

MENDIP CAVING GROUPNEWSLETTER NO. 56.APRIL, 1967NEWS & INTEREST

Ebber Gorge. Ebber Gorge is being presented to the National Trust in memory of Sir Winston Churchill by its owner Mrs. G.W. Hodgkinson. It is to be managed by the Nature Conservancy as a national nature reserve, with public access.

Agi Agi. Everyone will be pleased to hear that blood chit restrictions have now been lifted from Agi Agi.

Slide Show. Another of Malcolms popular slide shows will be held at the Royal Oak on Thursday May 4th at 8.30 p.m.

New Land Owners at Stoke Lang. Although Mr. Stock has sold the farm he has retained ownership of the cave entrance. Cavers should approach the cave from the top road; parking at the lay-by due East of the cave; climb over the stile and follow the public footpath to the entrance.

The new owner is not keen on cavers and the old changing facilities are no longer available. As he is easily annoyed cavers are advised to keep well away from the farm buildings. You have been warned.

Blackmoor. A new winch cable has been fitted, so rapid digging with even more safety is possible. So folks, dig dig dig.

Hire Service Sir? Not ready to buy a wet suit yet?. Hire one from Moss Bros, Ltd in Covent Garden.

Fire Danger. Petersays that the rubber piping on the gas rings in the cottage is exceptionally vulnerable to piercing by hot cooking utensils. Untill the piping has been replaced please take care to keep hot surfaces away from the piping.

Frustration..... Try following 5ft 2in of Greg Smith around the 5ft 2in high passages in Godstons Mine.

Big Laugh. A shop in Tottenham Court Rd. is selling ex. miners Nife Cells at 90/- each.

LIBRARY ADDITIONSDevon Speleological Society

ESS have most kindly sent a number of their journals, Nos. 90-97 (Oct. '64 to Nov. '66)

(90) Wheel Magdalen Mine(s) (S.Cornwall), In Search of

Postojna.

- (91) Cliffords Cave(s), Bunker's Hole(s).
- (93) Reed's Cave - Lower Series(s), The Dohstein Caves (Austria).
- (96) Recent Diving Activities in Devon.
- (97) Bakers Pit Cave.

There is also a series called 'The Minor Caves of Devon', from time to time there are informative samplings from the original Dat Man John Hooper.

LUCC Journal No. 2.

Includes - Expedition to Turkey (1965) and prospects of digging into Swildon's Seven (the digging sites mentioned are Aven Series, bypassing Sump Six, Shatter Chamber and Pirate Chamber).

'Old Mendip' Companion.

A new piece of equipment for armchair cavers entitled 'The History of Mendip Caving' (35/-) by Peter Johnson, will be out soon. It will be a companion volume to 'Old Mendip' by Robin Athill, by the same publishers David and Charles (Macdonald).

OCC Newsletter Feb '67.

This contains an account of the recent fatality in Carlswalk Cavern.

Pete Mathews

MARRIAGE

Warmest congratulations from the Group to James and Ann Gibb on their marriage at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church on the First of April.

REVIEW, 'MENDIP CAVER' APRIL.

The April edition of the 'Mendip Caver' devotes a page to the discovery of the extension to Bridge Cave by the UBSS members at the beginning of the year, and a sketch plan of the system is included. An upper dry entrance has been discovered, which enables non-divers to see the cave, and there are possibilities that Town Drain may also connect. It should be noted that the upper entrance is liable to very sudden flooding.

900ft of new cave has been discovered recently by members of Severn Valley Caving Club. Which may be the reason we do not see them much on Mendip these days. The new cave a low, tight one - is in the Hepste Valley.

The 'Mendip Caver' also gives progress reports on a number of digs and new discoveries on Mendip, one of them being a small chamber in Swildon's high in the wall opposite the 20ft pitch.

J.C.R.

QUOTE (A drunken Malcomb) "I still have my laugh I happen to be more tight than any of the people here",

PHOTOFLASH SLAVE UNIT

Multiple flash techniques are usually performed instantaneously by connecting up flash guns with lengths of cable or by 'open flash' during which one runs around in complete darkness firing off flash bulbs. The first of these is unreliable, that is to say rarely works, whilst the second can be rather dangerous.

Life can be made a lot easier with the assistance of a photoflash slave unit. This is a small, electronic device capable of being attached to the flash gun. The unit will fire the flash gun only when it is triggered by a fast rise time light source i.e. a flash. Since the device is unaffected by high levels of ambient illumination (even daylight) nife and carbide lamps may safely left on the whole time. The flash used to trigger the unit is usually mounted near the camerato which it is also synchronised. Thus all the modified flash guns will also be synchronised to the camera and will fire when the shutter is released

Full details for making a battery powered p.f. slave unit are given in the March edition of Practical Electronics. Not only will Peter Mathews lend you the magazine but will also let you have a circuit for a 'PM' version that doesent need a battery.

