

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 52.

DECEMBER, 1966.

HAPPY CHRISTMAS !!!

and a prosperous New Year. (so that you can afford to pay your annual subscription which is due on 1st. January).

CLUB NEWS.

Pinetree Keys - These have now been returned to the club, after being missing for a number of weeks. M.C.G. members are reminded that they may supply Pinetree keys to callers at the cottage on payment of 10/- deposit.

The Library. - Yes, we do have one. Although most of its contents have removed themselves from Mendip and are now resident in London again. Accordingly, I must apologise to the members who use it for any inconvenience this might cause. (Is this apology necessary?).

At present Library work involves sorting and stock-taking. In conjunction with this work materials are urgently required. These include, in the order of urgency:-

Quarto box-files (one dozen), binding tape (I would prefer black, linen-based tape, although this is not essential), binders and files (various shapes and sizes for binding volumes of newsletters, thin cardboard folders would be sufficient), polythene (a thick variety for book binding) and any other item of stationary that might be thought useful.

Remember, that as a last resort some of the material might actually have to be bought.

Pete Mathews.
Hon. Librarian.

I LEFT TEETH MARKS ON EVERY RUNG. - Review

With this highly descriptive phrase on ladder-climbing, 'Anon', nears the end of a very amusing article about the varied joys of caving, in the first Journal of the London University Caving Clubs (Chelsea College Caving Club, Imperial College Caving Club, and University College, London, Speleological Society). The Journal provides an interesting mixture of humour, 'tourist' trip reports, new exploration reports and reviews, and is now available in our library.

MEET PROGRAMME, 1967.

The Club programme of meets is circulated to members with this issue of the newsletter. It will be helpful if people wishing to take part in a meet will let the Meet Secretary know of their intentions. It is also to be hoped that members will arrange their own trips to supplement the programme.

VISIT TO DAN-YR-OGOF, 26th. November.

The long-awaited trip to Wales was at last reality. At about lunchtime on Saturday a party consisting of Mig, Joan, Pete Munt, Arthur Spain, Sheila, Brian Hillman descended D.y.O. led by Alan Coase and accompanied by some bods from S.W.C.C. and Wessex?. The initial part of the cave was traversed with ease, and after slight lamp trouble we waded across the four lakes which were unusually low, and then climbed into the upper series. At the time we were burdened with various pieces of ironmongery which Alan Coase wanted to erect at the end of the crawl as a 'ladder'. We encountered slight difficulty in route-finding but eventually emerged to view Straw Chamber; the stalactites in this chamber were very profuse and were up to five feet long.

After a brief stop we carried on at great speed as the main object of the trip was to visit the new extension. The long crawl was neither tight nor technically difficult, but it did seem endless at one stage. At the end of the long crawl, reached after thirty minutes, a ladder pitch of some 15 feet was negotiated. We at once found ourselves in a large hall with a rock and mud floor (Gerrard Platten Hall). Isolated formations, both mud and stalagmite, were to be seen. At the end of this hall a large crystal pool sparkled in the light of our lamps. The edge of the pool was encrusted rimstone crystals and there were also delicate floating 'rafts' of calcite. Two ways led on: Straight ahead lay a passage about 6 feet wide by 10 feet high, almost completely symmetrical. This was Flabbergasm. The floor was covered in mud formations, and there was a straw column 8 - 9 feet in length. The passage terminated abruptly after 200 feet in a drop (Flabbergasm Chasm) into a vadose trench.

The way on to the left of the crystal pool led to a large passage which proved to be the vadose trench seen previously. This contained some remarkable formations including red straws and bands of helictites along cracks and joints in the walls. This passage merged into a 5 ft. high bedding plane and we had to zig zag in and out of the straw columns. After about 100 feet the passage became larger and on our right we came upon a 'man' hunched as though in meditation formed of startlingly red stal (the Red Monk). We continued between the formations until we reached the Green Canal, but before tackling this hazard we turned left and climbed up into Hanger Passage. This passage was ginormous, being about 50' by 50' and 100 yds. long. The floor was covered in a thick mud with ripple marks on it. The passage was almost straight and terminated in a huge boulder pile about 100 ft. high which has not yet been pushed.

