

MCG NEWS



Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group
m-c-g.org.uk
mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Founded 1954

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Photo: Hayley Clark in Beinn an Dubaich Cave, Isle of Skye, Ed Waters

EDITORIAL

The MCG News has only appeared sporadically over the last year as no one was prepared to stand as editor at the AGM. That anything has been produced at all has been thanks to the sterling efforts of the guest editors since March, namely Bill Chadwick, Richard Woolacott and Linda Milne. Now that I am ensconced as a regular editor (if the group will put up with me), I look forward to as many members as possible providing material so that we all have an enjoyable, and useful newsletter. Remember, a wise man once said that if you didn't publish it, you didn't do it! The group is very active at present, and it would be good to see these activities recorded for posterity.

I am keen to see as wide a variety of articles as possible in the MCG News, even if it has the most tenuous of links to underground exploration or group activities. Everyone has something of interest to impart, please feel free to contact me at any time to discuss potential material. In terms of practicalities, MCG News is now produced using MS Word, and my favoured format for submissions is as documents produced using that software (including Word 2007 .dcx files). However, I am prepared to accept material produced in almost any manner. I will attempt to incorporate stuff from the most exotic of electronic formats, as hard copies or even scribbled on a soaked beer mat if necessary! So go on, what's stopping you!

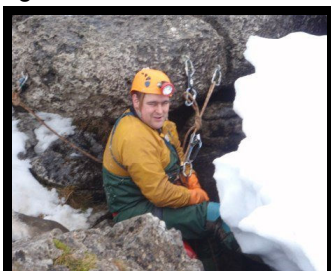
Hopefully you will have noticed that MCG News has received a bit of a facelift. There was nothing wrong with the old style, but I felt that a new look was required with a new editor. Hopefully the new format has carried across some of the character of the old, whilst hopefully generating a little more interest. It would be good to get some feedback on what people think of the new look, all good suggestions will get incorporated.

As with previous issues of MCG News, it is intended that the primary method of circulation will be electronically as a .PDF file. However, it is now intended that a high resolution version suitable for printing by those with faster internet connections, will also be made available. This should make it far more worthwhile to get those excellent pictures that so many of you are taking into the newsletter. As before hardcopies will be available to those who want them, but only in black and white in order to keep cost under control.

Material for this issue has come from a wide variety of sources, and my thanks go to all those who have contributed.

Ed Waters

Right: The new editor at play.
Photo: Kevin Speight.



TRIP REPORT: KING MINE, SANDFORD HILL

We were planning an evening trip to Eastwater, but by the time we were sorted it was already 7pm, so we thought where can we go for a shorter trip? "I haven't looked for King Mine yet", so off we headed to the Ski Centre with a rough idea of where the entrance was. We found the approximate area & I started to search - "Is this it?" said our least experienced member from the opposite direction. She was standing by a small entrance covered with branches, so we dropped the 20 foot ladder down to discover a decomposing sheep at the bottom, along with a frog and a toad (anyone fancy an amphibean rescue mission when it warms up a bit?). Several rabbit skeletons etc have been taped off at the bottom & passageways head off in both directions, but only one way for any distance. From the amount of iron staining on the walls I guess they were mining ochre - you can still see many pick marks on the wall. We headed on through the tiny passageways to the surprisingly large chamber at the end before heading back out. A very interesting diversion for a short trip with a few artefacts and calcite crystals.

Mike Moxon



Above: Miner's artifacts in King Mine. Photo: Mike Moxon.

NEWS

Due to instability at the entrance, Swildons Hole was closed over the Christmas period. Though the cave is now re-opened, caution is advised. In particular the area around Shower Bath Chamber is reported to be very loose, and best avoided by using the Zig Zags to reach Jacob's Ladder.

Many members will be saddened to hear of the recent death of Dr William Stanton, a true great of Mendip caving.

Group members continue digging in Upper Flood, Stainsby's, Bone Hole and Battery Swallet. In addition MCG members are aiding ATLAS digs in Fairy Cave Quarry, and the Cheddar CC in Burrington Combe.

