

MCG NEWS

Number 362 May 2010



Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

*m-c-g.org.uk
mendipcavinggroup.org.uk*

Founded 1954

CONTENTS:

- 1. Rescue Practice**
- 2. OFD**
- 3. Night Orienteering**
- 4. Dales Weekend**
- 5. Car Park & Pinetree Pot**
- 6. LED Upgrades**
- 7. Cottage Extension Appeal**
- 8. EGM**
- 9. Bookings & Calendar**

Photo: Linda Milne descending Chapter House Pitch, Yordas Cave.
Paul Davies & Havlev Clark

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 362nd edition of MCG News. Hopefully after three issues you are all now used to the new format, and are starting to find out what you like and dislike about it. Don't be shy, please let me have any feedback good, bad or revolutionary which you think would help improve your Newsletter.

First of all I would like to thank all of those who have provided content for this edition. I am sure you will agree that there is excellent variety in the submitted material. I will also make the Editor's perennial plea, please send me material for future issues, all of you have something to contribute. If you have something, but are not sure, drop me a line or give me a call, and I am sure I can persuade you to send it in!

This plea extends beyond the written word, with modern publishing plenty of photos (and other graphics) can be included, and as you are all no doubt aware a picture often paints a thousand words. In particular I need good quality photos for the front cover. These do not necessarily need to relate to articles in the Newsletter, but I guess it would be preferable if they do. So to this end I will be setting up a mini-competition, a liquid reward for the person submitting the selected cover photo for each edition.

Ed (the Ed) Waters.



The Editor exiting Heron Pot. Photo: Paul Davies

See report later in this Newsletter!

COMMITTEE NEWS

It has been suggested that it might be a good idea to introduce a "mentor" scheme to help new members into the group. Each new member being allocated to one of a number of volunteer mentors. The idea is that the mentor will aid the new member to join in with caving and social events, and integrate into the group. The committee would be interested to hear from any members willing to consider becoming mentors, so that the viability of the scheme can be ascertained.

Ed Waters

RESCUE PRACTICE REPORT

Combined MCR / CDG Rescue Practice Gough's Cave Cheddar 17.04.10

Attending MCG members Doug Harris, Keith Knight, Mark Ward

MCR notes on the rescue

This is the scene as set for the practice:

'That a diver has been reported as having fallen in Bishops Palace and sustained a broken leg and also suspected back injuries. MCR have been called out and have organised an advance party of two divers to be sent into the cave at 9.00am with heyphone.'

There are two distinct phases to this rescue scenario

Phase 1: *The extraction of the casualty from the far side of the Bishops Palace back to the landing platform in Lloyd Hall.*

Phase 2: *The haul up from Lloyd Hall to making progress and then evacuation of the casualty to the surface.*

The CDG are to carry out the first phase of this scenario and will operate as a stand alone team with separate stretcher and rescue equipment.

The MCR are to carry out the second phase of the scenario the details of which follow below. It should be noted that for operational and time expediency reasons these two phases will operate concurrently.

We all met up at Nordrach 09:30 and Doug drove us down to the Goughs Cave employees car park where we signed in. We met Lee and Jackie Hawkswell. Lee was in our carry team and Jackie was on the surface heyphone.

We were to be the carry out/Haul team from the top of Lloyd Hall after the hauling team had rescued the dummy casualty from the bottom dive platform.

Here the live casualty was put in the stretcher. She was a news reporter from a local rag and her name was Anna and had never caved before.

We were not required for some time so we lazed in the sun and drank tea in the true MCG tradition. The two carry out teams 6 cavers in each had their picture taken outside the cave and then set off. The rescue commenced after a short pause to get the casualty into the stretcher. This having been completed the casualty was passed down into the rift passage where I handed over the stretcher.

Not being able to leap frog the casualty I went back to have a look down Lloyd Hall. After a short climb down to the pitch head I met Stewart who was hauling out the 11 divers gear. (22 bottles and a load of tackle sacks). I was asked to stack the gear at the pitch head but there was limited space. Another caver Darrel appeared above me at the top of the short climb.

I then spent the rest of the rescue passing messages to the heyphone operator on the diver's arrival at Lloyd Hall via Darrel and sending gear up the short climb to Darrel who hauled up all the gear.

When the last diver had arrived and all the gear sent up I left the cave all the gear had gone so I did not even have to take any kit out.

Doug and Mark had to wait for me to exit the cave as they had stayed with the casualty all the way out. I had to get away but Doug and Mark attended the debrief meeting at the Hunter's where it was agreed that all went well.

Keith Knight

Anna had been petrified sat at Lloyd Hall and needed plenty of reassurance as she was strapped in tightly to the spinal board and drag sheet.

Moving her down the 45 degree tight bedding plane was slow, but she was in good spirits as we all chatted to her constantly.

She said she felt 'very safe with all these strong men'.

Some deep muddy puddles had to be sat in to keep the 'casualty' dry, so we were extremely wet and muddy when we surfaced.

The haul went very smoothly and we were soon out into the show cave, much to Anna's relief...and the flashing cameras of the general public!

Anna's parting words were, 'thank you all so much for getting me out safely, but I'll never cave again'!

Doug and I went to the debrief where it was agreed that it had been a very successful rescue practice.

