

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 55

MARCH, 1967.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The meeting was held at the cottage on March 4th at 4pm. The chairman was Robbie Charnock and apologies for absence were received from Arthur Spain, Pat Walsh and Mike Brace. The minutes of the last meeting were read and accepted.

Secretary's Report (Brian Mee)

Membership; break down of membership

28 full members
21 probationary members
9 associate members
58 total membership.

Rates; for the cottage we now pay 11gns pa. This may well be reduced to 5gns on the grounds that we are a scientific body. The Younge are leaving Lower Farm and the new tenants will find right of access to Longwood August written into the lease.

Treasurer's Report. (Tony Fitzgibbon)

A statement of accounts was circulated. In the cottage Land Purchase Fund there is a total of £71.4.6. and a total of £98.13.3. in the General Fund. It was pointed out that some subscriptions had not yet been paid (so pay up).

Meet Secretary's Report (Tony Knibbs)

Meets have gone well and have been well attended. Brian Hilman has taken over the Yugoslavia meet and bookings are nearly complete. The party numbers 20 and there is still room for another 3.

Tacklemaster's Report (Peter Goddard)

Replacement of the old 12in Ladder has not been started but is in good condition and can be kept for a little while longer. Tony Knibbs suggested that some knobbly Dogs be made. Tackle is being abused. It is not the Tacklemasters job to clean tackle after use. Ladders should be washed and wound correctly before being put away. Damage has been noted from this point not being observed. GREATER CARE OF TACKLE IS NEEDED.

Editor's Report (Joan Robinson)

The Journal has now been published and everyone should help sell it. Newsletters are being distributed at the end of each month 112 in all, 64 to members, 28 on exchange and 15 or so to prospective members. Surveys; total sales have been £26 (profit £8). The survey cupboard is now complete and surveys will be available each weekend. Joan reminded us of her resignation and hoped that everyone will continue to write stuff for the next editor.

Cottage Warden's Report. (Pat Walsh, absent)

No report. The chairman observed that the hard work put in by Pat in the building of the cottage speaks for itself.

Recorder's Report (Peter Mathews)

As yet no work has been done on the Index. Most of the work has been done on reviewing exchanges with other clubs. There has been no response to the appeals for binding materials and these will now have to be purchased. It is not proposed to publish a library list since some of the library will always be resident in London. Peter felt that inquires dealing with the library could be best dealt with by asking him.

Amendment to the Constitution and Rules

Malcolm Cotter said that lately people had been joining the club without anyone knowing who they were. He proposed that people applying for probationary membership should have their names and addresses, posted on the notice board for one month and also in the current edition of the newsletter.

It was pointed out that only three people had joined the club in the last six months. Peter Munt said that probationary membership was so that people could be introduced to the club and might not be well known until full membership was granted. Brian Mee proposed the following amendment to the Constitution and Rules section 3B "whose names have already been published as prospective members in the newsletter. The amendment was passed.

Other Business

Malcolm Cotter said that singing and bad language were all too common in the cottage. Brian Mee replied by saying that the committee was fully aware of the position and that discrete action was usually taken. The meeting agreed that rowdy behaviour and the use of foul words should neither be encouraged or condoned.

Mike Nightingale felt that people using the sink at the same time for cooking and washing was a bad thing. It was decided that alternative washing facilities would be provided if at all possible.

The caving trip board is not being used in the correct fashion. Times of exit and destination are not being kept to. This is important as this practice will lead to disregard for the board. For overnight trips parties should either make arrangements for their activities to be noted or confine their activities to trivial expeditions.

Election of Officers

Secretary	Brian Mee	defeated	Malcolm Cotter.
Editor	Mike Brace	defeated	Arthur Spain.
Tackle Master	Greg Smith	defeated	Tony Ingold.

Received here

Meet Secretary: Tony Knibbs.
Cottage Warden: Peter Goddard.
Assistant Editor: Tony Knibbs (non committee).

Membership. The following people were made full members of the club in February:-

Dave Hankin - 134 St. James Road, Watford, Herts
Greg Smith - 132 Hagdon Lane, Watford, Herts.

A number of people have expressed interest in joining the group and their names are listed below in accordance with the amendment to the Constitution and Rules which was passed at the Annual General Meeting.

