

MENDIP CAVING GROUP.

NEWSLETTER NO. 48

AUGUST, 1966.

CLUB NEWS.

Planning Permission for our cottage to remain on its present site, has been granted for the next two years.

Digging legalised. Formal permission has been received from the Charterhouse Committee for the M.C.G. to dig in Blackmoor Swallet and in the Oxbows section of August Hole. There's nothing to stop you now!

Membership. We welcome the following people who have been accepted as probationary members:-

Linda Green - 217 Lyndhurst Ave, Twickenham, Middx.  
 Dave Hankin - 134 St. James' Rd., Watford, Herts.  
 Mike Lovell - 197, Tamar Way, Langley, Slough, Bucks.  
 Trevor Parker - 19 Addicott Rd., Weston-super-Mare. Som.  
 Sarah Worgan -  
 John Virgo - 13 Hughenden Rd., Slough, Bucks.  
 Pete Virgo - " " " " "  
 Roger Wallington, - 46, Kendal Drive, Slough, Bucks.

Jumble Sale. After the jumble sale on Saturday, 10th. Sept. at Ealing Town Hall, there will be a free pint at 128 Cavendish Avenue, Ealing, for genuine helpers.

Surely there must still be large quantities of jumble hidden away in members' attics, bedrooms, cars etc. Please bring it along to Thursday meetings or deliver it to 128 Cavendish Avenue.

Successful Lectures. There have been two illustrated talks recently at Club meetings. Malcolm Cotter showed us some more slides of Malayan Caves, and Lorraine Mottley projected slides showing Australian Caves. Both talks were well attended.

Discount for members. Player's Sports (Camping and Hire) Ltd., 1 Newman Street, Oxford Street, London W.1. (Tel. Museum 6645) will give a 10% discount to club members. Take your membership card with you. A current catalogue is held by the tacklemaster, Pete Goddard.

Surveys. Surveys of Swildon's Hole are again in stock - J.C.R.

BRISTOL CONFERENCE DETAILS.

B.S.A.'s 1966 conference takes place in Bristol over the September 10th./11th. weekend. It will be opened by

Sir John Wedgewood (Deputy Chairman of the Pottery firm) who is, himself, keen on caving. Details from conference secretary E. Mason, Rose Cottage, Little Longstone, Nr. Bakewell, Derbyshire, or Pedro.

'The Mendip Caver' (August/september 1966) reports that the B.S.A. are planning to erect a cable railway in Lamb Leer for the Bristol conference.

#### DIGS AND DISCOVERY IN YUGOSLAVIA.

Don Searle and I decided to take caving gear with us on our holiday to Yugoslavia in August. After visiting a number of show caves we came into contact with some British cavers, who were staying in the National Park. There were contingents from Manchester University C. C., Leicester University Speleos and White Rose P. C. We seemed to make closest acquaintance with some enthusiastic members from Leicester who offered their assistance in digging near The Great Natural Bridge, at a crack which Don thought would go with very little work. If it did go there was a possibility of entering over a mile of cave containing the river Rak. In an atmosphere of excitement we set out at 10 p.m. The first site at the crack was soon cleared and indicated that a great deal of work would be needed to make progress. By this time another dig was under way nearby and this showed more promise. However by midnight we considered that this, too, would require a lot of work, so we packed in. That evening the Leicester party asked if we would like to join them to explore a newly found shaft on the morrow.

Next day we reached the shaft with a Yugoslav caver called Andre and accompanied by Bob Fowell, Pete Wardle, Chris Thomas, Nev Taylor, Martin Parham (and Pete Holm who was ill and looked after affairs at the top) we proceeded to descend it. The shaft was some 80 feet deep and broken by two ledges. At the bottom we found ourselves in a high rift. When I got off the ladder I spotted some large bones, a skull and a jaw with a big canine tooth. From then on much discussion ensued as to whether it was wolf, bear, or boar; the second choice being mine. A partly blocked squeeze at the lowest point was attacked by Pete who was soon through. After a few feet a tricky climb followed by a thirty-foot pitch. The dig success was a great surprise to Andre who soon became even more amazed to hear that there was yet another pitch of about 20' to follow. This was a very nice one - quite round with some stalactites hanging from the roof. Our tether point was a cluster of stalagmites. At the bottom we found a small chamber leading to a high rift; one hole in the floor went down 10' and a draft was reported but we could make no further progress. Don, Bob and I then surveyed the pot.

