



# MCG NEWS

Newsletter of the Mendip Caving Group

Number 373

January 2014



## 60th Anniversary Year

### This Issue:

- 60th Anniversary Dinner
- Club News, including the Christmas Party and news of a New Shaft in Velvet Bottom
- MCG' AGM Date and Notice
- MCG Digging; exciting potential in Battery and Upper Flood
- Longwood Valley Flood Relief Measures
- The history of the MCG's Digging Equipment
- Templeton Dig Report
- Home Close Hole Dig Breakthrough
- JRat Digging Awards Report
- Library Additions and MU5 review

**Biff Frith in the Shower Bath Swildons for the MCG Historical Photos Photo by Charlie Allison**

# WINTER 2013/14

## EDITORIAL

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The Range of Helmets and lights used for the 60th Anniversary Photoshoot

Photo by Charlie Allison

Happy New Year!

Hope you have all had a very merry Christmas and holiday season.

It's 2014, so I'm also pleased to wish you happy 60th Anniversary Year, Mendip Caving Group. We have the 60th Anniversary Dinner coming up in less than 3 months, time to get your cheques in to Richard to confirm your place at what should be a very enjoyable celebration.

In April, (all being well) to coincide with the Anniversary dinner, we will be publishing a special 60th Anniversary Newsletter.

In December, Ed Waters organised a very special photo shoot, the photos and the story of this shoot will appear in this anniversary edition! I won't say too much about it at this time, but it was fascinating to see how equipment has changed during the existence of the club.

**If you have stories, recollections, or photo's which would help to illustrate the history of the club, then I would be most grateful to receive them!**

In this edition of the newsletter, Joan Goddard writes about the impressive job that Mendip Cavers have done to help to reduce the chances of another prolonged closure of the gorge at Cheddar. During the research for this piece Joan attempted to uncover the history of the Longwood Winch, which in turn leads to a very interesting piece of re-

search into other early MCG Digging Equipment.

The Digging battle continues in Battery, Bone and Upper Flood. There are digging reports in this edition from all three and a brief look from Tim Francis at a few of the main leads in Upper Flood.

At Templeton, Elaine Tucker talks us through the progress of the dig, made possible only with the use of some very innovative engineering techniques.

Mick Norton has been keeping a close eye on happenings at Home Close where they have had a recent breakthrough. This is a particularly interesting dig to the MCG with its close proximity and potential link to Battery Swallet and as Joan reports in her piece, Three Winches and a Jib, it is also the current home of an old piece of MCG equipment!

Don't forget to check the events calendar in the newsletter and online for future trips and special events and please keep your photos, trip reports, dig reports, articles and anything else coming in!

See you at Nordrach!

Tom Harrison January 2014

[Get2\\_tom@hotmail.com](mailto:Get2_tom@hotmail.com)

# MCG - 60TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

HAVE YOU BOOKED YOUR PLACE YET?!

**We are fast approaching the cut off for booking your place at the MCG 60th Anniversary Dinner. Please send your cheque and choice from the Menu to Richard ASAP. You can print this page and use the form at the bottom to indicate your menu choice and whether you require the coach or not. Look forward to seeing you all there!**



The cost of the dinner is £26.00 per person and the coach is available at £10 per head picking up either from the Hunter's Lodge Inn or the Cottage.

Please make cheques payable to the Mendip Caving Group and send them to :  
Richard Carey, 9 Greenvale Drive, Timsbury, Bath BA2 0HW.

**Cheques to be received no later than 12<sup>th</sup> April 2014 please!**

**First course:**

Roasted Butternut Squash and Sweet potato soup

Or

Grilled Goat's cheese, Roasted Peppers and Mixed Leaf Salad

Or

Smoked Chicken Caesar Salad

**Main course:**

Roast pork and apple sauce

Or

Homemade Steak and Ale Pie topped with Puff Pastry and gravy

Or

Aubergine bake

All served with roast potatoes and seasonal vegetables.

**Dessert:**

Sticky toffee pudding with creamy custard

Or

Trio of Sorbet

Tea, Coffee and mints



**Mendip Caving Group  
60 Year Anniversary  
AGM Dinner**

**The Batch Country  
House  
Lympsham  
Near Weston Super Mare  
Somerset  
BS24 0EX**

**On Saturday the 26th  
April 2014**

**7pm until Midnight**

Name		Name	
1 <sup>st</sup> course		1 <sup>st</sup> course	
Main course		Main course	
Dessert		Dessert	
Coach from Hunters (H) Cottage (C) ?	H / C / Not needed	Coach from Hunters (H) Cottage (C) ?	H / C / Not needed

# MCG CLUB NEWS

## Christmas Party

December's MCG Christmas Party was a great success. I am sure that everyone in attendance would attest to having had a wonderful night of fun, with delicious food, great company, a few drinks, spontaneous collapsing chairs and of course an appearance of the MCG Supergun.



Special thanks must go to Linda Milne, who made it all happen. Linda passed her thanks on to her team of cooks (Karen, Caroline, Jackie, Hayley, Keith and Brian), Joan for the pigs in blankets, Mike for the big trifle, Kev and Biff (carving), Biff (music and oven), Russ (BBQ and gas safety), Keith and Megan (xmas decs), Bob (odd job bob), Charlie and Keith (BBQ prep), Sue (finance), and Ed (MC). A very memorable night.  
TH



Mikes's Washing Up Bowl Trifle! Both Photos from Charlie Allison

## NEW Shaft in Velvet Bottom

A local farmer informed John Crowsley and Chris Binding of a new hole that had opened up.

