

Wayne Hiscox, who has recently passed away, joined the MCG in 1971 (with the membership number 200). He very quickly found himself serving as Cottage Warden due to his practical skills. He held this post from 1972 to 1982 and acted as Site Manager, or Cottage Forman, for the construction of Nordrach Cottage from 1973. This first version of our present cottage was destroyed in a huge gas explosion on 01/01/1980 just as it was nearing completion. Wayne, with others, then demolished what was left and set about the task of having it rebuilt by a contractor using our insurance payout. Later, from 1989 to 2004, he served on the committee again. Initially he was Librarian (Recorder) but switched to Cottage Warden (for a second time!) when the cottage extension was needed. For this, he acted as Site Forman again from 1993 until 2005.

He was a fund raiser for the Cottage Building Fund, organising and taking part in folk events and sponsored walks. He wrote articles for the Newsletter, chaired several AGMs and Half Yearly meetings, and spent a period as an Examiner (auditor) for the accounts in the 2000s. In between all this he was an active caver and an early digger in Upper Flood Swallet. And of course he was an essential part of the Velvet Bottom Band and the singing in the Hunters Lodge Inn. *They words, they 'orrible words!*

It is no exaggeration to say that without Wayne as the Forman we could not have coaxed the membership into building Nordrach Cottage or the Extension, where his practical skills and organisational ability were much in demand. This is supported by Ron Saunders who many years after the completion of Nordrach Cottage wrote:

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians xiii

It might also have been the first minute of the M.C.G. cottage building sub-committee when it was convened on 4th October 1973 – indeed we had need of all three virtues “And now abideth faith, hope, charity these three”. What a good thing it was that we did not know what tricks fate would play upon us during the ensuing years.

Instead the minute read –

1. This Sub-Committee will advise the Committee on land purchase, planning application building design and construction and legal matters.
2. It will act as an agent of the Committee to purchase the land, obtain Planning Permission, design and construct the building, complete legal requirements, purchase materials and hire services of contractors.”

It could not be said that at least on paper the sub-committee lacked in confidence – and who, you may well enquire, were these audacious individuals bent on achieving so much?

6. Members of the Sub-Committee shall act in the following capacities within the Sub-Committee.

R.J.Saunders -Legal and financial advisor

A.J.Knibbs- Coordinator and Secretary

R.Wallington- Planning and architectural advisor

W.Hiscox- Site Manager”

What genius conceived the idea of appointing Wayne Hiscox as site manager? He lead us all by his own good example and tireless exertions.

The following extracts from MCG News illustrate Wayne's involvement in MCG from 1971 to 1981, the period covering the construction of Nordrach Cottage v1 and v2. In the time available I've not been able to supplement this timeline with extracts from the caving logs.
Martin Rowe, MCG member 1978 – present

A Timeline for Wayne Hiscox 1971 - 1981

MCG Newsletter #87 Feb 1971

There are four prospective members interested in joining the MCG

Len Eley, Feltham

Wayne Hiscox, Southall

John Pudduck, Heston

David Stanford, Nantwich

John and **Wayne** run a folk club at the Crown and Sceptre, Feltham on Wednesday evenings from 8.30 and a number of MCG members support them

MCG Newsletter #87 Feb 1971

COTTAGE HUNT HOTS UP

Several possible properties for a new field hq have now been received and are now being investigated by the committee and cottage sub committee

MCG Newsletter #88 Mar/Apr 1971

Group news

Four probationary members were accepted

Leonard Eley

Wayne Hiscock

John Pudduck

David Stanford

MCG Newsletter #92 Feb 1972

Group news

NEW MEMBER

Wayne Hiscox has been elected a full member

MCG Newsletter #93 Apr 1972

COTTAGE WARDEN Wayne Hiscox, Southall, Middx.