Malcolm Cotter.

### SANDFORD LEVVY.

During the course of a festering week on Mendip, a visit was made to Sandford Hill where at the bottom of the face is a levvy. It consists of a basically straight, horizontal passage blasted for 1,600 feet into the hill. There are two junctions or crossroads from which secondary passages lead off, the second of these crossroads being formed supposedly by the 'Great Rift' of old mining accounts. The main passageway is roughly shaped, often being of triangular cross-section, but headroom is generous throughout (about 6' 3"). The roof was checked at intervals and appeared to be quite safe. Although of only recent origin (late 18th. century) there was no lack of small formations. Stalactites were found to be quite numerous, the longest measuring three inches. Small curtains, rimstone pools and cave pearls were also found. The most striking feature of the formations, especially the stal coating on the walls, was the rich colouration due to mineral impurities.

I found the only caving equipment necessary to be a helmet and a source of polychromatic electromagnetic radiation (a band width of 4,000 to 7,000<sup>o</sup><sub>A</sub> was found to be suitable. The usual foul gear and boilersuits aren't required for this trip.

Pete Mathews.

### COUNTY CLARE.

Nine members of the Club, and two Manchester cavers who joined up with us, spent an enjoyable fortnight near Lisdoonvarna. For the first week we camped just a few hundred yards down the road from Pollnagollum, but after a particularly wet night which resulted in mild flooding of the campsite we moved to a nearby cottage. In spite of the attractions of local beaches and comfortable peat fires some caving was done, details of which will be appearing at a later date. Suffice it to say that Simon, Joan, Pete and Del got 'orribly lost down Fisher Street, and Joan nearly got eaten alive by a huge brown eel in the stream in Aille's Tributaries.

The main weejee events were a trip by five of us to the Aran Islands, and a detour on the journey home which enabled us to see the Lakes of Killarny and Cork.

### NOT ALL OF US WENT TO IRELAND.

Whilst spending a week on Mendip with Vern Whelan, the main intention being fishing and drinking, we encountered members of the Northern Pennine Club also engaged in the latter activity. Thus we, the M.C.G. (namely myself) decided that after enjoying the splendours of Lancaster/Easegill during last summer's expedition to Yorkshire, a

reciprocation of hospitality would be in order. After much consideration one of Mendip's classic systems was selected as being appropriate for a visit. For this reason on a rainy Tuesday morning all the above-mentioned together with Phil Coles (B.E.C.) made their way to the impressive entrance of Goatchurch Cavern. An uneventful descent resulted in a full party arriving at the water chamber, where the entrance to the drainpipe was eventually located. I then proceeded to worm myself along to the end and in doing so noted, that in common with many other limestone passages, the drainpipe is now considerably longer and altogether of much smaller diameter than it was on the occasion of my last visit about two years ago. After making these observations I found myself at the end of the aforementioned passage, and being in a position to turn about I proceeded to do so. Upon looking back I saw John Laycock who up until then was close behind me, lying at the other end of the drainpipe uttering curses. He muttered something about his goon suit being hot and his NiFe cell getting in the way and then reversed himself out. The N.P.C., now without their leader to follow, did make any more attempts upon the drainpipe. The three caves returned to a party of trembling potholers waiting in the Water Chamber for us to take them back to the surface.

Visits were also made to Read's Cavern and Penrose Cottage and thence to G.B. A fast weejee trip of G.B. was made so as to leave sufficient time for a cancelled evening trip to Stoke II The N.P.C. ended an unliveable-down day on Mendip with one of many evenings spent in the Hunters enjoying cancelled caving trips.

Pete Mathews.

