

*J. Robinson*

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 46

JUNE, 1966.

CLUB NEWS.

Cottage The Group has applied to the planning authorities for renewal of permission to keep the cottage on its present site. A decision will be given before August 12th.

Finance At the beginning of June we had £45 in the General Fund (but a number of large items of expenditure are expected in the near future - insurance etc.). The Land Purchase Fund stood at £30.

Jumble Sale The date and place for the Group's jumble sale have now been fixed. It is to be held on the 10th. September at Ealing Town Hall, and helpers are needed between 1.30 p.m. and 5.00 p.m.

Good Wishes Pedro and Lyn are getting married this Saturday (25th. July) and the club would like to take this opportunity of wishing them all happiness for the future.  
Pedro's new telephone no. is SK7 3485.

Membership We welcome the following new probationary members:-  
Fred Davies, Camp V, Withy Lane, Neighbourne, Oakhill, Nr. Bath.  
Philip Ebbage, 86 Hazlemere Rd. Slough, Bucks. (Somerset.  
Greg Smith, 131 Hagdon Lane, Watford, Herts.

Address John Barker is now living at 797 Kenton Lane, Harrow Weald, Middlesex.

Film Shows

Thursday, July 7th. Malaya, Part I.  
Thursday, July 21st. Malaya, Part II.  
Place:- Club Meeting Room at the Royal Oak, Brentford.  
Everyone welcome.

July Newsletter This should be distributed on 21st. July. It is being produced earlier than usual because of the Club meet in Eire at the end of July. All articles should therefore be given to me by 14th. July at the very latest.  
J.C.R.

Rescue Practice The rescue practice in August/Longwood System was cancelled due to heavy rainfall and unsettled weather, and the relatively few people available to take part.

G.B. CAVE

Information received from U.B.S.S. indicates that the

"Ladder Dig Series" in G.B. Cave will be open for visits by other clubs by August 31st. The biological programme is taking much longer than had been expected.

The U.B.S.S. wish to emphasise that the nature of the immense boulder ruckle is such that entry to "L.D.S." must be by small parties only - maximum six - and must be by experienced cavers only. The series is NOT SUITABLE for large parties nor for inexperienced cavers.

It is expected that an interim report, with survey, will be published in Proc. U.B.S.S. (Vol. 11, (1)) due out in Nov. 1966. Offprints will be available at low cost.

### PROVETINES EXPEDITION

Two cavers are required to complete a team which is to spend the month of August in the Greek/Albanian Border area. The object of the expedition is to bottom Provetines Cave. Anyone interested can obtain further details from Joan.

### WHITSUN IN DERBYSHIRE

We arrived at the Orpheus C.C. cottage at 1.00 a.m. in the morning. After an unsuccessful search for the light switches, we found that they wouldn't have been much use anyway, since there is only gas lighting. The cottage was empty and we proceeded to select our bunks and kip down.

Next morning we woke to find that the taps didn't work. We followed the cold water pipe next door (a pub) and asked if they would turn on the water please? Certainly not! We couldn't use their water. Ours came from the village pump.

After breakfasting we went to Castleton and walked to the gaping entrance of Peak Cavern. Against this backcloth we listened wonderingly to the guide's stories of 25 miles of passages extending as far as Buxton(?)!!!... Then to Peveril Castle on the hill above. From here we could see the entrances to several show caves and decided to make for Blue John Mines. Once again there were the usual imaginative stories from the guide ...

Having had our fill of show caves we spent the evening crawling about in Perryfoot Cave - a horrible, tight, muddy little hole. But we failed to negotiate the 'Iron Lady Squeeze' and disgustedly adjourned to the 'Quiet Lady' at Earl's Sterndale.

Sunday was to be the big day. Gaping Gill or bust! We left the cottage at 10.00 a.m. and after lunch at Settle and the walk up from Clapham we arrived at Gaping Gill at 4.00 p.m. Winching was in full progress:- a controlled drop until the ledge was passed, then a free fall until near the floor! Apprehensively we approached the winchman. Yes, we could go down if we were willing to come up about midnight. Alternatively we could sleep in the Bradford P.C. tent if we had sleeping bags or go down via Bar Pot. We decided the latter would be the best, and negotiated the first pitch - 45 feet - into a large chamber. A little further down we showed another party the way out - they had been lost for some time. We explored the upper passages as far as the hundred foot

pitch, but since two more parties were on the way up we decided to beat a hasty retreat in order to be the first up the 45 footer. It was 9.00 p.m. by the time we reached Clapham and well into the early hours before we reached 'home'.

Whit Monday, we woke up about 11.00 a.m. and since the weather was so glorious we went for a ride up past the Ladybower and Derwent resevoirs. We walked up onto the Howden Moors and baked in the sun. All too soon it was time to come home. We didn't do much caving but we are all agreed on one thing - next time we really will get down Gaping Gill.

Pete and John Virgo,  
Roger Wallington,  
Philip Ebbage.

