

J. Robinson

MENDIP CAVING GROUP.

NEWSLETTER NO. 51.

NOVEMBER, 1966.

CLUB NEWS.

Summer Meet, 1967.

The Club is arranging a trip to Yugoslavia next summer. Tentative dates are July 22nd. to August 6th., and the cost of travel is expected to be in the region of £13 excluding the cross-Channel return passenger fare - about £4 unless a party rate can be applied for. So far, 19 names have been given to the Meet Secretary, and any outstanding names should be forwarded to him immediately so that arrangements can be finalised.

Membership. We welcome the following people who have recently become probationary members:

- Brian Hillman - 24 Kidderminster Rd., West Croydon, Surrey.
- David Oliver - 32 New Road, Womersley, Guildford, Surrey.
- Julie Thrift - Combermere, 5 Woodrise, Eastcote, Pinner, Middx.

Carbide. Recently it has become necessary to keep the Club's stock of carbide in a locked cupboard. However the lock has been forced and the tacklemaster would appreciate it if the culprit would own up and pay up.

Wanted. Pete Mathews requires binding tape and about twelve quarto-sized box-files for use in the library. Some foolscap-sized ones may also be useful. Will anyone who can obtain these items please get in touch with Pete.

For Sale. A limited number of carbide lamps, from the tacklemaster. Carbide lamp spares, NiFe cell spares, and helmets can also be obtained via Pete Goddard.

"Caves of Mendip", "Caves of Wales and the Marches", "Caves of Derbyshire" and "Pennine Underground" are available from the Secretary.

Copies of the Journal 1962, and surveys of most of the Mendip caves are obtainable from the Editor.

Read all about it. Aqua-Marine Sports Ltd. have produced a new catalogue which may interest cavers. Pete Goddard, the Tacklemaster, has a copy or obtain your own from 116 Manningham Lane, Bradford 8.

Lost and Found. Lost on August Meet in Yorkshire and believed to be held by someone by mistake - One Stubai Krab, cadmium plated. Please return to Malcolm Cotter.

Found in Malcolm's van on August Meet - one pair of small scissors and 1 x 20 ft. nylon waist length.

Lost recently - Nylon waist loop and screw gate krab. The waist loop will be alot too small for most members of the club! Please return to Joan Robinson if found.

DON'T LOSE YOUR FAVOURITE GROTTY BOILER SUIT.

Wells police warn cavers of the danger of theft if you leave clothing or equipment in farmers' barns. On a Wednesday night in September the following were stolen from Manor Farm, Priddy: rucksack green, with black metal frame; pair of black climbing boots, orange rubber exposure suit, ten foot steel coiled rule and quantity of other caving equipment. Wells C.I.D. (Tel. Wells.3481) would be pleased to hear from anyone having any information.

Since this incident, there have been more thefts of caving equipment. On Friday 18th. November some gear was taken from a car parked outside "The Victoria", Priddy, and on Sat. 19th. a wet-suit, sleeping bag and rucksack were removed from a car at the "Hunters". Therefore it would be advisable to lock ones cars at all times, and care should be taken that the Cottage is not left unlocked when empty.

TRAINING TRIPS.

Although not as dangerous as the national press would have us believe, caving does provide situations which are potentially dangerous. It is the policy of all responsible caving clubs to ensure that all members are conversant with basic techniques of safe caving. The vertical descent or ascent is a common source of danger and it is wise therefore, for caving clubs to ensure that members can rig a ladder and a lifeline belay safely and can operate a lifeline, tie a bowline knot, climb the ladder correctly and use the three whistle signals. Personal safety should be given careful consideration. Adequate clothing must be worn in addition to protective headgear and footwear. Two efficient forms of lighting should be carried along with appropriate maintenance items such as carbide, prickers, bulbs and batteries. A whistle will be advisable where long or wet pitches are encountered and, for a trip lasting more than 2 - 3 hours, a quantity of food must be carried.

General behaviour underground is important. New members must recognise the responsibilities of the leader and should be discouraged from using the cave as some sort of playground where he can ignore the others in the party and wander off at will leaving litter and damaging formations. Indeed the whole aspect of cave preservation must be clearly understood and appreciated by all who visit caves. Important too is the caver's conduct in the countryside around the caves where special consideration must be shown towards local inhabitants and their property.

An appreciation of all the foregone points must be shown before a probationary member can become a full member with all the Group's resources available to him. Before full membership can be granted the candidate is required to attend a training trip which will be led by a Committee member or an authorised full member who will observe the abilities of the candidate to carry out simple basic techniques and show himself a responsible member of a caving party. The leader will make out

a report, in the form of a questionnaire, which will then be handed to the Committee for attention. Probationary members should give adequate notice of their training trip requirements to enable a leader to be arranged. A study of one of the two following books will give a clear but concise account of caving techniques:-

"Cavecraft" - D. Cons (Publ. by Harrap & Sons, London, 1966)

"Caving and Potholing" - D. Robinson & A. Greenbank (Publ. by Constable, London, 1964).

A. J. Knibbs.

CAP LAMP FLEX.

