to see how accurate the Caveatron that I'd built is against his survey.

Michael kindly offered to assist with the surveying and with the Land and Cave owner's permission we set a date in October to

complete the scan.

Unlike the DistoX, the Caveatron needs a reflective target card for the Laser Range Finder (LRF) to take measurements from. This is so that when the LiDAR is scanning, the device knows where it is in relation to the target card. Having someone to hold and position this card is a great help.

Each scan starts with a traditional line survey shot to the target. When this is complete, the user traverses towards the target with the LiDAR running, which builds up the point cloud data for that part of the Cave. Traverses can be repeated to try to ensure as much of the passage is covered as possible.



Scanning was quick, maybe a little slower than traditional methods, but as, Left Right Up Down shots, note taking and sketching are not required, it probably takes a similar length of time to do and with practice might prove quicker than traditional methods.

Occasionally, while LiDAR scanning, too many LRF shots miss the target card and the device reports an error with the scan having to be redone, slowing the process. I have some ideas on how to speed up the system and improve the accuracy and will work on these! I have also learnt that to create a nice-looking finished model, consideration has to be taken to the direction of consecutive scans. As the LiDAR works perpendicular to the direction the Caveatron is facing, it can help to consider as shallow an angle as possible, between stations, to smooth out the join between the different scans.

The trickiest part of scanning Grebe occurred in the main rift. Vertical traverses are tricky as the Caveatron needs to be moved steadily towards the target card. Due to the nature of the climb down the rift, this proved difficult.

Processing of the data gathered is completed by a program written by Joe Mitchell, the Caveatron's designer and creator. This takes the data from the calibration file and allows scans which it identifies as suspect,

due to their misalignment, to be removed.

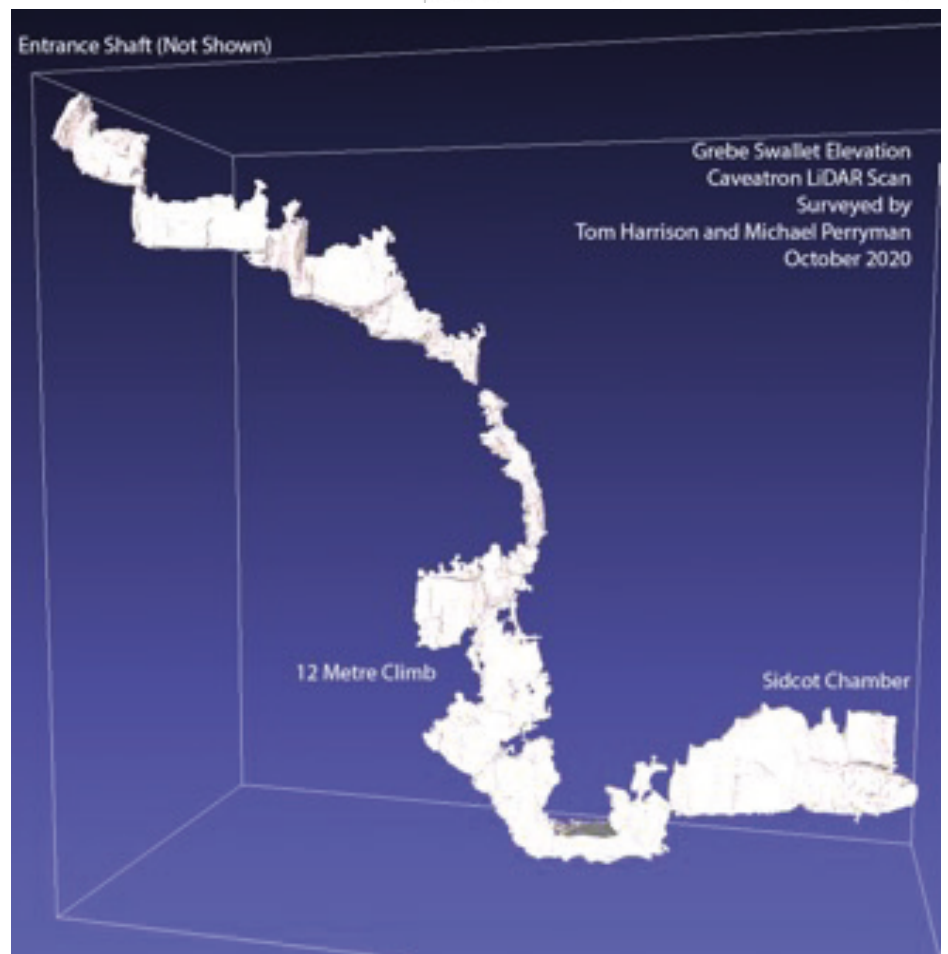
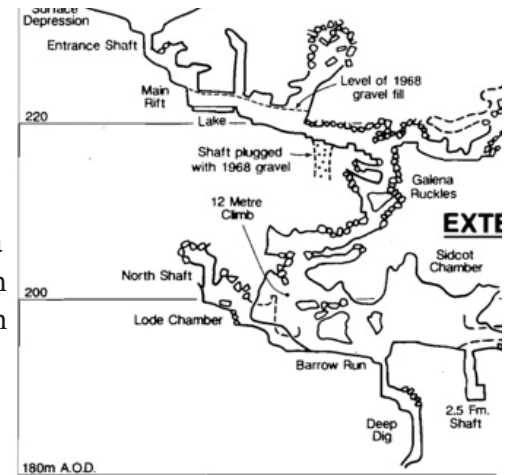
The point cloud data can then be further processed in applications such as CloudCompare and Meshlab. These programs can help to smooth joins in the scans and make a cleaner model.