MINUTES OF HALF YEARLY MEETING 21st October 1972

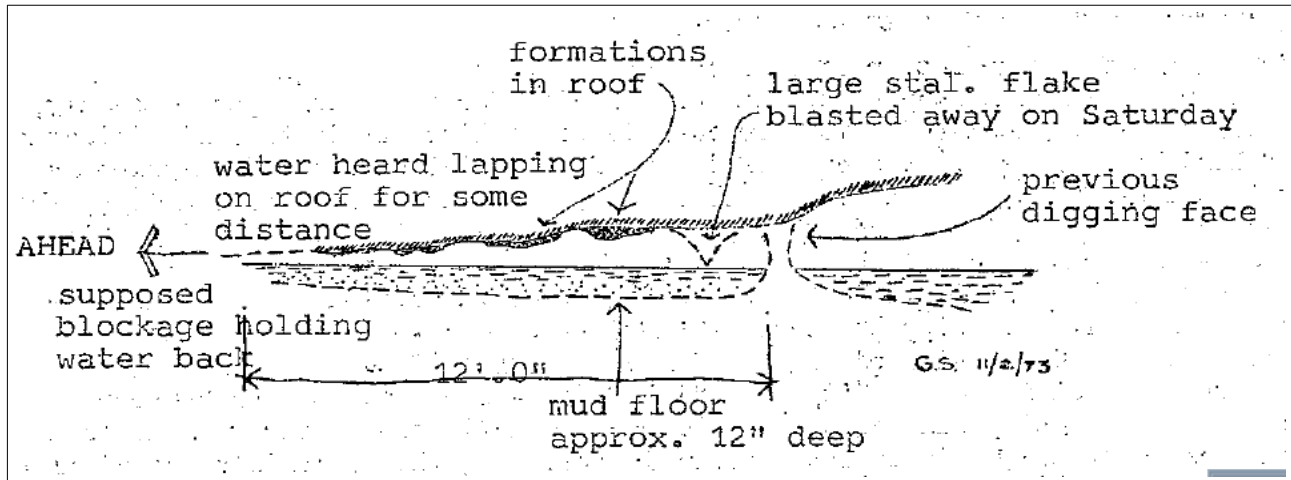
Wayne Hiscox was nominated for the vacant post of Cottage Warden, and was elected unopposed.

MCG Newsletter #98 Feb 1973

LATEST UPPER FLOOD NEWS

Saturday/Sunday 10th/11th February -

On Sunday Greg [Smith?], **Wayne**, John P [Puddock?], Ann [Hiscox?] , Ed [?] returned finding that bang had been successful removing the whole flake. They pushed on in a water filled crawl for about 12ft where the roof became too low. Another obstruction is suspected ahead since the water backs up and does not flow away, although it can be heard lapping against the walls some distance ahead.



MCG Newsletter #102 Sep 1973

A new MCG Cottage?

Negotiations and planning for the New Club Cottage have now reached crucial stage. Cottage plans are now being drawn up, and site purchase is under negotiation at the present time. It is possible that we might be in the new cottage by the end of next year. It is expected that an E.G.M. will be called in mid November to discuss the financial and structural aspects of building the new cottage. Both will require a great effort from all our members when construction starts. Most caving activity will have to be sacrificed to cottage building next year if our aims are to be fulfilled with speed and efficiency, and thus putting the club on a more secure and permanent footing.

So be ready to divert all your energy from caving to cottage building soon. Pete Mathews has produced a questionnaire which will be distributed with this newsletter, regarding opinions held by yourselves about fund raising. It would be appreciated if they could be answered and returned as soon as possible [author probably Bryan Pittman; **Wayne** is cottage warden at this time]

MCG Newsletter #102 Sep 1973

BANG!!!

In 1846 a German born, Swiss chemist named Christian Friebel *Schönbein*, spilled a mixture of nitric and sulphuric acid in his kitchen, (where he was forbidden to experiment.) In his wife's absence having done just that, he proceeded to wipe up the mess with her apron. The story continues that when he hung the apron over the fire to dry, it went poof, leaving nothing behind.

