

MCG NEWS

Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

Departure Lounge, Upper Flood (by Charlie Allison)

Number 358
August 2009

mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Founded 1954

Titan to Speedwell through trip 20th June 2009

by Geoff Rodwell; photos by Dave Tyson (WCG) and Geoff Rodwell

Leaders Roy Rogers, Masson CG Keith Mason, YSS
NAMHO Geoff Rodwell and members of Wirral Caving Group
Delegates Dave Tyson, Mary Stenhouse, Ian Jack and Paul Fairfield

Being possibly (??) the only member of MCG at the NAMHO 2009 conference (National Association of Mining History Organisations), Matlock, their varied list of organised trips over the 20th/21st June weekend offered the opportunity for just five persons to abseil Titan and quite exceptionally (with very kind permission from the owner) exit via Speedwell show cave, mingling with the tourists taking their boat ride. By good fortune I made the Titan list.

Then while recently caving again in Yorkshire (Simpson Pot to the duck, White Scar swim and Alum Pot) a chance conversation in the YSS cottage with Keith, one of their committee members, revealed the surprising fact that he had been asked by NAMHO to rig Titan so we would likely meet up in the Peaks in two weeks time!

A phone call unexpectedly followed - could I pass on the message that everyone should remember to bring a tackle bag for their SRT gear for after the main descent and bring a belt for cow tails as there is a later exposed traverse.

Perhaps adding to Keith's suggestions would be to mention a shorty wet suit and long wet suit socks AND a fleece over the top (ie leaving the knees free in case of an unplanned climb back up) or alternatively a neofleece, that you take both SRT suitable AND wet suit type gloves and don't forget a bit of string to pull your kit bag through the crawls. It gets cold waiting at the bottom of Titan as folk descend, the way on is certainly muddy, then there is the final exit wades. Larger build cavers may want to enquire about the boulder choke as it is a very long climb out if this is not passed!

Finally of course there is one part of the exit that can (and occasionally does) sump, where bailing is more or less impossible and may turn you back.

So a Speedwell car park meet for the five of us and two leaders, a drive up to Titan's mined entry



From the
Guest
Editor

(Journalists
always use a
picture of them-
selves when a bit
younger)

As you get older it is said that Policemen look younger. I have the problem that now cavers are doing the same thing—see page 3!

Well this will be my last Newsletter. It has been very interesting and enjoyable but as I do not take part in caving, digging activities and know very few of the active members these days I have had the problem that I am somewhat remote from the club which has made it a bit difficult even though I read the Newsgroup avidly. Anyway thanks for your attention. **Richard Woollacott**



Newsletter
Editor
needed

Either a guest editor to do one or two issues or a permanent one with a position on the Committee.

Apply to Jeremy Gilson

In this issue

- 1-2 Titan to Speedwell
- 3 My first Caving Trip
- 4-5 Rescue practice
- 6 OFD
- 7-8 Cave Surveys
- 9 Hidden Earth
- 10 Group information

shaft and 4 ½ hour trip underground. NAMHO provided new Beal 10mm ropes (washed 3 times) which proved really slow, but only deceptively so for the first 10 metres, then WOOSH, no stopping. An immediate change from a Petzl 'Freino' braking krab to a Raumer 'Handy' solved the problem for the main descent.

Once down the 50 metre mined entrance shaft there is a short passage where the main ropes were wetted in a large puddle, then it was on to the pitch head to unexpectedly find Dave 'Moose' Nixon, who discovered Titan, hanging on rope ready to drop down for a digging trip. He kindly rigged the first Y of our 80 metre (long stretch required and large krabs).



descent taking down the 60 metre rope bag; his faint light providing a real indication of the massive cave depth.

The Event Horizon, the natural landing point of the 80m rope is a good place to pause and demands a wander around its traverse on another trip. The rope dropped directly onto the point where a P hanger at your feet allows an additional rebelay for rigging down slope to the final free-hang re-belay.

