

MCG News

Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

Number 322
September 2004

www.m-c-g.org.uk
Founded 1954

VALE PHIL INGOLD

Phil Ingold joined the Mendip Caving Group in September 1967 and became a Full Member in April 1968. Within a few years he was serving on the Committee, first as Cottage Warden (1971-1973) and then as Tacklemaster (1977 – 1983).

Although Phil had diabetes he was determined not to let it spoil his 'Action Man' lifestyle. He carefully monitored his blood sugar levels and regulated his food intake and insulin while caving, which enabled him to undertake long and arduous cave trips with his friends, Yorkshire being a popular weekend venue as well as Mendip. Members will recall the bonus of being with Phil at the end of an underground trip – he would share his chocolate goodies with the rest of the party once he knew he didn't need them for himself!

Helen (Saunders) joined the club in 1969 and she and Phil were married in 1976. As well as caving, Phil and Helen became keen windsurfers and spent many happy Sundays racing across Cheddar Reservoir.

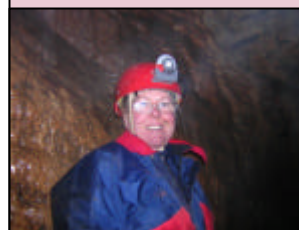
As well as his committee work, Phil spent many hours helping with the building of Nordrach Cottage (particularly the original building that was destroyed in the explosion on the eve of New Year 1980 – the footings of which remain today as part of the new cottage) and with Malcolm he provided a service to club members by way of sourcing and selling caving and camping equipment.

One thing that Phil always enjoyed after caving was the cottage games (particularly in the old hut) and he could often be seen hanging upside down by his toes from the beams, doing the 'cottage traverse' or the 'table traverse' and 'bottle walking' – which he often won. Quite impressive, considering his stature!



In the early 1990s Phil developed Multiple Sclerosis. Over the years he gradually lost his mobility – but never his sense of fun and adventure. When he was no longer able to cave under his own steam he became MCG's rescue practice 'casualty'. His first rescue, into and out of GB, was in 1992 and in subsequent years he was 'rescued' from Swildon's, Rod's Pot and Gough's (beyond-the-show cave). MRO observers were pre-

From the Editor



Well, I think all who went agree that the MCG 50th anniversary trip to Slovenia was a great success. As promised, there was something for everyone—caving at all levels, show caves and a mine, walking, flora and fauna, touring, seaside, history, and of course the social side which we're well practiced at!

Also nice was that whenever you went out somewhere, you would be with a different mix of people each time—until the evening when we would mostly all eat together and talk about what we'd done that day, and make plans for the next.

Sorry this newsletter is so late. As a result I have more than I can fit in this one so what's left will be in the next. *Yvonne Rowe*

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sent and Phil was able to provide valuable feedback from the casualty's point of view. He wrote up his 'rescues' in the newsletter and was always very appreciative of his trips underground.

It was wonderful for us to see Phil and Helen at the 50th Anniversary Dinner in March this year - and to see Phil's pleasure at being amongst his old friends again. He also celebrated their son Simon's 21st birthday earlier this year - it must have been a proud day for him.

In recognition of his many services to the Mendip Caving Group and for his contribution to cave rescue, Phil was made an Honorary Member of the Group at the 1995 AGM.

Phil died on June 17th 2004. His funeral service was a celebration of his life and was attended by many of his friends. It was very moving to listen to the words of the Monty Python song "Always look on the bright side" - they describe Phil (and Helen) so well. Phil was an inspiration to us all and will be greatly missed.

Joan Goddard; Fred and Julie Burton

Helen's father said that he enjoyed the funeral and I know what he meant. It was both a sad & happy occasion. There was a good MCG presence mostly from the South East but also from Mendip. There were even workmates from over twenty years ago. The weather was good to us. The chapel at the Crematorium had both a downstairs and upstairs. I have been told the chapel has a capacity of 100, it was standing room only upstairs.

The husbands of Helen's two school friends gave an (accurate & funny) eulogy. I thought the service was just about right not too religious and with the playing of "Always look on the bright side of life" slightly irreverent. Many returned to Phil & Helen's house for a good two hours and were met by a wonderful spread & vast quantities of beer & wine. He was sent off in a manner he deserved.

"The world is a much better place for Phil Ingold having been here" *Chris Whittle*

To all our caving friends in MCG:

Just to say thank you so much for being our friends over the many years of Phil's illness. You all stuck with us and enabled us to continue and enjoy life to the full... never a dull moment, lots of "living life on the edge" (Phil had many more than "9 lives") and always lots of fun and laughter.

Thank you for all the flowers, cards, letters, funny stories that have kept Simon and I going over the last few weeks.

We were overwhelmed by the numbers of you who were able to escape your normal commitments to be with us on Thursday 24th of June... and we know those of you who were unable to be there were thinking about us, thank you.

Phil had a really wonderful send off, he would have loved it all. He is now at peace with the angels! (Hope he's behaving himself, well, not too much!) and we wonder what the beer's like up there?

Thank you for your donations to The Chilterns MS Unit, Hospice of St. Francis and the Drum Day Centre, all were exceptional in the care, and activities that they helped Phil to enjoy.

Phil always liked helping people and would be so pleased that the centres he went to would be able to continue to help others.

