

MENDIP CAVING GROUP.

NEWSLETTER NO. 34.

JUNE 1964⁵TACKLEMASTER'S NOTICE.

Carbide Lamps - The club has restocked with carbide lamps. One dozen are now in stock, with $\frac{3}{4}$ " spade-type brackets.

Nife Cells - Tony Knibbs has ordered some Nife cells, which will cost 25/- each; the club proposes to buy six of these. These lamps will probably have plastic vents, which must be replaced with steel vents for caving.

Helmets - Pete Munt is going to buy a further stock of helmets. Will anyone interested in buying one, please contact him.

Wet Suit Kits - Kits are available from Sub Aqua Products for £7. 19. 0. plus 6/6 postage, less 10% discount. Nett cost about £7. 3. 0. Postage is less with a bulk order - about 4/-.

The kits consist of:-

- Six 3' by 2' by 3/16" Neoprene sheets.
- Two rolls of $\frac{1}{2}$ " tape (choice of colours).
- Two turnbutton fasteners and washers or press-studs.
- Zip (give length).
- Adhesive and brush.
- Solvent.
- Instructions and pattern (small, medium or large).

Please would those interested give details to Pete Munt, and pay the Treasurer. Pay in advance, please, as the total bill will be over £50 and the club cannot carry so large a sum for long.

Digging Tools - The club possesses the following:-

- 2 Picks
- 2 English pattern entrenching tools
- 1 7lb. sledge hammer
- 1 12lb. sledge hammer
- 1 2lb. club hammer
- 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ " star drills
- 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ " star drills
- 2 shovels

THESE ARE NOT ENOUGH!!

Pat is making some crow-bars and has some pulley sheaves for us. Tony Knibbs has presented us with a pick-head. WHAT HAVE YOU DONE ?

EDITORIAL POLICY.

The Journal - to be or not to be.....

There has recently been some talk of dispensing

with the next issue of the Journal, but I disagree most strongly with this view. We have begun a series of M.C.G. journals and it would be a pity and a waste of effort to ditch the project now. The newsletter should - I think - be reserved for club news, members' comments, short articles, and 'snippets' of information. By 'short articles' I mean those which do not extend over more than three sides of quarto. Occasional publications, such as the Meet Programme for example, may also be produced.

I hope that the next Journal will be under way by early autumn, and finished by the end of 1965. So far, only 9 articles have been received, although a few more have been promised. So - all you people who so rashly promised to expose your literary prowess by writing for the Journal - you'd better get pen to paper. I should like the articles by the end of August. That gives you two whole months in which to produce your masterpieces.

SWILDON'S SURVEY .

A new edition of the survey of Swildon's to Sump I2, published in May 1965, is available from Brian Ellis, price 4/3 plus postage.

SOUTH WALES MEET - 21st./23rd. May 1965.

Nine M.C.G. representatives travelled down to Penwyllt on Friday 21st. and I joined them on the Saturday. As no-one was up on Saturday morning in time to arrange a trip to Dan yr Ogof, we set off at about 12 noon for OFD. Two parties were formed, lead by Pete Munt and Mig respectively, both of them having recently achieved the distinction of being added to the list of leaders for that cave. I think, perhaps, that they rather wished they had prepared copies of the survey for self-referrings-to whilst underground, but in spite of the inevitable mistakes both parties seemed to enjoy themselves. Pete's group went to the Waterfall Series, whilst Mig's party eventually found themselves wandering in the Rawl Series.

A notable feature of Saturday evening was the showing of a film taken by members of SWCC on their trip to Balinka Pit. Incidents on the journey there (using an old converted bus) proved quite entertaining to watch on film, and we also saw the winch being assembled and used at the Pit entrance.

On Sunday a party of five went through Dan yr Ogof under the leadership of three SWCC cavers. The cave is very fine indeed and well worth the necessary duckings in the lakes. Actually a dingy was used to cross two of the lakes on the forward trip although we waded chest

deep on the way back - a rather pleasant, and moderately efficient, way of cleaning one's boiler suit. Beyond the fourth lake we left the river and struck off to the right along a passage which eventually led us to the main boulder chamber, and beyond. Superb examples of straws - many over three feet long, and one more than six feet long - were seen in abundance, and erratic stalactites, helictites and rimstone pools were common. On the surface of one pool was a patchily distributed floating calcite film. We went through a recently forced boulder choke and Mig tried to find a reputed way on through a tight bedding plane squeeze but was forced to chicken out as it became very tight. After this sad defeat we returned to the blissful luxury of warm dry clothes - and a cup of coffee with the weejees in the cafe.

