



Web edition

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Founded 1954

MCG weekend at SWCC 18-19th Oct 2008

by Keith Knight

From the MCG: Geoff Beale, Brian Snell, Keith Thomas, Keith Knight. From the SWCC: Mick Davies. From Texas: Terry Holsinger (yes that's his real name).

We all arrived Friday night to an almost deserted SWCC cottage but this didn't last too long as a minibus turned up with a load of students from Kent University and another mini bus from Imperial College turned up at 2:30am; noisy sods.

Saturday: OFD1 Geoff, Brian, Keith T, Keith K, and Terry.

We finally got underway about 11:00ish. This was Terry's first trip into OFD 1 and probably his last as he was off back to the USA at the end the week. Geoff led the way pointing out many points of interest, including the strange fixed section of ladder called the Toast Rack - this amused our visitor from Texas. We found the water level was quite low as we set off up the streamway. Between the second and third pole crossing we were able to see the wire traverse high up the rift, where we would be later on in the trip when coming out. At the sump we took a detour up to the boulder choke before returning to the start of Lowe's Passage.

It was to be Keith T's proving trip so we sent him up first to rig a ladder at the start of Lowe's Passage and to lifeline our party up the ladder with Brian overseeing the rigging and lifelining. Geoff was chosen to be lifelined and about half way up the ladder he was asked to simulate unconsciousness by hanging on the rope. This was to give Keith some idea of what it's like trying to hold someone's full weight on a lifeline. He immediately got the idea, and with eyes bulging at the strain Geoff got back onto the ladder. We moved off on our way admiring the helictite formation know as The Fingers, sadly not looking as good as they were when first seen (presumably by Mr Lowe). With Geoff doing his admirable tour guide bit we set off and made our way through some tight rift passage and up the boulders into Roundabout Chamber. Here Keith T, who had brought a camera along, stopped to take some photos of the pretties and the crystals that cover the roof of the passage just beyond. There are some small but pure white decorations around the wall and some very nice straws and pillars which appear to be bent. Geoff gave the game away about finding the way out of the chamber as we stopped short of doing the complete loop. Terry hadn't taken the bait however and had already found the exit.

Soon we got to a bedding-plane crawl. Geoff said the accepted way to negotiate the crawl was to roll over and over like a log. We all adopted the hands and knees approach except for Brian, who took a short detour here but soon relocated the way on.

After a short break we moved on into Rawl Series, taking care around the deep pits in the floor. We reached Pi chamber and descended through an unpromising little hole in the boulder choke and down a nasty awkward drop. From here a short section of passage leads on to another tight bit but after a little gardening we all got through. The way on was down a nicely polished tube, descending at a sharp angle. Geoff suggested that the best way to negotiate this was to just slide in a controlled descent. It was very smooth and would be quite difficult if you needed to try to climb back up it. As the passage starts to go horizontal you can hear the roar of the main streamway below and in front is the steel cable which gives the traverse it's name.

Clipping into the steel cable we climbed down to the ledges above the main streamway. Here a dilapidated fixed iron ladder leads on to the jammed boulder

From the Editor



A good number of articles have arrived for this month's newsletter – some from new members and some from longer-standing members. Thanks to you all.

Sadly we couldn't make it to the February members' weekend – not due to bad weather at Arnside (we haven't had **any!**), but due to the weather on the way down and particularly in North Somerset. Let's hope we have more luck for the March weekend. Unfortunately other planned events had to be cancelled too such as novice trips, SRT training and jacket spuds!