John descended said shaft on Sunday 11th November and placed the lawn dig lid over

the hole to make it safe.

Biff descended the shaft and found it to be about 6 metres deep, quite muddy and with a very dead sheep at the bottom, beyond the Black Liquid Mess a small cavity can be seen. This is too putrid to dig at present and permissions will have to be sought.

Biff Frith Nov 2013

## The History of the Blackmoor Area SUNDAY 9th MARCH

Joan Goddard will be leading a short walk around the Blackmoor area to look at it's mining and MCG history.

Meet at the cottage at 10am. Everyone welcome. Come prepared for mud, rain, snow or a heatwave!  
Joan Goddard

## MCRA

Mike Moxon has taken over responsibility from Alan Gray (Axbridge C.G.) for

updating the bibliography for the Mendip Cave Registry and Archive. Joan Goddard

## MCG News Scoops the Times Newspaper

Anyone reading the Times newspaper recently may have spotted one of Josh Batchley's (Plymouth Uni Caving Club) photos of Sima de Cacao taken during last summer's Andalucia trip.

Another photo from the set had already appeared on the cover of MCG News back in October!  
TH

See Chris Binding's new Sima de Cacao video online at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQFU6CwU5dg>



## 2014 MCG Annual General Meeting Notice

The AGM will be held at **10 a.m. on Saturday the 26<sup>th</sup> April 2014 in The Hunters Lodge Inn, Priddy**. Nominations for Office and proposals to change the Constitution and Rules must be submitted in writing by first class post to the Hon. Secretary's home address (Brian Snell, 38 Serpentine Road, Fareham, Hants PO16 7EB ) with the signatures of full members proposing and seconding at least 25 days before the meeting (Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014).

A nomination for Office must be accompanied by a signed agreement to stand for election by the nominee. Nominations are sought for all posts.

Job Descriptions of all Committee posts will be available, on request, from Bob Templeman, Librarian/ Recorder in due course.

### Upcoming Trips and Events

7/8/9	February	Members' Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
22	February	Afton Red Rift, Devon	Contact Dave Ball
7/8/9	March	Members' Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
9	March	History of Blackmoor Walk	Meet 10am at Nordrach Cottage Contact Joan Goddard
15	March	OFD, South Wales	Contact Steve Church
4/5/6	April	Members Weekend	Meet at Nordrach Cottage
26	<b>April</b>	<b>AGM</b>	<b>Meet at The Hunters, 10am</b>
26	<b>April</b>	<b>60th Anniversary Dinner</b>	<b>Contact Richard Carey</b> <a href="mailto:richardmcarey@btinternet.com">richardmcarey@btinternet.com</a>

Above, are the upcoming trips for the next 3 months. Please contact the trip leader in advance to reserve your place on the trip.

A more comprehensive list of trips, digs and events can

be found at [www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk](http://www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk)

Don't forget to record your trips in the logbook at the cottage, especially with the logbook prizes now on offer!

And any trip reports, photos or even videos that you have, I would gratefully receive for future editions of the newsletter!

[Get2\\_Tom@Hotmail.com](mailto:Get2_Tom@Hotmail.com)

**A very warm welcome to the following new MCG members :**

**Jane Crowther and Alara Vural**

# LONGWOOD VALLEY

Flood relief measures in Longwood Valley by Joan Goddard

In Newsletter No. 370 I wrote about the flooding in Cheddar Gorge and how in February 2013 cavers, Somerset Wildlife Trust and Natural England unblocked Longwood Valley Sink and created a temporary dam to divert the stream into it.

At the end of October, after reading in the local paper that the flood relief measures were complete, I decided to take a walk up Longwood Valley to see the results for myself and take a few photos. I was very impressed and visited the Charterhouse Caving Committee (CCC) website to find out more about the project.

The work was undertaken jointly by volunteers from Somerset Wildlife Trust (SWT) and the CCC, managed by Mendip and Sedgemoor Highways Dept. and co-ordinated by Linda Wilson (CCC)

## Phase 1 - digging out the main sink.



Photo 2. Longwood Main Sink, silted up and flooding, April 2013 [Photo: Alison Moody]



Photo 3. Digging the Main Sink below Longwood blockhouse, May 2013 [Photo: Graham Price]

It would have been too difficult to get machinery this far up the valley so it was dug by hand. In early May, after several days digging, cavers uncovered an enormous tree trunk which had been there for around 20 years and which had caused wood, stones, leaves and silt to block the swallet. Numerous digging trips later the swallet was lowered to the depth it was some 30 years ago. This phase took eight working days with six to eight people working at a time, assisted by up to 10 SWT volunteers moving rocks further down the valley to Longwood Valley Sink to be used for wall building.



Photo 4. Excavator and pipe being transported to site, July 2013. [Photo: Graham Price]

## Phase 2 – digging out the entrance to Longwood Valley Sink.

In July a mechanical excavator with a skilled driver removed the original crumbling metal oil drums, enlarged the hole, installed the new plastic pipework and deepened the stream bed to allow for the building of a dry stone wall.