SPAIN 2010

To carry on with the preparation of MCG Expedition to Spain 2010, our next step is to request permits for all the caves that we are going to visit and book our accommodation. In order to start this process we need a final confirmation from all members taking part in the expedition. The expedition will take place from 4th to 19th of September, as Hidden Earth will be the following weekend giving people enough time to return.

Cost of expedition:

At this point we are not sure of the full costs of the expedition but we have a good idea.

Accommodation:	£30 p/p per day full board
Flights:	EasyJet Bristol to Malaga. Current price £120 return
Car Hire:	From £20 per day
Ferry:	£600 per van
Petrol:	£?

Accommodation includes breakfast, lunch, dinner or an optional picnic bag when you miss one of the meals. To reserve our place we need to book now and pay 50% in advance. I will manage this booking on behalf of the group. For more information on our accommodation:

<http://espeleo.es/formacion/villalu.htm>

Flights need to be booked individually or as a group. However, we need to take this decision ASAP as the price of the flights is increasing daily.

We are driving one or two vans with all the heavy equipment, plus we will need to hire some cars in Spain for travelling from the airport to our accommodation and to/from the caves. The ferry for the vans, the hired cars and petrol for all vehicles will be shared between all members/club.

In order to reserve a place, all participants need to pay a non refundable amount of £100 by the end of February.

The list of members taking part at the moment is:

1. Miguel Tome
2. Ed Waters
3. Hayley Clark
4. Mark Ward
5. Biff (Lewis Frith)
6. Buddy (Mark Williams)
7. Tim Francis
8. Russ Porter
9. Russ Hunt
10. John Crowsley
11. Jonathan Williams
12. Kevin Speight
13. Sue Speight
14. Adrian Bell
15. Paul Ketcher

We will be doing different caving trips to fit all needs. For preparation of members, at the moment I am doing some SRT evening trips and I will be leading Rhino Rift in the next members weekend. Some more SRT training are being developed at Biff's place to improve SRT knowledge of members taking part in the April Yorkshire trip and after that trip I will be doing more training if needed at the quarry next to Wells. All caves we are visiting in Spain need SRT knowledge. For the tougher cavers, I have spoken with the leader of the exploration at Sima GESM, who said that our team will be more than welcome and they have a lot of work to be done, such as re-rigging some of the ropes in the cave, photography, survey and digging at different depths (including -1100 new passages), my conversation with Manuel Guerrero has been very interesting, he has updated me with all the new discoveries in the cave, now the way down to -1100 is much easier than it used to be with a new connection in the pitch Paco de la Torre (194 m. -640) down to Lago Ere (-1100). That means that we won't have to prusik up Paco de la Torre from the bottom, the team who is already working in the exploration is going to move the bivouac (actually at -600) lower down in the cave to make the exploration easier at the bottom.

Miguel Tome

LITTLE MONKEY – NEW CAVING LAMP

In this rapidly advancing time of mega-lamps, a new lamp is about to hit the scene. Born and bred in the heart of Mendip, the *Little Monkey* does not attempt to join in the current war of "who has the brightest light" (though at 365 lumens it isn't exactly dim). Instead the design emphasises efficiency, i.e. producing the most light for the least power and weight. The result is a lamp which appears to have the high build quality of the Scurion or Viper, but is physically much smaller, lighter and crucially at about £285 considerably cheaper than either of the previously mentioned lights. Prototypes have been in the field for the last 18 months or so, and reportedly perform very well indeed. Your editor has managed to acquire one, and we shall see how it compares over time.

Right:
The new "Little Monkey" caving lamp on a Petzl Ecrin Roc helmet.

Photo:
Ed Waters



ANNUAL DINNER DETAILS

The date: 27th March 2010

The Price: Food £25.00

Coach: £8 return

The Venue: The White Hart Hotel
WELLS
Somerset
BA52RR
Tel: 01749 672056

Email: info@whitehart-wella.co.uk

Website: www.whitehart-wells.co.uk

The Hotel Room Price (space limited):

Double / Twin including full English Breakfast £85
(when booking please Ask to Speak to Sonia or John
and say you are attending the function to get this
reduced rate)

The time: Arriving at the White Hart 19:30,
for food at 20:00

The Coach: Do you want to be on the coach? if yes,
picking up from the hunters or the cottage – first come
first served – reservations only made once monies
received as limited seats! Coach departs 18:45 sharp
from the Cottage, picking up at the Hunters on route.