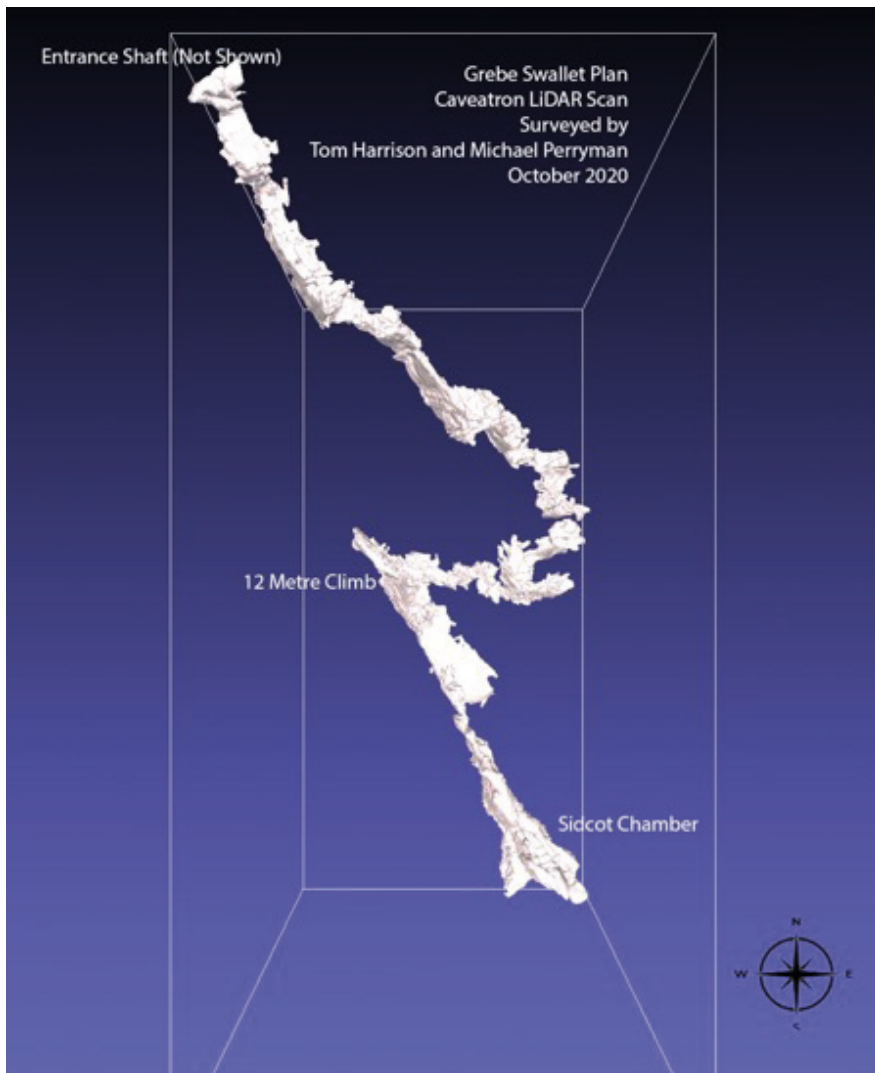
The final processing produced the following results (Below Right).