Yvonne

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some considerable height above the main streamway. Geoff said we were about 40ft above the stream at this point but it looked more to me. Here we saw a party making their way in the steamway below who were a little surprised to hear voices from above. At this point there is an iron girder section helping to prop up the boulder and also serve as a very narrow walkway which we were able to use, clipping our cowstails into the traverse wire as security. Geoff went first and showed Keith T how to negotiate the traverse, again on nice new steel cables but with very smooth and polished ledges to walk on. At the end of the Wire Traverse Keith T took more pictures and then we set off along the passage that meandered above the streamway and finally closes down to a crawl. Beyond, you reach the shaft below the Dug Out Link. Once up through the Dug Out we reached some more crawling-size passage which descends gradually to meet the main entry series of OFD 1. The floor of polished wet flowstone did make for an easy descending slide and led on through to the last muddy puddles. A short stomp back to the entrance and we were back out into the glorious grey South Wales afternoon. All agreed it was an enjoyable trip.

Sunday: OFD 2 Geoff, Brian, Keith T, Keith K, and Mick from the SWCC

Geoff was struggling with a sore knee and lagged behind a bit as we followed the rather wet walk up the hillside to the entrance. We went into Gnome Chamber for a look round and Keith T took photos. We then pushed on stopping for a short time as Keith T went down to a chamber to take more photos. Next we descended to Salubrious Passage. At the corkscrew Geoff was getting too much trouble from his knee and had to stop. So the rest of us went on down to the Cross Rift and on to the Trident and Judge formations. We continued following this passage down to a fine white formation in the roof. Keith T took some good photos of this. We carried on along the passage, a typical weaving, winding stream-filled rift passage of the type you often find in OFD, until it finally closed down at a bolder choke. There may have been a way on but nobody was prepared to push it so we all returned to meet Geoff at the cork screw again. We were all keen to get away not too late so we stomped back to the entrance and out again to a wet and windy hillside.

A good weekend, as you always find in Wales.

First trips of 2009 – bitterly cold caving on Mendip

by Geoff Rodwell

Bitter cold weather accompanied the first members' weekend of 2009. Arriving at the Cottage Friday midday, 02/01/09, Mendip was presented in freezing mist and the photogenic sight of heavy frost on bushes. Ice frost fell from the trees repeatedly onto otherwise clear roads, forming millimetres of compacted slippery white 'snow' under each tree; a most unusual sight.

Meeting up with Jeremy and with introductions made with other MCG members at the Cottage and digging invitations kindly declined (another time perhaps), our group consisting Angus, Debbie, Emma, Jeremy, Alex and Geoff headed off as planned to SRT Thrupe Lane.

Thrupe Lane – Marble Steamway Perseverance Pitch looked decidedly narrow after Christmas pudding. Once down, and having found our way to Marble Steamway, Debbie arrived first to achieve her ambition to rig the nicely exposed traverse and Y hang of Lateral Pitch. There was no delay in the spray below the pitch and everyone was soon on the long haul up through the narrow jagged rock, seemingly unique to this Mendip cave.

Friday night was 'squeeze box' time as Emma and Debbie successfully negotiated Upper Flood, in the box at the same time!

Swildon's – Round Trip Saturday morning and ice was firmly on the inside of the bedroom windows and an over suit carelessly left in the car had turned to a frozen lump of stone. Wetsuits were donned for a Swildon's Round Trip and the team set off lead by Angus. Jeremy had weekend commitments but friend Dave joined the group.

Having lifelined everyone down the 20, it was to the sumps, bailing and siphoning to complete our way to the next obstacle, The Squeeze. After valiant efforts, probable cracked rib, chest hair left on rock, the squeeze finally defeated one of our group, necessitating a party split and back-tracking return journey of Emma, Angus and Dave. Remaining members headed to Sump One and quickly negotiated this to find the ladder and lifeline completely undisturbed; a very quiet Saturday in Swildon's.

On exiting the warmth of the cave and walking back across fields, our wet gear froze solid with ice by the time the cars were reached. The temperature was probably minus 10°C.



Jeremy on Lateral Pitch, Thrupe Lane



Angus, Steve and Steve at GB



Ascending Great Chamber, GB



Alex, Tony, Emma and Debbie at GB

GB – Great Chamber Sunday, a sunny trip to GB Great Chamber with members Tony, Steve and Steve joining us for the day required a split into two parties due to access numbers. We parked at the adjacent farm for security and gladly paid £1 per car at the house. This was our first trip to Great Chamber. Some of us had been to Bat Passage previously, but this time we diverted upwards through the boulder choke with the aid of an assisted hand line (a small ladder would also have helped).