The menu choices: pick 1 starter, 1 main, 1 Dessert
and fill out the attached form

Starters:

Sweet potato & Roasted Pepper Soup
Smoked Duck & Mushroom Terrine served with
Green Leaves & Melba Toast
Fresh Buffalo Mozzarella, Beef Tomato & Basil
Salad with Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Main Course:

Roast Topside of local Priddy Beef served with
Yorkshire pudding
Roasted Somerset Pork served with Cider & Sage
Sauce
Fresh Salmon, Prawn, Crab & Coriander
Fishcakes served on a bed of creamed Leeks and
New Potatoes
Brie & Cranberry Tartlets

Desserts:

Sticky Toffee Pudding & Toffee Sauce
Belgium Chocolate Mud Pie
Fresh Cheesecake with Fruit Compote

After dinner Coffee included

The Beer:

1x Barrel of Potholer

1x Barrel of Butcombe

AND I WANT BOTH BARRELS DRUNK DRY!!

Booking and pay for:

Send your menu / transport selections and your
payment to:
Jenny Plumb, 288 Nine Mile Ride, Finchampstead,
Wokingham, RG403NT
(Cheques made payable to 'Mendip Caving Group')
Just dinner £25.00
Dinner and coach £33.00

**CLOSING DATE FOR EVENT FRIDAY 5TH MARCH, I
NEED YOUR PAYMENT, MENU & TRANSPORT
SELECTIONS BY THIS DATE!!**

NOTE!

**PLEASE USE THE BOOKING FORM
PROVIDED!**

GUEST SPEAKER

Dr Andy Farrant will be providing the after dinner
speech this year. As well as being a caver, Andy is
one of the foremost authorities on the geology and
cave formation in the Mendip Hills. Anyone who saw
his lecture at Hidden Earth last year will know how
informative his ideas are, not just for casual interest,
but also for the insight they give into the exploration
potential of many caves and digs. All budding
explorers should bring their notebooks!

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will be held at the cottage at 10am on
Saturday 27th March 2010. In accordance with the
constitution, please ensure that nominations for
committee positions and proposals to change the
constitution or rules are provided to the Secretary, on
the appropriate form available on the website, no later
than 25 days before the AGM (2nd March).

Please contact the Secretary, Mike Richardson, with
any proposed agenda items.

Email: secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk

Post: FAO The Secretary,
Mendip Caving Group,
Nordrach Cottage,
Charterhouse-on-Mendip,
Blagdon,
Bristol
BS40 7XW

TITAN TO PEAK CAVERN THROUGH TRIP

Saturday 31st October 2009

Participants:

Debbie & Emma Lambert, Angus Leat, Geoff Rodwell, Tony Smith and Keith (YSS & trip leader), Mel (YSS) & Ray (WCMS).

Practiced in Rhino Rift on its top pitch, confident with rebelay & replicating the increased difficulty of a long heavy SRT rope (using a tied on rope bag with rocks in it) meant everyone was comfortable for their forthcoming Titan adventure in the Peak District. The plan was to abseil Titan and exit out of Peak Cavern. The trip took six hours, of which after a spectacular descent, 45-50 minutes was spent in the slippery mud pack confined stomach crawling passage of aptly named Colostomy Crawl.

The weekend arrived for our Titan trip and on Friday afternoon Tony very kindly gave Geoff his very first 'ever' rock climbing lesson (!!!) on the mill stone grit above Hathersage, leading the climb planting friends, hexi's and other devices for Geoff to remove. A fun experience to be repeated – sincere thanks Tony.

With other party members safely arrived, a pub meal was enjoyed by all, only for Tony to unexpectedly depart for an early hours drive home, caused by sudden staff shortage at his outdoor centre. Yet another missed opportunity to achieve a Titan through-trip!

