

MCG News

Newsletter of the
Mendip Caving Group

Golden Chamber, Upper Flood Swallet, 2004

Number 326
February 2005

www.m-c-g.org.uk

Founded 1954

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2005

The AGM of the Mendip Caving Group will be held at the Hunters Lodge Inn on Saturday 9th April 2005 at 10.30am.

Nominations for Office and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules must be submitted in writing by first class post to the Hon. Secretary's home address with the signatures of full members proposing and seconding at least 25 days before the meeting (15th March).

A nomination for Office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand for election by the nominee. Nominations are sought for all posts. We currently have two vacant positions - Caving Secretary and Tacklemaster and there may be more to follow. A nomination form is enclosed with this newsletter.

Lee Hawkswell, Hon Secretary

Annual Dinner 2005

We had a lot of very favourable feed-back after holding the 2003 dinner at the **Lyncombe Lodge Hotel, Churchill**, so we are going back again this year. Rooms are available at 2003 prices: £70 double and £45 single. All rooms are ensuite and include a full English breakfast. ☎ 01934 8548000 for reservations.

As before, the Hotel will be providing Butcombe just for us! There will of course be a raffle and as usual we welcome any unwanted Christmas pressies, caving gear or other donations. As I recall we raised about £70 last time - can we beat it this year?

We are also very pleased to have a guest speaker. Alan Jeffreys (Goon), founder member of the Grampian Speleological Group and a popular speaker (Shepton 50th and MRO AGM), will provide an entertaining end to the dinner.

Please return your reply slips (attached) to me at the address/email shown by 1st April 2005. Please note there is a slight change to the Annual Dinner menu. The vegetarian option is now onion and apple tarte tatin with olive sauce and a new vegan option has been added - mixed bean, tomato and basil cassoulet with rice. Special diets can be catered for; please advise on your reply slip.

Transport on the night

A coach will be provided (£5 return), with pick-up stops at Wells (Princes Road) at 6pm, followed by the Hunter's and the cottage.

Special activities

The Hotel is within walking distance of Mangle Hole and Sandford Levy caves and there is plenty of walking nearby. The Hotel is also located next to an activity centre (see below). Why not bring the kids?

Ski-slope: £11.00/hr including equipment for skiing and snowboarding (£10.00 for kids), £4.50/hr for tobogganing (kids only!). Lessons are also available.

Riding: One hour group ride £14.00 pp. Two hour group ride £25.50pp. (Longer rides and beach rides are also available.) Lessons are also available.

Quad Biking: 10 minute taster £8.00, 20 minute taster £16.00.

Mountain Biking: Afternoon £6.00. All day £10.00.

For activity bookings and further details contact High Action Ltd 01934 852335.

From the Editor



This month's newsletter is literally just that - a 'news' letter, full of bits and pieces of news and information.

As sometimes, but thankfully rarely, happens, I have not received a single article. I think it's that time of year when we are all feeling the rigours of short winter days, and maybe, like me, falling prey to winter ailments like colds and flu.

Spring is just around the corner and even here, up t'north, snowdrops and daffodils are appearing in swathes all over the countryside. The evenings are drawing out, lambs are gambolling in the fields and the sun is beginning to have some warmth in it. Wow! Doesn't that sound idyllic?

Anyway, hopefully we will all soon be stirring again and will have reason to put pen to paper (or fingers to keyboard) - I hope so. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yvonne

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MCG Annual Dinner

Lyncombe Lodge Hotel, Churchill

9th April 2005 7.15pm - midnight

£22.50 (Coffee and Mints extra at £1.90)

Cheques and menu choices to Linda Milne by 1st April 2005, please.

