

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 12.

MAY, 1957.

EDITORIAL

We are now well into the fourth year of activities of M.C.G. This year may well prove a critical one in many respects and should develop into a period of greater activity than ever before.

A very comprehensive meet programme has been prepared by the committee and a large measure of support is contemplated from the club in general. By the time this newsletter is published Whitsun Meet at Velvet Bottom will be behind us and the work of excavation at Timber Hole should be well in hand.

Due to the de-rationing of our petrol supplies many individuals are planning to make more frequent visits to Mendip. It is to be hoped that the individual members quickly lose a habit so prominent at our Easter Meet - the formation of cliques - an undesirable feature in every possible way.

We have a reasonable nucleus of new blood in M.C.G. and have a good chance, this year, of consolidating our position as a club, a chance which must be seized upon and nurtured. The financial position is very precarious and those members who are in arrears with their subs should make an effort to remedy this shortcoming - or forfeit their rights to membership.

Members must remember that the club is what they make it - not an organisation to be criticised by people who should know better.

ANTHONY J. KWLEBS. Hon. Ed.

BOOK REVIEW

"THE CAVES BEYOND" By JOE LAWRENCE JR.
& ROGER W. BRUCKER.

Publisher: Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 10.

Price: \$ 4.75 U.K. 35/-

This is the first American - published book on speleology I have read. It is based on accounts of Floyd Collins' Crystal Cave and the dramatic episode of the underground tragedy of the death of Floyd Collins himself.

Although the actual text left me quite unimpressed the book contains numerous photographs which are well worth looking at. Judging by one photograph, showing someone carrying two cameras around his neck and a bag of equipment which must have weighed half a hundredweight, photography is lavishly equipped pastime in American caves. Floyd Collins' Crystal Cave is situated in an oasis of private property in the Mammoth Cave National Park in Kentucky. The system itself, open only partly to visitors, is dealt with in the first part of the book.

The visitors' section ends at the start of the Crawlway, a very long, low passage containing numerous tight squeezes. Beyond the Crawlway lies an extensive system of passages including Floyd Collins Lost Passage. Due to the severity of the Crawlway a base camp, Camp 1, was set up just beyond it to enable easier exploration of the remaining system of unexplored passages.

The setting up of Camp 1. is dealt with at length. Apart from the hazards of caving the main difficulties encountered were the movement of newspapermen, cameramen, and their tackle, and the laying of a telephone cable - the term "Ballyhoo" may well be used to cover a great deal of the proceedings. A little bit of interest is sparked off by a section about exploration of a new sector of cave - the account is shortlived however.

The account of Collins' death gives the impression that the rescue attempts were far from adequate as he lay trapped after a long search for a suspected new entrance.

There is a useful appendix, compiled by members of the National Speleology Society of America (N.S.S.A.), containing useful details of exploration and underground camps.

This book may well be kept in a general library but fails to have appeal as an addition to the home collection.

MALCOLM C. COTTER.