Roy rigged the 60m over the lip and to the final rebelay for the descent. This was straight forward, a simple changeover suspended from short cowtail, slightly confused by existing rigging for the digging team off to one side, but their extra line down allowed Keith and Mary to make a tandem descent for fun. Rigging from the Event Horizon upper P hanger left the 60m just one metre short for the bottom, which proved fine to touch ground being elastic and interesting to watch everyone's solution how to undo a Stop !

Then followed as advertised a twisting boulder choke descent, mud crawls, stream, traverse and miners stemples and dated names on cave walls. A complete description requires better knowledge and a survey, neither of which I regretfully have as I write.

The exit proved a really nice conclusion. A mined straight passage lit with lights leads directly to the public show cave. Part way we detoured for one final point of interest, a ladder climb down and under the canal to see the original 'bung' holding the water in.

Entering the show cave we were suitably met by camera flashes, a very full group of hard-hat wearing interested tourists and their guide. He kindly made the offer that a couple of us perch on the back of his boat, with a couple more hanging on behind dragged through the water, with the idea others wait for the next boat. As a group we opted for the more spectacular final but long wade out following behind, where by necessity we all had to pass the incoming tourists at the half way station, as each boat completely fills the passageway.

A wonderful trip that certainly needs repeating. Titan is indeed spectacular, an excellent vertical play ground linking to an extensive system. Personally speaking, far easier than Alum Pot's 65m 'direct route' as it is not in daylight, when my fear of heights kicks in.

Sincere thanks to NAMHO, Keith and Roy for excellent guidance and rigging and special thanks to Speedwell show caves for exceptionally allowing us to exit and for the company and laugh's with Wirral Caving Group.

Wells museum

In the last newsletter (p7) it was stated that the display of material from Bone Hole and Hunters Lodge Inn Sink was to start on 18th July. This has had to be postponed until (probably) the 26th.

New email address Jeremy Gilson —

My first caving trip - Swan Mine

by Sophie Brander - aged 1.973 (10 days before my second birthday)

We went to St Saviour's Summer Fayre in Coalpit Heath on Saturday 27th June. Daddy helped to run the skittles stall, while I slept (it was very hot) and Thomas ran round the field all afternoon.

On Sunday Thomas was ill (too much sun?), so he missed the church service. He seemed to be better by lunchtime, so the whole family

(Mummy, Daddy, Thomas [4.5 years], Matthew [8 weeks] and me) went to Bathford with our friends - Natalie Field, Tom, Ben and Jo - to go caving. Unfortunately Thomas was unwell again by the time we got there, so Mummy had to stay with Thomas and Matthew in the [very hot] car, though I think they sneaked off to the pub for some of the time. It is very unlike Thomas to miss some caving and I was looking forward to him helping me on my first caving trip. It would also have been



Mummy's and Matthew's first trip, but somehow Mummy always seems to find some method to escape from the caving trips.

We walked to the Mine, just across the road. The difference in temperature was quite amazing as soon we got under the trees. As we approached the entrance it got even cooler; a nice change from the heat of the day. I did



not like the look of the small entrance and for a minute it looked as if I was going to refuse and go back to the car, but with some kind words from Jo I was happy[ish] to be carried over the rough floor of stones and man-handled through the small entrance hole. I could have walked through really, but everyone else had to crawl - it was fun to see them struggle.



Once inside it opened up into a big chamber with a roadway down the middle. There were a few collapses we had to climb round and again I was rightly concerned about these. We walked down the roadway for about half a mile, looking at the various old tools, saws,



files, chains and bits of half-cut stone. It was not easy - look at the size of the ruts in the road! However I soon gained confidence, stopped holding Daddy's hand and ran off. We stopped for a small picnic and had some crisps and cake. At the end we found a complete wooden crane. It was a long way for me to walk and there were some very tricky bits, but think I enjoyed it overall though! Next time I will have to show Thomas what he missed.