Tony Buchan	Colin Carson
John Maxwell	Dave Bacon
Clive Newing	Ron Margetts
John Mugridge	Bridget Moberly
Geoff Filton	Glen Jones
Kevin Mellon	Don Pickrell
Richard Peat	Peter Jonson
John Hookins	Steve Smith
Bob Hobbs	Steve Hogan
Bryn Davies	Ken Newcomb
Brian Hammond	

SURVEYS

Joan Robinson is still responsible for the distribution of cave surveys, and a comprehensive selection is available. They can be obtained on Thursday evenings at the Royal Oak, Brentford, and at weekends at the cottage.

INSURANCE

Several people have asked me where I managed to find a company who would include caving and its associate risks in a life assurance policy. That company is the Legal and General Assurance Society Ltd., Temple Court, 11 Queen Victoria Street, London E.C.4. Policies vary with circumstances but mine worked out to about £7 a year extra, which I thought was quite good. After ten years this extra is finished with and the premium is as normal; I expect the company think that ten years would see the finish of such dangerous activities! My business was conducted through a friend of mine who is an employee of the company and fully qualified. I found him most helpful personally.

Mr. J. B. Hunter, A.C.I.I. Insurance Consultant,

"Roselea"

42 Roseacre Lane,

Bearsted

Maidstone, Kent

YUGOSLAVIA

Just a 'gentle reminder' that the initial £5 deposit from each member of the party is required by the end of March. Please pay Brian Hilman who is in charge of the arrangements. His address for those who do not know is:-

24 Kidderminster Rd., West Croydon, Surrey.
Tel. Croydon 8513.

THE ANNUAL DINNER

The Group annual dinner was held this year at the Charterhouse Country Club, and it was supported by about 60 people. Mig proposed a toast to the guests and the reply was given by John Ball of Axbridge. The dinner was highly successful and we finally left at about 12.30 a.m. and made the hazardous trek back to the cottage.

J.C.R.

EXPOSURE & SURVIVAL

A one day symposium on Exposure and Survival has been organised by the C.C.P.R. to be held at Loughborough University on Sunday, April 9 from 10 a.m. to 5p.m. All aspects of accidental hypothermia (the effect of cold on the body) of interest to cavers, walkers, climbers and campers will be discussed by medical and rescue experts. Dr. Oliver Lloyd is one of the speakers.

COST £1. Further details from Pedro - applications close on March 31.

COOPERS HOLE, 12th March

The largest digging party for sometime assembled at Coopers Hole, they included Robby, Arthur Cox, Olly, Bob Knott, and myself. Half the time was spent clearing the railway line of silt, and the rest a collapse of debris from the bottom of the stairway rift. This had come from the wall and consisted of angular blocks cemented by soft tufa.

Malcolm Cotter

EASTWATER SWALLET Sunday, 26th. Feb.

A gentlemanly trip via the Twin Vertical route with some people new to Eastwater.

We went across into Harris' Passage and whilst the others explored Ifold Series I decide to have a look at Phil Davies' modification to the Dolphin Pot route. It now avoids the Bold Step and may be difficult to find from the bottom, but if descending it is easily found by going down the 30ft. pitch and then continuing to the highest point of the boulder floor where a low crawl leads into Harris' Passage.

Having arrived at the bottom of the pitch I decided it could be climbed; after lining the rest of the party up, and ascending Dolphin Pot itself we reached the Cross-roads only to discover that all our tackle, including a bag containing food and spare carbide, was on the Twin Vertical route. I left the others to face the prospect of recovering the tackle!

SWILDON'S HOLE. Monday .27th. Feb.

Mike Boon, on a flying reappearance in Mendip with some eight Northern hard cases, was making a big push on Sump 12. Tackle was ferried into the cave on Saturday, Sunday was rest day, and the party went underground early on Monday, i.e. about 10.30 a.m. Monday was a day of hard rain and when Phil Romford and I met at 7.30 p.m. we were worried about possible flood. We changed and were at the cave entrance by 9.00 p.m., surprised to find a very low stream. Bob Craig remained as surface watchdog. We reached sump 2 by 9.45 p.m., then had a tedious wait (during which lewd crude songs were sung to maintain spirits) until exactly midnight when Harry Frakes erupted from Sump 2. Gas supplies were running very short and cylinders with air remaining in them were having to be ferried back and forth between 2 and 3. We made a couple of trips between sumps 2 and 1 carrying out kit, then struggling from Sump 1 to the surface with approximately two packs and two cylinders per man. All gear, except one cylinder mislaid on the way, was removed from the cave by 3.00 a.m.

