

MCG News

Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

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Founded 1954

Jackpot! Argentina Report 2004

By Richard M Carey

This was the MCG's 5th visit to Argentina and probably the most successful so far. This year's expedition team was Peat Bennett, Tim Francis and myself. I had already been in Argentina for five months so had done some groundwork and some general exploration of the 5th largest country in the world but that will require another article in itself. This time we explored Las Salinillas, finished off Poti Malal, visited Caverna de las Brujas and discovered a whole new gypsum area at Las Leñas. At least 12 new caves and 900m of survey. Oh, and Tim and Rubén were held hostage by the police.

We had arranged to meet up for the New year this time and I met Peat and Tim at Mendoza airport with my faithful Renault 12 and drove the 250 miles back to Malargüe. A quick shower and then off to meet our old friends to see in the New Year with barbecued goat. We had not thought of doing much the first day to let the travellers recover from their jet lag, (It's 14 hours from London to Buenos Aires with another 1000 miles to Malargüe.) but we decided to start with something gentle so we went and collected Rubén Cepeda and drove off to visit Las Salinillas, recently rediscovered by INAE. The first 25 miles are on tarmac roads and then we turned off onto a dirt track towards the cave. The track becomes impassable and the last mile or so has to be walked. 40 minutes of walking in the summer sun saw us at the entrance and we found some interesting cave paintings, they didn't look like much at first glance but were very evident when photographed. A general rummage was had exploring every nook and cranny with Peat even sticking his camera into a pool to see if it would go.

Next day and we went shopping for our expedition food to Poti Malal. Last year's discovery, Miranda Cave, was to be surveyed. It had received a lot of press coverage "the longest gypsum cave in South America" so expectations were high. Rubén had already surveyed Las Salinillas and Tim went round to argue his case that it was not grade 6 just because they used a theodolite. We moved north by 180° and everyone was happy.

Saturday and we loaded up the car to go to Poti Malal with the INAE en masse. Hector had borrowed a car so it was we; Rubén Cepeda, Ariel Benedetto, Hector Sevillano, Matias and Lucas Oliva from Córdoba formed a mini convoy. The road from Bardas Blancas has improved and we were soon at the border control point. 15 minutes of checking paperwork finally saw us on the road to Poti Malal. We set up camp and then Tim and I began the survey whilst Peat and Ariel went exploring in Miranda Cave. Rubén took the others to San Agustín. 4 hours of surveying got us to the first junction. Peat and Ariel pushed on to the chamber previously discovered by Rubén back in August and found a couple of desperate crawls although this looked like the end of the cave. Ariel was under-kneepadded and suffering so they exited the cave. Sausage stew and pasta followed by fruit salad and off to bed.

Sunday is not a rest day. We were awoken at 6.45am by one of the locals looking for help with his car. I feigned ignorance and allowed Hector to do the honours. Breakfast of porridge and biscuits and off to battle. Ariel didn't want to play today so it was Rubén and Peat to explore leads while Tim and I continued the survey.

From the Editor



Burrington Challenge –p7

Well, what a weekend that was! I'm talking about the 50th celebrations on the 27th March of course. Everything was perfect—the venue, the food, the raffle, the auction, the speeches, the photos, and most of all the members from the earlier days and those from the beginning of my caving career starting in the early 80s. It was lovely to see so many members and ex-members who I hadn't seen for many years—there was so much to catch up on, so much reminiscing.

The auction was one of my personal highlights as I successfully bid for a 'Gonzo' cave painting and a trip round Torr Quarry.

I can't wait for July!!

In this issue

- 1-4 Argentina 2004
- 4-5 50th round-up
- 6 AGM round-up
- 6-8 Carcass Cave, part 2
- 9 "50th" trip, Swildons
- 9 Yucatan, Mexico
- 9 July Social
- 10 Group information

MCG doings

Re-joining us:

Associate member:
Gordon Lister

Full member:
Bob Templeman

Prospective Member:
Louisa Minahan

Pete and Joan Goddard have moved into the 6 room at Nordrach Cottage from 7th to 27th May (with the agreement of the committee) as their new home is not ready.

Resignation:

The following members have not renewed their subscription are deemed to have resigned:

Gof Daine, Bob Dungey, Paul Dungey, Mike Eeles, Julie Kavanagh, Greg Smith, Simon Tanner, Hannah Tutchter.

Cancellations:

Dave Briggs, Ralph Diment, Dan Miles and Charlie Ruddock did not pay their BCA insurance and their membership has been cancelled.

