

MENDIP CAVING GROUP.

NEWSLETTER NO. 50.

OCTOBER, 1966.

HALF YEARLY GENERAL MEETING.

This meeting was held at the cottage on October 15th. at 4 p.m. There were 15 full members present, 12 probationary members, 1 associate member, 1 wife member and n guests. One apology for absence was received from James Gibb. Robbie Charnock was chairman. The minutes of the last meeting were read and accepted.

Secretary's Report (Brian Mee).

Membership is as follows:-

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|----------------------------|
| 29 full members |
| 18 probationary members |
| 8 associate members |
| <u>55 Total membership</u> |

The cottage has been assessed for rates at approx. £16 per year, which amounts to about 6/- per week. We are to apply for a reduction of this amount on the grounds that we are a scientific body. In conjunction with this, Pedro said that he hoped the amount of scientific work undertaken by the Group would be increased.

A revised copy of the Constitution and Rules has been circulated to all members.

Meet Secretary's Report (Tony Knibbs).

There has been good attendance at meets so far this year, and the 1967 Meet Programme is in course of preparation. Yugoslavia has been suggested as a likely place for the summer meet, Devon has been put forward for another meet. Other suggestions will be welcome. Mig said a few words about equipment and reminded the meeting that the 4 blast whistle signal is no longer to be used; food is the personal responsibility of each individual.

Surveying equipment has now been purchased and is to be kept on Mendip. The importance of helping in Club projects was stressed; we have Blackmoor, Cooper's and August Hole as Club digs, and members could usefully help in the design and manufacture of a new cave rescue stretcher.

Mig completed his report by announcing that a barrel of ale was to be available at the Hunter's (in conjunction with Brian Ellis) to mark the birth of their sons.

Tacklemaster's Report (Pete Goddard).

No new tackle had been made during the last year, but the old 12" spacing ladder is to be replaced next year.

Cottage Warden's Report (Pat Walsh).

Pat apologised for his absence from Mendip during the last three months. The porch has been built and the library cupboard completed, although the survey cupboard has yet to be constructed. The cess-pit will now be left until next summer. Food cupboards and six more bunks are also planned. Better care must be taken of the elsan in future.

The cottage is now paying its way, in fact it is making a slight profit. A large number of guests and members are staying on Mendip. All beds are now provided with mattresses. Pat thanked Pete Goddard for his work on the garden and walls.

Editor's Report (Joan Robinson).

Approximately 100 newsletters are distributed each month; members are contributing quite a few articles for publication, although only about 8 people contribute regularly. The newsletter is distributed on the last Thursday in the month.

The Journal is at last getting near to completion. The covers, designed by Mig, have been printed by Mike Brace.

The Survey Scheme is going well and over 100 surveys have been sold since the M.C.G. joined the scheme in January. Surveys are to be kept in London for the time being.

Recorder's Report (Simon Knight).

Simon reminded us that he has resigned, and warned that the new Recorder has a lot of work to do!

Treasurer's Report (Tony Fitzgibbon).

The statement of accounts was circulated.

Land Purchase Fund : £52. 4. 5

General Fund: £67.15.11

A total of £38 has yet to be paid back as part of the loans scheme. In answer to a question, Tony said that the front porch had cost about £53.

Auditors' Report (Robbie Charnock and James Gibb).

Robbie said that the books had been audited and found to be in order.

Amendment to Constitution and Rules.

A proposal was put forward by Pedro and seconded by Joan, that as from the A.G.M. in March 1967 the post of Editor should be split into two posts, a Journal Editor and Newsletter Editor, as the work involved is getting to be too much for one person. This was objected to on the grounds that it would create an extra Committee Post, thus upsetting the voting balance. A suggestion that the extra post be taken on by the recorder was dismissed. Tony Knibbs suggested that some of the Editor's work, such as typing, printing, postal distribution, could be taken over by willing volunteers. However it was pointed out that the newsletter is produced to a tight time schedule, and to involve other people would result in news not being up-to-date. Tony suggested that there could be an Editor's Assistant, not on the Committee but responsible to it via the Editor, but this was dismissed and a substitute proposal put by Pedro; "With effect from the A.G.M. 1967 there be appointed a Journal Editor responsible to the Committee but not on the Committee". This was accepted by the meeting.

Election. Pete Mathews and Mike Brace were put forward as candidates for the post of Recorder; Pete Mathews was elected.

Any Other Business.

The possible location of the next Annual Dinner in March

was discussed. The meeting agreed to support a 21/- type dinner and the Committee is to look for a suitable place.

The meeting closed at 6.15 p.m.

CLUB NEWS.

Change of Address. Pete and Penny Munt have moved to
27 Chaucer Avenue,
Cranford,
Middx.