#### WHITSUN ON MENDIP.

Blackmoor Don Searle, Pete Munt, Mike Brace, Dave Mitchell and Malcolm Cotter worked throughout, while Tony Knibbs assisted on Saturday and Simon Knight and his brother Chris helped on Sunday.

Digging was concentrated in the shaft. On Saturday evening Don and I worked with a small bucket on our own but with little success. On Sunday while we were helping Jim Fry clear his quarry Dave's eye alighted on a hand-winch lying on its side and slightly sunk in the ground, Jim said we could borrow it and by late afternoon the winch was overhauled and installed in a satisfactory position and work progressed rapidly and without fatigue to the surface party. That evening Don and I found that we could raise full loads almost as rapidly as a larger team.

On Monday we moved rocks from the miners' chamber. Shortly before we left, a 3 cwt. rock fell from the trench wall and lodged just above Don's Chamber, a further reminder that boulders which appear to be firmly fixed are not always so. It also confirms the wisdom of deepening the shaft. (and of always wearing a helmet while digging - Editor)

Malcolm Cotter.

August Hole Pete Goddard, Tony Knibbs and myself carted digging tools down August (via Longwood and Christmas Crawl) on Sunday, and spent two hours in Sand Passage. We removed a few feet of sand and deepened the floor level to make the accommodation a little less cramped. The steel skip which Pete had made, proved to be a great help in removing spoil from the passage. While we were in Sand Passage, Wessex members were investigating the termination of the Stream Passage.

J.C.R.

#### POSTBAG

Dear Joan,

I am considerably surprised by the tone of the letter from Brian Ellis and consider such an obviously personal

slant and in very bad taste.

I will deal firstly with those parts of the letter connected with the Registry. Firstly I note that my paragraph was not properly read since my operative phrase was "if we are going to do much work etc."

Obviously any copies of the Registry are for the benefit of people interested in Mendip Caves (rather than people on Mendip). I should think that only those persons living in the Bristol/Weston area would use the Bristol copy, the rest preferring Wells which was the first. The Bristol copy is of convenience to those living in Bristol. This is of course satisfactory if those living there set it up. However I should think that there are as many cavers in London as there are in Bristol, and since there is now a precedent for having a copy away from Mendip I naturally thought that we could benefit from a copy in London as well. What does surprise me is that Brian Ellis tries to cry down my suggestion then turns a somersault by saying that he is already thinking of donating a copy to the British Museum Library (which is of course in London). This leads one to the impression that he has grabbed the opportunity of comment, and misused it to revel in personal animosity.

Lastly I would like to say that my paragraph was not intended for publication in the newsletter but to get further opinion on the matter. However I still stand by my comment and welcome sensible appraisal.

Malcolm Cotter.

Editor's Note: No more correspondence on this subject will be published.

#### CHARTERHOUSE SQUATTERS TRIUMPHANT.

Frank Taylor, the new owner of Charterhouse Country Club, "has been forced to hand over 9 acres of his land to the squatting tenants". This statement occurs in "The Sun" (15th. June, 1966) but surprisingly does not refer to the M.C.G. Perhaps if we had stayed in the old cottage it would have been a different story. In fact the "squatting tenants" are insects known as the Bloody Nosed Beetle. They are rare and of biological interest, and consequently Mr. Taylor has given the lead mining spoil tips to nature conservation societies.

J.C.R.

#### NEW RIFT FOUND IN BLACKMOOR.

Since Whitsun the hand winch has been superseded by a petrol-driven miniature hoist of 5 cwt. capacity. Lifting at the rate of 220 ft./min. this latter installation enables very small groups (3 or 4 men) to operate the dig successfully. Good progress has been made and the general debris level in the shaft has fallen to -25 feet with the deepest point at -27 feet where the down dip chamber opens.

During the weekend of June 18th/19th. the work included

removing some of the clean rock choke in the down-dip chamber. A natural rift was discovered reaching a depth of about -45 feet with more to come when the chamber above is cleared out a little more. The rift is heavily coated with stal. and appears never to have been entered before. One wall is solid rock whilst the other appears to be a cemented choke. A draught is detectable in this area and further work should reveal a change in character in a few feet and possibly a further open section. The old miners' legend of a richly decorated cavern on Blackmoor looks like being substantiated.

Tony Knibbs.

#### "BRITISH CAVER" 1965 and 1966

The standard of production of this and last year's British Caver saddens your reviewer. Typing and reproduction leave something to be desired, pages are missing, (from the sample copies, anyway) and the contents list gives reference to either non-existent articles, or non-existent pages.

The material is a mixture of extracts from club and other publications, a few original pieces and a number of reviews. If you can face up to the poor production standards you are almost bound to find something of interest. But it is a big IF.

Ogofwr Ddu.

(Obtainable from the Editor: G. Platten, Rotherfield, Fernhill Lane, New Milton Hants., 10/- each volume.)