Saturday 0730 hours prompt the party left Orpheus caving cottage for the drive to Castleton and TSG to meet Keith (our experienced Titan leader from YSS) and Mel (YSS). With fees paid and forms signed we ascended in two cars, for most of the group's very first trip down.

The initial impressive 50m descent of the mined entry shaft to the top of Titan is an engineering feat and pleasant introductory abseil. With Geoff and Tony's rope rigged by Ray (80m and 60m) everyone descended Titan with Keith giving encouragement at the Event Horizon's free-hanging rebelay. The 9.5mm Beal Spelenium Gold rope with its kevlar core proved itself excellent, though Keith made repeated attempts to sell the idea that for small groups we should move to Beal 9mm (an interesting thought, especially after comparing the strength, bounce and other properties of these two very different rope types).

Finally at the bottom of Titan it was the usual crawl through the boulder choke, along Stemple Highway to a very muddy attempt at lunch, before onwards to the Speedwell canal down to The Bung. A short conference determined that with current speed due to group size it would be a 6 hour total trip if we exit via Colostomy Crawl, or a 10 hour trip if we take in the White River series (for which we were carrying 2 x

25m ropes in case we chose this longer more interesting route, involving more SRT).

With a decision for the quicker trip, the 'short by-pass' took us to the ladder up to 'Colostomy Crawl' for a special 45-50 minutes experience in a tight hole of liquid mud, which was thankfully draughting. We struggled through crawling on stomachs, occasionally hands and knees, towing repeatedly snagging SRT gear and glad to get out !

Covered head to toe in mud, pleasant motorway caving quickly lead us to the back door of Peak Cavern and the compulsory group wash in the purposefully dammed stream way. This was necessary for a totally clean exit via the tourist area of Peak Cavern show cave.

Here within the public cavern a surprise awaited; we had instructions to be quiet, with our lights off; the reward was a cave totally lit by candles, occupied by friendly ghosts, witches and gremlins. We exited past tourists being lectured on rope making and received a 'goodbye' from a friendly gnome. It was of course Halloween!

A special thanks to Keith (YSS) for kindly giving up his day to expertly lead us down Titan through to Peak Cavern. Also sincere thanks to his friends who entered after us and de-rigged.

Debbie was rightly elated having completed this trip, particularly pleased to have done so in the company of her daughter Emma; impossible for her to imagine a few years ago during early days of SRT practice! A fun trip we all enjoyed and will repeat.

Geoff Rodwell

PS

An interesting observation SRTing Titan (my second time) is that there is a unique 'rope' situation at the Event Horizon that may help explain why some cavers get 'hung-up' on what is actually a simple 'free-hanging' rebelay, so similar to Mendip 'Rhino Rift' top pitches.

Titan's free-hanging rebelay has 70+ metres of rope above it, a situation cavers are unlikely to have experienced as Titan is rather unique in the UK! On this free-hang it is (almost) impossible to use the rebelay's normal rope loop to stand up on to unclip the cowstail for the final descent. As you stand the loop immediately lengthens with rope stretch beyond use, due to the metres above. What is needed is a means of standing up on something that is attached to the actual rebelay point and NOT to a point 70+ metres above. Easy examples include foot loop & hand jammer, or a 4 foot sling & krab, or the rigger leaving a fixed loop of some sort from the rebelay e.g. just leaving a lengthened loop, then tying a knot in it.

FUN UNDER THE ISLANDS

Caving in Skye & Sicily

In 2009, Hayley Clark & Ed Waters made two caving trips to very different Islands. One to a very cold and wet Isle of Skye during May, and the other to a very warm Sicily in September. Apart from both being a very long drive from Salisbury, there is little else that the two experiences had in common. The caves on Skye being conventional limestone karst caves (if in varieties of the rock unusual in British caving), whilst those visited on Sicily were another episode in our taste for lava tube caves.

This was our first visit to the Isle of Skye, and the scenery did not fail to impress. The jagged Cuillin mountains are simply spectacular. The caves on the island are formed in two very different forms of limestone, namely rocks of Jurassic age and much older metamorphic limestones. There are also a large number of sea caves formed in a variety of rocks.

