



70th Anniversary



Foreword & Contents

Welcome to this MCG publication in celebration of 70 years of the Mendip Caving Group. At the end of 2023 the club had an editorial vacancy and so I offered to gather articles and put something together for this important anniversary.

People

All of the members reading this will have their own personal recollections of adventures with the MCG and I felt, and hope that you'd agree, that it's interesting to hear these stories and to record them for members to enjoy in the coming years, possibly at future anniversaries.

History

Having adapted Tony Knibbs' original Concise History of the MCG 10 years ago, I have updated this informative piece and provided some photographic illustration from the MCG Photo Archive. On behalf of future members and particularly editors, if you have caving photos please share these with the Group, they are a fantastic resource and record!

The Wooden Hut

The various homes of the MCG have provided shelter, warmth (sometimes!), a social venue, a base and an HQ for the Group over the years. Enabling members and guests from all over the country to enjoy Mendip Caving. Joan Goddard's article tells the wonderful story of the Wooden Hut, its construction and the role it has played in the history of the group.

The Caves

A nod to the 70 years of exploration and the thrill of finding and extending caves. These are some of what I feel are the notable MCG digs. I couldn't include everything; important digs in Longwood's August Series, Manor Farm, Browne's Hole, Vincent's Swallet and digs in Wales and many other caves haven't made the cut but I hope that I can address those omissions with a future MCG News article.

The Publications

The MCG News, the logbooks, the Journals, the Occasional Publications and the other writings of MCG members have formed a vital and important record of the group's activities and is a great resource for those interested in the MCG and Mendip Caving. Charlie Allison has done a wonderful job in listing publication content, including articles, surveys, cave area maps and away trips.

Photos

As part of the 70th celebration I created some photo boards for the 70th dinner, these are reproduced here as well as a selection of photos from the dinner itself.

A huge thank you to the contributors, this publication is only possible because of you. Finally, thank you too, reader, for being a part of the Group's fine history. I hope you enjoy this publication!

Tom Harrison

70
YEARS OLD

OVER 2100
TRIPS INTO UPPER FLOOD

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Many Many Thanks to the contributors to this Publication:

Joan Goddard
Paul Green
Charlie Allison
Brian Snell
Keith Knight

Julie Hesketh
Steve Conquest
Denise Knibbs
Linda Milne
Helen Ingold

To all of the many photographers. Where known, photographer's names appear in square brackets!

And to those whose research and articles have been used here. Citations can be found on page 51.

MCG in the 50s

Paul Green

Member No.: 48 Joined: June 1957



1956 OR 57 PAUL GREEN, VELVET BOTTOM CAMP
[ROBBIE CHARNOCK]

I now live in Canada, but in the 1950's I was living in Hounslow Middlesex.

My name is Paul Green. My pal Jack Green and I (not related) both joined the club somewhere around the Autumn of 1956. We had both been considering a new active and interesting pastime and had talked about sailing or rock climbing but had not come to a decision until Jack came home from work one day and said to me "what about caving"? I said OK..., but how do we go about it? He told me that a guy he worked with at EMI by the name of Tony Crawford, had dropped his wallet and out fell all these photographs. Jack helped pick up the scattered photos and was intrigued by their content. Tony said, "if you are interested in what we do, come along to our club meeting on Thursday night at a pub in Hanwell and find out what caving is all about. So, next Thursday night we climbed aboard our trusty BSA 250's and went to our first MCG club meeting.

The Crooked Treasurer!

Before we ever set up our tents in Velvet Bottom OR entered a cave, we attended the Club Annual General Meeting

in another pub in Lewisham (I think). When Jack and I arrived at the AGM we were met with some pretty glum faces. The club was broke and our treasurer had been arrested for loitering with intent while carrying house breaking tools in a public phone box and he had spent our club funds!

Cold Camping

Our first trip to Mendip was the following Easter weekend. We left on Good Friday morning on a glorious sunny cold and very frosty day with our bikes piled high with camping gear and our old ex-army leather boots (don't tell anyone) nailed with old fashioned triple hob and tricouni hardened steel climbing boot nails! We pitched our tents after a long ride on our bikes which at about 50 mph and no motorways took us many hours. That evening we sat around the campfire under amost amazing display of stars and then crawled into our sleeping bags only to awake in the morning to about four inches of snow.

The Queen Vic

Later we were introduced to caving by entering

Goatchurch Cavern and we were hooked. This was then followed by an evening in the New Inn Priddy, drinking cider from two handled china pint pots decorated with pictures of Queen Victoria and consuming Mrs. Speed's amply proportioned cheese sandwiches and home pickled onions.

Explosive Risks

The next memory I believe relates to the next holiday weekend (Whitsun) when we had another Monday holiday. We were working on the dig in Velvet Bottom and had come to a squeeze that was too impossibly tight to negotiate and de-



AROUND 1960 NETHERWOOD, PAUL GREEN, PHY
[ROBBIE CHARNOCK]

LATE 1950S/1960S VELVET BOTTOM CAMP [RICHARD WOOLLACOTT]



cided to blast it and open it up a bit. Noel Dilly a club member who was living in Wales and was either incredibly brave or a raving lunatic drove from Wales on his Lambreta scooter with 10 lbs of plastic gelignite on the front carrier and the detonators on the rear carrier! Someone decided that it was time for me to learn how to use plastic gelignite. I packed a couple of pounds of plastic gelignite in the right breast pocket of my boiler suit and a detonator in my left pocket while unwinding the electric detonating cable behind me and made my way to the offending outcrop rock. I placed

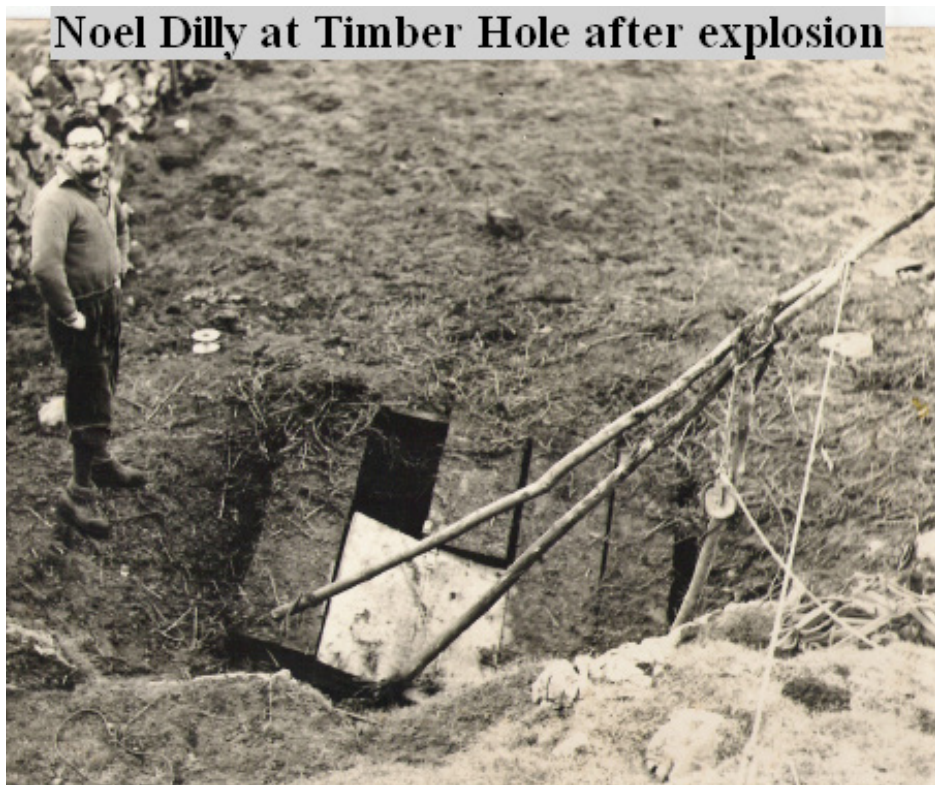
the plastic gelignite into place and patted it down as instructed by my more experienced colleagues. I then pressed the detonator into the plastic gelignite. The next part of the operation was to connect up the detonator wire to the terminals on the detonator. At this point I hesitated somewhat, The two pounds of plastic gelignite was about six inches in front of my face. A terrifying thought crossed my mind, what if someone above has al-

ready connected the battery to the wire? I quickly pushed the wire away from me and rapidly exited the dig and was confronted by some rather confused faces as I strode over to the battery and stuffed it into the front of my boiler suit and entered the dig again and this time confidently connected the wires to the detonator and then back up to the surface and had the pleasure connecting the battery and detonating the explosion myself!



ALLIS SPEED, BOB KNOTT, PETE GODDARD

Noel Dilly at Timber Hole after explosion



[ROBBIE CHARNOCK]



MCG in the 60s

Joan Goddard

Member No.: 117

Joined: May 1964

mier' carbide lamp. Next thing I remember was waiting nervously at the entrance to GB. Our party consisted of three males and two females and we made our way down to the end of Main Chamber where the men enthusiastically set about digging. The lady was tasked with taking me up the Oxbow passage to see the formations in White Passage. Leaving our bags at the dig we went to the viewpoint above the Main chamber. What a view! We sat down to enjoy it, leaning back against the surprisingly comfortable rock.

Drip!

My companion's carbide lamp was extinguished by a drip from above. No worries, she could relight it from mine. She leaned over to light her carbide jet – and extinguished mine



2004 JOAN GODDARD SLOVENIA
[DENISE KNIBBS]

too! At that point we remembered our torches were in our bags at the dig site. This was a little disconcerting as we were perched above a huge drop in total darkness and dare not move.

But carbide lamps have a flint mechanism (striker), similar to cigarette lighters, to ignite the jet of acetylene. All we had to do was use the striker while cupping the lamp reflector to contain the acetylene gas so that it would ignite. But the striker was not providing a spark and the palms of our hands were almost raw as we tried again and again to get the lamps working. Our only option was to sit-it-out until the diggers noticed our absence - which could take some time . . .

We were getting cold up there on our perch overlooking the Main Chamber and I gave the flint one more strike. It worked! With two working lights we made our way down to the diggers, our chocolate bars and most importantly our emergency torches. I

First caving trip - GB Cave

I was studying geology in Bristol and it seemed a good idea to venture underground to see rocks in their natural environment. University of Bristol Speleological Society (U.B.S.S) was the obvious place to find someone to take me down a cave, so I duly joined a group who were prepared to have a extra person tag along on their digging trip. Not sure if it was 1961 or 1962.

Essential Kit

I suppose we went by car to the UBSS hut at Burrington where we changed into caving gear, but it would just have been walking boots, old clothes and a borrowed cotton boiler suit. The must-have accessory was a small ex-army canvas 'shoulder bag' for a torch, spare battery and emergency chocolate bar. Primary lighting was a 'Pre-



CANVAS SHOULDER BAG

learned an important lesson about spare lights on that trip – and I also decided to give caving with UBSS a miss from then on. (Apologies to U.B.S.S. for spilling the beans!)

My first and last caving trips were to G.B. Cave, with many enjoyable visits in between

Second Caving Trip (Swildon's Hole)

Having finished exams in the summer of 1962, a group of us were wondering what to do to celebrate. We didn't have cars or cash and didn't have any bright ideas until one of the group, Barrie Ottewill, asked if we would like to try caving as he belonged to a caving club whose headquarters was on Mendip. A couple of people had motorbikes and I rode pillion behind Barrie. We went down Swildon's Hole but I can't remember much of the cave except for the lovely fossils in the streamway; what really

impressed me was the Mendip landscape and MCG's Nether Wood Cottage.

It was late when we left the cottage, and dark, and that was when we discovered the lights didn't work on the bike. However the large rubber torch we had with us still had battery power so we returned slowly and carefully along the A38 to Bristol with me shining the torch over Barrie's shoulder. Fortunately the cops were nowhere to be seen. Postscript: Unfortunately Barrie lost his life while travelling home after a weekend on Mendip

Third trip (My First MCG Meet)

In 1963 I was living in Swansea and decided to meet up with MCG members when they arranged a caving weekend at Llangattock. I arranged for someone to drive me to the Clydach Valley on the pretext of collecting limestone samples for analysis, from where

I planned to walk around the east end of the escarpment and along the tramway to the hut where they had booked to stay – can't remember if it belonged to Hereford C.C or Chelsea S. S.

Snowdrifts

In January and February 1963 Britain had the most severe winter since 1895 and my solo walk was, to say the least, difficult. I think caving equipment was being supplied by the MCG crew but I had a bulky rucksack containing sleeping bag, food and clothing. The further I walked the deeper the snowdrifts, and it was difficult to recognise the path along the tramway. A few steps to the right and I would have fallen over the edge. With darkness approaching I eventually reached the hut expecting to see familiar faces – but was met by a couple of strangers; my friends had had to abandon their journey and kip in their cars. Fortunately the strangers were also MCG members and took me under their wing and I am forever grateful to them. The other thing I remember is that there were no bunks or mattresses and my sleeping bag was the thinnest and most useless item I have ever owned. I don't think we ventured underground that weekend but I had met a group of cavers who have given me 60 years of fun and friendship in the MCG.



1962 NETHERWOOD COTTAGE
[JOAN GODDARD]

A Caving Baptism

MCG in the 70s

Steve Conquest

Member No.: 220 Joined: 1974

Welcome to the MCG!!!

My first experience of caves was as a young boy. We were on a family holiday to Devon and we made a stop off on the way to see the Cheddar Caves. I didn't know then that Mendip would have such an affect on my life. We continued our journey to Devon and we toured the Kent Caverns in Torquay. After that, and independence from family, caves disappeared from my horizon and I took up hill walking and other outdoor activity pursuits.

Sid Perou

As I explored around the country I found the Yorkshire Dales and caves became noticeable again and piqued my interest. It was at this time that I watched, on TV, the film by Sid Perou called The Lost River of Gaping Gill. I had to go and have a look!! Around this time, early 1970's, I changed jobs and became friendly with a colleague. We got on well together and I talked about my walking trips and interest in caves. His eyes lit up and he said he was a caving club member. He suggested that I could join him on a visit to his club based in Somerset on the Mendip Hills. His name was Phil Ingold and was an experienced potholer.

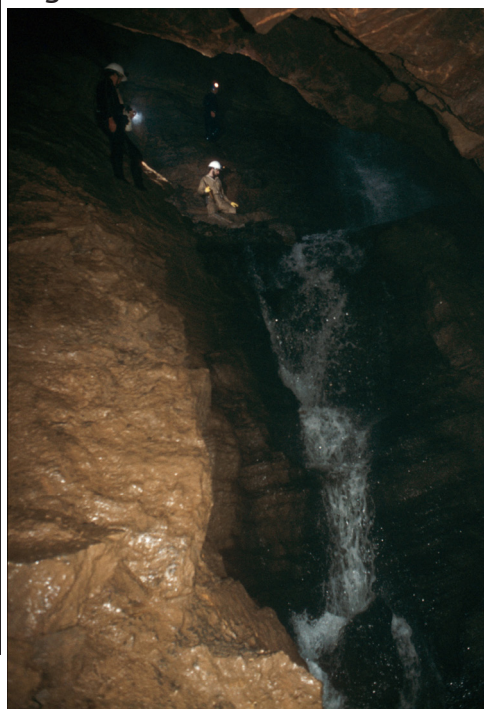
So, Phil arranged the visit to the cottage for a week-end in June, 1973 and there would be 4 of us going. Phil, myself, Doug Anderson, another work colleague new to caving, and another club member named Chris (whose surname I didn't record).

Longwood Swallet Accident

Phil told us we were going to explore a cave system called Longwood Swallet. He briefed us about the cave and some of the procedures to progress underground. It was an amazing trip that I couldn't even have imagined! I was hooked! Phil eventually decided we had travelled almost to the end of the passages and that we should make our return out of the cave. This was, of course, more demanding and challenging to climb up from the bottom of the system. On the way in we had attached a couple of fixed ropes to assist in ascending two, ten foot pitches before approaching the extremely tight bends, rifts and crawls prior to exiting via the 35ft of vertical chimney. Phil was in the lead, then Doug, myself and Chris in the rear to collect the ropes and follow us out. I had ascended the ropes and was approaching the letterbox squeeze in the tight section



when I heard a swooshing noise and a couple of heavy thumps behind me. No other sounds, cries, calls or shouts. I waited for Chris to come but he didn't appear. I called out but got no reply. I decided to carefully go back to look. Frighteningly, I saw Chris in a heap at the bottom of the uppermost 10 ft drop. I called him but there was no reply. By this time, Doug had gone from sight into the tight crawls. I frantically scabbled up the crawl and finally saw his boot soles and shouted to him to stop. It was difficult in this incredibly tight space to have a conversation but managed to tell him that he had to



get to Phil, who was far ahead, to tell him of the accident. I asked him to come back to me here and we would then both go back to Chris and evaluate the situation. Eventually, Doug returned and informed me that Phil had exited the cave and was going to raise the alarm.

Rescue

Doug and I returned down the passage, descended the rope (checking it was still secure!) and got to Chris. He was in a bad way, unconscious, with a serious head injury (despite his helmet) and severe swelling to his right side face. One of his legs was at an awkward angle. Doug and I ensured that he was safe on the ledge and decided there was not much more we could do but wait for Cave Rescue to arrive. I couldn't tell how long we waited but we knew that Phil had a long way to go once he was out of the cave. Some time later Chris groaned and became semi-conscious but was very, very dazed not really aware of what had happened. He did manage to complain about his leg but Doug and I decided not to try and do anything except to try and keep Chris still, calm and quiet. Eventually, there was rumbling and scrabbling sounds coming closer with lots of cursing and swearing about the tightness of the cave. I'll never forget the first rescuer bursting into our small chamber, stating unmistakably, shouting that he "hated this f.....g cave and f.....g seriously hoped there was no blood, as he hated f.....g blood"!!!!

After his arrival it was all a blur but I assured him that there was no serious blood. He kicked us ceremoniously out of the way and told us in no uncertain terms to b.g.g.r off. I don't know how Doug and I got out of the cave with all the rescuers and emergency gear coming in. It was a beautiful, warm, bright day and I felt very relieved to be on the surface. There were dozens of people around, volunteer rescuers, a doctor, police and medics and we found Phil to tell him the rescuers were with Chris. The rescue team advised us to make our way back to the club but we wanted to see Chris get out of the cave. Again, I have no recollection of how long we waited with everyone else but eventually the news came that Chris was on his way out. He was manually hauled out because stretchers couldn't be gotten in or out. It was a most emotional moment when Chris's bandaged head appeared at the entrance and everyone shouted and clapped. He was quickly whisked off to Bristol hospital.