This leg of the survey was (I hope) the hardest part and despite the agonies of lying in liquid mud we got to the aven we found last year passing through an impressive keyhole passage. We bumped into Peat and Rubén who had been exploring the streamway but my sense of humour was seriously on the wane as my lights were fading and my knees didn't like me anymore. We had done 6½ hours for 120m. Peat had done a bit of digging at the junction to reveal an airbell but decided that it would be a long term effort so went off to push the streamway and despite sterling efforts bashing away at the rock it too became too tight to continue.

We decided to give our knees a rest and went for a bumble around the area to look for new sites. It was a typically scorching day. While Tim and Ariel were rummaging in some cracks in the gypsum and Peat went for a huge hike I followed a stream up-valley and lo and behold a resurgence. The entrance was very low but I could hear water cascading down inside. I managed to force my way in and found a small chamber with the water coming in through a small hole in the roof. Big disappointment. I named it Cueva Scorchio. Ariel and Tim then caught me up and duly went in for a look. Peat then arrived and took the GPS co-ordinates. We had a rummage to see if we could find a fossil passage but to no avail. There are a lot of small pots but are all choked. Oh well, back to camp.

I decided that another day of walking was due so I went with Rubén, Hector, Matias and Lucas to the kiosco and walked up the valley that runs behind the Poti Malal river. Rubén, Hector and Matias kept to the same side while Lucas and I continued up the valley. It was very scenic but we only managed to find a few choked pots high up in the gypsum. Rubén says he found a going pot but would need to return with kit to carry on the exploration. Meanwhile Tim and Peat surveyed to the final chamber in Miranda.

By now everyone was feeling pretty knackered so we decided not to complete the streamway survey and went for a wander up the Miranda valley. We then packed up and returned to Malargüe. We debriefed Carlos Benedetto and headed off to the Goat festival and gorged ourselves at an "all you can eat" restaurant.

Time for a bit of tourism and Peat, Tim, Rubén and I drove off to Las Leñas to visit Valle Hermoso. A spectacular valley on the border with Chile. We spotted a few resurgences on the way up and these were duly investigated. We also spotted a cave entrance close to Las Leñas. We asked the local farmer's wife if it was alright to visit and crossing a small river we climbed up to what seems to have once been a tourist cave complete with fixed ladders. Cueva de los Tunduques was duly explored but it was only about 30m long. Returning to the farm we sent Rubén off to enquire if there were any more caves around and was told to follow upstream. We would return. On the way back to Malargüe we were stopped by the Gendarmeria and asked for our papers. Unfortunately Peat had left his passport back at my house. So holding Tim and Rubén as hostages and retaining all my papers I went with Peat to get his passport. This being shown soon secured the release of the hostages and it was back home with a warning to carry all our papers all the time.

Off to Las Leñas only stopping to check the weather from the gendarmeria, 15 minutes later after all documents checked and being informed that I only had 5 days left on my visa we arrived at the farm. We duly marched up-stream and we spotted the first of many resurgences. Tim was elected to make the first enquiries and reported that it was very low and that the water was very cold. We were quite close to the snow line so it was undoubtedly meltwater. As Peat was taking the GPS co-ordinates a group of pony trekkers came by and told us that there were more caves higher up. We continued up valley and spotted yet another resurgence, but this time it was issuing from beneath a huge boulder pile. We looked above for a fossil entrance but although one was spotted it would be impossible to reach without specialist climbing gear. Meanwhile Peat had dug open a short cave nearby that was draughting nicely. Could yield some results with a bit of digging. Continuing up-valley we spotted another collapse feature and this time we were able to enter a cave. Formed on a bedding it appeared to be a bit unstable

so after a brief look around we exited for lunch. After lunch we continued up-valley and spotted a resurgence high up absolutely gushing water. This was more like it. We climbed up and entered the cave. Unfortunately the roof lowered after about 10 metres and although it was draughting the water was again very cold and we declined to continue. We discovered a fossil entrance over the top and in we went. This cave had a large entrance chamber complete with a guano stal. Pushing on through a small passage revealed more passage with crystals, banded gypsum and pure orange ochre. We named it Orange Cave. There is a good draught at the end and might reward a bit of digging. We continued a bit further but as time was getting on we decided to turn back and follow a pony track back to the car. There are a lot of sinkholes up on the top of this gypsum but unfortunately all are choked. We separated at this point and I returned alone along the pony track whilst Peat, Tim and Rubén continued looking for more caves. They discovered a couple more caves but decided to save them for another day.