#### WRITING ABOUT CAVING.

"When two or more cavers gather together. . . they will produce a newsletter". This, it seems, is an inevitable law. In some ways the idea that new finds should be reported to the world is a good one. In fact it is essential if records are to be available to speleologists in the future.

But too much is published by too many people. No one can read Everything that is produced by Britain's 100 or more clubs, and if you did make the effort you would find an immense amount of duplication. Caving will soon be in the same state as industrial research, where it is now almost as cheap to carry out months of original work on a project - to find out something that has already been done elsewhere - rather than spend years trying to find all that has already been written on the topic.

"The Speleologist" offered a possible solution - but appears to have failed because cavers preferred to keep their individuality and did not have confidence in it. No one has produced a satisfactory alternative.

I don't offer a solution, but before long one will have to be found or we shall all be armchair cavers reading about the glories of the past and not having any time to find anything for ourselves. If we did find anything interesting, of course, we should hardly get our boiler-suits off before

reaching for pen or typewriter. Enough, though, the time spent reading this, could be spent digging.....

Ogofwr Ddu.

### IN THE BEGINNING.....

In the organisation and running of any caving club, special consideration must be given to catering for novices. This amounts to nothing more than simple planning to encourage a regular intake of that essential ingredient - new blood. Caving clubs are expected to offer the novice basic instruction in the techniques of caving. This means that older and more experienced members must devote a fair proportion of their weekend time to leading novice trips. Whilst this may interrupt a variety of plans and projects, all of us recognise the importance of such work.

Novices seldom come complete. Many clubs will find it necessary to purchase helmets and lamps for the exclusive use of novices. Some of the expense so incurred may be slightly offset by a nominal hire fee. Usually, however, such items fall into the category of "tackle" whose upkeep and replenishment fall burden on club funds. Transport and cheap accommodation are frequently available as a club facility. In the initial stage, as a guest, the novice will enjoy all the necessary creature comforts for a fee which would hardly cover the overnight fees of a good camp-site. What has the novice to offer in return for all this?

He may become a member and pay an annual subscription. He may even become a conscientious member and join in wholeheartedly with club activities. He may help to maintain and improve club accommodation, assist on club projects such as cave surveying and digging, and do whatever he is able towards the more efficient running of the club.

A caving club is judged by its contribution to speleology as a whole; a new cave discovered, a new survey produced, a research project completed. The common key to all of this is teamwork. To join a club is to join a team; to join a team is to strive for a common goal. From his very first introduction to a caving club the novice should be aware of this vital aspect of club membership. The club needs his support and co-operation even more than it needs his annual subscription.

Tony Knibbs.

ARE WE DIGGING IN THE BEST PLACE? - (This article was received before the new rift was discovered).

With Blackmoor this seems to be an ever present problem. The reason for digging out the shaft is to get better access to Don's Chamber which may lead to a downstream section of the cave. Excavation here will entail removing a great deal of material and there are no noticeable air currents in this part of the cave.

I feel it would have been better to investigate the end of the Swallet Passage more fully since the required shaft would have been narrower and we would have got to an interesting phase more rapidly. There is also a very strong outward air current and in wet weather most of the water seems to disappear there. The sinking of a shaft to try and link with the Swallet Passage was undertaken about 4 years ago but the present shaft was dug at the same time and revealed a cave which obviously diverted attention. Work was later restarted in the shaft above the end of Swallet Passage but stopped again when it was 14 feet deep as the team working there broke up due to travel etc. A relatively dormant situation arose for several years while the group worked on the new cottage, Cooper's Hole and Knapp Hill. The first people to restart work at Blackmoor had not been strongly connected with earlier excavation and were not aware of the possibilities which existed, the Swallet Way having slumped in soon after it was left.

One factor to set the balance back in favour of digging the shaft was the report of a blow-hole through the snow in the severe winter of 1962/63.

Malcolm Cotter.

#### SENSATION!

At long last, the Club library is at the cottage.

#### MEET PROGRAMME.

June 25th./26th. MENDIP - Stoke Lane Slocker  
Lamb Leer (Sunday)

(subject to leaders being available)

July 23rd./Aug 7th. EIRE - Nine people have booked for this meet.

August Bank Holiday

Aug. 27th./29th. YORKSHIRE - camping: The main event is a visit to Lost John's System.

#### COMMITTEE.

Secretary - Brian Mee, 88 Seaton Gardens, Ruislip Manor, Middx.  
Treasurer - Tony Fitzgibbon, 265 Eastcote Rd, Ruislip, Middx.  
Meet Secretary - Tony Knibbs, 2 Rectory Lane, Byfleet, Surrey.  
Cottage Warden - Pat Walsh, 18 Oxford Rd. North, Chiswick, W.4.  
Tacklemaster - Pete Goddard, 11 Lebanon Park, Twickenham, Mdx.  
Recorder - Simon Knight, 40 Garrard Rd, Banstead, Surrey.  
Editor - Joan Robinson.