



MCG News

Newsletter of the
Mendip Caving Group

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Founded 1954

An evening trip to Redcliffe Caves

by Joan Goddard

Four MCG members (Andrew Brander, Arthur Spain, Mark Ward, Joan Goddard) and one from the Shepton (Andy Goddard) met Alan Gray of Axbridge CG at the entrance to the 'caves' on the evening of the 1st December. We changed inside the entrance (surprisingly difficult in the dark, would you believe, as we didn't have our lights immediately to hand. Mine was at the bottom of my kit bag as it is usually the last item required).



Left - right: Alan Gray, Andy Goddard, Mark Ward, Arthur Spain, and Andrew Brander (photo: Joan Goddard)

After an introductory talk, amply illustrated with survey, old photos and quotes from various documents unearthed during Alan's research, we set off through the maze of old workings. The 'caves' were mined in red sandstone rock, the sand being used for making glass (cheap, dark green-black bottles), as a slip used for glazing pottery and even as ballast in ships. Few documentary references have been found, but apparently Spanish and French prisoners were held in the caves in the 1700s, they were used for storage of glass (1784), and for barrels of palm oil and elephant tusks. Contrary to rumour slaves are not thought to have been kept in the caves. Although the possibility of using the caves as air raid shelters was discussed in 1938 they were not used as such, although a small nearby cave was fitted with bunk beds and 20-30 people sheltered there.

The caves consist of an apparently haphazard arrangement of chambers and pillars of various shapes and sizes, pick marks of the miners being clearly visible on walls and ceilings. We saw several shafts to the surface including one up to the car park above . . . be careful where you park as it would probably swallow a Mini! A possible use of this shaft was to haul goods, unloaded from ships onto a short stretch of narrow gauge rail line leading into the caves, up to street level.

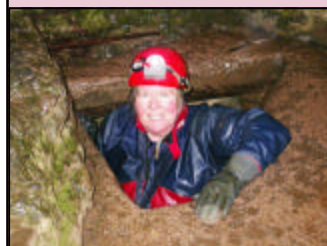


The top-hatted man
(photo: Andrew Brander)

The chamber walls retain inscriptions dating back to 1761 and near the entrance there is a picture of a man sporting a Brunel style top hat (possibly drawn at the time a railway tunnel was cut through the caves). Some of the chambers have had their roofs strengthened by railway-type arches (built by the Midland Railway Company which bought nearby King's Wharf in 1912)

Probably Redcliffe Caves' most interesting claim to fame is it's association with the Mendip (St Cuthbert's) lead industry. A plumber, Mr Watts, had a house above the caves. As a result of a recurring dream, he is said to have poured molten lead, through a sieve, from the top of St Mary Redcliffe church tower into some water beneath.

From the Editor



Happy new year to you all.

Although it tends to be the same few members at the cottage each members weekend, you will have seen from the log book extracts over the months that quite a lot of caving and digging has been done. This has taken place mostly on Mendip, but has been in other areas as well, including abroad.

Along with good and varied caving we've had some excellent social evenings in the cottage — some themed like the Slovenian evening, others have been communal meals, or barbecues in the garden. Occasionally we all have a meal in a pub.

The new style newsletter seems to have gone down well with you all so please keep sending your photos in.

Yvonne

In this issue

- 1-2 Redcliffe Caves
- 2 BCA insurance
- 3-4 Mallorca 2003
- 4-7 Mallorca 2004
- 8 Digging update
- 8 CRoW access update
- 9 Library additions
- 9 Wind turbines
- 10 Group information

MCG doings

On the move

Cara Allison

Cara adds: I have started a 9 month job with the National Trust in the Lake District (Coniston). If anyone would like to come up to go walking (or maybe caving in the Dales?) give me a ring. I can offer floor space and maybe a bed.

Congratulations

To **Cara Allison** who has been accepted as a Full Member.

Vale

News has only just reached me regarding two former members of MCG who passed away last year. **Bruce Dean** died in the early summer. **Joyce Dines** died in January 2004.

AGM and Dinner 2005

If you want to stay at the cottage on 8/9th April, you are advised to book now as beds are on a first-come, first-served basis. The cottage is filling up already although camping is still available.

Cottage fees

Members' cottage fees are £2.00 per night from 01/01/05. Season tickets are now £40.00. Guest fees remain unchanged at £3.00 per night.

Subscriptions

Full and probationary membership fees are now £30.00 and associate membership is £15.00

BCA insurance

£18 for cavers, £6 for non-cavers. There is no "2nd club" fee (see Lee's article).

