

MENDIP CAVING GROUPNEWSLETTER No. 15.DECEMBER 1957EDITORIAL

As the end of 1957 approaches several things stand out as signs of progress during this year. Foremost the amount of work that has been put into Timber Hole. Also the tackle programme is reaching its final stage of completion; a full verbal report will be given by the Tackle Master at the A.G.M.

As the result of an E.G.M. (see following report) a Hut Committee has been formed which I trust will submit a report of their progress for publication in the next issue of the Newsletter.

This issue of the Newsletter contains our first photographic reproductions which I hope we will be able to continue in our future publications.

I would like to remind all members, that the loans towards the club Hut are urgently required now, so that the purchase may be completed.

Finally a reminder that the club holds meetings every Thursday evening in the Royal Hotel, Boston Manor, London, W.7.

D. HARLE.

REPORT ON EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING  
14/11/57.

The following members were present:-

A. Crawford.	J. Green.
L. James.	P. Green.
A. Knibbs.	D. Harle.
M. Cotter.	R. Knott.
R. Charnock.	R. Woollacott.

Tony Crawford was elected Chairman.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed purchase of a club Hut.

PROPOSAL That the club purchase the wooden Hut, which has been inspected by some members.

Proposed - M. Cotter.  
Seconded - R. Woollacott.  
Passed by Majority Vote.

The Secretary announced that Funds in hand amounted to £17. and that the income from subscriptions due on January the First would be approximately £21.

It was proposed that a Hut Committee be set up and the following were elected -

B. Knott (Chairman)  
M. Cotter.  
R. Woollacott.

The Hut Committee was authorised to conduct the purchase of the Hut and to arrange for its erection either in Velvet Bottom or Priddy.

PROPOSAL A loan should be asked for from Members to enable a Club Hut to be purchased. This loan to be unconditional. It will be repayed when the Committee consider it possible.

Proposed - R. Woollacott.  
Seconded - J. Green.

At the end of the meeting a change in the Club constitution was proposed to simplify the preparation of proposal forms for the A.G.M. This did not get the required 4/5 majority, since some members considered that it should be left until the A.G.M.

R.L. WOOLLACOTT. C.J. CRAWFORD.

---

#### SOME RECENT CAVING WEEKENDS.

24th August, 1957.

Those present were: Tony Crawford (Leader)  
Bob Knott.  
Richard Woollacott.  
Tony Knibbs.  
Malcolm Cotter.

As Richard had not arrived by early afternoon we decided to carry on without him.

Tony Knibbs took some friends of his off to Burrington thus leaving Tony Crawford and Bob Knott and myself.

We decided to examine St. Pauls Series in Swildons Hole, and carry on as far as time would allow. None of us had previously been into this section.

Bob carried a First Aid Kit in a bag with other desirable additions; among them food and spare carbide. This was to be his test trip to see how the Kit stood up to caving. Anyone who has seen Bob's bag will at once realise that a great deal of thought has gone into its construction.

We were not sure where the entrance to the St. Pauls Series was, but inside the cave we met Norman Tuck who later showed us the climb above the streams.

Pitches one and two were soon laddered and return lifelines rigged. Incidentally the forty foot Pot only needs a thirty foot ladder as the actual drop from the ledge is only

thirty-four feet! The twenty foot is only about 12 feet! It is therefore of more use to call the pitches by order i.e. first pitch and second pitch. (The depths of pitches in other Mendip Caves are also exaggerated.)

On reaching The Temple at the beginning of the St.Pauls Series, we were all struck by the supreme beauty of the formations. I advise all members to take the trouble of visiting The Temple which is only just above the main stream passage. It is difficult to explain its position but if one looks upwards about two hundred or three hundred feet after the twin pots a large jammed boulder can be seen above the stream. Follow foot-prints up on left hand side and The Temple is at once entered. A fine view can be obtained from the other side of the passage.

Tony started to remove some rocks from a blocked corner of the chamber but soon found that it was a false choke.

We pushed on and found the passage in front partially filled by a pool. Fortunately previous parties had left a length of plastic pipe and we were able to set the syphon going, after which action we retired to wait.

While Tony and Bob were contaminating the area with a thick fog obtained by combustion of tobacco (tracing air currents!!) I successfully washed some spent carbide from some formations.

On returning to the pool we found the level had lowered enough for us to pass without getting wetter than we were already. Once through, the going was again easy until the passage lowered to a muddy sump. At first we thought it was the well known mud sump because there were dams of mud behind it. However, investigation in the left hand passage revealed a long crawl. After the crawl the passage continued until we arrived at the real mud sump which was relatively clean and dry.

After further crawling through mud squeezes and walking through passages we reached Dennis Kemps' blasting notice.