The longest cave on Skye is Valley Head Cave, which provides a sporting through trip of about 400m length, including squeezes, ducks and a free diveable sump. However, it rained pretty much continuously for the entire week of our stay and we decided that this trip would be just too risky. Our first trip was therefore the picturesque Camas Malag Caves. The top entrance is formed where a dyke of basalt within the limestone forms a waterfall into the limestone. The cave is not long, and has three entrances, a very active streamway and an impressive daylight waterfall below the second entrance. Well worth a visit by any passing caver.



Left: Hayley with the waterfall in Camas Malag Cave, Skye.

Photo: Ed Waters

From Camas Malag Cave we walked up the valley to Bienn a Dubaich cave. This requires a slippery climb down of about 3m to the bottom of the surface collapse. Inside is a sporting traverse over a narrow canyon, where the banded marble is shown to good advantage. At the end of the traverse is an easy climb

down, which leads to a pool and the sump. This lies only a few metres from the sumped resurgence.

The next day saw us visit High Pasture Cave. This is the second longest cave on Skye, and is at present the focus of a major archaeological dig. This dig has opened a new entrance to the cave, complete with ancient steps leading in. The area is provided with lots of information for the casual visitor, and we managed to have a chat with a couple of the archaeologists who were installing equipment ready for the 2009 digging season.

We entered the cave via the original cavers entrance. This is a short dug shaft in loose boulders close to the stream sink. The cave starts as a pleasant hands and knees crawl in the stream, but soon enlarges. The fossil passage leading to the archaeologists entrance emerges from the left. Not far beyond here the passage lowers to a duck. Given the wet weather there was minimal airspace on the duck, and fresh foam stuck to the roof. I was also raining quite hard when we entered, so we gave up here. This is less than halfway down the cave. From the survey it appears that the rest of the cave is well worth a visit.

Right: Streamway in High Pasture Cave, Skye.

Photo: Ed Waters



Our final caving trip on Skye was to the impressive Spar Cave. This is not a limestone cave, and as such not affected by the rain! It is however a seacave, to which access is restricted to a very short period around low tide. A slippery traverse over rocks leads around a headland to the huge rift like entrance. The cave is formed in sandstone, but the beds above these rocks include a proportion of calcium carbonate. The result is that the cave is festooned with calcite formations. Though these have had some obvious damage by visitors over the centuries, there is still plenty worth seeing.

After this we took a winding road home, managing to visit some sea caves on Arran, including the impressive King's Cave.

Sicily had been on our agenda for some time, and with no concrete plans for a foreign trip in 2009 we took the opportunity to visit. Armed with information on the caves of Etna from our friend Chris Wood and the internet we set off south, finding time to visit the show cave of Grotta del Angelo at Pertosa on the way. This is well worth a visit, though it was a bit of a pity that the guide spent more time talking about his complex lighting system than the cave!

Etna is Europe's largest volcano, and at 3300m high dominates the skyline of Sicily wherever you are. For the caver its flanks include many centuries worth of lava flows; which contain over 200 caves. Our first was the Grotta dei Ladri (also known as Grotta Ladroni). This site is used by adventure tourist companies, and it is really an uninspiring little hole, about 50m long. The only feature of note being that three shafts have been driven into the middle chamber, and steps cut into the steep basalt at one of the entrances. This work was apparently done to turn the cave into an ice store. Snow was shovelled down the shafts in winter, and then compacted to ice in the cave. Ice was then carried down the mountain in summer for the production of ice cream. Following this unimpressive start, we drove up the road to visit Grotta di Cassone. This cave has got possibly the shortest walk in I have ever come across, a small hole beneath the Armco at the roadside. The cave is a handsome gallery about 200m long, but with few features of note except a superb example of a lava seal at the far end.

The next day saw us make a more serious trip. The aim was to visit Grotta di Lamponi (Cave of the Raspberries). This is far more remote than Grotta di Cassone, lying about 7km from the nearest road. We chose to walk in from the Piano Provenzana over the lavas from 2002 rather than the normally recommended route on forestry tracks. For us this was undoubtedly the right thing to do, the views were stunning including the sad remains of the ski lift station partially buried under the 2002 lavas. We also passed the entrances to the eruptive fissure from 1922. The path follows the line of cinder cones along the fissure, some of which have open shaft entrances in them. Apparently these can be descended (with pitches of up to 60m) for a depth of 200m into the eruptive fissure. About 1km of passage has been explored here to date, and is ongoing.