We are all keen with Miguel to now have a regular team at these practices and fly the MCG flag.

Mark Ward

The following links to articles in the Wells Journal provide the casualty's view of the rescue practice. Thanks to Doug Harris for providing the links [Ed].

<http://www.thisissomerset.co.uk/wells/news/Rescuers-reveal-lure-cold-gloomy-caverns/article-2079150-detail/article.html>

<http://www.thisissomerset.co.uk/wells/news/Saved-deep-despair/article-2079148-detail/article.html>

A GREAT DAY OUT IN WALES

On Saturday 20th March a group made up of me, Jeremy Gilson, Karen Fendley, Sue Speight & our friends Nicky Xander & Nathan Sollis made the journey to South Wales to visit the delights of OFD2. It was Karen & Sue's first welsh trip, Nicky & Nathan's first ever caving trip and for Jeremy & I a return visit to a cave close to our hearts as it was where Jeremy proposed to me in October last year! We set off from our house bright and early, our high spirits making up for the gloomy wet weather and arrived at a very busy SWCC at around 10am.

Changed and ready we made our way up the hill and stopped at the entrance to catch our breath and assemble for a group photo. After assuring Nathan that the smallest space he would need to squeeze his 6'7" frame all day was the entrance I led the way in and continued in front for some time which was a good test of route finding for me and a great confidence boost. We took time to admire the cave in general and formations along the way, stopping in Gnome Passage for more photos' and the 'has to be done lights off' experience for the newbie's to demonstrate the total darkness of caving! We got to the top of the boulder slope and Nicky said that she presumed we would be going straight on, just as I began its descent telling her with a smile that we were, indeed, 'going down there', I won't repeat her response here but it was quite colourful! We all made our way down to the first obstacle of the day, the corkscrew climb. It was my second time here and I negotiated it with much more confidence that the first, even managing to give some encouragement to Nicky and assisting with foot holds and technique.

Once in the Salubrious Streamway, my own thoughts were turning to my main challenge of the day – the 'T' word! Jeremy & I had been as far as the traverse on our last trip but I had not crossed it and quite frankly, I was pretty scared at the prospect. I was however, full of determination to do it this time, my prize for doing so was to see the Trident & The Judge but I knew that I would have to get it over with quickly so when we got there Jeremy made his way to the front of the group, I explained that he would be back to assist those who needed help and, with his guidance, made my way across before I had chance to change my mind! It was actually much more comfortable than I expected, the only awkward bit being the climb down at the end, and I think that was more due to my knee than confidence.

Once safely down I let out a whoop of excitement at my achievement which earned a round of applause from the rest of the group! Jeremy then made the journey back and forth across the traverse to assist the others, apart from Kazza the Treas who negotiated it like a true professional! We had to wait for a short while to let 2 other groups pass in both directions – it really was busy, and then made our way down the lovely stream way passage to the magnificent Trident & Judge – I had an emotional 'moment' here, so pleased to finally get to see them.

We stopped here for more photos and refuelling with drinks and mars bars and popped down to Swamp Creek to marvel at more beautiful formations. This was as far as we had planned to go so here we turned around and made our way back. Nathan kindly showered Karen, Sue & I with muddy cave water from his boots as he made his way back up the corkscrew climb – note to self – don't stand underneath someone next time!!



The Group at "The Trident". Photo: Jeremy Gilson

Some of us were a little more tired than others by now so the journey back was a little slower but our spirits remained high and we had plenty of laughs along the way. We all emerged into daylight in one piece and found that the rain and fog from earlier in the day had been replaced with brighter weather, making the walk back down the hill to hot showers much more enjoyable. Showered and changed we reassembled in the SWCC dining room for very welcome hot drinks and food and a good chat about our trip. All in all a very enjoyable day and who knows, maybe a couple of potential new MCG members in Nicky & Nathan who are already looking forward to their next trip. I did end up with a bag of frozen peas on my right knee on Saturday evening as it let me know it was a little unhappy at the length and content of my trip – but it was well worth it!!!

Angela Clulow



The Group outside OFD II Entrance. Photo: Jeremy Gilson

NIGHT ORIENTEERING EVENT HELD IN FEBRUARY IN THE NEW FOREST

Mike Haselden had come up trumps again and with his son Ollie had organised one of his famous night orienteering events in the New Forest. It could be termed as a race and those people who wanted to make it one take it very seriously and run most of the course. I like to make it a fun event and just try to get as many points as possible without over doing it. We have had teams from the MCG before and this year there were two teams, my team of 7 and Giles Martin with his team of 6.

We had been given a reference point at which the event would start from. It was a car park on the edge of an enclosure. The evening didn't get off to a good start. We were in my son's car going to collect my brother with his son and friend, when we were T boned by a car coming out of a side road. There was a delay whilst details were exchanged and fortunately our car just had trim removed and was still road worthy. Next we initially got lost trying to find the start point. But with bearings found we got there at about 6:45pm. Giles turned up about 20 minutes later.

With boots and waterproofs on we were given a list of reference points at which typically a stake will be found with an alphanumeric code written on it. The idea is you have about 30 minutes to plot all the points onto an OS map and decide on what route to take to obtain the most points and record the code on them. Reference points easily reached had low scores but more distant ones scored higher. Additionally some points carried bonus points. These were usually found by walking on a bearing for an indefinite distance. These play with the mind a bit when you have walked for a while and haven't found anything. Have you passed it and walked too far? Have you not gone far enough yet?