#### FIRST EVER C.R.G. CAVE STUDY.

A study of the origins of the Gaping Gill - Ingleborough system in Yorkshire is being initiated by C.R.G. Between August 20th. and 29th. groups are invited to contribute manpower and resources; experienced project-leaders will be available.

The plan includes proposals for a surface survey, geological mapping, with ground to cave correlation studies, hydrography and underground surveys including electro-magnetic cross-checking. The organisation is by former C.R.G. secretary Dick Glover (West Penwith, Over Kellet, Carnforth, Lancs.)

#### EXPERT GUIDANCE TO CASTLETON AREA.

Dr. Trevor Ford is to lead a surface demonstration meet in the Castleton area on Sunday, September 18th. (depart Castleton carpark 10.30 a.m.). He will be describing relationships between surface features and the underlying cave systems.

...ALL FOR A PINT.

Cave length-of-stay-record breaker, David Lafferty, has something in common with the average M.C.G. member. While in Gough's Boulder Choke for his 136-day stint he dreamed of one thing more than any other - a pint when he got out.

In spite of his dreams he would not have qualified for M.C.G. membership..... when the long-awaited pint was eventually set before him, it took all of an hour and a half for him to drink it - and what's more it was free!

In common with others who have stayed underground for long periods, he lost his sense of time and balance, interrupted his normal living cycle (he slept for 37 hours at one stretch) and was bored! Bored that was, in spite of being paid at the rate of 4/- an hour for his long trip (£650 in all).

The success of David Lafferty's marathon, which broke the previous French record of 126 days, was attributed to the products of three manufacturers (by the manufacturers themselves, that is). C---- and B----- claimed great things for their soups, M----- powdered milk, it was claimed, proved its keeping properties in spite of the conditions, and K----- cornflakes obviously had something more than snap, crackle and pop. Or perhaps it was the plastic toys which come with each packet that he liked most about them?

Ogofwr Ddu.

KING-SIZE POTATO.

The cost of printing the cover for the Club Journal will be rather high if the quotes we have received so far are anything to go by. A suggestion has been made that we should economise by using a potato-cut. Anyone got a 10" by 8" potato?

GOGGLES FOR THE PATIENT.

A practice rescue in Agen Allwedd is the subject of a special report by Chelsea S. S. (in the library). The patient (or victim as she prefers to call herself) praises the goggles which she wore as being infinitely better for rescues than a handkerchief over her face. They enabled her to see what was going on - a psychological advantage without doubt.

The team afterwards commented that their priorities of speed first, then thought for the patient's comfort, were the wrong way round. They faced special problems in Keyhole Passage on which they seek others' views. The details of the report are difficult to assimilate unless, unlike your correspondent (due to a little-known illness) you have got further than the first 100 yards of the cave.

Pedro.

‡ Perhaps it's called Opening Time Disease - Ed.

### FOR CACKLING CAVERS.

Swiss sleeping bags and duvet jackets filled (and we quote) with "live goose down" claimed to weigh next to nothing and be unprecedently warm are now being advertised, price (bags) £17 to £20.12.6 and (jackets) 10gns. to £20. A card to Messrs Hillerwent, 1 Norman Avenue, Epsom, Surrey, will bring details of where they can be seen. Don't forget to take your live goose-repellent with you.

### THIS CHANGING WORLD.

'The Hunter's', that hitherto unchangeable centre of every good caver's world (except perhaps for a gradual scruffing process) has undergone metamorphosis. The stone flagged floor remains and so does the shove ha'penny board, but where is the yellowed wallpaper and the old chipped table? Closer investigation reveals the latter standing proudly in the middle of a new cavers' bar which is reached via the back of the Hunter's (careful, don't let the weejees see you). A 'singing room' is in process of completion; it has walls three feet thick and is far far removed from the ears of the new clientele.

(unfortunately this article wasn't received in time to be included under 'Club News' - Editor.)

### LENGTHS AND EXTENTS OF SOME MENDIP CAVES.

While home for a few days with a cold, I thought I would browse through 'Caves of Mendip' and a few other publications to compare the lengths and depths of Mendip caves.