Simon and I look forward to seeing you all again soon in our new life ahead.

Helen Ingold & Simon

Discovery and Digging Report of Carcass Cave (Part Four)

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 of interest to the wider MCG membership. Following on from the earlier instalments in MCG News 319-321 in the form of logbook entries, the main protagonists conclude by describing the discoveries up to December 2002.

Pneumatic Squeeze and Nun So Thin by Doug Harris

Sunday 13th January 2002 Bill Chadwick, Biff Frith, Duncan Harbour, Jenny Plumb, Mick Norton and Doug, a B.D.C.C. trip armed with Axbridge's Hilti drill, we set about enlarging the hole at the end of the stal chamber. By late afternoon the team had moved 45 buckets of soil, false floor and rock out of the cave. Bill, Doug and Elaine removed the dangerous looking loose rocks above the hole (now a small tight tube) to reveal several beautiful geodes and hedgehog-like formations.

Saturday 9th February 2002 Bill, Biff, Jenny, Duncan, Mick and Doug. First digging trip with Bracknell District Caving Club's (B.D.C.C.) secret weapon - a pneumatic chisel driven by a small, 2 hp engine and small compressor - very compact and lightweight to carry up the hill. This made life a lot easier. The rock was peeling off in small pieces but progress was being made. Lots of volunteers made light work of hauling buckets out of the cave. Mick had the unpleasant job of emptying the buckets outside in the pouring rain; nobody offered to swap either. When the hail/rain stopped, digging continued on the third tunnel going into the hill.

Sunday 10th February 2002 Peter Cross, Biff, Jenny, Duncan, Bill and Doug. Work continuing with the now draughting hole. Bill and myself took it in turns to squeeze as far as possible into the tube to see round the corner. Blackness was seen but we both had to be dragged out due to the obscure positions we had got into.

Saturday 23rd February 2002 Alison Love, Bill, Biff, Duncan, Jenny, Mick, and Doug. Mick continued digging at the third entrance going into the hill assisted by Jenny and Duncan - not enough room at the sharp end for all of us to do chiselling. Bill pushed the hole head first, but didn't have the bottle to go any further and had to be dragged out by his feet. I tried it feet first, with assistance and several suggestions from Biff and made it. First through into a small chamber - "Fools Rush In" - I enlarged the tube from this side, using the chisel. About 2pm the M.C.G. turned up in force, just allowing Bill to slip through before Peat Bennett, Richard Carey, Tim Francis and Julie Hesketh rushed through "Pneumatic Squeeze" and filled the chamber - so many arses you couldn't see anything else! Before long they were digging like moles, looking for the way on.

Sunday 24th February 2002 Bill, Biff, Duncan, Jenny, Mick, Doug. Mick and I had a probe at the floor in "Fools Rush In" before the others entered. Air was draughting out of the floor in several places. I carried on chiselling out the squeeze to allow larger cavers to get through, also a drum. The others hauled buckets out from the cave. The chamber got a lot bigger now the stacked pieces of rock had been removed. A flat-out phreatic tube was thought to be the way on. Tim and Julie ([late](#)) spent some time making it possible to get further along.

Wednesday 6th March 2002 A.C.G. in the bodies of Elaine Johnson, Hugh Tucker, John Stevens and Simon Moth. I am told they all got through "Pneumatic Squeeze" into "Fools Rush In" and removed 8 or so drums from the start of the phreatic squeeze right out of the cave.

Saturday 9th March 2002 Tim, Biff, Mick, Duncan and Jenny, now two digs in progress. Tim and Bill worked on the narrow bedding plane while the others dug out the ochre choke next to it. All the spoil was taken out of the cave. (One day this practise will cease)

Sunday 10th March 2002 Biff, Bill, Mick, Tim and Doug. The others went to the garden centre for Tim to buy a hoe. I carried on digging out the ochre choke. Tim and Bill used the hoe to push spoil over the lip at the end of the bedding plane.

MRO organised cave rescue practice

Date Sat 23rd October 04

Place MRO Store at the Belfry 9.30am

Cave Eastwater

Doings Practice Rescue from the bottom of Dolphin Pitch to the entrance side of the traverse, run by Caving Club team leaders (that's Keith Knight), overseen by MRO.

So chaps, any cavers wishing to take part from the MCG would be most appreciated, a rough idea of numbers for the MRO would be handy. Any takers please get in touch with Keith

British Cave Rescue Council Conference, July 1st - 3rd 2005 Eastwater Farm, Priddy

Hosted by the Mendip Rescue Organization, the 2005 conference will look at various aspects of cave rescue, with demonstrations and talks from other cave rescue organizations from around the UK. Recent developments, new techniques & equipment, rescue practices, workshops etc., together with the ever-popular Rescue Race! Many activities will be hands-on, and underground where practical.

Delegates are expected from overseas and interested parties are welcome from all caving clubs and further afield. The venue will effectively be a 'tented village' with conference facilities, bar and food available. There will be a live band/stomp on the Saturday night

More information will be available shortly. For more details and advance bookings contact Bob Cork, MRO Secretary.

MCG social events



Oct 9th Beer and Skittles

After the Half Yearly meeting on the Saturday, why not join us for a beer and skittles evening at the New Inn Priddy? Meet from 7.30pm onwards. No tickets required, but arrive early if you want to order bar food. Details from Linda on 07767 267849 or 01420 562315.

