

# MCG NEWS

Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

Departure Lounge, Upper Flood (by Charlie Allison)

Number 349  
April 2008

[m-c-g.org.uk](http://m-c-g.org.uk)

[mendipcavinggroup.org.uk](http://mendipcavinggroup.org.uk)

Founded 1954

## Breakthrough by WCC in Charterhouse Cave

“ After 26 years of digging and over 125 working trips we have finally got through the Charterhouse Cave boulder ruckle and have explored an estimated 300m of walking sized streamway. A sizeable inlet enters part way down the extension and it is believed that this water is probably the G.B. Cave stream. Work continues. The final section of the Charterhouse boulder ruckle is extremely unstable and makes the Upper Flood Swallet boulder choke look positively safe! ”

**Ali Moody, Wessex Caving Club, 03/03/08**

A hard-won and significant breakthrough has taken place in the boulder choke in Charterhouse Cave where, after 125 digging trips over 26 years, the Wessex digging team lead by Pete & Ali Moody and Pete Hann have found about 300m of new passage, some of it well decorated, and have added about 90m to the depth of the cave. The breakthrough was just in time for the MCG dinner and Pete Moody came along as Guest Speaker to describe the discoveries.

However, most Charterhouse leaders will not be taking trips into the new stuff for a little while. There is a gate at the beginning of the dig, beyond The Grotto of the Singing Stal and this will remain locked for some time, with trips being undertaken only with the diggers. The reasons for this are twofold: firstly the diggers will have the usual period of grace in which to complete exploration, surveying, photography, conservation work and scientific inspection. Secondly the breakthrough choke is in an extremely precarious state and time will be needed to analyse the extent of the danger that it poses and to undertake any stabilisation works that might be possible.

A week after the announcement of the breakthrough, the team was back in action and several new things came to light:

The mudbank at the end was passed and the streamway regained. It ended, temporarily, at a sump that appears to be a diveable prospect.

There are a couple of possible leads on the eastern side that need investigation.

The inlet that was thought to be the G.B. water most certainly is! Dye put into the G.B. stream was seen in Charterhouse Cave after 35 minutes.

Much of the passage is trending eastwards (i.e. away from G.B. and away from Cheddar). Such a trend was predicted by Andy Farrant.

There is a hint, based on altimeter readings, that the cave is actually considerably deeper than was first thought. The diggers are making no claims as yet, that will wait until the high-grade survey can be done, but the possibility is that they have broken their own Mendip depth record (Longwood Swallet 575 feet) and have the first 600 feet deep Mendip cave.

Time will tell, but with this team anything is possible. However, the choke is still extremely nasty and still needs work.

This is the second significant breakthrough in the Cheddar catchment area in less than 2 years (the other being in Upper Flood Swallet).

MCG extend their congratulations to the WCC. *The race is well and truly on for the 2008 digging barrel!*

## From the Editor



What an exciting place Mendip is for cavers at the moment thanks to the Upper Flood Swallet breakthrough, the promising Stainsby's Shaft dig, and now the breakthrough in Charterhouse Cave.

Although I was a Charterhouse leader for many years I never went into the dig beyond Grotto of the Singing Stal. I am just sorry I will no longer fit down the narrow fissure near the entrance so, as with Upper Flood Swallet, I will have to rely on the chat and photos.

It was good to hear about it all first hand from Alison and Pete Moody at our Annual Dinner. I hear there is renewed interest in Roman Rake now too – all power to the diggers!

*Yvonne*

## In this issue

- 1 Charterhouse Cave
- 2-3 AGM report
- 4 Upper Flood update
- 4 Stainsby's update
- 5 Public benefit test
- 6 Lost swallet
- 7 Swildons book
- 8-9 Cottage projects
- 9 Committee
- 10 Group information

## MCG doings

### Committee

I was very pleased to have the opportunity of joining the committee and look forward to my first meeting next month.

I travel a lot with work so if you want to call me I am always easier to contact on my mobile, my number is 07525 629508.

I was sorry to have missed the Dinner but look forward to the cheese & wine evening in a few weeks!

**Jeremy Gilson**  
Tacklemaster

### Hidden Earth

26th-28th Sept 2008

This year's national caving conference will be at Prince Henry's Grammar School, Farnley Lane, Otley, LS21 2BB. For a map of the location, see <http://tinyurl.com/6e2sug>

Further information will appear at <http://hidden-earth.org.uk>

## MCG AGM held on 5<sup>th</sup> April 2008

To attract more members to the AGM we decided to hold the meeting at the cottage this year and to use the marquee for a post-meeting buffet with the Hidden Earth stand on display. Due to the poor weather the buffet was moved into the lounge, and the Hidden Earth display was set up in the library. The format was a success with 28 people attending the AGM of whom 22 were full members, and people stayed on to enjoy the free post-AGM buffet and a chat. *Full minutes of the AGM will be available later. In the meantime, the following brief notes will give members an indication of what occurred at the meeting.*

**Gas safety** We need an official safety notice on the gas store door. Only gas bottles should be kept in the gas store - no digging tools - and there should be a gap maintained at the bottom of the door (which there is) in case of any leak.