The rescue practice that never was!

by Richard Woollacott

Saturday 8th August was scheduled for a rescue practice down Waterwheel Swallet with it being arranged for Martin Grass of Mendip Cave Rescue to bring along some rescue gear for us to look at and to observe our rescue practice and lend a helping hand if required.. When it came to it however there was only 6 of us, which when you deduct the intended victim (Andrea Russe) and me (strictly surface these days), far too few to be able to run a practice rescue. Martin was very good though and showed us the rescue equipment he and brought and demonstrated its use.



He started by saying that a typical rescue is a call out on a Saturday evening (just as he has finished his bath) to haul someone up Swildon's 20 foot. There tends to be about 6 callouts per year of which 1 will be serious. Some callouts are to find someone apparently lost, but they often turn out to be safe and well somewhere normal. On long rescues, the rescue party are selected often by going to a club with a particular knowledge of the cave involved. Thus it is important that cavers are sent who have the skill and experience to be a real help. Even people living far from the rescue sit are useful on a long rescue as replacements for the initial rescuers at the end of their stint. The calling out

of MCR has to be done through the Police to make it official and for insurance cover purposes

The Hey phone is a means of communicating from the surface. The underground phone has a very very long wire aerial that has to be stretched out in the cave. The surface receiving end is not as a rule placed by the cave entrance as one might expect since they have over time established the best position for it in respect of various caves and now have maps that often show that the best position for radio reception can be in surprising places.



The Comfort box contains an initial First Aid kit and other goodies. Until the 80's it also contained a packet of Woodbine cigarettes but presumably political correctness caused these to be removed! Also carried are elastic straps and leg splints. Now some trained Team Leaders are authorised to administer Morphine.

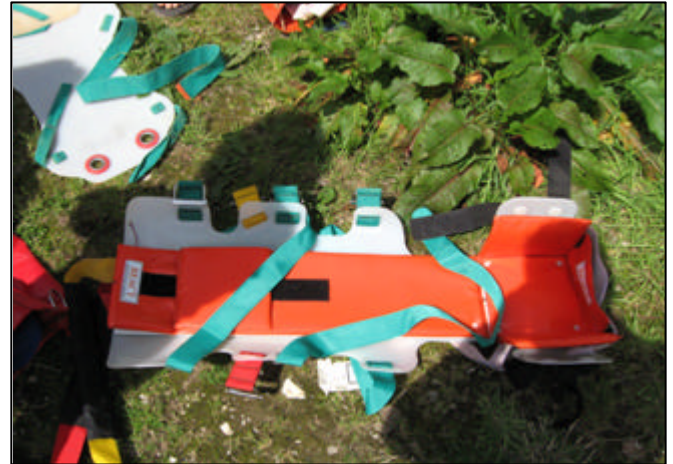
Entonox is a pain killing gas (also used in dentistry and pregnancy) the

effect of which was described as having a drink or two.

We then tried out the Drag sheet and the stainless and aluminium stretcher which can be used with or with or without a back support. Great fun was had in strapping in the volunteers though at times 'the naughty bits' did cause problems.



We then visited the MCR stores situated by the Belfry. Here saw the Hot Air Kit known as a Dragon which supplies warmed air to the patient. Also we tried out a new high tech stretcher with a different body in it.



The store is compact to put it mildly but contains a vast amount of equipment all contained in plastic well labelled sacks. The quantity of equipment is necessary since there is sometimes two or on the odd occasion three rescues on at the same time.

We had a really interesting and fascinating morning. Our thanks to Martin for it and for his tolerance of our lack of numbers. I believe that another rescue practice will be organised later in the year when one trusts more people will attend. **RLW**

Thank you Richard for your write up and thanks to the few that did turn out. I think I can speak for those who turned out that the instruction on the surface was educational and gave a glimpse into the reality of a rescue and the large amount of gear that has to be transported under ground in a real rescue of an injured caver. But just walking around the car park carrying the stretcher does not prepare you for the real thing.