Schönbein recognized the possibilities at once as can be realized from the name he gave the compound, the English translation of which is 'Guncotton' (also called Nitrocellulose). *Schönbein* peddled the recipe to several governments. Ordinary gunpowder was so smoky that it blackened the gunners, fouled the cannon, so that it had to be swabbed after every shot, and raised such a pail of smoke that after the first shots battles had to be fought by dead reckoning. War Offices therefore leaped at the chance to use an explosive which was not only more powerful but smokeless as well. Factories for the manufacture of guncotton began to spring up, and blow up almost as fast. Guncotton was too eager an explosive, it wouldn't wait for the cannon. By the early 1860's the abortive guncotton boom was over, figuratively as well as literally.

Later, however, methods were discovered for removing the small quantities of impurities that encouraged guncotton to explode prematurely. It then became reasonably safe to handle. It was mixed with Nitroglycerine, and Vaseline was added to the mixture so that it could be made into cords, hence Cordite. That finally was what emerged as a useful smokeless explosive.

Nitroglycerine was discovered in the same year as guncotton. An Italian chemist, Ascanio Sobrero treated glycerol with a mixture of nitric acid and sulphuric acid and soon realised he had something when he nearly killed himself in the explosion that followed. Sobrero, lacking *Schönbein's* promotional impulses felt nitroglycerine to be too dangerous a substance to deal with. Although he suppressed information about it, within ten years a Swedish family, the Nobels, took to manufacturing it as a blasting oil for use in mining and construction work. After a series of accidents, one of which took the life of a member of the family, Alfred Bernhard Nobel, brother of the victim, discovered a method of mixing nitroglycerine with an absorbent earth called 'kieselguhr'. A stick of this impregnated earth could be dropped, hammered, and even burnt without explosion. When set off by a percussion cap however, it displayed all the shattering force of Nitroglycerine.

These "Dynamite" sticks eventually made it possible to carve roads, railways, and dams cut of rock at a rate unprecedented in history. Dynamite, and the other explosives that the lonely and unpopular Nobel discovered, made him a millionaire. Against his humanitarian will he found he was regarded as a 'Merchant of Death'. When he died in 1896, he left a fund out of which the famous Nobel Prizes were to be granted each year in five fields; Chemistry, Physics, Physiology, Literature, and Peace. A surprising end to the beginnings of Bang. **Wayne Hiscox**

4th October 1973 the Cottage Building Sub Committee is formed with **Wayne** as the Site Manger (although he is still living in Southall!)

This Sub-Committee will advise the Committee on land purchase, planning application building design and construction and legal matters. It will act as an agent of the Committee to purchase the land, obtain Planning Permission, design and construct the building, complete legal requirements, purchase materials and hire services of contractors."

Members of the Sub-Committee shall act in the following capacities within the Sub-Committee.

R.J.Saunders -	Legal and financial advisor
A.J.Knibbs-	Coordinator and Secretary
R.Wallington-	Planning and architectural advisor
W.Hiscox-	Site Manager

MCG Newsletter #103 Nov 1973

Cottage Building

The Committee would be very pleased to hear from any Club Members having specialist skills such as brick laying, carpentry, plumbing, electrical installation etc, who wish to offer their services to the club. Help of this sort from Club Members will help greatly in reducing construction costs.

MCG Newsletter #104 Feb 1974

Top Ten Cottage Rotters 1973/74

John Miriam 47

2 Pete Mathews 39

3 Wayne Hiscox 30

4. Eric Dowley) 29

John MacMillan) . . -

5 Bin Jones - 28

6 Bernard Reeves 26

7 Don Vosper 19

8 Greg Smith 18

9 Pat Walsh 15

10 Phil Ingold) 14

Roy Bowden)

Others with double figures scores

Simon and Val Knight 11

Tony Knibbs 10

Brian Terry 10

John Pudduok 10

Dave Graves 13

MCG Newsletter #105 Apr 1974

CLUB AMALGAMATIONS

Our Congratulations go out to: -

Wayne Hiscox and Anne, and Pete Virgo and Anne

Who were married on Saturday 30th March.