Peter Mathews

DEVON Easter 1967.

A small group, eleven in all, spent Easter camped in an orchard at Buckfastleigh. Robbie and Pam Charnock were already in residence when Pete and I arrived early on Thursday evening, and we awoke on Friday morning to find that we had been joined by Pete and John Virgo and Roger Wallington. Barrie Milner, Derek Alwood and two friends arrived later.

Robbie and Pam showed us around the Pengelly Cave Research Centre on Friday, and provided a tour of Joint Mitnor Cave, the paleontological 'show cave' prepared under the direction of Dr. Sutcliffe. The cave has been excavated to show the different strata containing bones of elephant, wolf and deer amongst others; a small artificial tank housed a colony of the blind, almost transparent cave dwelling shrimp, Niphargus. Although the centre has spent a great deal of money on modernising the museum building, there is only one display at present completed (on Calcite Formation). A rather disappointing effort as the Pengelly Centre has been in existence for over three years.

Saturday was used by most people as a generally lazy day, but our Slough Contingent undertook a strenuous trip down Afton Effie cave. We visited the Waterman's Arms in the evening (solely to meet up with our leader for Reed's Cave, you understand). However we saw no sign of other cavers, and on a visit to DSS Headquarters later that evening we were told that there would not after all be a trip down Reed's for us - leaders appeared not to be available for the Easter Weekend!

So Sunday seven of us set off for Baker's Pit with Pete Goddard as Leader. We took the obvious route along the main chamber where there was a great preponderance of mud coating the rocks and formations. A certain amount of grotting about down odd holes resulted in us reaching an old bicycle which I had remembered from a previous visit. "Turn left at the bike" I said. We did, and after a hundred feet or so of wriggling along a small muddy passage containing unavoidable pools, we arrived at a largish chamber. The trouble was, the Chamber was reached via a 20ft. drop and we had no tackle. The long crawl had been of no avail, and my directions were never again needed. Although Baker's Pit is extremely muddy, a little careful searching reveals some rather pleasant formations in small grottoes which are inaccessible to cavers. One calcite 'cascade' showed rhombohedral crystal faces which were described by Mr. A.G. Wells in his Pengelly Association lecture. The Crystal Passage, although muddy, nevertheless showed examples of pool crystallization of calcite and the beginnings of gour formation. In its original state this must have been a very beautiful passage.

On Monday the Meet broke up, and we joined the throngs of motorists fighting their way towards London.

J.C.R.

YORKSHIRE 25th March, Calf Holes.

Dave Hill, Dave Hankin, Ron Margetts and myself walked down to the entrance and waded upstream the 70yds of passage into Browgill Cave. Our exit was Calf Holes which had to be laddered first. Before changing we had inspected the exit and had been assured by a survey party coming out that the water was only two feet deep, Although thundering down the entrance.

Whilst looking for a passage to bypass a waterfall that now confronted us, Dave Hill became covered in soapy foam deposited by an earlier flood. Quite an improvement! Later, being stumped for the way on in an area of small stream passages fed up, we sat down. From here I noticed the way on which though tight led us to a wide low bedding plane and into the Calf Holes system. Re-joining the stream we followed it until it split into two; the right hand section soon sumped but the left hand one turned into a large passage. This stretched for about 100yds until we came to the bottom of the ladder. We climbed it and walked back to the van in a strong gale and snow on the ground threatening to return, soon.

Dave Bacon

QUOTE WSG Bulletin
its water from?"

..... "So where does Cheddar receive

ST. CUTHBERTS SWALLET 8th April

Saturday morning saw a large group of MCG at the Belfry eagerly awaiting to descend St. Cuthberts. We split into two parties and proceeded down the cave via the Old route, crossing to the water chute, where Simon succeeded in drenching several of the party by damming the stream then allowing the water to shower all over the unfortunate victim as he neared the bottom.

We followed the main stream passage to the Rabbit Warren, reaching Plantation Junction via some very nice little passages. Passing through Gour Hall we reached the duck, where enthusiasts went on to the sump.

We returned via Cerberus series, Curtain Chamber and the Cascade. All were well satisfied with an excellent trip except, perhaps, Simon who produced four soggy torn bank-notes from his overalls after the trip. However they were quite usable for the drinking session that evening. The Cuthberts survey by the way is nearing completion 7000ft already surveyed.

Richard Peat

THE MENDIP CAVE REGISTRY

Most cavers on Mendip have heard of the Mendip Cave Registry, and quite a few of them have made some very valuable contributions towards it over the past ten years. but how many know how to avail themselves of the information the Registers provide?

In this article I hope to shed a little light on the workings of the Registry and the Registers.