The lead – it had to be of exactly the right chemical composition - formed spheres as it solidified in the water. Watts converted his house into a shot tower by extending up (through the roof) and by digging downwards (into the caves) to achieve a sufficiently long drop for the lead shot to form. Production continued here until 1968 when it was transferred to a new shot tower built nearby and the Watts tower was demolished for a new road scheme. Sadly, ACG's efforts to reach the base of the shot tower have been unsuccessful due to infill and unstable passage.



Steel pile (photo: Joan Goddard)

Some of us (not me!) climbed part way up another shaft which had two horizontal brick-arched, flagstone-paved passages leading off it. Modern features we saw were massive concrete foundation pillars and steel piles to support buildings above the mines.

In another part of the system we saw a dark 'water mark' a short distance above floor level and a nearby well-shaft was reported in 1938 to contain salty water. However, a well with salty water is hardly a sensible proposition. Alan's hypothesis is that the 'well' connected with the harbour and was used to dispose of sewage, to be carried away on the ebbing tide. This would have worked until 1809 when the non-tidal Floating Harbour was constructed and the sewage would not have been removed. Ughh!

It was a fascinating way to spend the evening. We were underground for 3 hours and reached the nearby pub, The Ostrich, just as last orders were being called – Alan had his timing spot on.

References: <http://www.bristolotours.com/Redcliffe.htm>
Redcliff Caves Guide, ACG, 1996 (there is a later edition)

BCA Public Liability Insurance Scheme 2005

The rates for the BCA PLI scheme for 2005 are to remain unchanged from last year and are as follows.

Full Caving Member £18.00
Non-Caving Member £ 6.00

The only significant difference in the scheme this year is that they are doing away with the £6.00 payment for people who are members of more than one club, so each individual will pay into the scheme only once. For example, if you belong to two or more clubs, last year you paid the Full Caving element of £18 to one of your clubs and in addition paid the £6 element to each subsequent club you were a member of. This year you will only pay once the Full Caving or Non-Caving rate to one club only. If you choose to pay your PLI through another club rather than the MCG, I will need to know which club you have paid it to for our and the BCA's records.

The BCA have decided that they will continue PLI cover for existing members until the end of January to allow time for clubs to collect premiums. Therefore, please will you pay your 2005 Subs and PLI premium promptly. If you have not paid your PLI by 31st January you will no longer be insured to go caving. Late payment not only jeopardises your cover, but also generates more work for myself, the Treasurer and the people at BCA.



Lee Hawkswell, Secretary

Madefaction*, meanderings and Mahon – Darkest Mallorca 2003

by Tim Francis

It does increasingly seem that the Mallorcan jottings get written up just as we are off on the next trip. Not ideal I know but at least they do finally get recorded. The 2003 jaunt did not differ radically from previous visits except that we did attempt to try and do some new caves plus we made contact with a local caving club. Quite appalling really as this was our 8th trip (the MCG's 12th) with the usual logistics: aeroplane, hire car, food shopping, villa, restaurant.

The first trip was a gentle stroll down an old favourite, Cova de Les Rodes, which was first done by the MCG way back in 1984. The cave is a doddle to find as it's only 10 minutes walk back from the sea front at Cala Sa Vicente, and there is a good description in the 1995 write up so I won't go in to details. The main feature on our visit this year was that the air quality was horrendous almost as soon as we got inside the entrance. We had experienced this before but we almost had to curtail our visit this time. At the bottom there was also quite a large streamway flowing which made a pleasant change. Later in the week Tony Merino mentioned that what seems to happen is that the draught in the cave switches, and the best time to visit the cave is at the end of the winter (not the beginning) when the air current flows out. I'll remember that next time because it was quite an uncomfortable experience caving in such poor air.

On Friday we thought we'd go and do a spot of prospecting over on the top of the hill just to the North of Can Sion in area marked on the map as Tosses del Llamp. To get to the start of the walk involves a tricky drive South West from Pollensa along classic Mallorcan lanes with high dry stone walls. This was real finca** territory complete with large dogs. The walk started in a delightful valley head at L'Assarelleta, which is just a couple of houses. We walked and scabbled our way through the tough scrub that is prevalent across most of the island. But unfortunately just as we were climbing up on to the top of the hill and scouring for caves the weather came in. We were not kitted out for Snowdonia conditions at all so after only forty minutes of driving rain we decided to call it a day and head back down to the car. So as is usual for Mallorca we had been thwarted in locating a cave on the first attempt.

