

MENDIP CAVING GROUP.

NEWSLETTER NO. 36.

AUGUST 1965.

THANK YOU !

The Group is extremely grateful for a gift of £25 towards the Cottage Fund from Mr. and Mrs. Ottewill, Barrie's parents. It has been decided that this money should be used to build the front porch of the cottage. We would like to say a very big 'Thankyou' for this generous donation.

CONGRATULATIONS to Pedro and Lyn on their engagement, which was announced on Friday the thirteenth of August. (obviously an antiperstitious couple, these two.) Best wishes to you both.

B.S.A. 1965 NATIONAL CONFERENCE.

* The British Speleological Association's 1965 National Conference will be held at the University of Leeds, Bodington Hall, from September 10th. - 13th. In addition to a full programme of papers, the weekend will include an elementary course in Speleology starting from "rock bottom". This will be followed by a lecture on cave hydrology.

The papers to be presented are:-

- Remington-Dunn automatic water tracing agent detection and recording device. (By the designers).
- Drainage of the area between the rivers Wye and Lathkill, Derbyshire. (By J.A.Robey, B.Sc., Ph.D.).
- Some practical aspects of speleological research. (By D.T.Richardson, ARIC.).
- Mosssdale Caverns. (By N.Grandison.).
- The Grassington-Greenhow mining area. (By J.McFarlane, B.Sc.).
- Flow Markings. (By R.R.Glover.).

* On the Monday there will be a series of meets in the Warfdale - Nidderdale area.

The costs are:-

Bed (single room) & breakfast <u>PER NIGHT</u>	26/6
Conference & copy of proceedings	15/-
Conference fee only	7/6
Proceedings only	12/6

Any other details, application forms etc. from Pedro.

* - licenced bar !!!

CLUB NEWS.

Cottage insurance. The club has insured for ten guests to stay at the cottage. All members are, of course, insured.

Green Shield Stamps. The club has decided not to continue collecting these stamps, as the original target - to provide kitchen equipment - has been achieved. The full books which

The Group now possesses are to be used to set up a stock of tools for cottage maintenance.

Finances. On 16th. August the Treasurer reposted the following in hand:-

Cottage Purchase Fund	-	£20	-	9	-	3½
General Fund	-	£27	-	13	-	11½

Tackle. Thanks to Geoff Davies for donating three crowbars, and to Pat for donating pulleys. Pete Goddard and Pete Munt have started work on the construction of a hoist for digging.

Tackle Fees. It was decided at the last Committee Meeting to abolish tackle fees payable by club members.

Pinetree Keys. New locks have now been fitted to the entrance of Pinetree Pot. A set of keys is kept in the cottage for use on request, on payment of a 10/- deposit. B.E.C., Wessex, Shepton, Axbridge and M.N.R.C. are each to be given a set of keys on payment of the required deposit.

Cave Rescue Practice. The club is to hold a practice rescue in G.B. Cave on the weekend of 25th./26th. September. As this is the first M.C.G. Club Practice, we hope that attendance will be staggeringly high. Each one of us should be able to perform a useful part in a cave rescue, and the only way in which to learn how to do so is by practice.

Change of Address. The Editor has moved to 68, Cole Park Rd., Twickenham, Middlesex. (Tel. POP 7937), from which address she is in a favourable position to encourage and/or nag those members who have not yet handed in their articles for the journal.

For Disposal. One pair of mens' dark blue (?) trousers. One polythene sandwich box.... These two items have been lying around the cottage, apparently without ownership, for several months. Unless they are claimed by Sept. 30th. they will be relegated to Jim's quarry.

Weekend, 14th./15th. August.

At 10.00 a.m. on Saturday morning work commenced at Blackmoor Swallet where A.Knibbs, P. Munt, D. Mitchell and P. Mathews began removing debris from behind the temporary shoring. Clearing of the ledge soon exposed a good bedrock face extending along the southwest side of the shaft which undercuts downwards at an angle of about 5 degrees from vertical. By 7 p.m. the ledge had been lowered by 4 feet, and bedrock exposures were also found at each end of the ledge. Parts of the shoring were removed during the day. The expected arrival of Paul Dye, with gelignite, failed to materialise and the big rock at the lowest level remains untouched.