Great Chamber proved enjoyable with interesting formations particularly as you climb up slope. Another visit is firmly required as regrettably water fogged the camera. Otherwise this proved an uneventful trip and easy exit, straight back to the Cottage to help clean up and say goodbyes.

A great start to 2009 and the New Year; good company caving, good company around the blazing MCG lounge fire and a nice pub evening. Our thanks to all for making this weekend and in particular for the cottage “hot showers”

Yorkshire trip 21-23/1/08

by Steve Clarke; photos by Russ Porter and Angela Clulow

Team: Jeremy Gilson, Angus Leat, Debbie Lambert, Russ Hunt, Russ Porter, Giles Martin, Dangerous John Williams, Begoña Chamorro-Ramos, Angela Clulow, Steve Clarke

Friday - Sell Gill Holes We all met at the Inglesport cafe for a quick yarn and a cuppa, and once we were organised we went off to find our home for the weekend – the YSS hut at Helwith Bridge. Once we had fought for the best beds we set off to Sell Gill where we split into two teams and hit the cave via two entrances. Being the beginner, I did the cave by ladders and the others did it by SRT - I just tried to take it all in. Jeremy did a great job of leading our group and needless to say got us in and out the cave in one piece. After a nice shower we all ended up in the local boozier for a few jars!



Saturday - White Scar Cave White Scar was exceptionally cold today. This made the swim at the beginning extremely inviting.....NOT!

Anyway, what a great cave and very much an eye-opener for a beginner like me. On our return to ground level, passing through the show cave we had to do our bit and pose for the Chinese tourists whilst they took endless photos - when all we wanted to do was have a nice shower and get into warm clothes. I don't think I've ever been so cold getting changed in the car park, with snow on the ground and a lovely Yorkshire wind! Begoña kindly offered to make us all dinner and after an hour or so she rustled up a great paella and stew, washed down with a few bottles of vino to help us sleep. Honest!



Sunday - Yordas Cave Oh my god - how cold was it today! Today was an SRT trip so it was a quick learning curve for me, but after taking it all in on Friday I found it straightforward enough. After a 30 meter drop into the top of the cave we had a nice lie in the snow melt-water (not nice!). Jeremy and Debbie continued down the waterfall and out the bottom and the rest of the team came out the same way. On our return to the surface we were very glad for a car with a heater!

Despite the cold, it was a great trip, and many thanks to Jeremy, Angus and Debbie for leading a brilliant weekend and getting us home in one piece!

Upper Flood Swallet progress

(adapted from the Newsgroup message of Bill Chadwick)

03/01/09 Bill Chadwick, Mike Waterworth, Tim Francis, Mike Richardson

Upper Flood was fine - water levels were pretty low but on the chilly side (6°C). Though looking frozen, the lid was persuaded to open without much trouble in and out, but our wet gloves stuck to the rim. We did not need to resort to Mike's gas stove. We emerged to a very fine crisp starry night with the grass sparkling in our lights - the muddy track was rock hard

Digging was done at the Rift Series sandy tube - a bit of progress but air less fresh than before, perhaps due to outside weather conditions. Mike W and I explored the new Rift passage, Tim and Mike R returned to poke in the gloom at the end of the East Branch. Its a possible dig site but less strategic than the Sandy Tube as it heads back towards the sump.

Mike W climbed up the small hole behind the boulder at the first West Passage kink, he reports that it did not look promising, even after a bit of hammer and chisel work (tools from Brian's Eye left in place here, some more tools still at Chuckle Choke). I believe the left side wall of the West Passage dig could be made safe by walling it up to the ceiling using stone from outside. The roof above the way on down is more of a problem some scaffolding will be needed there.

What looked like more than 1" of snow under the trees up high on Mendip was actually accumulations of frost fallen from the branches. My car read - 8°C on the way back from the Hunters to the cottage.