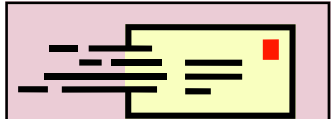
The next day was a guaranteed cave as we're going to be meeting up with Tony Merino, a local caver who lives in Palma. He was going to take us to an area of wooded hills above Palma that we hadn't visited before plus hopefully help us out with some new cave info. Some of you will probably have seen his photography at the BCRA or in Caves and Caving. We met up outside the Soller railway station in Palma and drove around the city to the town of Génova just off the ring road to the East of Palma. Above Génova is a huge statue of Jesus and our walk in was to start from there. The area is owned by the forestry commission of the Balearics government so is extremely popular with ramblers and locals. En route to the entrance Tony pointed out sites of interest and it seems that the whole area is riddled with caves. This is definitely an area we will visit again.

The cave we were heading for was Avenc de S'Embut which was a pleasant SRT drop to chambers with fine formations. The entrance is a simple 20m pitch and with a straightforward rebelay at the top. We fluffed a bit though, mainly as we were a descender down so we had to pass bits of kit around to get everyone down. Below leads to a steep loose slope so we slung an 80m rope down this as well to make the descent safer. At the bottom Tony showed us around an extremely well decorated chamber which pinches out in a slope of boulders jammed up against a back wall. A squeeze through boulders pops out in a small decorated chamber in which Peat reeled off a load of photos. And so back to Palma for a rack of beers in a converted abattoir....

Next up was a return to Cova de Cornavaques, a cave that we had visited in 2001

* Madefaction. The act of madefying, or making wet; the state of that which is made wet.

** Finca. In Spain and other Spanish-speaking countries, a property in the country, especially a large farm or a ranch



Getting well soon

Following an operation to remove a brain tumour, Tony Knibbs writes:

I am now at home catching up on some sleep and generally recovering from what may have been a close shave. Anyway it's all over; next year I'm going to try to get fitter. Just let me thank most warmly all of you who have buoyed me up with your good wishes. It was a great adventure, but I think ordinary caving is preferable. Of course, I look forward to seeing whomsoever may be around when we take our delayed two-week stay in UK from 13 February to 27 February in 2005.

Very best regards, TonyK.




Cottage work weekend

Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither was the Cottage so there is always work to be done. Each year, the same few faces turn up for the cottage work weekend, so it would be nice to see some new faces on 5th Feb!

Here is a list of what needs doing. If you have suitable tools and equipment for the more specialist jobs, please bring them along.

Paint Foreman's Lounge
Relocate compost heap
Renew cottage fascias
Spring clean
Replace changing room taps

There will be a curry in the evening, **but only for the workers.**



From our sump correspondent

Hi all. I have finally made it to Swildon's sump 12 with Jim Lister of the CDG Derbyshire section.

I have been building up to this trip for some time and have made several trips to sump 9 in preparation for diving on to sump 12. On 12/12/04 I ventured through sump 9 and on to sump 12. It was lovely to get to 12, sitting at the sump pool is a really nice place to be after all that work to get there.

The cave is so crisp and clean; its a very special place to be. I had a look at the work they are doing at 12 and then a grot around the different places. The trip there was quite a journey but was well worth it. Clive Westlake met us at sump 2 and did some photography then we all made our way out for a nice cup of tea and hot mince pies.

I have been away from Mendip in the last few weeks cave diving a bit further afield in Derbyshire and Wales. I had a nice dive in Peak Cavern, did some digging in Bagshaws, and a lovely trip in to Gothic Sump and Hush Sump (a dip). One of the best trips was into Pwll Y Cwm; you drop down a shaft to about 14m then spend a few minutes digging your way through a choke and then pop out into a massive cavern dropping down to 23m. I will keep you all posted with my underwater explorations.

Fiona



and got badly benighted on the walk back. This year we set off earlier to allow ourselves more time to walk back. But we still parked at the same place at the layby by the 3km marker on the Cala Sa Vicente road. The walk in from here is definitely the shortest way up the mountain but it does involve thrashing through a few hundred metres of pine trees and scrub before you hit the open hillside. It takes about 2 hours to reach the entrance so you need plenty of daylight hours for a visit. You don't need much in the way of kit except that the entrance section requires an 8m rope and a bold climber to pass a flowstone barrier. Beyond are some typically fine Mallorcan columns with the best bit being a fine group of calcified roots, some more than 3m long.

This year we took another rope to descend the final pitch. This is an unusual looking funnel at the top of a flowstone barrier at the far end of the cave. The pitch is a bit like an egg timer as it widens out again below the flowstone. I rigged a sneaky rebelay off some flowstone to assist the hang to the bottom (2 x 8mm bolts, 1 natural rebelay, 18m rope). Immediately at the bottom of the pitch is a rather pleasant gour pool that overflows down a delightful cascade. Upslope it all gets muddy and scrubby but right at the end we came across an excellent section of helictites and straws. These are definitely worth a visit if you can be bothered to carry your kit up the hill. As in 2001 we shouldn't really have tarried so long underground and it was a real rush back out and down the mountain to the car. We made it back with 15-20 minutes of daylight remaining.