Support our Rescue Practice. - This will now take place on Saturday, November 5th. in Longwood. It should prove a most interesting project as Longwood, especially the point above the 10' overhang, poses some thought-provoking problems. A rescue is something that all cavers should be able to assist with, and there is no better way to learn than to attend the Club's practice rescues.

On Sunday there will be opportunities to visit G.B. Cave.

Lost - A 1 dioptre close-up lens in 37 mm. mount was lost in Ladder Dig Boulder Maze, in G.B. Will finder please contact P. Mathews.

RULES FOR THE LADDER DIG EXTENSIONS TO G.B. CAVE.

In addition to the already existing G.B. rules, the following points must be noted when entering the new extension.

1. Only one party (Not more than 6 cavers, all experienced) other than a U.B.S.S. party, is allowed in the new series at one time. There is a separate door into the new part.
2. Formations in Bat Passage and in Great Chamber have been marked by tapes. Please adhere to the marked routes in order to preserve the formations. Care should always be taken to avoid accidentally damaging stalagmites which occur all over the floor.
3. All cavers should use NiFe cells, and no rubbish of any kind is to be left in the series.
4. All side passages must be left unvisited due to microbiological studies which are in progress.

STOKE LANE.

One Sunday not long ago, whilst spending an energetic weekend on Mendip, Allan Wicks induced Dave Hankin, Dave Hill and myself to go down Stoke Lane Slocker, and we decided to make the trip worthwhile by visiting Stoke II.

We entered the narrow entrance tube, after a short dispute over the size of the stream, which was presumably normal height. From the end of the tube we floundered and crawled along a maze of sewer-like passages until we reached the chamber before the sump, where it was unanimously decided that I should go first. I gingerly followed a wet-suited Nottingham caver, with whom we had caught up, through an awkward duck and found myself facing

the sump. Before I had the chance to ask him which direction to dive, he disappeared into the murky pool. I was relieved, however, when a hand appeared above the water. After a short period of contemplation I grabbed it and was promptly dragged underwater at great speed.

I emerged spluttering on the other side and the rest of the party soon followed. After a few minutes shivering, we proceeded along the streamway and entered the high level route, where we came to some splendidly decorated chambers which truly made up for the slight discomfort of total immersion. A visit was made to sump II and then we followed the stream back to Sump I which was dived uneventfully, in spite of Allan's vivid tales of cavers diving too far and becoming stuck under the upstream boulders. We moved quickly to keep warm and soon reached daylight after three enjoyable hours underground.

Greg Smith.

SOUTH WALES, 24th./25th. SEPTEMBER.

After one of those memorable hill climbs that always seem amusing in retrospect, Pat, June and I got into the C. S. S. cottage at Llangattock at 2 a.m. to find Brian Hillman and Tony Buchan already in residence. Dawn brought no response from the silent cottage, and it needed the advent of Arthur Spain at 10.30 a.m. to produce any semblance of life.

After further delays, and the arrival of two B.S.A. members, the slog to Aggi got under way and the leading party had arrived at the entrance when Pat remembered something.... Whilst waiting for Pat to get the key Brian and I investigated Keyhole, and our hopes of getting in this way were cruelly dashed when, after much effort, it was found that a gate had been most unsportingly fixed 200' in. Pat's return and ours were almost simultaneous, and the party embarked on the main business of the day. Our swift progress through the entrance series was impeded by the two B.S. A. men climbing into the roof. Naturally, they found it rather harder coming down, and the prospects of a spectacular fall seemed pretty good until a lifeline was ferried up. They made up for this by making off thereafter like Olympic sprinters, with the result that we found ourselves through the choke ahead of the rest, and I was regaled with horrific stories of Northern rescues while waiting.

We made a quick jaunt through the impressive main passage to the meander connection, where your friendly author made his second mistake by following the Northmen to see some crystals "not far away". Pausing only to stamp on his clapped-out NiFe, the leader set off at a run, and although the crystals were very nice the distance seemed hardly worth the effort. Returning we met Pat and June off to the cliffs of Dover, and soon after caught up with the rest in the main stream passage. After following this fine passage for some distance, the 2nd. boulder choke and the wire traverse were passed and the stream

followed to North West Junction.

Arthur Spain and the tigers went out, and Brian, Tony and I pushed on into the Turkey Series. After a long walk up a magnificent passage, Turkey Pool was gained. With a spirited rendering of "Summertime", the pool was crossed by Brian and I, and after a brief look in the direction of Turkey Chamber I returned to find Brian and Tony enjoying a meal. I made a public nuisance of myself over the relighting of my carbide lamp, and we then returned to the surface in record time.

The next day a return trip to Aggi was vetoed in favour of a prolonged trip into Ogof Pwll Hws, and after little more ado all returned home after a fine weekend.

Mike Quartermain.

LONGWOOD/AUGUST, 16th, October.

