

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

Newsletter September 1963
No. 22

Club Expedition to Switzerland 1963 - Preliminary Report

A variety of reports and comments have filled the air since the return of the eleven members from Switzerland. The formal description of our activities will appear in the Journal, but in the meantime a brief outline of events will make the holiday activities fairly understandable. Further anecdotes to add local colour may be obtained from the participants.

27th. 28th. 29th July - Travelling from London to Fluhli, in the Canton of Luzern, near the limestone plateau of Schrattenfluh.

30th. July - Introductionary walk on the Lapiaz of Schrattenfluh. Unknown cave entrance located at about 6000ft. altitude.

31st. July - A group explored the well known Neuenburgerhohle the largest in the area at a length of some 21/2 miles and depth of 600ft.

1st. August - One group explored the new cave duly named Mendiphohle, descending a 130ft. pitch and partially exploring a system of galleries and boulder filled chambers to a length of around 1500ft. A second party explored a new vertical shaft in a belt of vegetation just below the lapiaz. Evening revelry in Fluhli on the occasion of the Swiss National Festival.

2nd. August - General rest day.

3rd. August - Those fit enough climbed the path up the Brienzer Rothorn (7056ft.). Remainder visited the Schrattenfluh again and commenced work on dig emitting a hurricane of cold air - another Mendiphohle?

4th August - Mass exodus from Fluhli. We headed towards the high Alps; arrived at Kandersteg in the evening.

5th August - General tourist type activities in Kanderstag.

6th August - Various activities including a visit to the Gennui Pass and the Kanderfion Glacier.

7th August - Group travelled to La Chaux-de-Fonds in the Jura to resume caving activities.

8th August - Visits to the Grotte de la Lievre in the Daubs valley and the Gouffres de Pertuis in the Jura Central. The latter proved an excellent pot with good length pitches the largest being 140ft. During the evening we were entertained by our host club the Speleo Club des Montagnes Neuchatelaises, to a typical Swiss fondue and wine meal.

9th. August - Visit to an ice cave - la Glaciere de Montesi - in the region of la Brevine.

10th. August - Visit to la Grotte de la Cascade de Motiers. An interesting resurgence with an active watercourse on a lower level. This final evening in Switzerland was spent raising pints with the S.C.M.N. at selected drinking fountains.

11th. 12th. August - Return to London.

On the whole the holiday was a success with a rise in caving activities over previous years. Someone must have said this before but we shall return.

A.J.K.

Club Finances

The Cottage Purchase Fund now stands at £236 13s 6d. and the General Fund at about £7 10s.
(as at 31st. August)

Wanted

Tony Crawford has asked for good quality and interesting colour slides for copying. He frequently gives illustrated talks to youth clubs etc. and wishes to enlarge his library of slides with this object. Thanks to Chris Reynolds who has already obliged Tony.

London Cave Rescue Organisation

A meet of the L.C.R.O. will take place over the weekend of 26th. and 27th, October at swildon's hole. We are a founder member of the organisation and all members are requested to attend what will no doubt prove to be an interesting and unusual trip. Details from Mig.

Congratulations - to Mike and Christine Rennie and to Geoff and Anne Davies on their recent marriages, (September) and to Richard and Maureen Woollacott who were married on August 17th.

Reports that committee membership inevitably leads shortly to the alter are strongly denied by the surviving bachelors. This brings the total during the last year to seven.

The applications for membership of Bob Hill and Tony Fitzgibbon will come up for review at the next committee meeting - comments invited.

Mig is trying to arrange meets in the near future at St. Cuthberts and Lamb Leer caverns. He would also like ideas for future meets.

Mendip Comment

Three weekends have now been devoted by a few members to the filming project. After a certain amount of initial teething troubles with the equipment and a sheared gear wheel in the generator, a successful day's work was completed on Sunday 1st. September. Geoff has now taken over 10 minutes of film and he hopes to be able to make a showing one Thursday. One feels that much more encouragement in the form of active participation at Longwood should be given to Geoff, who has put a fantastic amount of work into the project even with his other commitments at this time. A large number of persons are required for the sessions to work smoothly. Further details of coming film operations from Geoff!

Have members also forgotten another club project? The enthusiasm for work at Coopers is decidedly low at the present with the notable exception of our local members. It should be remembered that this dig was started by kind permission of our Patron and he and his staff at Cheddar expect to see us there occasionally. I hope there is no foundation for the rumour I heard recently on Mendip that another club was considering making representations to take over the dig as the M.C.G. were noticeable by their absence over a period of several months.

Once again the vexed question of membership categories has been cropping up in discussion. In particular the limits which should be applied to the class associate member. At present these are persons who have been full members but for various reasons cannot take a full part in club activities, and have been offered an associate membership. Others have been asked to leave the club. Associate membership does in no way restrict the participation in an activity but they have only a limited influence in club control. The important question seems to me to be whether a club like ours should or can afford to turn away likely associate members, who still wish to attend the occasional meet and who indirectly support the full member by paying a subscription - and are pleased to do so. As long as control of the club lies with the full member what is the cost to the club - a band of interested people supporting us financially and no doubt ready to help when required who mainly for reasons such as family or job cannot often come to Mendip. Not expensive!

Recently a meeting of cave surveyors took place at the S.M.C.C. cottage at Priddy. Representing Mike Rennie - who could not attend - were James Gibb and Barrie Ottewill. The idea of the meeting was to attempt to sort out problems of purpose, scale, detail, grading and presentation of cave surveys. As a result of the meeting certain recommendations are to be submitted to the C.R.G. which makes the grading systems more logical, in particular to amend Grade 4. The C.R.G. gradings refer to the expected accuracy of a centre-line traverse, and no allowance is made for the accuracy of detail. One recommendation is, that the present C.R.G. grade will have suffixes A, B, and C according to the accuracy of detail. It is hoped to publish a fuller account of the proposal in the Journal.

An interesting 'Weegy' type Bone Cave

BRIXHAM CAVERN

While on holiday this year we came into Brixham. During this stay Mike Brace and I walked up the steep steps to a house showing a placard 'Brixham Cavern Below'. Having paid 1/6d we proceeded into the large opening beneath the house.

The length of the main passage - which has electric lighting - is about 200 ft. and ends in a boulder choke. There are about five smaller side passages and all seem to go downwards. Throughout the main passage a white line is noticable, this was the height of a floor when the cave was first discovered in 1858. Throughout the cave can be seen the bones and teeth of many animals, and there are show cases with flints, teeth and bones of Hyeana, Cave Lion, Cave Bear, Mammoth, Reindeer, and various rodents.

The cavern was discovered by workmen digging foundations for the houses, when inevitably a pick disappeared through a small crack in the ground. The cave was then excavated and explored by the Geological Society who named the galleries and chambers. On our way out we stopped to talk to the Lady at the entrance who turned out to be on the Board of the Pengelly Research Organisation.

It was quite a change to come out of the bright cave into the gloom outside

T.F.

The following articles for the Journal have been promised:-

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| Malcolm Cotter | - Cooper's Hole. Blackmore Swallet. (received)
Malayan caving Regions.
- Subject to be notified. |
| James Gibb | - Cooper's Hole and the Cheddar Gorge problem. |
| Mig | - Ireland 1962. Switzerland 1963. Cave lighting
Equipment. |
| Bob Knott | - The use of Radio Transmitters in caves. |

More articles required, PLEASE !

Read recently. A report that a party of Cavers from the Outward Bound School was seen equipped with candles and berets. Good rigorous training? but foolhardy, stupid, and not what one expects from such an organisation.

(Poor quality reproduction of original - retyped May 1998)