Ouch!



1996 RESCUE PRACTICE INCL. PHIL IN-GOLD, STEVE CONQUEST, BRIAN PREW-ER(MRO), JOAN GODDARD, NICK & JEREMY GILSON, MARTIN ROWE

I can't remember whether we went to the Hunter's that night but I think we probably did! I don't think we hung around the next day but on the way back home we visited Chris in the hospital. He was sitting up in bed, heavily bandaged but more alert. He had a skull fracture, a crushed right eye socket, a fractured cheek bone but didn't appear to have a damaged leg but doctors were still concerned. We wished him well and departed. I never did learn of his surname and to the best of my knowledge he, sadly, never came to the club again.

Not Put Off!

Despite my "Baptism of caving danger" I went on to visit Swildon's Hole in July, 1973 with Phil, et al, joined the MCG in February, 1974 and have since enjoyed an extensive and exciting 'career' in caving & potholing all around the UK and Ireland. The MCG is a truly inclusive club and was a significant influence in my life. I'm still a member and consider that my subscription is a donation to a thriving club to enable beginners and experienced members to have as much fun and enjoyment that I have had over the years.

I don't get down to Mendip much now as I live in Derbyshire but I still occasionally pop into an easy cave and I'm active with the Peak District Historic Mines Society. I'm looking forward to meeting the current club members as well as old friends when I come to the 70th anniversary 'bash'.



I first met members of the MCG in a pub in Brentford in 1977. I was already caving with the SWCC and had just become the Permit Secretary for OFD and Dan yr Ogof. I had been caving since 1970. I had gone to the pub, The Beehive, with some friends and their dog. We were having a nice quiet evening chatting when someone came into the bar with a box of books and sat at the next table to us. Several other people arrived and started looking at the contents of the box. I realised that the books were all about caving. The person selling the books was Malcolm Cotter and he



THE BEEHIVE, BRENTFORD



AROUND 1985 DENISE KNIBBS IN UPPER FLOOD [TONY KNIBBS]

Member No.: 237 Joined: 1979

had just received copies of Mendip Underground by Dave Irwin and Tony Knibbs (First edition) and they were selling like hot cakes. Of course, I excused myself to my friends and started talking to the cavers. I discovered that they met at The Beehive every Thursday night. So began my association with the MCG. I joined them every Thursday at the Beehive.

The New Hut

At this time the club was busy building the hut. Members had spent a lot of time raising funds for the hut project and many members spent their weekends on the building work. We were still using the

barrack room hut on the Fry's land. The old hut was fairly basic, but comfortable. The bunks were three-tier; there were no showers and the toilet was an Elsan which needed regular emptying. Washing was either done in the kitchen area or we took a bowl of water to the bunk room to wash and change. The heating was a stove in the middle of the main room with the chimney reaching through the roof. I remember, on at least one occasion, when there were several cavers from other Mendip clubs doing the cottage traverse and they brought the chimney pipe down! It was quite common at this time for cavers to visit other clubs after the pub – especially if there was a barrel on. This would of course lead to silly games including sofa rugby and the moving of Elsans. Due to lots of club members working hard on the new hut there was inevitably less caving going on. I joined some of the then younger members on a few trips when possible. I did my caving with people like Greg Smith, John

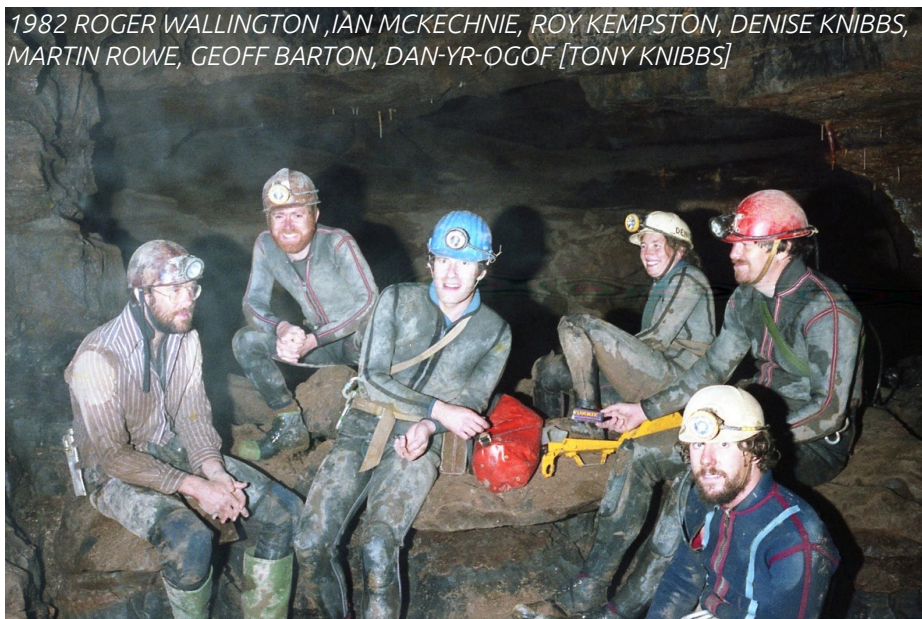
Miriam, John Pudduck and Don Vosper. We also went up to Yorkshire on a number of occasions, in John Miriam's Morris van and did some of the classic trips there whilst staying at the NPC. I actually did more caving in Yorkshire with MCG than with SWCC. As the song goes, "We are the Clockwork Cave Club, and South Wales is our home, but from our native valleys we seldom care to roam". (From the song Wessex Cave Club Hymn). To be fair to SWCC there was so much digging and exploration going on at that time that caving in other areas was not a priority. I became a probationary member of MCG in 1979 and a full member in 1981 – number 237.

Songs, Dances and Awards

There was a great atmosphere in the MCG. Several members were part of a Ceilidh band who played at our Half Yearly meets with dancing led by Val Knight. There was regular singing in the Hunters led by Wayne Hiscox, John Pudduck and others. At the dinners – in the 80s we would often have an awards ceremony led by Ron Saunders in his wig and gown. Prizes were awarded for different misdemeanours.



1982 ROGER WALLINGTON, IAN MCKECHNIE, ROY KEMPSTON, DENISE KNIBBS, MARTIN ROWE, GEOFF BARTON, DAN-YR-OGOF [TONY KNIBBS]



In 1984 Roy Kempston was awarded a breakfast for being incapable of eating his full English after the last AGM whilst all around him were tucking in happily – I believe that JR (Jonathan Roberts) saved the day by eating it for him. Don Vosper was awarded a book of excuses for not going caving and others prizes were awarded but I can't remember them now.

South Wales and France

In January 1980 the hut they had spent so much time building blew up. I had spent that New Year at the SWCC but a friend, Sam Moore, had gone to Mendip to spend New Year with the UBSS and returned with the tale of the destroyed MCG hut. Of course, everyone was pretty low after that. However Ron had got good insurance for the club and they paid up fairly quickly – allowing the club to pay someone else to do most of the work and free them to do more caving. Tony and I would lead club trips

to South Wales and foreign trips were organised including a trip to Arbas in 1983. Little did we know that we would be caving in this area far more often when we moved to France four years later. The regular Thursday meets moved from the Beehive to the Mawson Arms (Fullers brewery tap) and gradually the Thursday meets finished as members moved away and committee meetings were held at the MCG instead of the pub.

Caving Friends

I always look forward to meeting old friends and new ones at the club dinners and welcoming members to my home here in France. If you are ever near Toulouse please get in touch to share a drink on the terrace and talk about caves and caving.

I hope that I have got most of the dates correct – unfortunately I didn't keep a diary so some may not be totally right.

MCG IN THE 80S

Linda Milne

Joined: June 1984

I started caving in the 80's, probably 1984. A brilliant decade. I was working with Roy Kempston at the time and he invited me and Gill Norris (née Warren) along. I was 22 and Gill was probably around 18 and we had no idea what caving was about but we were up for everything back then.

Pilfering and Parties

We had a whale of a time, the club was thriving. We measured it more for its social life than its caving! Lots of really serious inter club rivalry, with sabotage the name of the game. Someone stole the BEC bat emblem one time, not good. The BEC managed to chop a tree down and place it in our common room (lounge) one night. The Chariot race

and sofa rugby, were very serious events and many injuries sustained. Gill and I managed to persuade our friend Julie to be the chariot passenger one year, she was frightened to death and never forgave us. The Wessex challenge was legendary and competitions in Priddy Hall were very physically demanding. Games at the cottage were outrageous. Design to test the prowess of the keen caver but also to provide entertainment as the expense of the unwary - the cottage traverse, the table traverse, bottle walking, the ladder trick, the broom trick, with various props like chairs, toilet rolls, trays filled with

water, and the infamous two man lift (just ask any of the oldies).

Race to Mendip

There was of course lots of caving. Roy would give us a lift down on Friday night in his white Ford Escort XR3i. We would set off at 7pm on the button and it was pedal to the metal all

the way to Mendip. There was an ongoing challenge to beat the record for the shortest time, I think the record from Frimley to the Hunters was 1 1/2 hours (should be nearer 2 hours!). We would have a few beers in the Hunters, packed full of cavers from all the clubs, then off to the cottage to get ready for a caving trip. Most often it was down Upper flood. This was in the days when the cave only went a few hundred feet and sometimes the beer drinking continued underground. The next day started with a fry up, we needed lots of energy for caving. Just in case, it was tradition to pack a Mars Bar in the ammo box and yet another competition for the oldest most squashed Mars Bar. The caving continued the next day and we eventually set off late afternoon and stopped off at the King's Head, Chitterne for an evening meal.

The weekends were full on both socially and physically. Much cheaper than gym membership but the downside for us girls was the unflattering bruises which took some explaining!



2004 50TH SWILDON'S BRIAN SNELL, LINDA MILNE, LEE HAWKSWELL, GORDON LISTER, BRIAN PITTMAN [LEE HAWKSWELL]



MAY 1995 BBQ JA+LINDA MILNE, LEE HAWKSWELL+SONJA COTTER+SIMON GODDARD [?]
COLOURISED

The Night the Cottage Exploded

Helen Ingold

Member No.: 188

Joined: August 1969

I was staying at the cottage with Phil, and our caving friends, Fred and Julie Burton.

Fred found the exploded cottage as he didn't want to use the Elsan in our old Army hut and so had wandered over to the new cottage to make use of the facilities.

Luckily my father Ron Saunders was treasurer at the time and had insured the cottage for £30,000 if I remember rightly, of course we had never expected to make use of that insurance so soon or at all! Below is the actual write up that I wrote a week or so later.

NEW YEARS EVE 1979/80
THE EVENING WE BURN THE COTTAGE UP

New Years Eve for members of the Mendip Caving Group was spent in typical style at the Hunters Lodge Inn near Priddy. A good time was being had by all with plenty of singing in tune (or out of tune in many cases) with the Velvet Bottom Band. Excitement was rising as the hands of the clock moved towards midnight. At two minutes to a surge of cavers and locals poured out onto the crossroads. We all joined hands forming a large circle and as midnight struck sang 'Auld Lang Syne'. As we sang someone shouted "look at the Moon," it was a strange sight a huge moon with a massive halo around it. Another voice asked "Is it an Omen?" By this time we had finished 'Auld Lang Syne', for the third time, and everyone was wishing everyone else a happy New Year and flowing back into the Hunters for another round of drinks.

At 12:45 pm we arrived back at our old army hut, club house, not to be for much longer as we had almost completed 6 years of building our new club cottage. As we sat round the stove Fred said he was going over to the New Cottage to use the loo (we have an elsan in the old hut). A few minutes later he returned saying he didn't know if he'd drunk too much but the end wall had fallen out of the new cottage. At first we thought he was joking, but as we realised he wasn't we all rushed over to find the cottage in ruins. The gable end walls were blown out, a third of the roof, the library & the dormer windows were totally destroyed. The main bedroom had collapsed into the lounge which was now a heap of rubble. Only one wall survived almost intact, all the others were badly cracked or completely demolished.

We realised a severe explosion had taken place

caused by leaking propane bottle gas, ignited by a pilot light.

As we slowly got over the initial shock and the police & fire brigade had gone we tried to joke about what had happened.

At the Hunter's next day the landlord gave us a free drink and other carving clubs ragged us about setting off the new year with a bang. One member reckoned if he'd put longer bolts through the bunks to the walls (fitted the day before) we'd still have that wall left as his bunks had not moved.

We have now got better news, our insurance company has at last 'paid up' and we have invested the money while we obtain tenders from local builders. I don't think we could manage another six years of hard labour.

We hope to back in the New New Cottage for next new year.

HELEN INGOLD



1979 COTTAGE [GEOFF BARTON]

GB cave lock in

Keith Knight Joined: 1988

Many moons ago I was caving in GB cave with Brian Snell, Simon Goddard and Cara Allison?. A quick trip Saturday morning before the MCG AGM at The Hunters in the afternoon.

Key Number 1

All went according to plan until we tried to exit the cave. The lock would not budge no matter how hard we tried in turn to free the lock. I went and got some water which we poured in to the lock and jiggled the key with no luck. So we sat to ponder our next move when another party came to exit the cave.

Key Numbers 2 & 3

A different key now we are on the way out, it was not to be, their key also failed to open the lock as again each member of the party took it in turn to try the lock. Then a third party turned up with another key, surely we are on the way out, third time lucky.

But no, another failure as again each member of the party took it in turn to try the lock.

Now this is where your emergency supplies come in handy, the young lady had a Mars Bar and Simon had one of those heat pads where you mix two chemicals together and now you have warmth. Well the Mars Bar was so old the brown chocolate had turned white all over, and the heat pad was way out of date, so no chemical reaction and no heat, just a soggy plastic bag.

By now we should have been reported overdue on the notice board back at the cottage. Well, no, everybody had gone to the Hunters for the AGM. So we sat and pondered for a while.

Key Number 4

Eventually another party turned up to go caving. Key number 4 was duly passed through the door, but same as before the lock would not budge. One of the outside party was dispatched to get a hacksaw. So we sat and waited. By now it was getting a bit cold just sitting around.

The hacksaw was passed through the door and we set about trying to cut the lock hasp, but as it was made of hardened steel the blade would not touch it. Only one option left; cut the latch on the door frame, bend it a bit and take out the lock.

After a mass exodus we arrived back at the cottage just as people were returning from the Hunters.

Lesson learned; keep an eye on your backup supplies you never know when you may need them. Oh and we got a rollicking for damaging the door and not the lock. But it did result in the door locking mechanism being re-designed so no key is required to exit GB cave!

Note: This was the last time I was slim enough to get through the Devil's Elbow.



Caving, the MCG, and me

Brian Snell

Joined: 1987

I began my caving days in late 1967 at the age of 15. My dad who had left the navy had made the decision to become a teacher and he was studying for a Bachelor of Education degree at Milton College in Portsmouth. One of the students with him was John Pitt, who had previously worked for the Ordnance Survey (OS) Group in Southampton. Like my dad he was also making a work life change. But it just so happened that John was a member of the OS caving club, and had been caving for a number of years. He had even been part of an expedition to Jamaica looking for new cave systems there. The journal of this is in the MCG library.

One day my dad was in conversation with John about his recent weekend's caving activities. One thing led to another and caving weekend was arranged for us on Mendip. We set up camp at Bill's campsite just up the road from Priddy. From here it was an easy walk to the Queen Vic, which in those days regularly had people turning up with

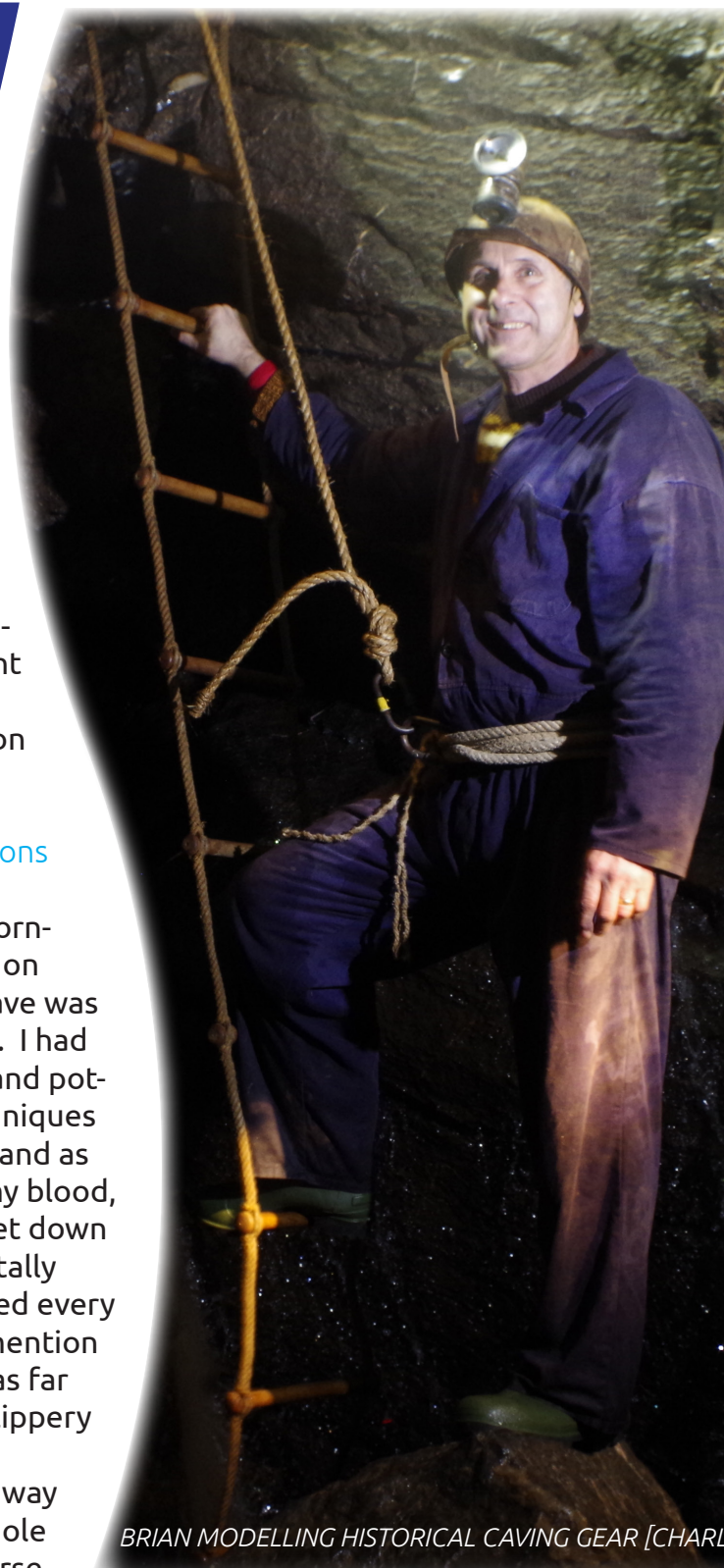
guitars, penny whistles etc which meant there was a great sing song evening on Saturday nights.