**Shed** Any overalls left unclaimed in the shed by 01/06/08 will be patched up and loaned to novices. If you own one of these overalls, let the committee know now.

**Newsletter** Most members now write trip reports on the Newsgroup rather than submitting articles for the Newsletter. A trawl through the Newsgroup is required each month to create a Newsletter article. This is proving time-consuming for the Editor. Yvonne asked for volunteers who would produce monthly reports from the Newsgroup entries. Tim Francis volunteered to send Upper Flood Swallet updates to Yvonne, and Biff Frith volunteered to do the same for the Stainsby's Shaft dig.

**Clash of dates** Some members were unhappy that our AGM was on the same day as the CCC and BCA AGMs. Charlie Allison volunteered to represent MCG at the CCC AGM this year (he is our Charterhouse Cave leader). He returned to our AGM in time to inform us that the CCC 2009 AGM will be on the first weekend in April. We were therefore able to agree that MCG's 2009 AGM will be on **Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2009, at 10.30am, at Nordrach Cottage followed by a buffet.**

**New members** It was suggested that we could have a mentor for newcomers to the Group, to be responsible for encouraging them to attend members' weekends, join caving trips, attend social events, to inform them of how the Group ticks, and ensure that after 6 months they undertake a training trip to become Full Members.

**Gift Aid** We need a volunteer to administer the Gift Aid scheme, to ensure new members make Gift Aid declarations and to submit an annual tax recovery claim. [*Karen Fendley volunteered after the meeting*]

**Guest bookings** At the AGM, some members expressed dissatisfaction at having to share their caving weekends at the cottage with large numbers of guests. It was suggested that as members are caving more frequently due to interest in Upper Flood Swallet and Stainsby's Shaft, we could have two members' weekends each month, and that these weekends could be kept clear of large visiting groups. It was also suggested that if we do have additional members' weekends, that they should be advertised in the meets program with planned activities (digging, specific caving trips, SRT training etc.)

**Malcolm Cotter** After many suggestions for naming a part of Upper Flood Swallet after Malcolm Cotter in memory of his caving-lifetime's work there, and after consulting with his family, the diggers have renamed the 500' Way, 'Malcolm's Way'.

**Tony Knibbs** The committee announced to the meeting that Tony Knibbs has been made an Honorary Member for his exceptional services to the Group over the years. Tony is member number 10, having become a Full member in April 1954. He has served on the committee in various posts and at various times since 1957 and has also been an auditor. He co-edited the 50th anniversary journal.

**Elections** Jeremy Gilson was co-opted to the post of Tacklemaster. Roy Kempston replaces Ann Pittman as an examiner. All other committee and non-committee posts are unchanged.

**Showers** On the Newsgroup prior to the AGM there had been much discussion about the inadequate supply of hot water to the showers. This was discussed in detail at the AGM, and the committee was asked to provide a workable solution by 05/07/08. [*A longer article appears elsewhere in this Newsletter*]

## Annual dinner

The MCG annual dinner this year was held at Coxley Vineyard. It was an excellent venue and the food was very good and plentiful. The starter alone was a meal in itself, and there were masses of vegetables to go with the main course. Because the room was a good size, we were not squashed at tables touching elbows with our neighbour.

We decided to have a limerick competition like the 'old days', the topic being the hot (or should that be cold!) showers. Some of the hilarious results can be found below. It was said that compiling the limericks broke the ice at the tables where people didn't know each other very well, especially for the guests. There was certainly a lot of laughter.

Alison and Pete Moody gave an interesting talk on their recent important discoveries in Charterhouse Cave and their plans for the future – stabilising, surveying, conservation, photography etc. (just as we did for Upper Flood Swallet).

Due to a mix-up, Zot had been invited as the official BEC guest (his BEC membership ended some years ago!). He gave an excellent speech on behalf of the Guests, and told an hilarious joke (the one he told at the cottage after the Dinner was even funnier!). At a suitable pause between courses, it was announced that Tony Knibbs had been made an Honorary Member, and would he take a bow..... Unfortunately he had gone to the gents! He received an ovation when he came back though!

Finally, we had the usual raffle, which this year raised £77. There were many prizes so plenty for everyone, but not enough for some it seemed – K\*\*\*n decided when her ticket was picked to take the silver(!) ice bucket that the hotel had put on the raffle table for the raffle tickets to be drawn from!! Well, everyone else thought it was funny...