As Richard has said, I was thinking of trying again to get a rescue practice in for our beginners before the end of the year but other commitments keep me away for the October and November club meets. December is usually the Christmas do and January is a non started. So February 2010 looks like the first opportunity for me to organise a rescue practice. But should any body wish to have a go before February by all means feel free.

Many thanks again to those who showed interest sorry we did not go under ground. Thanks also to Linda who had her own mini rescue on the way to Priddy Green.

Keith Knight MCG rescue warden



**Cottage Work
Weekend 5th/6th
September**

AGAIN

The Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has appointed Andy Mallender as project officer.

For details visit:



http://www.mendiphillsaonb.org.uk/show_partnership.php?id=8

Another in our series of trips to the OFD system in South Wales

by Geoff Beale

Trip Recruits (in no particular order) Geoff Beale, Keith Knight, Andrea Russe, Kate Stilwell, Miguel Tome Mejias, Brenda Wybrow.

After several false starts getting a weekend away, we settled for the weekend of 17-19 July. It being Wales the weather was as usual - very wet.

Saturday 18th July

Brenda walked up to the entrance with us and then carried on for a good walk across the moors. However sat morning brought forth not the hoped for bright weather but more low cloud and drizzle. We opted for the trudge up to top entrance (OFD 2) and a leisurely stroll through the dry top series taking in the delights of Chasm Passage and Gnome Passage.

We moved on to the Corkscrew through large boulders made shiny black with all the savers who had slithered through it over the rears. Andrea who is one of our newer members took a short cut through the boulders that was denied to the rest of the team who are slightly larger. A short scramble down an off vertical passage led us to an active streamway known as Salubrious Streamway. We all splashed happily down to a small section that required a small bridging technique to negotiate until Andrea who is only 4ft 11 inches thought her legs were not long enough to straddle across the passage. However when shown where to place her feet she had no problems. Soon we turned off left at a sandy junction leaving Salubrious Streamway to visit the Trident Formations and just past that a beautiful stalagmite boss known as the Judge. We went past these pretties and walked on to the cross roads junction with Swamp Creek.

Here we turned left and splashed upstream in very cold water to marvel at the unnamed formations just a few metres upstream. The formations here are pure white and rival any that I have seen in other cave systems. Back to the crossroads and climbed up on the left and after a short walk viewed some very large stalagmites hanging down the Knave Pitch. Then again retreating back to the crossroads junction with Swamp Creek where Keith led Miguel Andrea and Kate down a tight sinuous passage to the head of a large waterfall that empties this stream into the main OFD Streamway about 60-70 feet below. This was the turnaround point of the trip and we made our way out with Keith leading. Back at the entrance the rain had cleared up and was slightly sunny (strange weather).

Sunday 19th July

Weather again very wet with showers interspersed with sunny periods. We opted for a trip into the lower active entrance to see if the water levels in the main stream would enable us to traverse up to the Boulder Choke and the connections to OFD 2.

Miguel and I crossed Pluto's Pool at the foot of the Toastrack Ladder and carried on to its junction with the main streamway. At the junction we were greeted with foam marks at least a metre above Miguel's head and he is about 6ft 6 inches tall. However Keith was keen to see the water levels at The Step which is a gauge for OFD 1 leaders to assess if a trip upstream is feasible.

The stream height seemed to be about 8 inches so everyone was keen to try it. However the water levels for us were below knee level but diminutive Andrea struggled against the current and force of water rushing down the passage. Her trials were not helped by some of the small pots in the streambed. We progressed upstream and climbed the waterfall and then moved further on. Keith was in front by this time and when we reached the second pole it seemed obvious that the water level had risen, so we wisely turned back at this point, probably about just over half way up the stream, to the boulder choke. I brought up the rear at this moment and I heard a crashing up ahead of me. I thought it may have been a flash surge of water coming towards us but was in all probability a rock falling down from the top of the streamway canyon.