Goatchurch & Swildons

On the Saturday morning as is customary on Mendip, our first cave was Goatchurch Cavern. I had read about cavers and pot-holers and the techniques used underground and as adventure was in my blood, I couldn't wait to get down there. I found it totally enthralling and loved every minute. I have to mention that Goatchurch was far less polished and slippery then.

The next day it got way better. Swildon's Hole upper series of course. It was before the 1968 storm so there was no grill by the tree and you couldn't exit under the tree. The entrance was a lot easier then and just inside the entrance chamber it was easy to just slide off a slab down onto the stream floor to continue on down. Over the years the floor it has dropped about 4-5ft. We

wriggled, slid and clambered around the short and long dry ways eventually ending up in the Water Chamber. From here it was simple to follow the stream along the level floor of a rift to the top of the 40ft pot. Looking down it, John told me that that this pitch was the gateway to more serious caving. As I



BRIAN MODELLING HISTORICAL CAVING GEAR [CHARLIE]

looked down the drop with my pathetic acetylene lamp, unable to make out the bottom of the pitch, I made up my mind then that I wanted to get down this pitch sometime in the future and explore more of Swildon's.

After that weekend I was invited to join a number of trips with the OS group. More trips to Mendip, some to Ashburton in Devon where I was introduced to Baker's Pit and the extremely muddy but enjoyable Pridhamsleigh Cavern. There were also trips to South Wales.

But a notable trip was back down Swildon's about a week after the notorious storm which hit in July 1968. I believe the theory is that hay had been cut on the local fields and was laying in drifts to dry. When the storm hit it was accompanied by strong winds (possibly mini tornadoes) which lifted the hay into the air. This ended up being washed down the stream to Swildon's entrance, where it plugged up

the entrance stream. Consequently, the water levels rose to fill the whole depression before the pressure became too high, the debris plug was blown, and a deluge of water blasted through the cave. On the day I went down there, the most notable thing I saw was in the Water Cham-

ber, where straw and grass was attached to the stal in the roof of the chamber. It doesn't bear thinking about how wild it must have been in there. The other very notable change there, was that the stream no longer followed the usual level floor in a rift. It was now following a new course and now bypassed the 40ft. It meant that I got to see the 20ft for the first time.

Climbing

At the same time all this was happening, after a trip to the Lake District at Easter in 1967, I had taken up rock climbing and hill walking. It being my preferred activity by far, I was self-taught, reading all the climbing books I could get hold of from the town library. From these I learned about belay techniques and the equipment used. The years went by, I got married, had children and by then I was very active on the Swanage Sea cliffs finding unclimbed lines and making first ascents with my close friend and climbing buddy Keith Knight, who I have known since the age of 16. There were annual winter trips to Ben Nevis and Glencoe for some hard ice climbing, and with warmer winters and unpredictable snow in Scotland, I eventually started climbing big routes in the Alps with my friend Nigel Porter. The North face of the Aiguille de Triolet was a big one, 2600ft of steep 58 degrees of ice and snow, which unfortunately was followed by a forced bivouac on the top of the mountain with minimal gear and unable to dig a snow hole. That was a cold night

spent mostly shivering and getting frost nip on my big toes.

I was still caving occasionally but it wasn't long before I realised that I was spending too many weekends away and forsaking my responsibilities as a husband and father. So, something had to go and I made the painful decision to stop caving.

MCG

Some years past and a move to a new job was about to change things. I had started work as a systems engineer at a company based at Camberley. The work there was primarily MOD projects and our group was working on the weapons systems coordina-



BRIAN AND LINDA MILNE IN SWILDON'S [LEE HAWKSWELL]

tion for a new class of submarine called Upholder. It was here that I met Roy Kempston. One morning we were having a discussion about our weekends and Roy said he had been caving on Mendip. He told me he was a member of the Mendip Caving Group. I reminisced about my caving days and Swildon's in particular. Then Roy said 'why don't you join us on the next Mendip weekend'. I told him why I had given up caving and was adamant that I wouldn't take it up again. However, so easily seduced to the dark side, I agreed to join him in the next caving weekend. Well just one weekend of caving wouldn't harm surely. The arranged weekend soon arrived and we drove to Mendip. But there was a difference. Instead of camping in an unpleasant muddy field we turned up at Nordrach Cottage. Oh, what heaven to have a kitchen to cook in, decent beds to sleep on, a lounge with a roaring fire, and best of all, a hot shower after a chilly cave trip. We did Longwood/August and GB that weekend, both caves I hadn't been down.

After that I had to have a conversation with my wife. She understood my mad obsessions with adventure and agreed I could join the MCG as long as I made time for her and the family. Therefore, in 1986 I joined the MCG and never looked back. Since then, I have met some lovely people and been on some great caving trips. Most

notable was a trip into 'Time Machine' in Ogof y Daren Cilau, led by Clive Gardener. He was part of the team, which included Martyn Farr, who had broken through a choke and made the discovery only a few weeks before. And I will also cherish being part of the team that made the first trip to the very end of Neverland in Upper Flood. To make footprints in a passage nobody has ever been through before was a thrill.

Digging

Age is starting to catch me up now so I mostly now try to be involved in digging sessions. The re-opening up of Pearl Mine at Sanford after two years of digging was a big achievement for the team with the discovery of over 100m. of new passage. There is still a hope that we can make a connection with Sanford Levy and create a through trip, top to bottom.

And a hole in the ground in a field at Manor Farm led to the descent of a mine shaft that probably hasn't been visited in over 250 years. There are many opportunities for new discoveries on Mendip for those who are prepared to put the work in and hopefully the efforts being made in Stainsby's Shaft will reward us at some time in the near future.

My dad had told me in my youthful Scout days, that you should always try to give back to groups that give so much to you. Over the years I have tried to follow that philosophy with the MCG. I have had several positions on the committee and done a lot of work on the cottage including the building of the present drying Room/Tackle Store with a great team of people. So, all the time I am able, I will continue to give back and support the MCG, the group that gave so much to me.



ED WATERS AND BRIAN SNELL 'DIGGING' PEARL MINE [GRAHAM PRICE]

MCG in the 90s

Julie Hesketh

Joined: 1991



50TH SWILDON'S TRIP [LEE HAWKSWELL]

I joined the MCG in 1991 mostly because the pub meet was walkable from my university digs. The cottage was great and the members welcoming when we were on Mendip. Tim, Ralph, Charlie, myself and some others would regularly go along to the pub midweek and meet a few regulars including Malcolm Cotter, Brian Pittman and Bernard Reeves.

Malcolm and joining the MCG

I was young and liked a beer and was fascinated that people would gather and talk such detail about the caves they had visited and were digging. Malcolm loomed large for me in those days and was our main club friend and inspiration, encouraging us to go on weekends away and get involved in his digs. We were made to feel most welcome and it was the start of my long relationship with the club. It's tricky to recall which trips I did with my uni club and which with the MCG as they were often one and the

same on Mendip as a group of us all joined the MCG en-masse and even picked up a few others on the way; I met a young guy called Ben Cooper in a crowded Swildon's streamway in the early 90's and persuaded him over a post-caving pint in the New Inn at Priddy, to join up! The rest is history.

50th Dinner

Fast forward to 1994 and I recall the MCG 50th celebrations with both founders, Tony Knibbs and Malcolm Cotter present. Fresh back from our 1994 MCG expedition to Belize, Tim, Jules, Big Pete and I arrived still a little jetlagged and slightly sunburned to the dinner. We were welcomed back by Malcolm with a kind of caving-hero status and we were treated like kings at the dinner on the top table alongside Malcolm, Tony and the Committee. I recall laughing that us expeditioners would hopefully be dancing at the MCG 100th celebrations and I still live in hope, though

am glad to be celebrating 70 years with some wonderful caving friends with the best memories of the club and our achievements. Those early years for me were mostly spent underground though in the company of other Royal Holloway students who also joined the MCG around the same time – happy days for us though I know we must have been viewed as a big, noisy clique back in those days. Still, many of us persisted and more than a couple of decades later remain staunch supporters and contributors to the best club on Mendip.



1998 JULIE LEADING A BEGINNER'S TRIP WATERWHEEL [?]

Caving Every Weekend

Many years of regular caving followed – one year not taking a single weekend off (or perhaps just one, because my parents started to object). My visits to the cottage in the 90's featured many good conversations and dinners with local members – Wayne Hiscox who would rope us into cottage work and Arthur Spain, who was very accommodating to support on beginner trips to encourage new folk to try caving. The UK-focussed caving was well supplemented by trips abroad thanks to the era of cheap flights – many happy memories of Mallorca trips with Malcolm & Norma and others in particular.

Social

Cottage and table traverses were the entertainment on Saturday nights. We drank and ate a lot in the Castle of Comfort on the 90's and had our own corner of the pub where the MCG were regulars and welcomed warmly. It took till the early 2000's for many of us to really commit to socialising in the Hunters Inn (asides those who regularly went on a Sunday for the back-room music scene) though a move which was long overdue as it has improved the MCG's visibility and relations with other local cubs and communities.

Upper Flood & Other Digs

I did lots of digging too of course, some in Upper Flood but also in East Twin Swallet in Burrington and lots in Pinetree Pot. Then in the early

2000's when the Bracknell crowd joined, and we helped them, led by Biff but with Mick Norton and Bill Chadwick as regulars and joined by Doug Harris, push the stuff over at Shute Shelve Hill. I went to a wedding dress fitting in 2002 more than a bit "orange" after having pushed to a breakthrough in Carcass Cave (Nun-so-thin) where the cave mud is ochrous and brightly orange-coloured. The shop owner was not amused. The Draenen digging years with Ben, Tim and Peat also featured in the late 90's/early 2000's – tough caving and digging with long but fun trips. Our breakthrough in Upper Flood was of course the highlight, though sadly we couldn't enjoy it with Malcolm. I can only imagine how thrilled he would be with the discovery (and to have his mild obsession justified!) My move to Scotland didn't stop my Flood digging and many of the places in the boulder choke and breakthrough are named after my flights to and from Edinburgh to Mendip. In fact, the close relationship that Tony Jarratt had with Scotland and the Grampian Speleological Group (GSG) means that I often cave with lots of Mendip cavers who are also GSG members and get

to catch up with John Crowlesley on occasion too. We just need to plan an MCG trip up this way soon.

Thanks to the MCG

The MCG has been a big part of my life and core to the caving aspects of it. Friends and family have all been persuaded to stay at the cottage and I'll always try to cram in a visit if I am in the south of England. I have a lot to thank the MCG for – great friendships, fantastic company, some of the best caving and discoveries ever, technical know-how and travel and a few bashes and bruises too. Long may it and the club continue to thrive and I look forward to continuing to be an ambassador to and loyal member of the MCG from north of the border.



2023 EVA (JULIE'S DAUGHTER), JULIE AND BILL CHADWICK SLUDGE PIT [TH]

Concise Illustrated History of the MCG

Tony Knibbs
(Updated & Edited by Tom Harrison)

1953 Malcom Cotter and Dillan Evens stayed at Albert Maine's Barn, Manor Farm, Priddy. During the 18-month period that followed, a nucleus of cavers formed an affinity group, staying at Maine's Barn, and began referring to themselves as the Mendip Caving Group.



1950S OUTSIDE MAINE'S BARN
MALCOLM COTTER & AUSTIN SANDERS [ROBBIE CHARNOCK]

1954 Mendip Caving Group formally adopts the name, suggested by Malcolm, together with some basic safety rules. The Group's Easter meet is based in Velvet Bottom (camping), ending the "Maine's Barn" era. Timber Hole dig started. First subscription rate decided at 12 shillings per year. The need for hostel accommodation was seen as an early requirement.



JULY 1955 MAC, MOOMIN TONY DAVIES, DEREK HOLMES [MALCOLM COTTER]

1955 Mr Ball, proprietor of the Lion Rock Hotel, Cheddar, is made an honorary member in recognition of his loaning the Group a small hut, behind the hotel, for tackle storage. Mr Saye of Sycamore Cottage, Cheddar, is similarly honoured for giving the Group access to the cave in his garden, Saye's Hole. First general meeting held.



~1957 NEW INN - MALCOLM COTTER BOB KNOTT, TONY CRAWFORD, (AND LOCALS!) [ROBBIE CHARNOCK]

1957 First AGM and Annual Dinner held in January. Petrol de-rationed in May (rationed following the 1956 Suez Débâcle) resulting in an upsurge of trips to Mendip. Hon. Treasurer absconds with funds (about £100). We obtain the rent-free use of a tumbledown cottage in Nether Wood, Charterhouse, which we refurbish as our first Group headquarters.

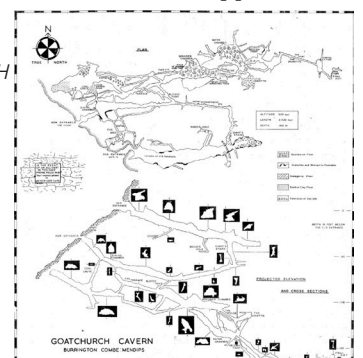


ROBBIE CHARNOCK, JACK GREEN, D STEAD, TONY CRAWFORD [?]

1958 Death of H.E. Balch. Group starts survey of Longwood/August System.

1959 Longwood/August survey finished. Canyon Cave, Cheddar Gorge, discovered and surveyed. Goatchurch Cavern surveyed. First field meet based at the newly occupied Nether Wood Cottage at Charterhouse; this included considerable cottage work because the building was taken over as a roofed shell without facilities. Pinetree Pot dig started. Cooper's Hole dig started.

GOATCHURCH
SURVEY BY
MIKE RENNIE



1960 First overseas meets in France: Vercors: Grotte de Gournier, Cuves de Sassenage and Alpes Maritimes - Canjuers plateau: Aven du Clos del Fayoun. Easter meet in Devon. Pinetree Pot opened. Ubley Hill Pot discovered (dug open in one weekend).

1961 Meet in Ireland (Co. Sligo). Meet in Austria. Work on Blackmoor Swallet started. Meet in France; Pyrénées. The Annexe, Browne's Hole entered by digging (human skeleton found during excavation). As a direct spin-off from MCG survey work, Christmas Crawl in August Hole was opened by digging, providing easier and safer access to the lower streamway. Fred Young (of Lower Farm) made honorary member. Other discoveries by digging in caves on Eastern Mendip: Elm Cave, Hunting Lodge Slocker, Merehead Quarry Cave, Pitten Street Swallet, St Vincent's Swallet. First exploration of Stock's Hole.

1962 Second Irish meet (Co. Sligo and Leitrim). Meet in Yugoslavia. A cave rescue conference at Han-sur-Lesse (Belgium) brings us into contact with the Swiss club Spéléo-Club des Montagnes Neuchâteloises (SCMN). Excavation at Blackmoor (Stainsby's) Shaft breaks into mined cave. Digging at Cooper's Hole reveals passage with ancient steps hewn in stalagmite and a small chamber; further work reveals animal scratch-marks.

1963 Very severe winter on Mendip; snow on ground from New Year until end of March. First meet in Switzerland with SCMN (Siebenhängste plateau, Luzern) camped at Flühli. Charnel Shaft (Charterhouse rakes) discovered.

1964 Eviction from Nether Wood Cottage leads to purchase of ex-army wooden barrack hut which we dismantle at Tilshead on Salisbury Plain and erect on Jim Fry's land at the Stirrup Cup, Nordrach. Jim kindly transported the monster.

1965 Group hosts a week's visit by SCMN on Mendip. Cottage warming party. Digging started at Knapp Hill Swallet in grounds of Wells Hospital.

1966 Meet in Ireland (Co. Clare). Clean-up operation in August/Longwood.

1967 Meet in Yugoslavia. Dig at Bone Hole started. Group carries out a clean-up operation in Longwood/ August.

1968 Charterhouse area receives torrential rain; the subsequent flood scours the floor of Velvet Bottom, washing away



1960 PINETREE POT [BOB TEMPLEMAN}



1962 STOCKS CAVE ? & DAVE MITCHELL [A COWLEY]



1963 SNOW - PETE MUNT & TED GABB [TONY KNIBBS]



1965/66 BLACKMOOR SHAFT DAVE MITCHELL & OTHERS [?]



1968 GREAT FLOOD TOP CAUSEWAY (J & K TUCKERS)

the causeway and road and causing damage in Cheddar Gorge and Village. On the bright side it opened Upper Flood Swallet and Middle Flood (Waterwheel) Swallet and Grebe Swallet. The long campaign of digging in Upper Flood begins. Meet in Czechoslovakia.

1969 13 MCG Members visit Austria. Caves visited include Eis Kögel Höhle in the Tennengebirge Mountain Range, and Hennerhöhle, near Sommerau.

1970 Meet in Poland, the first recorded British caving visit to the West Tatra region. Multiple Yorkshire visits. Mrs Speed, proprietor of the New Inn and friend to the group passes away.

1971 Meet in Yugoslavia.

1972 Digging in Upper Flood enters a well-decorated chamber, then more passage with a further chamber. Length of Upper Flood 150m, Depth 20m. Meet in Mallorca. Flake Dig in Bone Hole stopped to protect Archaeology.

