

J. Robinson

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 44

APRIL, 1966

CLUB NEWS.

Eire People going to Eire with the Club should pay £7. 0. 0 to Pete Goddard by the end of this month (April).

Membership. John Evans has become a probationary member; his address is 16 Church Road, Hanwell, W.7. The following people have been accepted as full members; Derek Allwood, Tony Ingold, Roy Townshend.

Bed Booking Scheme. The last member to leave the Cottage at the end of a weekend should remove the carbon copy for the following weekend from the Bed-Booking-Book. They should either give it to Pat on the following Thursday evening, or post it so that he receives it not later than Thursday morning. Pat's address is 18 Oxford Road North, Chiswick, London W.4

Club Slide Shows. Malcolm Cotter has offered to give some illustrated talks on caving subjects, and has suggested the following topics:-

- 1). Blackmoor (including a short cine film)
- 2). Caving in Malaya, Part 1 - Caving areas and Karst.
Part 2 - The Caves.
- 3). Mendip, (including short cine film).
- 4). Some French Caves.
- 5). Some Austrian Caves.

The first talk will be on Thursday, 19th. May at the 'Royal Oak', Brentford, and will be repeated on Saturday, 28th. May at the Cottage on Mendip. Everyone welcome.

Change of Address. Malcolm and Norma Cotter have moved to:- 89 Greenland Crescent, Southall, Middx. Tel. SOUTHall 2166.

Mike and Christine Rennie will be moving to their new address (18 Brentham Way, Ealing, London W.5) on 6th. May, 1966.

Apology. The report in the March issue of 'Club News' that Pete Munt has relinquished his O.F.D. leadership was incorrect. We hope Pete will accept our apologies for this mistake.

Old Newsletters. If any members have the following issues of the Group Newsletter, and are prepared to donate them to a worthy cause, The Mendip Cave Registry (in conjunction with Bristol Central Reference Library) is forming a collection of caving literature. Our Club intends sending a full set of newsletters, but some issues are out of print. Please send or give the newsletters to me as soon as possible so that I can forward them. The issues required are as follows:-

Series One: No.1 (Feb 1954), No.3 (May 1954), No.4 (June 1954),
 No.5 (Aug 1954), No.6 (Oct 1954), No.7 (Mar 1955),
 No.10, No.11, No.12 (May 1957), No.13 (July 1957),
 No.14 (Aug 1957), No.17 (Nov 1958).
 Series Two: No.1 (July 1961), No.2 (Aug 1961), No.9 (Mar 1962),
 No.19 (Feb/Mar 1963).
 Miscellaneous: Information Pamphlet No.2, "M.C.G. Statement on
 Cooper's Hole".

JER.

AUSTRALIAN CAVING FILM

A film entitled "Under the Nullarbor" will be shown at
 the Commonwealth Institute Cinema, High Street Kensington, W.8
 from 16th. to 22nd. May. Admission Free. The film begins at the
 following times:-

Mon - Fri 12.30, 1.15, 2.45, 3.30.
 Saturday 2.45, 3.30, 4.25.
 Sunday 3.00, 3.50, 4.40.

HEAR ABOUT MOROCCAN CAVES.

Axbridge Caving Group invite our members to an illustrated
 talk on Moroccan Caves by Colin Graham. It is to be held in the
 Caveman Restaurant on Saturday, May 14th. at 8.00 p.m.

CAVE SURVEYS. Surveys of two additional Mendip caves are now
 available from Joan Robinson:-

Balch Cave, Plan Price 3/9
 Section 3/9
 Browne's Hole 2/-

Surveys previously held, and still available:-

Caves of the Cheddar Gorge 4/3
 Eastwater, Sheet 1 } 8/3
 Sheet 2 }
 Goatchurch 2/6
 Holwell Cave 2/6
 Lamb Leer 3/9
 Longwood, Sheet 1 5/6
 Sheet 2 4/-
 Sheet 3 3/6
 Pinetree Pot 2/6
 St. Cuthbert's, Plan 3/3
 Section 2/6
 Addendum 1/-
 Stoke Lane 4/3
 Swildon's 4/3

Also available from Joan or Pedro:-

M.C.G. Journal, 1962 Price 6/-
 Caves of Mendip - Barrington
 Caves of Derbyshire - Ford
 Caves of Wales and the Marches - Jenkins and Mason-Williams
 Caves of Ireland - Coleman

LONDON COPY OF CAVE REGISTER ?