With so many members getting married recently it would appear that a future generation of M.C.G. cavers has been assured.

MCG Newsletter #106 Jul 1974

UPPER FLOOD SWALLET PROGRESS TO DATE

Following the “breakthrough” into 10ft of crawl-able passage early in November’73 work has continued steadily. The task of improving height was tackled with gusto. The presence of a void made blasting more effective and it was possible to use the 3ft drill manufactured by **Wayne**, to great advantage.

MCG Newsletter #108 Sep 1974

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE GROUP

An extraordinary meeting of the group will be held at the Royal Oak, New Road, Brentford on Thursday evening September 26th at 9.00

AGENDA

- 1) Outline of proposed scheme for the construction of a new cottage, presented to the South-East Council in application for grant aid.
 - 2) Proposal - this meeting to endorse the above project and support the plans drawn up for grant application.
- No other business will be discussed.

MCG Newsletter #109 Nov 1974

As most of you know the furniture is becoming somewhat tatty and needs replacing. If you have an old three piece suite, some kitchen chairs or anything similar that you would kindly donate could you contact **Wayne**. Give him a few days notice of removal and he will probably be able to organise a van.

MCG Newsletter #112 Mar 1975

CLUB NEWS

The weekend of 4th April will be a Club weekend with the view to marking the site of the proposed new cottage

MCG Newsletter #115 Jan 1976

COTTAGE WARDEN'S APPEAL

As most of you probably know we have got the go ahead to start building the new cottage. The first item on our agenda in the building programme is the removal of the old Axbridge hut, This will take place on the W/E of 7th February. Jim Fry is kindly providing a tractor and chains in the hope of dragging the hut into a new position. The building area has then to be levelled and the foundation trenches dug and concrete laid.... It's clearly a case of many hands make light work and **Wayne** will be pleased to see you all down there. There might even be a barrel on.

MCG Newsletter #116 Mar 1976

COTTAGE NEWS

The completion of the Conveyance of the site to the Group took place on the 20th February, 1976. The old Axbridge hut has been removed and the site cleared and levelled. It was envisaged that the old hut could possibly be removed whole with the help of one of Jim's tractors, some chains and many willing hands. I think a lot of people suspected that it might collapse like a pack of cards. Anyway after a lot of pulling and pushing, nothing happened literally. The cottage was [then] dismantled by hand Work on the footings has commenced and surveying is still in progress. At this particular stage

it's a question of "many hands" rather than "too many cooks" and the labour required is unskilled. So if you fancy helping with the footings in the very near future contact **Wayne Hiscox**.

MCG Newsletter #118 Jan 1977

ANY OLD IRON?

Members who can put their hands on any valuable scrap materials, preferably not iron, but brass, lead etc. should contact **Wayne Hiscox** who can dispose of it for cash. The cash would then be donated to club funds.

MCG Newsheet Sep 1977

The Cottage, the present one that is. The Guest Room is full of building materials and is strictly out of bounds. As a result no guest parties may be accepted at the cottage — this includes groups of friends, work— mates etc. And, you are only welcome if you're building. Normal service will be restored just as soon as the shell is completed. Go easy with the coke it is now £60 a ton — cottage fees may have to go up again. Please give due consideration to Anne and **Wayne** who are living at the Cottage whilst their house deal goes through.

A BRIEF REPORT FROM THE HALF-YEARLY GENERAL MEETING - NOVEMBER 5TH, 1977

Wayne Hiscox led the way into the main subject with his account of progress on the new cottage. The supply problems concerning tiles had now been sorted out and 3,000 were due to arrive shortly. Types of gas water heating were being examined and it has been decided to instal two shower heads. .. **Wayne** underlined the urgent need for greater effort to finish the blockwork and roof timbering to meet [the] completion date.