## In hot water.....

A selection of limericks from the Annual Dinner (health warning - may be rude!)

There once was a caver called Mick,  
Who went for a cave and a dig,  
He arrived on the day,  
To find scouts in the way,  
And the showers ran out pretty quick.

The moan is the cottage hot water,  
They're saying it really should oughter  
Have a much stronger heater,  
And much increased litre.  
Our saviour is good old Russ Porter.

To let us have lots of hot water,  
The hut warden went out and he bought a  
Gas boiler so vast,  
It consumed all the gas,  
Now the MCG's funds are much shorter.

There once was a caver called Peat,  
With incredibly bad smelly feet,  
He said, "I declare,  
My soap is nowhere,  
And the showers are totally sheet."

If the MCG water was hot,  
We could all choose to shower, or not.  
But the cost of the heating,  
Would be self-defeating,  
Our hut fees would go up a lot.

The cottage hot water was dud,  
With no way to clean off the mud.  
So a plumber was called,  
A new system installed,  
Now it's forty degrees in the Flood.

There once was an Upper Flood digger,  
Who wanted a shower that was bigger.  
He increased the flow rate,  
But sad was his fate,  
For the boiler blew up (snigger snigger).

We are told in an old caving ditty,  
Lady members must cave with committee.  
When Kate Moss came to stay,  
She said "Sure! Any day!"  
But the water's too cold. What a pity.

There once was a caver from Flood.  
Who came back all covered in mud.  
He craved a hot shower,  
But there wasn't the power.  
The electric supply was a dud.

It's my turn said Mick,  
Not expecting a trick.  
Feck me it's cold,  
I'm too bloody old,  
Just look how it's shrivelled my prick.

A clergyman fancied his daughter  
Although he knew he'd not oughter  
He took her to bed  
And rogered her red  
Which got him in very hot water.

The committee it seems  
Had answered his dreams  
But it wasn't his daughter  
Who'd had all the hot water  
But the bastard boy scouts from Cheam.

## Upper Flood padlock

Biff and Doug have modified the Upper Flood Swallet lid to take the new security padlock. Leaders should note it is a close fit and a bit fiddly at first but once you find the knack it's ok.



There is currently a single new key in the Upper Flood Swallet key box -

it has the Upper Flood Swallet key tag attached to it. Make sure you have the right key when going to the cave!

The new padlock has a detachable shackle. When the key is turned in the body of the padlock, the shackle drops out. It is important, when opening the lock, to hold onto this shackle so that it is not dropped down the entrance pipe.



The cave should be kept locked at all times. However, the lid is designed so that it can be opened from within without a key.

## Upper Flood Swallet updates

**23/02/08 Thief's Chamber - climb up to Great Expectations. Bill Chadwick, Mike Richardson, Richard Carey plus Probationary Member Angus Leat.**

We had first to visit Bat Products to do some shopping. We bought 10 spits and 3 maillons (having failed to find any at the cottage).

We could reach in at the bottom and managed to put in a bolt to get us started on the climb.

The spit is in hard calcite rather than limestone. Once we learned to keep the spit clean, it took us 10-15 minutes to get the spit in. We took a pair of water pump pliers to separate the spit from the bolting tool - these were a necessity.

Bill managed to jam a bar to gain a bit more height and Richard was able to climb into the aven. There were a few ledges and with some shoulder-wedging Richard managed to reach some chocked boulders. We pulled up the ladder and attached it via slings.

From there Richard could see two continuations. One is vertical and will require bolting. From the top of the ladder is a bold traverse to another larger boulder that forms the floor in what we have called The Old Curiosity Shop. From there it continues upslope at 70 degrees. It narrows but as no-one has climbed up there we can't tell if it is a viable continuation or not. The chamber will require further bolting so that the ladder hangs in the larger part of the aven.

Maybe the Dickens Series beckons or maybe not.

We left the ladder in place. The sling holding it up (perhaps around 25' up) comprises an MCG rope sling and a tape sling of Bill's. Perhaps whoever visits next would be kind enough to replace Bill's sling and return his sometime. We took a 30m+ rope in and out of the cave.