Having registered a start time we had five hours to get as many points as we could. The key thing to remember was not to get back late as there was a time penalty. This was based on every minute late squared e.g. 4 minutes late, deduct 16 points. A maximum of 100 points were available so if you were 10 minutes late back you would lose the lot.

We set off and quickly navigated to 2 points. Then it started to heave it down with rain. This made things a little more trying for me as I was doing the navigating for the team. In the rain it becomes difficult to read a map by torch light with rain drops over the map case, reading glasses and magnifying glass. Add condensation on glass to this and I think you can get the idea. It is such a pain needing reading glasses! Anyway I got my son's relatively youthful eyes to look at the map for me when I couldn't make out all of the detail.

We soon began to collect points, trying not to give locations away when other teams arrived, by getting away from it as quickly as possible. After about 3 hours we decided that we needed to head on a course back towards the start point. The weather had eased off to light rain by then. We managed to pick up a couple more points on the way back, but after wasting 20 minutes looking for a bonus point which could not be found we trudged back at a fair pace to get back with about 15 minutes to spare.

Adding up the scores our total was 45. Not brilliant out of 100 available. Later I found out that Giles team had got 42, but the winning team had achieved 64, which is an indication of how it is practically impossible to get all 100 points. The lowest score was 0, down to those penalty points no doubt.

Mike had asked for donations for the Haiti disaster fund and this later amounted to £93.16. All in all, it was a great night out in the darkness, mud and freezing rain. We look forward to next year's ordeal.

Brian Snell

DALES MEET APRIL 2010

Over the weekend of 16th to 18th April, a group of MCG members had a great time caving in the Dales. Based at the Yorkshire Subterranean Society's hut at Helwith Bridge, a great weekend was had by all. Activities included drinking in the excellent Helwith Bridge Inn, walking, toy shopping in Ingletton and even a little bit of caving...

I think all of us who attended would like to thank Jeremy for organising this superb weekend. The following trip reports are by a variety of authors, and give a flavour of the caving done.

Ed Waters

Heron Pot / Yordas Cave – West Kingsdale

Group: Ed Waters, Paul Davies, Linda Milne and Hayley Clark

After driving up and all meeting at Bernies in Ingletton we had lunch before deciding to go over to Heron Pot for some SRT practice. The weather was excellent, sunny and a hot 15 degrees.

We drove up Kingsdale, parked at the side of the road near Yordas Cave and changed into caving gear. We crossed the field and Kingsdale Beck (which was dry) and headed up the stream in Gaze Gill. Luckily Ed knew exactly where he was going and we soon found the entrance to Heron Pot.

After donning our SRT kit we entered the cave. We dropped down the entrance and entered the crawl way just behind the entrance boulder. The passage was low but fairly dry and occasionally opened up so you could stand up. After a short while a T junction was reached, we headed left. Downstream the passage became a highish rift. Progress in the narrow rift was fast and quite a few nice looking formations were encountered.

We reached the first pitch, which was slightly awkward but Ed soon had it rigged. A squirm around the corner and a stretch over to a ledge were required to reach the pitch head. Unfortunately Hayley was unable to do any SRT because of her back [*recovering from surgery – Ed*] so she made her way out. Ed, Linda and Paul soon abseiled down the first pitch.

The second pitch is very close to the bottom of the first pitch. Again Ed rigged this and the three of us abseiled down. After a look around we eventually retraced our steps prussiking back up the pitches and de-rigging.

Altogether the trip took about 3 ½ hours. It was very enjoyable and good SRT practice for the weekend ahead. As we had time we headed over to Yordas Cave. *The same party then carried out a quick pull-through trip from the Sink Entrance to the Main Entrance of Yordas Cave. See the front cover! – Ed.*

Paul Davies

Jingling Pot - Kingsdale

Friday afternoon, as others caved in Heron pot, Angus Leat, Debbie Lambert and Geoff Rodwell met up in Kingsdale valley, climbed to Jingling pot in the sunny breezeless weather and located the two trees marking the 60m pitch. The trees provided Geoff with a swing to P hanger's leading to Lateral Cleft seven metres below, before the group decided to try the 'new route' (rigged by Debbie) around the 60m hole and across to Lateral Cleft and on down. This all proved good practice after a few weeks away from SRT.

Geoff Rodwell

Meregill Hole – Chapel le Dale

On Saturday 17th there were a few trips going on, one was our trip to Meragill Hole. In the party Ed Waters, Miguel Tome and Ross Davison a Grampian Speleological Society caver based in Edinburgh and a friend of Julie.

To access to the cave we had a long walk of about 1 hour. On our way to Meragill Hole we popped to see the entrances of Sunset Pot, then up to our destination.

First of all we arrived and had a look to the big entrance of Meragill Hole proper which sumps in flood. Then we managed to find Aven Entrance that was our way in. Ed went in head first to see what the squeeze was like and came out saying that it was really tight, then I went in to start rigging the first pitch and wait for Ed in case that he'd need help to go through.