I did get to work on Tuesday. Although I have not been able to talk much with Mike about his progress, there were burblings of the possibility of an air space having been sighted just as their gas supplies were getting low. The whole party, of whom about five reached Swildon's Twelve, were highly impressed by the trip and eager for a second bash.

Fred Davies

DISAPPOINTMENT IN LONG HOLE

This story begins on the 1st of August 1954 when a number of the M.C.G. were carefully looking at some of the caves in Cheddar Gorge, including the Long Hole. We found a narrow chimney close to the climb into the upper passage of this cave and followed it. After a climb of about 25ft the tube arched over and plunged ~~xxxx~~ downwards for about 8ft. This formed really the best example of a siphon tube that I can think of. One could not see clearly what happened at the bottom but a passage appeared to lead off. It was not possible to turn round and go in feet first and due to its tightness a retreat without tackle may have been impossible. So the matter had to rest, not in my mind however, and I always intended to return with tackle.

On the 11th of March 67 an occasion arose when due to the A.G.M. a long trip could not be undertaken and there were several interested members who had not seen the Long Hole. Our party consisted of Norma, Bob Knott, Greg Smith, Mike Nightingale and Myself. After looking over the rest of the cave we decided to attempt the chimney. When I arrived at the top I found that there was less room than I thought. As someone had already volunteered Greg to have a go, I moved from the aperture to allow his access to the tube. I attached a life line to his waist length and watched his boots disappear down the tube.

A little way in Greg reported that the passage although tight had every indication of virgin cave. At this point he suggested that someone join him, so over the bend I went and plunged downwards to a dead stop. I remained in this upside down yoga pose until I replaced my knife with a carbide lamp. Before I reached Greg he had reported some initials and a date, 1957. A very narrow bedding plane lead on, but proved too tight for us to follow.

With help from the people above we made our return safely. So ended one of the most difficult pieces of exploration I have tackled.

Malcomb Cotter

DUSTMEN FOR A DAY

The morning after the night of the A.G.M, dinner and drinking session at which I am told we had a very enjoyable time, I was conned into talking as many people as possible into going down Longwood for the annual spring clean. After about 2 hrs. fifteen unwilling volunteers were persuaded that they wanted to spend Sunday being unpaid dustmen, only one member of the committee felt it necessary to support this venture.

On reaching said hole we quickly changed and made our way to the main chamber carrying sacks and scrubbing brushes. There was a lot of water coming down the "Shower bath" and down the climb into the main chamber. On reaching the main chamber a small party was immediately dispatched down Fault Pitch to clean the downstream section. Four of us started clearing the main chamber whilst awaiting the others who, when they arrived, volunteered to tackle the upstream section of August then to go downstream to give the first party a hand. The first party however came out and joined up with us in the main chamber.

We proceeded out heavily laden with some metal poles and tripods also some useless telephone wire which has been lying around in August for several years. On the way out we collected rubbish as we went including some 30ft of heavy power cable. After much hard work hauling sacks up the entrance pitch we surfaced after at least 5 hrs leaving the other party still clearing the downstream section. The rubbish removed amounted to six sack fulls, including 40 ft of piping, 200 ft of assorted wire, one tin of sardines (Eaten by Greg Smith), one wearable pair of trousers (appropriated by the tacklemaster), soggy fag ends dried and smoked by Simon, many batteries, sweet papers and other cave rubbish. An attempt was made to remove the spent carbide. Although much of the carbide near running water was scrubbed away, carbide in the drier parts of the cave was extremely difficult to remove and will require another expedition armed with buckets and spades in addition to scrubbing brushes. I therefore suggest that all those committee members who were not able to make it last time might go down in the near future and remove all the remaining spent carbide.

Brian Hilman

MEET PROGRAMME.

April 8th./9th.

MENDIP - St. Cuthbert's Swallet (Sat.).

April 22nd./23rd.

MENDIP - Swildon's Hole, IV and Vicarage
Passage (Sat.).

Whitsun

May 13th./15th.

DEBYSHIRE - Giant's Hole, Jackpot (P.8).

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 - Pete Goddard, 11 Lebanon Park, Twickenham, Middx.
Tacklemaster - Greg Smith - 131 Hagdon Lane, Watford, Herts.
Editor - Mike Brace, 8 Foxfield Close, Northwood, Middx.