We carried on down and past The Step connection and climbed out by the guard rails and entered Loopways Passage. Miguel showed his climbing prowess by free climbing up to the passage that connects to Column Hall. Kate tried the climb ably assisted by Keith but would have been happier with a rope for a hand line. We all followed Keith back down the well trodden passages. back down the Toastrack ladder and on to the entrance. where it was found to be raining again.

Cave surveys

The Mendip Cave Survey Scheme (administered by Joan Goddard for the last ten years) has finally gone digital. The original scheme whereby a group of Mendip clubs pooled their surveys and made paper copies available for purchase has been wound up and the surveys are now available on the Mendip Cave Registry and Archive Site. They are available for download as reduced size JPEG images at <http://www.mcra.org.uk/wiki/doku.php> but higher resolution formats are available by contacting the MCRA

The copyright for these surveys remains with the original club/authors. These images are made available only for personal, non-commercial use.

Cave/Mine	Year	Authors
A Hole	1992	A. Legg
Aveline's Hole	1968	R. D. Stenner
Balch Cave Sections	1962	A. J. Surrall, J. D. Hanwell, D. Warburton
Balch Cave	1962	A. J. Surrall, J. D. Hanwell, D. Warburton
Browne's Hole	1964	C. Jones, K. Barber, R. Witcombe, M. Harrison, M. Rossite
Brown's Folly Mine	1978	D. Irwin
Cheddar Gorge Caves of	1965	W. I. Stanton
Compton Martin Ochre Mine	1992	A. Legg, P. Blackwell
Cooper's Hole	1963	M. Rennie, T. Gabb
Cow Hole	1979	G. Price
Cuckoo Cleaves	1968	D. Warburton, P. Davies
Dallimore's Cave	1972	R. D. Mehew, M. T. Mills
Denny's Hole	1992	A. Legg
Devil's Hole	1992	A. Legg
East Twin Swallet	1969	R. Bennett, D. Irwin, R. Saunders, G. Tilly
Eastwater Cavern Sheet 2	1964	D. Warburton, A. J. Surrall
Eastwater Cavern Upper Series Plan	1964	D. Warburton, A. J. Surrall
Fairy Cave Quarry	1977	G. Price
Fox's Hole Compton Bishop	1992	A. Legg
Goatchurch Cavern	1959	M. Rennie
Holwell Cavern	1967	B. M. Ellis, M. T. Mills, W. N. Tolfree
Hunters' Hole	1975	R. D. Mehew, M. T. Mills
Hutton Cavern No. 2	1972	M. D. Clarke, C. Richards
Lamb Leer Cavern	1962	D. Warburton, A. J. Surrall, P. Davies
Lionel's Hole	1970	W. I. Stanton
Longwood Swallet Elevation ***	1961	M. Rennie - revised Knibbs 1984
Longwood Swallet Sheet 1	1961	M. Rennie
Longwood Swallet Sheet 3b	1961	M. Rennie
Longwood Swallet Upper Series Plan	1961	M. Rennie
Nine Barrows Swallet	1967	Church, Davies, Lawrence, Kenny, Surrall, Warburton
North Hill Swallet	1971	B. Willie
Picken's Hole	1992	A. Legg
Pinetree Pot	1962	Rennie, Jackson, Cotter, Catherine, Knibbs, Gibb