Further going brought us into Paradise Regained. We decided to return at the latter point.

Altogether, the trip had been very instructional and although the Westminster Spelaeological Group have continued on from Paradise to discover Swildons Four is a magnificent bit of work, I feel further work in St. Pauls and Paradise would pay dividends.

M. O. COTTER.

31st August.

Those present were	Leslie James (Leader)
	Tony Knibbs.
	Malcolm Cotter.

Les and I were in the barn while Tony camped with the Westminster Spelaeological Group, since he was to spend a week caving with them.

DIG. We all decided to work on the Dig. Shifts were between one hour and three quarters of an hour. Tony brought a W.S.G.

guest Betty Browning along with him.

Work progressed satisfactorily and we were able to manipulate a large rock which was causing an obstruction.

The next day Les and I were at work fairly early on and were later joined by Tony and Betty. Work proceeded to a satisfactory extent when Les and I decided to return to London. Tony stayed on to finish his shift and close the Dig.

---

### 7th September

Those present were                    Malcolm Cotter (Leader)  
    David Harle.  
    Leslie James.

Tony Knibbs was on Mendip with the W.S.G. exploring Swildons Four.

This weekend was to have been our assault on the Primrose Pot in Eastwater. Unfortunately we were unable to undertake it as our furniture had to be moved again. Also Tony had some of our tackle down Swildons' and would not have been able to recover it in time.

David, Les and I visited Mr. Laye to discuss the furniture situation. We also visited Mr. Ball of Lion Rock Hotel and he again came to our aid by making some more space available. The furniture was moved successfully next day.

Earlier on Saturday afternoon we had made enquiries about a cottage in Priddy. As far as the actual cottage was concerned we did not have much luck but we did get the offer of renting a bit of land. The rent would be decided according to that usual in the particular spot.

DIG. Later in the afternoon we did further work on the Dig having three quarters of an hour shifts. Progress was slow but steady; much of our effort being directed against a boulder.

The next day, after moving the furniture, we continued work on the Dig.

---

### 21st September.

Members present                    Bob Knott.  
    Malcolm Cotter.

DIG. This weekend was to be devoted to breaking the large boulder beyond the squeeze in the Dig. I had prepared, from silver steel, some tapered tubular wedges. These were to be inserted into a hole first made by a star drill.

HUT. Before commencing on the Dig, we first went to Cheddar Post Office where we saw advertised a sectional garage, fourteen feet by eight feet with windows. Enquiry within the shop drew a blank as the man inside said that the building had already been sold.

However, Bob wrote down the address outside and insisted that we give the house a try since the man could have been mistaken. I agreed with him so we decided to see if it was still

available. We obtained the address of the actual owner and Bob has since written a letter to him enquiring the price.

THE DIG. After our fortune in Cheddar we went to the Dig and started to slam the rock taking shifts of an hour. After dark Bob announced that a large chunk had been removed.

The next day on my first shift the hammer head did its usual trick of flying off but on this occasion shot right down the scree slope out of reach. This meant that further work on the rock could not be continued.

Not to be daunted, we joined our waist slings together and started to remove rocks and mud, thus clearing the way and sinking the rock lower in the passage.

Contrary to previous reports we found it quite easy and safe to work this way. If two members can get to Mendip I feel they could work quite easily and intelligently on the Dig. There is no question of disturbing previous work as there is only one obvious way to dig, as there is hardly any shoring in the hole and what there is, is only as an additional safeguard. There can be no danger whatsoever.

#### SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE DIG.

During my last visit to the Dig I investigated the walls. At one point on the right hand side of the shaft, (looking in) there is a small area of calcite about half way down. A number of rocks removed from the Dig also have calcite, some of these may be seen incorporated in the nearby stone wall.

The sides of the Dig show signs of water action. I found that the marks are in fact due to scolloping. By shining a light along the surface it was easy to see the side which gave the longest shadow and so decide the steepest side of the scollop. The steep side was on the valley end, which was to be expected. This seems to confirm the theory that at some time a stream ran from Velvet Bottom along a deep trough into the Dig. The infilling at the Velvet Bottom end of the Dig consisting of mud and rocks, as well as the angle of scolloping, seems to dispel any idea of a waterfall plunging over the edge of the hole.

---

NOTE Other members present on July 20th and 21st.

I should like to say that the members mentioned as being present on Mendip were not the only ones, other persons were David Harle, Malcolm Cotter, Norma Hurst (Visitor).

---

#### LANCASTER HOLE AND EASEGILL CAVERNS

October 12th - 13th 1957.

The journey to Yorkshire on Friday night was by coach, as a guest of W.S.G. arriving at Clapham, Yorks at 3 a.m. on Saturday morning. We pitched our tents in a wood behind the "Flying Horseshoe" a Licensed Hotel.