1973 Members visit Czechoslovakia. With trips to at least 10 different caves.

1974 Further Bone Hole digging, (where the blockhouse is) finds more bones.

1975 Another MCG group return to Czechoslovakia. Digging in Bone Hole continues finding the skull slope and West Rift. Planning permission granted for Nordrach Cottage. Building work commences and this now severely interrupts caving activity. Dave Mitchell dies.

1976 Bone Hole surveyed. Meet in Ireland (Co. Clare). First of two 30-mile sponsored walks to raise money for Cottage purchase. Group becomes a registered charity.

1977 Surveying in Bone Hole. Second sponsored walk brings total cash raised to almost £1,000.

1978 Away trip to Switzerland. Member's visit the Gouffre Berger.

1979 New Year's Eve; gas explosion destroys almost-completed (but fortunately not yet inhabited) cottage.



1973 CZECHOSLOVAKIA TRIP [?]



1974 BONE HOLE ENTRANCE BILL JONES, GREG SMITH, PETE MATTHEWS JUDY & JOHN MACMILLAN [?]



1976 JULY CEMENT FOR THE COTTAGE



~1978 BUILDING THE 16 ROOM RSJ DH OD [DON VOSPER]



1978 DIGGING THE CESSPIT ? [?]

1980 Insurance cheque for £30,000 received and rebuilding work subcontracted.

1981 New building finally completed and cottage-warming party held. Work resumes in Upper Flood.

1982 First Group rescue practice in GB Cave.

1983 Meets in France ; Central Pyrénées (Arbas plateau, Réseau Trombe). Honorary membership conferred on Malcolm Cotter. Start of digging at Nether Wood Swallet. Small extension entered in Bone Hole. Trial dig at East bank distributary, Blackmoor.

1984 Easter meet with GSG at Elphin (Scotland). Group "adopts" Longwood/August System for annual clean-up operation. Winter Meet in Mallorca. Trip with Whernside Manor to France (Vercors, Gouffre Berger). Small finds made in roof of Great Chamber, Longwood Swallet. Work continues in Upper Flood.

1985 Winter meet in Mallorca. Major breakthrough at Upper Flood; Midnight Chamber and continuing stream passage discovered. Abandoned dig in the Oxbows, Longwood /August System.

1986 Meet in Malaga (Sima – GESM), and winter meet in Mallorca. Discovery in Upper Flood; Hannah's Grotto. Upper Flood (Bypass Passage) dig enters short length of high passage; digging started at end.

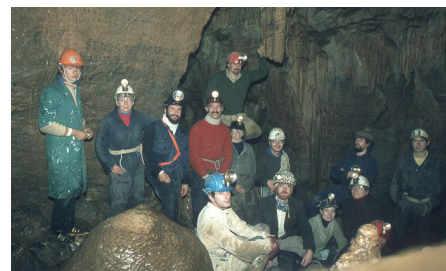
1987 Winter meet in Mallorca. Digging in Upper Flood (Bypass Passage) achieves several breakthroughs including the Red Room.

1988 Meets in Malaga (Sima – GESM), France (Vercors), and trips to Sarawak and Thailand. Death of our neighbours and friends Jim Fry and his wife Gladys. Survey of Shale Rift (Upper Flood) and observation of near-sumping at the Lavatory Trap; short upstream section from Puddle Lake entered.

1989 Meet in France (Dordogne). Group hosts visit to Mendip by the French Spéléo-Club d'Aérospatiale. Ron Saunders made honorary member. Digging in Battery Swallet. Death of Grant Shepherd in road accident near Cottage. Black Aven (Upper Flood) extended; voids found in the Boulder Choke.



1980 COTTAGE REBUILD



1984 30TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY
SWILDONS



1986 RONDA (SPAIN) GROUP



1987 GROUP AT SCHOOL HOUSE
CARBOST, SCOTLAND [IAN MCKECH-
NIE]



1989 SEVENTIES DO

1990 Meets in Czechoslovakia and France (Pyrénées, Mâne). Trips to Italian Alps (Margaureis) and France (Vercors). Digging in Rod's Pot; Eyeball Rift discovered. Surveying in Boulder Choke (Upper Flood).



1991 CZECHOSLOVAKIA TRIP SA JPB
DT LH BP KW BH

1991 Meet in Czechoslovakia. Digging in East Twin Swallet. M&M Passage opened.

1992 Meet in Mallorca. Digging in Milton Hill Cave. Digging in Pinetree Pot restarted.

1993 Ubley Hill Pot reopened. "A Pock Hole Lips Way" in Pinetree Pot opened. More progress in Upper Flood; Rip-off Aven.



1993 UBLEY HILL POT, NICK W, AS,
LEE HAWKSWELL.

1994 Meet in France (Jura). Meet in Mallorca. Belize expedition.

1995 Meets in France (La Chartreuse), Ireland (Fermanagh) and Mallorca. Phil Ingold made an honorary member. Attempt made to make second entrance to Upper Flood by reaching Rip-off Aven – Rip-off 3 found from below. Some digging in Bone Hole. Fish seen in Midnight Chamber (UpperFlood). Drought allowed more progress upstream from Midnight Chamber. Lavatory Trap re-excavated.



1995 CHARTREUSE CHARLIE ALLISON,
MARK WARD, YVONNE & MARTIN
ROWE, R PAIN, JAMES ALLEN, ZOE
HAMMERSLEY, JULIE HESKETH, TIM
FRANCIS, LEE HAWKSWELL

1996 Meets in the Picos region (Spain) and Mallorca. Rescue practice in Gough's Cave.

1997 Meet in Ireland (Co. Clare and Fermanagh). Meet in Mallorca. Library built as extension to the cottage.



1997 ROOFING THE LIBRARY EXTEN-
SION

1998 Start of digging Pontypool or Bust in Ogof Draenen. Meets in Fermanagh and Belgium. Expedition to Madagascar. Permission renewed to dig Blackmoor Swallet via Stainsby's Shaft.

1999 Second expedition to Madagascar. Meet in Mallorca. Digging in Ubley Warren Pot.



1999 WATERWHEEL RESCUE PRAC-
TICE

2000 Expedition to Argentina.

2001 Second expedition to Argentina. Meets in Belgium and Mallorca. Digging in Carcass Cave.

2002 Ogof Draenen extensions in Pontypool or Bust. Third Argentina expedition. Meet in Greece.

2003 Fourth Argentina expedition. Meet in Mallorca.

2004 MCG Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner. Discovery of Golden Chamber, Upper Flood. Fifth Argentina expedition. Meets in Slovenia and Mallorca. Deaths of Phil Ingold and Bruce Dean.

2005 Limekiln/Roman Rake Dig. Death of Geoff Davies. Return to Cow Hole. Trip to Mallorca

2006 Death of Malcolm Cotter who proposed the creation of the MCG in 1953 and was listed as the first member in 1954. Upper Flood goes as the boulder choke is opened into the Departure Lounge, the continuation of the streamway, east and west passages and the jewel in the crown: Neverland. A must see/do trip for MCG members. Argentina again!

2007 . Thief's Chamber (ask Brian Snell!) and Wall street found. Plenty more exploration, surveying and digging in UF.

2008 Stainsby's Shaft, Battery Swallet, Upper Flood and Roman Rake all dug. Trips to South Wales and a 60's themed celebration of 40 years of Upper Flood.

2009 Trips to Yorkshire. Digs continue. Winners of the Hidden Earth Club Stand.

2010 Bone Hole digging. Yorkshire and Andalucia.

2011 Yorkshire, Wales, Digging and a new Gas Tank.

2012 Death of Tony Crawford. Another of the founder members, driving the club forward early on and a big contributor to the MCG. AWOL Avens, Muddy Hell, L33T Inlet and other digs in Upper Flood.

2013 Reservoir Hole trips a plenty to see the Frozen Deep. Yorkshire Trip. Grebe Digging and Andalucia.



2000 ARGENTINA RICHARD CAREY



2005 LIMEKILN ROMAN RAKE TIM FRANCIS, MARTIN ROWE, DOUG HARRIS [YVONNE ROWE]



2007 DEPARTURE LOUNGE UPPER FLOOD [MARK SHINWELL]



2009 MCG - COTTAGE MOCK UP HIDDEN EARTH [MARTIN ROWE]



2012 THE AFTERMATH OF MUDDY HELL DIGGING [MARK LUMLEY]

2014 60th Anniversary of the MCG. MCG members go to the Galapagos Islands and Lanzarote

2015 After much digging in the 'New Cave' part of Bone Hole, 2 sessions in the 'old Cave' leads to the 'Happy New Year' Breakthrough. Ritual Protection Marks found by Charlie Allison. Death of Ron Saunders aged 94, a big part of the group since the late 1960's. Breakthrough in Sandford Levvy to find significant extensions to the mined passages and Hancock's Shaft.

2016 Eurospeleo in Yorkshire. Work continues in Sandford Levvy and a project starts to reopen Pearl Mine.

2017 Deaths of Tony Knibbs and Biff Frith. Tony was member number 10 and had been a member since 1954 and a pivotal part of the group. Biff was cottage warden for a number of years and had an engineering solution for every problem. Snowdonia Away Meet. Pearl Mine is reopened and a further 1/2 km of new passage is found in the process. Winner of Hidden Earth Best Club Stand 2017.

2018 Digging continues at sites across the Mendips, away meets in South Wales, Portland, the Peak District and France.

2019 Tuesday nighters, Vercors, Mines & Bunker Away Meets.

2020 Coronavirus Pandemic - Caving curtailed during lockdowns, in between further passage explored in Pearl Mine, named Biff Frith's Mid Rift.

2021 Lockdowns continue, Stainsby's/Blackmoor Digging restarts. Work continues in West Passage, Upper Flood, to create further links into Neverland.

2022 Small, decorated chamber entered in West Passage named Sleepless Nights.

2023 Breakthrough into a small rift in Stainsby's Shaft in the Possible Passage Dig.

2024 Death of Wayne Hiscox who was heavily involved with the building of the cottages. Away Trip to Portland, Yorkshire. Wood discovered in Possible Passage dig, appears to be confirmation we have found the infamous 18 fathom level. 70th Anniversary Celebrations!



2014 - GALAPAGOS ISLANDS PEAT BENNETT [TIM FRANCIS]



2017 NEW SHED - DRYING ROOM & TS ACKLE STORE BUILT [ANDREW HORRECKYJ]



2017 PEARL MINE ED WATERS, BILL CHADWICK, BRIAN SNELL [GRAHAM PRICE]



2022 POSSIBLE PASSAGE DIG STAINSBY'S / BLACKMOOR SWALLET [TH]



2024 YORKSHIRE TRIP [TH]

THE WOODEN HUT



Joan Goddard

MCG'S SECOND COTTAGE - WOODEN HUT (1964-1981)

(NOTE: CPF = Cottage Purchase Fund, LPF = Land Purchase Fund, GF = General Fund)

Richard Woollacott wrote in Occasional Publication No. 5 that the owners of Stirrup Cup "Jim Fry who with his wife, were the best friends that the club ever had". They certainly came up trumps when we were evicted from MCG's first cottage next to the flues in Nether Wood.

This article describes how we sourced and built the Wooden Cottage but continues into the period when we were looking for a site for a permanent building.

On 8th February 1964 Simon Knight, Pat Walsh and Pete Goddard spoke to Mrs Fry at Stirrup Cup about the location of the new club cottage, and settled details of water, electricity etc. In March Mr Clarke, the new owner of Nordrach Sanatorium, said we must vacate the Netherwood Cottage by end of March or pay £3 per week rent – we paid the previous owner one guinea per year with a bottle of whisky at Christmas!

A Wooden Cottage Planning Committee was set up consisting of Brian Mee (Secretary), Pat Walsh and Tony Knibbs, and it was decided to purchase an ex-WD wooden sectional hut for £100 - but planning permission was required. At that time the Group had £256 in the Cottage Purchase Fund.

Pete Goddard recalls that members drove down to Tilshead on Salisbury Plain (probably in April 1964) to collect the hut. They slept in the hut overnight - and received a morning visit from a policeman who wanted to know why they were there. Explanations accepted!

The hut was dismantled in the morning before Jim Fry arrived from Stirrup Cup, having removed the livestock container from one of his cattle trucks so it was suitable for transporting the sections of hut. When he was about to drive off there was much swearing, cussing and imprecations on the culprit(s) when he discovered a puncture - caused by one of the nails, which had been lying around from the dismantled hut. The convoy drove back to Nordrach with the hut wobbling

around on the back of Jim's truck and we then set about unloading the hut.



ACCOMMODATION, WITH ARMY HUT STACKED BEHIND TENT [JOAN GODDARD]

"Our eviction from the old cottage in the upper reaches of Blackmoor was indeed a sad occasion in the history of the club, but it imparted a sense of unity in striving to provide a new headquarters on Mendip". After much consideration we decided to invest our hard saved Cottage Purchase Fund in an ex-army wooden barrack hut." (MCG Journal No 4)

Planning permission was not yet granted but foundations could be made – between February and July Pat Walsh, Simon Knight, Pete Goddard and others spent their summer weekends casting 31 concrete blocks on Mendip. Without a cottage, members had to find alternative accommodation which was either camping or sleeping in one of Jim's old cattle trucks in the yard.

Camping was in the field next to the site chosen by Jim for our hut and it sometimes contained young pigs which would wake early each morning to root around the tent pegs for worms - until the tent collapsed around us and we were forced to wake up and start work constructing the concrete blocks which were made on site.

"HAY WAGON USERS BEWARE – Before entering the hay wagon late at night, make sure what is in there. Sheep are alright, but a bull might turn the tables, even on Pat. Whatever happens do not tell the BEC – they have sufficient songs about us already." (Newsletter No.24 May 1964)

Most people at this time worked a five-and-half-day week so didn't arrive until Saturday afternoon. Sunday breakfast used to be taken at Mrs Fry's café - which was also in an ex-army hut

The Group had a Cottage Purchase Fund (CPF) which I believe was initiated in the early days when they camped in Velvet Bottom near Black

Rock Quarry. Members and guests donated what they could afford and for many years (probably into the 1990s) there was a weekly Thursday evening meeting in London where a collecting box was passed around for loose change donations. Another regular fund-raising

event was an annual jumble sale which not only raised money but was also an excellent source of caving kit. Members were asked to start collecting Green Shield Stamps, which at the time were given away with petrol, to exchange for kitchen equipment for the new cottage.

In May 1964 the CPF was £159.5.9d of which £136-15-2d had now been spent. (To put it into perspective the annual Dinner at the Star Hotel in Wells cost £1.00).

Planning Permission was received on 30th June 1964, to be reviewed in 1966, and building commenced on July 11th. When hut reconstruction commenced the building crew were dismayed to find the foundation blocks were not 100% level - not surprising as they were positioned without any proper survey kit. A bit of reorganising and all was well. Flooring was purchased through member Dave Mitchell at an estimated cost £125, which almost exhausted the Cottage Purchase Fund.



BREAKFAST AT MRS FRY'S CAFÉ AT STIRRUP CUP – SIMON KNIGHT, PETE GODDARD & PAT WALSH [PETE GODDARD]



SHOVELLING SHIT! BARRIE OTTEWILL, PETE MATHEWS & MIKE BRACE BEHIND THE PIG-SHED [JOAN GODDARD]



PAT WALSH MODIFYING CONCRETE BLOCK [JOAN GODDARD]



1964 COTTAGE FOUNDATIONS (AND PIGLETS!) [JOAN GODDARD]



TONY KNIBBS MODIFYING CONCRETE BLOCK [TONY KNIBBS]



STARTING TO BUILD THE FLOOR. RON HOGSTON, PAULINE KNIBBS, PAT WALSH [TONY KNIBBS]

Site clearance and preparation

Pat Walsh (Cottage Warden) and a band of helpers fixed most of the floor joists and runners and the following weekend positioned the roof trusses, all lower wall sections and three upper sections.

Some straight-talking appeared in the Newsletter:

"The committee reminds members that the Cottage Warden was elected to supervise the new building, and whilst he welcomes constructive advice – he makes the decisions. In other words it is essential that if one wall leans drunkenly – they all do"

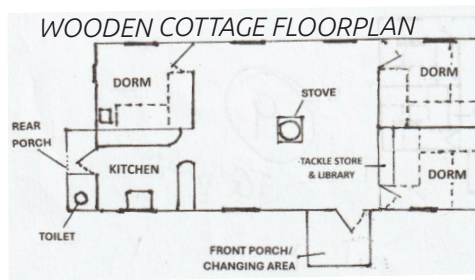
and

"If the hardships of camping – in a tent or even in the squalor of a hay-filled lorry, next door to a café is too much for our members, then this short break without a cottage has been useful in showing up who is really interested in the Club."

(Newsletter No 26, Aug 1964)

By mid-September the "Shell" of the building was complete except for 90% of roof asbestos and some shiplap board. Agreed 3-tier bunks, not sleeping shelves, in 3 bedrooms, 2 for men at the end nearest Stirrup Cup. Women's bedroom and kitchen to be at the "pig sty end." A back door was to lead from the kitchen to a lean-to annexe for dustbin and lavatory, the latter being a chemical toilet. Cleaning caving kit and personal washing was at the edge of the quarry (where the yard is now) using the hosepipe

which was also used to swill out the cattle trucks. Still to be completed were electrical works, stripping & painting, plumbing, carpentry and creosoting.



"By Autumn 1964 it was sort of habitable, although the furnishings consisted of only orange boxes and planks of wood. For the October General Meeting a table was especially imported from Jim's barn" (Journal No 4, 1967)

Construction Works

By mid-October running water had been laid to the kitchen and electrics installed, costing £17.10.0, and a Cottage warming party was held on October 23rd. Secretary Brian Mee sent a letter to members asking for interest-free loans of £1 or more until finances were expected to start returning to normal in 1965. By the end of the month the Group's total funds amounted to £24.16.1 and cottage fees were raised to 2/-a day. A large expenditure was expected on wood for bunks. At about this time we acquired a square coke-burning cast-iron stove which was so heavy it required a concrete base to be constructed from ground level to floor level to support its weight.

At last we moved in!

Progress slowed down over Winter 1965 but it was decided to apply for permission to add two porches. A concerted effort was made to complete drains for inspection; pipes were purchased in April and the trench was dug - but they were not initially signed off by the Council Surveyor until a soakaway pit was moved further from cottage and a trapped gully installed.