The squeeze is well tight, as Ed said, and as you get through you are on the top of the pitch, very exposed. Once at the bottom of the first pitch, we had a look through the sump, that was dry, and allowed as to get into the other side and see what in flood is a pool. From the sump level when the pool is full it is about 20 metres deep by around 20 metres wide and a length of 40 metres, the view of the pool empty is amazing, and think that the whole system floods is incredible.

From the bottom of the first pitch we carried on down a nice meander and then several pitches, some of them of impressive size. We were surprised when on the bottom of the last pitch we found a big frog, we supposed that it came that far in the cave brought by the water when it floods.

After this point starts a phreatic tube with the roof coming lower and lower, here Ed and myself stopped and Ross carried on for a few minutes and then we started our way back out.

As I rigged in our way down, Ed de-rigged all the way up to the first pitch. On our way up we met another group that were coming down. At the first pitch Ross and Ed went up, and then I came last de-rigging it.

For future visit to the cave I would recommend to use the P-bolt in the surface before the squeeze as the head of the pitch is very exposed and we were lucky that the other group was in and we used their rope to make safe the way out through the squeeze. It was a really interesting cave and beautiful walk.

Miguel Tome

Swinsto Pot – Geoff Rodwell, Debbie Lambert, Angus Leat, Russ Porter, Julie Hesketh & Paul Davies. Saturday, turned out to be another lovely day, with Paul, Julie and Russ joining Debbie, Angus and Geoff for a six person pull-through of Swinsto Pot.

This meant a quick drive back to Kingsdale to enter Swinsto at its top, with the intent to emerge out of Valley Entrance right by the cars without the need for hard SRTing up rope. Of course the down side of this easy SRT caving is the increased risk of a long wait for rescue should anything go wrong once the first committing rope is pulled down!

On arrival Angus and Debbie quickly entered Valley Entrance with 4 krabs and 20m of rope to pre-rig the one essential climb up to exit the streamway, while their SRT kit was carried up the hill. It proved another pleasant struggle up the steep hillside admiring the views more than once for enforced breath-catching pauses!

Once the correct entrance had been located there was a quick briefing for those on a first time pull-through and then it was 'down-hole'. There was a surprising amount of water on the hands and knees as we crawled the long stream way after the first pitch, even though conditions were exceptionally dry. (Neofleece advisable in normal conditions).

Geoff rigged, abbed down and removed the ropes end knot, quickly followed by Rus, Paul and Julie, with Angus and Debbie taking it in turns to de-rig the pitch head traverse lines, remove the pull-through safety knot at the Y hang, descend and re-bag the rope. This was then leap-frogged to the front of the team ready for re-use.

Angus and Debbie did the hard work while others had the fun. The leap-frog technique with 2 x 50m ropes provided a speedy trip which went faultlessly. Everyone quickly completed the nine pitches to arrive at the stream way leading to the SRT prussik up and the tunnel leading out into the blazing April sun.

With the 'call-out' cancelled there was time to head to Inglesport for shopping and late afternoon tea before a return to YSS for chats, drinks and late meal.

Geoff Rodwell

Dow Cave – Great Whernside

On Saturday April 17th Hayley Clark, Jeremy Gilson & I visited Dow Cave, pastures new for all of us. Having dubbed the trip 'another cripples day out', we set off for a gentle underground wander together with a mixture of body parts either injured or recovering from surgery!

It was a lovely sunny day and we had a very pleasant drive from the YSS to Leyburn where we parked as suggested by the book at the start of a steep hill with a garage at the bottom. The garage was a proper little garage for keeping a car in which almost threw us off the scent as we were all expecting to see a petrol station type garage!

Getting to the cave wasn't quite the gentle stroll we were expecting either, up a steep road, over a few stiles, across a few fields, also on steep ground, over a stream with slippery rocks and a bit of a clamber up to the entrance, perfect for our weak ankles, knees and backs!

It was all worth it though, big entrance with a scramble down through some boulders into a nice stream passage which was mostly easy walking with a couple of detours around the odd boulder. The canal was deep and very cold but easily walked around on a sandy bank. Hayley & I had a bit of fun nosing around in passages to see where they went, both finding a few dead ends and we went on to explore some of the cave on our own while Jeremy stopped to take some photographs.

The cave links up to Dowbergill Passage via a tube but we left that for another day, and went, we think, almost to Hobson's Choice, a rather delicate boulder choke which we had no intention of tackling! After a couple of little crawls and climbs and further exploration, Hayley & I had satisfied our 'caving craving' and headed back to meet up with Jeremy.

We wandered back up the stream and admired the entrance from below on the way out, it really is a lovely little cave, pretty and fun and with enough bits to explore to make you feel like you have really been caving.

We emerged from the cave into beautiful sunshine and had a good walk back to the car, stopping to watch rabbits playing in the fields along the way. After changing and having a bit of lunch at the car, we headed back towards the YSS, stopping at a lovely country pub for a drink, making the most of being able to sit outside in the glorious weather.

Not quite the trip that Jeremy had planned to go on but enjoyable nevertheless and the caves will all be there for more adventurous exploration when injuries have healed!

Angela Clulow



Hayley & Angela in Dow Cave. Photo: Jeremy Gilson.

Bar Pot – Ingleborough

Bar Pot is the most popular route into the Gaping Gill system and requires permission from the Ingleborough Estate Office. Jeremy had managed to arrange us a permit for a Sunday - the last trip of the weekend for Ed Waters, Russ Porter, Paul Davies, Miguel Tome and me.