We then returned to the beginning of Green Canal. This passage was reminiscent of the main stream passage in O.F.D. except that instead of a swift stream it contained still, green water. The passage was 5 ft. wide and of unknown depth,

and it meandered for about 70 yards. We crossed this with the aid of two rubber dingies and much floundering. A similar passage continued on dry land until a chasm was reached where there were some fine examples of striation in the floor. It was at this point that, after several frights in a boulder choke, we returned over the same route noticing yet more beautiful formations and other phenomena. We surfaced after seven hours underground. Alan Coase and three others continued to Dan-yr-Ogof III and found some more new passage.

B.S.H.

The following weekend, Alan Coase gave a slide-show at the Belfry. Some superb photographs were shown, including the ones reproduced in the 'Observer' supplement.

The Welsh Tourist Board has awarded an 'Oscar' to Dan-yr-Ogof Caves Ltd. for being the single greatest attraction to visitors to Wales.

TUNNEL CAVE - 26th. November.

Spurning the comforts of a trip to Dan-yr-Ogof, the tigers of the club decided to tackle the rigours of Tunnel Cave. After waiting three-quarters of an hour at the locked entrance we discovered the key hidden close by, and after much cursing we duly entered the stream passage which forms the first part of the cave.

Climbing up through some boulders we soon found ourselves in the most impressive part of the cave, Davey Price's Hall. We strolled through here ten abreast, admiring the size of the chamber and the formations. Then we entered the rift passages which form much of the cave. Tearing through these at great speed, the wet-suited members of the party became somewhat dehydrated and after some distance a halt was called in order to revive them, and to indulge in an orgy of dried apricot eating.

At this point we decided to turn back via another route in order to avoid a cave rescue practice. We received a description of the route back but this was rather vague, so, after passing through a beautiful sandy passage, we found the route was leading upwards rather than downwards towards the way out.

Retracing our steps we found a small side passage which formed a natural helter skelter. We slid down this with great delight and soon found ourselves on the route back to Davey Price's Hall where those with wet-suits wallowed thankfully in a small stream. Then it was time to make a hurried exit as it was fast approaching opening time.

Pete Virgo.

LLYGAD LLWCHWR (No. 18) - 27th. November.

On the Sunday, after some deliberation with two of my Welsh friends, we decided to visit Llygad Llŵchwr (pronounced as spelt). So Glen and Howell of Gower C. S., Brian Pittman, Allan Wicks, Sheila and myself set out in three cars for said

hole. When we arrived at the cave, which no-one ever visits, we found 24 other people already down there.

This cave has 1,200 ft. of passage, with mud slides, crawls, and four lakes in which we happily splashed about for hours. On a ledge of rock in the third lake we found an extremely rare formation - a calcite toadstool 3" diam. 3" high on a $\frac{3}{8}$ " diameter stem. This phenomenon is formed by a stalagmite becoming surrounded by mud, and the flattened portion being formed on top of the mud, the mud then being washed away leaving a toadstool which continues to grow. In the fourth river chamber, reached by twentyfive feet of ladder, the passage obviously continued under water and has been followed for a considerable distance by cave divers. Also, a small well-decorated grotto was found. We surfaced after about four hours; a very enjoyable trip.

B.S.H.

QUOTE: Overheard in the Cottage from the discourse of Mike Quartermain.

"It's more difficult coming out of Easy Street, it's uphill"!

PINETREE.

One weekend in October, Greg Smith, Mike Nightingale et al. got into a small aven above Rumble Pitch, and this prompted an expedition with the purpose of pegging fourth aven. After a great deal of swinging about in Pine Pitch investigating various ledges, Greg Smith, Pete Virgo and I proceeded to Rumble Rift. In order to put off the inevitable thrutching about in Easy Street as long as possible I embarked on a climb into the roof. The 'rock' bore a close resemblance to stiff porridge, and quantities of debris descended upon my unfortunate companions as I scrabbled to the top. Naturally, every hole was choked, but rather than retreat defeated, I commenced a grotty rightwards traverse, from which a sort of alcove was visible, towards which Greg was also climbing. After some hairy straddling in an airy situation I reached the alcove, Greg's climb having proved impossible. I scrambled into a passage which appeared to choke. However, on the right, a crawl about two feet high could be seen leading off, ascending gradually. After a peg had been shakily secured, I was joined by Pete and Greg. After all this effort, of course, the passage choked after a short distance, and after lowering the ladder I reversed the traverse. My troubles, though, were not over, for, catching sight of a hole half way across, I climbed into it. For connoisseurs of rotten rock this place offers unique pleasures, there being no firm holds at all. Several small holes led off the shattered ledge at the top, but the area was so loose that I retreated.