What about getting a branch of the Mendip Cave Registry moved to London? At present the people living in this area can only avail themselves of the records by undertaking a long journey and by curtailing caving time, while those in the west have two copies within 20 miles of each other, which seems an unfair distribution if we are going to do much work on it.

Malcolm Cotter

ONE FOR THE POT.

There has been, over the last few months, much controversy about the 40 ft. Pot in Swildon's. The removal of the pipe and the ensuing arguments are well known facts now. The real problem, however, seems to have been overlooked; how dangerous is the pitch in its present state?

If the pitch is laddered in the usual manner (from the rawlbolts) the ladder is positioned for most of its length in the waterfall, promising a drenching for anyone on it. Some people have been using Suicides Leap as an alternative laddering position. This would seem at first a good idea but it has been said that the belay rawlbolt was only installed for emergency purposes, and might not be wholly safe.

With the pitch in this state it definitely rules out novice trips, a fact I think that everyone accepts. Even among the experienced, to be thus soaked at such an early stage in a long trip can be a danger. Also the first men down have to wait around, leaving themselves wide open to the effects of cold. On the move a caver can generally keep warm when wet, but not whilst standing still.

For the wet-suited among us there is very little problem here, and all wet-suited parties are obviously the most desirable. The best lighting system is electric, preferably a Nife Cell or something similar. Attempting to light a carbide lamp, with cold numb fingers is a real nuisance as it also enforces a stop which results in everyone getting cold.

So that is the position; personally I say "Roll on the return of the water pipe on the forty".

Mike Brace.

CHARTERHOUSE WARREN FARM SHAKEHOLE SUBSIDES AGAIN.

On the weekend of March 26th./27th. Mr. Small of Charterhouse Warren Farm told me that the shakehole above Velvet Bottom has subsided again. This is the second time in four years. On the last occasion Dave and Allen dug it to 14 feet and were starting to reach rounded boulders, but unfortunately the shoring did not prevent the shaft from falling in. Anyway Dave is still enthusiastic and once we are clear with Blackmoor it could well be dug by a very small party.

Malcolm Cotter.

GIVE GENEROUSLY TO THE LAND PURCHASE FUND. DONATIONS IN THE BOX ON THURSDAYS, OR TO THE TREASURER. GIVE. GIVE. GIVE.

"I'VE BEEN THROUGH THE SUMP IN STOKE LANE"

Beware gentle caver to make sure that you have. Cook's Farm, where the cave is situated, is up for sale. There is hope that an arrangement may be made, but no guarantee. Possible buyers include the Bristol Waterworks Co. and the local Quarry Co. Anyone want to buy a farm?

EASTER IN WALES.

Twenty-two of us survived the wind and rain of the Easter meet at Ystradfellte. Mig, Pauline and Joan arrived at about 8.00 p.m. on Thursday and selected a suitable campsite about 100 yds. from the entrance to Porth-yr-Ogof, and as the evening drew on people arrived, pitched their tents and proceeded to kip down for the night (What was left of it - Ed.)

A party of eight entered the large, gaping mouth of Porth-yr-Ogof at 12 o'clock on Friday under the leadership of Simon, and waded across the main stream passage to the right of the entrance. This led into a large sand-floored passage which eventually rejoined the stream passage. After wading about 20 yds up the stream passage - much to the dismay of two non-wet-suited members - we crawled up a small gully to the right of the river. This brought us to a sand-floored bedding plane ending in an impassable sump. We thus had to about-turn and make our way back along the bedding plane, one of the members pointing out that the way to travel along this type of passage was to roll over and over; although this mode of transport was easier than crawling, it left its participants somewhat dizzy. Also in this bedding plane, Arthur pointed out some interesting plant life growing on a piece of rotting wood in the sand. On reaching the stream passage again, Simon and Arthur swam out up the stream, but the rest of the party took a drier route.

All awoke on Saturday morning to the familiar rhythm of the Welsh rain beating onto the flysheet, and the whole site was beginning to look like a marsh. After a very late breakfast most people adjourned to the New Inn to make arrangements for the afternoon. By closing time we were all suitably refreshed and ready to go caving. A party of 7, accompanied by Joan's sister, set off for Porth-yr-Ogof. Others went to take a look at the caves of the Neath River Valley. After the strenuous events of the day, a good evening was had by all at the local hostelry, Frank and his banjo providing the entertainment.