The weather was bright and sunny and we had agreed to meet up in the car park at Clapham just after 8.30am on Sunday 18th April. We got changed into our caving gear and decided to take the most direct route up to Bar Pot which involved a walk up the Clapham nature trail (incurring a 60p charge) a delightful route passing a lake, various old pumping stations, the entrance of Ingleborough Cave, past the resurgence, up through Trow Gill (a rocky gorge) and then up onto the top of the hill. All in all, about an hour's walk.

The main entrance to Gaping Gill is not far from Bar Pot entrance so Paul, Russ and Miguel went over to have a peep. They returned suitably impressed, I will always remember the first time I saw it, I couldn't believe that you could just walk up to this yawning mouth in the ground with absolutely no fencing around it for protection! The water just cascades over the flat rocks into the massive 300 ft chamber below. Wow!

Ed was leading, and once he'd rigged the first pitch we followed on after him. It was quite tight at the top, and required a particular technique to get down without the descender getting jammed against the rock face.

Mental note – must stay low on the way out. A straight forward descent to the bottom, then on over a large awkward slab.

According to the book it is best to 'grip the top edge of the slab, find toe holds below and descend cautiously'. Yeah, right. Happily Ed brought some rope and we slid down without any major difficulty. Then on to the Big Pitch. This involved a bit of a traverse followed by a descent straight down with no re-belays. This was a fantastic experience. It was a huge vertical water worn tube about 30m deep and the biggest abseil I'd ever done. I was nervous going off the top but once on the rope I actually enjoyed myself – I even looked down!



Miguel Tome descending the Big Pitch in Bar Pot. Photo: Paul Davies

Ed then took us on past South East Pot (a hole in the ground passed with great care) and then through a series of hands and knees crawling passages. The draught from the main chamber was very strong and we soon arrived. Luckily we had in the team the latest in fashionable (sorry - high technology) head lights. It was like caving in the daylight. Russ and I could probably have left our 'Duos' behind. We had, Ed with his 'Little Monkey', Paul with a 'Viper', and Miguel with his super duper top of the range 'Scurion K'.

Having previously been blinded on many occasions with Miguels Scurion even this light disappeared into the vastness of the main chamber. Our eyes were drawn to the daylight coming through from the entrance shaft high up in the roof and the various water falls (quite surprising given the dry weather conditions) and descent routes were pointed out by Ed. He warned us not to hang around under the entrance shaft as tourists often throw stones into the hole from above. The chamber is over 100m high and it took a while to take it all in.



Miguel, Russ, Ed & Linda in Gaping Ghyll Main Chamber.
Photo: Paul Davies

On the return leg my confidence was high, having come down the two pitches with out feeling too nervous. I'd watched Ed, Paul and Miguel shimmy up Big Pitch but when it was my turn the confidence gradually ebbed away as I ascended the thin rope. Strange how it felt easier going down than it did going up but as I got higher and higher I felt more and more anxious and I could not fully trust my equipment. I was assured that this is quite normal in the beginning, the more you do, the more you feel at home on the rope and the fear of plummeting gradually recedes. Well I hope so!

The last pitch was, according to Ed, a piece of p**s but I'd forgotten to remember my mental note and went too high. A bit of faffing and some tips from Miguel saw me off the top of the pitch to leave room for Russ who was de-rigging.

We emerged at about 3.30pm, 4 ½ hours underground, and once the rope was packed and all the karabiners returned to Miguel we walked back down the trail to meet up with Alan, Monti and Tilly who had enjoyed a walk up Ingleborough while we were underground. A splendid trip to end a splendid weekend.

Linda Milne

Great Douk Cave – Chapel le Dale

On Sunday morning, the Edinburgh-based contingent headed off to Great Douk. The trip was largely aimed at Julie's 6 year old daughter, Eva who arrived at the YSS on the Saturday evening. Ross Davison, Julie and Eva (dressed in a suitably pink puddlesuit) set off in glorious sunshine to the cave.

Whilst the cave is really easy to find if you stick to the path, we decided to do some 'off-roading' and clambered up to see the amazing limestone pavement nearby. 2 walls and half an hour later we finally located the obvious entrance and made our way in.

The entrance was very slippery with algae which made an interesting climb in. Water levels were low which was fortunate as Eva said she rather disliked getting her feet wet (Julie has noted that getting Eva to the far reaches of Upper Flood will require a little more mental preparation!). We splashed our way upstream taking in a few inlets en-route though it was noted that both Eva and Julie volunteered Ross for the tight bits!

The cave was longer and much more fun than we remembered. And the squalid crawl at the end much lower and colder! So we opted to walk back out the way we came rather than go for the through trip. Our exit was accompanied by a good singsong and we got back to the entrance again in wonderfully warm sun. Ross did the honours with a shoulder ride back to the car where we met the Sunset Hole party just setting off for home.

Julie Hesketh-Laird

Sunset Hole – Chapel le Dale

With a 6+ hour drive home for both Angus and Geoff, it was decided that an alternative was needed to the long walk to Gaping Gill. Sunset Pot was chosen for a first time recce, quick easy trip and to try out a borrowed 9mm rope for its last pitch.