The replacement of cap lamp flex may not prove to be as simple as it seems. A description of the specially laid material as manufactured by British Insulated Callenders Cables Follows:-

"40/.0076 inch flexible cord, twin core, conductors of high conductivity tinned copper wires, insulated with vulcanised rubber, two cores, one red, one black, twisted in a close spiral around a fire resisting treated textile strain cord, and sheathed overall with fire, oil and weather resisting polychloroprene compound to BSS 937 Ref. 0282A".

I would be interested to hear if anyone wishes to buy any, as the minimum quantity supplied is 50 yds., costing approx. £6.10. (2/9 per yard). The very tight lay means that the cable is unlikely to kink and break.

Malcolm Cotter.

G.B. CAVE.

Unfortunately a few people have been using carbide lamps in the ladder dig series in G.B. Cave and in recent weeks carbide dumping has become evident. Everyone has been asked to co-operate in enforcing the ban on carbide lamps in this extension.

The boulder choke on the route to Bat Passage is rather unstable, and earlier this month a number of sizable slabs of rock moved. Extreme care must be taken when going through the choke.

A survey of the G.B. Extension should be ready in Dec. from the Librarian, University of Bristol Speleological Society, University of Bristol. Price: 3/6 post free.

BONES FROM COOPER'S HOLE.

The bones taken from Cooper's Hole earlier this year were shown to Dr. Sutcliffe by Robbie Charnock. Surprisingly they were found to be recent. They were found at the highest point in Staircase passage which means that some 8 - 15 feet of spoil presumably lay above.

Malcolm Cotter.

QUOTE: by Maureen Woollacott on entering the Cottage for the first time:- "..... but it's Clean!"

ALL IN A WEEKEND'S WORK.

A large majority of recruits to the Club come from the Scouts, so with this in mind and remembering that I started caving with the Scouts, I said yes to introducing a party of six to the rigours and pleasures of caving in the raw.

I'm sure they were very sceptical at first, so down we went to Swildon's, the Upper Series - Wet Way to the Forty foot, back up the Short Dry, then back down the Pretty Way and returning by the Wet Way again and out in two and a half hours; almost routine stuff; their enthusiasm was rising.

That evening - Saturday - while three of us were comfortably sitting yarning, a message came to the cottage that there were two people unable to scale the Forty foot pitch in Swildon's, due to increase in water level after heavy rain for several hours. Dave Mitchell, myself and a scouting buddy went to Main's Barn to investigate and to offer our help if necessary. We found a small party had gone underground to see if they could lend a hand. In the meantime we wandered over to the entrance to find a roaring torrent, even going down the rabbit burrow - so different from the gentle stream at 3.00 p.m. Back we went to find Fred Davies hot from the Wessex 'do'. He decided to find out the score for himself so I volunteered to accompany him. When he saw the level of the water he dispatched a runner for the fire brigade. Plunging through the raging torrents we were in a different cave. We came to Jacobs Ladder where we found the previous party with the two to be rescued; they had managed to scale the Forty foot unaided. A mad panic ensued to stop the fire brigade from coming, which was successfully done. Luckily a false alarm but it does show how unpredictable conditions can get in a few hours.

Next day a trip to Eastwater was planned, so braving the cave without wet-suits, we followed the very convenient (for me) white cord avoiding the boulder ruckle, through the bedding plane, a few moans and groans here, to the first of the twin pots. Over the traverse to the Dolphin and back with the loss of only one carbide lamp (in the impenetrable bedding plane). Everyone thought that this trip was more exciting than Swildon's!

I feel now that I have done my bit in introducing prospective new members, for most of them asked when could they go again, as if they had not had enough.

Arthur Spain.

RESCUE PRACTICE - 5TH. NOVEMBER.

Having altered the venue for this practice from G.B. Cavern to Longwood Swallett, we eventually chose Goatchurch Cavern since heavy rainfall threatened to make progress in an active system rather uncomfortable. A distinct shortage of rescuers necessitated taking the casualty out via the shortest route from the Water Chamber and emerging at the smaller, or Tradesman's Entrance. The supposed injury was broken leg and casualty unconscious. No medical preamble was carried out. The

exercise was directed simply to gain experience of transporting the casualty in a carrying sheet through passages of varied shape and size. The choice of Gostchurch Cavern illustrated how an otherwise easy cave becomes appreciably difficult from the cave rescue aspect.

My comments on the proceedings are made from the point of view of the casualty; a unique position from which to observe the efforts of the rescue team at work.