When I first awoke on Sunday morning at the unearthly hour of 1.30 a.m. (a time when some beer drinkers are forced to rise) the weather didn't look too bad, but having returned to bed and risen at a more respectable time the familiar sound of falling rain reached my ears. A number of people walked to the Clun Gwyn (Mellte River) and Scwd-yr-Eira (Hepste River) waterfalls; the route necessitated paddling across one of the waterfalls, at which point Mig's boot went sailing downstream until its jaunt was cruelly terminated by Arthur's retrieving hand.

Also on Sunday there were trips to small caves in the area, and some festering around camp, Sunday being the day of rest.

On our last day at Ystradfellte some people rose relatively early to do a final cave trip. The White Lady Cave/Town Drain region was swarming with M.C.G. members by mid-morning, and trips were also made to Cwm Dwr Quarry Cave, Bridge Cave, and Dan-yr-Ogof (weejee).

Derek Allwood.

Those present at the Ystradfellte meet were:-

Mike Brace, Arthur Cox, Philip Ebbage, John Evans, Tony Fitzgibbon, Julie, Pete Goddard, Mig and Pauline Knibbs, Simon Knight, Brian Pittman, Joan Robinson, June Seath, Dick Smith, Arthur and Lyn Spain, Pete and John Virgo, Roger Wallington, Melvyn, Pat Walsh, Frank and Margaret.

EASTER ON MENDIP.

Present:- Alan Wicks, Norma and Malcolm Cotter, Blackmoor Caving Group, June and Don Searle (with daughter), Tony ~~Ingold~~ Ingold and family, Greg Smith, Dave Mitchell, Glenys, Mike Quartermain plus 2.

The meet was an extremely quiet one, but loss in trade at the Hunter's was balanced by an increase in time worked at Blackmoor.

Friday. Alan Wicks and the Blackmoor Group descended Pinetree but none got to the end. In the late afternoon Don, Alan and Malcolm went to Blackmoor and decided to dig below. Our efforts were directed to clearing the space at the bottom of the slide which had been filled by previous digging. Twenty bucket loads were removed, by which time it was getting late and we returned to our H.Q. - arriving at about 10 p.m.

Saturday. Tony Ingold took his brother and girlfriend down Pinetree with Alan, while the Cotters and Searles went to investigate the hot springs at Bath noticing a large amount of flowstone where the water first becomes visible. Late afternoon we went to Blackmoor, and with the addition of Greg decided to work the shaft. I worked at the bottom but those above had the hardest job hauling up the bucket. We raised 6 loads and also put in some hammerwork on a rock on Don's Chamber side. A trip to the 'New Inn' and the 'Victoria' completed the day.

Sunday. Norma decided to help us at Blackmoor and eased the situation until her leg got caught between the boom and the spoil heap; we were very relieved to find that nothing was broken (Norma's bones, we presume; not the boom - Ed.) We were all pleased to see Dave Mitchell and Glenys arrive, and we readily gave the sledge hammer to Dave who used it to 'put' the large rock into our deeper excavation. This manoeuvre revealed a weakness on the underside and within a few minutes the rock was in pieces. The pulley rope was swollen with water and tended to jam in the pulley blocks but we made some modifications which improved the situation, and work continued until about 9.30 p.m.

Monday. Further modifications to the jib resulted in our adopting a 2:1 ratio which made hauling easier; when we hitched the bucket we found a tendency for it to twist, so we tried controlling the bucket with a rope attached to a side handle, and this proved highly successful. One point to watch is the nut on the double pulley block which tends to come off. At one stage three boys about 10 years old came over. I asked "Would you like to pull on the rope?" to which they replied "Gee, can we Mister!". Strangely enough, their 3 x 60 lbs. made an amazing difference and we had a couple of loads up in rapid time, before they got bored. The hole is now about 5 feet deeper on Don's Chamber side: on examination of the survey we have another 7' before we reach the opening.

Malcom Cotter.

WET-SUITITUS.

It all started back in January when it was planned to "do" O.F.D. and Dan-yr-Ogof. Up to this time only a few sensible types had acquired wet-suits. On the Saturday we did O.F.D. - with a few ribald remarks concerning the fact that some of us were wet-suitless. However, as the cave was not too wet, it happened that we did not take a great deal of notice. Next day we eventually got round to doing Dan-yr-Ogof (now, incidentally, of increased importance due to the new discoveries). With much gusto we wandered through the show cave part to the first lake, where much to my consternation, some members of the party became enthusiastically acquainted with the water. About 10 mins later we all came in contact with water - swimming. My hat! was that water cold. We swam to the entrance of the second lake but after reconnoitre it proved to be too dangerous to go on. So, breathing a silent prayer of thanksgiving for the person who said "I think we ought to turn back", we retraced our swimming steps, Pat and myself both running to the cave entrance to regain lost circulation (we were both wet-suitless).