MCG Newsletter #121 Dec 1977

COTTAGE BUILDING BULLETIN

Four members unload[ed] 6 tons of pantiles, freshly manufactured on Humberside. ...A sizeable workforce laid a foundation for an external gas bottle store, raised the chimney stack, numerous courses .. titivated the woodwork and blockwork, and dug the septic tank hole down a few feet. ...The need for an external gas bottle storage has arisen due to a decision in favour of gas as means of heating water in addition to cooking food....The imposing structure is now insured for £ 18,000.

MCG Newsletter #112 Mar 1978

SEEN THE NEW COTTAGE LATELY?...Come on down and let that nice, kind foreman **Wayne Hiscox** find you a lousy job up on the freezing roof! Laying pantiles is a slow, tedious business. However, the roof is entirely felted and battened, with tiles covering about 50%. ... the windows are glazed now. For the first time it is possible to find a cosy job indoors.

COTTAGE DESIGN

The Building Sub-Committee is giving a great deal of thought to such matters as kitchen layout and bedroom arrangements,... [Cottage Architect] Roger Wallington and **Wayne Hiscox** have already put in a lot of work...

MCG Newsletter #123 May 1978

NEW ADDRESS Having over-wintered at Nordrach, **Wayne and Anne Hiscox** have flown south to sunnier (?) climes. They can now be found enjoying the rural life painting, decorating, car repairing and all that sort of thing at [their new house in Wells]

MCG Newsletter #124 Sep 1978

EDITORIAL

Cries for assistance with cottage building work come from a dwindling minority of overworked members and, in particular, from **Wayne Hiscox**. Our trusty foreman is beginning to suffer from outbreaks of disenchantment at the poor response from members to repeated pleas for help. Running my digit down the membership list which appears with this issue, it would appear that about 30% of members have done nothing (or next to nothing) on the cottage project. Surely it is possible for everyone to set aside a couple of weekends in a year to help with this task. Self-build schemes are not those which build themselves.

MCG Newsletter #125 Dec 1978

Wayne Hiscox (Hon. Cottage Warden) stated that cottage bookings had been going very well — too well on at least one occasion — and many forward bookings had been received. ...The committee had decided to increase guest fees to 50 pence per day.

MCG Newsletter #126 Feb 1979

A full working week is planned for the period 21st—29th April. And it is hoped that those who cannot manage a whole week will come along on either weekend and put in an extra day. But work goes on every weekend — it occurs whenever we do it. Make a special effort to be on site as much as you can before 13th May. It is very important indeed. Some coordination of effort would be useful. **Wayne Hiscox** can use any number of workers, but he would like to know how many and when. Either write to him giving dates for your attendance or contact Tony Knibbs who will collect information to pass on,... Why not elect to spend a week (any week) of your holiday working on the new cottage. So cheap, yet so effective.

MCG Newsletter #127 Jul 1979

NEW COTTAGE As anyone who has been on Mendip recently will know, the cottage is approaching completion. The cess pit was finished around June and since then work has been concentrated on the interior of the building. Upstairs, all plastering and painting has been done; the only remaining major job is constructing the bunks. Downstairs, there is still a fair amount to do. **Wayne Hiscox** estimates that the cottage could be in use by winter but only if work continues at the present rate.

FINANCES Our new treasurer, Eric Dowely, is wondering how to make ends meet. The first instalment of £333 is re-payable on the NPS loan in August, but the total funds of the club are at present £62.... This will cover the repayment to the NPA [? National Playingfields Association] but leaves the club very short of cash.... £500 can be claimed on VAT when the cottage is complete. Unless we raise £800, progress on the cottage will begin to slow down, which would be a pity since it is so near completion.

Wayne Hiscox said that if [progress] had been as good last year we would be in habitation now. The inside should be almost complete by the year end.... **Wayne** asked for loans [from members] to be made into donations. Malcolm Cotter asked if the cottage could be completed by the 13 May [deadline]. **Wayne** said the building would not be ready....