Nov 6th Slovenian Night



Photos of the summer meet in Slovenia, accompanied by traditional food together with Goats Beer, followed by fireworks



Dec 4th Xmas Dinner



Christmas dinner at the MCG Cottage. More details later.

October MCG members weekend

To avoid a clash of dates with this year's Hidden Earth National Caving Conference, (October 1-3, at the Brewery Arts Centre, Kendal) the MCG October members weekend has been moved to 8-10 October.

Myself and the others dug out most of the remaining ochre from the pit.

Saturday 6th April 2002 Tim, Julie, Peat and Doug, this was supposed to be a surveying trip but Tim had brought two clinos rather than one clino and one compass, so that was that! Tim went through the squeeze (bedding plane) and dropped into a narrow trench. He then bravely wormed himself through an awkward s-bend into a finely decorated chamber, which had a duck and lots of pretties. I tried the squeeze but it was too tight. The others went through to Tim and explored. (See newsletter 307).

Gour Pools and walking passage by Mick Norton

Wednesday 3rd April 2002 After us breaking through into "Fools Rush In" and feeling the slight draught coming up from the floor, I resolved to sink a shaft. Following that trip I've gone over to Biff's and talked him into letting me have more scaffolding for the dig. I've cut 10 boards at 60 inches and 18 at 27 inches. Biff is making a rolling chassis to take the brand new engine and compressor he has just bought, this system will be able to run two small chisels simultaneously or a full sized road drill!

Sunday 7th April 2004 Alison, Duncan, Biff, Bill, Doug, Elaine, Hugh and Mick took the mass of equipment up Shute Shelve Hill ready for a two pronged attack. Biff, Bill, Alison and Doug concentrated on enlarging the squeeze that leads to the pretty chamber and the gour pool. Alison being skinny slipped through and used an air gun from the inside, out. The other gun was used from the outside, in but kindly lent to Mick and Duncan who were digging the new shaft. We were working very close to each other, the heat and noise was appalling, also you could barely breath or see because of the dust and steam coming off the air guns! Bill and Doug were both desperate to get through Tim's dreadful squeeze. We took it in turns to get the spoil out of the cave, this must be similar to "Dante's inferno".

Doug finally made it through "Nun So Thin" to the pool, he came back stunned both by how good it is but also by how desperate is the squeeze. Elaine, Hugh and Doug then bugged off, Biff went outside with them, not yet sure if he had had enough for the day. A hole is opening, we can drop stones down it but no matter how excited Mick and Duncan become Bill refuses to look. He is like an athlete, fully focused on gaining the squeeze. Biff is called back, he had, had enough and threatened to kill me if I lied! After several more hours excavation and a bit of scaffolding Bill, Mick, Duncan, Alison and Biff drop down into a beautiful never before entered chamber. The walls are glistening, we are very satisfied but totally knackered as have been digging for ten hours. The remaining diggers then had to drag the equipment back to the minibus. On the way home Bill rang Doug and told him he had just missed dropping down into a chamber ten metres by three metres by three metres high with two unclimbed avens and stal covered walls!

Wednesday 24th April Biff, Duncan and Mick in Biff's minibus, past Stonehenge and a full breakfast at the Yokels café on route. We cart up the hill the small compressor, one small gun, the chisel bits, (100 metres of new yellow industrial hose, this to be fitted semi-permanently in the cave), another reservoir tank, more scaffolding, a petrol disc cutter and a footpegged scaffold maypole. We spend all day excavating and shuttering the new shaft. Peter Cross then joined us. We have put the maypole up to both avens they both have void but are too tight to climb up through. We have a go at air chiselling up the aven at the southern end of the chamber, whilst precariously balanced on the footpegs of the maypole. This takes some strength and agility. You can just see a small clouded pool underneath this aven. We did not get home till nearly midnight.

Saturday 4th May 2002 Biff, Bill and Mick, we have several carry ups the hill. After we had got all the stuff to the site, Tim and Julie turned up bringing only themselves. Tim ascended the maypole and air-chiseled up to open the route through one of the avens. He got through and found it connected to the pretty gour chamber thus bypassing the desperate squeeze and making a round trip for the thinner connoisseur.

Sunday 5th May 2002 Biff, Bill Mick and Doug, we have scaffolded down at the southern end of the new chamber, we have dropped two metres. A very large

slab blocks the way on down.

This is where the water from the gour pool drains; the back wall is calcited and there is some void going down. We have also removed more rock from the aven tube so larger cavers can squeeze up.

Saturday 1st June 2002 Bill, Biff and Mick, on entering the system we were pleased that Lee had previously slb'd the very large slab. Today we have brought a full sized road breaker and set too smashing the slab to bits.

Sunday 2nd June 2002 I have gone into the upper extensions for my first look, very impressive. The gour pool is nearly twenty feet long. Using Bill's hose we siphoned about 300 gallons of water from the pond right down to the dig face. I went through the duck Tim had described to a calcited ramp. The water was about three feet deep and quite cold. All this cave has horizontally cracked stal; I wonder why? The gour pool is beautiful.