Obviously displaying these in a 2D newsletter doesn't help with a 3D model, but I hope you can see, marked on the scan, the

entrance (top left), the 12 metre climb and Sidcot Chamber.

For comparison, below is a section of the elevation view of Dr Stanton's 1990 survey.





The above image shows the plan view post processing.

These scans help to demonstrate the accuracy of the Caveatron survey but also show the limitations in displaying a 3-Dimensional model in 2D.

The angle chosen to display the results of a 3D model will affect the features of a cave that can be shown. For example, the detail that is able to be depicted in the Galena Ruckle of Dr Stanton's survey (previous page) aren't clear on the 3D

scan due to the angle chosen to show Sidcot Chamber in the processed Caveatron image shown.

The image below right shows how closely the Caveatron survey matches Michael Perryman's latest survey, published in MCG News 386.

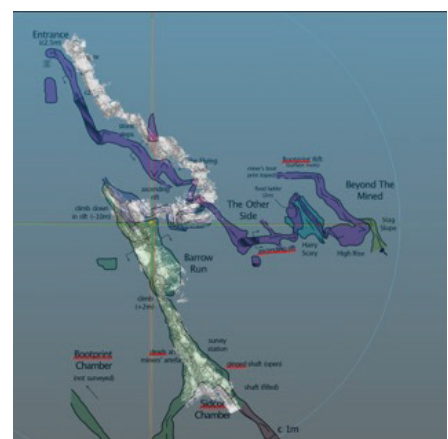
I hope that these results demonstrate the Caveatron's abilities. I feel that the device will be a useful surveying tool, enabling passage profiles to be gathered at a speed and level

of detail that hasn't been possible for a caver before.

Methods of Caveatron surveying and scanning, particularly vertical sections of caves, will have to be refined. At the moment the line survey can be viewed in the cave surveying software: Compass and Walls. I haven't yet found a simple way to combine the LiDAR data with a line survey and tend to use graphical software to do this alignment.

The possibilities are intriguing: 3D printed models of caves, detailed cave dimensions and volumes, and potentially the ability to create a 3D map of a cave which, in combination with a mobile device with an accelerometer, could allow a pseudo-underground GPS!

If anyone has any questions or places they would like to be scanned then please get in touch!



Tin Can Alley (Shipham)

In May 2021, Mike Moxon and I visited what I thought would be a Mendip Collector's Item with the intention of completing a survey where only sketches had been completed before.

Parking at the Village Hall, we trekked west through the bushes and overgrowth, and down into the steep sided Daffodil valley which connects Shipham to Star.

After a little rummaging we came across an opening with a descending passage blocked with branches, deliberately placed to conceal these old mine workings.

From the MCRA Bibliography and MU5, I learnt that in the Sidcot School Speleological Survey Diary 1929 to 1930, Peter North records the first visit to Tin Can Alley, then named Daffodil Valley Cave.



cludes mid 20th century bottles and tin cans, including Bryl-cream, Marmite and Honey jars and care must be taken with the shards of glass and jagged edges of metal. The age of these items is backed up by the lack of their mention in Peter North's description.

The lowest level is a series of connected shafts and small chambers following the vein which trends NE to SW.

It is possible to climb up the shafts to gain more short extensions (not yet surveyed), and two of the shafts show the ginged igloo type capping we have seen on Sandford hill, at Manor Farm and at Charterhouse.