The unused spits are in a cereal bowl in the tackle store, drying. The maillons should be in the tackle store too.  
**Richard Carey and Bill Chadwick**

## Stainsby's Shaft updates



**22/03/08 Mike Richardson, Biff Frith, Mark Ireland (ACG), Mark Ward, Mick Norton.**

It was extremely cold in the wind and snow, walking to the dig. The winch was re-installed (after Biff had taken it home for rebuilding). More scaffolding was added at the dig front at the bottom of the internal shaft. A good metre of depth was gained. Digging was easy, warm and dry. **Mick Norton**

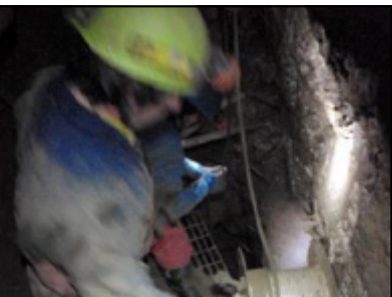
**05-06/04/08 Mick Norton, Mike Richardson and Pete Bennett on Saturday and Mick Norton, Russ Porter and Mark Island (ACG) on Sunday.**

We lifted over seventy drums of spoil and many netted rocks, I used over fifty hilties and then we were able to fit more much needed scaffolding, progress looks good with voids opening up between boulders and we had a good draught at times. (Note it was a cold day) **Biff**

**Progress report.** The winch system is working perfectly, all the preparation work was worth it. We are now digging virgin ground and if we get lucky we might break in to the 19th century stopes that were said to exist. These may have been driven up from the 18 fathom level. The other possibility is we may be able to find a way back to the main shaft as it is only metres away.

One of the old digs on the other side of the shaft ends in the main shaft at about the same depth the new dig has reached. There is a shaped socket in the solid wall that would probably have been used for the shaft ladder staging.

The shaft is back filled even at this depth, but even though it draughts well it would be suicide to dig here. So our present dig is the best and safest option. We are planning to dig again on the 19th&20th April let me know if you are up for it? **Biff (with photos by Russ Porter)**



## Charities and Public Benefit

From 1 April 2008 all charities must not only have “charitable aims” but must also demonstrate that the aims are for the public benefit. MCG already satisfies the “charitable aims” condition, but do we meet the “public benefit” requirement?

**Public benefit - It must be clear what benefits to the public arise from carrying out a charity's aims.** Our aims as stated in the Constitution are: “the furtherance of all aspects of the exploration, scientific study and conservation of caves and related features”

This is evidenced by:

- Survey and exploration of Upper Flood, MM Mine etc
- Scientific (geology) study of Upper Flood
- MCG library as a repository for scientific knowledge
- MCG membership of CSCC enabling access to and exploration of caves
- MCG access control of Upper Flood /MM mine for conservation purposes
- MCG Conservation and Access Policy for Upper Flood
- MCG gate on Upper Flood for conservation purposes, also MM Mine etc
- MCG News (freely distributed to libraries and other caving clubs)
- MCG Occasional Publications and Newsletters (also freely distributed)
- MCG websites
- MCG free training and free loan of equipment to novices to enable exploration
- MCG tacklestore to enable exploration
- MCG purchase of surveying equipment for exploration
- MCG stand at Hidden Earth (picture, right)
- MCG squeeze box and scientific study of relationship between age, chest size and ability to “squeeze” (*in prep.*)



**The benefits must be related to the aims** (exploration, scientific study and conservation) Between our different activities, each of the aims is covered, not just some of the aims.

**Benefits must be balanced against any detriment or harm.** Our activities are not detrimental (unless you count digging) and we do not have aims that are illegal or are a sham.

**The beneficiaries must be appropriate to the aims** Membership is open to anyone over the age of 16 years with an interest in the objects of the Group. Persons aged under 16 years may be sponsored by a member and attend meetings as their guests. Members can bring accompanied guests to the cottage and use tackle etc for no further fee. The actual number of people who can benefit at any one time may be quite small (120 members) but anyone who could qualify for the benefit is eligible. The benefit may be to a ‘section of the public’ (cavers), rather than the public generally, but the restriction is reasonable and relevant to the charity’s aims (caving carries a risk so restricting membership to over 16 is reasonable).

**Where benefit is to a section of the public, the opportunity to benefit must not be unreasonably restricted by geographical or other restrictions; or by ability to pay any fees charged.** Well, we are geographically limited to Mendip because that is where the caves are. But we don’t have a rule that says “No Welsh”. Charities must not be seen as ‘exclusive clubs’ that only a few can join. Membership is open to anyone over the age of 16 years with an interest in the objects of the Group and persons aged under 16 years may be sponsored by a member and attend meetings as their guests. Charities can charge fees that more than cover the cost of their services or facilities, provided that the charges are reasonable and necessary to carry out the charity’s aims. Where the charging restricts the benefits only to people who can afford to pay the fees charged, this may result in the benefits not being available to a sufficient section of the public. Members in hardship can apply for a reduction in subs, and cottage fees are charged at cost.

**People in poverty must not be excluded from the opportunity to benefit.** If we excluded people from the opportunity to benefit because they could not pay the fees, then our aims would not be for the public benefit. Trustees should think about other ways in which people who cannot afford those fees can benefit in some material way related to their charity’s aims. Members experiencing financial hardship may apply annually to the committee for consideration of a reduced personal subscription. If people are unable to join because they cannot afford the subs, they may use the facilities (tackle, library) for no charge as the accompanied guest of a member.