On Sunday the same team continued work and was assisted

by Ian Chandler and two other Cave & Crag members. Work began at 10.15 a.m. and, by 1.00 p.m. the ledge had been lowered by about another two feet. The remainder of the shoring has now been removed and the limit of manhandling buckets of debris has been virtually reached. Work can still proceed without the assistance of a derrick by using a good-sized bucket and length of rope. The shaft has now assumed the impressive dimensions of 9 feet square to a depth of 9 - 10 feet and 9 x 5 feet to a further depth of about 5 feet at which point the entrance arch into the chamber is open. A decorated clay pipe, still containing tobacco, and a hand-wrought iron nail were found during work on Sunday morning :

TEMPURONG RIVER CAVE.

A previous visit to this cave was brought to a halt at a shallow pool having an archway on the far side. On our latest visit to the cave Norma and I found no water, and beyond the arch there was a dry lake, crossed at one point by a stalagmite bridge. It appeared that this bridge crossed a lake which was full earlier in the year, the small pool discovered on the first trip being filled by its overflow. The lake when full would be about 8 feet deep, 15 feet wide and 100 feet long. Beyond the lake was a gentle slope which ended in a 'lip' approximately 5 feet high, at the edge of a great drop which a party of R.A.F. cavers said was 180 feet deep. Although at first it seemed that this point would be the limit of our exploration of this cave, Norma discovered a balcony which ran along the top of the enormous passage. We followed the ledge for about 400 feet and could just discern a floor beneath, and hear the stream chattering away. At one place there appeared to be a way down, but on investigation we found that after only about 50 feet we were at the edge of a precipice. We also found some very slender stalagmites, similar to the ones in the U.K., and I was about to photograph them when I discovered my camera had no exposures left! A further passage with a strong draught was discovered on our return trip, and we hope to return there later with some wood struts to enable us to climb up to it.

Malcom Cotter.

UPWARDS AND ONWARDS FROM BLUE PENCIL AVEN.

(Shepton Mallet Caving Club's May, 1965 Journal reviewed by Ogofwr Ddu.)

Roger Biddle's account of the exploration of Blue Pencil Aven is likely to strike fear into the hearts of cavers who are satisfied with a trip to Sump I and back. Forty feet up the aven, belayed on a ledge, Roger was told by his companion above: "I'm holding up a very large boulder. I can only support it for five minutes while you get clear...."

But read the journal (in our library) to hear the next thrilling instalment...

2Opp. long, two articles, two reviews, one survey, the journal is only marred by poor duplicating - but who are we to criticise? Praise is however due for there being a lot of 'human' interest - something that all too many journals lack.

MOUNTAIN CLUB OPENS NEW H.Q.

Our club has been invited to send a representative to the opening of the Mountain Club's new field H.Q., "Bryn Hafod", between Welshpool and Dolgelly on October 16th.

SURVEYS FOR SALE.

A stock of surveys for sale is now held by Pedro. Buy now, don't delay : Swildon's (1960 to sump V only) 3/6; Lamb Leer 3/9; Eastwater (two sheets) 8/3; Cooper's (to March 1963) 2/6; Goatchurch 2/6; Longwood/August (three sheets, also available separately) 13/-; St. Cuthbert (two sheets) 5/9; Ubley Hill Pot 2/-; Plan of Pinetree (extracted from 1962 journal) 2/-;

Denis Warburton's survey of all caves in and around Cheddar Gorge is now on sale, price 4/3 each plus postage.

Issues 1 & 2 of Speleology are out of print.

REMINDER.

Your Committee consists of the following:-

Secretary - Brian Mee,	12 Cranbourne Drive, Pinner, Middx.
Treasurer - Tony Fitzgibbon,	265 Eastcote Road, Ruislip, Middx.
Meet Secretary - Tony Knibbs,	2 Rectory Lane, Byfleet, Surrey.
Cottage Warden - Pat Walsh,	18 Oxford Road North, Chiswick, W.4.
Tacklemaster - Pete Munt,	The Cedars, Upper Butts, Brentford, Middx.
Recorder - Simon Knight,	40 Garrard Road, Banstead, Surrey.
Editor - Joan Robinson,	68 Cole Park Road, Twickenham, Middx.

MEET PROGRAMME.

September 25/26th. M.C.G. cave rescue practice in G.B. Cave.
October 9/10th. Sat. St. Cuthbert's Swallet (subject to confirmation.)
Sun. Digging at Blackmoor and/or Knapp Hill.

In spite of already having had one article on Blackmoor in this newsletter, here followeth another....

BLACKMOOR SWALLET. - AN OPPORTUNITY.

