

The Mendip Caving Group: Guide for New Members

2022 - 2023 Edition



WELCOME

I hope that you are reading this guide having recently joined our great club, the Mendip Caving Group.

You might be a novice caver, or a new member having caved with another club or in another location, or you may be a returning member. Either way this guide has been produced to help you to find your way around the MCG, get to know how the club is run, the current Committee, and who to contact for what.

It is also a guide to Nordrach/our HQ/ the cottage, and the facilities. Most importantly it should let you know how to find a trip, how to find out what is going on at the member's weekend and how you can get the most from being a member.

We really are a friendly and welcoming group with trips locally, across the UK and occasional expeditions abroad. We have members who are actively involved in digging and exploration both with other members and with others from outside the MCG.

The club has a long history, nearly 70 years now, and inside is a brief history of the group.

The club's new constitution and rules are at the end of the guide, along with the BCA's "so you want to go caving?", which includes important information about topics such as conservation and safety.

The Group would not run without the work and contribution of the members and your help is needed in keeping it successful. Please let someone know if you could run a trip, organise a social event, cook a meal, or have the skills to help to keep the cottage maintained!

I hope you find this guide informative and useful, please do not hesitate to get in touch if there is anything that you feel is missing, or that you would have liked to have seen included in this guide, so that future editions can be updated.

Happy Caving and see you at Nordrach.

MCG Committee

Photos:
Front Cover: Keri Smallwood
in Shatter by James Hazel

This Page's photographers,
Right: Burrington Combe
Selfie by Miranda Litchfield

Far Right: James Hazel by
Leigh Slomer

This publication is intend as a
guide for new members of the
Mendip Caving Group.

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MCG News and the MCG
Update are Copyright of the
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duced without permission.

New Members Welcome!
For joining enquiries please
Contact secretary@mendip-cavinggroup.org.uk

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Where to start:

If you want to find out how to find out about group trips that are happening, find someone to cave with, or find out what is going on during a members weekend, then see page 5 for all about group communications.

If you want to learn about the kit and equipment the club has and how to borrow it see pages 6-10.

If you are staying at the cottage, see pages 6-10 for all about the facilities at the cottage.

If you are first in or last out at the cottage see pages 11 and 12 for the entry and exit procedures.

If you are are new to caving it is worth reading the BCA's publication, "So you want to go Caving?" attached at the end of the guide pages 21 to 22.

Any if you want to know who the current committee are and what they do then see page 17.

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ABOUT US

We are a friendly, active group with members living close to the Mendips, throughout the UK and even some who live overseas.

Our base is near Charterhouse on Mendip (about 5 miles from Priddy). Nordrach Cottage, Charterhouse On Mendip, Blagdon. BS40 7XW



From complete beginners to experienced diggers, we cater for all abilities. If you are new to caving we have helmets, lamps and oversuits that you can borrow for your first few trips underground.

Our headquarters, Nordrach Cottage, is within walking distance of several caves including Upper Flood Swallet (one of the best-decorated caves in the UK) and is a short drive from the caves of Charterhouse (including GB, Longwood, Manor Farm) and Burrington (including Goatchurch, Sidcot, Reads Cavern, Rods Pot and Bath Swallet).

The cottage has a well-stocked caving tacklestore and a comprehensive caving library for members to use.

There is sleeping accommodation for up to 30 people, camping space in the garden and the building may be booked for guest groups to use. Cottage fees are kept as low as possible to cover costs - £5 per night for members and £6 per night for non-members. Payment is preferred by card or Bank Transfer. There is a card reader and instructions in the cottage.

MCG members will be found underground most weekends; at other times they can be found in the Hunters Lodge Inn.

Many caving trips are arranged informally, but we also try to have a calendar of trips arranged for the first weekend of every month so that all members can take part. There is also a regular tuesday nighters trip, advertised on facebook and google.

GROUP COMMUNICATIONS

Email Addresses

Much of the administration of the group, such as membership renewals, important information and newsletter sending, takes place via email.

Please make sure that you have provided the MCG Secretary and/or Editor with an up to date email address.

You can do this by emailing secretary@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk and editor@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk.

Publications

The MCG editor helps to produce the following publications:

MCG News -The newsletter with articles, trip reports, what's coming up and more

The MCG Update and Bulletin - In between newsletter publication with important news and events

Occasional Publications - For events, expeditions, exploration, that require their own publication.



Website

Goto www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk for lots of group info.