**Any private benefits must be incidental** Where people or organisations benefit from a charity, other than as a beneficiary, then those ‘private’ benefits must be incidental, and not a necessary result, or by-product, of carrying out the charity’s aims. Where private benefits are more than incidental this might mean the organisation is set up for private, not public, benefit and so might not be charitable. Any fees paid for presenting lectures should continue to be donated to the Group!

**Reporting on MCG’s public benefit** We already explain our activities in the Trustees’ Annual Report to the Charity Commission but this information now needs to be set in the context of our aims to show how in practice the aims have been carried out for the public benefit. Trustees will also need to confirm that we have had regard to the public benefit guidance.

**Assessment** The Charity Commission decide, based on our Trustees Annual Report, if we are failing to meet the public benefit requirement. If we are failing, the Commission advise on what needs to change in order to meet the requirement, and give clear reasons and advice on what happens if it is not possible to meet the requirement. We will be not be expected to make changes overnight and the Commission will take reasonable account of how much time and resources might be needed to make changes in order to meet the requirement. If we fall foul of a public benefit decision, we can seek a review of that decision using the review procedures and, if necessary, can make a further appeal to the Charity Tribunal and, ultimately, to the courts. Having said that, the committee believe we already meet the public benefit requirement.

**Further information** See the Charity Commission website <http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/publicbenefit/default.asp>

### MRO workshop

There will be an MRO cave rescue workshop at G.B. Cave on May 17th, meeting at the Charterhouse Centre car park at 10am.

MRO would like to know how many are coming so if you are interested please let me know

Keith Knight  
MCG Rescue Warden

### Upper Flood Lectures

Tim Francis is continuing to give a series of Upper Flood presentations to external groups and events. The slides in the deck continually get updated so feel free to drop Tim a line if you need a copy for something, such as Julie's session at the Grampian.

Where a fee is being paid Tim donates all monies to the digging fund, so its all in a good cause. Recently he has lectured at the annual AONB Mendip

Wardens and volunteers dinner in the Burrington Inn. So that's to all the people who have an active interest in the above ground world of the Mendips and of course including the Charterhouse reserve.

Next stop was the Subterranea Britannica spring day conference at Imperial College on Saturday 12th April. And there is a Wells Rotary Club meeting coming up as well.



dip Wardens and volunteers dinner in the

## Lost swallet

Following the breakthroughs in Charterhouse Cave and Upper Flood Swallet, there is much interest in the remaining gap between the Charterhouse area and Blackmoor Valley.

There is always the possibility that the still-slumping sink in Velvet Bottom about 400m down-valley from the old Mendip Adventure Base should also drop into something interesting. It took a large amount of water after the 1968 flood. Vegetation had been visibly sucked into the hole.

As a practical guide to its location, walk on down Velvet Bottom having passed the 'adventure centre' on your right, initially the path hugs the drystone wall to your left. After about 300m it veers a little to the right toward the right-hand drystone wall, and then it is followed among banks of mining spoil. The valley bottom lowers on the left to form an elongated flat-floored depression. The path continues alongside and to the right of this depression. The slumping feature is clearly visible at the farthest down-valley south-easterly point in the depression floor.

We first noticed this feature a few days after the 1968 flood. It was immediately impressive but the surrounding soil was like a squelchy bog. Despite the presence of grass and other vegetation showing clearly that it had been sucked down into the hole we didn't fancy 'doing' a bog, and shortly afterwards we began work on Upper Flood Swallet which was guaranteed 'real' cave. The prospects in and around Velvet Bottom had momentarily gone crazy: Grebe (Middle Flood) Swallet looked interesting; Waterwheel (Lower Flood) Swallet was inviting. These two were tempting until we saw Upper Flood Swallet which simply demanded our attention. Manor Farm Swallet had been transformed. However, Velvet Bottom was our first love, so there we stayed.

Regardless of the foregoing, it would still be interesting for fresh eyes to look into Bone hole. It is an impressive site which may still hold possibilities. Anyone with half-an-hour to waste could also find peering into White Spot Cave in the Gorge interesting if it is still accessible. **Tony Knibbs**

I believe the feature which is being discussed is the end of the trench which the 18thC miners dug when they were reworking the older waste which filled the original valley.

The sediments in the central deepest part of the valley had the highest concentrations of lead. When the price of lead plummeted, the mining company dug out the best stuff before they went bust. I suspect all this info is in Stanton and Clarke's paper.

