

# MCG NEWS

May 1986

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NEWSLETTER OF THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

## MALLORCA '85

by Neil Hutchinson

The MCG foreign trip took place for the second year in succession over Christmas on the Island of Mallorca. Ten members were present for a two week period from 14th to 28th December with two others joining for the second week only. Even by last years standards, this meet was a resounding success, the highlight being the discovery of a huge new chamber in Cova de Can Sion - the largest MCG discovery to date.

Locating entrances again proved by far the most difficult and dangerous element of the expedition, but with the aid of a good altimeter we were able to locate three caves we had been unable to find in 1984. One particular cave however, resisted the combined efforts of eight people over two days to find it, leaving one person with a badly cut hand and another group narrowly missing and enforced bivi on the mountain - two close shaves those concerned will not be in a hurry to repeat!

One additional problem facing us this year was the extra organisation required for a much larger group, some of the logistical details making quite entertaining reading, for example, over two weeks we consumed 25kg of potatoes, 10kg of peppers, 18kg of cheese, 30kg of fruit, 150 yoghurts, 40 litres of fruit juice, 30 litres of wine, 300 sausages and 615 bottles of beer - amongst other things.

One result of all this was the promotion of Martin Rowe to the position of Honorary Member with special responsibilities for shopping! - a post for which it must be said there is very little thanks. The other result was to illustrate that a group of about 10 to 12 is the maximum that can work together without the logistics getting out of hand.

In all we descended ten different caves during our stay, six of these were visited the previous year, whilst the remaining four, one was descended but not bottomed in '84 and three were located during our stay this time. Brief descriptions were given of the six previously known caves in the July '85 newsletter and the following are very brief descriptions of the remaining four:-

### AVENC D' ESCORCA

Located in a valley bottom in the Escorca area; an inconspicuous vegetation-filled gully forms the top of the large entrance shaft dropping straight down from the surface for 116m. A short climb up and descent to a ledge then leads to a further very broken and messy pitch of about 25m down into a muddy chamber at 146m with all ways on blocked by mud.

### AVENC S' AIGO

A huge and very impressive shaft with excellently placed bolts giving a superb 90m free-hang down to a large ledge, and re-belay for final 15m descent to the shaft floor. According to our information this should be the end of the cave, however, a small hole in the chamber floor emitting a very strong draught (obviously only recently opened up) leads to a 15m pitch dropping into a dry stream passage which can be followed down for about 75m to a large mud blockage. A way on could be seen overhead, but further progress would require climbing gear. With the bottom of the cave still 180m above sea level and a strong draughting, recently opened up passage, the potential for further extensions is quite significant.

.../

AVENC FEMENIA

An awe-inspiring shaft situated high up on the side of Puig Caragoler. An evil looking funnel shaped area is the top of a 120m shaft, the descent of which is somewhat technical requiring several re-belays in not particularly sound rock. This cave, unlike most others on the island, is very cold and dank, and the whole area has an atmosphere of foreboding about it - not a place for the faint-hearted.

COVA DE CAN SION

A predominantly horizontal cave consisting essentially of a huge inclined chamber, having some of the finest formations to be seen on the island, mainly in the less frequented lower end of the cave. It was while poking around in these lower levels that a certain Andy Beare simply squeezed down between boulders and dropped onto a ledge overlooking a very large and superbly decorated, steeply inclined chamber. Descending into the chamber moved so much loose rock that we knew immediately that this was new territory. The chamber is about 75m wide, dropping about 60m vertically, and is well over 100m long. Unfortunately we did not have time to carry out a full exploration so the length of the chamber was not determined, but as all we could see was blackness it presumably goes for quite a long way! Before leaving we informed the local cavers of our discovery, and after convincing them that we weren't mad, they appeared very impressed and offered to send us a copy of their new survey!

SURVEY

During our stay this year we in fact found less than half the caves we had hoped so there still remains much to do on the island, especially as our latest trip opened up even more possibilities for future expeditions.