Sunday 1st December 2002 Alison, Bill and Mick, yesterday we did Waterwheel and Manor Farm, so today is a slowish start. We rang Doug on his mobile, he was in Wales house hunting--any excuse, so just us three. We took no stuff up the hill, much less exhausting. Alison and Bill went up the maypole for a gander at Tim's dig and a splash in the pool. I poked about in various voids. Then we tried to force Alison up the other aven, as far as I know only Tim has managed it, Alison said her hips jammed so we reluctantly let her down. Then we started to dig the dry sediment out next to the tight hole down. After 25 drums were hauled up Bill stuck the large nailbar down against the back wall and it went through. He climbed down the squeeze and recovered the bar. This means that the tiny void made by the overflow from the pool can be widened to more than three feet. Let the exploration continue!

Library Additions

SWCC Newsletter no. 123 (2003) - includes two articles by Keith Ball 'The speleology, geology and geomorphology of the Hepste Valley' and 'The quest to build the perfect surveying unit'.

Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club Newsletter Vol 39 no. 1 (May 2002) to Vol 41 no. 2 (May 2004) A new exchange - a nice little A5 publication, club trips at home and abroad - enjoyable reading.

Shropshire Caving and Mining Club - another new exchange publication.

Craven Pothole Club Journal nos. 74 & 75 - various articles for their 75th anniversary year.

UBSS Vol 23 (1)

Cerberus S. S. Journal Vol 26, nos. 3 (June 2003) and 4 (March 2004)

MNRC Newsletters nos. 98-101 - includes a light-hearted article on writing for a newsletter - helpful hints for those of you with not quite enough confidence to put pen to paper (or fingertip to computer)!

Shepton Mallet Caving Club Journal Series 11 no. 2 Autumn 2002 is devoted to 'Developments in expedition cave surveying'

Chelsea S S Vol 46 (5-7)

Westminster S G 2004 nos. 2 & 3

Grampian Spelaeological Group Bulletin 4th Series Vol 2 no. 1 March 2004 -

includes a Gaelic glossary of topological terms - useful if you want to know the meanings of Scottish place names.

The Derbyshire Caver no. 119

Subterranea, Issue 4 April 2004 - includes flyer advertising visit to Emmer Green Chalk Mine to be led by Graham Old, Geoff Beale and Bill Chadwick (Sunday 14th Nov). Also look at www.subbrit.org.uk

NSS News (National Speleological Society, USA) Jan - June 2004 - superb photos, as usual.

Cave and Karst Science Vol. 31 (1) 2004 - includes a comprehensive historical description of Ingleborough Cave by Stephen Craven.

CREG Journal no. 56 (June 2004) - 'A flood early warning system for Irish caves' by Adrian Thomas. Use of data loggers to provide a proposed electronic notice board for early flood warnings.

Compass Points no. 33 - Therion software for cave surveys, especially useful for passage detail.

SpeleoScene no. 54 (Jan - May 2004) and NCA Training Bulletin - final issue. Will in future be incorporated into new BCA newsletter.

International Caver 2003 - foreign expedition reports.

New Electronics 11th May 2004 - not a caving publication but has an article on the HeyPhone by Mike Bedford.

World's deepest drop

AP, Monday, August 9, 2004

ZAGREB, Croatia (AP) -- Cave explorers have discovered a pit inside a mountain range in central Croatia believed to have the world's deepest subterranean vertical drop, at nearly 1,700 feet. The cave, in Croatia's mountainous Velebit region, has a steady, weaving descent of 203 feet before it takes a direct vertical plunge of 1,693 feet through the ground, said Ana Sutlovic Baksic, a researcher at the Velebit Speleological Society. The cave's widest stretch is about 100 feet. "We have even bigger caves in Croatia, but according to available data, this cave has the world's deepest vertical drop," Sutlovic Baksic said. At the foot of the Velebit cave are small ponds and streams, including one of the largest known colonies of subterranean leeches. It is located in the Rozanski Hip National Park reserve in the rocky Velebit mountain range in central Croatia. The pit was discovered by a team of explorers from around the country. The Voronya Cave in Georgia's West Caucasus has the world's deepest cavern, measuring 5,610 feet. But the pit discovered in Croatia is thought to have the largest underground vertical drop. Croatia, which is rich in natural wonders, is home to two of the world's 20 deepest caves. The Velebit region is Croatia's largest mountain range, attracting speleologists, botanists and hikers from around the world. Much of the rugged area remains untouched, and scientific expeditions over its vast expanse covered by rare flora and fauna have been ongoing for years.

(ED: this story broke during the MCG meet in neighbouring Slovenia!)

Slovenia August 2004 – the non-caving bits

by Yvonne Rowe

Week one – Julie Hesketh, husband Ross and baby Eva, Tim Francis, Louisa Minahan, Yvonne and Martin Rowe, Joan Goddard, Pete Bennett, Martin Peck, Linda Milne, Cara Alison, Natalie Field, Ben Cooper, Tony and Denise Knibbs.

Week two – Linda, Natalie and Ben went home, Julie, Ross and Eva went on to Croatia, but we were joined by Jonathan Roberts.