A nice late start and it was Carlos, Peat Tim, Rubén and myself heading off to Las Brujas. This cave has always presented us with problems of a bureaucratic nature and this year was no exception. We duly arrived at about 11am and showed our permit to the Park Rangers. They said that we weren't allowed in between the hours of 9am and 5pm. The reasoning behind this was that we couldn't interfere with the tourists. Well, Carlos went ballistic and there were all sorts of threats of denunciation and so forth because we hadn't been informed of this new change of the rules. The Park Ranger eventually relented and allowed us in as long as he came with us. The plan was to descend a pitch that we had spotted last year. After a bit of messing around finding our way we entered a rift passage where unfortunately Carlos decided to stay high rather than descend like the rest of us. The stal he was standing on gave way and he fell 2 metres with a crash, whoomph, and in plain view of the Ranger. Not good. Fortunately he was only shocked and bruised but decided to leave the cave with Rubén. We carried on but mistook our route and came to a pitch but we could hear tourists being guided round the cave. We decided that it was pointless to continue and the Ranger warned the guides by radio that he would be descending into the tourist route. He took our tackle sack and left us to return the way we came. We found the junction where we had gone wrong and Tim sped off for a quick recce of the pitch, realised that it must have been descended and exited the cave. The survey, although good, does have a few errors and will need some more work. At 2.5k it is beyond the time we could allow for us to do it.

This day it was just Peat, Tim and myself off to Miranda to finish off the survey. Because of the festival we decided to let Rubén get some rest. He was partying till 5 in the morning and then going caving at 9am. I declined the kind offer to help and left them to finish off the streamway and went for a wander. Señor Miranda had been promised a radio and I duly delivered it. Unfortunately it didn't work but he held on to it anyway. I am sure he will be able to exchange it for one that does. I thought I spotted a cave near the entrance to Miranda valley but it only turned out to be a small shelter (an occlusion I believe). Entry was very dangerous as the goats were returning and raining stones down on us. On returning home we fed the survey data into Survex and it yielded the grand total of 560m. Not the longest but at least its ours.

Back to Las Leñas to explore the new finds. Peat and Rubén went in to explore while Tim and I started the survey. A resurgence cave with a wide low entrance, which led to a boulder collapse where the route divided in two. We elected to survey the dry overflow passage first and soon rejoined the survey. Peat and Rubén had been ages so we were beginning to think they must have found something major. Back in the streamway I spotted a window from which I could hear Peat and Rubén. I looked through and saw that they were in a large passageway 8m wide 60m long and about 5m. Basically I abandoned the survey temporarily and went racing off down the passage. This was big but it soon closed down to chokes at the end of the passage. We surveyed to the end and explored all the leads. As we left I spotted something moving in the streamway. It was a crayfish (cangrejo). There is already a Cueva de los Cangrejos so we called it Cueva Langosta (well lobster is near enough.)

Congratulations



The following news about Victoria Arbizu should have been announced at the AGM and dinner but was overlooked as so much else was happening:

Victoria writes: "I would really love to fly to England for the MCG anniversary celebration, but am getting married and we are now getting things on the way. Please excuse me for my absence. My love to everyone there. I still have pretty good memories of my caving trips with the MCG members on the Mendips. I still feel that part of my heart is in that part of beautiful Great Britain, along with the warm and happy cavers there."

Victoria was married on the 2nd of April to Luis Alphonso. I know that everyone who knows Victoria will wish them every happiness.



While we are on the subject, it's congratulations also to Michael Pittmand and Julia Lovell who are engaged to be married.

Fairy Quarry

The old Cerberus cottage and car park have been levelled and gated. The gate will have a combination lock but the combination will be made known to bona fide cavers.

The previously open caves at Fairy Quarry (Hilliers, Balch's and Conning Tower) have now been gated and locked. A CSCC key is required to open these locks. MCG only has one CSCC so more will be purchased.

AGM Yv'sdroppings

RK: "How does the clock change affect when the coach leaves?"

MR: "We leave at one and get to the cottage at three!"

Discussion on MCG cave access:

Anon: "Where are we in question to Bone Hole?"

Anon: "About 4 miles away!"

After Julie phoned Ben on her mobile to ask if he will be an examiner:

JR: "This is the first virtual election of an officer."

JR: "The caving population, generally, are aging. Just look around you."

TK: "I resemble that remark!"

RK: "Is anything going to be done about the rotten floor by the kitchen?"

WH: "We're waiting for the mushrooms to come up for breakfast first."

RK: "In the absence of the Tackle-masters report, is the Tackle-master doing anything about the tackle?"

