

JCG  
J.C. Johnson

MENDIP CAVING GROUP.

NEWSLETTER NO. 35.

JULY 1965.

CLUB INFORMATION.

New Key. In order to fulfil insurance requirements, a new lock has been fitted to the front door of the cottage. Keys are available from the Cottage Warden, price 2/6 each. (3/- by post).

For Sale. Fine doorlock - no reasonable offer refused. Ideal for someone intending to hold parties and likely to be short of partygoers. (Three dozen eager partygoers already have keys). Apply to the Cottage Warden.

Insurance. The cottage is now insured against fire and burglary. Members and guests are reminded that no responsibility can be accepted for personal effects left in the cottage, particularly money and valuables.

Cottage Fees. The Committee wishes to remind members that cottage fees are payable for each day, or part of a day, spent at the cottage. The Cottage Warden has been empowered to waive these for one day if no, or virtually no, use of the cottage is made: for example, due to arrival late in the evening. The Cottage Warden's decision on charges is final.

Warning: SPEND AT YOUR PERIL. Group funds are at an exceedingly low level and members are warned not to spend group money without the permission of the Committee. There is no guarantee that you will be repaid, if you spend without prior permission. - B.M.

Cottage-warming Party and M.C.G. Dinner. Considerable expenditure on the cottage and the low state of group funds, has made the Committee decide to defer the cottage-warming party until the Half Yearly Meeting on October 23rd. 1965. The annual dinner will then be held at the Annual General Meeting.

Membership. Geoffrey Baynes, landlord of the Queen Victoria, Priddy, has been elected a probationary member. Welcome.

Probationary members who have not yet completed training trips are reminded that they must do so before being elected to full membership.

Congratulations. To John Barker, who was married to Cynthia at Harrow Register Office on July 3rd.

Mailing-list - Commentation Comment. Malcom Cotter need have no fears about newsletters not being sent to

Associate Members. The discussion at the A.G.M. of reducing the mailing list was an attempt to eliminate former members whose subscriptions had lapsed, not present members of any class.

Library Additions. Several important papers on aspects of Spelcogenesis have been copied, and are now in the library. The following are examples:-

Bretz, J.H. 1942. 'Vadose and phreatic features of limestone caverns.'

Davies, W.M. 1942. 'Origin of limestone caverns.'

Gardener, J.H. 1935. 'Origin and development of limestone caverns.'

Sanders, E.M. 1921. 'The cycle of erosion in a karst region. (after Cvijic).'

Swinnerton, A.C. 1932. 'Origin of limestone caverns.'

Coleman and Balchin. 1959. 'The origin and development of surface depressions in the Mendip Hills.'

Journal, 1965 - or A Plea from your Editor. The success of the forthcoming M.C.G. Journal depends on YOU.

Preparation of the litho-plates is expected to begin at the end of August, and articles should be handed in to me as soon as possible. Apart from articles which have been promised (and I trust those promises will be kept) I should like to receive at least half a dozen more. Unpublished surveys would be especially appreciated.

If members work and help to produce this journal, it ought to be completed - in all its glory - by the end of this year.

Knapp Hill. During July, work continued on the club's dig at Knapp Hill, near Wells. Digging has been temporarily brought to a stop because of the unstable nature of the overburden on the downstream side of the dig. A start has now been made on the shoring which, when finished, will enable further digging to continue along a small rift down which the stream disappears. As the stream is relatively large - that is to say, larger than Swildon's stream - there seems a reasonable chance of finding a good cave system.

Prison Escape Denial. Pat Walsh and friends deny supplying club tackle to train robber Ronald Biggs who used caving ladder to escape from Wandsworth Prison. He also denies any connection with the entry in the cash book: 'Tackle-fees, July 8th., anon, 2/-.'

#### SUNDAY BAN ON VISITS TO BANWELL BONE CAVES.

The owner of Banwell Bone Caves has been annoyed by large numbers of cavers attempting to gain entry other

than through the proper channels. In consequence, he has banned all visits on **Sundays** until further notice. Axbridge C. G. control access, and requests to visit the caves should be made through our Meet Secretary.

#### SWISS VISIT TO MENDIP.

After driving from Dover in pouring rain, our Swiss visitors - members of the Spéléo-Club des Montagnes Neuchâteloises - arrived at the M.C.G. 'chalet' at about 7.30 p.m. on Monday, July 12th. The party included Raymond and Denise Gigon, their two children Nicole and Jean-Marc, Claude Berberat and Francoise. During the evening the S.C.M.N. presented us with two fine caving photographs and a genuine cowbell and collar from their home town area of La Chaux de Fonds.

On Tuesday visits were made to Wells Cathedral, Wookey Hole, and Gough's Cave.