Martin and I drove down from the Lake District on Thursday July 29th with the Landrover packed to the gunnels with our walking, camping, caving and personal gear, loads of caving tackle, and umpteen lots of others' personal caving gear. We spent the first night at Marcus and Zoe Ward's abode in Lymington, Hants, then left early the next morning to meet Joan at Swindon railway station before heading off for Dover and the ferry to Calais. We just managed to leave enough room for her and her few bits of hand luggage but she insisted that she was quite comfortable and had plenty of room! We managed to drive across France and Belgium to Eupen, just before the border with Germany, where we camped for the night at a good site run by a very amusing chap with cavers' humour (lavatorial and sexist!). The next day, Saturday, we tackled the longest haul from Belgium, through Germany and Austria, to Slovenia – and our first serious traffic jam. We arrived at the Slovenia border, then just as the sun was setting we got stuck in a jam lasting over an hour – so frustrating as we couldn't even enjoy the views.

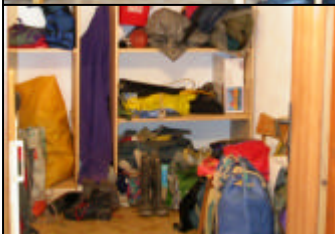
We got to Laze at 11.15pm and texted Julie to let her know we had arrived. She offered to give us directions to the bunk-house before she went to bed (she'd been up since 5am), but as we had a hand-drawn map and written directions, we said we'd be ok. *Wrong!* Both were complete rubbish and we drove around for another hour before we found it. There was nothing to say it was the bunk-house and no lights were on so Joan and I crept up and tried the door expecting to be shot, or at least attacked by some rabid dog. Inside we immediately found a cavers log book and battery chargers. *Phew!!!*

The bunk-house was lovely – a huge, modern, 3-storey Alpine chalet owned by a Slovenian ex-caver and his wife and two children. They lived on the upper two floors with the bunk-house occupying the ground floor. There was a kitchen/diner, a separate dining room, a tackle room, a large bunkroom (like the Forman's lounge), a room with two bunks and a double bed (ours and Joan's room), and one shower-room/toilet—for thirteen of us!!!. There was also an apartment with shower, kitchen, shower-room/toilet, and two bedrooms (Julie, Ross and Eva's pad), which we could all use when it was convenient. In the extensive grounds was a well-equipped campsite with a barbecue and other facilities.

Most days there was a caving trip involving walking/scrabbling, SRT or boats, but I will leave them for the keener cavers amongst us to write up. Joan will write up our trip down Idrija Mercury Mine. Martin, Joan and I did the mine, a couple of walk-in caves and trips in boats, but did mostly walking, touring and show-caves.

All of us at one time or another did four show caves – Postojnska Jama, Škocjanske Jama, Predjama and Planinska Jama (Jama being Slovenian for Cave and pronounced Yama). Each was huge, long and well decorated – the finest being **Postojnska Jama**, the longest in Slovenia, which was so long that you went through on a train! I have never seen such beautiful decorations in such profusion in all my caving life. It was very commercial and we were all herded like cattle but it was well worth the trip. Baby Eva was mesmerised by it all. There was also a separate exhibition that was well worth seeing (not touristy) with a multimedia presentation, morphology of the cave, vivariums containing cave fauna and a speleobiological laboratory.

Škocjanske Jama is a World Heritage site and has a huge gorge 100m high and 30m wide. The route is down some very well decorated passage to a path along a



ledge carved out of the wall which takes you to a bridge over the river Reka far below and on to the gorge. It is safer than it sounds but not good if you suffer from vertigo! The doline this cave is in is so deep (about 1000ft) that you get back up to the top from the cave exit by a funicular railway!

Predjama was more impressive from the outside than in because of the imposing medieval castle (Predjamski grad) built into the huge entrance arch. It was first built in the 12th century but was rebuilt or modified in the 13th, 15th and 16th centuries, finally being tastefully restored in the 20th century and opened to visitors. The tour includes the cave beyond which is done by torchlight making it more like a caving trip than a tourist trip. Not so well decorated as the other show caves but it had some ancient graffiti and was more historically interesting.

Finally, **Planinska Jama**, the river cave. This was not so much a tourist cave due to the need to wear full caving gear for an extended caving trip on dry, or should I say muddy, land. This trip was done in two inflatable dinghies – 3 of us in one and 4 in the other, including our guide for the trip. This was my favourite trip as it was so silent, beautiful and awe-inspiring. Here we saw *lots* of proteus, also cave lice and other tiny creatures with no pigment, bats, spiders, and more. At the end of the boat trip we moored the dinghies and did a 'normal' short caving trip. On the way we saw beautiful decorations – stripy curtains, various stalactites, huge piles of flowstone, large areas of gours, and one stal boss with an indent in the top containing just one cave pearl the shape of, and about half the size of a hen's egg. We were finally honoured enough to be taken to look at a dig currently being dug by our guide and his club. Looked just like our digs – tight and muddy, with buckets, jemmys and club-hammers! Just before we got back in the dinghies our guide took a bottle of žanje or schnapps from behind a large rock and gave us all a swig – mmm, lovely! Lots of interesting history in this cave, not least the Italian railway. At the end of World War I, the border between Italy and Yugoslavia ran very close to the mouth of the cave which was in Italian territory. The Italians attempted to engineer a connection from Postojnska Jama (deeper within Italian-held land) to Planinska Jama by tunnelling. This would have allowed them to move troops surreptitiously through the cave systems if and when they should launch an offensive against Yugoslavia. However, the Italians abandoned the project in 1928 before the railway (actually only a footpath) could be completed. Lots of bits and pieces connected to this can be seen throughout the cave such as bridges and tunnels.