TF: "He's seen where the tackle store is.... He's found it!"

Discussion on the new EU 'working at height' regulations:

MR: Surely we should be working to 'working at depth' regulations!"

Lee was asking the floor to bid generously for a superb painting donated to the auction. RK put up his hand to make a comment and everyone shouted "SOLD!"

And finally..... not an Yv's-dropping, but worth a mention anyway.... We recently had a guest at the cottage by the name of **Flo Stone** (honest!!).

January is holiday time in Malargüe and hardly had the Goat festival finished when they held Malargüe Rock. Ariel had organised this and there were bands from as far as Buenos Aires, so we went off to support it. Mostly covers but with some good old Argentinian rock it went down well.

Back again to Las Leñas this time for a resurgence that we had spotted high up the mountain. It was a bit of a struggle to get there and the only reward was a low crawl in freezing water so we declined. The next day we returned to survey Orange Cave (Cueva Naranja) and Peat and Rubén went off to explore a collapse feature. With the survey complete we exited the cave to find that there was a thunderstorm with lightning. We decided to get off the hill as soon as possible. We soon encountered Peat who was trying to keep as far away from Rubén as possible because he was carrying a metal crowbar. They had found a cave, Snow Cave (Cueva de la Nieve), which was basically 30m of pure white gypsum. Beaten by the weather we returned home via the café at Las Leñas.

An extremely active and rewarding expedition with the exploration of Poti Malal completed. It was a shame that Miranda didn't break the record but the papers now say that there is 560m surveyed so far. If someone wants to dig in the terminal collapse they might yet make it the longest. The real jewel in the crown though was Las Leñas with 12 sites so far and we haven't even finished the valley yet. We had been told that there were some small caves that weren't really worth the effort. How wrong they were!

50th Anniversary Weekend, March 2004

By Martin Rowe

And we were worried that no-one would turn up!!! When we began planning for the 50th dinner 2 years ago, nobody had any idea what a success this would be. We thought we might have up to 100 at the dinner if we were extremely lucky - in the end it was 140. Although many people were involved in the planning, special thanks must go to Linda Milne as Social Secretary for bringing it all together.

The weekend began on Friday with a trip down Swildons, as reported in the Wells Journal (see panel opposite).

In the evening, the cottage was crowded as Malcolm gave a slide and film show. The AGM at the Hunters on Saturday was attended by the usual suspects, and numerous caving trips followed, then it was back to the cottage to prepare for the main event - the Dinner. One concern was how much the group stood to lose financially if the event was poorly attended.

Linda and Jacky take up the story:

50 Not Out!

That the MCG is traditionally a sociable club was certainly evident on the 27th March. Some 140 people gathered together to celebrate the golden anniversary of their club and in doing so met up with friends they had not seen in many years. Current and past members mingled, in all their finery, in the wood-panelled rooms of a grand Jacobean mansion. History displays, fine food, toasts, auctions, videos, singing and socialising contributed to tremendously successful evening.

Many past members made a special effort to attend this event travelling from as far away as Brasil and Canada. It was such a great opportunity for us more recent members to meet them and hear the stories and see the films and photos from back then, in the days when the bobble hat ruled....

Other birthdays were celebrated over the weekend - Lee Hawkswell and Jane Baldwin laid on a barrel at the cottage to mark their 40th birthdays and Bryan Pittman had a spread at the Hunters on Sunday to mark his 60th. I believe there may even have been some caving going on too.....

The year continues with more celebrations in the summer so if you didn't make it to the dinner or if you just want to carry on where you left off, come along to the Barn Dance weekend on 2/3/4 July. **Linda Milne**

50th Anniversary round up

This was a resounding success, both socially and financially. Thank you to everyone who attended or helped organise or contribute to the event in any way. The Auction raised £400 for good causes – MRO (cave rescue), Council of Southern Clubs (cave conservation) and J'Rat's bang fund (cave access). The MCG also gets £400, and the raffle raised another £198 for club funds. The winner of the cave entrance competition was Tim Francis with 14 out of 18 correct. The winner of the dinner ticket draw was Chris Whittle. The winner of the Burrington Challenge was Martin Rowe. Commemorative Mugs and T-shirts are still available at the cottage. Now we can look forward to the Summer event! **Jacky Ankerman**



Self-Assessment returns

The Inland Revenue contacted Malcolm last year regarding nominating MCG as a charity to receive tax repayments as a donation. The main extract of the letter follows.

“Thank you for completing the form to participate in the new scheme that will allow any individual to nominate your charity to receive their tax repayments as a donation.