Incidentally, as we emerged dripping and bedraggled from the lakes on our return journey, a group of lucky tourists in the show part of the cave were told by their guide that seeing us "real potholers" was the climax of their trip!

COTTAGE PROGRESS.

We have:-

- A calor gas stove, complete with oven.
- A coke bunker.
- A newly painted living room.
- A half-painted kitchen.
- Approval from the council for the completed drains, and agreement to the erection of two porches.
- A new armchair.

We want:-

- More armchairs. In fact we want sturdy chairs of any kind.
- At least six more pairs of curtains.
- No milk bottles cluttering up the kitchen after weekends spent at the cottage. Please take them home or throw them away.
- More bunks. A lot of help is required to build bunks in the womens' room and the third dormitory.
- More paint applied to the walls and ceiling.

OPENING-TIME DISEASE: A research project - Part I.

This investigation into the problem was conducted by an expert in the subject with the aid of the products of Sir Arthur Guinness and Michael Arthur Bass, the First Baron Burton.

- (I) Incidence of the disease. The time at which first symptoms will be seen may be reliably predicted by the

use of Pedro's First Law ; abbreviated to this formula :

$$M = N + D \left[\frac{L + 2C + P}{5T} \right]$$

Where: M is no. mins. before opening time that disease likely to set in; N is time to reach pub from cave entrance; D is the depression factor (see below); L is distance from entrance of cave in yards; C is no. of crawls to be encountered on return trip, P the number of pitches and T twice the time taken to reach point in cave. The depression factor, D, is calculated by adding 1 for each hour after previous closing time, doubling this figure for every formation not seen on journey into cave, and squaring the resultant number if any underground digging is contemplated.

Warning - If, by use of the above formula, it is calculated that the disease is likely to set in before entry into the cave - YOU SHOULD NOT GO UNDERGROUND AT ALL. The only exception to this rule is if one has less than a shilling in one's pocket and no friends, when the time resulting from the formula calculation should be multiplied by 300.

Note - Future trippers to Agen Allwedd should carefully note this calculation.

LASCAUX DISEASE - Mal Vert (for the uninitiated - Green Evil)

Because of organic growths which are threatening the prehistoric cave paintings, Lascaux Cave was closed to the public in 1963 as a temporary measure. It now seems unlikely that it will be opened again, and the 2,000 or so people who used to visit the cave per day may have to make do with an artificial cave!

After a long struggle the green organic film has been checked by using antibiotics and formol, but a further threat remains: Due to changes in humidity and composition of the air in the cave - brought about by the twentieth century influx of people - calcite flakes are being deposited on the walls and may mask the paintings. Presumably this is how cave paintings in nearby caves have been destroyed. Measures to prevent the irrecoverable loss of these 20,000 year old paintings are being investigated. If the public are to be permanently banned from entering Lascaux Cave, a replica may be built so that the visitors can stand and admire projected photographs of the painted figures.

From a report in the 'Times', May 25th.

THINGS COULD BE WORSE

If you are the sort of person who gets fed up with Pat after a couple of hours down Eastwater, take heart - things could be worse. Your companions might be a crowd of fighting, screaming women !

Last month French research workers put ten women - "a potentially explosive group" - into a cave near Cahors and left them for fifteen days "to see what would happen". The aim was to test the psychological reactions of a group of different social backgrounds living together.

So far we have not heard the results of the tests - perhaps all that was found was broken finger nails and strips of torn flesh.

Ogoffer Ddu.

REVIEWS by Ogoffer Ddu (the Black Caver !)

The Taste of the Liffey.

The newly published "caves of Ireland" by J.C. Coleman, is more a work of reference than armchair reading (although the pictures are good), but it's likely to bring the taste of brewed Liffey water to your lips pretty quickly and encourage you to rush off and book a passage to Dun Laoghaire.

The caves are listed in the main areas with an O.S. map reference for each and there is an unusually good index. The geology is comprehensively covered in elementary form and there are a number of good diagrams and maps.

If you buy "Caves of Ireland" there is little doubt that you will cross the Irish Sea next summer.

*Published by Anvil Books, price 10/6. Now on sale from Pedro.