We had three walks; one called the Pliskina Pot (pot being Slovenian for path or trail) was a 6km circular karst walk, another was around an old karst village called Štanjel, and one in the Julian Alps along the Šoca Trail to the resurgence of the river Šoca. **Pliskina Pot** - Pliska is the Slovenian word for the white wagtail which is common in the area. This walk took us much longer than it should have due to the many unusual (to us) flowers, butterflies, spiders and insects which we kept stopping to photograph. Some of the pine trees had rows of diagonal cuts in the trunk from which pine tar was obtained as a raw material in the chemical industry, now replaced by oil. There were small stone shacks built into the stone walls which were used as shelters for land workers and their tools during bad weather or hot sun. Most interesting were the sinkholes where a portion of the soil was dug out, part of the excess stone that was removed from the sides and the bottom was thrown into the hole and the bottom was levelled with earth to form a circular field. The rest of the stone was arranged into dry stone walls around the sinkhole or used to make terraces on the sides of larger sinkholes.

Štanjel is one of the most picturesque and oldest villages of the karst region. The Romans turned the top of the hill into an ancient fort and in the Middle Ages the village expanded over the hill, and later on the settlement was enclosed by defence walls with a castle to protect it against the Turks invasions. The karst people always had to deal with the problem of the shortage of drinking water so it has many stone wells (cisterns) built in the squares that were fed by rainwater running from huge gutters hewn from stone on the buildings. Most of the castle and its walls are still in ruins, but that which has been renovated, The Roman or





Gough's Cave damaged

On Sunday 11th July a hydraulic ram was used by vandals to prise open the 1.5 inch strengthened steel bars at the entrance to Gough's Cave. They targeted 'The Ring of Bells', a formation which had been previously badly damaged in the 1960s when 11 of the 13 stalactites were broken off. This time they snapped a 4" stump of a previously broken stal and a 6" complete stalactite.

Mendip Messenger, 21.07.24

Karst House, contains an ethnological collection. The village houses and narrow streets are really quaint – lots of strange shaped houses, mostly white with terracotta pantiles, loads of colourful flowers everywhere, and small vegetable allotments and vineyards.

The **Šoca Trail** started off from one of the many tight hairpin bends that wound up through breathtaking scenery in the Julian Alps from where we could see Triglav, the highest mountain in Slovenia. The trail led to the resurgence of the River Šoca which was finally reached by climbing a footpath (not!) over rocks along the side of a cliff with a metal cable hand-line for security! Well worth the anxiety to see the river flowing out of a cave, through huge boulders, then shortly disappearing over a drop to who knows where! Through woods on the way up were more unusual flowers including dark red helleborines, yellow foxgloves, small bell-shaped campanulas (a bit like bell heather) only found in this area, butterfly orchids, mountain pinks, saxifrages, yellow melancholy thistles, grass of Parnassus, small cyclamens, delphiniums, and different varieties of beautiful blue gentians. A short walk from where we parked the Landy was an interesting small Russian chapel built as a memorial to 100 Russian prisoners of World War I who were killed in an avalanche.

Tony, Denise, Joan, Martin and I had a day trip to Istria in Croatia on a peninsula not far from the Slovenia/Croatia border. This part of Croatia was very different to green and flowery Slovenia, the countryside being parched and less colourful. Here the main local produce seemed to be olive oil and various alcoholic fruit drinks. I bought some fine looking olive oil, but I'm now a bit wary as it doesn't have a label! The coast was lovely and as it was hot we had a cooling dip in the Adriatic – well, that what Brits do, isn't it?

Well, I could ramble on for ever and have only picked a few of the more memorable things that we did, but hope it has given you some of the flavour of Slovenia. Talking of flavour – most nights we all piled into the Landy and ate (and drank) in nearby bars and restaurants. The food was lovely, plentiful and reasonably priced, but no good for the vegetarians amongst us as meat is the main focus of meals. Our veggies had to settle for salads which must have got a bit boring after a while, and not very filling.

On the way home we came off the motorway in Austria and took a scenic route which was breathtaking. On our first overnight stop we camped in Germany and breakfasted the next morning in a local village that sold giant (man-sized) steins and had a cuckoo clock outside a shop that was so big you could hear the tick at the other end of the street. However, we got a lovely cup of coffee and a piece of apple strudel *each* that would feed a family! Our second night was at Nordrach cottage so we could drop everyone's gear and the caving tackle off.

My thanks to everyone who went to Slovenia and helped make this MCG 50th anniversary trip a really successful and enjoyable event. Special thanks to Julie for all the time and effort spent in making it happen.

Breakthrough in Upper Flood

On the weekend of 28/29 August, Tim Francis and Peat Bennett broke through at the dig in the boulder choke and found a new chamber. It is quite small but extremely well decorated: a sloping flowstone floor, straws in the roof and delicate crystals on a ledge on the left.