1964 MIKE BRACE, RON HOGSTON, BARRIE OTTEWILL [JOAN GODDARD]



1964 PETE GODDARD?, PETE MATTHEWS ?, MIKE BRACE? [JOAN GODDARD]



1964 THE ALMOST FINISHED WOODEN COTTAGE [TONY KNIBBS]



CHRISTMAS DINNER, 1964 PAT WALSH, SIMON KNIGHT & PETE GODDARD [PG]



1964 PAT WALSH, TONY FITZGIBBON AND PETE GODDARD [PG]

The March 1965 AGM reported that so far £356.10.7p had been spent on the cottage. By June the cottage had a Calor gas stove with oven, coke bunker, newly painted living room, half painted kitchen, approval of completed drains, permission to erect two porches and a new armchair!

The August 1965 Newsletter reported that the Group was extremely grateful for a gift of £25 towards the Cottage

Fund from Barrie Ottewill's parents (Barrie had died earlier in the year on his way home from Mendip and Brian Mee was badly injured). The money would be used to build a front porch for caving gear.

At the Half Yearly General Meeting weekend on October 23rd 1965 Pat Walsh reported that the Cottage was now fully operational although there were a few interior additions and improvements to be made, as well as the front porch. A Cottage warming party was held in the evening.

Later in the year Mr Fred Young of Lower Farm (now known as Longwood Grange) gave us a 3-piece suite and fine Victoriana armchair for the cottage. Other furniture and mattresses were donated by members – and requests for more mattresses seem to be a recurrent theme in newsletters in the years to come!

By the 1966 AGM the Group's finances were in better shape although £40 was still owed to members from the loan scheme. The Cottage purchase Fund was renamed Land Purchase Fund and

The Cottage Warming Party- "...was very successful despite poor club turnout. Our neighbours, Mr and Mrs Fry came as did a number of people from other clubs, even though the Wessex was holding its annual dinner the same evening. An extremely amusing cabaret was performed by Pete Mathews, Dave Berry and Zot although it is doubtful they are able to remember much of it themselves!! The climax of the evening was provided by Pat when, instead of launching himself up at the cottage rafters for a quick traverse along the beam, he managed to descend through the seat of the chair on which he was standing and sat smiling rather sheepishly amongst the wreckage!"

(Newsletter No. 38, October 1965)

collections were still taken for it on Thursday night pub meetings in London. The cottage was now paying for itself and even making a small profit (total membership was 44). There was a need to start on the cess pit that Summer. Due to pressure of numbers wishing to sleep at the cottage, a bed-booking scheme was to be introduced.

Pat Walsh, Tony Fitzgibbon and Pete Goddard began building the front porch/ changing annexe in May. A library cupboard had been built in the lounge area so some of the library could, at last, be transported to Mendip from suburbia.

"Thurs 14 April 1966: INDESCRIBABLE!! Snowdrifts in bedroom!! Roof leaked everywhere, stove went out. Calor gas failed. HELP!! " (Logbook 2)



MIKE BRACE, GREG SMITH, KEN NEWCOMBE, ROGER WALLINGTON, JOHN VIRGO [ALLAN WICKS]



VAL KNIGHT AND JOAN GODDARD [DON VOSPER]



1966 HELEN, RON & ROGER SAUNDERS AND THE LIBRARY CUPBOARD BEHIND THEM [HELEN INGOLD]

In June 1966 the Group applied for permission to retain the cottage on its present site and in August we received permission for the following two years. A Jumble sale organised in September by Robbie and Pam Charnock raised £21 and the Land Purchase Fund stood at £46.

A reasonable amount of caving was continued throughout the cottage building period and wet-suit kits became available to buy for £7.19.0 (£7.95 in today's money). They contained 6 sheets of neoprene, 2 rolls of coloured tape, two fasteners, adhesive + brush, solvent & instructions. Around six people bought the kits and the cottage floor proved the ideal space to lie spreadeagled on the sheet of neoprene while someone else drew around you with chalk to enable a good fit.

At about this time digging started in Sand Passage, Longwood/August as well as continuing at Blackmoor Flood Swallet where a winch discovered in Jim's Quarry was a great help.

Saturday evenings were often

spent at the Hunters', after which cavers would retire to one of the other clubs' huts for coffee (and more beer!) or back to our hut for a music session or fun and games.



1966 VISITING OTHER HUTS AFTER THE HUNTERS [JOAN GODDARD]

In 1967 total membership was 55. The Group received a Rates Demand of £29, to which the Secretary objected, and by March it had been revised to 11 guineas per year. By August a new gas cooking system had been fitted in the kitchen. In October the LPF was £52.4.5p with £38 still to be paid back as part of the loans scheme. During the year a drystone wall was built around the hut.

By the beginning of January 1968 the General fund was £90, LPF was almost £120

and remaining loans were repaid by the end of the month. By April members had dug a water pipe extension trench across the yard for a mains water supply to be installed to the kitchen sink- but our temporary status did not warrant installing flush toilets, so in July a new Elsan toilet was purchased.

At the August Committee meeting discussion turned to the temporary nature of our tenure and the need to find a more permanent solution. The Group was on good terms with the owner of the Country Club/Holiday Inn-type business across the road (Nordrach Sanatorium, now Nordrach House) and we thought it might be possible to buy a plot of land from them when they "eventually go broke!" The cottage was insured against fire for £1,000. A water heater was installed in the kitchen – what luxury! Green Shield stamps were again collected, this time to replace the worn-out pots and pans bought with the first lot of stamps.

In October 1968 the first issue of 'Descent' was published costing 2/6 (12½ pence).

At this time Premier carbide lamps were in common use, the Group was still constructing its own electron ladders, and monthly caving meets were introduced.

By February 1969 the original central stove needed replacing. At the 1969 Half-Yearly Meeting there were major changes to the Committee; Pete Mathews replaced Brian Mee as Secretary Brian became Editor and Ron Saunders was elected Treasurer. In November the LPF reached £250 – and £50 was invested in Premium Bonds by Ron Saunders.

At the 1970 AGM, cottage fees were increased to 3/- (members) and 4/- (guests) and the search for a new cottage was intensified. An old chapel at Lulsgate Bottom and a cottage to the south of Wells were viewed but they were too far from Mendip.

In April 1970 we were still looking for a new stove (but it took until January 1971 to find and purchase one from Cornish of Wells for £28.) By July the Committee were considering using Deed of Covenant for subscriptions.

During Nov 1970 £100 was moved from the General Fund to LPF bringing it up to £460. A subcommittee consisting of Ron Saunders, Malcolm Cotter, Tony Knibbs and Roger Wallington (sadly, all now deceased) was formed to step up the search for a new cottage and by the end of the year Pete Mathews was corresponding with British Rail about the possibility of

old railway land for building a cottage. Old buildings associated with Mendip Lodge were also considered.

Wayne Hiscox, who also sadly died recently, was accepted as a probationary member (later he became the dedicated 'site foreman' for Nordrach Cottage Mark I).

During the spring of 1971 approaches were made to numerous landowners for a cottage or land, but to no avail. We were also aware that Axbridge Caving Group (ACG) was leaving their hut in a corner of the Stirrup Cup site at the end of 1971. Ron Saunders approached Jim Fry who said he'd "think it over". Jim was considering a 10-year lease - but we would prefer to buy. At this time the Land Purchase Fund contained £522.

In January 1972 we were seriously considering the old ACG site and investigating Planning Permission requirements. LPF reached £600 and GF was £100. At this time membership was about 50.

The newsletter encouraged members to complete Covenant Forms when paying their subscriptions.....

"If you pay your sub by covenant, the club may claim back tax from the Inland Revenue which could amount to £40.50 per year. You like paying income tax? No: well here's your chance to get some back".
Newsletter 100 (July 1973)

The Covenant was for 7 years but was not binding so could be terminated by mutual

agreement at any time with no loss of benefit.

In July Ron Saunders had an informal meeting with Jim Fry who said he would like to see the new MCG Cottage where the old Axbridge Caving Club was and in August we offered him a purchase price to consider. Roger Wallington surveyed the land so that we could decide how much we required, and it was mooted that we might, for example, sell the present hut to Jim and erect a permanent structure with aid of a grant.

By September 1973 negotiations and planning for the new club cottage were at a crucial stage. Plans were being drawn up and a site purchase was under negotiation. Newsletter 102 optimistically reported "It is possible that we might be in the new cottage by the end of next year." However, it took until 20 February 1976 for the land purchase to be completed.

Judging from newsletter content the delay seems to have provided opportunities for more UK away meets and foreign expeditions, as well as on Mendip, but *".... when construction starts most caving activity will have to be sacrificed to cottage building next year if our aims are to be fulfilled with speed and efficiency, and thus putting the club on a more secure and permanent footing....."*

The wooden cottage was maintained on a make-do-and-mend basis. The 'Guest Bedroom' roof leaked and a new stove pipe was required

before winter. By February we needed a new toilet, lino for the kitchen and yet more mattresses! The building was given a new coat of creosote and by late 1974 a window needed replacing and the interior was repainted

Logbook 4 recorded on 7th February 1976 *"The end of Axbridge!! Work was started on demolishing – sorry Jim DISMANTLING - Axbridge Hut after vain attempts at moving it whole."*

"It had been envisaged that the old hut could possibly be removed whole with the help of one of Jim's tractors, some chains and many willing hands. A lot of people suspected that it might collapse like a pack of cards. After a lot of pulling and pushing, nothing happened – literally! The cottage was dismantled by hand and the assembled labour got splinters and chicken ticks for their trouble."
(Newsletter 116, March 1976).

Once the ACG site was cleared, work started on constructing the new cottage while the workforce continued to live in the wooden one.

Pat Walsh made a new stove at the beginning of 1978 and in mid August, *"after months of suffering and amateur surgery the old plastic commode died of leaks. But nothing is irreplaceable. We now have a new Elsan chemical machine. It is not of the self-emptying variety and demands that a suitable hole be dug for this purpose. Having dug countless holes, members will appreciate the need to complete the cess-pit and toilet facilities in the new cottage"* (Newsletter 124, Sept 1978).

Newsletter 129 contained the devastating news that the almost complete new cottage was destroyed at 11.45pm on New Year's Eve 1979 by an explosion caused by leaking propane gas – which meant the Group had to remain in the wooden cottage a while longer.

"Now that we will remain in the old (wooden) cottage for most of 1980, there are a few jobs to be done A few weekends will have to be spent making it comfortable again. Windows and doors needed to be fixed and we desperately need to replace some of the furniture in the cottage, as several of the old armchairs are being used as nests for mice."
(Newsletter 130, March 1980).

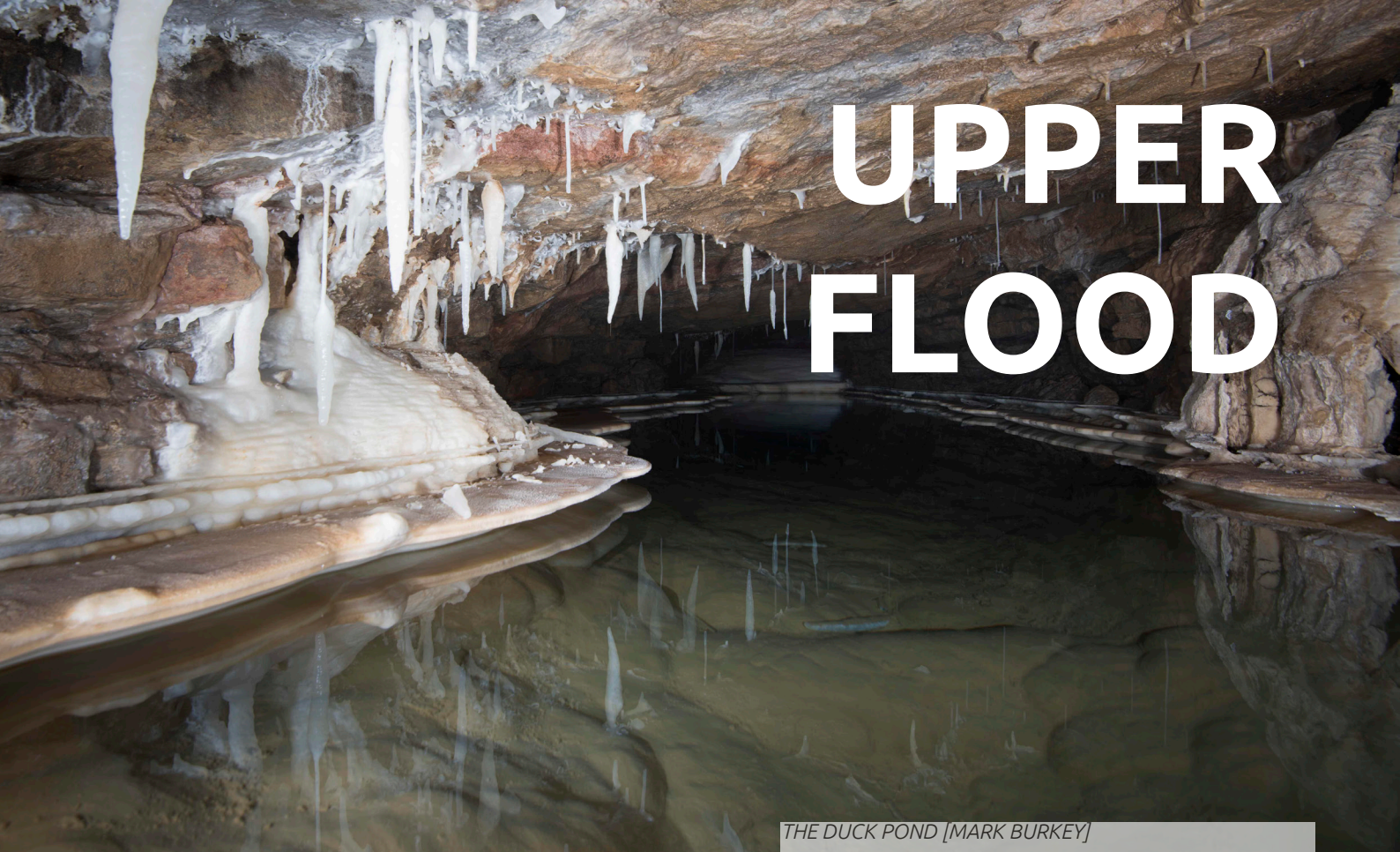
The builder completed building the cottage around Christmas 1980 but members continued to stay in the wooden hut while they decorated and finished the new cottage. The official opening was on June 6th 1981.

Details of the trials and tribulations that occurred before Nordrach Cottage finally came into being will have to wait until another time!

Joan Goddard 24 June 2024



STILL STANDING – JUST!! 2024 [JOAN GODDARD]



UPPER FLOOD

THE DUCK POND [MARK BURKEY]



NEVERLAND
[MARK BURKEY]



1998 -TIM FRANCIS, DAVE TOOKE, LETTI
PATTE, MARCUS WARD, BEN COOPER



2018 UF ENTRANCE - BEN COOPER, BILL
CHADWICK, PEAT BENNETT, TIM FRANCIS

The jewel in the crown of the MCG digs. From the 1st visit in 1968 to the biggest breakthrough trip in 2006, the club will always be linked to this incredible cave. According to Tim Francis' diligent research an astonishing 5065 caver trips have been made into Upper Flood (including into UF2) from 1968 to 2024.

Much recent Upper Flood digging has been concentrated in West Passage. Some of these digs are where surveying has shown that further connections into Neverland can be made, bypassing the delicate formations.

Ben Cooper's latest survey shows the length of Upper Flood to have reached 4,293m and counting!



1983 UPPER FLOOD [IAN
MCKECKNIE]



1968 UPPER FLOOD
ENTRANCE PETE MUNT



NEVERLAND DUCK UNDER
BOSS [MARK BURKEY]

CHARNEL SHAFT

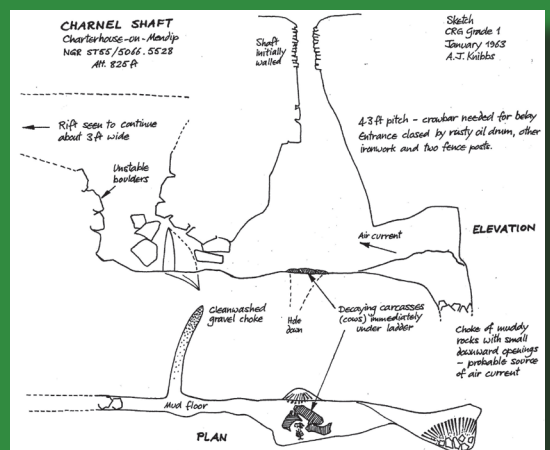
Found and lost by the MCG in 1963, there have been multiple attempts to relocate this intriguing mine. Then in 2018 Rob Taviner alerted us to "MCG 20" recorded by the group but with no record of a descent!

TIM & PETE, CHARNEL MAIN RIFT BY ANDREW HORECKYJ

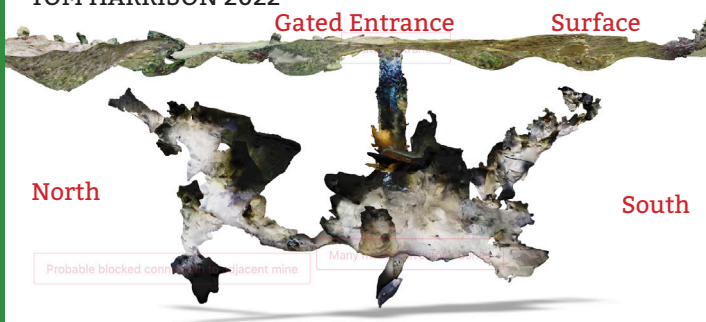
On entering in 2019, it was realised that this was the missing Charnel Shaft, (see the 3d image below compared to Tony Knibb's 1963 sketch right.)

At the bottom of the now 14m shaft are rope marks, with Stemple pockets offset, (see main picture to the right of the ladder) below a capped 2nd shaft. This suggests separate shafts for hauling and climbing. There also appear to be now blocked connections to adjacent mines and shot holes in the passage heading off to the east, where a cross rift joins.

Charnel Shaft is actually a few hundred metres further south than Tony Knibbs recalled and interestingly south of South Passage in Up-per Flood. A dig here could be very rewarding!