At the blocked shaft we found a Horse tooth and a further bone (possibly a shoulder) can be seen in the floor in the same location.



I quite enjoy mine workings, so perhaps I am not best placed to judge, but this was a fine example of a typical Mendip mine and much more extensive than I thought it would be.

Various items of refuse litter the steep entrance slope, which doubles back on itself and carries on down at a 45 degree angle to a narrow slot, opening onto an easy 5m climb down to the main level. The rubbish on this slope in-

This mine could warrant and reward further investigation, but like most of these types of sites, extreme care must be taken with piles of Deads to be clambered over and under.

Later sketches of Tin Can Alley, by Dr Stanton in 1946 and Cliff Dockrell in 1987 are included with the new survey. I have graded this survey 3C as I haven't yet fully confirmed

the level of accuracy of the Caveatron.

Words & Photos by Tom Harrison

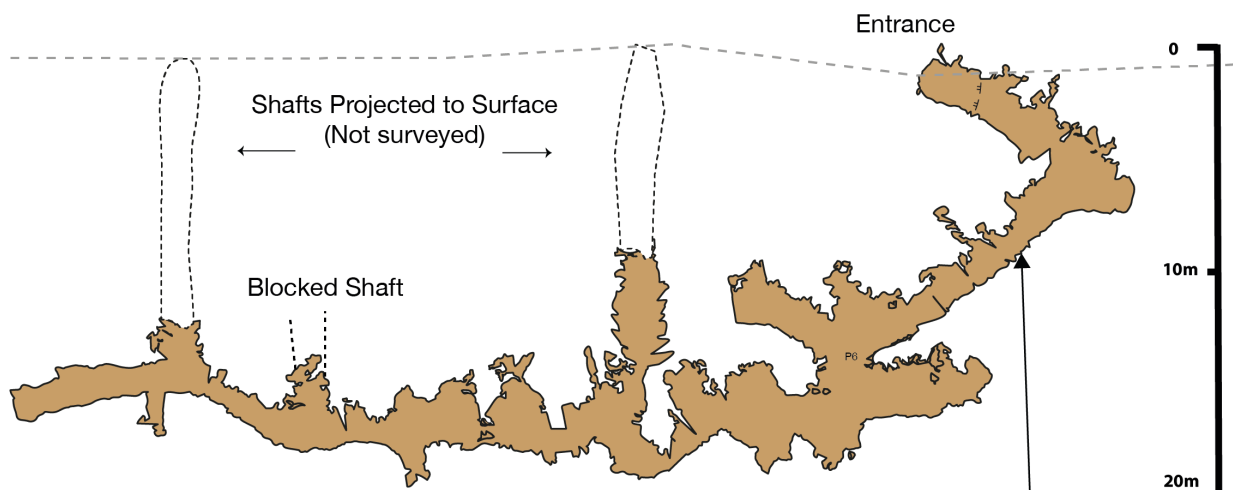
Tin Can Alley

Surveyed by Tom Harrison & Mike Moxon
Using the Caveatron LiDAR Surveying Device

BCRA Grade 4C

Surveyed Length: 72m
Surveyed Depth: 18m

Elevation

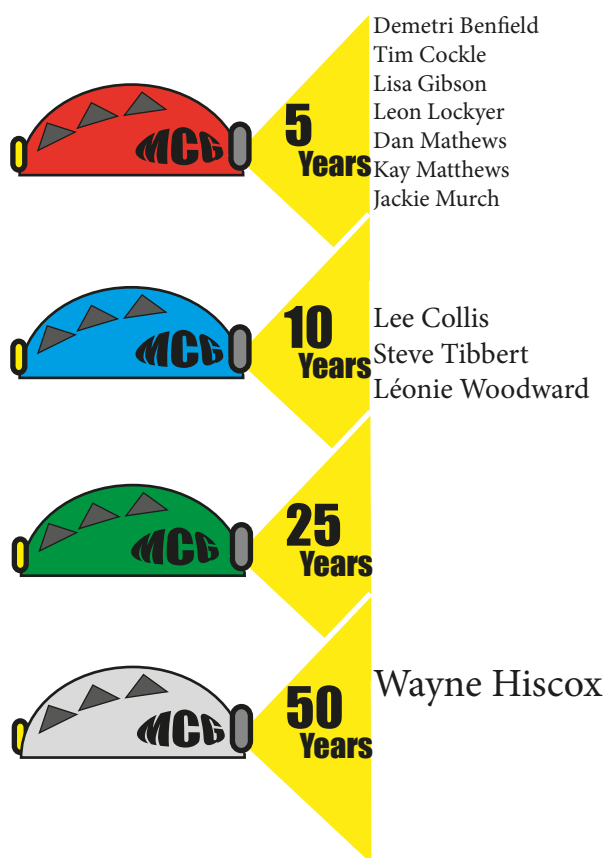


Plan



Back Pages

Congratulations to the following who have now reached the following MCG membership milestones:



To mark 50 years since Wayne joined the MCG, I tried to find a nice trip report from the logbooks.

Instead I found this from a trip Wayne joined as a prospective member:

"1st Nov 1970
Me (John Pudduck), Wayne Hiscox, Len Ely + many more descended Lambs Lair on sat