Since its inception in 1954 the Mendip Caving Group has had strong links with Cheddar and the surrounding limestone area. In the early days considerable time was spent examining the many small caves in the gorge, and looking for swallets and promising shakeholes in the surrounding district, but after eleven years we still have made no major contribution to caving in this area. True we have had some success in adding a little more to the Longwood/August network (about 100 feet), and in finding the first few yards of a cave system at Blackmoor Swallet. Timber Hole is much deeper now than when we started digging in 1953.

The great risings at Cheddar are probably fed by the streams collected from the southern flanks of Blackdown, say from as far west as Tynning's Farm, and from high ground extending eastwards as far as the head of Velvet Bottom in the region of Nordrach. The boundaries of the catchment area are possibly contained by drawing a line on the map between Cheddar, Tynning's Farm, Nordrach and thence via Ubley Warren Farm, Charterhouse Warren Farm and Black Rock Gate (where Velvet Bottom joins the Gorge) to Cheddar again. Several important sinks are known in this area. Two are already linked with caves; Tynning's Swallet (G.B.Cave) and Longwood Swallet (Longwood/August). Two more are in process of being dug; Manor Farm Swallet by U.B.S.S., and Blackmoor Swallet by M.C.G. Blackmoor Swallet is the most distant sink from Cheddar at nearly 3 miles, and is the second highest in altitude at 770 feet.

The dip of the limestone at Blackmoor Swallet is close to 15 degrees in an almost due south direction which suggests that the underground stream passage will not lose altitude as rapidly as do G.B.Cave and Longwood Swallet where the dip is also south but at 30 degrees. Assuming that Blackmoor Swallet begins by following the direction of dip, its course will cross a fault only a few yards beyond the actual entrance and this may give rise to a chamber of enlarged rift character. The dip of the limestone increases towards Cheddar, with a figure of 28 degrees marked on the geological map near Timber Hole and again near Wellington Farm, lessening to 18 degrees at Black Rock and increasing to 20 degrees at the Cheddar risings. In all these cases the direction of dip is almost due south. Initially then the situation provides the stream with two alternatives; to follow the dip southwards or to follow the strike in a westerly direction. In either case the Blackmoor stream will take longer to reach the water table than either G.B.Cave or Longwood/August, and this suggests that its horizontal and vertical development will be greater. It seems likely that Manor Farm Swallet follows a path directly down-dip which might result in this stream flowing

