

THE MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 5

AUGUST 1954

The August Meet

1. The August Camp was set partly on Piney Sloot and then after a week of severe weather was forced into the shelter of Velvet Bottom. Luckily the weather held fine for the main party over the bank holiday and we were able to do some important work in surveying and photographing the long hole, and Mr. Sayce Cave.
2. Those present were able to use the prototype "Electron" ladder made by Tony Crewford.
3. A general meeting was held on Sunday 1st August 1954, the findings and decisions will be found in the Appendix. Tackles fees were fixed at 1 shilling per meet per head. (The Hon. Treasurer would like to collect fees from those who have not yet paid).

Honorary Treasurer's Report

4. The Hon. Treasurer - Geoff. Wingrove - told us that the Group Funds were low owing to the fact that a lot of new tackle had to be bought:-

Credit				Debit			
	£	s	d		£	s	d
From subs				Materials for			
up to 1st May	5	19	0	25foot ladder	1	5	9
				Cash Book		1	9
				Carbide Gen'tor		2	6
Credit	5	19	0		1	10	0
Debit	1	10	0				
Balance	4	9	0	100' rung (alloy)			
1st May				50' plug (Aluminium)	3	17	0
Further subs	1	10	0				
Gifts		7	6				
Credit	6	6	6				
Debit	3	17	0				
Balance	2	9	6				

1st August 1954

The Dig

5. The dig is 20 feet deep and shows no signs of closing, and has a strong air current coming through the loose rocks at the lowest point. During the weeks previous to the bank holiday intermittent work was carried out. Those who have worked on a dig in wet weather will understand the extreme discomfort of working with liquid mud flowing into ones hair and down ones neck.

6. There is now strong evidence suggesting that the group has excavated to a greater extent than any previous party, and are therefore getting even closer to the secret of what lies beyond. There is no doubt that in the past the dry swallet (which some members now refer to as Teaber Hole) must have taken most of the water draining into velvet bottom. It is almost certain that there have been at least two periods of activity.

(a) When the swallet was first formed almost certainly before the ice age.

(b) During the mining period in velvet bottom when water was carried in heats for lead washing. Lead working has been carried on since Roman times, to about the last century, but it is doubtful if washing was carried on so far down the valley for some time after that. The mining could have two effects. Either cleaning old sediment, or depositing fresh.

#### Chelms Coombe Cave

7. Two visits were made to the newly formed Chelms Coombe cave. Information and help was first obtained from Major McNoard of Axbridge Caving Group.

8. The cave was uncovered in Chelms Coombe quarry just before Whitsun this year by quarrymen during blasting operations. Entry is gained through a window some 20 feet up the quarry face. A railway line is the bolay for the ladder and below is a broken pitch of about 27 feet. Even from outside some of the fine formations can be seen but once on the severe slope at the bottom with full daylight illumination coming through the entrance, the beautiful colouration and formation are a sight to be remembered.

9. At the lowest corner of the severe slope a low slide gave access to a low bedding chamber. There were not the profuse decorations of the previous chamber, long slender straws one of which had thickened at the end, following the development of a normal stalactite. The base of the chamber consisted of small boulders with washed mud between, which on removal showed a tightly packed mass beneath.

10. Our party consisting of Tony Crawford, George Pope, Mike Gladstone and myself were unaware that there was yet another chamber beyond, and when we spoke to the others we received various remarks directed towards our ability as cavers. The third chamber which was visited by Lorraine Sandercock, Dennis Hommings, Geoff. Wingrove and Mike Burbridge, consisted of a high but narrow rift and its formation had not been affected by blasting and surpassed those in the entrance chamber.

#### Mr. Sayes Cave

11. On 31.7.54, a party consisting of Tony Crawford, Mike Gladstone, George Pope and myself received permission from Mr. Saye of Cheddar to survey and photograph the cave in his back garden. Survey and photography proceeded without a hitch until we arrived at the water rift where we had to encounter the last stretch.

/no came.....

We came across mud stalagmites, which are most disconcerting when gripped for a handhold with deep water below!

12. The water at the far end of the rift showed turbulence in the light of a torch. Below the surface the arch of a submerged passage could be seen.

#### Cave diving

13. Some members in the Group are interested in experimenting in cave diving. Tony Civilian Crawford would like all Service masks i.e. A.R.P. etc. and corrugated tubing for conversion into diving apparatus. Tony Crawford has also consulted a leading firm on diving apparatus.

#### Group Badge

14. Dennis Hennings has a stock of badges and pennants at two shillings each. The money will go to Group Funds.

#### Caving Expeditions

15. Meet at Priddy from 3.9.54 to 6.9.54  
T. Kibbs and M. Cotter 14 - 21.9.54  
18 - 25.9.54 (South Wales?)

#### New Members

16. On 1st August 1954 it was proposed and carried that persons desiring membership shall be proposed by two members at or before a meet and then be voted as members after having made one underground trip.

#### Cave Research Group

17. Application to join the cave research group as a club member has been made.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Proposal

1. That lifelines shall be used on all pitches.

Amendment

2. Lifelines shall be used on all pitches over fifteen feet unless the person climbing desires one on a shorter pitch. The depth of pitch and final arrangements are to be decided by the leader of the party.

Proposal

3. That when a whistle code is used for lifelining it shall be:-

1 blast	:	Stop
2 blasts	:	Take in (slack)
3 blasts	:	Pay out
4 blasts	:	Have arrived, pitch clear for next man.

When on the surface:-

6 blasts	:	S.O.S.
3 blasts	:	Reply

Knots

4. It is surprising how few members know how to tie the simple bowline. Members are reminded that a diagram of one can be found in the Appendix to Newsletter No. 4.