Emboldened by all this caving our last effort was to try and find a new cave Tony had told us about. The cave, Cueva 502 over on Pollensa, was so named because it was discovered just after the "501 Grutas del Término de Pollensa" book had been published. As is the case with Mallorcan caves the description we had was somewhat vague. We did have a map and Peat had punched in the co-ordinates into his GPS but this was all to no avail. The cave is somewhere on the hillside overlooking the sea and back from the old lighthouse on the Formentor peninsular. We spent half a day wandering around until light stopped play and losing Peat in the process. Mobile phone reception was no good either so we were unable to get into contact with Louisa who was back in Porto Pollensa sipping coffee in the harbour.

And that was it for 2003. Not the most amount of caving we've ever done but plenty of new locations to try next year...which I've already written up.

Team: Peat Bennett, Julie Hesketh, Duncan Horne, Louisa Minahan, Tony Merino

Mallorca 2004 - Old friends and new faces

by Tim Francis



Martin Peck, Louisa Minahan, Julie Hesketh and Tim Francis (photo: Cara Allison)

It being only less than 12 months since our last visit this was a quick return to Mallorca for the MCG. It was a cheap trip as well: Easyscum flights came to less than the price of a bottle of Binalem and we were a small group this time so only one hire car was needed. We didn't really have any plans this year apart from getting underground. Everyone had visited the island at least once previously although not of course necessarily for the caving. Over the last 20

years there have been quite a few changes on the island. Above ground there seems to have been more road building going on than ever, and below ground the more popular caves are showing signs of wear and tear. The weather this year was quite cold and blustery at the beginning of the week but improved later on. We even had the wood-burning stove lit on most evenings. So most of the caves were a bit wetter than normal and shrubs and grasses greener.



Entrance to Penja Rotja.
(photo: Cara Allison)

Penja Rotja This is of course a good starter on any Mallorcan itinerary so our first port of call in 2004. It was also a good opportunity for us to swap notes on what Penja Rotja has to offer. Martin had visited the cave quite recently with a different group of cavers. This confirmed our view that you can get to the large pretty chambers and the so-called Wedding Cake without doing a proper pitch. The walk across the Alcudia peninsular has fantastic views across the bay to Formentor. But today was even more dramatic than usual as an overnight storm was still blowing. Waves crashed over the car as we drove along the coast near Malpas, and walking along the cliff proved quite challenging in places.

We decided to do the 'free climbish' route to the bottom that the MCG had followed in 1992. This just requires a 15m rope for the rift that drops down in the floor of the entrance gallery, a handline for the final climb to the pretties at the bottom, and a few tape slings for the flowstone slope in the galleries. With hindsight a rope would also be useful in the Pierre's Pot type slot that bypasses the normal pitch route to the bottom, "Pou Negre". This again proved rather sporting for the less experience members of the party. As in previous years Penja Rotja was hot and humid in the lower levels so it is actually quite an energetic trip. So we were out after dark, which made for a stumbling walk back to the car.



The walk to Cova Sa Campana
(photo: Cara Allison)

Cova Sa Campana This cave needs no introduction, as being the largest cave on the island most people will have visited it. The walk in to the cave is now simpler than in previous years as the path is much more worn in and cairned for most of the route. Just park in the lay-by on the right hand side after the 9.5km post and follow your nose. We walked back in the dark (as usual) and the cairns proved to be very useful. We had planned to do the final two pitches but ran out of time.

The trip to the large chamber with the huge stalagmite boss is a straightforward affair and an ideal SRT introduction. Unfortunately Louisa had to cave in her usual clothes as she'd left her caving grotts in the villa, so she ended up with a trashed pair of jeans and a muddy fleece. A few changes to note - the first section of pitch two now has two permanent hangers so just take a couple of maillons and a sling for this bit, and the nativity scene before the old pitch three (now bypassed) has disappeared. There was quite a flow of water in the final chamber and all the gours were full and overflowing. We went for a good old scramble around and pointed out the highlights to those in the party who had not visited the cave before.