At 2 p.m. we were ready to start off for Casterton Fell in the coach. On our arrival at Bull Pot Farm we discovered a shooting party in progress and were forced to wait for their "All Clear". The time was spent in a leisurely exploration of Bull Pot of the Witches, a large open shaft taking a small

stream. At the bottom of the shaft, only 30 feet deep, is a boulder slope adorned by two dead sheep. An obvious climb up, into a passage and over a boulder choke, leads to the bottom of the system.

At 4.00 p.m. the shoot was over and we proceeded over the moors to Lancaster Hole. The entrance is most unimposing, a manhole cover amongst rocks in a dry streambed. The Entrance Pitch was duly laddered and I was the first to descend at 5.00 pm. after a few exchanges of mock threats and sarcastic jokes with our helpers from Red Rose Pothole Club.

The pitch of 110 feet is virtually free climbing. Save for two ledges and the 20 foot of iron ladder at the bottom. I was followed by Betty Browning, Bob Lander and Ron Penhale of R.R.P.C. and the four of us set off for the Collonade, via Bridge Hall, returning by a detour through the Graveyard Section. On our return to Bridge Hall we met the remainder of our party and set off at once for the Easegill connection.

The route consisted mainly of large dry passages with floors of mud and fallen rocks and provided easy walking between odd climbs and fixed ladder pitches. We actually had to get right down on to our hands and knees at one or two places. The Route from Bridge Hall was briefly, through the dry upper passage of the Master Cave, through Montague Cavern, a good 30 feet fixed ladder pitch at Fall Pot, a tricky climb ending on mud-covered rocks over an 80 foot pitch at Stake Pot, and along walk through endless dry passages to Stop Pot where we took a rest and waited for another group of W.S.G. to come through from Easegill direction.

Here I must mention the profusion of formation so prominent in many parts of this high system. Wonders began at the marvellous 12 foot stalagmite columns in the Collonade and never ceased thereafter. The Graveyard, with its cracked mud floor and remarkable stalactites and stalagmites, the curious barbed sharks' fins before Stop Pot, and a never ending assortment of straws and pendant helictites. Apart from the Collonade most of the formation is stalactitic.

Full of chocolate and mint cake we descended the 40 foot of electron ladder at Stop Pot and entered Easegill Caverns at River Passage. Passing under a boulder choke we followed Pierces' Passage, stopping frequently to admire the scalloped walls and floor, and to examine some good examples of past and present corrosion.

Having climbed a 25 feet wire ladder pitch, crawled through Poetic Justice, and slithered down a 15 feet chimney we found ourselves in Spout Passage which we followed up to Spout Hall, paddling ankle deep in a stream. An easy walk brought us to Confusion Corner and then in to Oxford Circus where there was a 10 foot climb, a mantelshelf, leading towards County Pot Entrance; another ladder pitch of 20 feet and a high rift passage, The Snake, brought us to County Pot, from which we emerged at 12.15 a.m. on Sunday morning.

This was the finest three miles of caving I have seen as yet; admittedly the walking makes one rather weary. The four-mile walk to the coach made absolutely sure that we should sleep soundly when we finally crawled into our sleeping bags at 4.15 a.m.

ANTHONY J. KNIBBS.

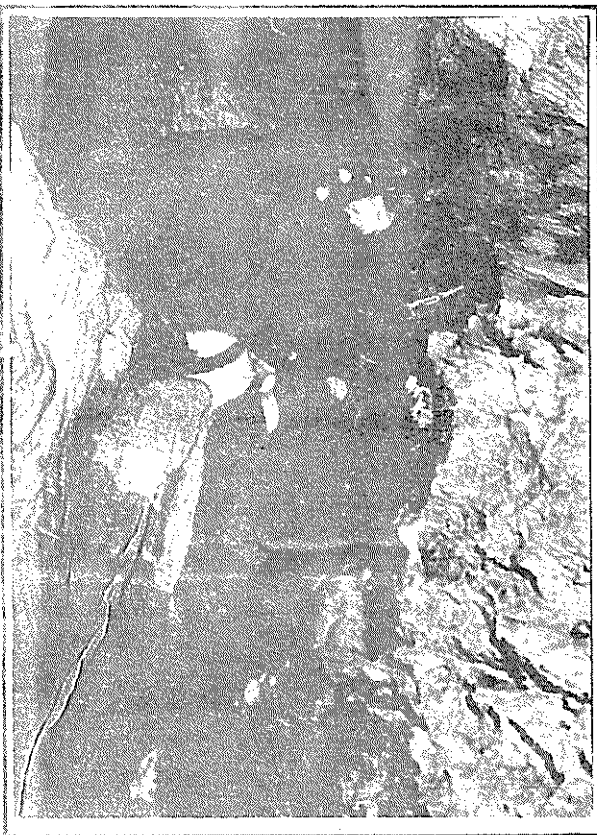
NEWSLETTER COMPILED BY - D. HARLE,  
88, Cawdor Crescent, Boston Manor, W.7.