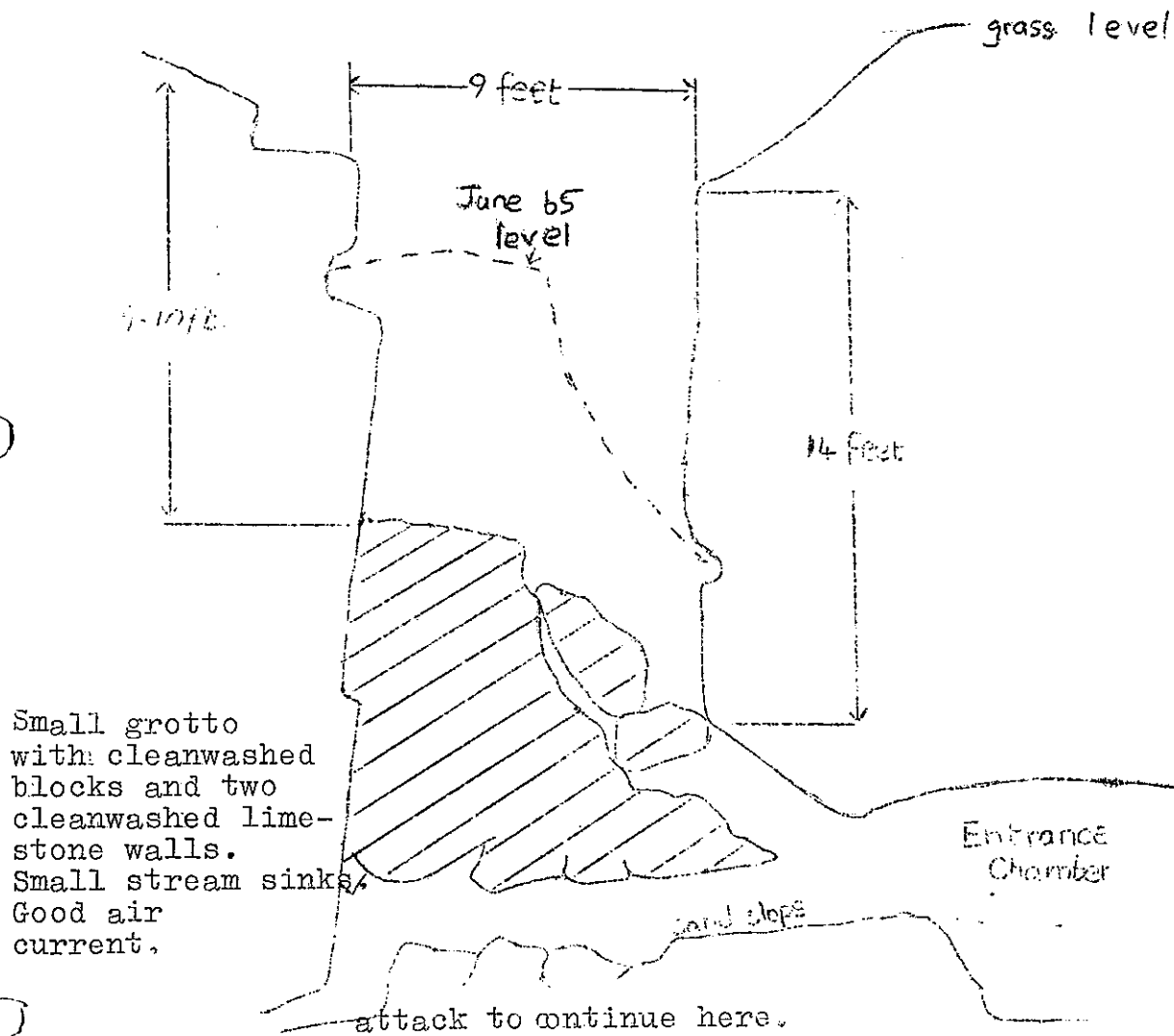
into the Blackmoor system which is expected to develop south-westwards along the dip and strike. The geological map shows a ~~north-south~~ fault which runs from just south of Manor Farm Swallet across Velvet Bottom and up to Charterhouse Warren Farm. This would provide a ready point of enlargement for the Manor Farm stream and may well prove to be the connecting link between this stream and Blackmoor stream. A large chamber is likely at this point - and a noisy one at that!

From this point westwards the Blackmoor stream may tend increasingly towards dip development because of the increase in dip-angle. Subsequently the system might possibly head south-west towards Black Rock or, more likely, take the more southerly course towards Wellington Farm. By this time the system will be about $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 miles long and probably over 500 feet deep. If conditions allow the cave to be followed beyond, say, Wellington Farm the whole system should swing west somewhere near the fault marked south of the Farm, and then proceed in a westerly direction on reaching the Bottom of the Cheddar syncline. With only $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles to go before resurging at Cheddar and much less than 200 feet of vertical distance the exploration will either have become or will be rapidly approaching a very wet business indeed.

Some of this is pure conjecture, but much of it can be supported by the 1" Geological Survey of the Bristol district. There is certainly a cave system, with more than a strong hint that it is a large one, draining the upper reaches of Velvet Bottom.

Despite interference with the local topography by past mining activities we have found a cave entrance and a fragment of the Blackmoor Swallet system. Within this fragment we know also where the best chance of an excavated extension lies. Ever since the entrance chamber was discovered, the existence of a small grotto beneath the entrance boulder-fill has been known (see diagram). This grotto has both floor and roof formed of large boulders (entrance shaft debris), and two walls of clean-washed limestone. A small rivulet sinks in the south-~~west~~ corner and both solid walls are undercut above clean, wet gravel and small rocks. At the junction of the two solid walls is an enlarged joint which looks like the top of a small stream passage with a rocky choke barring access. Limited digging has already taken place in the grotto, but the impossibility of debris removal and the inadvisability of moving the unstable rock choke brought the work to a quick close. Other points in the cave have also received attention and much work has been done in the lower rift.

Thus the present effort is being directed towards removing enough of the entrance shaft choke to uncover the small grotto. Once the grotto has been reached a new phase in the exploration of Blackmoor Swallet will begin. Digging in clean-



washed chokes has a great fascination - especially with such promise of a really good cave system to follow. There is really no question of whether or not a large cave system exists at Blackmoor Swallet. The only question is "When will the M.C.G. expose the vital entrance passage?". Don't delay - dig today!

Tony Knibbs.