PHOTOGRAMMETRY SURVEY CHARNEL SHAFT
TOM HARRISON 2022



MCG 20, THE ENTRANCE TO CHARNEL BY ANDREW HORECKYJ



PEAT IN CHARNEL BY ANDREW HORECKYJ



UP THE SHAFT BY TOM HARRISON



NORTHERN END OF MAIN RIFT BY TOM HARRISON

STAINSBY'S SHAFT/ BLACKMOOR SWALLET

JASON KIRBY STAINSBY'S SHAFT BY TOM HARRISON



BLACKMOOR SWALLET 1961

The longest running (although somewhat intermittent) MCG dig, the Swallet was possibly initially dug by the Sidcot School in the 40s² before it collapsed. The MCG gained permission and work on the Swallet tunnel in 1958³. In 1961² work switched to the depression above and this was opened to reveal the beautiful square 'cornish' mine shaft with large shotholes.

Later research by Stanton & Clarke³ identified this as the Mendip Hills Mining Compa-

ny's 'Stainsby's Shaft,' an attempt to drive under the old man's workings and find lead at depth. Diligent reporting in the Mining Journal newspaper recorded the depth of this shaft at 105m with levels driven at 18 and 38 fathoms (33m and 70m)⁵, where the miners entered "caverns!"

The Shaft works continued throughout the 60's to shortly after the great '68 flood, with a vertical descent made away from the main shaft and described as the Old Man's workings. In the 90's, work resumed in a continuation of what must be the main shaft². This work has been renewed on further occasions, often with great engineering feats required. Further recent digs have attempted to deepen the shaft or to find the missing 18 fathom level and possibly a backdoor to Upper flood.



STAINSBY'S SHAFT 1961



'POSSIBLE PASSAGE' DIG
FACE APR 24 TH

In 2021 an area marked on a logbook sketch from 1970², and named 'possible passage?' was investigated and the dig is now 25m long with a strong draught being followed.



STAINSBY'S SHAFT 1965 OR '66

BONE HOLE

Length: 423m
Depth: 41m
Surveyed by: Ben Cooper, Andrew Atkinson, Tim Francis, Henry Dawson, Mike Richardson, May Yap, Alison Moody 2012 – 2015

Maps

Bone Hole
Happy New Year
Ladder Pitch
Perforation Choke

1970S NEIL BROOKER - BONE HOLE [DON VOSPER]

PROFILE AND PLAN SURVEY BY BEN COOPER



2013 ED WATERS PERFORATION CHOKE [TH]



1974 BILL JONES, GREG SMITH PETE MATTHEWS JUDY & JOHN MACMILLAN

Bone Hole's open rift was excavated in the 19th century with 12 human skulls discovered.⁷ The MCG's digging involvement started in 1967⁴, with human remains, animal bones and pottery shards discovered, particularly after the Skull Slope was found in 1975⁴. Work carried on through the years with Ladder Dig extending what has become known as the old cave.

Projects in the old cave, most notably the Bottle Bank dig of the 1990s and the rusty scaffolding dig in the lower levels of the 1980s, never extended the cave by much. Despite this lack of reward the diggers kept returning.

In 2009, work started at the back of the old cave and named Perforation Choke. Much work, man hours and some serious engineering were put into this project, including intercepting chambers, an ancient phreatic tube and creating some unplanned loops. The draught here never seemed to stop but was difficult to follow.

In 2015, a small but potentially very significant breakthrough was made and remarkably this was not in "New" Bone Hole but in the old cave. A few hours digging along a tube opened into a classic piece of old Bone Hole consisting of a solid 20-30m rift wall, a rubble slope, ancient stal, and large passage. It ends in a blockage which from the presence of roots, dead flies and rabbit skeletons suggesting that it is very close to the surface. These extensions were named "Happy New Year"

Bone Hole is an extremely old cave which has long since been abandoned by active streams. Most of the cave is dry, and all ways on are blocked by enormous, ancient boulder chokes. There is very little actual passage and indeed no obvious 'way on'. The passages that do exist are sizeable in cross section and there is the tantalising knowledge that a river burst up through the floor of the gorge nearby during the 1968 flood.⁸

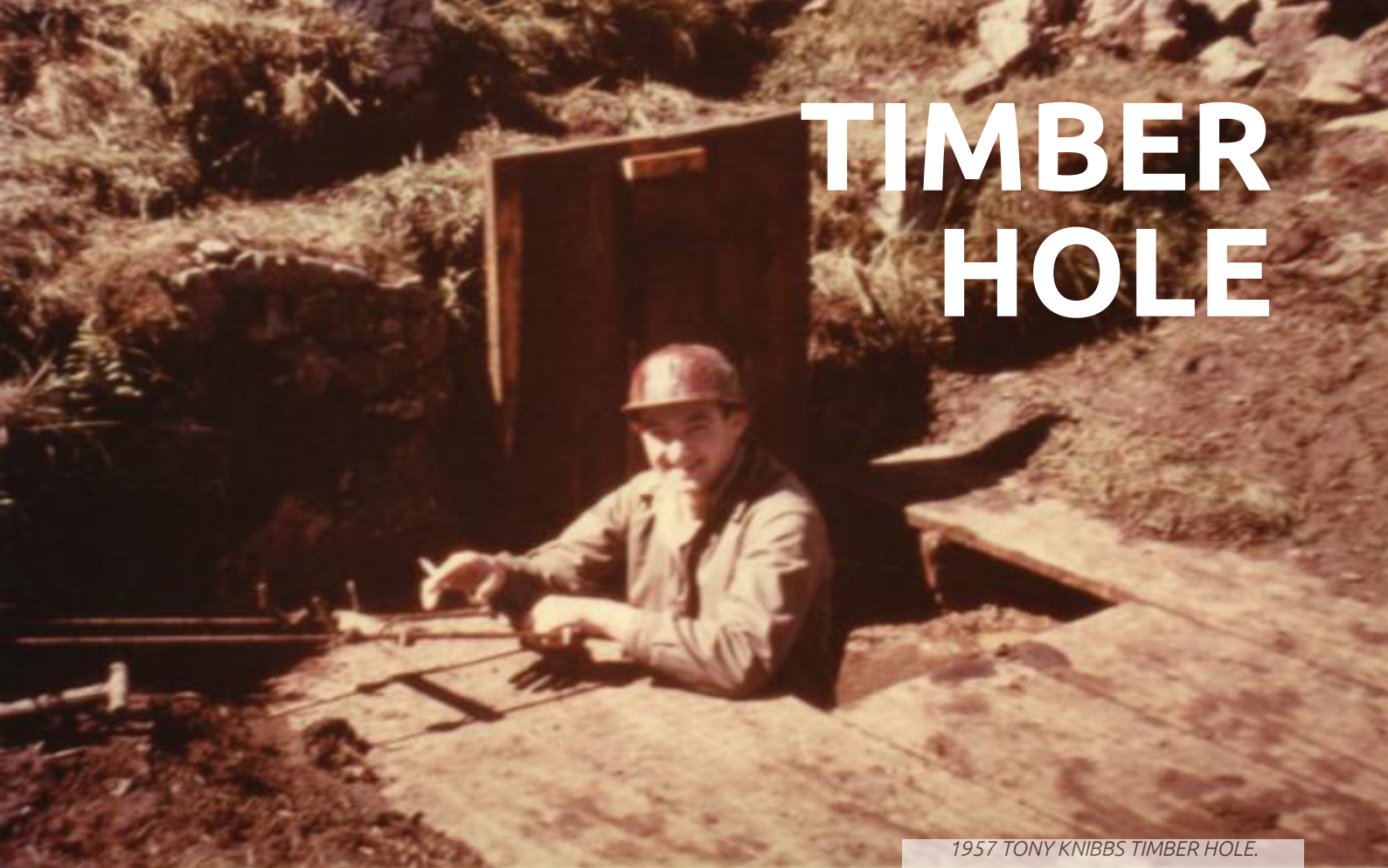


1974 ARTHUR COX ON THE SLOPE



2016 BIFF FRITH IN HAPPY NEW YEAR [ANDREW HORECKYJ]

TIMBER HOLE



1957 TONY KNIBBS TIMBER HOLE.



NOEL DILLY TIMBER HOLE VELVET BOTTOM



TONY DAVIES, TONY KNIBBS
[RICHARD WOOLLACOTT]



1958 TIMBER HOLE

A favourite early MCG Dig, early newsletters are filled with reports of progress and a strong draught but a true breakthrough was never made. Looked at again a number of times over the years this is still a dig waiting to go!



JUNE 1957 TIMBER HOLE - RICH WOOLLACOTT,
BRIAN ROBINSON, TONY KNIBBS, TONY DAVIES,
AUSTIN SANDERS - (POSS. BOB KNOTT)



IN TIMBER HOLE LOOKING OUT
[RICHARD WOOLLACOTT]

PEARL MINE

Pearl Mine sits atop Sandford Hill. It became of particular interest to the MCG as it appeared to be very close to the 2015 Breakthrough passages in Sandford Levvy, above the 1st Crossroads. The mine had been blocked since the early 1970s, so in 2016 the MCG took on the job of reopening it.

Significant progress was made in getting to the first landing. Here the East and West passages described by the previous visitors were found. The West Passage ended with a small crack, when this crack was opened an incredible discovery was made.

Dropping through the crack now named Pension Pot, an open rift was entered. This turned out to be over of 300m of walkable natural rift passage enlarged by the miners. This was named the Unexpected Level

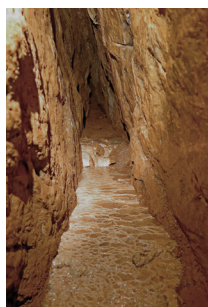
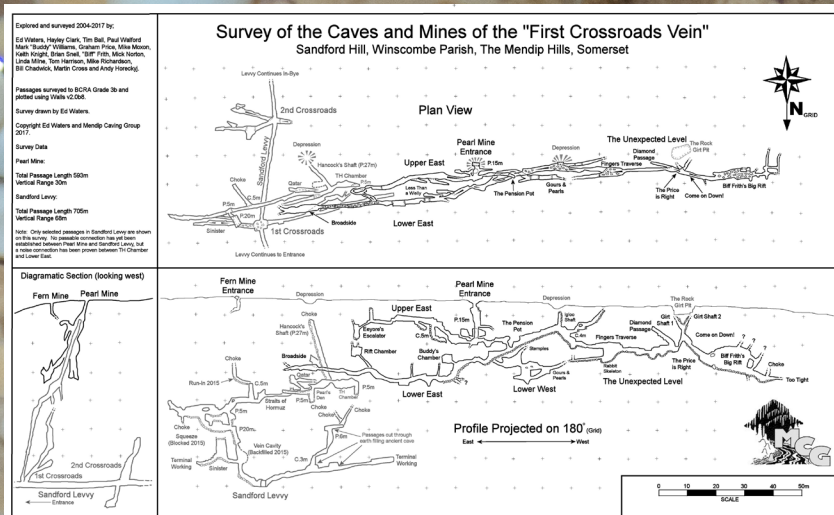
The passage below Pension Pot starts with a high rift about 1.5m wide and decorated with white stal. After about 50m a deep hole in the floor can be traversed to enter another 50m of mined rift passage.

A high level passage was climbed, named "Diamond Passage" in honour of Mike Richardson's 60th birthday, whilst the end a choke was opened and named, "The Price is Right" after Graham Price's brave work in opening it. The "choke" was in fact debris backfilled by miners from above.

This breaks out into a chamber with two shafts and much loose material above. These shafts must come very close to the floor of the surface feature known as "The Rock Girt Pit." Further west down a slope, a large natural rift chamber is entered. This was found on the day that the news that Biff Frith had passed away, reached the diggers, and it was named "Biff Frith's Big Rift" in his honour. The chamber is over 15m long, up to 3m wide and nearly 10m high. It is well decorated, and in particular there is a spectacular crystal pool at the point of entry.

The survey shows Pearl and the Levvy are several metres apart but there is just nothing obvious that suggests a connection. Given that the passages above 1st Crossroads in Sandford Levvy were dug from above themystery of where the Old Man entered these workings has only deepened. Recent digging in Fern Mine has yet proved inconclusive.

Despite this frustration, the project has reopened what is amongst the most interesting of Mendip mines for the caver, and made over ½ km of cave/mine passage accessible. In addition some 297m of new passage have been discovered, which can only be considered a bonus!⁹





KEITH CLIMBING THE
PITCHES [GRAHAM PRICE]



PEARLS IN PEARL'S DEN
[GP]



CEMENTED IN BOULDERS
WITH DUST STEMPLS [GP]



KIT CLEANING [GP]



ED AT THE TOP [GP]



A HANCOCK 17?? [GP]



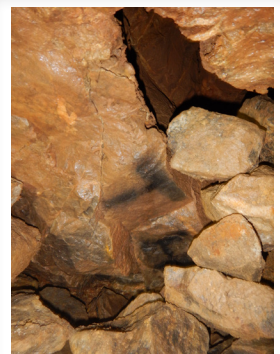
SHOT HOLES HEADING
INTO THE LEVVEY [GP]



BUDDY [GP]



KEITH AT THE TOP [GP]



TH SMOKE MARK, TH
CHAMBER [GP]

SANDFORD LEVVY

Sandford Levvy was driven in the late 1820's to mine for lead. There are 2 'crossroads' in the tunnel where passages lead off.

Mendip Caving Group's Ed Waters has long held an interest in digging in the Levvy following some comprehensive exploration and surveying in 2003.

In 2014, a trip to replace ropes above the 1st Crossroads, took in a look at the dig and work recommenced. Several trips were spent improving the approach to the dig by moving a vast quantity of deads from the narrow passage to get up and under the Stemples seen a decade before. The Stemples were all but dust. Ahead was about 2m of open passage to a further choke, but the real horror was the discovery that the stemples had been placed across the bottom of a shaft, at roof level of the passage. The "Old Man" had then backfilled the shaft with many large rocks.

A daring move by Graham Price was made to shore the roof up with cement instead. The end of the dig could now be reached.

On Wednesday 26th August 2014, Buddy, Graham and Ed popped the big boulder blocking the way on and the Breakthrough was made. Beyond was a narrow slope upwards which opens into a narrow mined passage. Behind is another passage almost full of deads which connects to the shaft with the useless Stemples.

Ahead is a small drop and an enlargement into a small boulder chamber. The boulder chamber ends at a choke, but to the right a step up and a small hole leads to another large void.

Immediately through the hole on the right was a shaft, lined with deads on two sides, leading down and to the left a section of walking height passage slopes upwards for about 10m or so. This passage was clearly natural and had been modified by the miners with walls of deads.

The floor is 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. Den had passed away a few days before this discovery was made.

At the top of Pearl's Den, there is a major shaft heading up out of sight. This shaft has seen much traffic and seems 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. 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 it looked very possible that there might be a connection to Pearl Mine, but a few metres ahead, the passage ended at another shaft down.

On the way out to the pub after the breakthrough trip, Buddy spotted some miner's graffiti. It was difficult to make out, but it is believed to say "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. The shaft was named Hancock's Shaft.

In September Brain Snell made a skilful climb of this to 25m where there is a solid roof and a blocked offset continuation. It must be said that Hancock's Shaft is certainly one of the finest mineshafts seen by the diggers on Mendip.

It was also noticed that some more previously unseen writing, this time in the form of the initials TH smoked on the wall in the chamber beyond Pearl's Den. This has now been named TH Chamber as a result.

Adapted from an article by E Waters MCG NEWS 379¹⁰

COOPER'S HOLE



1959 COOPERS HOLE
PETE GODDARD, DON SEARLE



1959 COOPERS HOLE 1ST WEEKEND
BC, MA, RICHARD WOOLLACOTT



1962 COOPERS HOLE
RAILS

According to H.E. Balch, the obvious entrance to Cooper's Hole could well be the remains of "Cheder Hole" of writings from the 12th and 16th Centuries. Excavations took place in 1931/2 but in 1959 the MCG's Richard Woollacott received permission from the Marquess of Bath to dig.

Archaeological finds were encountered, including iron age pottery and animal bones. Interesting man made cut steps were also found in the stalagmite.

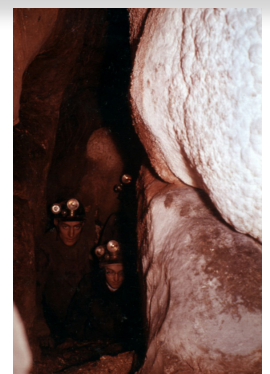
Rail track was used to help remove spoil, but flooding was a constant issue. Research by Joan Goddard suggests that MCG had finished digging by 1968.

In 1999, Channel 4's Time Team came along to dig in the hope of finding more interesting archaeology and Malcolm Cotter and other MCG member's assisted with this somewhat fruitless enterprise! This can be watched on both Channel 4's website and YouTube.

Adapted from an article by J Goddard MCG NEWS 386 ¹¹
46



1999 MALCOLM COTTER - TIME TEAM



1962 COOPERS HOLE
STEPS

PINETREE POT



1984 PINE PITCH [IAN MCKECHNIE]



1960 PINETREE DIG



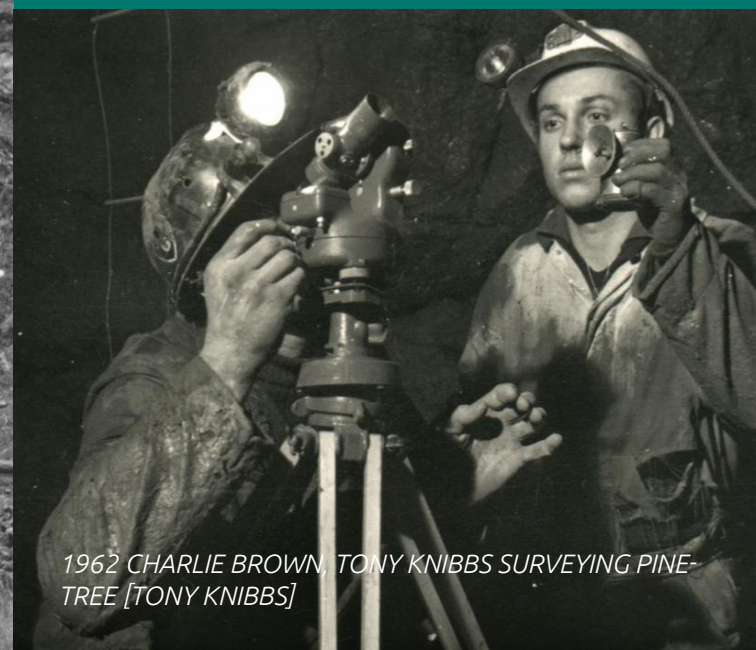
Tony Knibbs first spotted the large shakehole near the Pinetrees in September 1959. With permission obtained from Mr Brown, work commenced on the dig that November.