Covata des Puig Gros One of the only objectives of the trip was to revisit the area of pine forest hills above Génova near Palma. We had visited Avenc de S'Embut last year and were keen to locate some of the other caves that had been pointed out to us by Tony Merino. We knew where to park – underneath the huge statue of Jesus at Ca na Burgesa that overlooks Palma – but we were not that certain about the walk in. We had a couple of caves at Coll des Pastor, Cueva and Avenc, marked on our map of the island which initially we thought might be the same sites. We walked to these first more by accident than design. They were actually only a couple of minutes from a spot where we had taken lunch under a

BCRA Cave Science Symposium

Saturday 5 March 2005, 10am - 5pm School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, The University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, B15 2TT, UK

From academics to amateurs, this event will appeal to anyone with an interest in cave science. A wide range of topics will be covered in a series of short oral and poster presentations. Subjects in previous years have ranged from bacteria to bats and from drips to dye tracing!

Instructions on how to get to the venue can be found at www.location.bham.ac.uk/. Pay and display car parking is available around campus at 80p for the day: maps are on the above website. By public transport, the station ('University') is two stops from the main interchange of Birmingham New Street and is served by trains at approx 5 to 10 minute intervals. The venue is only 3 minutes walk from the station.

Earwig in on the committee meeting held on 08/12/04

Giftaid In 2003/2004 £699.22 was recovered and £50 recovered for previous years. This will help with the cost of felling the beech tree... **Drains** Due to a blockage at the right-angle in the foul sewer under the car-park, the drains continue to back up. Please be careful what you flush down the toilets!... **Mattress covers** Investigating the cost of covers for the 8-room... **Lounge floor** Work to start after the work weekend... **Roof gully** Wayne has offered to complete the work on the library extension.

CSCC doings

Cuckoo Cleaves The entrance lid needs attention; Frome CG may be prepared to do the work.

West Twin Brook Adit Bristol Water has fixed the door/lock; CSCC may yet have access as BW are open to negotiation.

A dangerous dig between the Charterhouse Centre and Waterwheel Swallet is due to be back-filled. A grill was suggested so that continued access would be possible.

Swildon's Hole More road signs had been left in the cave. Would cavers please note that whilst there are road signs beyond Sump 1, this is not an invitation to festoon the cave with more (or ironing boards, etc...)! The lowest left hand bolt of the two "over" the 20ft pitch was replaced on 04/11/04. The right hand bolt was inspected and has been passed as safe.

Loxton Cavern A lid is to be fitted and major Mendip Clubs will nominate potential leaders/keyholders.

Brownes Folly Mine An HSE safety audit is presently being done. The outcome of the report will determine future access. Recreational cavers should be unaffected.

Box Mine To reduce graffiti, fires and vandalism, grills are to be put on entrances, probably during April or September 2005.

Waterwheel Swallet Bolts have been placed for training purposes.

Priddy Green Sink The bolts are out of date.

Thrupe Lane Swallet CSCC to bolt. Atlas is already done, but not Slither Pot.

Pinetree Pot CSCC to bolt.

tree last year. The cave turned out to be just a large overhang and the avenc a grubby slot in the floor of the woods.

We then headed off to the cave we were after in the S'Embut area on the slopes of Puig Gros de Bendinat. To find the cave follow the main forest track all the way from the statue for perhaps 25 minutes. No route finding problems at first except that just after the start of the walk there is one junction. Turn right here and around a corner the track passes some masts and secure fencing. After 25 minutes the track arrives at a flattish area with three tracks leading off. Turn left (right goes to Cueva and Avenc) and follow the track for another 10 minutes or so. The track passes a National Park sign and gate and continues uphill. Where the track bends right a small footpath heads off on the left. The cave is soon found just to the right of the path. If you miss the path there is wooden signpost on the main track that says Cueva. This allows tourists to peer over the edge.

Covata des Puig Gros turned out to be a really worthwhile trip. The highlights of the cave were some extremely unusual bright yellow stalagmites and a large colony of bats. The entrance shakehole is a nice scramble where the cave looks like it might just be blind. But on the bottom right hand side is a draughting squeeze through blocks into a roomy chamber. The way on was pretty obvious and we soon found ourselves at the top of a pitch. We had thought the cave needed no kit but we took a few ropes just in case. We rigged a 20m rope from some stal but actually most of us free climbed the pitch on the way up. Immediately at the bottom of the pitch there are three ways on. In the floor it's just a squeeze to a boulder choke. To the left drops down into a very large chamber with some fine stalactites high up in the roof. We had a good old rummage in the lowest point of the chamber and there does seem to be potential to work a way along the back wall through the boulders. The air is certainly quite fresh here. To the right Martin lead the way along a rifty, clambery section of passage to a few chambers. We were here at dusk so plenty of bats were whizzing around and getting ready for an evening of midge munching.

Afterwards we dashed further down the main track to try and re-find Avenc de S'Embut. The lie of the land looked familiar but we couldn't relocate the entrance. We have a few more caves marked on a map of the area so no doubt we'll be back here again.