## Phase 3 – building the permanent dam

This was to replace the temporary dam built in February. During the summer a curved dry stone wall was built leading down to the newly piped entrance to Longwood Valley Sink, the bank behind the wall acting as a dam. In the event of the main Longwood sink being unable to take water after exceptional rain, this dam will prevent it flowing down valley into Cheddar Gorge.



Photo 1. Before work started. Water overflowing Longwood Valley Sink and continuing down the valley [Photo: Alison Moody]



Photo 5. Drystone wall, dam and new gate/grill at Longwood Valley Sink, 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2013 [Photo: Joan Goddard]

#### Phase 4 – installing the entrance gate/grill on Longwood Valley Sink.

On the 27<sup>th</sup> September the specially constructed grill was installed, the Main Sink was lowered by a further metre and the site was generally tidied up.

From start to finish the flood relief project took six months with at least a full month's work put in by cavers and Somerset Wildlife Trust. Many additional hours have been spent co-ordinating the project.

As someone who uses Cheddar Gorge to access Mendip (and the Hunters') I very much appreciate the efforts of all the volunteers.

The CCC Report is well worth a read and is available online at [http://charterhouse-caving-company.ltd.uk/resources/Longwood Valley Flood Works Report Sept%202013.pdf](http://charterhouse-caving-company.ltd.uk/resources/Longwood%20Valley%20Flood%20Works%20Report%20Sept%202013.pdf)



Photo 6. Blockhouse and improved streamway, 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2013 [Photo: Joan Goddard]



Photo 7. Main Sink taking a fair stream on 30<sup>th</sup> Oct 2013 [Photo: Joan Goddard]

#### Postscript

On 5<sup>th</sup> Nov, just a few days after I finished writing the article, there was heavy rain on Black Down (but only 20mm recorded at the weather station at Ubley Warren Farm) resulting in a flood pulse down Longwood Valley. Main Sink overflowed and the excess water continued down to Longwood Valley Sink where the water ponded and swirled around the new pipes (the grill having become obstructed by debris) and found its way underground in the loose backfill to the left of the pipes. Fortunately the dam held, apart from a short section nearest the grill, so flooding down the Gorge road was averted.



Photo 8. Entering the newly piped Longwood Valley Sink in flood, 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 2013 [Photo: Alison Moody]

As soon as conditions allowed, Ali Moody (Wessex) and Andrew Atkinson (UBSS) went into the dig where they saw most of the stream water joining the passage via the old adit.

Currently (mid Dec 2013) the stream continues down its new route underground, but the team will backfill the new collapse with rocks obtained by digging LVS and some further remedial work will occur around the sides.



Photo 9. Water entering dug passage from the end of the old adit, 6<sup>th</sup> Nov 2013 [Photo: Alison Moody]

Joan Goddard

# THREE WINCHES AND A JIB

by Joan Goddard



Photo 1. The old winch at Longwood Valley Sink when the sink was blocked, Winter 2012/2013 [Photo: A.Moody]

This is the object which started it all off; an **old winch at Longwood Valley Sink** which had been there for many years (at least since 1982/3). It was very much part of the scenery and I had been led to believe it originally belonged to the MCG. It disappeared after the unblocking of Longwood Valley Sink in October 2013 and I was curious to know what had happened to it – I hoped it hadn't been scrapped as it was an iconic feature in the valley.

Enquiries led me to Tony Audsley (TonyA), one of the team involved in the Longwood Valley flood relief project, who had taken the winch for safe-keeping, fettling and further use. He turned out to be one of Mendip's army of cave diggers and a winch enthusiast – and thereby hangs this tale . . .

Tim Francis thought the Longwood winch had been used by MCG at Battery Swallet in 1988, but it couldn't have been as Richard Witcombe remembers it was at Longwood valley Sink from 1982/3. TonyA thought it may have come from Twin Titties but Jim Hanwell said not although it *may* have come from Windsor Hill dig. A number of other diggers were asked but no one so far can remember where the Longwood Valley Sink winch originated. One person, Clive North, remembers transporting it in his Land Rover to the site but can't remember from where.



Photo 2. The old winch in better days [Photo from Weston & Worle News, 19<sup>th</sup> Sept 2002]

**So, although for the time being the jury is out on the history of the LVS winch (the Wessex may know more) I have discovered quite a bit about other early MCG digging equipment.**

## 2. The Stainsby's winch

An old winch appears in the background of a photograph of Blackmoor Shaft in a book "Britain's

Old Metal Mines – A Pictorial Survey" by R.H. Bird, 1974. Blackmoor Shaft is now known as Stainsby's Shaft, the name given to it by the Cornish Miners who came to Charterhouse in 1844 (Stanton & Clarke, 1844).