They have definitely passed the boulder choke as the walls are solid, presumably in the fault. The way on could be through boulders in the floor or perhaps straight ahead through the sediment bank. Water levels are very low so they couldn't check whether the streamway can be heard or not. It does draught but progress has been halted until taping and photography can be completed before carrying on. The route into the chamber is desperately tight at the moment but as the floor is made of mud it will be easily enlarged.

The extension has been named "Golden Chamber" for the MCGs 50th anniversary year.

Log book extracts, December 2003 to March 2004

26.12.03 Swildons (L Hawkswell and J Ankerman). Bimble down to Sump 1 and back – nice to see some water back down there. [LH]

10.01.04 Carcass Cave (D Harris, M Norton, B Chadwick, B Frith [BCC]) Objective – to link “Fools Rush In” to the main shaft so that spoil can be more easily removed from the depths of the cave (which is now fairly full). Made a voice link at lunchtime; at c. 2pm we poked crowbar through at a point c.12 ft down the shaft. [BC]

11.01.04 Sandford Levvy (G Beale, M Peck, B Cooper, J Hesketh, B Chadwick, J Goddard).

11.01.04 Mangle Hole (J Hesketh, M Peck, B Chadwick, B Cooper) Despite the logistics, an excellent trip. Ching! Ching! went the ladder down the first pitch. Oops! Rest of trip spent wondering how we could retrieve it with our remaining kit and tying bits of rope together to make enough lifeline to get down the second pitch – quite a challenge. Poor Bill sat on the surface in the rain while Ben and Julie retrieved lost ladder. Amazing second pitch – much underated cave. Rusty mangle at bottom. Good thunderstorm on exit [JH]

07.02.04 “B” Eastwater Hole (P Bennett, R Carey, T Francis, J Hesketh, Grampian and BEC cavers). Grampian/BEC boys went off to set a bang in 2nd Rift Chamber. Rest went down West End to the ??????. Long time since last visit and pleased to report we all survived the trip and are reasonable fit – especially the Argy contingent. Very wet in West End. [JH]

08.02.04 Carcass Cave (T Francis, P Bennett, B Cooper). First route in via new entrance. Carcass was the wettest we’ve ever seen it. [TF]

28.02.04 GB Cavern (T Francis, P Bennett). Snowy and very cold. General tour – ducks were quite full. [TF]

29.02.04 Carcass Cave (T Francis, P Bennett). Nice and dry this week [PB]

06.03.04 Waterwheel (B Cooper, R Carey, T Francis, Saron). Beginner’s trip to end and back. Original style rigging of the natural as I’d taken too short a rope. [TF]

07.03.04 Swildons (Y Rowe, M Rowe, J Goddard, C Allison). Bimble to top of Twenty Foot – just to ensure we are still capable of caving! Snowing when we surfaced at 3.30pm.

07.03.04 Carcass Cave (T Francis, B Cooper, Saron).

14.03.04 OFD I (B Snell, K Knight, B Wybrow, G Beale). Up streamway to top boulder choke, water levels very low. BS, KK and GB looked into Column Chamber and low wet link to admire some good formations. [GB]

15.03.04 OFD II (B Snell, K Knight, G Beale). Pushed sheep out of entrance cutting. Brian and Keith tried to find Mini Columns but missed by 40 feet or so. Geoff poked about in passages to the left of Big Chamber by the Entrance. Met up again for Chasm Passage, Salubrious Streamway, Trident and Judge. Brian and Keith went down Swamp Creek to a 90 ft waterfall pitch down to the main stream. Retraced steps to entrance. [GB]

20-21.03.04 Lee’s Birthday weekend.

Goatchurch (L Milne, L Hawkswell, Charlotte, L Minahan). First time caving for Charlotte and Louisa. Linda and Lee led and were extremely patient; Louisa and Charlotte very slow but very interested, nerves soon settled down and we really started to enjoy it. Lee took a couple of photos and did his bit for conservation by removing some litter. Met group from Kent Uni. In through Main Entrance, Coffin Lid, Diagonals. Out via Tradesman’s entrance and back to cottage for waiting grub [Louisa M]

Longwood/August (P Bennett, T Francis). Very wet! Water running in entrance.

Carcass Cave (T Francis, P Bennett). More digging at end but things don’t look too good way on may be straight down. [TF]

27.03.04 Upper Flood (T Francis, L Minahan, P Bennett, S Goddard). Tim and Louisa as far as Midnight Chamber to gaze at pretties. Exited early leaving the others to carry on to the end.

28.03.04 Carcass Cave (T Francis, J Hesketh, B Cooper, B Chadwick).

MCG’s 50th DINNER WEEKEND – is no-one going to write up the historic Swildon’s trip??

MCG Mendip Meet

Had enough armchair caving yet? Then why not try the real thing...

09/10/04 Stoke Lane Slocker

This will be the location for the next MCG Members Meet. This active stream cave falls easily into three distinct sections: a long crawl in low passage to a short sump; a series with finely-decorated chambers to a second sump; and passage beyond needing diving equipment to explore.

Stoke Lane Slocker provides a sporting trip and some particularly fine formations. The stream feeds St. Dunstan’s Well rising which is 70ft below the entrance and nearly 3/4 mile away.

More details of the meet from Richard Carey

Well I’ll eat my...