Cova de Son Vila We were feeling confident after Puig Gros so decided to try and find another new cave. This time the challenge was to find Cova de Son Vila, a well-decorated cave near Pollensa. The cave is somewhere on the Pico de Son Vila hillside just after the 45km marker. After that things were a bit vague. The two line description we had talked about stone terraces and thrashing through vegetation and undergrowth. Our problem was where to park the car and start the climb up through the woods. Some, but not all of the tarmac tracks, were marked on our maps. We parked up on what we thought was the best road but after five minutes of climbing we popped out on another road. We continued to climb through the woods until we broke out above the tree line and onto the limestone slabs above. From here we spent three hours wandering around looking for the damn thing. The cave should have been at an altitude of 150m and vaguely opposite the smallest foothill of Puig de Maria. We could have been a bit too high but ultimately failed to find the entrance. We'll go back in the future with the co-ordinates punched into a GPS.

Avenc des Llorer This was a cave we had been unable to find on a particularly drizzly day in 2001. The MCG had located the entrance in the 1980s but not descended it. This year we were armed with the exact location of the cave on a map. This revealed that the text of the cave on the 1:50,000 maps is in the wrong place, which explains our problems in 2001. We got up extra early to allow ourselves time to find the cave but actually it proved pretty straightforward.

To find the cave park opposite the Mortix gates after the 11km marker on the C710 in the hills above Pollensa. The area is extremely popular with walkers, climbers and gorge runners so it's often difficult to find somewhere to park. Take the road through the gates, or over the stile if it's locked, walking past a couple of houses and a tennis court. Straight after are a small house and a gate on the

right. Go through this gate and walk around the field to a stile on the far side. Climb over the stile and then follow the farm track beyond. A government sign soon after confirms that you are on the right track. Turn right at a junction after 100m or so and then keep going until the track peters out at a small hut. From there follow a well cairned, and intermittently red paint splashed path for another 300m across the flat valley floor to dry stonewall. There is a small gate in the wall. Just through there and on the left is Avenc S'Aigo. To find Llorer walk down the path for another 80m or so, crossing right over a cave in the path, where a shallow descending valley heads off on the left. Head down this valley, not the main path, for 3-400m on a bearing of roughly 340°; we've started a series of cairns to help with navigation. The cave is situated underneath a sharp peak of rock, and the back wall is a flash of red/brown rock festooned with ivy. You can actually see the red back wall from the main footpath.



This was a great cave to end the holiday – just the right mix of vertical stuff for everyone to finish on. The entrance is extremely impressive and overlooks the sea. At first it seemed like there was already a group of cavers in the cave but it turned out that the cave is home to lots of pigeons. It was certainly a different experience to be buzzed by pigeons rather than bats. Llorer is a fine pothole. It's actually a pair of twin shafts and we decided to descend via the more devious route rather than the main hang. We rigged a small rope to descend into the shakehole but discovered later on that there is an easy scramble down. Quite where the first pitch starts was not obvious. We rigged it from the landside of the shaft using a tree backed up from a boulder and rock thread (25m). If we'd taken a larger rope sling we could have used the larger tree rather than the smaller tree. This lands on a wide verdant ledge with fine views down the main shaft. The next pitch on our route was off to the side – 3 bolts and bolt deviation to a sloping ledge. All the bolts were in good condition and filled with Vaseline. The next pitch starts straight away so we used up the 25m rope as the rigging for a natural belay for the next pitch. This is the main pitch (40m rope, 2 rebelay) and a fine descent into a large chamber. Llorer has great views looking back up the main shaft but not a lot else at the bottom to tarry the visitor.

Odds 'n' ends So ends yet another enjoyable sojourn in Mallorca. Everyone got to do some new caves, yet again we failed to find a cave and some old friends were revisited. We now have a considerable amount of caving experience and knowledge about Mallorca so perhaps I may eventually write up that journal. No promises though.

Team: Cara Alison, Tim Francis, Louisa Minahan, Martin Peck, Julie Hesketh

A piece of history

As every one must be aware by now, the old beech tree at the front of the cottage is to be felled.

In order to recoup some of the cost, the wood from the beech tree will be made available to members in return for a donation.

Now is your chance to have a piece of the club's history. Possibilities include:

A slice of the trunk/bough (can be used as an outdoor table) or signpost; mushroom carvings; large pieces for carvings/sculptures; logs for firewood; small cross sections (can be used as a picnic seat or as a support for a larger garden bench); 'spalted' sections for wood turning; branch sections to make rustic arches or pergolas, fence posts, etc; planks (for seasoning) – this option would need to be priced.