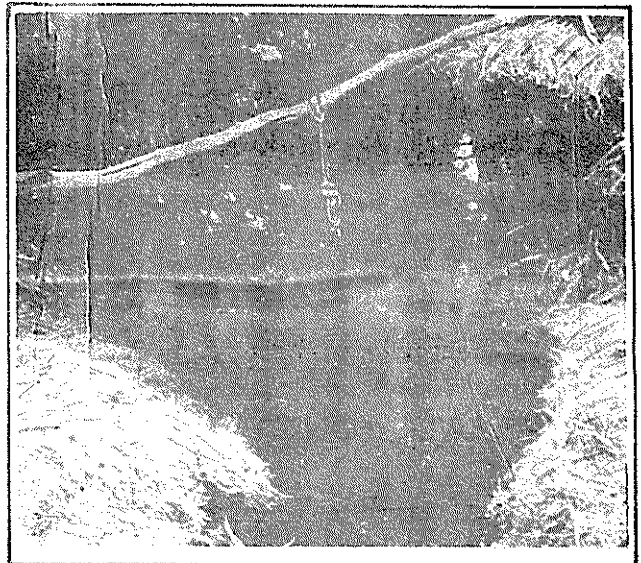
VELVET BOTTOM, EASTER 1954.  
M.C.G. DIG IN FOREGROUND.



M.C.G. DIG, AUGUST 1954.  
PHOTO: M.COTTER M.C.G.

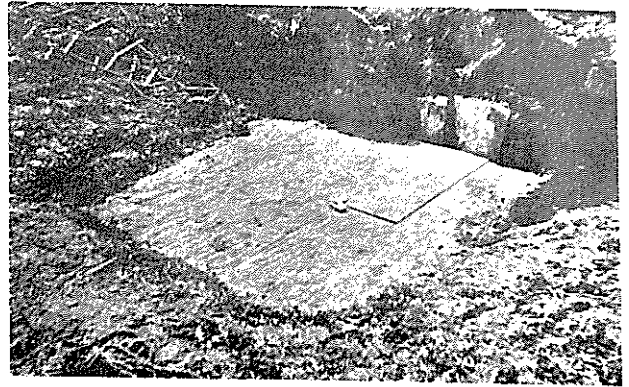
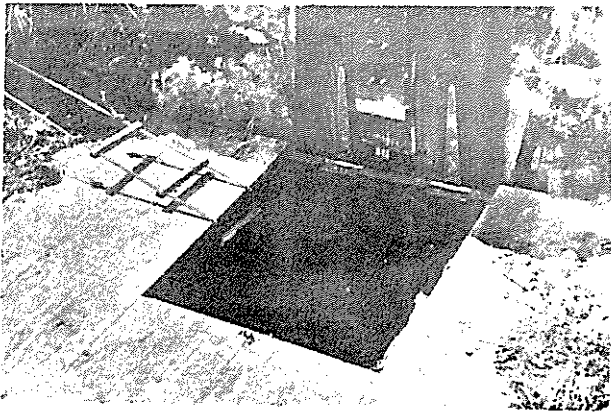


BEND AFTER 1/2 FT. POT. SWILDONS.  
TONY CRAWFORD, ERIC PALLET.  
MEET OF JULY 15<sup>TH</sup>-17<sup>TH</sup> 1955.



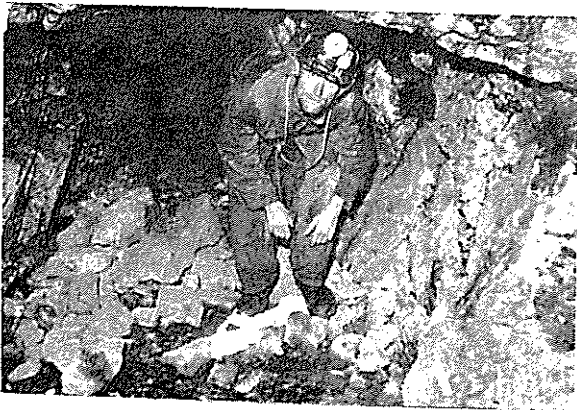
EARLY PHOTO OF DIG PROBABLY EASTER 1954  
PHOTO: AUTHOR UNCERTAIN





# DIG 1957

PHOTOGRAPHS:- R.L. WOOLLACOTT



SUICIDE CAVE DERBYSHIRE



ELDON HOLE DERBYSHIRE