TonyA explained that this winch was moved to Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet, first dug in April 1972 by a group which included Dave Mitchell, an MCG member who sadly died of cancer in 1975, and TonyA. In October 1972 archaeologically significant bones (and later, other artifacts) were discovered (see A. Audsley et al., 1988) and a shored shaft was constructed to stabilise the entrance. TonyA recalls that the winch, known as a "Crab" winch, was removed from Blackmoor Shaft by John Cornwell, Jenny Murrell (later Cornwell), Alice Simson (later Audsley) and Tony himself. The drum and gear wheel were wheeled to the road and then laid in the passenger seat well of Jenny's A40, the gearwheel protruding outside the open car door. It was driven to the dig where it was used to remove spoil from the shaft. It was originally used as a hand winch hauling a reinforced dustbin



Photo 3. The swinging jib at Blackmoor (Stainsby's) Shaft. Note old winch in the background, pre April 1972 [from 'Britain's Old Metal Mines' by R.H.Bird]





Photo 4. The old Stainsby's winch at Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet modified with a Ford Anglia engine and mounted on a two wheeled angle-iron frame [Photo: T.Audsley, 1977?]



Photo 5. The Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet winch in 2006 [Photo: J.Goddard]

acting as a kibble or bucket. It was then motorised with a Ford Anglia 105E engine on a framework of angle iron taken from Newbury telephone exchange, probably the last manual telephone exchange on the mainland. The initial version of the motorised winch, christened "The Miracle Crab Winch", was mounted on two wheels, fitted with various struts to hold it down and used like a dragline to rearrange the spoil heap to make way for the foundations of an engine house. The winch assembly was then bolted onto a concrete foundation and a hut built around it.

The winch and remains of engine house are still at Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet.

### 3. The Swinging Jib

As a result of emailing the R.H. Bird photo of Stainby's Shaft to Tony Knibbs (TonyK), memories were stirred with respect to the swinging jib (or derrick). TonyK constructed the derrick with help from a couple of Vickers Armstrong engineers from Weybridge and it was erected at Blackmoor Shaft. MCG Newsletter No 40 (December 1965) states that *"the derrick was rigged and ready for use"* but there was no mention of a winch. However Newsletter No 46 (June 1966) states *"Since Whitsun 1966 the hand winch has been superseded by a petrol driven miniature hoist of 5kw capacity . . ."*. An article by TonyK in MCG Journal No 4 (1967) describes the derrick in more detail *"On reaching a depth of 12ft a lifting tackle was installed. This consisted of two 11ft lengths of 2.375in. galvanised iron water pipe; one standing vertically and sunk 3 ft. into the ground whilst the other was rigged as a swinging jib supported on the vertical member at 45 degrees by a Y-piece of welded pipe, 2.5in. inside diameter. The majority of stress was taken through three wire rope guys from the vertical member to the ground and a single wire rope from the vertical member to the jib."*



Photo 6. John Cornwell (left) with the jib outside the East Somerset Hut, Eastwater Lane [Photo: T.Audsley, 1971?]

Coincidentally TonyA also mentioned seeing the derrick/jib in use at Blackmoor (Stainsby's) Shaft. In the late 1960s/early 1970s John Cornwell acquired the derrick and moved it to the East Somerset Hut with the intention of using it for digging (possibly at Hywell's Hole) but no further details are known.

### 4. The Villiers petrol hoist

TonyK recalled how he acquired this hoist. He was in conversation with a builder at party in Fulham in 1966. They were discussing leisure activities and when cave digging was mentioned - hauling buckets of spoil up shafts with a rope - the builder described how he lifted materials from ground level to the tops of buildings using a petrol hoist. He offered to supply TonyK with a used hoist, free of charge and it was duly handed over. It was quite small and manageable so could be taken back to the cottage at the end of each digging session. TonyK did not know what subsequently happened to the hoist



Photo 7. The Villiers petrol hoist as received by Tony Knibbs [Photo: T.Knibbs, 1966]

although he thought it *might* still be in MCG's old wooden hut behind the current cottage. I asked Ken Fry but he couldn't remember ever seeing it there.

Currently the digging crew at Home Close Hole is using a Villiers petrol hoist. Home Close Hole is a dig near to Wigmore Hole; it has a 1.2m diameter concrete shaft through Hitachi-excavated clay down to Dolomitic Conglomerate where cave passage is being dug. Spoil is brought to the surface using the hoist. Tony Audsley thinks this winch originally came from the MCG and was used in the early days of digging at Wigmore Swallet by Tony Jarratt and Co. in the mid/late 1970s. It is the same builder's hoist as the one in Photo 7.

A report in Belfry Bulletin No.356 (Dec 1977) states "**the M.C.G. Showband supplied the dig with a Villiers 250cc Motor winch**" and helped with the dig. . A look at J'Rat's logbook suggests that the 'Showband' consisted of Don Vosper, Greg Smith, Jane Kirby (+ one other), presumably because Don played the flute and concertina, Greg played the mandolin and Jane was learning the whistle. It was one of Tony Jarrett's quotes that you didn't need a training trip to join the MCG but an audition! The entry for 7<sup>th</sup> August 1977 reads "**Petrol driven (MCG) winch installed and engine house finished**".

When it was no longer required at Wigmore the hoist was used to dig an old miners' shaft in Stockhill woods. When it 'died' it was taken to the Belfry tackle store where it languished until they had a clear-out and it was chucked outside.