Stainsby's Shaft progress

(adapted from the Newsgroup messages of Biff Frith)

17/01/09 Biff, Bill Chadwick, Ed Waters, Mick Norton, Paul Ketcher

Stainsby's dig went really well. After a few hours installing scaffolding, we started digging and voids started appearing almost straight away. We do not have to haul the spoil up the shaft; instead we are just stashing it in the voids.

We have got down to a very large boulder that has a large void under it but it is holding back tons of infill; the problem is that it is at a poor angle with only a small point of contact against the wall. If it slips, ouch! I think we can dig down the side of the boulder and then support it from the below, then we should make rapid progress as we can see for about 3 or 4 metres down in the direction where the

draft is coming from. Behind us on the other side of the boulder is loads of stacking space. The draft was very strong and cold, becoming stronger as the day progressed. Although it was windy (there was a low pressure coming in) there must be a lot of void down there to take so long for the pressure to equalise.

31/01/09 Biff, Bill Chadwick and Mick Norton

A good digging session in Stainsby's. We protected the next down-section with scaffolding. A few more rotten timbers were uncovered. We could see the way on for several feet between the rocks. The stream was running quite nicely - a dye test is needed to see if it connects to Upper Flood Swallet.

Stocks Hole, Stoke St Michael

MCG were contacted recently by a resident of Stoke St Michael. She wanted to know what was causing "steam" to rise in a field at the back of her property in Coal Pit Lane. The short answer was: probably Stoke Lane Slocker!

With permission, Doug Harris and Mark Ward went to view this "blowhole". They quickly identified the source of the steam as Stock's Hole.

Stocks Hole was an early MCG dig in the 1960's. Located 80 yards west of Stoke Lane, the entrance (a 15' deep shaft) entered a small chamber from which a steep descent in loose boulders led to a final choke. The entrance was opened during quarry clearance operations about 1950; MCG explored it in 1961. The end is close to Tributary Passage in Stoke Lane Slocker, and a connection was proved when MCG blasted there about 1962. Spring flowers bloom a week or two early in the warm draught from the entrance.

Subsequently, a 'gentleman's agreement' came into being and access was not opened directly into Stoke 2 to protect the formations from vandalism and preserve a reasonable caving trip.

In the early 1990s the West London Caving Club (presumably unaware of the gentleman's agreement) allegedly forced a connection between Stocks Hole and Stoke Lane Slocker. This information was never published for some reason!

Doug and Mark found a "West London Caving Club dig 1993" metal plaque in the entrance to another cave in the quarry - a dig by the pond.

If the proposed holiday park at Stoke Lane goes ahead, this could be a very useful connection to Stoke Lane Slocker, as an entrance could be easily dug (assuming the landowner agreed!).

Important note: The landowner is concerned that no one else from the caving world makes contact. Please respect the owner's wishes and do not attempt to visit Stocks Hole.



05/02/05 before heavy snow arrived



07/02/08 Burrington Combe closed

Let it snow, let it snow, let it snow

Photos by Mike Moxon

The best snow for 20 years, with up to 20cm falling in Somerset.....



07/02/08 Caving or snowboarding?



07/02/09 Walking to UFS



07/02/09 Ed waters dives for cover



07/02/09 Giles heads for UFS



07/02/09 Mike R enters UFS



07/02/09 Giles takes off



07/02/09 Powder on Charterhouse



07/02/09 That broke it!



07/02/09 Rakes venting warm air



07/02/09 What a day



05/02/09 Before the heavy snow

CHERT leaflet

A new leaflet has been published by CHERT, a group of archaeologists to which I belong. It is subtitled "An illustrated introduction to the history and archaeology of remains that can still be seen in the landscape of Charterhouse on Mendip, Somerset".

There are a couple of minor mistakes on the accompanying map (aren't there always?!) but the text and photos provide some useful information.

Help yourself to a copy from the library.