MCG Newsletter #128 November 1979

Progress is continuing on the new cottage although I am sure **Wayne** would still like to see even more people down on Mendip now that the roof is complete, there can be no excuse for not working inside the new cottage, snow or no snow.... Eric desperately needs more cash if he is to allow **Wayne** to continue purchasing materials to finish the cottage work. ... you can help by paying your subscription [now]. .. Subscriptions are currently £5 for members and £1 for associates.

MCG Newsletter #128 Jan 3rd 1980

EDITORIAL As some members will already know, the new cottage was severely damaged by a gas explosion at 11.45pm on New Years Eve.

THE PRESENT SITUATION The cottage was fortunately insured However, exactly what the policy covers is unclear. There is a possibility that cover may be sufficient to have the cottage rebuilt by a contractor. The remaining bits of the building will have to be demolished. Many items can be salvaged (e.g. rafters, tiles, gas rings!). Demolition can begin as soon as the site has been inspected by the insurers. **Wayne** hopes to start this work this weekend. ... The group will have to remain in the old cottage for the present, and a few weekends will have to be spent making this comfortable again. Windows and doors need to be fixed, and there is a lot of tidying up to do.

EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING [to consider next steps] . This will be held on Thursday, Jan 3rd 1980 at 8.00pm in the Beehive, Brentford.

MCG Newsletter #130 Mar 1980

Not many members were able to see the results of the gas explosion which occurred on January 1st, as **Wayne** and Ken Fry had demolished most of what was left by the 13th January. .. Now the bad news: with no building to do, members will have to return to caving...

THE NEXT NEW COTTAGE Roger and **Wayne** have set the wheels in motion to begin

the next cottage..... Estimates are being sought from local builders. As we are limited to £30,000 Roger has asked for quotes for the whole job, including fixtures and fittings and will then work backwards to the figure of £30,000. Hopefully, we could be in the new new cottage by next Xmas. Modifications to the gas supply should prevent 1981 starting with a bang though!

Wayne has negotiated a deal with Jim Fry to remove what's left of the new cottage and clear the site. Anyone who wants to buy materials should therefore see Jim.

MCG Newsletter #131 Apr 1980

COTTAGE PROGRESS A Cottage Progress Meeting was held at the Beehive Brentford on 21 February... the meeting elected an ex gratia payment of £50 to be paid to **Wayne** for his work in clearing up the mess. It can only be a token of our gratitude.

Wayne received delivery of a bee hive and colony of bees the following week. I know he has been keen on keeping bees for a while now, and hope he remembers the group every time he gets stung.

Following the destruction of the old new cottage the Group was served with a Dangerous Building Order. In other words, [the council] were setting out to pull it down and send us the bill for doing so. They were beaten to it by **Wayne** and Ken Fry who pulled down most of the structure between them. Again the Group must be very grateful to these two for saving [us] unnecessary expenditure.

MCG Newsletter #132 Jun 1980

NEW COTTAGE REBUILDING CONTRACT SIGNED

The contract for rebuilding the New Cottage has been signed. Work will begin at the end of June, and will be completed in November

MCG Newsletter #133 Aug 1980

MEET PROGRAMME

5 September Manor Farm

6 September Walk to Harptree Coombe

18 October Tynings Barrow

19 October Walk to Compton Martin via Ubley

All the above trips lead by **Wayne**

MCG Newsletter #139 Apr 1981

THANK YOU

It seems strange now that our indefatigable **Wayne Hiscox**, who has for so long set us the example of what to do and how to do it without asking us to do anything he wouldn't do himself, was not on the [original Cottage Sub-] Committee. It was I suppose inevitable with his enthusiasm and confidence that he'd become our Clerk of Works and how fortunate we were when he and Anne decided to live in Wells. So that we had the added advantage of having our practical handyman (what he didn't know he found out and applied with considerable aptitude) as an on-site Forman.