In the member's area there is access to a number of important forms and an archive of club material. Access the member's area using the password: nordrach



CAVING TRIPS

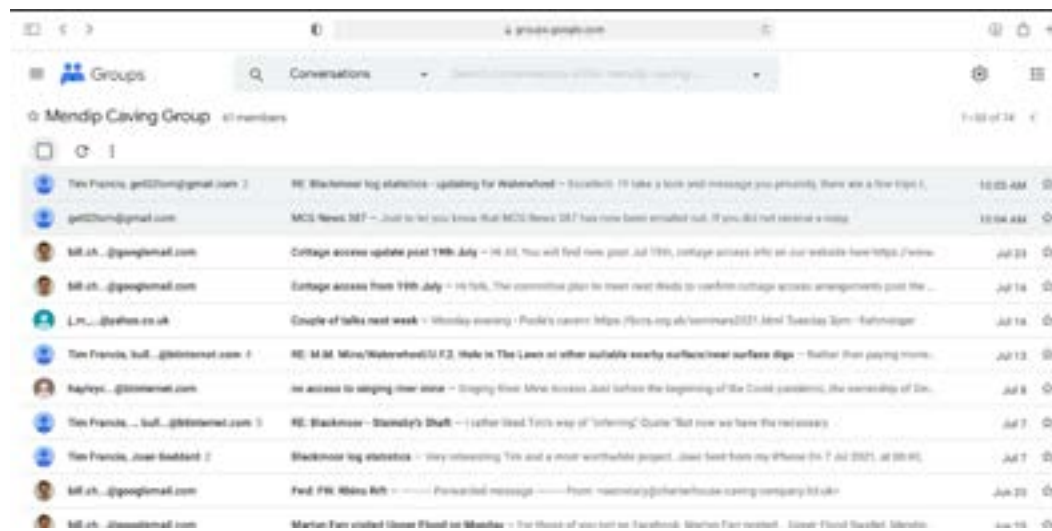
MCG Newsgroup

The MCG newsgroup, is where MCG online ‘chat’ takes place. This is a good place to find out the very latest about what is happening, upcoming trips and events, and a place to communicate with other members.

Goto <https://groups.google.com/g/mendip-caving-group> and hit ask to join.

There are 2 Groups, one for Caving/announcements and one for general chit chat.

In the “My Membership Settings” it is possible to select to have new messages emailed to you, or to receive a digest.



For Facebook users there is also a Facebook group , goto www.facebook.com/groups/76510288037/ or search Mendip Caving Group and request to join.

Finally, if you are still struggling to find or get on a trip then please email our caving secretary: caving@mendipcavinggroup.org.uk and they will be happy to help or put you in touch with someone who can help.

KEYS TO CAVES

We hold keys to the majority of Mendip’s gated caves, and we issue Charterhouse Caving Company access permits. Some Mendip caves are leaders only trips. We have leaders for most of these or the caving secretary can put you in touch with a leader from another club. Please just ask!

And for the more experienced cavers we are always on the look out to get new cave leaders. Again please contact the caving secretary.

THE COTTAGE

MCG Constitution & Rules:

This cottage guide should be read in-conjunction with the CIO Rules. These can be found in the member’s area of the website, along with the constitution.

Fire Alarm:

Should the fire alarm be activated, the advice is to “Get out, Stay Out, Call Out”. Evacuate the building and call the Fire Service (999). Stay out until the Fire Service say it is safe to return.

The fire alarm controls are to be found by the front door. A copy of the User Manual is available online at: http://www.mendipcavinggroup.org.uk/documents/Fire_Alarm_Instruction_Manual.pdf

Accommodation:

Upstairs there are 30 bunks, arranged in three rooms for 16, 8 and 6 persons. Guests are normally booked into the 16 room (Foreman’s Lounge) but on non-members’ weekends may also require the 6 or 8 rooms.

On first arrival at the cottage, please select your bunk and write your name on the daily cottage booking sheets which are kept on the lectern in the lounge. If the date is not entered at the top of the page ensure the date is also recorded. This is not only important for the group’s records and accounting but also vital in case of a fire to account for all those who are staying. On a busy weekend, light sleepers may wish to bring ear plugs.

Lounge:

The lounge is the room on the left hand side as you face the stairs! Inside you will usually find MCG members unless they are in a cave or at the pub. For information about the heating see the heating section but there is a multi fuel stove in the Lounge and adequate supplies of free coal (the coal bunker is at the side of the Cottage under the Lounge window) and wood (the wood shed is adjacent to the gate into the car park). There are usually some plastic trays under the seating to assist with carrying the wood.

Wi-Fi:

The current Wi-Fi code can be found on the Whiteboard in the lounge.

Kitchen:

The kitchen is reached through the lounge. It has gas cooking with many hobs, and 2 electric ovens, 2 microwaves, a refrigerator, utensils, crockery, cutlery, toasters and a kettle. The gas tap is located in the kitchen directly below the left hand hob cooker. Two externally housed propane cylinders have an automatic change-over valve, so access to the gas store is normally unnecessary. A key for the gas store can be found hanging on the gas tap. TURN OFF GAS SUPPLY in the kitchen before leaving the cottage or going to bed. If you notice that one of the gas cylinders is empty, please inform the cottage warden immediately.

Please Store food tidily on the shelves below the cooking surfaces. Utensils, crockery and cutlery will be found on the shelves, and in cupboards and drawers. Please WASH UP and REPLACE articles used after each meal and CLEAN the cooker and hobs. Take ALL food home at the end of your stay – please do not leave any food, not even tea or coffee as this just accumulates. Leave the fridge empty but switched on.