That might have been the end of the tale except that it was rescued and refurbished by Tony Audsley and it is now being put to good use at Home Close Hole where it resides in a purpose built Engine House

**Many thanks to Tony Audsley, Tony Knibbs and Don Vosper, without whom there would be no tale to tell.**



Photo 8. The Villiers hoist in need of refurbishment [Photo: T.Audsley, April 2009]



Photo 9. The hoist after refurbishment [Photo: Tony Audsley July 2010]



Photo 10. Home Close Hole dig site with Engine House to left of picture [Photo: J.Goddard, Dec 2013]



Photo 11. Tony Audsley in the Engine Shed with the Villiers winch in action [Photo: J.Goddard, Dec 2013]

#### References:

- Audsley,A., Hawkes,C.J., Levitan,B.M., Moody,A.A.D., Moody,P.D., Smart,P.L., and Thomas,J.S., 1988. *Charterhouse Warren Farm Swallet: Exploration, geomorphology, taphonomy and archaeology*. UBSS Proceedings, **18(2)** , pp 171-239
- Bird,R.H., 1974. *Britain's Old Metal Mines – A Pictorial Survey*, 1974, p31
- Stanton,W.I. & Clarke, A.G., 1984 . *Cornish Miners at Charterhouse-on-Mendip*. UBSS Proceedings, **17(1)**, pp 29-54.
- Jarratt,A.R., 1977. *Wigmore Swallet Dig -Provisional Report - The Story So Far*: Belfry Bulletin No 356, December 1977.
- Jarratt,A.R., Logbook No. 2

Joan Goddard

# MCG Digging

## LOG BOOK DIG REPORTS

01/02/14 Battery Swallet, final trip?.....Not!

James and Mark

With absolutely no labour, sadly digging has ceased in Battery Swallet.

I managed to tease James down from Cheltenham to help with a final clearance of the cave. It was a freezing wet Saturday. Water levels were high after all the rain and floods we'd recently had. Half changed and already frozen in the car park, our minds turned to James and Mig's epic flooded escape last year and we nearly settled for the pub instead!

Somehow we pushed on and trudged through the rain and glutinous mud to the cave. As it transpires, it was a very good time to enter Battery! Water was running off the fields so we kept a very careful eye on the water levels.

We cleared the cave of tools, cables, wires, ropes drums etc which took us half of the day. However, the last bang's debris was holding back a sizable pool, almost sumped in the tight approach to the dig face. Carefully pushing through this, it was evident that only a trickle was escaping past the debris. But in the not too far distance an almighty rumble could be heard. This was water either dropping or moving its way along the cave fast!

We sat in Midway chamber and listened to the noise of the large volumes of water tipping down the cascade. Same sound but not as awesome as the noise further on.

*"in the not too far distance an almighty rumble could be heard"*

This was clearly a new source of water entering the cave further ahead.

With renewed passion, we decided that we could keep pushing on minimally with just two people working quick shifts. Had we decided on the pub and left the clearance until a dryer day, we would not have heard this new water source entering from another depression and digging would have halted! So I will continue with the project as and when I can convince anyone to join me even for a Single trip!

**So.....anyone fancy helping on Mendip's most awesome dig....?.... :-)**

*Mark Ward*

13/12/13 Bone Hole BREAKTHROUGH AT LAST!

Ed Waters, Biff Frith, Keith Knight

Digging at Shrapnel Corner quickly revealed a powerful draught and eventually much black space, through which boulders could be heard rolling into the distance. Biff's movements quickened to a blur due to an almost terminal case of dig fever. Finally the black space could be seen to be a narrow rift through which Biff announced he could see 15, no 20, feet of passage. Biff inserted himself bravely into the narrow aperture suffering a mild case of 'digger's nipple' as a result. Expectation was at fever pitch as Biff disappeared from sight into caverns measureless . . . .

"What have you found, Biff?" we asked, only to get the reply

"Ooohh! Nooooo! I know where I am!"

He had found a pristine shot-hole and expended hilti cap in 'the new bit'. This actually turned out to be the far end of Arrgthurian Rift that Biff has been digging for the last few sessions. We have created yet another round trip that has been christened 'Frustration Loop'. BU\*\*ER!