This proved a lovely little cave to finish the weekend. 250m of meandering passage, three small pitches each requiring 10m ropes (one was free climbed) with an excellent 20m straight free-hang at the end, to confirm our view that 9mm was fine for future SRTing.

We wandered out just after midday saying hello to various Sunday walkers, for a reflective drive home with fond memories of a great weekend. Thank you all, especially Jeremy.

Geoff Rodwell

EGM NOTICE

As many of you are aware, due to the paperwork not being made available in the required time frame, it was not possible to hold a constitutionally valid AGM in March as planned. In order to avoid a wasted journey to Mendip for many members, it was decided to go ahead with the meeting, but to then arrange an Extraordinary General Meeting to ratify any decisions made at the "not-AGM". The EGM will be held on the July members weekend, and will have the sole purpose of endorsing the decisions taken at the meeting in March.

The EGM will be held at 10:00am on 3rd July 2010 at Nordrach Cottage.

An agenda, minutes of the "not-AGM" and other paperwork are included with members copy of this Newsletter. Any comments or issues with these documents should be bought to the attention of the Hon. Secretary, Mike Richardson, secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org or via post or telephone using the contact details on the membership list issued with this Newsletter.

CAR PARK & PINETREE POT

For those of you who haven't been to the Cottage recently, you are in for a pleasant shock. Biff, Buddy & Mark Ward (with help from others) have levelled the car park and replaced the gate. Biff has provided the following brief on the work carried out in the last few weeks. I am sure that once you see how much has been achieved that you will all be grateful!

In addition, remedial work was carried out at Pinetree Pot, involving installation of new concrete pipes and a new gate. This was done due to the old gate being repeatedly buried by the trampling of cattle in the field.

Ed Waters

Friday, arrived at cottage at 9.30 am with the digger and started loosening up the soil heap.

10.30 water company move traffic lights past the lay-by, I take digger and extend lay-by about 30 ft, water company man tips 20 ton of stone for me to spread over lay by, job done.

12.30 scrape up mud from outside cottage wall and add to soil heap, 2.00 pm me, Doug and Buddy drive to ARC near Frome and collect 3 concrete pipes weighing 3/4 ton each, two on my trailer and one wedged in the back of Buddies van, drive back to Mendip and drop 2 off at Pinetree pot, roll one down the depression, narrowly avoid slipping under it on its way down.

Back to cottage unload pipe from Buddies van (its only a small dent) and push on to lawn.

6.30 pm scrape up more mud from over cess pit and pile on main heap then form a ramp to get digger on top of heap ready for morning, 8.30 go down hunters for pint and grub.

7.00am Saturday get up to dogs early morning call and drink tea till farmer arrives at 8.00 with tractor and trailer, load 10 ton trailer in 25 minutes, farmer tips load of soil at Pinetree Pot, around 1.30 pm, after six loads have gone to Pinetree, I try to dig up beech tree stump with my digger, makes very little impression, ask water company Foreman (who wants to come caving with two others) any chance of using their 30 ton chain trencher as a stump grinder, no problem, shame about the wall though!. Load remains of stump on to farmer's trailer and off to Pine tree, only to find the farmer has tipped the earth about 30 metres from the bottom of the sink, this was depressing, it was going to take hours to move all that soil to where we wanted it.

The farmer did tip the last load much nearer and on the steep side of the sink hole and so the lads started shovelling that lot down by hand, hats off to them.

So I spent the rest of the day moving the soil down into the depression (I said it was depressing) until about 7.00 pm when I burst a hose on the digger.

That could have been a real problem being that the next day was a Sunday, where would I get a new hose on a Sunday? But after a rummage through Mr Fry's heap of old hydraulic hoses and fittings I found a quite neat bodge. Mr Fry would accept nothing for this, so I thanked him and went back to Pinetree with Buddy and fitted it, tested it and then went back to the cottage - well it was dark!

Had grub in the restaurant at the bottom of Burrington Combe, driven back to cottage by the bad Elvis impersonator [*The live music at the Burrington Inn - Ed*].



Biff and Buddy working on the car park. Photo: Mark Ward

Sunday lay-in, didn't start until 9.00 am, back to Pinetree, moved the soil down to the bottom, then Mark rolled the other pipe down almost getting a hole in one!. Used the digger to position the pipe then spent a few more hours landscaping and tidying up, Doug showed the farmer, who was happy with the job we had done, and the fifty quid.

Then it was back to the cottage and a little plan we had hatched, we thought as we had the digger we might be able to find the rift that had been unearthed when a soakaway was dug back in the nineties.

And so with a little trepidation we dug up the lawn, on the second attempt we found the old soak away, with the digger I managed to dig a hole 10 ft deep, pulling out all sorts of junk and exposing one side of the rift. By now we had a big hole in the ground and about six tons of mud, clay, rock, and junk piled up on what once was the lawn. Time was getting on and we were all aware that we had to tidy this mess up, so I built a wall in the hole level to and on the opposite side to the rift, we then lowered the 3/4 ton pipe in to the hole to rest on the walls, this all went horribly wrong with the wall partially collapsing and the pipe laying at a jaunty angle, by now its getting late again and we were all tired, so we called it a day,

Monday saw Buddy, Mark and myself at it again, the digger just managed to pull the pipe out again so we then rebuilt the wall, put some scaffold in to make a frame and lowered the pipe in again, this time it was ok, we then built a round ginged wall up to the surface level and back filled the sides.