Utility Storeroom (under-stairs cupboard),
CLEANING MATERIALS, TOILET ROLLS AND REFUSE SACKS are under the kitchen sink and in the walk-in cupboard to the right of the stairs. Fire precautions require that the door is kept closed and locked; the key is on a hook on the door. Should the cottage be short of supplies, the nearest shops are West Harptree Stores (3 miles), Tesco Express in Cheddar (7 miles) or there are also the supermarkets; Tesco, Waitrose and Morrisons in Wells (10 miles).

Changing Room/Showers/Washing
There are changing and washing/showering facilities to the right of the utility cupboard. The showers are communal and are not divided into separate cubicles. Please knock if you are unsure who is in there changing! We now also have a seperate shower and toilet in room at the back of the communal changing area. This can also be accessed directly, via the door beside the washdown area.

Toilet
As well as the new toilet off the changing area, there are 2 flush toilets off the main entrance hallway. They don't flush to a sewer but to a cess pit tank which is emptied. Please do not flush anything other than toilet tissue to prevent a nasty blockage forming! Sanitary Bags are available in the toilets.

Telephone
There is a telephone in the hallway by the front door for emergencies, important brief calls and for incoming calls (01761 462797). It is worth saving this number to your phone! Calls are free to landlines Saturdays and Sundays.

Gear/Tackle Cleaning:
A hosepipe, rope washer and hosing-down area are located at the back of the cottage. Please clear out the gulleys leading from the hosing-down area after use. Dispose of the silt sensibly but DO NOT THROW ANYTHING OVER THE FENCE.

Drying Shed
There is a drying room in the shed beside the wash down area, it's currently by the back door. The Drying Room works on a timed switch, please follow the instructions in the room. To access the drying shed you will need to use the key which is hanging from the gas tap in the kitchen. PLEASE ensure the key is returned there immediately after use!



The Tackle Store/Kit and Equipment
The tackle store is in the shed beside the washdown area, entered via the right hand door. When you become a full member you will have access to the store, but in the meantime please ask a full member for access. In here is a range of kit, helmets, ladders, tackle bags and more which may be borrowed but should be returned straight after your trip so that other members can use it. Keys to Caves are also kept here. Please record the items you have borrowed using the tablet, following the instructions.

Library
Available to MCG full members, who have an activated swipe card or fob. Full members can supervise access for guests and probationary members. If you want to borrow a book then please ensure you record the details in the black book on the library table. There is also a survey box, where surveys can be borrowed.

Call Outs and The Call Out Board
A call out, is a method of alerting the rescue services to a potential problem on an underground trip. As you are most likely underground with more experienced cavers as a beginner, one of them should be leaving a call out with someone, but it is important to know what they are and how they work. The call out board is located in the lounge on the left hand side as you enter the lounge from the hallway. This can be used when you are certain that someone will be in at the cottage at the call out time! Otherwise you will need to make sure someone responsible can follow the call out procedure, should you not contact them before the call out time. The call out cards, found in the lectern beneath the board, should be completed as below and placed on the number on the board that corresponds to the call out hour. I.E 10am call outs should be placed on the hook for number 10. 10pm on number 20. PLEASE DON'T FORGET TO CANCEL YOUR CALL OUT ON YOUR RETURN!

This is the MCG Call out card.

Date and Cave are self explanatory!

Route is useful to save time if you were in need of rescue.

Party must include all people on the trip.

Car Reg No. assists any rescue party to identify, if the car you travelled in, is still near the cave.

Callout time is the most important piece of information. At this time the rescue services will be contacted.

When Calculating Call Out Time think about; travel time, changing time, waking to the entrance and that coming out is likely to take longer than going in, then you need to ensure you add on time to change and travel back.

MCG Destination card	
Date	
Cave	
Route	
Party	
Car reg. no. (if applicable)	
Callout time	

Call Out Procedure
Dial 999 and Ask for the Somerset and Avon Police and then ask for CAVE RESCUE

Prepare to give: The Cave Name; Location within Cave; Numbers & Condition of those involved; Details of any Injuries Sustained. Stay by the Phone (or if on a mobile, in an area of good reception)

Electricity:
There are two consumer units located near the front door above head height. These should be left in the 'ON' position. The electricity is protected by an earth leakage circuit breaker. If this trips, please inform the cottage warden.

Rubbish And Refuse:
The wheeliebin at the front gate is emptied fortnightly. MCG is considered a business and must therefore pay for this. Service. Please do not leave rubbish beside the wheeliebin as it will not be collected – if the bin is full, take excess rubbish home.

External Lighting:
Lights are located above the hosing-down and camping areas. Switches are located inside the side entrance door and front door. Switch off after use. A light switch behind the refrigerator turns on the lamp at the back

door.

Battery Chargers:

These are located between the side entrance and the changing room. Read instructions carefully.