After a stretch of woodland, passing a refuge, the 1781 lava is reached. Grotta di Lamponi is located not far from the track, near the rough path leading up to the Grotta di Gelo. It took us about 2 hours to walk to the Grotta di Lamponi. The cave has about 700m of large passages, and is quite complex in places. This is a fine lava tube and well worth a visit if you are in the area. We took a few photos, and then escorted a

group of three Italian walkers between two of the entrances after they showed just a little too much curiosity when they met us emerging from the cave.



Above: Passage junction in Grotta di Lamponi, Sicily.
Photo: Ed Waters

After the long walk, we relaxed with a visit to the top of Etna. Fortunately we were rich enough to afford the cable car and bus method of ascent! The top of the mountain was cold and misty. It was also hailing and thundering, with lightning flashing around us. We were taken to the 2002 crater, which is still steaming profusely, and the gravel just under the surface is hot enough to burn your fingers.

The next caving trip was to the western side of the mountain. After some fun and games finding it, we visited Grotta Intralio. This lies just a few metres from the road with a convenient parking spot. Though the cave entrance is initially not obvious (it is in fact a very large entrance on top of a rise). There is a short length of partially walled off passage at the upflow end of the surface collapse, which leads to a lava seal a few metres beyond a small shrine. Downflow is a complex of multi-level tubes, some of impressive size. Also on this side of the mountain we visited Grotta del Santo. The entrance lies inside a gated walled enclosure, and contains a shrine. Beyond here is a maze of mostly small multi-level passageways with lots of bats. This is a fascinating cave, but we are unsure whether access is really allowed!

Our final caving trip on Sicily was the big one which was to the longest and deepest lava tube on Etna, Grotta di Tre Livelli. Again the cave lies right next to the road, but access is limited by a pitch less than 50m inside the entrance. We rigged this with an 8m ladder and lifeline. There are plenty of bolt belays, a few resin anchors and a lot of 8mm studs (bring standard 8mm bolt hangars with the bolts removed, and bring some 8mm nuts and washers instead). Below the pitch is an awkward climb / pitch. Again there are plenty of bolt belays available. Given that falling onto lava can have results you would expect from trying to juggle razor blades, we elected to rig this with a short handline (about 10m of rope).

Below the pitches is a magnificent gallery. Downflow leads to a short flat out constriction over sharp lava cobbles. The draft through this constriction is phenomenal! Beyond the constriction the passage opens up again, to eventually lead to a sudden lava seal after about 400m.



Above: The main gallery upflow of the pitches in Grotta dei Tre Livelli. Photo: Ed Waters.

Upflow from the pitches the passage is again large, and floored with lava cobbles. It also slopes steeply. After 200m or so daylight enters from the upper entrance. No exit is possible here unless the c.6m pitch is rigged, there are bolts available. Beyond here the passage is a little smaller, and another tightish constriction met. Again this carries a very strong draft. Beyond the constriction the passage gets steeper, and steeper making ascent very difficult indeed in the warm, humid, atmosphere as the cobbles slip away under your feet. Eventually the passage reaches such an angle that hands are required to climb, until it levels out in a large shattered chamber. Just beyond here the passage ends at a bright red lava seal and there are a few modest lava straws. We visited the entire cave, which is just over 1km long and has a vertical range of 310m.

On the way home we managed to take in the new show cave at Antro del Corchia in Tuscany, though we also failed to find the nearby Grotta del Vento. In addition we visited the famous Grotte de Han and Grotte de Lorraine in Belgium, which were well worth the short detour. In all it was a fantastic holiday, even if Hayley now swears she will never let me drive her anywhere again.

Ed Waters

COTTAGE EXTENSION?

There has been much talk of an extension to the cottage over the years and I believe Martin Rowe looked into it in depth, and found that there could be many obstacles in the way. Now I have had another look at this, Martin and others kindly furnished me with the list of problems to overcome, I am pleased to say that none are insurmountable (I will have a list of the problems and their possible solutions at the AGM).