Hardwood is expensive to buy so don't miss this opportunity!

If you are interested in having a piece of our beech tree please let us know in advance. Felling will take place in February.

Contact Doug Harris or Linda Milne.



Gone but not forgotten

I am sorry to announce that J-P Birch's dog, Ted, was put to sleep just before Christmas. While she was in the vets for exploratory surgery a tumour was found so JP took the kind but difficult decision not to resuscitate her.

Ted had become an integral part of cottage life and her cheerful presence will be greatly missed. She had almost become the Group's mascot as for quite a few years she spent weekends at the cottage with J-P and other members, taking us on many long walks across the Mendip hills and helping with the surface dig at Upper Flood.

MRO First Aid Talk

First Aid and medical issues related to caving, by Dr Pete Glanville. 8pm Feb 5th at the Hunters Lodge, Priddy.

Richard Carey PINK AND FLUFFY?

Yes! The latest issue of the Wessex Journal included Richard in the Pink and Fluffy Caving Team, which is visiting every part of Swildon's for Alison Moody's book description.

The book 'Swildon's Hole, One Hundred Years of Cave Exploration' is being compiled by an editorial team led by Jim Hanwell with contributors Dave Irwin, Alison Moody and Andy Farrant. There will be a detailed description of every passage and chamber, as well as notes on the cave's origin and development, and exploration history. The book is being published to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Wessex Cave Club.

You can reserve a copy of this unique publication at www.wessex-cave-club.org or by writing to Swildon's Hole Book Committee, Wessex Cave Club, Upper Pitts, Eastwater Lane, Priddy, Wells. Somerset BA5 3AX

Congratulations

Leslie Davies, senior warden of the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, was made an MBE in the New Year Honours list. Mr Davies, of Street, receives the award for services to the environment.



Les Davies, Senior Warden, repairing a stile near Deer Leap. Photo by Graham Parish. Copyright Countryside Agency

Upper Flood progress

by Tim Francis

Just a service update on the Upper Flood dig. Myself, Bill Chadwick and Martin Peck went down for a digging session in Golden Chamber on Sunday afternoon, 09/01/05. Luckily we were out before the heavy squall hit, which was handy as the canal gets a bit sporting in high water. We dug for a couple of hours in the far corner of the chamber and cleared down several feet in the gap between the calcited choke and the wall. The streamway is clearly rumbling away somewhere below us. An annoying slab decided to drop down in the floor which blocks the view down between the boulders. Hurrumph.

Also of interest though was the wall of sediment in the corner/right hand side that is definitely several metres deep. Just below the surface is a calcite false floor that trends underneath the passage wall. Almost all the stones in the sediment (gritty stuff) below this floor are water worn pebbles. Some are fist sized-cobbles, which presumably means a hefty stream has been flowing along here at some time in the past. Any thoughts? The cobbles just below the floor are actually imbedded in the calcite.

A new tray hauling system was used which helped enormously in getting spoil out of the chamber. At the moment it's all been dumped in the choke but we'll clear back to Andrew's Grotto on the next trip. This is vaguely planned for Sunday 23/01/05 if anyone is around for a dig or a normal caving trip on the Saturday. (And then definitely on the 5th/6th Feb if we can sneak out between cottage jobs).

Carcass Cave extended

by Mick Norton

Just before Christmas, Bracknell District Caving Club dropped down to a new Chamber in Carcass Cave. This is below the chamber that Alan Gray, Doug Harris and Mick Norton found in October 2003. It has a solid, inclined roof (which is the floor of the October Chamber). The new chamber is about 10 metres long and standing height.

The length of the cave is now about 150 metres but we have not exceeded the depth of the 2003 Easter Fault Passage that Tim Francis was the first to enter. We are now pursuing a tunnel heading back into the hill. This project we have spent the last year on has paid off, making it possible to get everything we dig out of the cave straight away. The 18 metre monorail is working fine.

No draught anywhere, but air quality is good; the cave was cold and dripping wet yesterday, 27/12/04.

Open access in the Mendip Hills AONB

On Tuesday 14/12/04 the new open access rights came into effect for the Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. (AONB). The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) gives people the right of pedestrian access on mountain, moor, heath, down and registered common land. This land has been mapped by the Countryside Agency and will be shown as 'access land' on Ordnance Survey Maps in the Explorer series. People are entitled to open air recreation that includes walking, bird watching, picnicking, running and climbing. This new right is for pedestrians only. It does not extend to horse riders, mountain bikers or people driving or riding in a vehicle.