From April 2004 your charity's name and code number will be listed on the Inland Revenue website. For the purposes of this scheme your charity's reference unique code is:-

MAJ02DG

Please remember that this method of giving will only be available on Self-Assessment returns from next year. It cannot be used before the 2003/2004 Self-Assessment returns issued in April 2004. If you intend publicising this code to your supporters, we suggest that you do this to coincide with the issue of the returns. This will help to avoid any confusion with the current tax years returns.

This new scheme does not replace the existing Gift Aid scheme and you should continue to make good use of Gift Aid to benefit your charity.”

New tackle

Dave Tooke has replaced 200m of the lifeline—this will be available after it has been shrunk in his bath and properly labelled. He has also purchased 8 new spreaders.

Earwig in on the AGM held on 27/03/04



Minutes of the meeting will be available later, but in the meantime here are some of the highlights from the AGM:

38 members attended the AGM

BCA Insurance: all members have to buy insurance so that the Trustees are covered.

Cottage fees: other cottages charge more but we are not near a pub. Committee to review cottage fees

Booking sheets: can these be numbered to help examiners?

Day fees: committee to confirm when these were reintroduced.

Newsletter: cannot be posted on the MCG website but old issues are available at the associated Yahoo! Groups website for members only.

Cottage work: it's always the same few who turn out for work weekends.

Working at height regulations: new EU regulations requiring double rope techniques may affect caving.

Library: Newsletter exchanges need to be brought up to date.

Gift Aid: Fiona Kempston to check if we are complying with the rules for claiming Gift Aid on subs and BCA insurance.

Discovery and digging Report of Carcass Cave (Part Two)

In the light of recent accounts of discoveries at Carcass Cave in the MCG newsletter and elsewhere it was thought that an article on the early days of the Carcass dig might be of interest to the wider MCG membership. Over the next few newsletters, in the form of logbook entries, the main protagonists will outline how the dig progressed.

The Epic Dig Continues by Doug Harris

How the shaft was fenced, a surface survey is conducted pinpointing the location of Carcass in relation to Shute Shelve and the shaft is dug to over 12 metres.

Wednesday 3rd September 1997 Elaine and Doug removed thirty drums of spoil. Another foot was gained.

Wednesday 17th September 1997 Doug met with Clifford Dockrell at the cave entrance. We removed twenty-five drums, still going down.

Sunday 21st September 1997 The crew consisted of Mike, Greg, Cliff and Doug. We used my Land Rover to gain access to the top of Axbridge Hill and were followed by Cliff in his Land Rover. The weather was on our side the view being superb. We spent the next couple of hours locating the top entrance into the woods. Then loaded up the wheelbarrow with tools. The wood was bundled together to make it easier to carry. By the time we got all the tools and materials to the cave it was nearly noon. All the iron stakes were driven into the ground. Then Cliff departed. The team who remained managed to install the top rails all the way around the shaft. Now a cordless drill would have been useful (at this time they hadn't got as far west as Somerset) so we had to use a carpenter's hand drill; a slow job but it got done. Then headed down the hill and called in at the New Inn at Cross for a well-deserved pint. Thanks to Martin Rhys for supplying all the fencing materials and John Dobson for arranging access to Axbridge Hill.

Thursday 25th September 1997 Mike, Greg and Doug removed all the rocks which had been stacked up at the dig site (25 drums).

Wednesday 1st October 1997 Mike, Chris Castle and Doug removed the top rails and installed wire netting, refitting the top rails and fitting bottom rails.

Wednesday 22nd October 1997 Chris and Doug took another five angle iron stakes to the cave. Drove in four of them, bolted them into position. Tidied up the wire and removed the surplus. Filled in the holes under the fence. All that is needed now is a gateway.

Wednesday 29th October 1997 Mick, Elaine, Mike, Doug set up a new double pulley system to make bucket hauling easier. The idea was a good one but we need a cleaner rope. We only managed sixteen drums but dropped two more feet.

Sunday 1st November 1997 Mick and Doug removed forty more drums. Mick moved the top rope higher up the tree to allow the pulley system to work more efficiently by letting the buckets clear the top of the hole. The drop was measured at 7.5 metres and still going down.

Wednesday 12th November 1997 Chris, Elaine and Doug; thirty more drums, lowering the floor by another half a metre. Scallops appearing on the east wall.

Wednesday 26th November 1997 Elaine and Doug removed 20 drums of soil and rocks. Starting to remove soil from a horizontal tube going into the hillside.