So next I put together the wish list of the many members I consulted or contacted me, they are:

- Individual showers;
- Drying room;
- Bigger tackle store;
- Another toilet;
- Bigger changing area;
- A fourth bunk room;
- A meeting room come members room;
- Bigger kitchen;
- More storage;
- and a fire escape (this can also double as a practice tower for the improvement of SRT and ladder skills).

With help of other members I have drawn up some sketch plans of what we think would be the best option, these plans would facilitate all of the above wish list and also allow a circulatory progression around the cottage thus allowing a greater freedom of movement.

It has been found possible to construct a corridor to the new upstairs rooms through the 8 room by moving the bunks and constructing a stud wall, there will be no loss of bunk numbers as has been suggested.

I will bring some costings of the proposed extension to the AGM and with the help of others some ideas on financing .

I hope to get a vote to move forward with the project at the AGM, if this happens, and perhaps after a little refinement and consultation with an architect, we get the said architect to draw the plans up properly and then submit them for planning permission.

The present cottage has served the members well for the past 30 odd years, but with all the new active members the cottage can become quite overcrowded on members weekends and others. Expectations are greater now and we need more room and more up-to-date facilities.

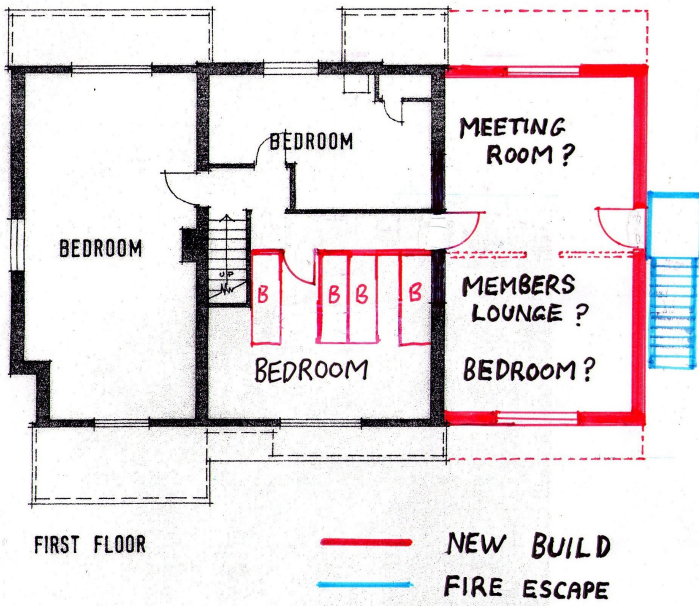
There is tremendous enthusiasm for this project amongst those I have talked to, therefore this is doable, so please support this project.

“Biff” Frith

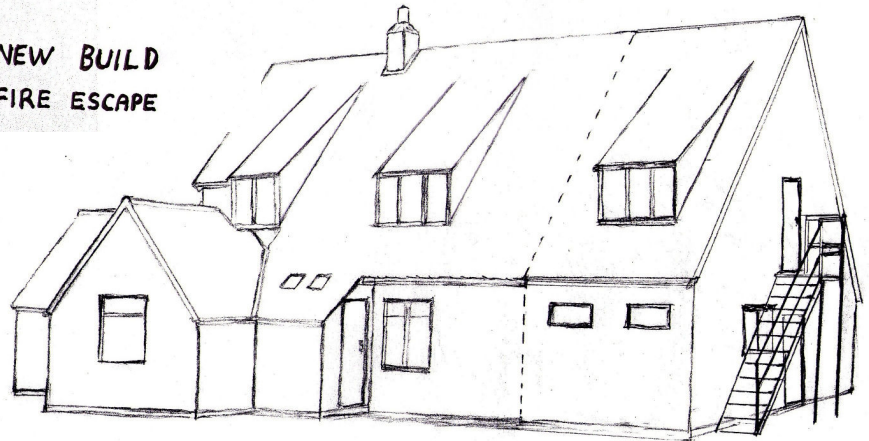
Biff's sketch plans are included on the next page. It would be good to get some healthy debate going before the AGM, so what do you think? [Ed].

