

MENDIP CAVING GROUPNEWSLETTER 3MAY 1954THE EASTER MEET. by MALCOLM COTTER. Hon. Recorder.

The most successful meet of the group yet was held over Easter between the 16th and 19th of April -- at one time six members were present, three of whom had just joined.

EASTWATER SHALLET. (16.4.54)

Members of the party were; Dennis Hemmings, Michael Burbidge, Tony Crawford, Geoff Wingrove, and M. Cotter.

After collecting the entrance key from Eastwater farm, we pitched tent near the cave entrance, changed, and placed our clothing in the tent. At the head of the boulder maze Tony pointed out a small pool and the first of the red guide markings. By following them we were able to reach the base of the most complicated mass I have yet seen, and stood in a chamber with a stream entering from one corner of the roof. Following the water down we found ourselves in a steeply descending passage which we presumed was the 380 ft. way. To begin with we passed a passage to the left for future exploration. The way levelled out and we squeezed through a narrow rift, at the base of which was a long pool. The passage then took a turn to the right, and after a few feet ended in an impassable slot. While returning to the branch passage seen earlier, we found two small frogs in the stream; they were not albinos.

The side passage let us into a steeply sloping bedding with deep runnels where the water went in flood. Tony and I were a little ahead of the others and had reached a constricted downward passage when we heard that Geoff was unable to get through. On the return I saw that the deepest runnel continued on upwards in a passage, so decided to follow as it suggested an alternative route. At the top it opened out into a chimney with a choice of directions, one of which led downwards into a long tunnel. Crawling through a pipe-shaped opening I came into a large sloping chamber, at the apex of which was the boulder slope where I heard the voices of the others.

After joining me in the chamber we went on downwards to the large tunnel, and through what was obviously "The Gorge". Just after the 'S' bend we came to the first pitch. Tony then directed operations with his ropes; he rigged them so that I was able to rope down to a ledge. Traversing over, I followed a corkscrew cleft to the head of the next pitch where I heard water. I returned, and climbed the pitch by alternately raising each foot and having the slack taken in from above; a method which, Tony told us was used in getting out of a glacier after a fall.

A rapid return to open air was made, emerging at 10.30 after spending 6½ hours underground.

CAVING AT CHEDDAR

On Saturday morning we all decided to camp at the base of Longwood, where Velvet Bottom runs on.

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While our two tents were being pitched, Tony Knibbs, who had just joined us, and Dennis went off for a walk and later returned with the news that a dry swallet, which we had seen some weeks earlier was opening out to a promising dig. We all went to see and were surprised to find to find Tony throwing rocks out of deep hole, which only a little earlier had been completely sealed up.

As time was advancing we decided to leave the dig and go shopping into Cheddar. Tony Crawford took me down on his bike and we made our purchases. While awaiting the others at the great rising we took keen interest in a large cave entrance in the back garden of a nearby house, and decided to ask permission to explore. The owner, Mr. Saye, could not have been more helpful and he arranged for us to go down next day.

The next day we went into Cheddar and visited Mr. Saye's cave. A little inside the large entrance arch, an inward sloping tube led us into a mud bank, at the extremity of a deep, green-water filled rift. The appearance of the cave led us to the conclusion that it had been formed under pressure, and the tube that we had passed gave the evidence that water had reached daylight only after having been forced upwards. The cross section of the tube was also too small to take the full volume of water now emerging at the great risings. We then examined the resurgences in the garden. The water seemed to be forced out of a hole over 2ft in diameter. From the visible evidence it seems that the underground river or master-cave must be submerged for some distance behind the point of outlet.

These facts seem to be of little interest to the sporting caver, but there is also evidence that there are long dry ways placed on different levels. Gough's cave is one of them.

A more complete picture could be obtained by searching and surveying all the known caves in the area.

#### THE DIG

In the evening we all set to work digging and removing rocks from the site started earlier. Tony Crawford had rigged a pulley above the hole to facilitate removal. After about two hours work we reached a narrow rift, and it was obvious that we would have to postpone work to a later date. Tony then asked for a cigarette and made the strong air currents' strength show itself in the fast moving smoke. He then lowered a candle, which was nearly gutted. Below the rift, about three feet deep, it widened out and we saw scree sloping into darkness down a passable passage.

Before we left on Monday evening we all resolved to continue the dig as soon as possible and to hold the next meet in the same place.

#### THE HON. TREASURER

Geoff Wingrove is now temporarily acting as treasurer. (17, Sutton way, Hounslow, Middx.)

A meeting held earlier decided on the sum of 12/- per year as the annual subscription. Reductions of 3/- per quarter from the time of joining should be made by new members in the first year. Junior membership, under the age of sixteen, requires half the sum of ordinary membership.

Further newsletters will be sent only to paid members. Persons who have not paid before 1st June will be considered to have dropped out. A list of members will be circulated after this date.

TACKLE

Members wishing for any types of tackle; snap-links, ropes, tents, etc, should contact the Hon. Tackle-Manager, Mike Burbidge (59, North Drive, Hounslow, Middx). These may be obtained cheaper through the group.