Wednesday 10th December 1997 Steve Wyatt, Elaine and Doug removing thirty drums of crud; two large boulders now need breaking up.

Wednesday 17th December 1997 A bitterly cold evening but Elaine, Steve and Doug are braving the elements to go digging. Elaine did a lot of digging to keep warm. Fifteen drums of frozen crud including five large rocks.

Tuesday 20th December 1997 Mick, William Chadwick, Mrs. Chadwick Senior (Bill's Mother) 63 years old and still keen on caving, fifteen drums today. Bill and Mum then traversed the hill and did Axbridge Ochre Cavern.

Friday 26th December 1997 "Photo Shoot" Doug's brother Ben, Doug and Mick

took almost a roll of film.

Tuesday 1st January 1998 Mick, Kathleen and Doug walking up to Carcass with enough wood to build a gate. We then assemble the gate and hang it using ropes for hinges. Eight drums of spoil.

Wednesday 21st January 1998 Clive Maybury, Steve, Cliff, Elaine and Doug using the new A.C.G. Hilti drill and Cliff's expertise, the large rock blocking the way downward is successfully got rid of.

Wednesday 28th January 1998 Steve, Clive, Elaine and Doug remove thirty drums, still finding scallops and we are unearthing another large block.

Wednesday 18th February 1998 Mick and Doug remove four drums of soil and rocks. Then Mick called me down; he has discovered that the right hand wall now had scallops appearing. We spent the next hour digging out large rocks from the bottom of what now seems to be a rift.

Thursday 2nd April 1998 Cliff, Mick, Elaine and Doug: more of Cliff's rock splitting.

Saturday 11th April 1998 Chris, Mick, Doug excavated thirty drums worth of soil and rocks. We have unearthed another large rock that requires splitting.

Thursday 30th April 1998 Mike and Doug have levered the large rock out of the floor breaking the pickaxe handle in the process. Mick stayed on the surface on hauling duty and did not enter the cave as he had forgotten his helmet and light.

Sunday 28th June 1998 Spent an hour digging, it seems to be getting damper.

Thursday 22nd July 1998 Steve, Clive and Doug. We managed to get April's rock out of the cave, also fifteen drums of spoil. We have lowered the floor by another half a metre and made the entrance crawl safer.

Sunday 26th July 1998 We have lowered the floor and discovered a ledge.

Thursday 30th July 1998 Elaine, Doug and Mick. We have removed fifteen drums of fill from the shelf.

Thursday 6th August 1998 Elaine and Doug carrying on digging in the floor, thirty drums out.

Sunday 9th August 1998 Mick, Kathleen, Doug meet up with Tom Chapman at the cave. Tom was impressed with the scale of the dig and the scallops. We removed sixty drums between us.

Sunday 16th August 1998 Elaine, Kathleen, Mick and Doug remove fifty drums of soil and rock, still going down and digging out the spoil with ease. Air pocket or side passage starting to open up at the foot of the dig.

Thursday 20th August 1998 Mike and Doug meet with Biff, Mick and Kathleen (Bracknell District Caving Club). Biff had brought scaffolding to hold back the now intimidating entrance slope. Mick and Doug shifted the scaffold planks up the hill. Mike cut the boards to size and Biff installed them, backfilling as he went. By ten o'clock we were done.

Sunday 23rd August 1998 Mick and Doug finish fixing the fencing. Fit scaffold toe boards to the base of the fencing to stop rocks falling down the deep shaft. Twelve drums pulled out.

Thursday 27th August 1998 Elaine, Doug and Mick remove another twenty-five drums - still going down.

Wednesday 2nd September 1998 Steve, Clive and Doug set up a tripod at the head of the shaft for the pulley system.

Sunday 6th September 1998 Paul Hodgson, daughter Steph and Doug carry out the surveying of Carcass Cave. Then we survey from the top of Jim's Attic in Shute Shelve Cavern to the surface, across the surface between the caves and then to the bottom of the Carcass Shaft. The depth of the shaft is now 9 metres. Carcass Cave: 42392 55299

Thursday 17th September Andy, Mick and Doug took up the last of the scaffold poles. Remove twenty drums; the rope works well after a good wash. Andy is

Burrington Challenge, 28/03/04

The aim of the Challenge (devised by Richard Carey) was to locate various cave entrances in Burrington from their grid references and record a letter from a marker previously placed there. Easy enough for Goatchurch, but what about Elephants Hole:



Yvonne and I decided not to worry about time, but to concentrate on finding all the entrances Richard had selected. So it was on to such delights as Trat's Crack, Lionels Hole, East Twin



Swallet, Tween-Twins Hole,



Tunnel Cave, Whitcombe's Hole, Goatchurch Cavern,



Bath Swallet, Rods Pot, Drunkards Hole, Bos Swallet, Reads Cavern and Rowberrow Cavern.