Wednesday morning was spent in G.B. cave with Raymond and Claude, both of whom were impressed with the size and general interest of the cave. Any preconceived ideas that all Mendip caves are small and muddy were effectively dispelled during this visit. We showed the visitors Blackmoor Swallet to demonstrate the local novelty of cave excavation. They were sore amazed! We reached Weston-super-Mare in mid-afternoon, via a heavy rainstorm, and Claude and Francoise bought souvenirs - plastic raincoats!

On Thursday we toured Exmoor, stopping at Dunster to see the castle, Minehead to see the sea, and on Exmoor itself for a number of reasons. Porlock Hill and the climb out of Lynmouth to Watersmeet laid low another preconception that England is more or less flat.

The club equestrian section took Claude on a mounted tour of Western Mendip on Friday, starting from Compton Bishop and including Shipham and Rowberrow. Raymond and family went to Bath to do some shopping and sightseeing. Later in the day, Raymond was taken on a brief tour of some of the more interesting swallets - beginning with Knapphill Swallet which was quite spectacular after the heavy rain; more expressions of amazement at the club's digging efforts.

Saturday resulted in a trip to Swildon's 4. Claude thoroughly enjoyed 6 hours of "grotte sportive" and especially remembered "Passage du Crayon Bleu". Simon remembers Blue Pencil squeeze in particular. The day ended very well with an evening of feasting at 'The Star' in Wells followed by a visit to the more prolific drinking fountains in the Priddy area.

Sunday, 18th. July: A day of rest was indicated at this stage of the week, and took the form of a short

horse-riding session in the morning, followed by work on shoring Knapphill Swallet. It was with much sorrow that we bade our Swiss friends 'au revoir' that evening. We assured them of our intention to visit Switzerland again, in response to their earnest pleas to this effect. Raymond and Denise thanked the Club warmly for their hospitality and assured us that their stay had been an enjoyable one. It was obvious that their stay amongst us had made a deep impression and we can rest assured that, with perhaps certain reservations regarding the weather, The other members of S.C.M.N. will be regaled with enthusiastic tales of the countryside, caves and people of Britain. MIG.

#### ANOTHER ATTEMPT AT LOWER FARM.

The Longwood/August system, surveyed by Mike Rennie and M.C.G. members and involving 500 man-hours work, is to be surveyed again. Permission to survey the system was given to Denis Warburton (Wessex C.C.) at the last Charterhouse C.C. meeting.

#### TO NATIONALISE OR NOT....

The latest step forward in the discussions whether or not to form a national caving organisation, does not seem to me much of a step forward at all. It took the form of a discussion between delegates from the north, south, North Wales and Derbyshire in Birmingham in May.

All the meeting seems to have done is underline the already well known fact that a majority of cavers in the north want a national body, whilst a majority in the south does not. There is no doubt that there is a minority in the south in favour of 'nationalisation', but their voice tends to be drowned beneath the anti-nationalistic cries of the CSCC's spokesmen.

B.M.

#### PRAISE FROM 'THE GUARDIAN'.

The rescue of John Stevens from Carlswark Cavern in the Peak District (the young soldier saved by pumping, after all hope had been given-up) brought this comment from a 'Guardian' leader:

"This was an exceptional incident even in the story of caving. But one thing it has in common with all such incidents - the zeal, skill and patience with which the rescuers tackled and stuck to what must have begun to seem before the end an almost hopeless operation."

"The rescuer in a cavern may be working in isolation, cold and discomfort. But one cannot recall an instance in recent years in which a call for rescuers has not met with a willing and well-organised response and, where required, with remarkable ingenuity and persistence in using complex equipment under difficult circumstances."

B.M.

## NEWS FROM OTHER CLUBS.

A number of recent publications have just reached the Group - some recent and some dating back over the past twelve months. Here, Ogofwr Ddu takes a look at some of the items of interest....

Elaborate Training Scheme. MNRC (Newsletter 39, July 1965) have set up a training programme with five qualifying grades : Novice, Intermediate, Senior, Advanced and 'Tiger'. Their members will have to reach the Intermediate level before being accepted for full membership. There is no truth in the rumour that their 'top' cavers will display notices 'Put a tiger in your carbide lamp'.

New Research Station. has been opened by MNRC on the B3135 near Green Ore. They offer full co-operation with other Mendip clubs on cave science problems. This is obviously a welcome development in Mendip caving.

Cave Sickness Examined. The risk of contracting Pulmonary Histoplasmosis (a fungus growth in the chest and lungs) whilst caving in Mediterranean areas is examined in CRG Newsletter 94 (Dec. 1964), by Dr. John Aspin. In certain conditions the chances are high. Who said something about a Mediterranean climate at Aggi ?