*Ed Waters*

# UPPER FLOOD

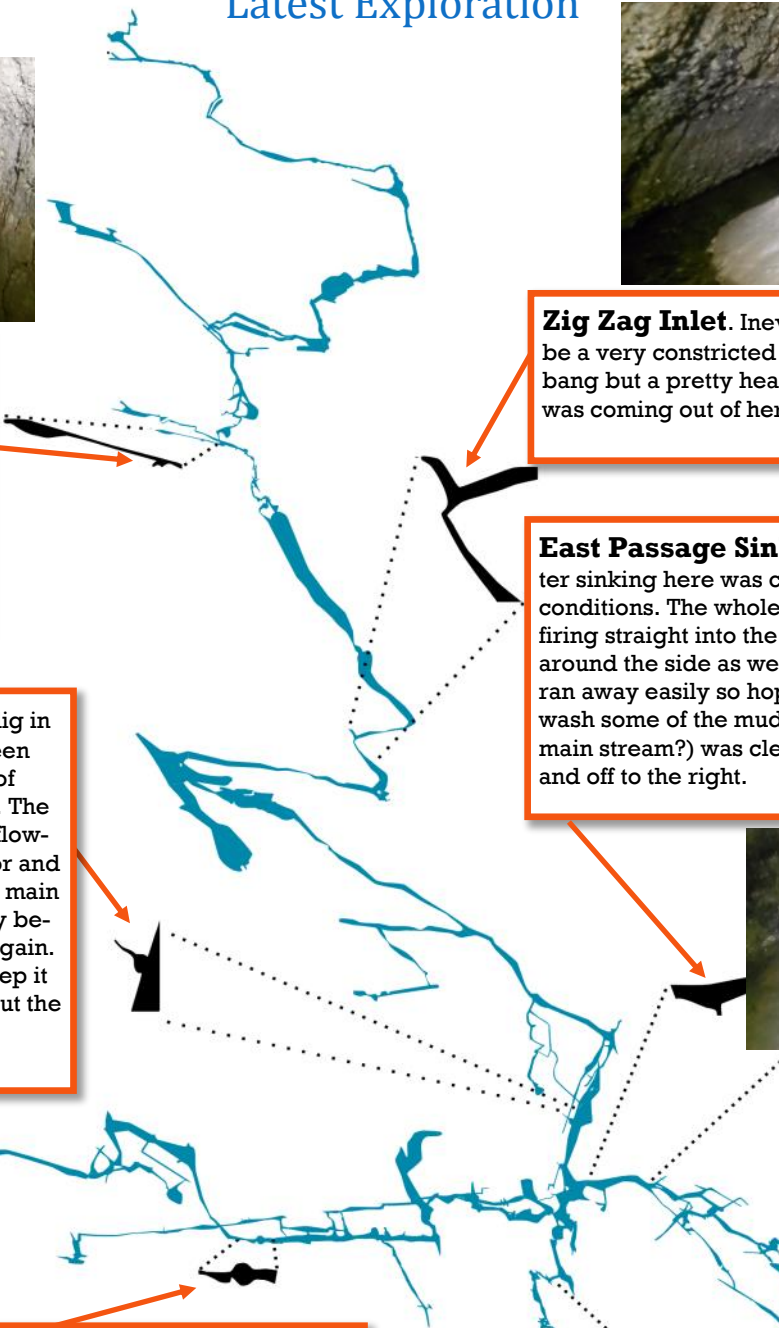
## Latest Exploration



**Goldfish Rift.**  
A chockstone blocks the view ahead. If and when we return we'll need at least a hammer and ideally a hilti session.  
*Tim Francis*



**Zig Zag Inlet.** Inevitably this would be a very constricted dig and needing bang but a pretty healthy flow of water was coming out of here. *Tim Francis*



**Brian's Eye.** The dig in the floor which has been blocked for a couple of years has washed out. The small stream there is flowing freely into the floor and dropping down to the main stream rumbling away below. So it's diggable again. The trick will be to keep it open whilst digging out the slop. *Tim Francis*

**East Passage Sink.** The amount of water sinking here was considerable in flood conditions. The whole of the stream was firing straight into the dig face, and not around the side as we thought it might. It ran away easily so hopes are high that it will wash some of the mud through. A river (the main stream?) was clearly heard in ahead and off to the right. *Tim Francis*



**Neverland Bypass 2.** We've opened up the squeeze to allow larger people (Ben size!) to access the small chamber below Funnel Chamber. It's an interesting area. The funnel chamber stream comes out of the roof and sinks in the small tube in the floor. There was also a section of the flow running along the tube hidden behind the flowstone boss at the back. Peat's utterly horrendous squeeze has been opened to allow larger people in (Tim size..!). Do they unite in West Passage? Muddied water was seen coming out of West Passage sump area, presumably from the heavy flow from the roof. *Tim Francis*

**South Passage Sump**  
Kev and his team have been labouring hard to engineer a way to drain the sump at the very end of the passage. The nature of the passage indicates that at some point in the past A LOT of water went this way. More on this in the coming months.... TH

Dig video at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gaetv5pLUIE>



# MENDIP NEWS



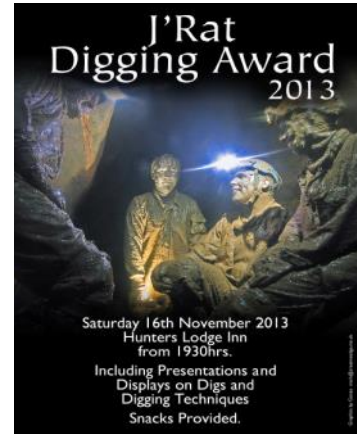
## J'Rat digging awards, 16<sup>th</sup> Nov. 2013,

As usual this was a good evening (for people who managed to fit into the Long Room at the Hunters - others couldn't get in through the door!) As expected, the winning team was the Tuesday Diggers in Reservoir Hole with a newly discovered and surveyed length of 693.75m, much of it within the roof area of The Frozen Deep.

Next year the CSCC is organising DIGFEST 2014 on 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> June, instead of the Cavers' Fair. There will be dig display boards in the village hall, Priddy, the chance to visit some of the digs and a hog roast on Saturday evening.

Short updates on twelve of Mendip's active digs followed including Bone Hole and Grebe Swallet, both of which incorporated short videos.

Joan Goddard



## Thrupe Lane Swallet Closed

A collapse believe to be caused by flooding has resulted in Thrupe Lane being closed. TH

## Home Close Hole Dig

This is a very interesting dig as it potentially connects to the other caves in the area, including Wigmore Swallet, which is at the very edge of the Cheddar catchment area.

*Mick Norton* reports on the progress at the dig.

