

Mendip Caving Group

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MALLORQUIN CAVERS

by Tim Francis

This year's MCG trip to Mallorca was taken in the first week of February. The aim was to consolidate upon our previous visit and hopefully visit a few new sites. Arriving at the villa near Puerto Cristo in the early afternoon we were soon off cave spotting. We were interested in checking out a few small sites that lie in a dry valley to the south of Cuevas de Pirata. These turned out to be a couple of small entrances which were heavily choked. Unfortunately whilst wandering through the scrub Ralph sustained a nasty injury to the eye and the evening was spent doing a spot of first aid.

Our first major trip was a return to Covota de sa Penja Rotja. Due to lack of time we had not previously completed the cave which makes a brilliant introduction to caving on Mallorca.

A more detailed investigation of the prettily decorated upper levels was made, including a delightful grotto just inside the entrance. Our objective was to further explore the lower series, and with the assistance of a couple of handlines everyone was able to make it to the bottom where we spent a few hours wandering through several large chambers filled with columns and flowstone. Ralph took some excellent slide shots which are well worth a look at.

After a day of rambling and indulgence we returned to the north east of the island. We easily located the entrance of Cueva de Ca'l Pessu behind the town of Puerto de Pollensa. This appears to be a very popular beginners cave and so the entrance sections are somewhat damaged. Once in the further reaches there are some fine formations. Most of the entrance series consists of dry, dusty crawls but opens out to large chambers above a series of tight pitches. To the back of the upper level we met three local youths with one candle and a bicycle helmet! Concerned about our rucsacs Ralph returned to the entrance to hide the gear. The rest of us had to help the local "cavers" back across a slippery traverse with the aid of some improvised cowstails.

Back outside Ralph was confronted with a bunch of locals apparently rifling through our gear. He returned to the car to find two more youths loitering around the boot. After an hour we exited the cave and discovered Ralph sitting up a telegraph pole cuddling a severely depleted bottle of brandy!

The following day was spent rambling around the hills to the north east of Arta, taking in the impressive show cave which was well worth the visit. In the afternoon we wandered over to Cala Mesquida and spotted a small abandoned sea cave. On returning to the car Tim and Julie interrupted two thieves attempting to crowbar open the windows, Mendip style. Their excuse: "We're car mechanics"! We were able to give a good description of the thieves and their car to the local police, and hence the two were apprehended within the hour.

Our next trip was a visit to Cova de Can Sion primarily to see the MCG extensions. Can Sion is a well decorated cave with the lower levels containing some fine green gour pools with floating calcite crystals. The walk from Can Sion Farm (ask permission) takes about one hour with the entrance easy to find. Once in the cave we searched around the base of the sloping chamber, and were able to extend several leads. The largest discovery required an hours bashing at a draughting hole. Once through this revealed a descending rift, 80ft deep with 100ft of passage. The extension contained some fine helectites, straws and gour crystals. The rift draughted but the way on was too tight to follow.

On the final day we were to attempt Cueva Campana, but were summoned to the Justice Courts in Manacor to identify the car thieves in an identity parade. We were eventually not required but half our day was already wasted. A heavy night at the Castle restaurant meant that we badly overslept in the morning. We checked in at Palma airport just as the desk was being closed.

Team: Malcolm Cotter, Norman Cotter, Ralph Diment, Tim Francis, Julie Hesketh.