Leaving the Cottage

If you are the last person exiting the cottage, even if you are just going out for a short period, please lock all outside doors, close all windows, and turn off the gas supply at the kitchen stopcock. Last one out? See the procedures on the next page!!

Cottage Fees.

£5 per night for members and member's children, £7.50 for Guests. Camping (including sleeping in vehicles) is charged at the same rates. We prefer card payments or Bank Transfer. There is a card reader at the cottage, use the Tablet by the kitchen and select the bed night option. Please fill in the booking sheet by the lectern on arrival. To pay by cash, use a brown envelope found in the lectern and fill in your details.

Using The Cottage:

Members may normally use the cottage at any time, and may bring two guests without prior booking except on the AGM weekend. Guest bookings should be made to the bookings clerk, email: bookings@mendip-cavinggroup.org.uk. Advance applications for bookings by guest parties are welcomed throughout the year, but on the first Fri/Sat of each month priority will be given to MCG members. It is worth checking with the Bookings secretary if you intend to stay as sometimes large guests groups may be visiting.

User's Responsibilities:

Nordrach Cottage is the MCG's major financial asset. Everyone is asked to help keep it in good condition. It is expected that the cottage will be kept clean and tidy, and that consideration will be shown to other users. The MCG committee reserves the right to refuse access to Nordrach Cottage by any persons who are unable to conduct themselves in a responsible manner.

PLEASE TAKE ALL REASONABLE CARE of the cottage and its amenities.

LEAVE IT CLEAN AND TIDY for the next persons or group.

REPORT ANY MALFUNCTIONS OR DAMAGE – better still, fix it yourself, if possible.

Nordrach Cottage Entry/Exit Procedure

On Entry

The front door has a Yale lock and a second upper lock controlled by a centralised access system.

1. Unlock the Yale lock by turning the key “clockwise”
2. Use the access card or fob and hold it against the receiver on the door frame above the Yale lock. A ‘click’ should be heard and after pulling the door handle down, push the door firmly to open it.

Once in the hut the access system latch can be set to always open if required. This will save the need to keep using the access card/fob. To do this, open the door and using the handle on the upper latch set the latch open. While it is open set the small brass lever in the depression on the door edge, up, to hold the latch open. (Note. The brass lever must be unset when the hut is vacated) Upon leaving the Cottage at anytime, ensure the door is fully locked by turning the key a full 3 rotations to set the deadlock.

The hut has a central heating system which maintains a suitable temperature. If the temperature needs turning up there is a button on the wall outside of the toilets. Once pressed (not the blue button this heats the water) this will heat the radiators downstairs for two hours. There is a similar button on the wall of the main dormitory upstairs. Pressing this heats the upstairs radiators.

If the log burner needs to be lit, the wood for this is in the two shed adjacent to the entrance gate.

Gas – There is an isolation valve in the kitchen adjacent to the right hand sink which needs to be moved to the horizontal position to allow gas to flow to the burners. When the hut is empty i.e. the occupants have gone out for the day, please turn the isolator off for safety. (An earlier MCG hut blew up when the gas was left on!!!)

Showers – These are set to a specific setting and needs no adjustment.

If staying choose a bed that is free, by referring to the booking sheets on the lectern in the lounge. Ensure that you fill in the booking sheet on arrival.



On Exit

1. Windows and doors should be closed and locked/bolted.
2. GAS - Ensure that the GAS isolation valve in the kitchen is set vertically to off.
3. Hut Fees - Ensure that the correct entries have been put on the booking sheet and all fees have been post in the hut fees box outside the Library door using the envelopes provided in the lectern.
4. Water - Check the kitchen sink taps are not running. (All other taps are self closing)
5. Remove rubbish in the kitchen bins to the Wheelie bin outside and leave this at the rear of the hut.
6. Don't leave any perishable foodstuff in the fridge.
7. Take home recyclable materials.
8. Lights - Ensure that all lights are turned off.

Finally

- On exiting the building, ensure that the small brass lever on the front door's edge is unset to release the latch and lock the front door Yale lock on closing the door.
- Do one last check around the building and its surroundings and close the main gate on leaving.

A Concise History of the MCG

Adapted from Tony Knibbs original piece (Tony was one of the original members of the MCG, he sadly passed away in 2017, aged 80).

In 1953 Malcom Cotter and Dillan Evens stayed at Albert Maine's Barn, Manor Farm, Priddy. During the 18-month period that followed, a nucleus of cavers formed an affinity group, staying at Maine's Barn, and began referring to themselves as the Mendip Caving Group.

1954. Mendip Caving Group formally adopts the name, suggested by Malcolm, together with some basic safety rules. The Group's Easter meet is based in Velvet Bottom (camping), ending the "Maine's Barn" era. Timber Hole dig started. First subscription rate decided at 12 shillings per year. The need for hostel accommodation was seen as an early requirement.