Several teams took part, but we were the only team to visit every entrance (as proved by our photos!), so were rewarded with a bottle of wine. *Y and M Rowe*

Meets update

Richard is planning a Charterhouse meet, on the June members weekend.

June 11/12/13th there will be a meet in Yorkshire. This is envisaged as a pre Slovenia trip for those attending (and not) to give them a chance to check out their caving (and walking) techniques. Richard Carey is hoping to book the YRC as the accommodation.

To work off the calories from the July Members Weekend (BBQ Friday, cooked breakfasts Saturday and Sunday, Wookey Hole Café Saturday and buffet at the Barn Dance on Saturday evening), Richard is organising some caving in Burrington Combe. More details later.

Socials update



June members weekend
BBQ

July members weekend
BBQ on Friday, Barn Dance on Saturday. Full English Breakfast at the cottage Saturday and Sunday. Full details on page 9

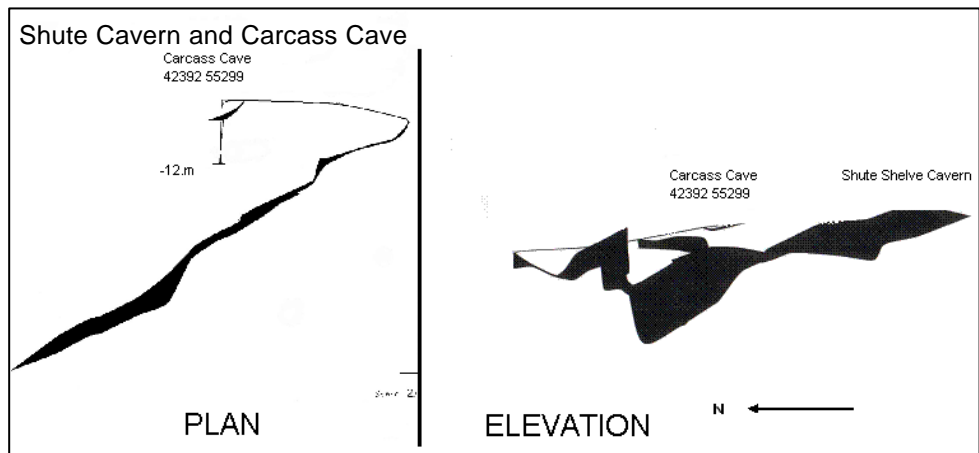
August members weekend
Slovenia. Places still available in Yvonne and Martin's Landy, or take a cheap flight. Details from Julie Hesketh.

October members weekend
Beer and Skittles.

For dates and contacts, see page 10

going off caving in India on Saturday.

Sunday 20th September 1998 Mick and Doug remove twenty five drums, still going down, now one metre below the shoring. A very hot evening.



Thursday 24th September 1998 Elaine, Chris and Doug remove thirty drum loads.

Saturday 26th September 1998 Biff Frith, Peter Cross, Errol Shearing, Robin Whitehead and Doug. A Bracknell digging trip. Masses more scaffolding brought; Doug set up more scaffolding for the opposite side of the rift. Thirty drums removed in spite of the wet weather. Thanks to Biff for obtaining, transporting and erecting it. The shoring now needs scaffold planks to finish it off.

Wednesday 30th September 1998 Steve and Doug fitting scaffold planks behind the shoring and backfilling. Lowering the floor by another metre.

Thursday 1st October 1998 Elaine, Clive and Doug remove another 20 drums of crud. Depth of Carcass Shaft now 10 metres.

Saturday 10th October 1998 Mick, Robin, Wayne, Biff and Doug, another B.D.C.C. dig; getting keen aren't they? Biff had brought a pair of very large diameter home made pulleys, these proved to be much more efficient in operation. Another two metres of depth were added to the shaft in seven hours.

Thursday 15th October 1998 Elaine Steve and Doug remove thirty drums and made half a metre extra in depth; the shaft is now 12.5 metres deep.

In the next issue: Following a few years of little activity Mick returns to the dig and recounts the discovery of the Carcass Cave entrance and the resumption of digging on Shute Shelve hill.



50th Memorabilia

Don't forget to order your commemorative mugs and t-shirts—they are selling fast!