We then borrowed the water men's 6 ton dumper and loaded all the clay and mud and stuff and tipped it in another hole that Farmer Brown is filling up, I then scraped the lawn clean with the digger, while the others covered the hole up.

The 4 inch pipe going into the soak away was completely filled with mud for about 4 feet, so the soak-away can't have been working properly, but its clear now.

We left the hose running for four hours in to the hole and the water has formed a little stream way flowing down through the rifty floor, it really looks like there must be void down there to take all that water. Please don't dig at the bottom yet as we have to stabilise the sides a bit more.

You would think I was finished at this point but it was only mid afternoon so we took the digger to Battery Swallet and dug a railway sized cutting down at the bottom of the depression removing tons of spoil to a higher level, I was nearly finished when a hydraulic ram snapped on me, couldn't fix that without welding gear so that was that , it was getting dark anyway.

Slept like the dead Monday night. Cleaned up the cottage and went home Tuesday dinnertime, for a rest.

On Friday the thirtieth of April I towed my mini digger down to Mendip for the second time. I arrived about dinner time to meet with Buddy and Mark. A one ton bag of ballast and cement ordered by Doug arrived at the same time. Using the digger we quickly pulled up the old gate posts and removed the nearer dry stone walls, this was to enable twenty tones of scalplings to be delivered and to dig the holes for the new heavier gate posts. We managed to get both of these concreted in place by the evening.

Saturday morning the weather was not very pleasant.

Buddy and I retrieved the large domestic fuel oil tank from battery swallet and took it back to the cottage for welding. While we waited for Mark to turn up with the hinges we made a start on fitting the new lid to the cellar or hole in the lawn. We were joined by Mark who had failed to get any hinges (you just cant get the labour these days). We then cemented the new lid in place (child safe). Doug came to the rescue with the hinges for the tank, so we cut a doorway in the tank and welded hinges and a hasp in place (cottage electrics didn't have a problem with my welder). The purpose of this tank is to create a steel container so the compressor and other tools can be left at Battery Swallet securely.

We then took said tank back to Battery Swallet and with the digger pushed it down into the depression. Again using the digger I cut out an area into the bank at the bottom to accommodate it. This done I started to move all the loose spoil back out of the depression. This took quite a few hours especially as I shed a track twice and burst the same pipe that we repaired last time. This time I got showered in hot oil from head to toe, not very nice. Luckily I had a new spare hose with me and was soon able to continue the job and finish at dusk.

Sunday was another cold day but we were able to hang the new gates, all four sections of them. It took some time to level these all up, and then concrete one of the location posts in place. Unfortunately we also ran out off ballast and had to send Buddy out for more.

Monday, I was joined by Doug who turned up with another ton of ballast and cement on a trailer. He proceeded to work on the walls while I concreted the second location post in place. After Doug left at around six pm, I went inside for an hour to warm up and eat. At gone 7.30 I went out again and using the digger mixed about half a ton of ballast up for the bund and started to lay it in place with a shovel. By this time it was getting dark and I had to finish the job using my caving light. By the time I had washed the gear up it was 10.00 pm, I was knackered!

Tuesday, Buddy and Mark were back to help me. Mark repainted the gates while Buddy helped me spread the scalplings. We soon realised we needed another ten tons of scalplings and so Doug was tasked with getting them within a couple of hours, which he did. So I spent several more hours spreading the scalplings ready for rolling while the lads did more work on the walls.

Then Buddy and Mark took turns on the roller to compact the material down, while I piled the remaining stone in the corner, and then loaded the digger and tools to go home. It took some time for us to clear every thing up and leave the cottage tidy inside and out. We set off for our homes at nine pm, well pleased with ourselves but very tired.

Biff



The posh new car park & gates. Photo: Mark Ward.*****

NEW LED RETRO-FIT OPTIONS

Over recent years there has appeared a wide range of superb, but pricy, caving lamps such as the Scurion, Sten, Viper and Little Monkey (see Newsletter #360). Such quality however comes with a hefty price tag, and for those who would rather save their pennies for the *Aprés Caving* scene than on blinding their potholing buddies, there are some interesting new cost effective options for upgrading your current lamp.

Firstly "Custom Duo" are producing units to fit into the popular Petzl Duo and traditional miners style headsets (including speleotechnics types). There is a range of options available, best explored on the web at;

<http://customduo.co.uk/>

The units appear to be well built, which should be no surprise as they are being made by the same person who produced the Little Monkey. Prices appear very competitive, with units starting at £26. Output is claimed to be up to 280 Lumens for the Duo units and 325 Lumens for the miners type.

Many MCG members will already be aware of, or even using, the excellent *Bisun* twin LED units which can be fitted to miners type headsets. Bisun have now extended their range with the *Solo* which can replace the spot beam on the Petzl Duo. No performance in terms of light output is given, but the unit will comfortably exceed the output of either the halogen bulb or the commonly available LED replacement. Price is similar to the Custom Duo unit, at £25 plus £2 p&p. More details can be found on the website at;

<http://www.bisun.co.uk/solo.htm>

Both of the above products now offer performance close to the top of the range lamps but for an outlay of 10% or less of the price (assuming you already own a Duo or miners lamp). Hopefully someone will be able to provide a review of one of these in the near future!