On the 25th May 1956 the Executive Committee of the Mendip Cave Registry was formed. This Committee comprised of eight people, five of them were Registrars whose job it was to get the information for the registers. The other three were administrative, that is Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. In October, 1962, however the Executive Committee was increased to 16 members of whom 14 were Registrars. This increase enabled the preparation of the Registers for the Libraries to progress much more rapidly, and by October 1963 the first two copies were ready to take their place in the Bristol Central Library and Wells Library. A third copy was kept by the Secretary, both to answer postal inquires and so that it could be kept up to date and exchanged every three months for one of the library copies. The copy removed from the library could then be amended and exchanged for the copy in the other library; in this way the Registers could be kept up to date without the libraries being kept short of a copy.

The placing of the registers at Bristol and Wells did not mean the end of the work for, the Registry, far from it. The Executive Committee immediately began investigating various methods of reproducing the Register at an economical price so that it could be offered to interested bodies.

Eventually it was decided to use the Rank Xerox method of copying, and the work of bringing the Secretary's copy up to date began. This entailed revising the existing pages, reading club publications and personal caving logs and diaries, as well as the field work of checking various sites of caving and speleological interest. Work progressed steadily for the next three years, and in June 1966, over two hundred registry sheets were Xeroxed and made into six new copies of the register. Two of these copies have been sold, complete with binders to the Bristol Central Reference Library and the Somerset County Library. The Cave Research Group and the Somerset Archaeological and Natural History Society have also purchased copies.

The Registers are based on the Ordnance Survey 2½" to the mile maps. Each sheet forms a division of the register. The maps are filed in ascending numerical order with the quarter sheets placed in the order SW, NW, SE and NE. The relevant information on caves etc. is typed on ledger sheets and these are filed following the quarter sheets on which they appear. The Type of information given on the sheets is:-

- (a) Type of site; e.g. Cave, Swallet, Depression etc.
- (b) Grid reference - to eight figures (10 meters) if possible.
- (c) All known names, if any.
- (d) Owner and tenant of land.
- (e) Restrictions on access.
- (f) Brief notes on the cave.
- (g) References in books etc, of scientific or historical interest.
- (h) Details of any survey(s) available.

The brief notes only include a full description of the site if this is not available in a readily accessible book such as Barrington's "Caves of Mendip". It is not intended that the register should be an enlarged form of this book but that it should give information not readily obtainable elsewhere, references to the more readily available information and detailed accounts. It is hoped that, in particular, the Register will be of most use to a person wishing to either find out what has already been recorded about a site, or looking for a reference to specific information on a certain cave.

The work of the Registry will never be completed while caving is carried out on Mendip and if anyone would like to help in this work they can contact me at the Belfry most weekends. The work, as I have said before, consists mainly of literature searching and fieldwork. The former involves reading caving books and club publications so that they can be included on the relevant Register sheet - a nice easy way to do your caving: the latter consists of walking over the ground looking for sites; more strenuous than the other but a very pleasant way of spending an afternoon or two.

Anyone who has personal caving diaries containing descriptions of original explorations, digs, etc is also asked to contact the Cave Registry in order that the information in the diaries can be recorded in the Register for the benefit of other cavers. People with these diaries may be interested to know that it has been arranged for any caving diaries or caving photographs of historical interest that are donated or bequeathed to the Registry to be stored in the Somerset Record Office at Taunton. Here they will be readily available for reference by anyone interested, but as no-one is allowed to take them away there is no longer danger of them ever being lost. Furthermore they will not come under the control of any single club, which could make it difficult for the average caver to consult them.

Gordon Tilley.

1966 RESCUES A RECORD

There was a record number of rescues on Mendip during the 12 months ending January 31st, reveals the annual report of the MRO.

Of the thirteen rescues, seven were in Swildons, two in St.Cuthberts and one each in Sidcot, Rod's Dot, Cuckoo Cleeves and Stoke Lane.

Slipping/falling was the biggest single cause of accidents. Water on Swildon's 40ft climb caused several call-outs.

The report regards several of the accidents as 'misfortunes' but suggests that as these can often happen, all cavers should learn the technique of rescuing on the Swildons 40ft pitch.

Osofwr Ddu

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

The committee, at their meeting on May 15th, will consider for probationary membership :

David Bacon, 144 Rickmansworth road, Watford, Herts
Peter Johnson, 21 Etheldene Avenue, London n.10.
B.M.

MEET PROGRAMME

May 13th/14th. MENDIP - Longwood/aUgust System; Rescue Practice.

May 27th/29th. DERBYSHIRE - Giant's Hole, Jackpot (P.8).

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

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 Hagden Lane, Watford, Herts.
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Editor - Mike Brace.

Printed and published by M.D.Brace, 8 Foxfield Close, Northwood,
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