1955. Mr Ball, proprietor of the Lion Rock Hotel, Cheddar, is made an honorary member in recognition of his loaning the Group a small hut, behind the hotel, for tackle storage. Mr Saye of Sycamore Cottage, Cheddar, is similarly honoured for giving the Group access to the cave in his garden, Saye's Hole. First general meeting held.

1957. First AGM and Annual Dinner held in January. Petrol de-rationed in May (rationed following the 1956 Suez D  b  cle) resulting in an upsurge of trips to Mendip. Hon. Treasurer absconds with funds (about   100). We obtain the rent-free use of a tumbledown cottage in Nether Wood, Charterhouse, which we refurbish as our first Group headquarters.

1958. Death of H.E.Balch. Group starts survey of Longwood/August System.

1959. Longwood/August survey finished. Canyon Cave, Cheddar Gorge, discovered and surveyed. Goatchurch Cavern surveyed. First field meet based at the newly occupied Nether Wood Cottage at Charterhouse; this included considerable cottage work because the building was taken over as a roofed shell without facilities. Pinetree Pot dig started. Cooper's Hole dig started.

1960. First overseas meets in France: Vercors: Grotte de Gournier, Cuves de Sassenage and Alpes Maritimes - Canjuers plateau: Aven du Clos del Fayoun. Easter meet in Devon. Pinetree Pot opened. Ubley Hill Pot discovered (dug open in one weekend).

1961. Meet in Ireland (Co. Sligo). Meet in Austria. Work on Blackmoor Swallet started. Meet in France; Pyr  n  es. The Annexe, Browne's Hole entered by digging (human skeleton found during excavation). As a direct spin-off from MCG survey work, Christmas Crawl in August Hole was opened by digging, providing easier and safer access to the lower streamway. Fred Young (of Lower Farm) made honorary member. Other discoveries by digging in caves on Eastern Mendip: Elm Cave, Hunting Lodge Slocker, Merehead Quarry Cave, Pitten Street Swallet, St Vincent's Swallet. First exploration of Stock's Hole.

1962. Second Irish meet (Co. Sligo and Leitrim). Meet in Yugoslavia. A cave rescue conference at Hant-sur-Lesse (Belgium) brings us into contact with the Swiss club Sp  l  o-Club des Montagnes Neuch  telloises (SCMN). Excavation at Blackmoor (Stainsby's) Shaft breaks into mined cave. Digging at Cooper's Hole reveals passage with ancient steps hewn in stalagmite and a small chamber; further work reveals animal scratch-marks.

1963. Very severe winter on Mendip; snow on ground from New Year until end of March. First meet in Switzerland with SCMN (Siebenhängste plateau, Luzern) camped at Flühli. Charnel Shaft (Charterhouse rakes) discovered.

1964. Eviction from Nether Wood Cottage leads to purchase of ex-army wooden barrack hut which we dismantle at Tilshead on Salisbury Plain and erect on Jim Fry's land at the Stirrup Cup, Nordrach. Jim kindly transported the monster.

1965. Group hosts a week's visit by SCMN on Mendip. Cottage warming party. Digging started at Knapp Hill Swallet in grounds of Wells Hospital.

1966. Meet in Ireland (Co. Clare). Clean-up operation in August/Longwood.

1967. Meet in Yugoslavia. Dig at Bone Hole started. Group carries out a clean-up operation in Longwood/August.

1968. Charterhouse area receives torrential rain; the subsequent flood scours the floor of Velvet Bottom, washing away the causeway and road and causing damage in Cheddar Gorge and Village. On the bright side it opened Upper Flood Swallet and Middle Flood (Waterwheel) Swallet and Grebe Swallet. The long campaign of digging in Upper Flood begins. Meet in Czechoslovakia.

1969. Meet in Austria.

1970. Meet in Poland.

1971. Meet in Yugoslavia.

1972 Digging in Upper Flood enters a well-decorated chamber, then more passage with a further chamber.

1973. Meet in Czechoslovakia.

1974. Bone Hole opened and explored.

1975. Digging in Bone Hole continues. Planning permission granted for the present MCG Cottage. Building work commences after demolition of the old Axbridge hut, and building now severely interrupts caving activity. Dave Mitchell dies.

1976. Bone Hole surveyed. Meet in Ireland (Co. Clare). First of two 30-mile sponsored walks to raise money for Cottage purchase. Group becomes a registered charity.

1977. Surveying in Bone Hole. Second sponsored walk brings total cash raised to almost £1,000.

1979. New Year's Eve; gas explosion destroys almost-completed (not yet inhabited) cottage.

1980. Insurance cheque for £30,000 received and rebuilding work subcontracted.

1981. New building finally completed and cottage-warming party held. Work resumes in Upper Flood.

1982. First Group rescue practice in GB Cave.

1983. Meets in France ; Central Pyrénées (Arbas plateau, Réseau Trombe). Honorary membership conferred on Malcolm Cotter. Start of digging at Nether Wood Swallet. Small extension entered in Bone Hole. Trial

dig at East bank tributary, Blackmoor.