Mugs are £6.50 each, or 4 for £25.00 and t-shirts are £6.00 (available in all sizes)

Available from Jacky Ankerman



Cavers enjoy celebration

From the Mid Somerset Series newspapers (Wells Journal), April 8, 2004

Cavers gathered at Priddy on Friday to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Mendip Caving Group. Events kicked off with a re-enactment trip down Swildon's hole at Priddy. Some of the members dug out their 1950's-style caving gear and reminisced about how their predecessors equipped themselves for their subterranean explorations.

There followed an annual meeting and dinner which featured an auction of caving related items to raise money for caving causes. Other events were held over the course of the weekend including caving trips, competitions and a cave-finding challenge in Burrington Coombe where there are more than 43 caves. There will be further celebrations at another event to be held in the summer.

The Mendip Caving Group is one of the largest caving clubs in the UK with a well-equipped cottage at Nordrach. They welcome enquiries from anyone wishing to have a go at the underground experience.



Luxury caving in Yucatan, Mexico

In an email from Julian Flavell

The Comision Federal de Electricidad (Federal Electricity Commission) are building a power station near Valladolid and want to fill in any caves, holes whatever with cement so they have a solid base, as the turbines weigh un chingo. It's a huge project, with loads of money involved. They wanted us to relocate any bat species where they were cutting down the forest.

The cave was just a 30ft pitch straight down (a natural pit basically). So I got to use my new rappel (Petzl Stop) equipment. The bat expert I went with got bad rope burn. I told him to trust the gear and do not hold the rope but as he began to descend I guess he panicked and grabbed the moving rope. We only practiced a few times before the trip; I guess you really need to practice at least 5-6 times before doing it in cave.

We found a community of 18 *micronycteris microtis* bats or little big-eared bats (13 males 5 pregnant females). The species is in the *phyllostomidae* family (bats that possess a nasal leaf). They live in groups of about 7-20 individuals in hollow trees, crevices, abandoned buildings, or small caves - usually near the entrances which are illuminated in the day - as they are foliage-gleaners They search for insects on the ground or on foliage, are mainly insectivorous but also fructivorous, especially during the dry season/fruited season. They fly low and "can be collected by stepping on them" as one collector expressed! They are not endangered or protected.

After capturing the bats, we released them a few kilometres away but the next day 8 of them were back, even with wire mesh covering the cave! So we took them further afield and released them in a cenote. They seemed to like it better there. Hopefully they will put in a finer mesh cover otherwise we will have to return and get them out again.

This environmental impact stuff seems to be big business. Posh hotel, meals drinks everything paid for and about 4000 pesos (200 quid) for 3 days caving. They also bought us 100 metres of rope - not bad eh? .

MCG 50th Anniversary Summer Celebration

A Weekend of Fun and Activities—please join us the w/e 2/3/4th July 2004

Friday Evening from 8pm: B.B.Q at site of old MCG Cottage, Netherwood. Salad, relishes and bread provided – small charge to cover. Bring your own meat or vegetarian alternative, drink, seat / blanket, glass, plate and cutlery. **10.30 onwards:** Quiz at the MCG Cottage

Saturday: Cooked breakfast at the MCG Cottage 8.00 - 09.30 cost £2.50 per head

Saturday Daytime: Caving Trip – Burrington and visit to Wookey Hole (Adult £8.80, Child £5.50 Group of 12 or more Adult £5.75, Child £3.75). Leave Cottage at 10.30am or meet Wookey Hole Carport 11am. Notify Ann Pittman tel no 01458 833573 by Thursday 1st July if wishing to participate.

Saturday Evening: Barn Dance at Chewton Mendip Village Hall, 19.30 to 23.30. Licensed bar, buffet supper supplied by Menu (Sue Gray), music supplied by Velvet Bottom Band. Tickets Adults £10, Children (under 13 yrs) £5 from Ann Pittman, Sunnymead, Newtown, West Pennard, Glastonbury, BA6 8NN tel no 01458 833573 (Please notify if Vegetarian or Vegan food required when booking)

Coach will be provided from Wells (18.30), Hunters Lodge (18.45) Mendip Heights Camp Site* (19.00) and Nordrach Cottage (19.15) cost £5.00 pp. Please let us know how many places you need.

Sunday: Cooked breakfast at the MCG Cottage 8.00 - 09.30, cost £2.50 per head

Sunday Morning: Walk for adults and children ending at Priddy Green. Adults only bike ride ending at Priddy Green (Participants at their own risk)

*Camping Facilities at Mendip Heights Camp Site 01749 870241
www.mendipheights.co.uk