Music of the Earth.

The layman watching BBC 1's film of the trip down the Gouffre Berger (June 10) probably found entertainment enough in the superb pictures of giant underground halls and enormous stalagmite formations. To the caver, however, the BBC's Radiophonic Workshop added a new dimension to an underground trip - sound: Strange, weird and yet fantastically appropriate notes which really sounded as though they came from the depths of the earth and not from Shepherd's Bush.

An eight-day trip condensed into 25 mins. inevitably lost something, and most apparent was the dimension of time. But the programme did explain to the man-in-the-street a lot about caving and cavers, and told experts much about the Gouffre Berger. Ladder climbing,

chimneying and underground camping were all included - not to mention the magnificence of the Berger, itself.

Sound, too, natural sound this time, made the climax of the programme: "And there, one of the party, forgetting the cameras for the moment, takes time off to play the music of the earth...." The pictures showed a caver playing a tune on a stal. curtain with sound to match.

What the film did not show - could not show - was the fantastic difficulty of movie photography at all. The whole film taken by Harold Lord and Ian Smith, of Yorkshire and Derbyshire, was a very fine technical achievement.

'The Road to Gaping Gill'

Under this headline "The Guardian", of May 29th., devoted three-quarters of a page (no small amount of space by any standards) to a serious article by David Drew explaining why cavers go caving. Here are a few quotations to show that all newspapers are not the sensationalist enemies of the sport that non-journalists so often make out:

To the casual observer it might appear that potholing is the pastime solely of the country's masochistic fringe.....

.....Yet caving is a sport rapidly increasing in popularity in a Britain that is becoming more and more fond of its material comforts.

Clubs now span the whole country with a membership in excess of 10,000.

Most of the publicity the sport receives consists of occasionally lurid and sometimes inaccurate accounts of cave rescues. It has not yet acquired the status of a "respectable" sport in this country - in contrast to France, for example, where it is almost a national activity.

Mountaineering is accepted as a bona fide pastime. Perhaps the glare of publicity surrounding the climbing of Everest accentuated this acceptance: Caving needs an Everest.

Enemies of newspapers please note - and if in need of more evidence, buy a copy. - B.M.

COTTER COMMENTATION - the following comments have been sent by Malcom Cotter,

Newsletters and Associate Members. - This comment follows the suggestion put forward at the last AGM, that the newsletter mailing list should be revised.

".....Probably the main reason why some people wish to

stay as Associate Members is just so that they can keep abreast with happenings in a field which interests them. They will wish to see a gradual improvement of the Group's affairs..... Newsletters may well rekindle interest in many people, and in any case retain a large amount of goodwill. Surely the cost of sending newsletters to Associate Members is less than the subs they pay ?"

Leadership in Caves.

"By the time a prospective member has completed training he should be aware of the fundamentals of safety and technique, and be in a position to cave on his own initiative. This is not to say that he should start leading novices on Swildon's 5 sumping trips!The main damage to occur in early trips is to the caves rather than the cavers, and this aspect should be guarded against. Much of the joy of exploration comes from finding out for oneself. Leaders tend to develop naturally, and many people do not develop as such even after many years' experience."

The Proposed National Caving Body.

"Caving is mainly a team occupation, the ideal being when each member of a club is also a member of a team. Competition is quite an important spur to finding new caves and passages, and a single National Body, devoid of clubs, would slow down the rate of progress."

".....The Northern Council seems to be trying to expand before it has its own house fully in order. The north has bitter squabbles over access, and will have quite a job dodging grouse-shooters' bullets! I think, 'though, that they deserve some support from us, otherwise their caves may be closed to all, to the detriment of our own odd Bank Holiday and the Gaping Gill winch-ride."

MEET PROGRAMME.

June 26/27th.	Sat. Longwood/August (P) Sun. G.B.Cave, (P); Digging.
July 10/11th.	Cottage-work.
July 12th.	Swiss party arrives at Dover; thence to Mendip.
July 13-18th.	The following trips are hoped to be planned:- G.B.Cave and/or Swildon's Hole. Longwood Swallet/August Hole. St. Cuthbert's Hole. Perhaps Stoke Lane Slocker.
July 31st./Aug. 1st.	SOUTH WALES.-Ogof Agen Allwedd (Permits are required. Please give at least 1 month notice to Mig.) Trips planned to Cliffs of Dover and Summertime.