At a depth of 6ft, shoring (provided by Mr Fry) and a pulley system designed by Tony Knibbs, and built by Bob Knott and Pete Goddard, assisted the excavation. The discovery notes, report Pat Walsh's role as rock crusher, and teams of up to 15 MCG members assisted with the work.

On 6th June 1960, the breakthrough was made, with the shaft at a depth of 14 feet. Crawling along a short passage off this shaft, Arthur Spain came to the head of Pine Pitch.

The first descent was made shortly after, finding Rumble Pitch, and Easy Street with a later trip discovering Moonlight Grotto. Sonya Carruthers extended the length of Easy Street by passing the now named Sonya's Bend a few weeks after the 1st breakthrough.¹²

Between 1992 and 1999 over 100 digging trips in "a Pock Hole Lips Way" extended the cave but failed to make a significant breakthrough.¹³



1962 CHARLIE BROWN, TONY KNIBBS SURVEYING PINETREE [TONY KNIBBS]

CARCASS CAVE

2004 TIM FRANCIS, CARCASS CAVE [BILL CHADWICK (BC)]



In 1996, Mick Norton showed Doug Harris an interesting hole on Shute Shelfe Hill above Axbridge. Digging through a Cow and Sheep to get to a 6m long entrance slope inspired the naming.

¹⁴



2005 BIFF FRITH CARCASS COMPRESSOR [BC]

Progress through to 1998 took the depth of the shaft to 12.5m. Interest slowed until in 2001, when Mick and Doug decided to take another look at one of the leads in the entrance. This turned out to be a goer. More MCG, Bracknell District Caving Club and Axbridge Caving Group members became involved in the dig during that year, finding small chambers and more interesting passages.¹⁵

2002/3 brought a new engineering approach to digging with a pneumatic chisel employed to enlarge the passages, scaffolding and boards used to shore up the dig, and a monorail system to haul out the spoil.¹⁶

This led to the discovery of two new chambers in 2003.¹⁷ By 2005 the main digging protagonists had moved onto other projects leaving the cave at 150m long, with a vertical range of 46m.¹⁸



FINAL CHAMBER, CARCASS [BC]

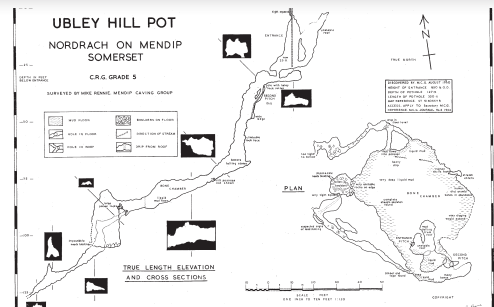


THE MONORAIL SYSTEM & DOUG HARRIS [BC]

UBLEY HILL POT



JULY 1960 - PETE GODDARD, JOY DYER,
JACK GREEN, DON & J SEARLE



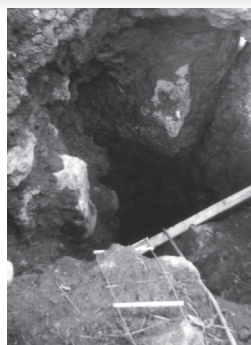
A 90ft wide, 19ft deep Shakehole, Dug open in just a few days by the MCG in 1960, 2 pitches lead to a very muddy chamber with small passages leading off.

Bones, antlers and 2 Human Skulls were discovered along with the remains of a wooden runged ladder. The Natural History Museum have one of the skulls, dating of which has been imminent for the last 60 years!!²⁰

A concrete pipe was installed by the MCG in the 80's, however this has been regularly blocked at the bottom by sumped mud and clearing this mud is reported to be difficult due to air problems. Sadly permission to access this interesting cave is currently refused by the landowner.



JACK GREEN, STEVE D - TOP FALL PITCH



1960 1ST PITCH UBLEY



UBLEY BONES [RICHARD WOOLLACOTT]

References

Info & Corkboard Photos

Many of the photos are from the MCG Photo Archive. Unfortunately not all photographers and not all of the people in the photos are known!

Please let us know if you know who is in the photo or who may have taken the photo, so that the photographer they can be properly credited.

Infoboards created by Tom Harrison

Infoboard References

- 1&2 Somerset Underground Vol 3 - R M Taviner
- 3&4 Blackmoor Valley From The Log Book - T Francis
- 5&6 Cornish Miners At Charterhouse-On-Mendip - W I Stanton A G Clarke
- 7&18 Mendip Underground 5 - A Gray R Taviner R Whitcombe
- 8 MCG News 376 - Adapted From An Article By T Francis
- 9 MCG News 382 - Adapted From An Article By E Waters
- 10 MCG News 379 - Adapted From An Article By E Waters
- 11 MCG News 388 - Adapted From An Article By J Goddard
- 12 MCG Journal No.3 Pinetree Pot Discovery & Description - T Knibbs 1962
- 13 MCG News 283 - Whatever Happened To Pinetree - T Francis 1999
- 14 MCG News 319, 320 - Doug Harris, Richard Carey
- 15 MCG News 321 - Mick Norton, Doug Harris, Yvonne Rowe
- 16 MCG News 322 - Mick Norton, Doug Harris, Yvonne Rowe
- 17 MCG News 325 - Mick Norton
- 19 MCG News 385 - C Binding
- 20 MCG Journal No.3 Ubley Hill Pot - M Cotter 1962

Corkboard Photos

Some abbreviations have been used for the photographers these are as follows:
IM- Ian McKechnie, BC- Bill Chadwick, TH - Tom Harrison, TCr - Tony Crawford, GP -Graham Price, BR - Bernard Reeves, RW - Richard Woollacott

Cover Photo and 70th Dinner Photos

Cover - 70th Anniversary Dinner Wookey Hole - Tom Harrison
Pages 56 and 57 - Tom Harrison except bottom left page 56 Jackie Murch

Journals and Occasional Publications Content

Charlie Allison

Joined: 1991

Since the late 1950s to the present day, as well as the regular newsletters, the MCG has produced many ad hoc Journals and Occasional Publications (Occ. Pub.). Here is a list of those publications since the first journal in 1959 and their contents, just in case you were wondering what is inside the dusty tomes on the shelf. Until, of course this is added to the shelf.

Names are as recorded in the individual publications, and the same person may have used various forms of their name. Spelling is as it is in the various publications.

Some publications cover general caving and some were produced following specific expeditions and trips.

One thing they do show is how caving equipment (and the cost of it) has changed over time. For example from the first 1959 Journal:

"... Firstly lever the £3 from the Committee. This will enable us to finish the last 100ft of ladder..."

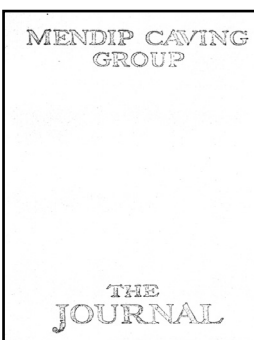
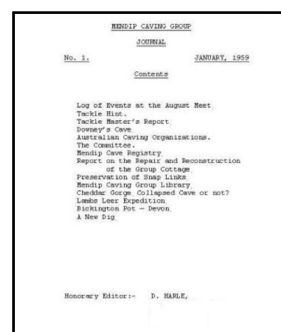
If

you want to see the artist's impression of the cottage following a rather disagreeable gas leak then it's in Journal 7.

Copies of these publications are available for perusal in the MCG library.

Journal No. 1, January 1959, editor D Harle

Log of Events at the August Meet (R Charnock); Tackle Hint (Don Searle); Tackle Master's Report (T Crawford); Downey's Cave (Noel Dilly); Australian Caving Organisations (extract from Australian Speleological Federation); The Committee (R Charnock); Mendip Cave Registry (anon); Report on the Repair and Reconstruction of the Group Cottage (P J Goddard); Preservation of Snap Links (M Cotter); Mendip Caving Group Library (anon); Cheddar Gorge Collapsed Cave Or Not? (Malcolm Cotter); Lambs Leer Expedition (Tony Crawford); Bickington Pot – Devon (Chris Reynolds); A New Dig (Don Searle); Mendip Caving Group 1959 Committee Address List(anon); Obituary – Oliver Speed (anon)

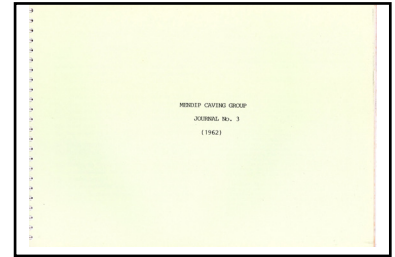


Journal No. 2, February 1960, editor David Harle

The Marquess of Bath (anon); Cooper's Hole (R Charnock); Mendip – July 4th - 5th 1959 (MIG (aka Tony Knibbs)); A Survey of Goatchurch Cavern (anon), G. B. Weekend - 15th August 1959 (Tony Crawford); The Policeman's Hole (anon); Mendip (anon but an extract from Highways and Byways of Somerset), Caving Regions (J. David Taylor, B.Sc); Lighting Miscellany (Antony J. Knibbs); The Discovery of Canyon Cave (John Green); Coopers Hole – A theory of its origin (R. L. Woollacott); French Expedition – 1960 (Antony J. Knibbs, John A. Green)

Journal No. 3, 1962, editor Mike Rennie

What do they do? (Mike Rennie); Blackfield Hole (Malcolm Cotter); Unter Den Tantalhohle (J. Rutherford); Pinetree Pot: Discovery and Description (Antony Knibbs), Easy Street 1 (E. A. Carruthers), Easy Street 2 (Malcolm Cotter), Stream Sink (Malcolm Cotter); Ubley Hill Pot (Malcolm Cotter); Caves and Swallets of East Mendip (Dave Mitchell); Irish Expedition 1961 (R. Woollacott); The Evolution of the Mendip Area (Barry Ottowell); Cliffords Cave Devon (C. Reynolds); An Accumulator Charging Set (Antony Knibbs); Stocks Hole (Alan Cowley); The Deposits of Coopers Hole (C. Reynolds); Mendip Surface Survey (Antony Knibbs); Pyrenees '61 (James Gibb); Before we start a cave survey (Mike Rennie); The Annexe, A Breakthrough (Dave Mitchell and Alan Cowley); The Blackmoor Swallet Problem (Malcolm Cotter)



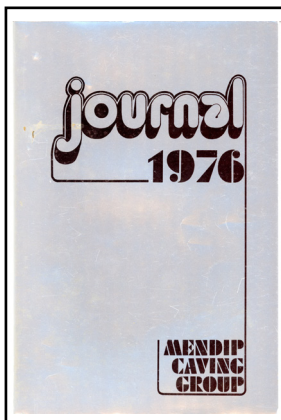
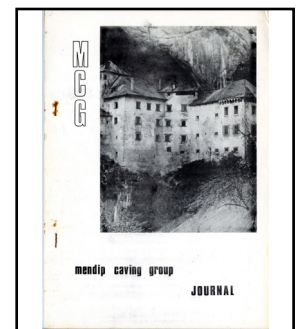
Journal No. 4, 1967, editor Joan Robinson



Caving in Malaya (M. O. Cotter); Switzerland 1963 (A. J. Knibbs); Every Cave Has a History (C.F. Reynolds, Ph.D.); August Hole: New Discoveries (A.J. Knibbs); The Etymology of Central Mendip Place Names (A. Cox); The Cooper's Hole Breakthrough of 1962 (M.O. Cotter and A.Cox); A Caver in the Holy Land (I.W.J. Hopkins); Ireland 1962 (A. J Knibbs); The Cottage (anon); The Founding of the M.C.G. - The Early Years (M.O. Cotter); Cheder Hole (C.F. Reynolds Ph.D.); Some Notes on Limestone (Joan Robinson); Blackmoor Swallet: 1962 Discovery (M.O. Cotter); Blackmoor Swallet: Operations Since 1962 (A.J. Knibbs)

Journal No. 5, 1974, editor Peter Mathews

Some Notes on Faulting (Joan Goddard); Caving In South Eastern Belgium (Vic Ingraham); There It Is, Where It Is - Devon, Dartmoor and Its Mines (Agro Pyrem Repens); Those Meritorious Speleologues Or Yugoslavia 1967 (Peter Mathews); Three Men Down A Jeskyne – Czechoslovakia 1967 (Peter Mathews)

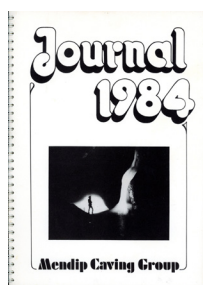
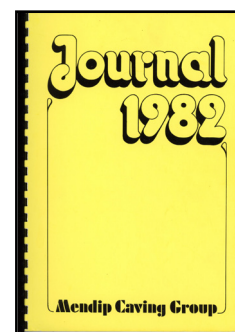


Journal No. 6, December 1976, editor attributed to Steve Conquest (assumed from Committee Post)

Foreword (Greg Smith and Arthur Cox); The Salt Mines of Wieliczka, Poland (Peter Mathews); Blackmoor, Charterhouse (Malcolm Cotter); Digs and Discoveries in August Hole (Greg Smith); Pollcan, Doolin, Co. Clare (Bill Jones); A Magneto/Capacitor Shot Firing Device (Bernard Reeves); Towards Conservation (Peter Mathews); Interim Report on The Bone Hole, Cheddar Gorge (Arthur Cox); First Tunnel Under The Thames (Peter Mathews)

Journal No. 7, December 1982 editor Bryan Pittman

Building Nordrach Cottage: From Humble Beginnings (Peter Mathews); The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (Ron Saunders); Some Caves of Pembrokeshire (Tony Knibbs and Joan Goddard); Saturday Night Fever (Inky Scribblor); Some Observations on the West Kingsdale System (Malcolm O Cotter); Progress in the Blackmoor Valley Area of Velvet Bottom (Malcolm O Cotter); Upper Flood Swallet Future Projects (Malcolm O Cotter); Charterhouse Rakes (Jonathan Roberts); Cave Photography (Ian McKechnie); Hitches for Pitches (Arthur Spain); The Lone Caver (Bob Speleo)

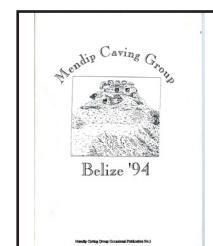


Journal No. 8, December 1984, editor Ian McKechnie

MCG Pyrenees Expedition Report (ed. Neil Hutchinson); Dim Recollections of 1953 and all that (Tony Knibbs); Voice from the Past (Caving Impressions) (Joy Dyer); Nordrach: the History of a Name (Ian McKechnie); A History of Nether Wood Swallet Dig (Jon Roberts); MCG Membership 1953 to 1983 (Jon Roberts); Bob Speleo's History of the MCG (Pete Bulling); Karst Caverns of Yixing (Don Vosper)

Occ Pub No. 1, Belize 1994, editor Julie Hesketh

Objective; Previous Expeditions to Belize; The Field Area; Logistics; Discoveries; Medical Report; Financial Report; Photographic Report; Summary; Future Work; Acknowledgements; Written by Timothy Francis, Julian Flavell, Julie Hesketh, Peter Hollings

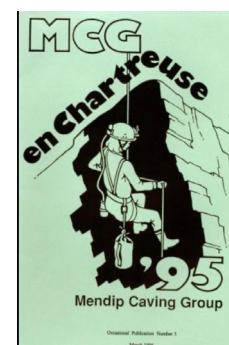


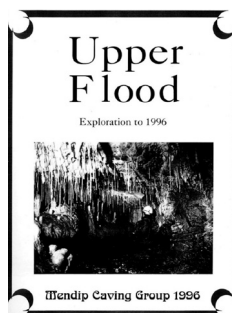
Occ Pub No. 2, July 1995, editor Yvonne Rowe

Low Voltage Tungsten Halogen Bulbs for Caving Use (Anthony Knibbs); Czechoslovakia Expedition 1991 (Dave Tooke); Lechuguilla – Hints and Tips (Pete Hollings); Coahuilla '94 – The Cutting Edge Project (Pete Hollings); Battle of Britain Series, Dan-yr-Ogof (Brian Murlis)

Occ Pub No. 3, MCG en Chartreuse '95, March 1996, editor Tim Francis

Introduction to the Chartreuse Massif (Timothy Francis); Location Map; Logistics (Julie Hesketh); Survey of Réseau de La Dent de Crolles (anon); A Guiers Mort Experience (Yvonne Rowe); Rigging Trou de Glaz (Timothy Francis); The Short, The Bag, and The Ugly (Zoe Hammersley); No, It's Not It Can't Be! (Marcus Ward); The Second Through Trip (Yvonne Rowe); The Derigs (Timothy Francis); Summary of the Trou do Glaz – Guiers Mort Through Trip (Timothy Francis); Guiers Vif Survey (anon); Grotte de Guiers Vif (Timothy Francis); Grotte de Choranche (Joan Goddard)



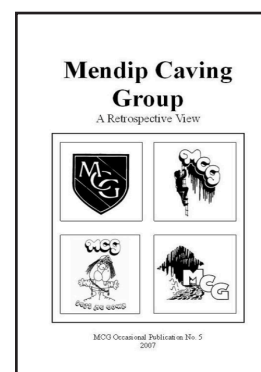


Occ Pub No. 4 Upper Flood Exploration to 1996, September 1996, editor Charlie Allison

Preface, Editorial (Charlie Allison); Foreword (Malcolm Cotter); Mendip (extracts from MCG Journals); Flood and Discovery (Malcolm Cotter); Upper Flood Swallet (Malcolm Cotter); An analysis of MCG digging efforts in Upper Flood Swallet 1968-1985 (Jonathan Roberts); The 1990s and the Terminal Choke (Malcolm Cotter and Charlie Allison) Appendices: Upper Flood Survey Notes, Geology of the Locale, Chemical Analysis, References and Bibliography (compiled by Charlie Allison and Malcolm Cotter); Upper Flood A3 Survey (Malcolm Cotter)

Occ Pub No. 5 Mendip Caving Group A Retrospective View, August 2007, editors Tony Knibbs and Joan Goddard

Introduction (Joan Goddard and Tony Knibbs); Acknowledgements; Concise History of the Mendip Caving Group (Tony Knibbs); Going caving..... (Fungus McBogle); A Momentous Meeting (Tony Crawford); A caver's Ramblings into the Past (Malcolm Cotter); The Rather Random Memories of Richard Woollacott (Richard Woollacott); Expeditions and Holidays – the first 50 years (Joan Goddard); A few Thoughts on Tackle and Equipment (Tony Knibbs); 50th Celebrations (contributions by Arthur Spain and Richard Woollacott); Slovenia – The Wild caves (Peat Bennett); Photo Gallery

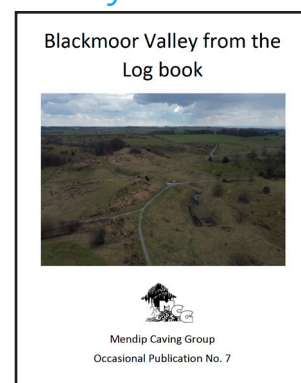


Occ Pub No. 6, The Mendip Caving Group in Argentina 2000-2006, pub 2021, compiled by Richard Carey

Introduction (Tim Francis); Argentina 2000 – Malargue (Richard M Carey); Argentina 2001 (Tim Francis); Argentina 2001 Part 2 Three Wheels on my Wagon (Richard M Carey); Argentina 2002 – Exploration at Poti Malal (Tim Francis, photos Peat Bennett); Argentina 2003 (Tim Francis); Argentina 2003 – 2004 Malargue Caving Group (Richard M Carey); Argentina 2004 – Jackpot! (Richard M Carey); MCG in Argentina 2006 – Las Lenas (Tim Francis)

Occ Pub No. 7 Blackmoor Valley from the Log Book, pub. 2022, editor Richard Carey

From the logbook: a history of the MCG at the Blackmoor Valley (Tim Francis); The Headlines; Blackmoor Swallet, Blackmoor Shaft and Stainsby's Shaft; Upper Flood Swallet discovery; Cave name Conventions; Hard Going at Upper Flood, 1972 – 1981; The Netherwood Swallet Dig; Midnight Streamway and the Riddle of the Red Room; Fun at Waterwheel; Upper Flood II; "Good News Days" at Upper Flood; Roman Rake; Consolidation in Upper Flood; Grebe Swallet; All Quiet at Upper Flood and the Pandemic Years; Final Statistics; Notes on the data



Where has the MCG Been?