If anyone would like one but cannot pick it up from the cottage, please send me a stamped self addressed envelope (at least 212mm x 101mm).

Joan Goddard

St Cuthbert's

I have been confirmed by the BEC as a leader for St Cuthbert's Swallet. (I used to be an MCG leader for the cave back in the 90's.)

If anyone is interested in a visit to the cave we have a trip in this years meets program. I am happy to run other trips where required if this gets fully booked.

Jeremy Gilson

MCG families weekend 12/13/14 June 2009

by Julie Hesketh

I've been talking to a few members with kids and we are planning a family weekend at the cottage over the weekend of 12/13/14 June. The idea is to have a relaxed weekend (not on a busy members weekend) when members can bring their families (babies, toddlers and kids of all ages encouraged) for a couple of days of outdoor activities (caving, beach, walking and the Hunters Inn garden!)

So far Ben Cooper and his 2 boys (aged 5 and 3), Andrew Brander and his 4 year old boy and 2 year old girl, myself with Eva (currently 5) as well as Natalie Field and Tom with Jo and Ben (who are teenagers) are hoping to be there and this email is to let you know about it and to encourage you to join in (or to let you know so you can give the cottage a wide berth that weekend if it isn't your kind of thing!)

We don't have definite plans yet but please note that I have asked Mike to book us into the cottage and that we earmark the weekend as a family weekend so please can the rest of you help us keep the weekend pretty low-key and the cottage relatively quiet.

If there are any more families that wish to join us, please let me know - everyone is welcome. Also if there is anyone else who is prepared to help out on a kiddies caving trip and help build sand-castles, please shout. Any offers of small caving kit also gratefully received!



Family trip in Goatchurch

Advance notice of Annual General Meeting 2009

The MCG AGM will be held at Nordrach Cottage on Sat 28/03/09 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 (Clevelys, Upper Radford, Paulton, Bristol BS39 7PU) with the signatures of full members proposing and seconding at least 25 days before the meeting (2nd 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.

Mike Richardson, MCG Hon Secretary

*Nomination forms can be downloaded from the MCG website at:

mendipcavinggroup.org.uk/sections/about/forms%20and%20leaflets.html

After the AGM there will be a free buffet lunch with refreshments in our marquee. *Please let Mike Richardson or Linda Milne know you will be attending the AGM so that we know how many to cater for.* We will have the MCG Hidden Earth stand on display.

The Annual Dinner will be held at [Coxley Vineyard](#), Glastonbury Road, Wells from 7.30pm - midnight. There will be a coach picking up from the Cottage, the Hunters and Wells. Don't forget to book your seats in advance if possible.

If you wish to book accommodation at the hotel please call 01749 670285 or email max@orofino.freereserve.co.uk

Annual Dinner - price £21.50. Cheques and menu choices to Linda Milne by 21/03/09, please.

For menu details, please see page 7 of this Newsletter.



**MENDIP CAVING GROUP
ANNUAL DINNER**

28th March 2009
Coxley Vineyard, near Wells
7.30pm - midnight
[\(Rooms available\)](#)



Raffle prizes

MENU

Homemade Cream of Asparagus Soup;
 Penne Pasta with Cream and Tomato Sauce with a Hint of Chilli;
 Ardennes Pate served on a Bed of Mixed Leaves, complimented
 with a Sweet Onion Chutney and Melba Toast;

-- 0 --

Pan-fried Chicken with a White Wine & Mushroom Sauce;
 Pave of Salmon, Grilled and Served with a Cream and
 Wholegrain Mustard Sauce;

Roasted Loin of Pork with Apple Sauce;

Mushroom Stroganoff Served on a Bed of Saffron Risotto;
 All Served With Freshly Prepared Vegetables and Potatoes

-- 0 --

Home made Tiramisu;

Vanilla Cheese Cake with a Fruits of the
 Forest Compote;

Warm Sticky Toffee Pudding;

-- 0 --

Coffee and Mints



Tickets
 £21.50
 Coach ticket
 extra

There will be a coach from the Cottage (7pm), The Hunters(7.10pm) and Wells (7.20pm) and returning after the meal. All times approx. Please book your seats in advance if possible.