During the 1968 floods the water flowed (rushed) down the valley until it reached the end of the trench and then disappeared (photo, right). Whether it went down a swallet or just drained to the bottom of the sediments to emerge further down the valley is unknown (but I suspect the latter). Note that the water didn't flow all the way down the valley on the surface but resurged just below Charterhouse 1 Floor (smelter). I don't know where it sank below the breached embankment of the horseshoe bend.



A feature which intrigues me is the kink in the wall which bounds the south side of Velvet Bottom. It can be seen on Bill Chadwick's website to the east of the end of the trench (GR approximately 4950 5495). Why is the kink there? Presumably the wall builders were avoiding something and (if I remember rightly) there does appear to be a depression on the south side of the wall (which is on Mr Small's land).

Also, there is a leat and water channel which occur down-valley of the buddles associated with the Charterhouse I smelter. Could this have been channelling water to a swallet? **Joan Goddard**

## One Hundred – not out

by Tony Knibbs

Few and far between are the books on caving that have really grabbed me. I will always be a life-long advocate of "Subterranean Climbers" by Pierre Chevalier. From a few weeks ago that tome will have a challenger. I had not been too much enthused by prior announcement of "**Swildon's Hole 100 Years of Exploration**" by D.Irwin, A. Moody and A. Farrant; edited by J. Hanwell and R.Whitcombe (Wessex Cave Club, 2007). However, the published result attests to the success of this team.

Before I had read ten pages, I was warming to the narrative. The exploration story begins in 1901. I was only six months old when Sump One was first dived in 1936. Having been familiar with Swildon's Hole since my first visit to Mendip in 1953, I thought I more or less knew the story of its exploration. However, this book fills in gaps in my knowledge, which I never knew existed.

It was often the proud boast of cavers in the 1950s that they had done a 'Full Swildon's'; this was a trip to Sump Two, free-diving Sump One on the way. Today such a trip doesn't merit a mention because it is no longer done wearing linen boiler suits and woollen underwear. Using a carbide lamp didn't help much, either. I vividly remember finding several 'lost' stinkies during one particular passage of Sump One.

The narrative moves smoothly through the early phases of exploration, helped in no small measure by copious photos and survey extracts. Page design is easy on the eye, giving text and graphics room to advantageously complement each other.

It soon became obvious that putting down the book would be difficult. As soon as exploration moves beyond Tratman's Temple through the Forbidden Grotto and past the Blasted Boss, the story picks up great momentum as St Paul's and Paradise Regained and ultimately Swildon's Four are entered between 1953 -1957. This was a period on Mendip when every caver and his dog were eager to lend a hand with the rapidly extending exploration.

Barriers, imagined or real simply melted away as individuals from any and every club were drawn into the effort. WSG played a leading role in the effort to reach Swildon's Four, notably as coordinators. If you wanted to join in on a working trip, all you needed to do was to approach Len Dawes in the Hunters' and offer your services. There were always 'sherpa' trips to join. Enthusiasm and a willingness to perform an allotted task were all that it required. Friendships were quickly formed and 'heroes' began to emerge as progress became increasingly distant and difficult.

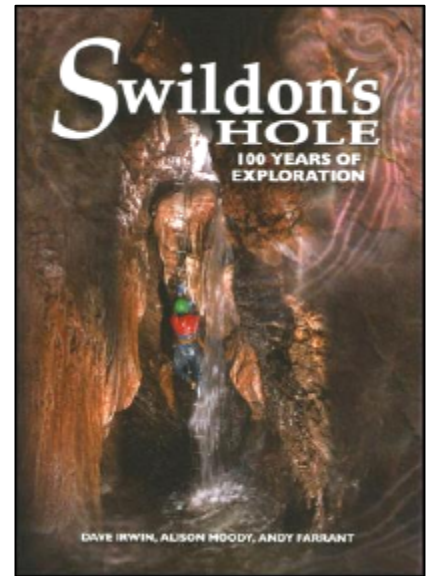
The name of Dennis Kemp will forever be associated with Blue Pencil Passage. Miners-style belt-mounted electric lamps had now become the standard form of lighting. This permitted longer trips and exploration of some particularly wet and nasty places such as the Mud Sump. However, they made passing the original Blue Pencil Squeeze a trifle difficult.

With the discovery of Swildon's Four streamway, it was largely divers who took up the gauntlet of exploration. However, Paradise Regained continued to provide a source of new discoveries with such gems as Shatter Series, Double Trouble Series and South East Inlets. Eventually the exploration story begins to reflect the extremely demanding progress in such areas as Renaissance Series, Watergate, Cowsh Aven Series and Passchendaele.

I was pleased to read that the last 2m of the Cowsh Aven climb was regarded as tricky – it was like emerging out into a funnel, with about as many obvious holds. The recently discovered link from Priddy Green Sink into Swildon's Four via Cowsh sounds well worth avoiding.