1984. Easter meet with GSG at Elphin (Scotland). Group "adopts" Longwood/August System for annual clean-up operation. Winter Meet in Mallorca. Trip with Whernside Manor to France (Vercors, Gouffre Berger). Small finds made in roof of Great Chamber, Longwood Swallet. Work continues in Upper Flood.

1985. Winter meet in Mallorca. Major breakthrough at Upper Flood; Midnight Chamber and continuing stream passage discovered. Abandoned dig in the Oxbows, Longwood /August System.

1986. Meet in Malaga (Sima – GESM), and winter meet in Mallorca. Discovery in Upper Flood; Hannah's Grotto. Upper Flood (Bypass Passage) dig enters short length of high passage; digging started at end.

1987. Winter meet in Mallorca. Digging in Upper Flood (Bypass Passage) achieves several breakthroughs including the Red Room.

1988. Meets in Malaga (Sima – GESM), France (Vercors), and trips to Sarawak and Thailand. Death of our neighbours and friends Jim Fry and his wife Gladys. Survey of Shale Rift (Upper Flood) and observation of near-sumping at the Lavatory Trap; short upstream section from Puddle Lake entered.

1989. Meet in France (Dordogne). Group hosts visit to Mendip by the French Spéléo-Club d'Aérospatiale. Ron Saunders made honorary member. Digging in Battery Swallet. Death of Grant Shepherd in road accident near Cottage. Black Aven (Upper Flood) extended; voids found in Boulder Choke.

1990. Meets in Czechoslovakia and France (Pyrénées, Mâne). Trips to Italian Alps (Margaureis) and France (Vercors). Digging in Rod's Pot; Eyeball Rift discovered. Surveying in Boulder Choke (Upper Flood).

1991. Meet in Czechoslovakia. Digging in East Twin Swallet. M&M Passage opened.

1992. Meet in Mallorca. Digging in Milton Hill Cave. Digging in Pinetree Pot restarted.

1993. Ubley Hill Pot reopened. "A Pock Hole Lips Way" in Pinetree Pot opened. More progress in Upper Flood; Rip-off Aven.

1994. Meet in France (Jura). Meet in Mallorca. Belize expedition.

1995. Meets in France (La Chartreuse), Ireland (Fermanagh) and Mallorca. Phil Ingold made honorary member. Attempt made to make second entrance to Upper Flood by reaching Rip-off Aven – Rip-off 3 found from below. Some digging in Bone Hole. Fish seen in Midnight Chamber (UpperFlood). Drought allowed more progress upstream from Midnight Chamber. Lavatory Trap re-excavated.

1996. Meets in the Picos region (Spain) and Mallorca.

1997. Meet in Ireland (Co. Clare and Fermanagh). Meet in Mallorca.

1998. Start of digging Pontypool or Bust in Ogof Draenen. Meets in Fermanagh and Belgium. Expedition to Madagascar. Permission renewed to dig Blackmoor Swallet via Stainsby's Shaft.

1999. Second expedition to Madagascar. Meet in Mallorca. Digging in Ubley Warren Pot.

2000. Expedition to Argentina.

2001. Second expedition to Argentina. Meets in Belgium and Mallorca. Digging in Carcass Cave.

2002. Ogof Draenen extensions in Pontypool or Bust. Third Argentina expedition. Meet in Greece.

2003. Fourth Argentina expedition. Meet in Mallorca.

2004. MCG Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner. Discovery of Golden Chamber, Upper Flood. Fifth Argentina expedition. Meets in Slovenia and Mallorca. Deaths of Phil Ingold and Bruce Dean.

2005. Limekiln/Roman Rake Dig. Death of Geoff Davies. Return to Cow Hole. Trip to Mallorca

2006. Death of Malcolm Cotter who proposed the creation of the MCG in 1953 and was listed as the first member in 1954. Upper Flood goes as the boulder choke is opened into the departure lounge, the continuation of the streamway, east and west passages and the jewel in the crown: Neverland. A must see/do trip for MCG members. Argentina again!

2007. Theif's Chamber (ask Brian Snell) and Wall street found. Plenty more exploration, surveying and digging in UF.

2008 Stainsby's Shaft, Battery Swallet, Upper Flood and Roman Rake all dug. Trips to South Wales and a 60's themed celebration of 40 years of Upper Flood.

2009 Trips to Yorkshire. Digs continue. Winners of the Hidden Earth Club Stand.

2010 Bone Hole digging. Yorkshire and Andalucia.

2011 Yorkshire, Wales, Digging and a new Gas Tank.

2012 Death of Tony Crawford. Another of the founder members, driving the club forward early on and a big contributor to the MCG.