morning. On coming out we were met by Greg Smith, Wally, + J Evans who were in the 9th stage of getting completely pissed. Evans then proceeded to walk into 3 feet of stinking dog (shit) & then tried to piss in Len's Car Boot."

Special Mention also to Pat Walsh and Robbie Charnock who this year reached 60 and 65 years of membership respectively! Wow

The Worst Caving Related Jokes Ever....

Two bats were hanging upside down in a cave.



The first bat asks the second, "Do you remember the worst day of your life?"

"I sure do," said the second bat. "It was the day I had diarrhoea."

Why are MCGer's terrible negotiators?
Because they love to cave.

Someone asked me if I had ever noticed that I had a keen sense for being able to tell where water was underground...

I replied, "I'm well aware."

Why aren't more cavers digging holes underground anymore?

Because it's boring.

Wordsearch - Can you find all 16?

MCGer's Most Visited Caves

EDSBSKBSUDVHBNYCTFYQVKMIW
VMXUIKWVABQEWATERWHEELPQR
DATCDKJNCNRCVBEANAYDSYHOX
IQQQCQVCCODQRTETCLSRWXZA
VPZHOVGMRFQFPRNRSPUEQUKJR
QQBKTCIYSUGSOQYNCTFUJAKOO
XGEKOIDAGYWQBRGATVALYJTDD
TVOKIFPSDGHIQJDQPHIIOCIHS
XJRAHXTHHETPETALFZSRNQZTB
FEFCTYBUJULVNP NMELEQCSQQA
ROCSZCMDPJNDHOPHAVFHMQBKT
LXCZAVHOJIRTA VPCIBVUPCUYH
TSJZJFFUFVNFEDIVOOFYEWMA S
SWILDONSREEEI RCLBNPCALJJG
ZUIVEWJUSCHJTZSVAEZIROICR
FSNZCMNCYLHYTRYHAHBGLNUQE
PCUBLEYWARRENZEZOOUZIGDKB
HMOIKOEDVEOQHMI EGLCVMWLEE
XZAGBCAVERN F UMLWPEELZOLNS
CUXPUCNEPGPTHAPYVOXOUOKNW
QLECLIDSZOLYCCSPWKTDQDDMTA
GHLUPPERFLOOD OXBKCTOUCAQL
GZEBKVFI XRVYPDSNTMSLJWIL
QLJKWWFKDHB LZVAOJABHGHWE
TMCWAUKUCTNXQZCTTRBDIBQPT

SandfordLevvy

GrebeSwallet

PinetreePot

UbleyWarren

HuntersHole

UpperFlood

Waterwheel

Stainsbys

Swildons

BoneHole

Goatchurch

GB Cavern

Longwood

RodsBath

Sidcot

Pearl

Answer sheet available from the editor!