That day was the beginning of the end of ordinary caving clothes for me: I ordered a Wet-Suit Kit. The price caused a gap in the family budget for a few weeks, but we soon overcame that. When the kit arrived there was just under two weeks to assemble it before the second Wales trip, under canvas at Ystrad-fellte. It was touch and go as several alterations had to be made. Nevertheless Good Friday dawned quite brightly and the initial test came about midday with a visit to nearby Porth-yr-Ogof, where while waiting for the others, a few of us dived into the deep pool at the cave entrance. I was very dubious at first and lowered myself in gingerly. Apart from the initial cold water entering, I was delightfully warm. After an exploration of the dry series I actually agreed to go with Simon back along the stream passage route against a strong current, a thing I would not have dreamed of doing a few months earlier, except perhaps by necessity. Next day some of us decided to explore the Neath River

Valley area. Unfortunately most of the caves in this area are small or end in sumps. So, to get our day's enjoyment we ended up shooting the rapids down the fast flowing river with nothing more than wet-suits as protection; great fun (when adequately covered):

After these stringent tests, surprisingly enough it is still in one piece. I only hope that all active members of the Club eventually purchase wet-suits so that they can enjoy their caving to a much fuller extent, as I feel I now can.

Being thoroughly soaking wet and bitterly cold leaves a caver listless with little interest in his surroundings after a while. This may not be true if you are always on the move, but being in a large party waiting for someone to climb a ladder or go through a tight bit, you cannot help but get cold if you are decidedly wet. These unpleasant circumstances are very nearly eliminated by wearing a wet-suit.

Note; I have no financial interest in Sub Aqua Products, as may be rumoured.

Arthur Spain.

PRESS COVERAGE OF CAVING TOPICS.

The National Press has really excelled itself during the month of April. Everyone will have read of the fine discovery made in Dan-yr-Ogof (DAM-yr-Ogof according to the Guardian - everyone is entitled to his own opinion !). The South Wales SAILING Club (Daily Telegraph terminology) broke through into a series of very large passages and chambers on Wednesday of Easter week. S.W.C.C. deserve congratulations for this splendid addition to British caving which is the result of months of hard work in Dan-yr-Ogof. The New Scientist, 21 April 1966, has a short article on the more scientific aspects of the new extension. The 'General Public' (presumably meaning sporting cavers) will not be granted access until scientific studies have been undertaken.

John Lafferty who is attempting to stay down Gough's Cave, Cheddar for four months appears to have lost his sense of time, as he is now sleeping 24 hrs. at a time and staying awake for 20. (reported in the Daily Mail, 19th. April). This is very different from Michel Siffre's cycle when he stayed down Scarasson Cavern - his sleeping periods of 4-5 hrs. were shorter than his waking periods.

Less pleasant publicity for caves are the reports of "Troglodytes" and Ravers in the caves of Matlock. Why do jobs have to use such respectable names to describe such non-respectable beings? The Daily Mirror (18th. April), however, reports that a team of potholers from a Derbyshire Caving Club has evicted the squatters from their Cumberland Cavern home.

J.C.R.

C.C.C. PERMITS

The Secretary has handed over the distribution of these permits to the Meet Secretary, Tony Knibbs.

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THE SPELEOLOGIST MAGAZINE - Review

No, The February-March edition was not reviewed last month, because I was too busy counting up the column-inches of editorial matter in each issue since the first one. The answer: You are now getting less than half as much for your money as you were a year ago. One article on bats, by John Hooper, is interesting and well illustrated. Almost a page is occupied by an exchange of correspondence between C.R.O.'s solicitors and the magazine's editor.

Ogofwr Ddu.

MEET PROGRAMME.

- April 30th./May 1st. MENDIP - Swildon's Hole: Vicarage Passage.
- May 14th/15th. MENDIP - G.B. Cave (Saturday). Permits reqd.
- WHITSUN: May 28th/30th. DERBYSHIRE - Camping. Visits to Giants Hole, Oxlow Cavern, P.8 (Jackpot).
- June 11th/12th. MENDIP - Longwood/August System; (Rescue practice).

COMMITTEE.

- 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 Goddard, 11 Lebanon Park, Twickenham, Middx.
- Recorder - Simon Knight, 40 Garrard Road, Banstead, Surrey.
- Editor - Joan Robinson, 68 Cole Park Road, Twickenham, Middx.