Menu choices

Starters

- Leek and potato soup
- Fan of galia of melon, sorbet and fruit coulis
- A salad of crisp baby corn, bitter lettuces, raspberry dressing and hot buttered hazelnuts
- Stilton, pear and tarragon mousse with tomato and olive sauce

Main courses

- Grilled rib eye steak topped with parsley and shallot butter
- Honey roasted pork fillet sliced onto a smoked bacon and caper sauce
- Fillet of cod baked with mushrooms, rosemary and white wine
- Stir fry of prawns and mange tout in a light garlic and coconut sauce
- Mixed bean, tomato and basil cassoulet with rice (vegan)
- Onion and apple tarte tatin with olive sauce (vegetarian)

Desserts

- White and dark chocolate mousse
- Orange and lemon cheesecake

Coffee & Mints

£1.90

MCG AGM DINNER – REPLY SLIP

Name

No. of tickets required

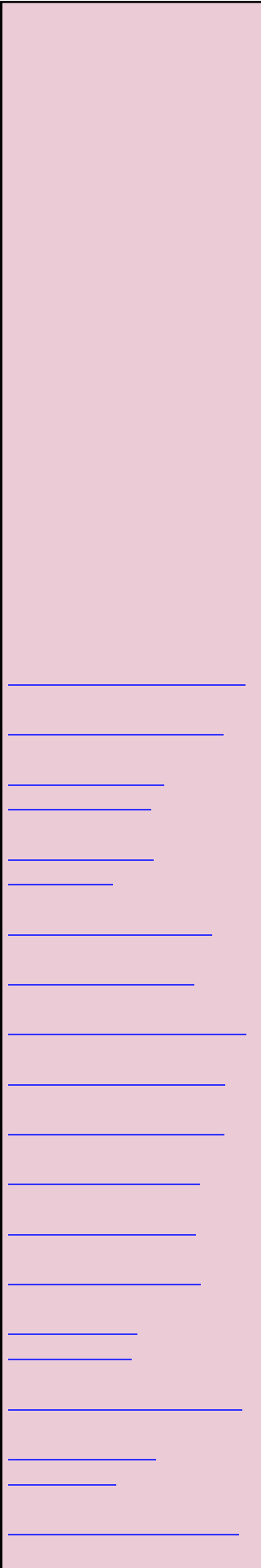
Menu choices (please use other side of this slip if required):

Person 1: Starter
Main Course
Desert

Person 2: Starter
Main Course
Desert

Amount enclosed £ (cheques payable to Mendip Caving Group)

Please return to Linda Milne by 1 April 2005, please.



MCG subs and BCA public liability insurance

We still have a few members who haven't paid their 2005 Subs and Public Liability Insurance (if applicable). Final reminders have been sent/mailed. If we receive no response from these members, their membership will lapse and this is the last newsletter they will receive.

Charterhouse leader

Following the resignation of Richard Carey, we have a vacancy for a leader for Charterhouse Cave. If you are interested, and available to lead trips down this cave, please contact Lee (Hon. Secretary) for further details.

Cottage work

Thank you to all members who attended the work weekend. A lot of jobs have now been completed. Thanks also to Jacky for cooking us a curry on the Saturday evening.

The beech trees have now been felled. Anyone who would like to have some of the wood, please could they contact Linda Milne or myself to arrange a convenient time for collection. We are asking for a donation towards the payment of the job, to be put back into group funds.

Doug Harris (Cottage Warden)



Engravings found in Burrington cave

Monday 7 February, 2005

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/somerset/4243787.stm>

Engravings thought to be about 10,000 years old have been found in a North Somerset cave once used as a cemetery. Bristol University's Speleological Society discovered the engravings recently in a cave in the Mendip Hills. The inscribed crosses were found on the wall of Aveline's Hole in Burrington Combe, one of the earliest known cemeteries in the UK. It was used for burials shortly after the end of the last ice age, during the early Mesolithic period.