Because of rumours that there would be long queues to enter the new extension in G.B., Brian Hillman, Sheila and I decided to make a trip down August Hole. It so happened we chickened out of going down August Hole and both our in and out routes were via Christmas Crawl. The trip was uneventful but unfortunately we didn't have time to do any digging in Sand Passage. The downstream termination in August has been pushed considerably by Wessex members and still looks promising although it seems that progress would rely almost entirely on the use of large quantities of bang.

J.C.R.

G.B. EXTENSION.

The weekend of the H.Y.G.M., as might have been expected, proved to be not without incident, thanks mainly to a Saturday night firkin kindly arranged by Mig. Some members being so carried away by the prospect as to spend most of Saturday working up a thirst; they even went caving.

After crashing our cars and doing unprintable things on unprintable people in an unprintable state on the floor of the Formans' Lounge most of us tottered off again on the Sunday. All the best people choosing to visit the newly opened Ladder-dig extension in G.B.

From the end of Ladder-dig the passage was followed into an immense boulder choke. We eventually found the route through the boulders to Great Chamber. The extremely unstable nature of this section does not warrant spending too long here, in spite of the superb formations which abound. Needless to say halts were made for photography and as is now customary the following day was spent putting back the leaves in the camera shutter.

The way on through the boulders was found to be a small, clean-washed passage situated at a slightly higher level than the entrance dig. On following the passage it was found to open out quite abruptly at the bottom of a steep

boulder slope in Great Chamber. This chamber although 0.7 of the size of Main Chamber is roughly circular (if you can call 200' x 100' circular) and is consequently far more impressive. The centre of the chamber is almost devoid of formations, these occurring in abundance around the edges. One of the largest chambers containing the finest formations on Mendip surely make this one of the most noteworthy caves in the county.

Pete Mathews.

MANOR FARM DIG.

Following a visit to Blackmoor by one of the Manor Farm diggers, some of us went over to see how the U.B.S.S. were getting on. A very impressive effort greeted us. A few yards away from the swallet entrance was a small fenced compound within which work was in progress. The present dig is a 25' - 30' shaft blasted through solid rock. The shot-holes are being made by a hired electric rotary drill. One wall of the shaft which is smooth and vertical is of extremely hard limestone which the drill will not effectively cut. The cleared section is in softer rock. The object of the shaft is to hit a broad passage which was entered from the swallet before it subsided. This passage was obstructed by a boulder choke through which blew a strong air current, and beyond which a way-on was seen. The present shaft has hit a crack with a strong outward air current. The workers hope to have sited their shaft above an aven to save about 20' of excavation.

It is interesting to note how the thoughts of the party approximated to our own, for they mused with us on Manor Farm and Blackmoor joining. On my suggestion that this would probably not be very likely early on, the retort was that it was nice to think of! One was impressed by the bounding enthusiasm of the workers and I felt that fate would be very unkind if it does not reward them.

Malcolm Cotter.

DEAR READERS,

Do you want to be left behind in the new rave in "with it" caving gear? Don't be left out on this one. There's no room for squares in new swinging Swildon's. Yes, cavers, the latest sensation is here; really here at last; your very own Mini Wetsuit. Daringly cut 18" above the knee, these topless hipster-style wetsuits are the latest in way-out clobber. Why continue to pay through the nose for old-fashioned wetsuits? When, the very latest in caving gear can be ordered through me with only a very modest increase in price. Cash with orders please to Pete Mathews.

FROM OUT OF THE PROVERBIAL PIGSTY.

Severn Valley Caving Club has obtained new premises at Hill Cottage near Chewton Mendip, and have set about making it habitable! So we have yet another cottage to put on our Coffee-after-the-Hunter's list. Soon after moving in, S.V.C.C. members began digging at the swallet at Red Quar, previously attacked by M.N.R.C. and Wessex, and are now working at the head of a rift at the bottom of the entrance shaft.

MEET PROGRAMME.

- Nov. 5th/6th. MENDIP - Rescue Practice in Longwood on Saturday. G.B. Cave on Sunday (A Charterhouse Caving Committee permit will be necessary for these caves).
- Nov. 26/27th. SOUTH WALES - PENWYLLT. Tunnel Cave, Pwll Pant Mawr, Dan-yr-Ogof if possible.
- Dec. 10/11th. MENDIP - Lamb Leer (Sunday).

COMMITTEE.

Secretary - Brian Mee, 88 Seaton Gardens, Ruislip Manor, Middx.

Treasurer - Tony Fitzgibbon, 265 Eastcote Rd, Ruislip.Mdx.

Meet Secretary - Tony Knibbs, 2 Rectory Lane, Byfleet, Surrey

Cottage Warden - Pat Walsh, 18 Oxford Rd North, Chiswick, W4

Tacklemaster - Pete Goddard, 11 Lebanon Pk, Twickenham, Mdx.

Recorder - Pete Mathews, 343 Uxbridge Rd, W.3.

Editor - Joan Robinson.