Here is a quick reference chart of the places outside of the UK the MCG has visited as referred to the Journals or Occasional Publications concerned. There is also a summary of some of the MCG foreign trips in Occ. Pub. 5 'Expeditions and Holidays – the first 50 years' by Joan Goddard.

Country followed by Journal or Occ Pub Number

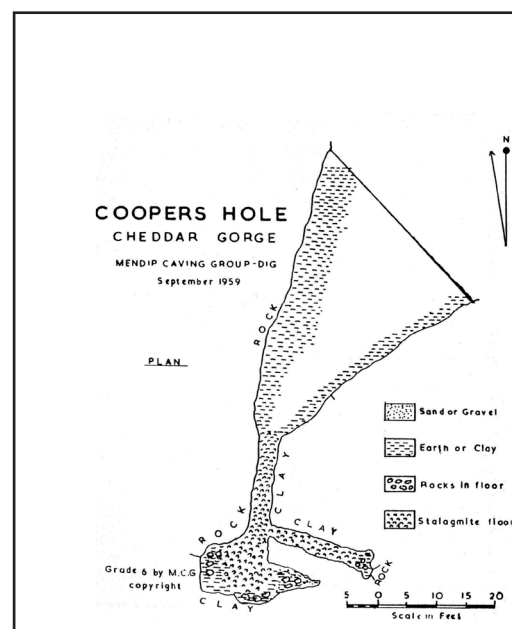
Argentina OP6	Israel / Palestine J4	Australia J1
Malaya J4	Austria J3	Mexico OP2
Belgium J5	Poland J6	Belize OP1
Slovenia OP5	China J8	Switzerland J4
Czechoslovakia J5; OP2	USA OP2	France J2; J3; J8; OP3
Yugoslavia J5	Ireland J3; J4; J6	

Cave Surveys

There are cave surveys within some of the articles. Here is a list of the caves and the publication the surveys are in. They vary in quality from quick sketches to the finished article. Note that there are various rigging guides for Pyrenees caves in Journal 8, but no actual surveys.

Survey Location Journal or Occ Pub:

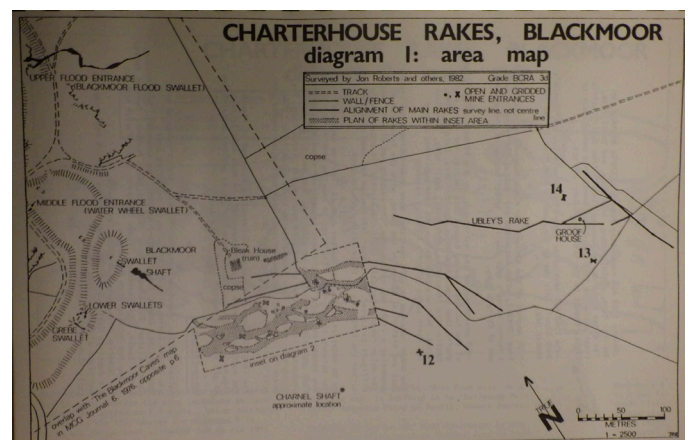
Cueva Federacion Argentina OP6
 Cueva Miranda Argentina OP6
 Actun Merech, Cayo District Belize OP1
 Cocohil Cave, Cayo District Belize OP1
 Cool Spot Cave, Cayo District Belize OP1
 Rocky (Crab) Cave, Cayo District Belize OP1
 Unique Cave, Cayo District Belize OP1
 Valley of the Caves, Cayo District Belize OP1
 Jedovnický Potok Creek System Czechoslovakia OP2
 Bickington Pot Devon J1
 Clifford's Cave Devon J3
 Grotte du Guiers Vif France – Chartreuse OP3
 Réseau de la Dent de Crolles France – Chartreuse OP3
 Cave C, Co. Sligo Ireland J3
 Cave D, Co. Sligo Ireland J3
 Cave E, Co. Sligo Ireland J3
 Lecarrow West Swallet, Co. Sligo Ireland J4
 Pollcan, Co. Clare Ireland J6
 Qumran Caves – various Israel / Palestine J4
 August Hole – Fountain Passage Mendip J6
 Bone Hole Mendip J6
 Browne's Hole (The Annexe) Mendip J3
 Canyon Cave Mendip J2
 Charnel Shaft Mendip J7
 Charterhouse Rakes Caves and Mines Mendip J7
 Cooper's Hole Mendip J2
 Goatchurch Cavern Mendip J2
 Grebe Swallet Mendip OP7
 Longwood August Mendip J4
 Nether Wood Swallet Mendip J8; OP7



BONE HOLE, Cheddar Gorge

Projected Profile N ← S Magnetic Feb 2010

Cave surveyed by BCRA Grade 3c on 8th February 2010
by "Biff" Fith, Ross Porter & Ed Waters. Survey data computed
using Walls v2.07 and drawn by Ed Waters.
© Mendip Caving Group 2010





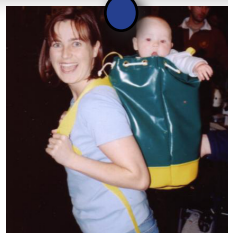




2005 Biff Frith & Mick Norton



1950s Pete Goddard Ubley



2003 Julie Heskeith-Laird & Eva BCRA CONF



2003? John Pudduck 60th



Martin Rowe GB extension [IM]



2023 Eva & Julie, Bill, Tom, Sludge Pit [TH]



1991 Phil Elliott & John Pudduck (50th)



1994 James Allen, Tim Haynes, Le Hawkswell, Andrew Bellamy, Ralph Diment, Tim Francis, Joe Frampton, Dave Tooke, Marcus Ward, Julie Heskeith-Laird



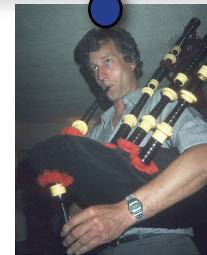
2001 David Walsh & Helen Miriam (60th Birthday Party)



2024 Bill Chadwick Portland [TH]



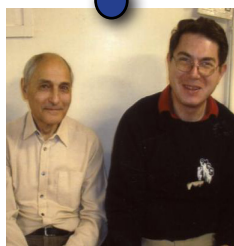
1985ish Arthur Spain Charterhouse Cave



John Miriam



1967 Ron Saunders Eastwater



2001 Malcolm Cotter & Jonathan Roberts (60th)



1991 Wayne Hiscox (50th)



1985ish Pat Walsh Charterhouse C



1981 Tony Knibbs Priddy



1973 Roger Wallington Czech



Biff Frith Fitting Coral Lid [BC]



1980 MacKechnie Swildon's [Geoff Barton]



1960s Ann Hiscox & Valerie Knight



1983 (Neil Hutchinson & Denise Knibbs Otter Hole



1982 I MacKechnie, Ian Parry, Steve Conquest Little Neath RC



1995 Charlie A, Marcus W, Yvonne R, Martin R, Reggie P, James A, Zoe H, Julie H, Tim F, Lee H



Don Searle, Pete & Joan Goddard Mary Cox



1991 Czech trip, Steve A, JP B, Dave T, Lee H, Barry P, Kevin W, Bill H



?.?.?. Bill Chadwick, Bob Templeman, Biff Frith, Yvonne Rowe



1996ish Nicki Robinson, Rupert Knowles, James Allen (W-S-M)



Frisbee Golf - Various!



1985 Mallorca - Neil H, Adrian D, Paul C, Ian P, Martin R, Andy B, Paul M, Steve T, Kate T, Paddy N, Alan M



2016 Russ & Lisa Porter, Ben Cooper, Dan Matthews



1973 Czech Bernard R Wayne H JM BJ Don V Dennis H Trish W Ann H GS Roger W



1955 end-jly poss Mac Moomin Tony Davies Dennis Holmes



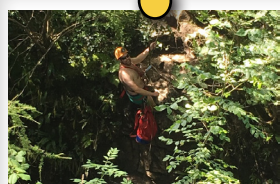
Tony Crawford in centre [TCr]



Pete Goddard [RW]



2013, Brian Snell, Bill Chadwick, Biff Frith, Tom Harrison, Hayley Clark, Ed Waters, Charlie Allison [CA]



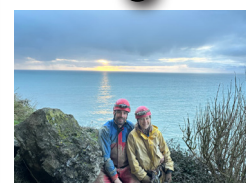
2016 Kew Speight Alum Pot



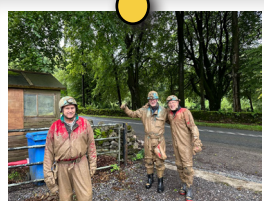
Don Vosper & Rosine, Ann H, Helen Miriam, Emily



2016? Beverley Allen, Alan Gray, Jackie Murch, Lisa & Russ Porter,



2024 Greg Hawkins, Hannah Blunt



2023 - Brian Snell, Jason Kirby, Dave Loub, post Stainsby's



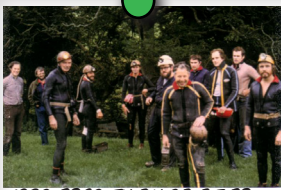
2023 - Mark Edwards, John Crowsley, Ed Ford, Kat Rosier



1988 John B Steph Bowen, Vince Simmonds, Steve W, Van Gill - Giants?



1985 Sidcot Yvonne R, Ian Mack, Linda Gates, GW Grant Shepherd [Roy Kempton]



1980 RS60 TH DH OD BJ RS
PSHI SK, ED, MS, MB



Keith Knight, Mick Norton, Bill
Chadwick, Joan Goddard, Mark
Williams, Mike Richardson [TH]



Jim, Mrs Fry, Ken [Mary Cox]



Otter Hole - Mark Ward, J
Crows (?) LH DT



2016 Russ Porter, Rich Carey, (?),
Dan Matthews, Bob Templeman,
David Lossel



Keith Knight, Mike Richardson,
Joan G, Lisa, P, JP Burch, Jeremy
Gilson, Bill Chadwick, Ed W [?]



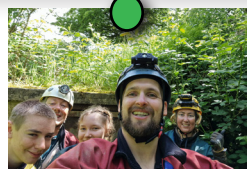
2016 Committee Keith K, Karen F,
David L, Russ P, Tom H, Brian S,
Lisa P [TH]



1968 Swildons Bryan
Pittman [Tony knibbs]



2001 60th Birthday
[Bernard Reeves]



2024 GB With, Mike and Izzy
Ormond, Calum Bisley, Kat
Rosier [CB]



1956 D Holmes, Don Searle, T
Noble, Les James, Robbie Charnock,
Anne Coynel(?)



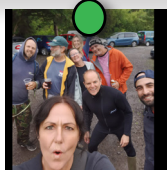
1983 Ahen Allwedd Members
Trip



1995 Rods Rescue Practice
Phil Ingold, JG John Crows-
ley, Yvonne Rowe



1983 Swildons
[Geoff Barton]



2022 Wessex Challenge Dan M,
Mike M, Becky V, Kay M, Jackie
Murch, Julian, Chris B, David V [BV]



2022 AGM Dinner Jason Kirby,
Mark Edwards [Kay Matthews]



2016 Wookey Hole [CB]



Ben Cooper, Hayley Clarke, Ed Wa-
ters, (?), Rich Carey, Linda Milne,
Mike Richardson [?]



New Years eve - Waterwheel
trip [?]



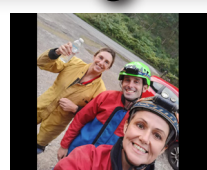
2021 Manor Farm Mine Graham
Price, Brian Snell, Martin Cross,
Keith Knight [Jason Kirby]



2024 Portland Mike Moxon, Greg
Hawkins, Calum Bisley, Hannah
Blunt, Matty Dredge, Kerry Rutter



1962 Eire RSM Wool, Robbie
Charnock, Bob Templeman



2023 Kay Matthews, Matty
Dredge, Becky Viall [BV]



1996 Goughs Phil Ingold
SH ough Cornwall, AS, Chris
Whittle



Brian Snell, Keith Knight
Martin Rowe



1991 (50th) Greg Smith, Denise
& Tony Knibbs



2024 Portland Greg H, Callum B,
Matty D, Bill C, Hannah B, Kerry
R, Mike M [TH]



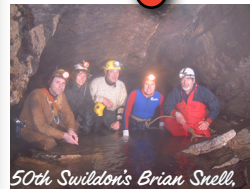
?, Tim Francis, ?, Lee Hawke-
ersell



1957ish New Inn Malcolm Cot-
ter & Bob Knott [R Charnock]



1955 Eastwater Dennis Hem-
mings, George Pape, Terry
Noble, Les James, Don Searle



50th Swildon's Brian Snell,
Linda Milne, Lee Hawkswell
, GL, Bryan Pittman [LH]



Dec 2000 Julie Heskeeth, Joan Goddard,
Yvonne Rowe, J-P Burch, Cara Allison,
Martin Rowe (Castle of Comfort) [BC]



2004 Peat Bennett, Phil Elliot, Char-
lie Allison, Julie Heskeeth, Dave Tooke,
Simon Goddard, Doug Harris, Linda
Milne Barn Dance [Bernard Reeves]



1996 Phil Ingold, Pete Matthews,
Steve Conquest, Nick & Jeremy Gilson



1990s Blackdown Archeology
walk



2013 Beverley Allen, Julie
Heskeeth, Jackie Chadwick



Roy Kempston, ?, Fiona Kempston,
Lee Hawkswell, Bryan Pittman,
Arthur Spain, Bob Templeton



2001 (60th) Jenny & Mike Lovell,
Lyn Spain



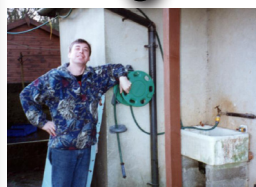
1996 PL Steve Conquest, Brian Prewer,
Joan Goddard, J-P Burch, NG, Pete
Matthews, AS, MR JG, Nick & Jeremy
Gilson



Dec 2000 J-P Burch, Yvonne Rowe, Ted,
Linda Milne, Jane Baldwin (by BC)



?, Ben Cooper, Peat Bennett, ?
[Bernard Reeves]



Dec 2000 Richard Carey [Bill
Chadwick]



2023 - Upper Flood - Dave
Cook & Hannah Blunt [TH]



2013 Russ Porter, Jenny
Plumb, Mike Moxon [TH]



2013 Angela Gilson & Karen Fend-
ley [KF]



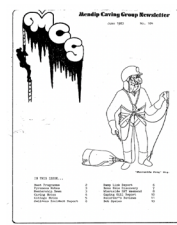
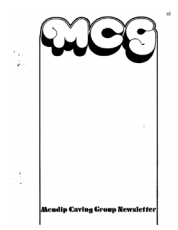
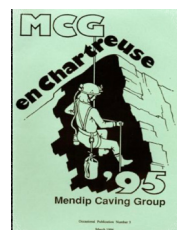
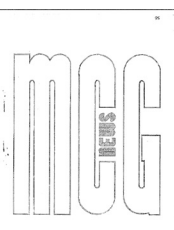
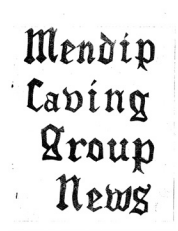
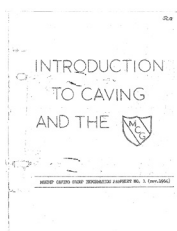
1983 inc Neil Hutchinson & Ian Parry
Swinston to Valley [Roy Kempston]



Joan Goddard, Geoff Beale, Stan
Pittman, Ann Pittman, Bryan Pitt-
man, Tony & Denise Knibbs



1984 30th Anniversary Party Swil-
dons [Ian McKechnie]



Mendip
Caving
Group