The world’s first museum dedicated to cannibalism is to open in Cheddar Gorge, Somerset—where it was practised during the Stone Age. *The Sun, 3.9.04*

Rope washer

Recently, the rope washer in the hosing down area finally died. However, on our return from Slovenia (with 500m of rope to wash), we were pleasantly surprised to find a sparkling new machine installed for our delectation.

Many thanks to Richard Carey for having the washer made and installed. *MR*

Earwig in on the committee meetings held on 05.06.04 and 04.07.04

Bone Hole Lid has been completed... **MCG 50th Anniversary** Summer event was a success and the Committee expressed their thanks to Anne Pittman... **Storage heaters** Installed and working... **Upper Flood lock** Leaders need to keep an eye on the lock and clean when necessary.... **SRT rope** Will be sufficient for the 50th expedition but will be up for replacement in 2005. Recommendation of wider discussion amongst the membership... **Training weekend** Now on the November members weekend. Those interested should contact John Crowsley directly but places are only open to MCG fully insured "caving" members... **Life-line** All '97 and '95 ropes to be replaced.

Slovenian Yv'sdroppings

MR: "What language do they speak in Belgium?"
YR: "Flemish."
JG: "French in the south."
MR: "What language will they speak on the campsite?"
YR: "English!"

BC: "I'm right handed but I do a lot of traditional things with my left hand!"

YR: "Even slow it's quick!"

YR: "Oh! Your thing is dangling in the dirt."

The drive from Calais to Laze was a bit of an epic, but we amused ourselves by collecting strange placenames along the route, including:

Knapsack	Worms
Pfaffenheck	Leper
Dinklesherben	Egg
Goldegg	Grotz
Kruft	

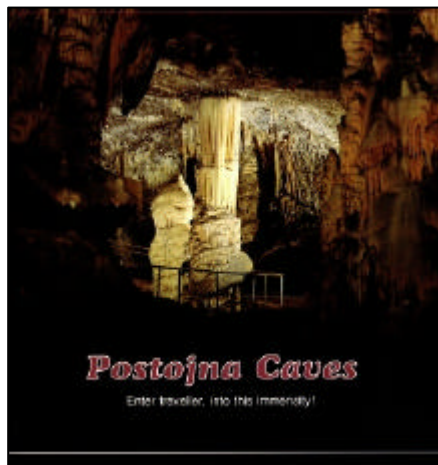
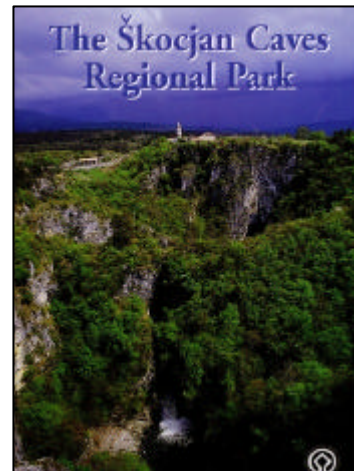
But the best of all was a town called....**Mendig** which is strange enough. But stranger still is the fact that there is a company in the town called **Blagden Packaging Mendig** (!)

Slovenian Library additions

by Joan Goddard

The Skocjan Caves Regional Park edited by Borut Peric (2002) and **The Skocjan Caves** (Guidebook) 2004. The Skocjan Caves were included on the UNESCO World Heritage Site list in 1986 and the Park was created in 1996 to protect the surface and underground features of this area, which is in the Kras region (from which the term 'Karst' was derived). Both books are beautifully produced with excellent photography. The text is informative and as well as a historical overview and description of the caves they also devote space to climate, geology and geomorphology, flora and fauna, cultural heritage and archaeology. If you want to see what you missed by not coming to Slovenia, have a look at these books!

The Karst and Slovenia's tourist caves by the Slovenian Tourist Board. As well as being full of photos (not only of caves) there is a useful information insert which lists accommodation, events, commercial 'cave trekking' (helmets and lights provided) and a section with contact details for access to some of the tourist caves which require prior arrangement.



Postojna Caves (Guidebook) 2003. Again, a beautiful production; not just a series of pictures, but with an interesting text including a striking simplified plan of the caves.

The River of Seven Names, around the karst of Notranjska by France Sustersic, June 1994 (published by NAKLO, an outdoor pursuits company in Logatec). This booklet aims to trace the upper reaches of the River Lubjanica and relates to the areas around Speleocamp Laze. It discusses the development of the rivers, caves, poljes (intermittent lakes) and ponars (sinks). I wish I'd read it while I was there! Useful map.

The Postojna Caves and other Tourist Caves in Slovenia by Francis Habe, 4th Edn 1986. First published in 1977 this small format book

is now out-of-date with regard to political names (eg 'Yugoslavia') but it contains much of interest including short descriptions of some of the other caves which can be visited.

Slovenian/English Phrase Book (donated). Wish I'd bought the English to Slovenian version while in the UK, but this was better than nothing.

Numerous leaflets and information from tourist outlets.

The larger books will be kept on the shelves, the leaflets and any other relevant material will be kept in a folder or box file with other foreign holiday/expedition data.



Notice of Extraordinary General Meeting 2004

An Extraordinary General Meeting of the Mendip Caving Group will be held in the lounge of Nordrach Cottage on Saturday 9th October at 1.00pm.

This meeting has been called by five members of the Committee.
Agenda to follow.