<u>Cave</u>	<u>length</u> <u>Depth in feet</u>	<u>Source</u>
1. Swildon's Hole	21,500	'Speleologist'
2. St. Cuthbert's Swallet	(4,200 surveyed (+4,000 estimated)	B.M. Ellis
3. G.B. Cave	(4,500 surveyed (+400 estimated)	Barrington M. O. Cotter
4. Longwood/August System	(4,480 surveyed (+100 estimated)	M. Rennie A. J. Knibbs
5. Stoke Lane	(3,300 surveyed (+1,300 estimated)	Barrington
6. Gough's Cave	(3,400 (+1,000 (Longhole & Gough's Old)	Barrington Barrington & Stanton
7. Eastwater	3,500	Barrington
8. Hilliers	2,800	Barrington
9. Goatchurch	2,420	M. Rennie
10. Wookey Hole	2,000	Barrington

Notes. Although estimates should not generally be relied upon, St. Cuthbert's even if grossly overestimated should have enough passage to put it in second place. The difference between

survey lengths of (2) and (3) is only about 300 feet but the G.B. length could not be increased with more survey to make up, say, a further 1,000 feet. In the case of Longwood/August and Stoke Lane, a large proportion of the latter's length rests on estimates. Even 'though the two totals come within 20 feet, preference has been given to the more complete survey.

The Gough's System is a difficult one to place as a proven air connection exists with Longhole, although it is not negotiable. Longhole is also part of Gough's Old Cave.

Incidentally the longest M.C.G. discovery, Pinetree Pot, comes out at 17th. place.

<u>Cave</u>	<u>Vertical Interval</u>	<u>Source</u>
1. Swildon's Hole	540 ft.	'Speleologist'
2. Longwood/August	465	M. Rennie
3. G.B. Cave	430	Barrington
	:10 estimate	M. O. Cotter
4. Eastwater	420	Barrington
5. St. Cuthbert's	400	B.M. Ellis
6. Cuckoo Cleeves	250	B.M. Ellis
7. Gough's	230	W.I. Stanton
8. Cow Hole	200	Barrington
Lamb Leer	200	"
Read's	200	"
Rod's Pot	200	"

Pinetree comes out at 16th. place.

M. O. Cotter.

### CAMBRIAN CAVING CONFERENCE, 1966.

A detailed account of the conference can be read in S.V.C.C. newsletter (July 1966), but the following points may be of particular interest.

The indemnity chits for Agen Allwedd have been withdrawn. Access for caves in the Forest of Dean is via the Forest Wardens.

Copies of the Cambrian Cave Register are to be held at Cardiff Aberystwyth and Oswestry, and by the C.C.R. secretary.

Details were given regarding callouts of Cave Rescue teams in Wales. Apparently the S.W.C.R.O. is expecting an increase of rescues when the Severn Bridge is opened and more cavers arrive from the Mendip area.

### MEET PROGRAMME

August 27th.-29th. - YORKSHIRE - Camping. On Sunday a visit to Lost John's System is planned. Details of other trips are not yet finalised, but the Meet Secretary is trying to cater for the inexperienced as well as the experienced caver.

August 27th.-29th. MENDIP - Malcolm Cotter will be showing his Malayan slides at the Cottage, for the benefit of those who were unable to see them in London.

Sept. 10th./11th. MENDIP - Cow Hole, Cuckoo Cleaves Hole (if open).

Sept. 24th./25th. SOUTH WALES - Llangattock - Ogof Agen Allwedd, Ogof-y-Darren-Cilau.

October 15th./16th. MENDIP - Half Yearly General Meeting. G.B. Cave.

QUOTE: "He's just the right size for digging Sand Passage" - Mig, talking about his new (3 weeks old) son.  
Congratulations, Pauline and Mig.

COMMITTEE.

Secretary - Brian Mee, 88 Seaton Gdns., Ruislip Manor, Middx.  
Treasurer - Tony Fitzgibbon, 265 Eastcote Road, Ruislip.  
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