Just when you think the book cannot get much better; it does, when the folded Swildon's survey falls out at your feet. The geomorphology section is clearly written and well illustrated, but I mourn the loss of 'Old Red Sandstone' to 'Portishead Formation'.

For me personally the book is full of names and photos of people I remember so well and is a reminder of a golden age on Mendip. This book simply begs to be read by anyone interested in Mendip caving. There are many other caves which could benefit from such caring, detailed treatment.



## Keys deposits

A deposit of £20 is required for any key loaned to casual callers to the Cottage.

When giving out a key, take this deposit and agree how the borrower will a) return the key and b) collect the deposit. Preferably, take a £20.00 note or cheque and hang it on the key hook, to be exchanged for the key on return.

If this is inconvenient (eg the key is to be returned at a time when the cottage may not be open) it is acceptable to take a cheque which can then be destroyed when the key is collected from the letterbox.

It is advisable to place a note on the key hook explaining which key has been taken and the arrangement for return of the deposit.

## Maps API blog

There is now a map of Swildons, a link to the MCG Neverland video and a mug shot of Bill Chadwick all on a Google Blog (by invitation of Google)

<http://tinyurl.com/23m835>

## Yv's droppings

YR: "I'm the editor and I grab anything I can find"

JG: "Where's Devon gone?"

Anon: "Careful, mind my baubles."

## Cottage Projects

The committee are looking at several issues concerning the cottage. There is insufficient space for full details to appear in the newsletter so the following is a brief summary. For more details, or to help with any of the projects, please contact a committee member.

**COTAG keyfob system** The system has come to the end of its useful life. It is old technology and, although keyfobs can still be obtained, there are better and cheaper systems which are more suited to our needs. The new system being considered is manufactured by Access Control Technology. The controller would be either an ACTpro1000 or ACTpro2000 together with the HID ProxPro 5355 or HID MiniProx 5365 Reader. The cards would be HIDProx HS. You can find out more about these products on the ACT website <http://accesscontrol.ie/index>

Cost (taken from [securitywarehouse.co.uk/](http://securitywarehouse.co.uk/)) will be about £300. New fobs will be about £3.00 each. The old COTAG system will run in parallel with the new system until all COTAGs have expired.

**Fire alarm** 'The Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005' came into force on 1st October 2006. All non-domestic premises, including club huts, have to comply with the Order. Guidance on the order can be downloaded at [www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/151339](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/fire/pdf/151339) (144 pages, 3.6Mb) and any member who would like a copy of the committee's risk assessment should email Yvonne Rowe.

The most important outcome of the fire risk assessment is that we may need a fire alarm.

If any member, having read the guidance believes that we do not need to fit a fire alarm, or knows of a fire safety expert prepared to say that a fire alarm is not essential, then please contact the committee now!! You could save the MCG a lot of money!! Assuming that we need to proceed with a fire alarm, the cost will be between £500 - £1500

**Hot water – electric** The mains cable to the cottage appears to be a 25mm<sup>2</sup> cable and the length of the cable is approaching 150m. This suggests that our cable has a capacity of 30 amps, although there is a letter from Electricity Board confirming we have 45amps (10kW). This supply needs to be shared with storage heating, so additional immersion heaters may not be possible.

The immersion heaters are wired so that the booster switch in the kitchen turns on the top element. The off-peak relay turns on the bottom element, to heat the whole cylinder. It is proposed to alter the booster switch so that it turns on the bottom element, heating more water. This quick fix can be done for probably less than £100. Depending on how frequently the shower boost is used, the cost of the additional electric should be no more than £300 per year.

**Hot water – alternatives to electric** A gas boiler, using bottled propane gas, is the most

likely alternative to heating the water by electric. A gas boiler could supply hot water without having to wait for a tank to be heated or a fire to be lit. Based on 1000 bednights per year, this would require about 5 propane bottles for showers plus 1 bottle for cooking per year. Gas costs would increase from £60 per year to £360 per year. In order to have more than two showers, we would need to have a system boiler. Most recently, an Andrews CSC39 system boiler has been suggested. This would consist of a 44kW boiler fitted in the tackle store and an un-vented hot water cylinder. It could also run the basins and kitchen sink and will still be able to run a radiator circuit in the future. However, the cost (£3656.81 for the Andrews CSC39 gas boiler alone) may prove prohibitive.

**Solid fuel stove for Lounge (wood or coal)** Much of the heat from the fire is lost via the chimney, and it has been suggested that a stove could be a better option. A simple 10 kW stove with a backburner option is around £600, not including fitting (flue etc).