Few unconscious casualties could have complied with the request to "lie down on the carrying sheet then"! as I did. The casualty having been trussed up, the serious thrutching commenced. The first shortcoming was a tendency for many voices to give opinions of the more difficult moves to the effect that the leader had difficulty making his instructions heard and acted upon. The casualty suffered some discomfort from lashing ropes bearing against his throat and face during the early stages. Frequent advocacy of the casualty being fitted with goggles would seem inadvisable from my experience since they would have been displaced frequently and caused discomfort; the handkerchief seemed satisfactory. The passage forms traversed required resting the casualty on the ground very often. A folded blanket was in position between casualty and carrying sheet and this took most of the unpleasantness out of it. However not enough care was taken regarding the comfort of the casualty and his losing body heat. If dry, even ground cannot be found then rescuers must form themselves into a human platform. Dropping the casualty is not only uncomfortable but dangerous; this only occurred once. Towards the end of the exercise the rescue team began to move the casualty in a slapdash way, pulling him over rough terrain where the position of the casualty was semi-wedged and unprepared. Where dragging is necessary some effort should be made to fill the more marked undulations in the floor with rocks, mud or a body if large enough to hold one. The leader must at all times co-ordinate the efforts of the team and ensure that all is ready before ordering a move. The team of seven did well to bring the casualty out to daylight in under $1\frac{3}{4}$ hours.

As a footnote I would like to reiterate my request for ideas on the manufacture of a specialist cave rescue stretcher-cum-carrying sheet. The apparatus should possess the property of being either rigid or flexible as desired. Suspension points for both horizontal and vertical lifting must be considered and some thought should be given to the inclusion of adequate padding for casualty comfort and protection. Ideas on suitable materials would also be welcome.

Tony Knibbs.

FAIRY CAVES QUARRY.

All the caves in this quarry have been closed to cavers for a three month period commencing October 8th. The

reason given is possible danger. The entrance to Fairy Cave was partially covered with large limestone blocks on the above date.

KNAPP HILL.

A party comprising Dave Mitchell, Allan Wicks, Bryn Davies and myself went to the swallet to continue work. Although a lot of rain had fallen previously most of the stream water continued down the valley. Spoil was removed from the shaft and a new fence was erected. Dave states that there is about four feet or so to go vertically before the old level is reached. Further improvements on the fence are still required.

Malcolm Cotter.

BLACKMOOR.

At the beginning of ~~NOVEMBER~~ September the lower dig in Blackmoor received attention. The floor was lowered about four feet until rock was reached. This rock is still relatively soft red sandstone. The crack where water disappears in wet weather continues downwards and is about four inches wide. It may be possible to see further down after the stream has cleared some of the mud this winter. I still consider this way could offer access to the cave.

We visited the cave at the beginning of November after rain which had not, however, been heavy enough to form the enormous pool sometimes seen. From the bottom of the shaft we could hear the roar of the stream below. The lowest passage contained about six inches of water and a voluminous fall existed near the lowest point which was flooded to about four feet. A slight inward air current was detected in the rift leading from Don's Chamber.

Malcolm Cotter.

NOVEMBER 19th./20th.

Pete and I arrived on Saturday afternoon to see evidence on the board of trips in progress to Eastwater (by Brian Hillman, Sheila, some scouts and two South Wales cavers) and Burrington caves (by Mike Nightingale's scout group). A further expedition took place at the dreadful hour of midnight to Cuckoo Cleaves, by Brian, Sheila, Tony Buchan and the South Wales people.

On Sunday Mike Nightingale's group set off for Swildon's and Ubley Hill Pot, this latter trip being decided upon after finding that the Pinetree keys have not yet been returned. Brian, James Cobbett and myself showed our Welsh friends the splendours of the Longwood/August System. After a slight holdup when we discovered that the previous party who should have left the entrance open, had locked it

~~and taken the key into the cave,~~ We eventually got in using a second key. We went down the wet chimney route into August Hole but the amount of water was not uncomfortable. James cursed his length as he thrutched along the drainpipe, and then we passed uneventfully down fault pitch. We made a rapid trip to the downstream termination of the cave and then up into the Cxbows for nosh and reassuring stories of cave fatalities! On the spoil heap at the entrance to Sand Passage, there was a plant of some description growing on what is probably decayed food. It had three or four stalks, about $4\frac{1}{2}$ - 5 inches long, and at the end of each one was a pale green, rather leaf-like structure. It seems unusual to me that there should be any green colour in a plant growing in a cave environment.

We didn't have time to explore the Upper Stream Series. James and I went out via Christmas Crawl and met the others at the bottom of the ten foot pitch. We had arrived back at the cars and stripped off boiler suits when Brian realised that he had lost his car keys somewhere in the cave. Fortunately we found them in the pool at the bottom of the entrance shaft and a long walk home was avoided.

J.C.R.

MEET PROGRAMME.

Nov. 26th/27th. SOUTH WALES, Penwyllt.
Dec. 10th/11th. MENDIP - Lamb Leer (Sunday).
Christmas - Dec. 24th/26th. MENDIP - festive occasion!
Visit to Gough's Cave.

The 1967 Meet Programme will be circulated with the December Newsletter.

COMMITTEE.

Secretary - Brian Mee, 68 Seaton Gdns, Ruislip Manor, Middx.
Tel. SK7 3485
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.
Tacklemaster - Pete Goddard, 11 Lebanon Park, Twickenham, Mdx.
Tel. POP 6057
Recorder - Pete Mathews, 155 Radcliffe Way, Yeading Green,
Greenford, Middx.
Editor - Joan Robinson.

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