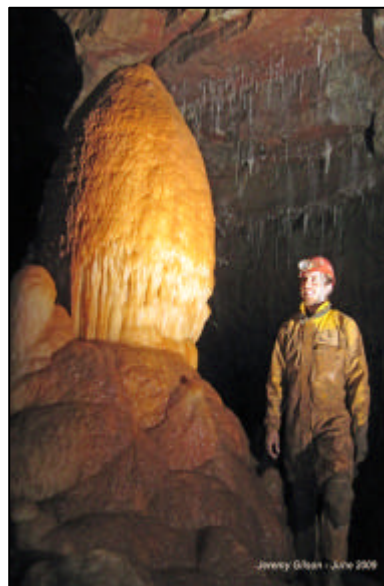
Quaking House Cave	1962	T. Charles, M. Bryant
Read's Cavern	1966	W. I. Stanton
Rhino Rift	1971	W. I. Stanton
Scragg's Hole	1992	A. Legg
Shatter Cave	1970	A. Butcher, M. Mills
Singing River Mine	1971	M. D. Clarke, C. Richards
St. Cuthbert's Swallet Addendum No. 1	1963	R. Roberts
St. Cuthbert's Swallet Elevation	1962	B. M. Ellis
St. Cuthbert's Swallet Plan	1970	B. M. Ellis, D. J. Irwin, M. T. Mills
St. Cuthbert's Swallet Preliminary	1962	B. M. Ellis
Stoke Lane Slocker	1957	D. C. Ford, D. Warburton, P. Davies
Supra Sandy Hole	1992	A. Legg
Swildon's Hole	1965	Devenish, Wells, Lloyd, Mills, Davies, Ford, Stanton
Thrupe Lane Swallet	1977	P. S. Dunk, M. T. Mills
Thrupe Lane Swallet 2	?	D. Everett
Tyning's Barrows Swallet	1978	D. Irwin
Ubley Hill Pot	1962	M. Rennie
Ubley Warren Pot	1968	M. Ferraro, A. Jarratt, R. Pike, C. Richards
Withybrook Slocker	1962	D. Warburton, J. D. Hanwell
Withyhill Cave	1975	D. Irwin

*** NOTE This is the version of Longwood/August which includes elevation and plan, and was revised by Tony Knibbs in 1984.

Otter Hole



Otter Hole



Jon in Otter Hole



Russ in Hall of Thirty

Hidden Earth 2009

Hidden Earth 2009, the UK's annual caving conference, will be held on Mendip from 25-27 September 2009, at Churchill Community School, Churchill, Somerset. (Location map below) You may have noticed that Upper Flood Swallet appears in much of the publicity for the event (the image is "Approach to Walk The Plank" by Rob Eavis)



I am putting together MCG's stand for Hidden Earth and it would be appreciated if I could have some assistance with the following:

Setting up. I will need help on the Friday evening taking all the equipment, display boards etc from the Cottage to the venue and help with setting up the stand. This will not take long. We usually have access to the hall from about 6pm.

Manning the stand. It is likely that we will have laptops and desktops on the stand so we will need volunteers to share the task of manning the stand. So far only 2 MCG members have offered to help out. Please can others share this task?

Survey of Upper Flood. I suppose this is a question for Ben or possibly Bill. Can I have an A1 size copy of the latest Upper Flood Survey? Is it possible to have this in colour, or is that too expensive? I would do this myself but none of the print shops in Kendal have A1 printers!!

Destination Board. I need a digital photo (good quality, high resolution) of the Destination Board in the lounge. Can someone do this for me and email it to me please?

Display Board. We have MCG display boards but I could do with a few more. For the 2007 display someone (Biff??) supplied a couple of boards about 2m tall by 1.5m wide - could I borrow these again please?

Data Projectors. Ed W and Giles M have kindly offered a projector each. Thanks guys. Can you leave them at the cottage beforehand so that I can collect them on the Friday evening?

Leaflets. This is probably one for Linda M. Can I have the Publisher version of the leaflets (MCG and Cottage leaflets) so that I can update them (eg the lounge now has a wood-burning stove). Thanks

Computers. I can bring 1 laptop, and we have the MCG computer. It would be good to have at least one more, preferably a laptop but even a desktop would be ok. Any offers?

Survex. Can I have the latest Upper Flood Survex file please? (Ben?)

Thanks everyone Martin Rowe

MCG's 2007 display:

2 into 1 *will* go!