Jill Cook, from the British Museum, said: "This is an exciting and important discovery. The few lines that form this panel are a signature from the period right at the end of the last ice age when the present period of warm climate was beginning. The pattern is comparable with others known from Northern France, Germany and Denmark." The engravings were identified by Graham Mullan and Linda Wilson, who have spent much of the last 10 years studying Palaeolithic cave art. They recently began a systematic search of caves in southern Britain in the belief that such works would not simply be confined to those found at Creswell Crags, on the Nottinghamshire-Derbyshire border. The Creswell features are a little older at about 13,000 years and were first detailed by scientists in 2003. They depict representations of bison, deer, bears, plus two or three species of bird; including one unusual bird head with a long, curved bill. Mullan and Wilson are continuing their search of southern Britain and believe more works like those at Aveline's Hole will surface. A further engraving has been noted in one of the caves in the Cheddar Gorge, and further investigations are being carried out to verify this. However, for the vast majority of engravings, it is impossible to obtain any direct dating evidence, leaving stylistic comparisons and archaeological context the only means of reaching a conclusion on the possible age of any such markings.

More MCG doings

An application for membership has been received from:

Neil Larsen

Proposer: Steve Wyatt
 Seconder: Clive Maybury

Resignations

Stephen Jones, Richard Carey and Simon Goddard have resigned their membership of the Group.

Also, Dave Tooke has resigned from his Committee post (Tacklemaster) as he will be working overseas for the next year. Our thanks go to Richard and Dave for their work on the Committee.

Descent decamped

Descent have moved to:

Wild Places Publishing
 P O Box 100
 Abergavenny
 NP7 9WY

☎ 01873 737707
 ☎ 0871 750 5277

Email and website remain unchanged

Little Neath River Cave; Bridge Cave

Please would all cavers be aware that access to these caves is in a delicate situation of negotiation with the owner. If you visit them please behave with extreme care and consideration.

Elsie Little, Conservation Officer, Cambrian Caving Council

Potholer recovers from cave ordeal

14/02/05 - A potholer is recovering in a Spanish hospital after being dragged unconscious into a freezing underground pool. Denis Bushell, from Prestwich, fell several feet down a shaft while exploring the Cueva del Gato - the Cave of the Cat - near Ronda, inland from the Costa del Sol. Friends said the 54-year-old gym instructor was in an intensive care unit near Malaga suffering from hypothermia and was expected to be transferred to a medical ward. A rescue team took more than five hours to reach the experienced potholer and his five British colleagues. He was unconscious when the rescue team finally arrived and they brought him to the surface. Mr Warren is a member of a number of potholing clubs including the Yorkshire-based White Rose Pothole Club. La Cueva del Gato is a popular site with the European potholing community. It begins as a massive limestone grotto then narrows into small tunnels including one which is a kilometre long.

www.manchesteronline.co.uk/news/

CSCC doings

Brown's Folly Mine Avon Wildlife Trust have CLOSED the mine until further notice, pending a Mines Inspectors report.

Aveline's Hole Following consultation with the landowner and English Nature, a gate has been installed in the back of the cave to protect an engraving that is possibly 10,000 years old. Access is controlled by the UBSS.

Logbook extracts, November 2004 - February 2005

07.11.04 – Blackmoor Shaft (Malcolm Cotter, Doug Harris). First visit since the cover was put over the top of the shaft. Ladder fixed using rope tethers to grating. Cave not particularly wet and no stream entering at bottom. The spoil behind the deads and shoring at the bottom very satisfactory. Very clean at bottom where stream has run. Doug started probing with a length of dexion and within a short time he was passing out rocks and muddy spoil. A hollow sound was noted and shortly afterwards a small void appeared. A narrow stream bed came into view (dry) trending along a lower part of the rift on the right, back to spoil heap. A pleasing result. [MOC]

07.11.04 – Upper Flood (TimF, LeeH, RichardC). Midnight Chamber: air 10.5 deg C, water 10.5 deg C. Canal: air 10.5 deg C. Dug out all of the breakthrough crawl to Golden Chamber. This is now almost all crawling sized. The streamway can be heard at the far end of Golden Chamber in the floor so very promising! On exit, a load of the choke fell on top of Lee who wasn't excited by this, as one might imagine. We didn't hang about to check what else is moving – back in a few weeks for more clearing and a start on Golden Chamber. [TF]