Looking at Cave Development. Two interesting theories of cave development are contained in Belfry Bulletin 200 (B.E.C.) where Derek Ford begins the first of two articles on 'The Sequence of Development of St. Cuthbert's Swallet', and in Wessex C.C. journal 99 vol. 8 (Jan. 1965) where Tim Atkinson writes on the chances of extension at Longwood Swallet.

For us, obviously, Longwood is the more interesting. Mr. Atkinson has done a field study of the cave and discusses at some length the various water tables at different periods. His conclusions are that the principal chances of extension lie in an extension of the Fault Grottoes and in maypoling in Waterfall Chamber. He rates high the chances in the Oxbows where M.C.G. has been digging for some time.

To Stoke VIII. In W.C.C. journal 100 vol. 8 (March 1965) David Drew and Mike Wooding (I.C.D.G.) describe the exploration of Stoke V, VI and VII, with surveys. At the time of writing they hoped to carry on beyond Sump 7 to beat the tally of 8 sumps in Swildon's. - What did they think when Swildon's 12 made it's appearance on the survey ?

All Drinking Time is not Wasted. Bruce Bedford describes in Chelsea S.S.'s newsletter (Sept. 1964) how their

'Triglav' expedition began in a pub and ended several hundred pounds (££) later in Yugoslavia. The trouble with M.C.G. expeditions is that they not only start in pubs - they finish there, too!

WANTED - MORE FOR EVERYONE. ('The Speleologist' June/July, Reviewed)

There was some discussion in the first two issues of 'The Speleologist' as to whether it would be biased towards the north or to the south. Issue 3 (published July) seems to have resolved this argument by being biased in neither direction and looking abroad for much of its material.

The report on the repair of the longest colonnade in Lancaster Hole by British Aircraft Corporation Potholing Club, who used 'Araldite' for the purpose, made fascinating reading. I am sure that this type of article is of more interest than the long analysis of the Neil Moss tragedy 6 years ago, which has already appeared elsewhere in print. Incidentally Robert Leakey in 'The Speleologist' gives too little prominence to the main cause of death, which was carbon dioxide poisoning, and not delay in bringing a variety of equipment into the cave.

Conclusions: 'The Speleologist' is the only national magazine for cavers and each issue so far has contained at least one or two items of interest to everyone. Its sales (and therefore its future) will remain in doubt, however until it contains such a profusion of articles of interest to everyone that it becomes a 'must' for every caver.

Ogofwr Ddu.

ISSUE NO. 1 of 'The Speleologist' is, its Editor regrets, now out of print and not available to those members who ordered it from our secretary.

IMPORTANT VISIT TO CO. CLARE, EIRE, 1966.

Several members have suggested that another fortnights holiday in Eire is about due. County Clare appears to be the favoured venue, and is an area offering a good selection of caves many of which are of considerable length. The appearance of 'Caves of Ireland' (available from Pedro) has done much to increase the demand for a visit to Eire, and preliminary enquiries have been made. Details of the shortest sea-crossing - Fishguard to Rosslaire - are as follows:-

Adult passenger fare (return) Class II	£2.	15.	0.
Kids: from 3 to 14 years - half price			
Sleeping berth in open saloon Class II	£	8.	0.
Car charges (return)			
Up to 11' long	£13.	10.	0.
Between 11 and 13 feet	£17.	10.	0.

Between 13 and 15 feet	£22. 10. 0
Booking deposit per vehicle	£ 3. 0. 0.

A specimen cost of the sea crossing shared between 4 adults in a car 14 feet long and including a sleeping berth for a night crossing one way would be £7. 10. 6. The distance between London and Fishguard is about 250 miles and the distance from Rosslaire to Lisdoonvarna (Co. Clare) about 150 miles. The motoring costs will probably amount to about £3. per head on average.

The ferries are heavily booked, and it is essential that we make our own bookings as soon as possible - certainly before December this year. I should like to hear immediately from any member wishing to go to Eire, with a view to agreeing on a set of dates. A weekly savings scheme can be arranged if required.

Meet Secretary.

MEET PROGRAMME.

Ogof Agen Allwedd. The meet at Aggi Aggi scheduled to take place July 31/Aug. 1st. has been cancelled. Only three members expressed interest in the meet and, as none of these were able to lead, there was no other alternative to cancellation. In place of this meet members may wish to spend the weekend on Mendip where digging on Knaphill Swallet will be in progress. If there are sufficient people, activity on Blackmoor Swallet or in the Oxbows Sand Passage in August Hole will take place. Both Knaphill and Blackmoor Swallets require the completion of shoring before excavation may continue.

Meet Secretary

Aug. 21 - Sept. 5th. Yorkshire.

AUGUST NEWSLETTER.

Articles and information for the next newsletter may be given to me at the Club meeting on Thursday evenings, or sent to Pete Goddard, 11 Lebanon Park, Twickenham.

gcl.