Ed Waters

LOST PROPERTY

- 1) 1 Muddy Troll battery belt.
- 2) 1 ATC (climbing belay device) in brown & gold.
- 3) 2 Pink screw gate DMM crabs.
- 4) 1 HB Wales alloy snap link.
- 5) 3 Petzl Hangers with 8mm allen key heads.
- 6) 1 D Mallion.
- 7) 1 Troll Hanger with 8mm Hex head bolt.
- 8) 1 Dmm no:7 Walnut (climbing aid)
- 9) 1 Dmm no:4 Walnut (climbing aid)
- 10) A Uniross battery charger.
- 11) 1 FX2 & White builders helmet & Troll belt & D mallion.
- 12) 1 pair of red plastic gloves.
- 13) 1 Hilti firing pin mat.
- 14) 1 Golf umbrella (blue & white)
- 15) 1 Left footed Wetsock (blue & black), size 5 - 6.

- 16) 1 small red tackle bag, complete with 1 red bottle.
- 17) 1 Pink T-shirt (new look) size 10.
- 18) 1 Blue wicking long sleeved vest (Daleswear/Polartec)
- 19) 1 Red Hoodie XL (Russell Athletic)
- 20) 1 Travel Essentials Blue towel.
- 21) 1 Lime Green Towel.
- 22) 1 Rubber Knee/ Elbow pad.
- 23) 1 Man's wash bag (Lowe Alpine)
- 24) 1 pair of Blue rugby socks.
- 25) 1 Light Blue Travel towel.
- 26) 1 Blue Boiler suit/coverall (Castle) 46".
- 27) 1 Extra small pair of Waterproof leggings, complete with knee pads.
- 28) 1 Brown sock.
- 29) Pair of Poomex Pants in Dark Blue.
- 30) Pair of Medium Blue George Pants.

All of the above items are in a box in the X cupboard. Please ask a member of the Committee to claim your property.

After 2 months, Items will be either skipped or sold to a good home, all profits going towards the Cottage extension.

Cottage Warden; Doug Harris.

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

The log of the Wookey Hole Exploration Expedition, 1935 by *Graham Balcombe & Penelope Powell*. This is a new edition produced by Duncan Price, working from Balcombe's file copy and incorporating his handwritten notes, some supporting material from others and a brief update of Wookey Hole exploration to 2005. An original copy of this log would cost hundreds of pounds so Duncan is to be congratulated for bringing this fascinating story to a wider audience at a reasonable price.

Wookey Hole – 75 Years of Cave Diving & Exploration, 2010, published by the *Cave Diving Group* and edited by *Jim Hanwell, Duncan Price and Richard Witcombe*. This is a 'sister' publication to the Swildon's Hole book which was published in 2007 and which is in the MCG library.

The first 21 chapters (1935-1985) were collected together by Jim Hanwell for a publication to mark the Golden Jubilee of underwater exploration in Wookey. That book never materialised, but a further seven chapters have been now been added to bring the history of exploration bang up to date. The early chapters are reminiscences of those involved with diving in Wookey and a similar presentation has been used for the later chapters. This leads to very personal and varied views of the quest to discover and explore the further reaches of Wookey Hole. There are ample illustrations ranging from log book excerpts, surveys, photos of the divers, support teams and equipment.

Although I didn't expect to be enthralled by the subject of cave diving, I was very pleasantly surprised - the book has much for the specialist but also great appeal for the general caver.

Joan Goddard

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

In the past it was customary for the Newsletter to contain a welcome to new members of the group. Unfortunately this has not occurred in recent times, so in order to set the record straight, please provide a warm welcome to the following members who have joined since the December 2008 committee meeting (please note that this list does not include those who did not renew their membership this year);

Paul Williams
Kevin Speight
Jenny Plumb
Miguel Tome Mejias
Ed Waters

The above have actually been members long enough to become Full Members (and even join the committee in a couple of cases), whilst those listed below are Probationary Members;

Hayley Clark
Dave Naismith
Paul Davies
Andrea Russe
Tracey Fisher
Stefan Marjoram
Katherine Stilwell
Mandy Bristol
William Morris
Evert Wilbrenninck
Matt Denyer
David Lossl
Sue Speight
John Jeffery
Emma Lambert

Contact details for the above new members can be found in the membership list circulated to group members with this Newsletter.

The following have not paid their subscriptions this year, and as such have resigned their membership of the group;

Gabriel Best
Sonya Cotter
Andrew Gallon
Kerry Howard
Richard Pain
Neil Walmsley
Robert Alfano
Robert Hardy
Debbie Freeman
Nick Baston
Graham Sutcliffe
Jane Charlesworth
Helen Cotton
Louise Stone
Lisa Flynn
Adam Etherington

STOP PRESS

As this Newsletter is going to press, there has been a week of almost unparalleled dig breakthroughs across Mendip. To the Editor's knowledge significant finds have been made in Charterhouse Cave, Manor Farm Swallet, Balch Cave, Bowery Corner Swallet, Rod's Pot and East Twin Swallet. Hopefully more details will be available in the next issue of MCG News!