Nov 2004 Mallorca (LouisaM, TimF, JulieH, MartinP, CaraA). Very cold this year so we needed a stove each night. Caves done: Perija Ritja, Campona, walk-in-thing near Palma, Avenc de Llover, Lost Cava de Vila so that's one for a revisit next year. [TF]

31.11.04 Scotland - Umah an Claonite (Julie Hesketh + GSG). Went down to help GSG who are making a video on the history of Claonite. I was a bit of a spare part so took one of their new, young, keen members to Sump 3 and back. Lots of water – nice and snug in a borrowed club wetsuit – thanks GSG! Then to **Rana Hole** to have a look at the dig. A most impressive shaft – probably about 25m deep and 3m wide. A serious dig! Slopped about in the water at the bottom and moved some rocks before heading off to GSG's annual dinner (a good fun affair with a "Sound of Music" theme – lots of bearded nuns!) [JH]

Redcliffe Caves, Bristol (Andrew Brander, Arthur Spain, Mark Ward, Joan Goddard, Andy Goddard (SMCC), Alan Gray (ACG, leader). See Newsletter 325.

Upper Flood (TimF, BenC, JulieH, RichardC, MalcolmC). Entered c1pm, last one out 16.30. Tim, Ben and Richard continued work in Golden Chamber. Julie and Malcolm stuck into the pile of spoil deposited in Andrew's Grotto – 20 skips removed and deposited behind deads at the lower left (looking down to Andrew's Grotto) of the Red Room, Julie pulling up the tubs while Malcolm filled them. Once Richard and Tim left for a Committee Meeting Ben, Julie and Malcolm cleared the day's spoil from the boulder choke up to the Red Room. This time Julie filled leaving Ben and Malcolm to empty; two of us men doing what she, earlier, had done alone. What thick, soggy, thixotropic clay! 10 skips removed. Temperature at start of canal c 51degF. Felt colder in the water. Sound of water booming heard from Golden Chamber, Julie sensed it in a confined space rather than a large void. Everyone very kind to the old man, arranging for him to travel back to the cottage – like a dog – that is, in Richard's boot! [MOC]

05.12.2004 Cuckoo Cleaves (MartinP, JulieH). Quick poke about most of the cave but we had no appetite for the 'excessively arduous crawl' to the 'exclusive' pool. As we were in our Sunday best we saved the gravel for another day. Fun, quick trip around nearly all of the nooks and crannies [JH]

03.01.2005 Blackmoor Shaft Cave (Doug Harris, Malcolm Cotter). Entered about noon, left about 5pm. Weather mild. First digging trip this year – just missed the 1st! On reaching the face a smoke test was done using Jos. The air flow showed an inward current, then an outward current, At the end of the session another test was made but this time the smoke rose undisturbed. Even so there was no smell once the bottom of the next climb up was reached. Good digging progress. Doug had sharpened his chisel and it proved very effective. Not much storage left. [MOC]

08.01.2005 GB. Training trip for Martin Peck, along with Bill Chadwick, LeeH, TimF, JackyA, LouisaM. Parked cars at Charterhouse Farm, followed by a fast walk to the cave, due to the strong, cold wind. Inside the cave we made our way down via The Bridge and Oxbow. Pitch rigged by Martin and checked by LH and TF. Tim, Louisa and Jacky exited the cave at that point.

Continuing down the dig (very little water) we made our way up into Great Chamber after Bill climbed up and put a lifeline in place. This could have been Lee's first visit to Great Chamber. Leaving here we made our way to the end of Bat Passage. Exit from the cave was fast to get Lee back for the Committee Meeting. 3 hours total [MP]

09.01.2005 Upper Flood (MartinP, BillC, TimF). More digging in Golden Chamber. Large rumble of the streamway could be heard below. Loads of spoil shifted back into the choke. The new tray-hauling system works well but it's still awkward. Air 10.5deg C, Midnight Chamber. [TF]

09.01.2005 Swildons Hole (MartinR, YvonneR, JoanG). Trip to take photos of the folds in the limestone between the Forty Foot and Twenty Foot. [JG]