**Stove and Back-boiler for heating** A stove with backboiler can be used to provide space heating via radiators and domestic hot water. The Hunter 80 B multifuel stove costs £1073 (excluding flue and fitting). This stove gives a maximum of 54,600 BTU (16kW) to the water and 34,140 BTU (10 kW) to the room. This should give around 12.5kW to the water and 9 kW to the room when burning wood. For comparison, the Andrews gas boiler we are considering for the showers is 150,216 BTU (44kW) – more than twice the total output of this backboiler when burning wood.

**Upgrading the electric supply** We have a maximum of 45 amps or 10 kW of electric supplied to the cottage. When we last enquired about upgrading our power supply we were told the cost would be over £10,000 for a new transformer on the nearest HT line.

**Draught proofing** This is cheap to fit and could help reduce some of the heat loss from the cottage. The disadvantage is that if a draught strip makes a door or window difficult to close, we are left with a door jammed open - which is worse than a door with a small draught! As it is so cheap, we should probably just go ahead and do it anyway?

**Energy savings** The payback times, before energy savings amount to the same initial outlay, for energy improvements on an average three-bedroom terraced house are:

Cavity wall insulation 5 years; double glazing 124 years ; loft insulation 13 years.

Energy saving features could influence the time it takes the cottage to warm up on a Friday evening and help to make a more comfortable environment. So it isn't just



about cost effectiveness. It may be worth adding additional loft insulation and having some cavity wall insulation, but double glazing may prove to be just too expensive?

The attic is boarded but only the rear one-third is used for storage. It seems very sensible for us to add a layer of insulation on top of the boards over the rest of the area. This has been priced at £42.00

Cavity wall insulation will significantly reduce the amount of energy needed to heat the cottage and could reduce heating costs by 15%. It usually costs around £500, and can pay for itself in around ten years.

**Heat exchange/ventilation system** Heat Recovery Ventilation (HRV) recovers the heat from the outgoing warm air and transfers it to the incoming fresh air. This means that the energy that would otherwise be lost is used to heat the incoming air, helping to maintain a comfortable temperature. HRV systems can recover up to 95% of heat from the extracted stale air by using a counter flow heat exchanger. The outgoing and incoming air pass next to each other but do not mix. A mid-range HRV system with an air flow rate of 325 cubic metres per hour would cost £1500 excluding ducting. If it saved 10% of our annual electric bill, pay-back time would be some 15 years?

**Central heating (as opposed to background heating)** As noted above, the options for space heating are limited to gas or burning fuel (coal or wood). The Hunter 80 B multifuel stove would have a maximum 16kW when burning coal or 12.5kW burning wood available for central heating. 16 kW is insufficient to centrally heat the entire cottage, but is at least more than is available for electric storage heating. Installation costs (excluding the stove and backboiler) would be in the order of £1000, or less if

members do the installation.

**Additional gas supply** Ideally, we would want to install a large LPG tank for propane. Unfortunately, the regulations probably prevent this. However, we can have 4 propane bottles rather than 2 and this would be sufficient for a gas boiler for the showers.

**Plumbed-in hot water urn in kitchen** Using an urn for hot water in the kitchen would save the hot water in the tank for the showers. A 20 litre Burco LPG urn costs £222.00

**Renewable energy (solar, wind)** Charities may be able to apply for 50% of the cost for installing the following technologies.

*Active solar water heating*, using collectors on the roof to provide heat to a fluid that circulates and raises the temperature of the water in the hot tank. The advantage of this system is that the cottage is not used mid week, allowing 5 days to heat the tank.

*Solar photovoltaics* convert sunlight into electricity. Batteries or other forms of electricity storage can be used to store the electricity for periods when the output is low but the demand is high. For solar thermal systems, the hot water can be stored in well-insulated water tanks.

*Wind* Most small wind turbines generate direct current (DC) electricity. Wind systems can also be connected to the national electricity grid. No battery storage is required. Any unused or excess electricity may be able to be exported to the grid and sold to the local electricity supply company. This could be beneficial to us, as most of the time the cottage is unoccupied.



How times have changed

### Correction

#### MCG News issue 348

The fine photo of red stal in the geology article on page 2 is in fact part way down the 550m way, not in the Red Room. The photo of the veining is at Zebra Aven (hence its name). Both photos by Mark Tringham.

### They words

If you missed they words in the back room of the Hunters, fear not. You can now Listen Again thanks to Thrupelite® <http://tinyurl.com/3tl7qa> (“the sounds & sights of caving, with the discomfort and effort involved carefully processed out in the laboratories”)

Do you want to know how the bison bones got into Hunters Lodge Inn Sink? The bones are a source of much puzzlement but Thrupelite® has an elegant theory to explain their presence. This theory is supported by an exciting discovery made recently at the lower end of Cheddar Gorge - go to <http://tinyurl.com/3vc3lq>

### Stainsby's shaft

Following a successful digging trip in Stainsby's. Biff has excelled himself and installed some really neat scaffolding...