Except where special restrictions apply visitors can take dogs onto CRoW access land. Dogs must be on short leads between 1st March and 31st July and at all times where there are livestock. The Mendip Hills AONB Service are working with the local authorities and landowners to continue to improve access and provide information for appropriate sites.

Library additions

by Joan Goddard

The New Caves of Scotland by Tony Oldham (2004). Once you open the cover it says 'except Appin, Assynt, Schichallion, Skye and the Southern Highlands': this is because those areas have been covered in previous publications by Gram-pian Spelaeological Group. Consequently the caves mentioned here are generally small and are often sea caves. Nevertheless, a useful 80pp A4 book with grid references and miscellaneous information about each cave.

Cavern of the Dragon, 32pp booklet, written I think by E A Martel but undated. Mainly refers to the Caves of Drach in Mallorca.

It's Only a Game by Jim Eyre (2004). Chapters 2-6 concern Jim's time in The Royal Navy (*interesting and eye-opening – for me at least. How did we ever win the war?*). Chapters 7-17 take us through to the mid 1960s via Lancaster Hole, Ease Gill, cave rescues and Yugoslavia. A good read and easy to dip into.

The Lead Legacy – the prospects for the Peak District's Lead Mining Heritage (obtainable from the Peak District National Park Authority). I found this a very interesting publication because of its relevance to the Mendip lead-mining heritage. The Peak District, as one of the richest lead mining areas in Europe, has been worked from at least Roman times to 1939 when the last mine closed. The Lead Rakes Project aims to identify and safeguard the remaining mining sites and associated landscapes. As one would expect from a government agency, the publication is glossy with plenty of photos and appendices.

On Three, an Introduction to Digital Photography for Cavers by John Charles Woods (in association with Wild Places Publishing and Descent Magazine) - an interactive manual-on-a-CD with masses of information on it. Well worth looking at - or buy your own for £7.50 from Descent.

Below! Journal of Shropshire Caving and Mining Club No: 2004.4

Red Rose Cave and Pothole Club Newsletter Vol 41 No 3 December 2004 (article on Crete caves)

Chelsea Spelaeological Society Newsletter Vol 46 No 12 December 2004 (includes index to Vol 46)

Craven Pothole Club Record No 76 October 2004 (it's their 75th Jubilee Year)

Wessex Cave Club Journal Vol 28 No 292 and Index to Vol 27 (Nos 282-291).

CREG Journal No 58 (Dec 2004) A couple of interesting articles '*Putting it on the map*' - using Excel as a geographical Information System' by Mike Bedford - how to plot geographical features on a base map. '*Virtually prehistoric: beneath the surface at Grimes Graves flint mines, Norfolk*' 3D laser scan of workings.

Council "no" to wind power

Mendip councillors have thrown out Ecotricity's proposal to erect a 335ft turbine which would tower over Chewton Mendip. Mendip District Council's planning board voted to refuse permission for the huge structure, claiming it would disfigure the landscape and spoil the views of neighbours. Residents and parish councillors called an emergency meeting when Ecotricity revealed its plans for the energy plant on Shooters Bottom Farm in March. Action group Chewton Against Rural Turbines (CHART) was consequently formed and has attracted high profile support from countryside campaigners including David Bellamy. Mendip District Council received 180 letters of objection, the BBC feared the structure might cause interference and British Airways warned it could pose a danger to air traffic. Even the National Trust, which generally supports green energy schemes, said it could not agree to the project.

CHART committee member Peter Williams, a consultant in power generation, said: "We are delighted in the resounding way the council turned down this proposal. As well as the visual impact, the turbine motion and shadow can spook horses. With a tip speed of up to 180mph it could also kill birds. And we have buzzards, red kites and barn owls in this area."



14th International Congress of Speleology 2005

The Organizing Committee would like to bring to your attention substantial updates incorporated in the Congress web page at: www.14ics-athens2005.gr

There are revisions in the Schedule of dates, including the "early bird" registration deadline, which is extended to 31/01/05. On-line Registration has been expanded to include credit card payment, and Accommodation Reservation Form. Already we have more than 250 registered international participants, and are waiting to receive your registration.

Christos Petreas, General Secretary, 14th ICS Organizing Committee



NAMHO Conference

The National Association of Mining History Organisations Conference will be hosted by Subterranea Britannica and Wealden Cave and Mine Society over the weekend of 8-10th July 2005 at the Juniper Hall Field Study Centre, Dorking, Surrey, close to Boxhill on the North Downs. See www.namho2005.wcms.org.uk/index.shtml



Keswick Mining Museum

Threlkeld Mining Museum in the Lake District has undergone a name change and moved to Otley House, Otley Road, Keswick, Cumbria CA12 5LE