15.01.2005 Wretched Rabbit, Yorkshire (TimF, Jules Flavell, JulieH). Jules, yes, Jules, is back in the country for a brief sojourn. The demands of Much Wenlock became too great and our 'gone native Mexican' demanded a caving trip to Yorkshire. Kit was cobbled together thanks to the Grampian and Ingletief Emporium. Wretched Rabbit was the obvious choice as we didn't have any kit. So down W/R and upstream to take in the delights of Easter Grotto and Straw Chamber. We came back via the lower level so it made for quite a nice round trip. One member of team was a bit tired (!) - no names amigo - but we had plenty of time left for a curry and beers in the New Inn, Clapham. [TF]

16.01.2005 Illusion Pot, Yorkshire (TimF, Jules, JulieH + the Grampian Hordes). Spent two hours trying to find the damn thing. Tim and Jules had to head back south but the Grampian and Julie went in as far as they could. It was sumped/ducked off not far from the entrance and there wasn't time to bail. [TF]

22.01.2005 Cuckoo Cleaves (TimF, LouisaM). Short dash around the highlights. The shakehole has nearly been sold apparently. Horrendously wet in the afternoon - headed home. [TF]

05.02.2005 Upper Flood, Golden Chamber (Timf, JulieH, Ben Cooper). An unexpected trip for me with my wife, Lindsay, 8 months pregnant - possibly the last trip for a few months. But I managed to persuade Tim and Julie to miss a few hours cottage work for a digging trip in Upper Flood. We took out the spoil from the boulder choke and stacked it in the grotto for later, then went through into Golden Chamber - Julie dug first with me in the middle ferrying buckets across the chamber, and Tim in the squeeze pulling the spoil through to the boulder choke. Using very small buckets, two at a time can be pulled through the tunnel - very slow work.

The dig itself is going fast . . . plenty of loose spoil around large boulders. We revealed a second large slab that will need to be Hilti'd. Plenty of small voids below. Watch this space! [BC]

05.02.2005/06.02.2005 - Work Weekend (Doug Harris, LeeH, JackyA, BenC, BillCh, MalcolmC, GeoffB, Brenda Wybrow, TimF, LouisaM, John Crowsley, Simon Stephens, LindaM, JaneBaldwin, Dave Tooke, JoanG, JulieH). Lots of work done in spite of rain during much of Saturday. Sand and compost heaps moved, gutters cleaned, roof tiles moved, hosing down area and drain cleaned out, cottage surrounds swept, new shelves in library, cleaning including windows, lounge chairs mended, new tap fitted, shower heads descaled, start made on windows and polyfilling in Foreman's Lounge, chimney swept . . . etc etc. During previous week the temperature of the over-hot hot water was corrected by Bryan Pittman and Wayne Hiscox. On Saturday evening there was a fine curry meal and quiz. [JG]

HE05

Hidden Earth is the UK's annual caving conference, traditionally hosted by the British Cave Research Association (BCRA - a registered charity) for the benefit of all cavers.

For 2005, the conference returns to the Mendip region, to a new venue at Churchill Community School. This is located south-west of Bristol, between Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare, near the town of Winscombe, at the foot of the northern side of the Mendip Hills. For cavers the description "a couple of miles west of Burrington Coombe" should give you an idea of the location. The conference will be on 23rd-25th September.

Further information will be available at <http://www.hidden-earth.org.uk/> in the Spring. A location map can be found at <http://www.multimap.com/map/browse.cgi?pc=BS255QN&scale=200000>

The venue address is Churchill Community School, Churchill Green, Churchill, WINSCOMBE, BS25 5QN. <http://www.churchill.n-somerset.sch.uk>

International Congress of Speleology

Cara Allison is going to the International Congress of Speleology in Athens this August (21st - 28th). She is thinking of staying on afterwards to cave, sightsee, swim etc. Archaeological sites, islands, mountains - there is lots to tempt! Anyone interested in joining her? Perhaps the ICS could become an "official" MCG summer meet?