Cheques and menu choices to Linda Milne by 20th March 2009, please



Group Headquarters

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Cottage Bookings All Groups (Members or Guests) should be booked via Mike Richardson

Mendip Caving Group
Reg charity no. 270088

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Group information

Weekly Meeting	At The Hunters Lodge, Somerset, first Friday of month from 9pm
Monthly Meeting	At the Group HQ usually on the first Fri/Sat/Sunday of the month
On-line Meeting	http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/mendip-caving-group/
Group websites	www.m-c-g.org.uk and www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk
Cottage Fees	per night: MCG members, members' children, SWCC, NPC £ 2.50 per night: Guest clubs and member's guests £ 5.00
Camping Fees	As for Cottage Fees: MCG, SWCC, NPC: £ 2.50. Guests: £ 5.00
MCG Subs 2009	Full or Probationary member: £30.00. Associate member: £15.00
BCA Subs 2009	Club Caver £16.00, Club Non-caver £5.00, DIM £pay to BCA

MCG Calendar 2009 updates at mendipcavinggroup.org.uk/sections/caving/meets.html

Date	Location	Caving trips	Other activities	Contact
Various	Mendip	Digging in Upper Flood/Stainsby's/Battery		Check Newsgroup for updates
Feb	S Wales		Away trip	Meet at SWCC
Feb 21	S Wales	OFD1 and OFD2		Geoff Beale
Feb 21	Mendip		Mid-month meet	
Feb 21	Mendip	Swildons - sump 2		Jeremy Gilson
Mar	Mendip		Members Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
Mar 7	Mendip		Cottage work	Doug Harris
Mar 7	Mendip		Pub meal	
Mar	Mendip		Members Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
Mar 28	Mendip		10.30am AGM	Mike Richardson
Mar 28	Mendip	post-AGM trips		Various - see next entries
Mar 28	Mendip	St Cuthberts		Jeremy Gilson
Mar 28	Mendip	Shatter Cave		Ed Waters
Mar 28	Mendip		Annual Dinner	Linda Milne
Mar 29	Mendip		Archaeo. walk	Yvonne Rowe
Apr	Mendip		Members Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
Apr 4	Mendip	Loxton /Shute Shelve		Doug Harris
Apr	Yorks		Away Trip	Meet at YSS
Apr	Yorks	SRT		Jeremy Gilson
May	Mendip		Members Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
May 02	Mendip		Mexican eve	
May	Yorks		Away Trip	
May 23	Yorks	Gapping Gill		Martin Rowe
Jun	Mendip		Members Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
Jun 06	Mendip	Eastwater		

Cottage bookings

When under-18s are present, members should co-operate with teachers / scout leaders with respect to sleeping arrangements

For latest updates go to mendipcavinggroup.org.uk/sections/cottage/availability.html

Booking Group	Arrive	Depart	Nights	Beds	Rooms
Pete Mason (Hades)	Fri 20/02/09	Sun 22/02/09	2	20	2
John Crowsley	Thu 26/02/09	Fri 27/02/09	1	5	1
SSCC Scouts	Fri 27/02/09	Sun 01/03/09	2	18	2
MCG Members Weekend	Fri 06/03/09	Sun 08/03/09	2		
Majendie-Steeps Scout Unit	Fri 20/03/09	Sun 22/03/09	2	12	2
AGM Members Weekend	Fri 27/03/09	Sun 29/03/09	2		
MCG Members Weekend	Fri 03/04/09	Sun 05/04/09	2		
MCG Members Weekend	Fri 01/05/09	Mon 04/05/09	3		
MCG Members Weekend	Fri 05/06/09	Sun 07/06/09	2		
MCG Family Weekend	Fri 12/06/09	Sun 14/06/09	2		
MCG Members Weekend	Fri 03/07/09	Sun 05/07/09	2		