Sketch Plan of Proposed Cottage Extension Drawings by "Biff" Frith

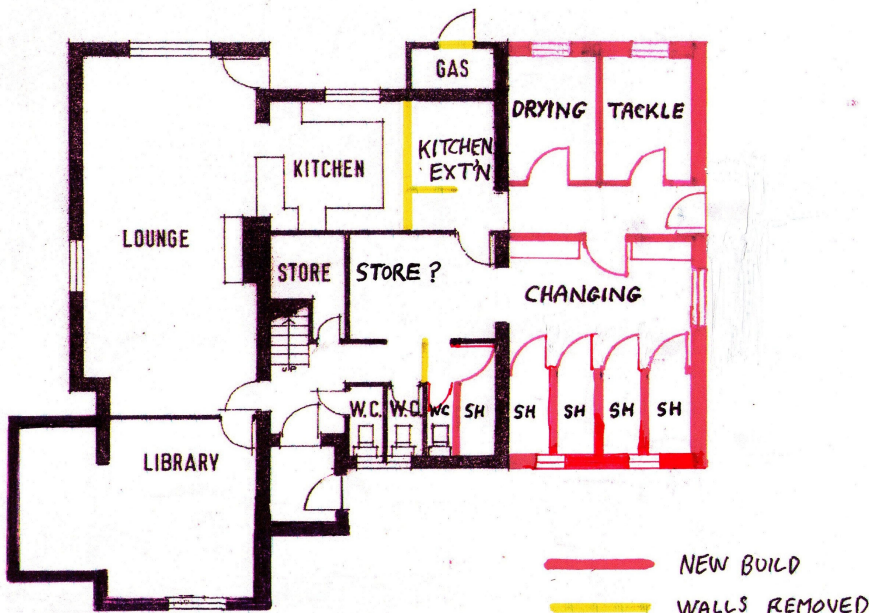
Below: Plan of First Floor



Below: Impression of what the extended cottage may look like from the road.



Below: Plan of Ground Floor



PERFORATION CHOKE, BONE HOLE

As reported in the last newsletter (No.359), MCG members have been actively digging a new site in Bone Hole. Now known as *Perforation Choke* due to a series of minor Hilti induced injuries to members of the digging team, progress has been rapid, with the cave extended by some 18m to date.

The dig follows a solid, scalloped wall along the right hand side of the choke and there is an encouraging outwards draft. Digging involves the breaking up and removal of boulders blocking the way on, and then extensive use of scaffold shoring to support the loose roof and left hand wall. The current terminus lies in a small void, known as *Scurion Chamber* on account that owners of said Rolls Royce lamp had claimed they could see a large chamber for several trips before entering it. *Scurion Chamber* measures 2m long by about 1m square, though it does boast a few formations.

On reaching *Scurion Chamber* there was a fear that the dig may be heading towards the side of the valley above Bone Hole. For this reason a survey of the cave and the overlying land was conducted on 6th February in order to ascertain whether this was the case. The survey shows that the end lies about 12m vertically below the surface and more than 25m horizontally from the side of the valley.

The survey was conducted to BCRA Grade 3c by "Biff" Frith, Russ Porter and Ed Waters. The survey data was computed using Walls v2b7, and drawn by Ed Waters.

Digging continues on most weekends and Wednesday nights. All are welcome to join in, please contact any of the diggers for more information.

Also please note that conservation work is ongoing in the Skull Slope area of Bone Hole. Joan Goddard has placed water and sprays above the gate. Could anyone visiting the cave please spend a few minutes to wash some of the mud off the calcite covered walls? It is worth bringing a small scrubbing brush to aid this (though Joan may have placed one in the cave by now).

Ed Waters

STOP PRESS

There has been another spate of car break-ins recently. Sites targeted include Ebbor Gorge and Blackmore Reserve car parks, presently during the daytime. As far as we are aware no caver cars have been hit but everyone should be vigilant.

CSCC Website

<http://csc.org.uk/wiki/doku.php?id=news:start>