Any member who is interested in making light-weight metal ladders should contact Malcolm Cotter and details of manufacture will be forwarded. The more of us who make tackle, the sooner we will have enough to cover our needs.

GROUP BADGE

Dennis Hommings is able to get a badge made for the group. Would members please submit drawings to him (4, Rectory Court, Rectory Road, Hounslow, Middx)

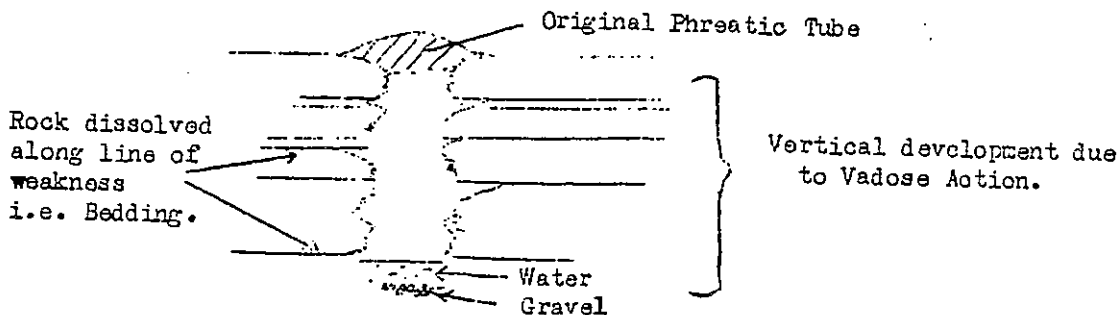
WHITSUN MEET

As stated, the Whitsun meet will be held at Longwood. Members wishing to attend should contact the Hon. Secretary, informing him whether they have a tent or not so that sleeping arrangements can be made. Some members may be staying on after the Bank Holiday so start work on our hut. Would anyone interested please state this as well.

TWO CAVING TERMS

Not many cavers know the meaning of the words PHREATIC and VADOSE, which describe the way in which a cave, or part of a cave, has been formed.

Briefly Phreatic means solutional. Limestone or Calcium Carbonate is soluble in Carbonic acid, which is formed when Carbon Dioxide is dissolved in water from the atmosphere and the soil. This acid solution then dissolves the rock, forming round pipe-like tunnels from a few inches to many feet across. When grit or other abrasive matter starts to get washed in, this has a wearing effect, which is termed Vadosic. Most Vadosic streams have an air space above. The acid attack on the floor nearly ceases when other matter covers its surface, and the attack on the walls is easily noticeable.



RECORDS

Work on a cave card index system will be started shortly. In order to open up new ground it is first necessary to have all the known facts on our fingertips. Everyone is invited to do research, and information should be sent to the Hon. Recorder. A valuable list of diagrams, surveys and notes has been compiled by Tony Crawford and is in records. All information is available to members.

Close contact has been kept with Oldham Hydrological Group, formed about the same time as ours, and three newsletters have so far been received from them.

Developments in caving outside the group will be reported in future newsletters.

SOLE BOOKS ON CAVING

In the following list are prices and addresses on where to obtain each book, but there is no guarantee that all the books are still in print.

Three excellent books on the Mendip caves have been written by H.E. Balch, they are in his Mendip series and are:-

- 1. Mendip, it's Swallet Caves and Rock Shelters. - 3/6 paper: 5/- cloth.
- 2. Mendip, Cheddar It's Gorge and Caves - " " " "
- 3. Mendip. The Great Cave of Wookey Hole - " " " "

Obtainable from:- John Wright and Son, Bristol.

Three of N. Castercots' classical books:

- 1. Ten Years Under the Earth - 15/-
- 2. My Caves - 15/-
- 3. Cave Men, New and Old - 16/-

Obtainable from:- J.M. Dent, Aldine House, Bedford St., London.

By Pierre Chevalier; (sequence of explorations leading to the discovery of the then world's deepest cave)

Subterranean Climbers - 16/-

Obtainable from:- Faber and Faber, 24, Russel Sqr., London.W.C.1.

By Haroun Tazieff; (about exploration in the Pierre St.Martin Abyss, France)

Caves of Adventure - 12/6

Obtainable from:- Hamish Hamilton, 90, Great Russel St., London.W.C.1.

By A. Gemmell and J.O. Myers ( exploration in the North of England of Lancaster Hole now Britain's largest cave system and other famous Yorkshire caves).

Underground Adventure - 15/-

Obtainable from:- Dalesman Publishing Co., Clapham, Via Lancaster, Yorks.

Also printed by the above company : Britain Underground. 7/6.

This book divides up the British caving regions, positioning and listing most of the northern Pennine caves and a number of those from other regions. The accuracy of details in other than north Pennines is questionable, but nevertheless it is of great use to the Mendip caver.

British Caving - at 35/- and written by various members of the Cave Research Group.

This excellent book is full of not only the sporting side of caving but deals also with the most technical parts and a though expensive should be in the possession of, or read by, every spelilogist. It is hoped that when Group funds allow, this book may be bought for members, as a start to our library.