

MENDIP CAVING GROUPNEWSLETTER 2MARCH 1954SECRETARY'S ADDRESS

As the secretary is at present serving in the Royal Air Force, letters requiring an immediate reply should be sent to his Service address :-

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SITE OF GROUP HUT - On the 26th February, 1954, by M. Cotter

Dennis Hemmings and I walked from Priddy to Piney Sleight Farm, about two miles from Cheddar.

Outside the farmhouse we met the farmer and explained to him that we were a newly-formed Caving Group and were on the look-out for a disused barn or outhouse for use as the Group Headquarters. He told us that we were unlucky as he was now using all his available room for hay storage. We then asked if he would let us erect our own hut, and in this respect he was most helpful. He told us, however, of the difficult water situation and the best spot on which we could build - near a water overflow. After thanking him for this information, we told him that we would return during the afternoon, after viewing the site.

After walking across two fields, we reached the downward footpath leading to Velvet Bottom and Long Wood. We found no water although we walked nearly a mile up Velvet Bottom in search of it. Deciding that we had gone astray, we retraced our steps down the valley.

After proceeding a further hundred yards we found water gushing from a pipe. Just above was a manhole and the sound of pumping, no doubt one of Bristol Water Works Schemes. Having found the source of our water supply we decided to have tea, and made for Cheddar.

Whilst having tea, a storm arose, and though it passed quickly the sky remained overcast, forcing upon us the decision for an immediate return to Priddy. The route we chose was straight over the Top which set us on the road, about a mile from our destination.

I have since written a letter to the farmer explaining why we were unable to return.

It is now up to us to turn out and start building. Will any member who is able to spare the time please contact me in order that a working party can be arranged. The most conven-

ient time to commence work would, without doubt, be the Easter Bank Holiday. This would enable us to establish a firm foundation on which to build. Anyone possessing a tent would, naturally, be most welcome as there is no other accommodation.

OFFICIAL MEET AT SWILDON'S HOLE - On the 27th February, 1954,
by M. Cotter

Owing to unforeseen circumstances, only three members and one non-member from Melksham Caving Club were present. The party were : Dennis Hemmings, Mike Perrins and Jack, the latter being the Melksham member. Before going below, we prepared candles and emergency rations as it had been raining and the cave was in flood.

We entered approximately at 11 p.m., and managed to keep dry up to the low entrance of the Short Dryway where, instead of the usual drip, a full-scale waterfall nearly blocked the way. After plunging through, we were soaked but soon 'thawed' in the dry tunnel. We arrived at the forty-foot Pot, but as we had no tackle, we were unable to descend. Returning to the Old Grotto and following it on, we found that we were in the Long Dry Route which none of us had visited before. We came out of the Steep Slide Hole and followed the torrent upstream to the Showerbath where we again got such a soaking that we decided to leave. Water was cascading over the usually dry slabs as we crawled the last few yards towards the entrance. I found to my amazement that the grill was locked!! I tied a broken torch to the grill to show that we were inside. I then led the party back to the Old Grotto, via the Short Dry Route, where we wrung out our clothing. As our overalls were so cold we decided to remain unclad and leave them off until required. Before we had left the barn the other party from Melksham told us that if we had not returned by 8 a.m., they would come in for us. The long wait commenced. Huddling together for warmth, each one took his turn at the end of the line. Every quarter of an hour or so we had either a barley sugar, some chewing gum, or a horlicks tablet to suck. With the heat from a candle and Dennis's acetylene lamp, we were able to boil some water. The Melksham team arrived at 9.30 and a rapid evacuation of the cave ensued. As we were helped out of the entrance, one thoughtful person gave us a swig of rum.

Back at the barn, a brew had been prepared which we drank, then changed into dry clothing. While changing we learned that the other caving party, who were underground at the same time, had left the cave locked. While at the barn changing they were asked if they had seen us and told that our party was still in the cave. They did not say that the cave was locked or return to unlock it, but went straight back to their headquarters. Let us hope that this does not happen again ; as it was, we were merely inconvenienced.

TACKLE MANAGER - M. Burbidge has undertaken to look after the groups tackle. At present our first ladder is under construction.

ADDRESSES OF MEMBERS - Would all members please communicate with the Honorary Secretary to enable direct postage of newsletters. A list of members names and addresses will be circulated as soon as possible.

SUCCESS OF NEWSLETTER - This will be guaranteed if members send in short articles which they consider of interest.

SUMMER MEET IN SCOTLAND - It is hoped that arrangements can be made for a trip to Scotland this summer lasting about a week. This will be later in the summer, and further details will be given in a later newsletter.