2013 Reservoir Hole trips a plenty to see the Frozen Deep. Yorkshire Trip. Grebe Digging and Andalucia.

2014 60th Anniversary of the MCG. MCG members goto Galapagos Islands and Lanzarote

2015 After many sessions digging in the 'New Cave' part of Bone Hole, 2 sessions in the 'old Cave' leads to the 'Happy New Year' Breakthrough. Ritual Protection Marks found by Charlie Allison in Nancy Camel's Hole, a cave now adopted by the MCG. Death of Ron Saunders aged 94, a big part of the group since the late 1960's. Breakthrough in Sandford Levvy to find significant extensions to the mined passages and Hancocks Shaft.

2016 Eurospeleo in Yorkshire. Work continues in Sandford Levvy and a project starts to reopen Pearl Mine

2017 21 MCGers goto Snowdonia Away Meet. Pearl Mine is reopened and a further 1/2 km of new passage is found in the process. Deaths of Tony Knibbs and Biff Frith.

2018 Digging continues at sites across the Mendips, away meets in South Wales, Portland, the Peak District and France.

2019 Tuesday nighters, Vercors, Mines & Bunker Away Meets.

2020 Coronavirus Pandemic - Caving curtailed during lockdowns, in between further passage explored in Pearl Mine, named Biff Frith's Mid Rift.

2021 Lockdowns continue - Lockdown Shaft descended and lid fitted. Digging continues in UF, restarts in Stainsby's Shaft.

Who's Who

The current MCG Committee is composed of the following members:



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CONSERVATION

Caves are one of the most fascinating environments known to Man where it is still possible to participate in original exploration. They have taken thousands of years to evolve their fantastic shapes, and crystal & clay formations.

Long slender stalact, just able to support their own weight, and solid, stumpy stalagmites arrayed across the rocky floor are just two types of calcite formations that may greet a visitor to this unique natural world. Untrampled clay floors remain as pristine as the dry ancient floodwaters last receded. A world that, whether you are the first to enter or not, will leave an unforgettable impression.

Unfortunately, very few people are able to experience this remarkable environment so it is imperative that all our caves stay as undamaged as possible to ensure their conservation for future visitors.

CAVE CONSERVATION CODE

Caves are a special and rare environment, some more so than others, and parts of some more so than others. Active stream passages and pedicles with fast moving water may have very little that can be accidentally damaged by the passage of a cave, but fossil cave passages where streams never flow are likely to contain all sorts of delicate remains that could easily be damaged by the path of a single thoughtless cave. Where there is a risk of artificial damage, while passing delicate stony stalactites, or sand banks, or a crystal pool for example, you should slow down, look carefully around and take extreme care. All these features are easily damaged and cannot be repaired. The following is a carefully considered CODE intended to minimize damage to caves. Please read it and try to follow it whenever you go caving. Thank you.

Cave with caution and within your own ability and experience
Keep your party size appropriate to the cave you are visiting

Observe and keep to taped routes

Do not touch formations or other delicate items

Keep away from bats or other life

Never dig without proper consent

Never interfere with scientific equipment

Leave no litter or pollution

Take nothing out of a cave

Take photographs with care

HINTS & TIPS

- Carry at least one spare lamp in your team: poor or no light combined with fatigue can cause unnecessary damage to the cave or yourself.
- Damage to stalagmite formations, mud floors, rimstone pools and graffiti on walls is vandalism: help prevent it.
- Why not participate in a cave conservation scheme: collect litter, clean off graffiti, etc.?
- Natural caves and old mines are part of our natural heritage, help protect them for yourself and others.

SAFETY

A PLAN TO BE SAFE

- A** Always include experienced cavers in the party.
- P** Pick a cave or pothole within everyone's capabilities and know the route to avoid becoming lost.
- L** Leave a note of your trip and latest time of return with a responsible person. Confirm your safe exit.
- A** Ask local experts for advice and act on it.
- N** Never cave alone without considerable experience and taking advanced safety precautions.
- T** Take notice of the local weather forecast and ground conditions. Flooding can happen very quickly and violently.
- O** One reliable headlamp for each person. Without light you are trapped.
- B** Boots, helmet and warm clothes are essential.
- E** Emergency lights, food, first aid kit and survival bag or blanket should always be taken.
- E** See that ropes, ladders and belays are inspected and rigged properly before hanging your life on them; check the rope is long enough and knotted at the lower end.
- S** Accident underground is always easy, rescue is difficult, sometimes impossible.
- A** Falls, loose boulders, rising water and exposure cause most accidents.
- E** Exit can take more effort than entry - plan with the return in mind.

The BCA recognises that cave and mine exploration are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

WHERE CAN I GO CAVING?

In Britain almost all caving takes place in areas where the rock is a form of limestone; the main caving areas are shown on the map below - so you may have to be prepared to travel quite a long way to go caving.

- A** Yorkshire Dales
- B** Peak District
- C** South Wales
- D** Forest of Dean
- E** Mendip Hills
- F** South Devon
- G** Ayrshire

Other areas of interest to cavers can be found in north west Scotland (in Dumess and Apple), North Wales, the Northern Pennines, Furness, South Yorkshire, North Nottinghamshire, North East Cheshire, the Isle of Skye and Ireland. Cornwall, Cumbria and a few other areas have prehistoric ruins which are also of interest to cavers and mining historians.