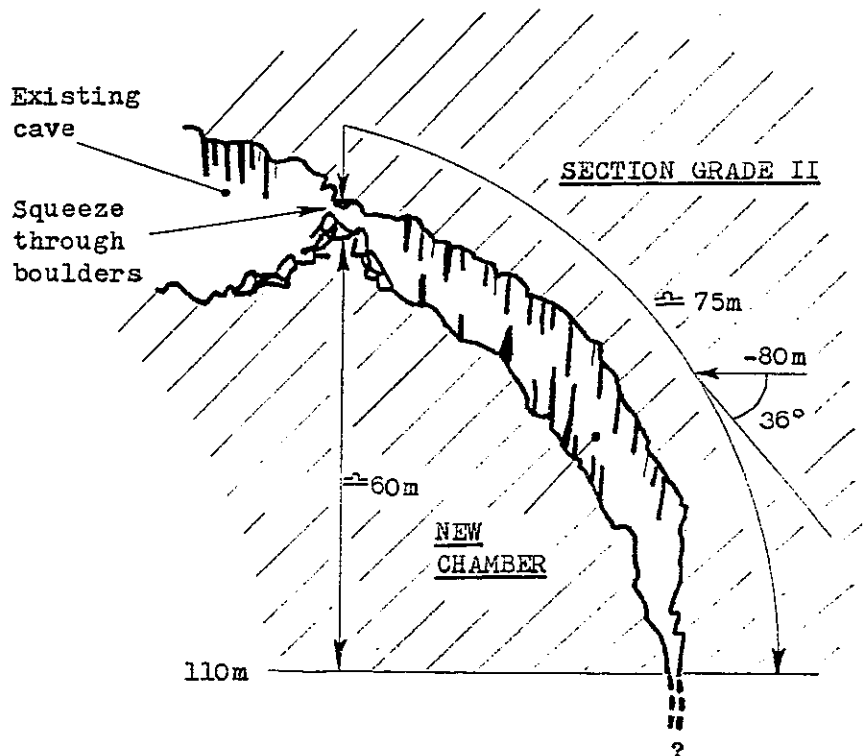
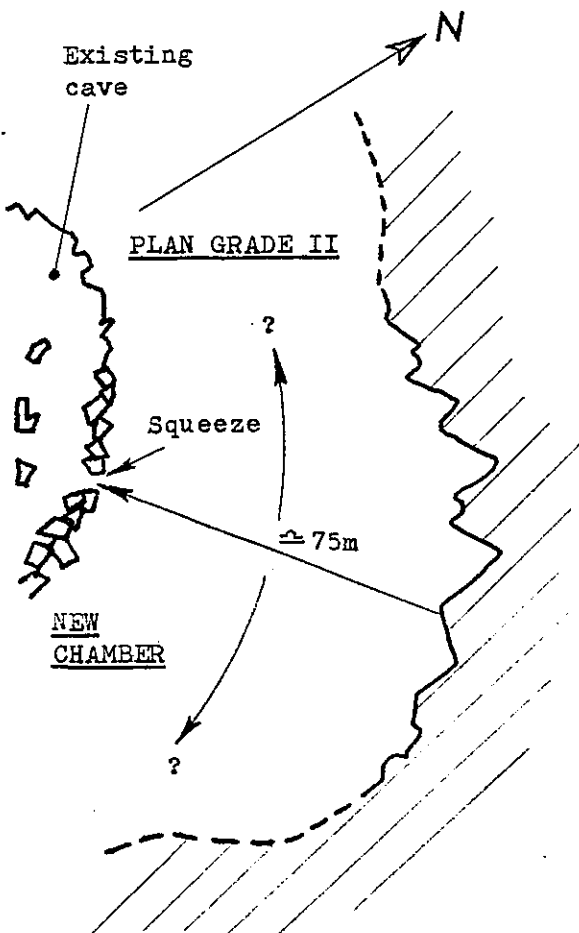
With this in mind, we are currently correlating all the information gathered over the past two years with the aim of producing a Mallorca 'information pack' to enable easy planning of future trips to the island, this will hopefully be published in the next journal.

Also our intrepid photographer - Ian Parry, took even more pictures this year, many of which are quite spectacular. ■

COVA CAN SION - MALLORCA

(2 59'54" / 39 50'09" / 310m)

DEC'85 EXTENSIONS MCG-BCRA GRADE II



# Majorcan Speleos

By Kate Supergrass.

Christmas 1985

Andy forgot to take his helmet and lamp on the expedition to Majorca. Still, when he arrived he made up for it by volunteering to go and buy matches... except when he came back it took him ages to light the fire... he'd bought 600 toothpicks by mistake! (It was even written in English on the box: 'Finest quality toothpicks made in Spain')

Geoff kindly let the Majorcan team buy an altimeter for £10. It worked brilliantly - as the team came down the mountain, it showed they were going up - still, who needs to go caving anyway, when you can spend happy hours scaling mountains in prickly scrub?

Andy was official navigator on the first visit to Escorca and directed the driver up the Torrente de Parais (massive mountain gorge, full of 20ft boulders, trees, caves, etc., but no road) FOLLOW THE BEAR?

Martin was happily dropping rocks down Sago. Suddenly he realised they were taking a long time to reach the bottom - so he ran away. The others carried on looking down the hole, taking photos, jumping over the hole, etc...

Later they found out it was LOOM or so straight down. (Wot's Spanish for sh--t?).

We met Miles Drake, a lone American caver. Kate asked if he had any caving gear, but he didn't understand. 'Equipment,' she explained... 'Oh yes, I have full vertical equipment!' he boasted.

'God, these roads must be horrible in the winter' said Joy on a hair-pin bend. But Joy, it's December!

Paul Craig, who travelled with Kate, hadn't flown since he was 12. As he got on the plane the hostess said 'good evening' but Paul just gave her a dirty look. Later he said 'Why did she say "keep moving!"?'

After the duty free drinks, Dan Air perfumes, etc, Paul waited for the loo queue to go down... 'There's only one person in there...' said Kate, bossily, 'You'd better go now, because I think it's going to be a constant stream'. 'Even I don't know that yet!' protested Paul.

An innocent abroad - a middle aged woman alone had nicked Paul's window seat when we boarded the plane. Politely Paul sat next to her. Half way to Majorca she invited Paul to 'unclip and look at the lights'. 'Oh yes', said Paul. 'No, right down there...' Politely he leaned right over to look below the plane... 'I've got this nice Spanish library book... full of useful phrases on dating' (Was this the moment when worried Paul noticed her seamed stockings and Kate dashed to the loo to hide a mega-smirk explosion?)

Later that week...

'Bear tried to put it in, but it was all loose and dangly!'

'What's Spanish for stuffing' (Joy)

'As a whole, we've done a lot of caves...' (Ian)

'Okay, who put the balloon in the loo? I went in the dark... wot's going on, I thought?' (Joy)

Catch phrase of the week...

'So I do a bit of shopping - I can handle it'. (Martin)