"I had an email from Tony Audsley, the dig coordinator for Home Close Hole. The last pitch they dropped is 25 feet deep. This is the fourth pitch, if you count the concrete entrance shaft. At present it is quite wet.

Altogether they have now descended 120 - 130 feet, so if they are in the correct spot, they may only have another 70 - 80 feet to drop, to get into the top of the highest avens in Young Blood's Inlet, Wigmore Swallet.



Home Close Hole dig site with Engine House to left of picture  
[Photo: J.Goddard. Dec 2013]

I think these swallets are connected by geology and water flow; The Devil's Punch Bowl, Vee Swallet, Battery Swallet, Attborough Swallet, Wigmore Swallet. Only one of them is known as a major cave, it may be part of a major system, draining to Cheddar.

Wigmore Swallet has ten known downstream sumps.

The reason the diggers are excavating in Home Close Hole is because of Young Blood's Inlet in Wigmore Swallet, if they break into Young Blood's Inlet, there is a dry route to sump ten. It is thought that Attborough Swallet drains to the upper part of Wigmore Swallet."

# TEMPLETON

by Elaine Tucker

Templeton was begun in the summer of 2000, a small pit had suddenly appeared in the bottom of a shallow depression in the farmers' field. David Morrison was given permission to bring in a hymax and excavate enough soil to be able to put 30ft of pipes onto solid rock and refill the depression. Digging progressed well for a while but problems with slumping meant the depression had to be dug out again.

In September 2001 the hole was dug out again and this time another set of pipes was put in next to the original set. A few extra pipes were added to the top and the depression was now filled to field level. However, more slumping problems led to the depression being dug out a third time in May 2002. This time it was left open.

Digging progress was fairly slow to begin with as the new hole was 100ft wide at the top and there was a lot to clear away to get back to bedrock. However, the installation of a railtrack with a skip on rails made from an old diesel tank speeded up progress, as did a mini digger which was lowered into the hole!



Dave Turner working on the 166ft platform winching up spoil from below

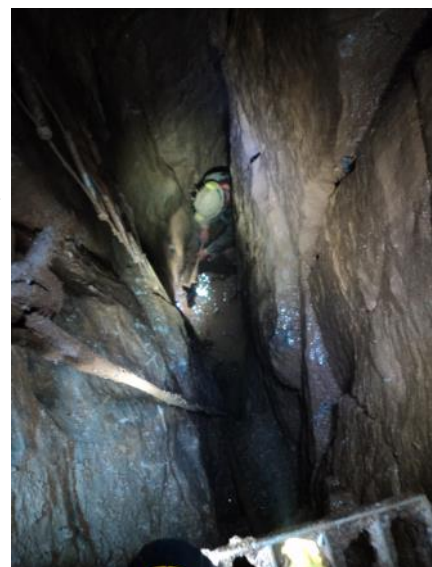


Hugh Tucker digging in the North End at around 210ft depth

In February 2003 the mini digger was lifted out of the hole by crane. The hole was approx 30ft deep at this stage, and the floor area to dig had decreased sufficiently for rapid progress. By 2006 it was about 140-150ft deep, and metal platforms and fixed ladders had been installed at regular intervals to allow easy access, and to provide protection from falling rocks. The rail track had also been extended as the dig became deeper.

Unfortunately solid floor was reached at about 168ft deep. The apparent only way on was a squalid low crawl in the south end full of sloppy gloop. This was excavated to around 20ft long and has two areas where it is possible to stand up. To avoid this squalor - and also of course for completeness, others found a small area right in the north end that wasn't solid floor. They kept digging, and over the next few years dropped this hole by some 90ft. It was also fitted with platforms and fixed ladders.

However, it was around May 2006 that water began pooling at the bottom of the dig. Until this time, any puddles had been easy to drain by driving an iron bar into the floor. For the following 5 years much time and money was spent pumping the flood water out of the dig up to the surface. This involved many pumps and many repairs and changes to the system. Eventually an effective set up of pumps and barrels was arrived at and more depth progress was made. It gradually became obvious that the maximum flood level was consistent, which suggested that there was an exit point at this depth for the water. Having managed to clear



North end at approx. 220ft deep



The night we descended the south pot for the first time Feb 2012

out all the infill down to about 160ft - this was no small undertaking given the amount of time required to pump out the flood water. And the 'flood years' also coincided with some high annual rainfall totals.

The most obvious place that the water may have been leaking away was a very narrow rift in the south end, this rift was 2-3 inches wide, and several feet long, and mostly choked full, but the top appeared to be free of infill. The top of the rift was about the same height as the max flood level. Some banging and lots of hard work eventually opened this out sufficiently to be able to stick a water pipe through this slot and pump the water out this way. This was so much quicker than pumping out tho the surface.

Meanwhile, on busy nights, 2 of the diggers carried on widening the south rift where the water was being pumped, and over the course of a year made it wide enough to get to a small breakthrough into a pot (south pot) which is about 60ft high and about 10ft diameter

The north pot suddenly changed direction and as a result was free of mud. This achievement meant that the north pot no longer flooded as the water drained away on its own. However, it had also become much narrower, and will need chemical persuasion to see whether any more progress can be achieved..

The North pot is a max depth of 255ft below field level.