After this diversion we set off for Easy Street. Since Pete was unable to manage the first bend, being six foot two (!) Greg and I trogged along the horrible hole, but my legs must

have grown somewhat since I last passed this way, for I failed to negotiate the blasted bend beyond third aven. Disgusted, I retreated, while Greg went on, reporting that fourth aven seemed to offer little promise of an extension. After a swift return to the surface, we walked back to the cottage in a freezing wind, nearly succeeding in being the first frost-bitten cavers on Mendip.

Mike Quartermain.

REPORT ON LADDER DIG SERIES.

The 1965-66 Proceedings of the U.B.S.S. contains a number of interesting articles including one on the new extension to G.B. Cave. After a brief history of the exploration of the cave, there is a description of the new part. Prospects for further extension are discussed and a short report is appended on the bacteriology of the series.

An informative article on limestone quarrying in the Mendips makes one realise how much our caves are in jeopardy. The author, W.I. Stanton, suggests ways in which the damage to the natural beauty of Mendip can be minimised.

J.C.R.

MEET PROGRAMME.

Christmas on Mendip - Yippee!!

Jan. 7th./8th. MENDIP - Eastwater Swallet (Saturday)

January 28th/29th. MENDIP - G.B. Cave (Saturday)
Lamb Leer (Sunday)

February 18th/19th. MENDIP - Swildon's Hole: I - II (Saturday)

COMMITTEE.

Secretary - Brian Mee, 88 Seaton Gdns., Ruislip Manor, Mdx.

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, W.4.

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

Recorder - Pete Mathews, 155 Radcliffe Way, Northolt, Mdx.

Editor - Joan Robinson.

JCR

MENDIP CAVING GROUP.
MEET PROGRAMME 1967.

January 7th./8th. MENDIP - Eastwater Swallet (Sat).
January 28th./29th. MENDIP - G.B. Cave (Sat.).
Lamb Leer (Sun.).

February 18th./19th. MENDIP - Swildon's Hole I - II (Sat.).

March 4th./5th. MENDIP - Longwood/August System
"Operation Springclean" (Sun.).
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND DINNER.

EASTER.

March 24th./27th. DEVON - Buckfastleigh area. Reed's Cave,
Bakers Pit, Pridhamsleigh Cave.
Visit to Pengelly Cave Research
Centre. Camping.

April 8th./9th. MENDIP - St. Guthbert's Swallet (Sat.).

April 22nd./23rd. MENDIP - Swildon's Hole IV and Vicarage
Passage (Sat.).

WHITSUN.

May 13th./15th. DERBYSHIRE - Giant's Hole, Jackpot (P.8).

May 27th./28th. MENDIP - Longwood/August System; Rescue
Practice (Sat.).

June 10th./11th. MENDIP - Stoke Lane Slocker (Sat.)

June 24th./25th. SOUTH WALES - Penwyllt. Dan -yr- Ogof II,
O.F.D., Pwll Dwf'n or Pwll Pant
Mawr. S.W.C.C. accommodation.

July 22nd./Aug. 6th. JUGOSLAVIA - Postojina/Lubliana area.
Fourteen-day visit travelling by
coach. Advance Bookings only.

BANK HOLIDAY.

August 26th./28th. YORKSHIRE - Notts Pot, Gingling Hole
(Fountains Fell). Camping at
Newby Cotes.

September 16th./17th. MENDIP - Swildon's I - IV or Longwood/
August System.

September 30th./Oct. 1st. MENDIP - HALF YEARLY GENERAL MEETING.

October 21st/22nd. MENDIP - St. Cuthbert's Swallet (Sat.).

November 11th./12th. SOUTH WALES - Penwyllt. Tunnel Cave,
Dan-yr-Ogof II, Llygad Llŵchwr.
S.W.C.C. accommodation.

December 2nd./3rd. MENDIP - G.B. Cave (Sat.).
Lamb Leer (Sun.).

NOTES. All persons visiting caves in the Charterhouse area
(this includes Blackmoor Swallet) must be in possession of
a Charterhouse Caving Committee Permit. These may be obtained
from the Hon. Meet Secretary.

Prior Notice would be appreciated from persons wishing to
attend meets in areas other than Mendip, and rescue practices on
Mendip

20th. December 1966.

Tony Knibbs
Hon. Meet Secretary.
2 Rectory Lane,
Byfleet,
Surrey.