WHAT SHALL I WEAR?

For your first trip you should be able to borrow a lamp and helmet until you decide whether you want to go caving again. You may be able to borrow some other specialist clothes, such as a waterproof overcoat, and other gear. However, don't worry if you can't, the following will be suitable for a first trip.

HELMET

With a Y chin-strap and lamp bracket.

LAMP

Any reliable lamp can be used providing it can be attached to your helmet to leave your hands free.

OLD WARM CLOTHES

Perhaps pullover, woolly socks and track suit trousers. (Jeans are NOT suitable as they drag when they get wet.)

WATERPROOF JACKET & OVER TROUSERS

These can be covered with a boiler suit or overalls to protect them.

BOOTS

Wellingtons with non-slip soles are best, otherwise boots without laces for laces. (Trainers are NOT suitable.)



The **BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION** is the successor to the National Caving Association, (first set up in 1969) and is recognised by the UK Sports Council as the National Governing Body for caving in Great Britain. It is a federation of Regional Caving Councils, National Bodies with specialist interests, Caving Clubs and Individual Members.

The **REGIONAL CAVING COUNCILS** cover a number of loosely-defined regions which together cover the whole of Great Britain; each includes at least one major and some minor caving areas. They are the bodies which look after the practical aspects of access and conservation locally. Caving Clubs are linked to the regional council covering their area(s) of interest through their membership of BCA. Some of the regional councils and specialist organisations have both individual and group membership.

There is no Scottish Council of Caving, but some Scottish caving clubs are members of the Council of Northern Caving Clubs. The Speleological Union of Ireland is not part of BCA.

The **NATIONAL BODIES WITH SPECIALIST INTERESTS** are:

- **BRITISH CAVE RESCUE COUNCIL** provides liaison between the independent Cave Rescue Organisations, the Home Office, The Police and the Mountain Rescue Council. Each Cave Rescue Organisation is responsible for its own area organisation and draws its rescue teams from volunteer cavers active in the area.

- **BRITISH CAVE RESEARCH ASSOCIATION** is the charitable arm of BCA whose primary object is to encourage all aspects of research in caves and karst areas, to further the development of caving equipment and technology and to publish the results of such work.

- **CAVE DIVING GROUP** represents the interests of Cave Divers, provides the necessary specialist training for cave diving (which is potentially far more hazardous than open water diving) and sets safety standards for cave diving proficiency.

- **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MINING HISTORY ORGANISATIONS** represents organisations such as mining history societies and mining museums which are concerned with the exploration of, research in and preservation of abandoned mines in the UK.

- **WILLIAM PENGELLY CAVE STUDIES TRUST** is the only body concerned with scientific cave study whose role is primarily devoted to education and conservation rather than research.

- **ASSOCIATION OF CAVING INSTRUCTORS** is the specialist organisation which represents the interests of those cavers who are holders of the Cave Instructors Certificate.

Current addresses for the Secretaries of all these organisations are available from:

BRITISH CAVING ASSOCIATION,
The Old Methodist Chapel, Great Hucklow,
Duxton, Derbyshire, SK17 9RG
Website: <http://www.british-caving.org.uk>

JOINING A CLUB

For most cavers, joining a club is the only way that they can go caving regularly and safely. Clubs provide an opportunity to meet other people with the same interests, where up-to-date knowledge can be shared.

Clubs often have a hostel in a caving area with reciprocal arrangements with club hostels in other regions. They arrange 'tunnels' or caving trips as well as evenings in their local home town and they may also have a library and a store of equipment for the use of members.

For a beginner, the best clubs to join are those which have a training programme involving surface practice and beginners' meets. Some clubs expect people to join in with normal trips where some previous experience is advisable.

For legal reasons most clubs have a minimum age for joining. This is usually eighteen although some allow young people to join at the age of sixteen, so it is best to check.

Information on clubs who are members of the British Caving Association may be obtained from the BCA's postal address, by email or from its web site: see overleaf.

However, you may find it more helpful to contact one of the regional councils of caving who keep up-to-date lists of clubs who cave in their regions (BCA can provide up-to-date addresses for the regional councils too). If you write to BCA, itself or to one of its member organisations, you should always enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

LEARNING TO CAVE SAFELY

Following an introduction in straightforward caves, the next step is to learn the basic skills and techniques which allow you to visit caves safely.

Many caving clubs will offer training to new members and there are a number of commercial instructors with BCA recognised qualifications who offer training for a variable charge. The regional councils of caving also arrange courses in their regions and these may enable you to meet other cavers or contact a local club.

Details of such instruction and courses can be found in the caving press in magazines such as DESCENT. Remember that centres offering courses to people under the age of eighteen must now be registered under the Adventure Centres ('Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995.

If you require further details on training you can contact the BCA Training Officer via BCA's central address.

So, You Want To Go Caving?