

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 13.

JULY, 1957.

EDITORIAL

The preceding month has indeed been one of success. This is largely due to two working weekends in Velvet Bottom of which the result has been a lid on Timber Hole and a substantial amount of excavation therein.

Members will no doubt notice a lack of articles in this month's Newsletter. This is unavoidable and due, of course, to a lack of contributions by members who, I feel sure, are capable of writing something of interest for the Newsletter.

The number of new members this month is a sure sign of improvement in the club and is most encouraging indeed.

ANTHONY J. KNIBBS. Hon. Ed.

WHITSUN MEET

Members present:-

Anthony J. Knibbs. (Leader)
Austin Sanders.
Richard Woollacott.
Tony Davies.
Bob Knott.
Brian Robinson.

All the above members were assembled in Velvet Bottom on Saturday morning. The weather looked threatening and we lost no time setting up camp and arranging food supplies from Cheddar.

The first job was to transport thirty-six square feet of one and a quarter inches thick Elm boards from Priddy to the camp site. This was affected by the illustrious 'combination' with Ricky at the controls.

By working late into Saturday night the lid was almost completed and work on the foundations above the dig was begun.

Rain was seriously hampering the progress when some clear-thinking type suggested a drink, beer to wit.

Now the nearest beer-post is in Cheddar, which, on such a night, entails a weary trek down the rain-swept Gorge and an even wearier trek back. However the combination stood us in good stead and, in due course, returned amid a flurry of spray and blue smoke. Work ceased immediately.

Early on Sunday morning we braved the elements and work was once more resumed. It must be noted here that Austin actually slept in a shanty of groundsheet and rusty tinwork. Any self-respecting tramp would have disowned such a structure, but Austin remained undaunted and proved that a tent is a mere luxury.

Getting the lid into position was no easy matter and a whole day of spadework and rockbreaking elapsed before the lid was finally eased into place. The act of closing the trapdoor and turning the key in the lock was a great boost to morale. We turned in on Sunday evening with a great sense of achievement in our minds. We had done what, for two years, had seemed impossible.

The weather had brightened up considerably when we arose on Monday morning. Ricky took advantage of a brief spell of sunshine and put the story of our successful weekend on permanent photographic record. Shots of Austins' shack were a must and should be included in a photograph album of club records, should there ever be one.

It was a very satisfied band of cavers that set-off for London on Monday night.

"MIG".

MORE EXCAVATION

JUNE 22nd.-23rd.

Members present:-

- Anthony J. Knibbs (Leader)
- Tony Crawford.
- Richard Woollacott.
- Gerald Green.

With the exception of Ricky, who was due to arrive on Saturday, the party reached Mendip on Friday night. After a quick brew up in Mr. Mains' barn, we retired to the Straw-loft where Tony demonstrated a law of physics originally attributed to Sir Isaac Newton. Yours Truly can conclusively

state that: if a suspended bale of straw of weight w lbs. is released at an altitude of 7.2 feet the resultant velocity at ground level is 0 feet per second. . . If however we interpose a man between the bale of straw and ground level in a prone position we find that the time-lapse is insufficient to enable the prostrate form to entirely avoid contact with the descending bale. By a simple equation concerning the velocity and the weight of the falling bale we can arrive at the effect on the interposed man: $O \times W = OW!$ This shall henceforth be named : Crawfords' Fourth Law of Motion.

On Saturday morning we moved to Velvet Bottom and made preparations for excavation.

The first job was to erect a system of three sheerlegs over the dig. This was arranged in due course and it was not long before a steady stream of debris began issuing forth from the dig.

At the end of the day we were absolutely sure that we were beyond any previous stage dug to and were still going strong.

On Sunday several large rocks were removed leaving the daddy of all large rocks firmly wedged in our line of advance. Many hours of patient working made only a slight impression on the block. A system of pulling the block with the rope was cunningly devised but the rope parted at a stress which must have been far below its specified breaking point, i.e. three men pulling it.

Now that the rope was useless we had no alternative but to discontinue our efforts for the weekend.

Early on Sunday morning I took Gerald on a circular tour of Swildons' Upper Series. Gerald enjoyed himself immensely, even though he wore Commando Soles, and achieved several short climbs on wet and muddy rock that even beginners in tricounis and clinkers sometimes peel off.

"MIC".

TIMBER HOLE

The situation at the dig is one of promise. A great deal of work remains to be done however and rash statements about how soon the actual entry into a cave system will take place should be regarded as entirely spurious.

A great deal of work has been carried out at Timber Hole this year but there is no definite indication of an easy way through. The presence of a draught is a good omen but is merely an indication of an existing cave system and is no gauge

as to how far away the opening into unchoked passage may be.

Two keys to the dig are in existence. I have one and Tony Crawford holds the other. These keys are only obtainable for the purpose of opening the dig for excavation parties. This regulation has been enforced by the Committee to prevent any unfortunate occurrences. Digging must be conducted by a member with a first-hand knowledge of the dig situation. Mis-directed labour could do unlimited damage to the present stage of excavation.

"DIG".

AUGUST MEET

There will be a full club meet at Velvet Bottom, Cheddar, during August Bank Holiday Weekend. Details of the programme for the weekend are not yet available but, as usual, there will be plenty going on.

It would be appreciated if members intending to be present on the Meet would inform the Hon. Editor of the fact. This will facilitate the making of arrangements for accommodation and transport where necessary.

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WALTON-ON-THAMES,
Surrey.

Anthony J. Knibbs. Hon. Ed.