Attention has now turned to the south pot, which has been fitted out with a platform and a fixed ladder in keeping with the rest of the dig and digging is expected to start here in January 2014. The bottom of the south pot is around 200ft below surface level. If anyone wants to visit, this can only be done on digging nights (landowners insistence). Contact me, or any of the other Templeton diggers first though.

*Elaine Tucker*

Footnote. End of Jan 2014: digging in the South Pot has now begun, and some 5-6 tonnes of mostly rock (which had fallen in during the enlarging and stabilizing period) has been removed in the last 3 weeks. Digging undisturbed material is about to

begin....



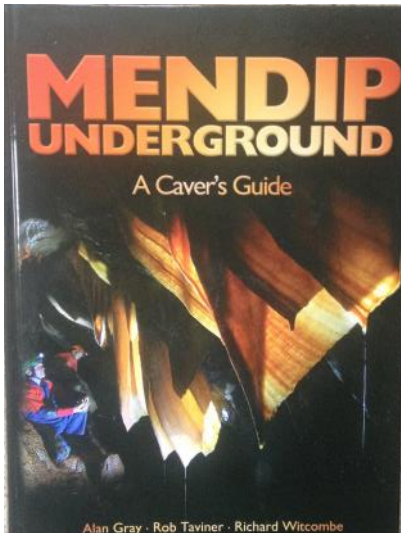
Hugh Tucker working on enlarging the south end slot to see where the water is going! Nov 2011



The south end slot as we began to widen it The water pipe is about an inch diameter

# LIBRARY ADDITIONS AND REVIEWS

By Joan Goddard

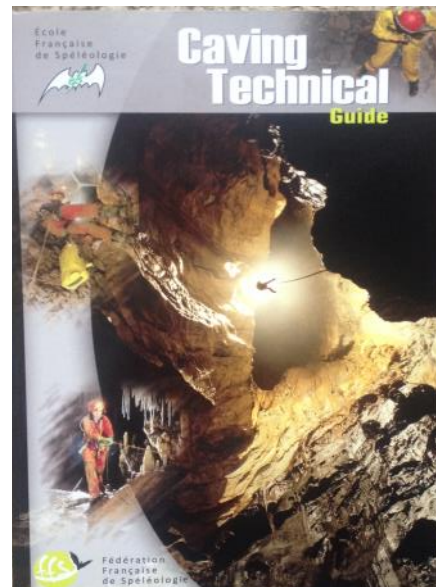


Mendip Underground 5 by Alan Gray, Rob Taviner and Richard Witcombe

**Mendip Underground, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition** 2013, (£25),

MU5 was launched on December 14<sup>th</sup> at the Hunters. It is all it's cracked up to be; beautifully presented, nice clear surveys, very useful O.S. based location maps and numerous photos (many of them specially commissioned). The text is a bit on the small side for my old eyes but presumably if it was larger the book might not have fitted into one volume – so I will just have to squint or use a magnifying glass! Alan Gray, Rob Taviner and Richard Witcombe are to be congratulated on producing this book together with the photographers, Mark Lumley (layout) and many others from the caving community. All Mendip cavers (and ex-cavers) should have a copy on their bookshelves.

**Caving Technical Guide**, (Picture Right) *French Caving Federation, May 2013*, is now in the Library - see Chris Binding's review in Newsletter 371



Caving Technical Guide, French Caving Federation, May 2013

**Grebe Swallet Revealed**, by Chris Binding, *Subterranea Issue 34 Dec 2013*, A summary history of Grebe Swallet from its appearance after the 1968 floods to present day. Sub-Britannica made a grant to Chris for the replacement of the 40-year old rusting lid which had reached the end of its life.

**The Charterhouse and GB Cave System survey** (*A1 sheet*) produced by Andrew Atkinson using Therion. Original survey data provided by UBSS and the Charterhouse Digging Team. Total depth 228m. Total length 931m

**Sludge Pit Cave and Nine Barrows Swallet survey** by Crabtree, Everett, Gouldborne and Yeandle (published by ULSA)

Bernard Reeves has kindly scanned **MCG Journals 5 (1974), 6 (1976), 7 (1982) and 8 (1984)** and they are on a CD in the library (reference only please – not for borrowing)

The (very short) video of **Phil Ingold's "rescue" from Gough's Cave in 1996** has been transferred to DVD and is in the library

**Geology Explained in South Wales** by T.R.Owen, 1973. Quite an old fashioned book but useful for anyone walking in the area and interested in landform, drainage and caves. (*donated*) Please note that **pre 2008 North American periodicals are now kept in the attic.**



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Mick Norton

And to all the photographers contributions, as acknowledged.

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



**Founded 1954**

**The Mendip Caving Group consists of some 120+ members of all abilities who have banded together to share resources such as ladders, ropes, caving library and accommodation on Mendip.**

**The Group is registered as a charity in the UK, and our objectives are: For the benefit of the public, the furtherance of all aspects of the scientific study and conservation of caves and their related features.**

**Membership is open to anyone over the age of 18 years with an interest in the objects of the Group.**

**Members have use of the Group's cottage at reduced rates, free use of Group equipment and free access to the library. They also receive the newsletter of the MCG and Occasional Publications (a journal-type document published infrequently.)**

Please send any submissions, photos, comments, letters to Tom Harrison

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