It was Roger Wallington however, who carried the responsibility for designing our cottage, preparing plans, obtaining Planning Permission, and drawing up specifications with great care, considerable detailed paper work, and an everlasting patience towards those of us who were just novices in this new venture..... Our first Minutes were kept by Tony Knibbs with his usual precision and clarity, and when he resigned from the Sub-committee, once again it was **Wayne** who filled the breach. And, just in case you have forgotten, it was John Miriam who first drew my attention to the fact that there was a special self build scheme for Charities which had as a legitimate target, the recovery of VAT. Now that I am no longer the Group Treasurer I feel that I can express my admiration of and thanks to the other members of the Sub-committee who did so much for us, never forgetting that all the time Pete Mathews was lurking in the background urging and cajoling the rest of us, and negotiating so well and so tactfully with the Sports Council with out whose financial backing our task would have taken a great deal longer.... **Ron Saunders**

MCG Newsletter #146 Nov 1981

Wayne Hiscox announced his intention to resign as Cottage Warden at the 1982 AGM. He will have done ten years in that post come February and the Club is greatly indebted to him, for without his leadership it is doubtful if we would have the wonderful cottage we have today



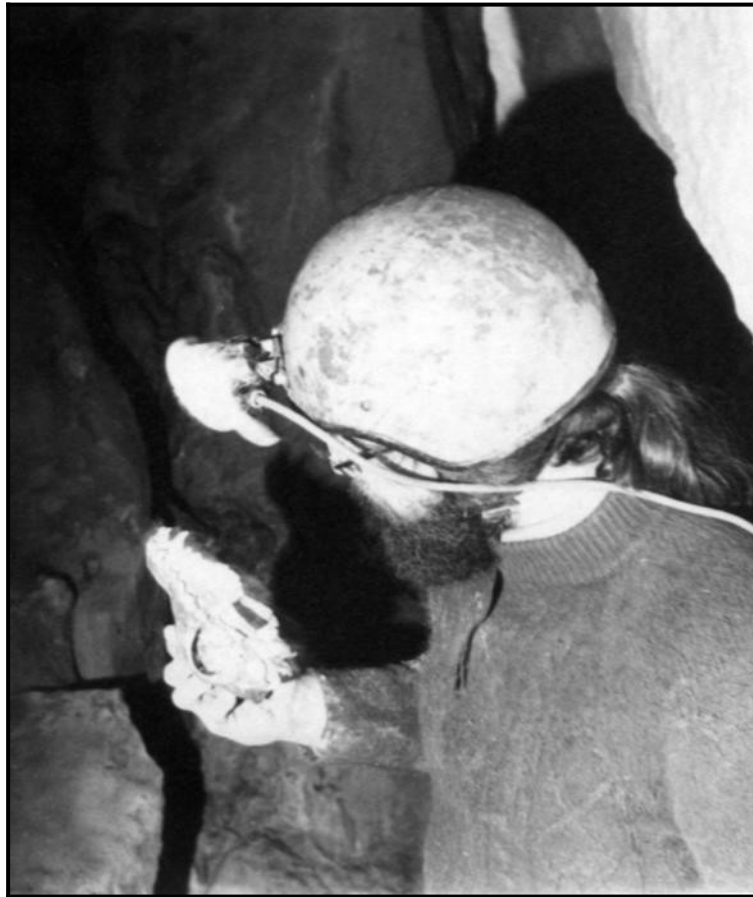
Wayne (standing) and Phil Ingold



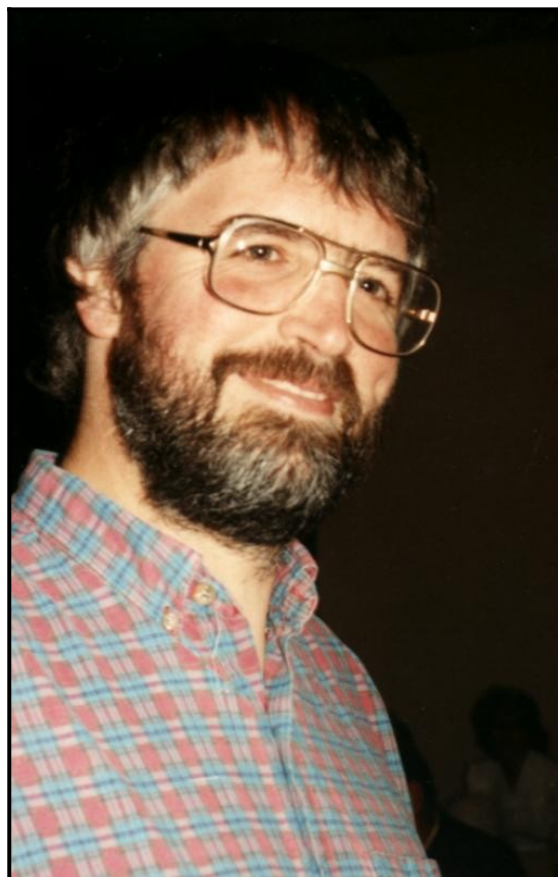
Cottage games with Phil Eliot



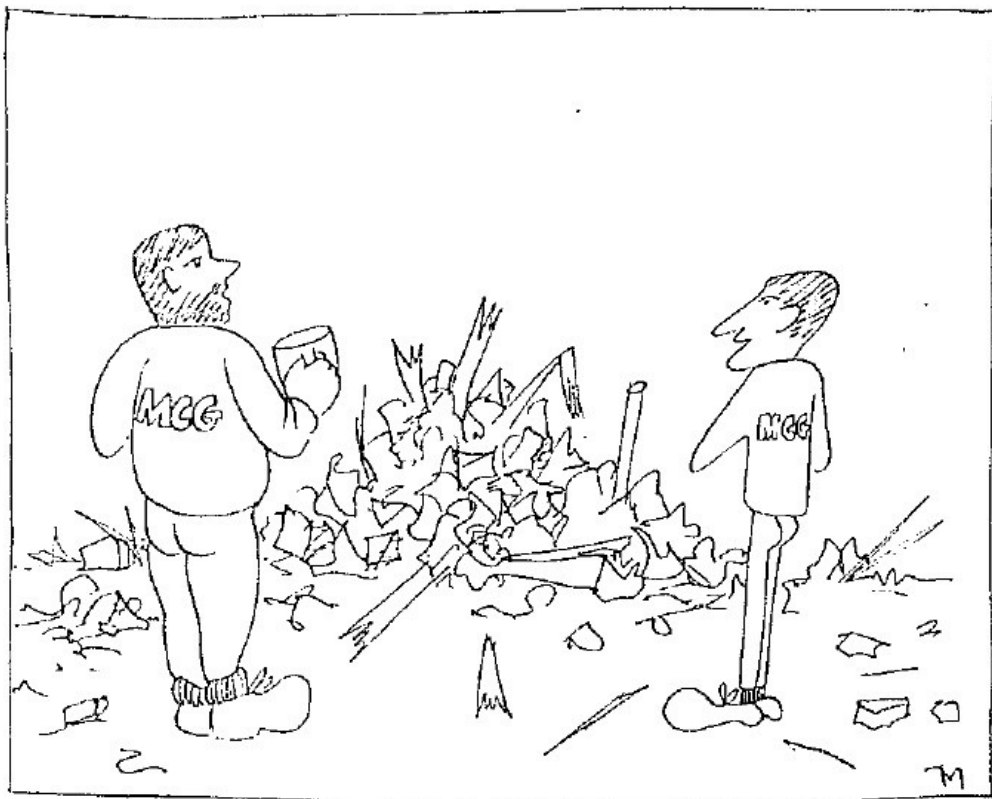
At the MCG 60th Dinner. From left: Wayne and Anne Hiscox, John and Judy MacMillan



Wayne inspecting a Bone Hole skull, 1974



Wayne Hiscox



" When I said blow it up and let's collect on the insurance.....
I meant the old cottage ".

Above: from MCG News #131 Apr 1980

Wayne (left) to Malcolm Cotter (right)

"When I said blow it up and let's collect on the insurance.... I meant the old cottage"