

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 58.

JUNE, 1967.

NEWS & INTEREST

Longwood-August Due to the fact that Mr & Mrs Young are away on holiday, the Club now holds a key to Longwood-August. The key is at the cottage and should not be lent out or used by anyone but permit holders staying at the cottage.

Membership Sheila Killingbeck has expressed her desire to join the Club along with Glen Jones, and Ion Petter.

Congratulations to Dave Hill, Alan Wicks, and Fred Davis on becoming Full Members of the Group. However, I must warn them that this still does not entitle them to take club library books underground!

Dave Hankin Says "I don't go out with women because I prefer drinking. However if I do go out with a woman she must have blond hair as it looks most like the froth on a pint!"

Cottage Two extra beds have now been added to the visitors' room.

Rescue On Sunday 11th June a 23 year old teacher from Middlesex fell as he was free-climbing the Twentyfoot in Swildons. He sustained a broken leg, which was plastered up before he was brought out of the cave. Moral: don't free-climb the Twentyfoot pitch without a lifeline.

Knapp Hill The fence and cross sapling at Knapp Hill together with numerous rocks were found to have been thrown in the dig by some vandals when a digging party arrived on 10th June. Clearance was started, but quite a lot of work will still have to be done to shore the sides, which were also damaged, to regain our position of a few weeks back.

Nine Barrows Swallet Goes. Bristol Exploration Club and Wessex members digging at Nine Barrows Swallet on Saturday 10th June entered a cave system, which after further blasting on the Saturday evening was 436ft long, and 129ft deep. Expectations of further penetration on the Sunday were dashed however, when the diggers were called away to a Swildons rescue.

Felix Seizer's Visit to Mendip A party took Felix Seizer into G B Cave during the Spring Bank-Holiday. He was very taken with the calcite formations as stal formations do not occur to any extent in the caves of Salzburg.

We must thank U.B.S.S. for arranging access and permits for his visit at very short notice.

Blackmoor The water has washed a large quantity of sand and mud from the lowest dig leaving mainly clean washed rocks. If these rocks were removed, vertical progress could be quite rapid. Holes are opening between boulders in Don's Chamber, and a tantalizing view can be had into a stal lined crack in the rift leading off.

VERSE SECTION

Arthur's Lament

To Mendip Arthur did ride,
Early on a Sunday in his stride,
But poor Arthur was taken aghast,
When he found he couldn't cook his breakfast.
At this Arthur raised such a stink!
"Why are all the plates in the sink?
Where is everyone, are they caving,
Or are they even digging?"
"No there's only seven in number,
And they are still in slumber,
We thought we'd leave 'em washing up,
Till there were no plates off which to sup!"
So folks the moral shouldn't be forgotten,
Do your washing up as soon as you have eaten.

Bryan Pittman

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

Box Mines (Cothem Caving Group)

The mines which are close to Bath were first started by the Romans, and now extend to over 60 miles of passage. The report gives the history of the mines, methods of working and geology. It is 26 pages long and includes, 3 plates, diagrams, and a plan.

British Caver Vol 46

This contains the usual collection of articles, mainly reprints from last year's newsletters.

London University C.C. Journal No. 3

(Geology of Longo Gill - Stump Cross 7pp, O.F.D. II and a tackle list for Yorkshire.)

Chelsea S.S. N/L May

Tunnels Edition, Fort Widley (Hants) and Larkin's Series (Godstone).

M.N.R.C. Journals Vol. 2 Nos. 1 and 2 (111pp)

A much belated edition. The journals between them contain practically everything there is to know about Lamb Leer. The historical section is especially well done and contains old reports and photographs of the cave.

LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE

This cave was first entered in February of this year from Bridge Cave by some U.B.S.S. members, and then called Bridge Cave 2. However further exploration and surveying revealed a new entrance 200yds upstream from the bridge. This is now the normal entrance as the original connection is through the 80ft long Bridge Cave Terminal Sump.

Our visit took place over the Spring Bank Holiday. On the Saturday the entrance was found to be half submerged so we visited Bridge Cave instead. On Sunday there was a sudden thunderstorm just before we arrived, so we abandoned it yet again. On the Monday the river was low and the weather prospects good, so we hastened to the cave entrance which was found to be 6" above the water level. We then built a dam around the entrance and descended.

The first 100ft consisted of low crawl type passages with a couple of squeezes. It was easy to see how one could be trapped by a flood. The passage then opened up and we were able to climb up clear of the stream into a dry passage which meandered about with many side passages and promising places to dig. There were a fair number of formations (unspoilt) including a number of fine cascades with small amounts of water trickling down them, making them appear to ripple in our headlamps. A large stream was followed and was found to emerge from a large sump. There was an orange guideline disappearing into the sump, and we were told that it was the other end of the Bridge Cave Terminal Sump. We retraced our steps and bypassed a wide low lake which occupies a beddingplane. We rejoined the stream passage and continued down-stream following one of the most sporting stream passages I have ever seen. The passage is a cross between a narrow G.B. gorge and the Down-Stream section of August Hole, with ten times the water. It is really fantastic! At one point we stopped to go up an oxbow passage with 5ft of water in a 6ft passage. Unfortunately time prevented us from following the passage to the Terminal Sump. We came out via another oxbow, dry this time, and surfaced after 5 hours. The cave has over two miles of passages and is well worth a visit. However care must be taken not to get trapped by floodwaters, which rise very rapidly indeed, as U.B.S.S. found to their cost.

The party comprised, Don Petter and Jim Gardiner of Victoria Caving Group, Glen Jones and Howel Isaacs, (late of the Gower Caving Society,) Sheila and myself.

Brian Hillman

HAPPENINGS AT GODSTONE

A very fine Sunday morning saw a party of eleven assembled outside Godstone Heathstone Mine. Due to heavy rain that had fallen during the previous week the entrance was found to have collapsed.

The entrance shaft being some five feet deep and only two feet in diameter was the best place to dig. Due to the restricted nature of the entrance it was decided that picks and shovels would be quite useless as digging tools. This decision was also due in part to the fact that we didn't have any! At this stage the latest in M.C.G. secret digging tools came into use; the "WHIRLIGIG". This fine piece of equipment at a casual glance looks not altogether unlike a corkscrew of gigantic dimensions. Further it is in operation rather similar to this latter implement. First it is screwed tightly down into the offending blockage, and upon subsequent extraction will be found to bring with it the debris blocking the aforementioned hole. Working in this fashion the entrance was made passable (just) after two hours had passed.

After the digging session followed an uneventful exploration to other sections of the mine. Three hours were enough in Godstone and ten of us started to make our way out. Ten! --- We had lost Dave Hankin! --- That can't be right, Dave had lost us. By following that well known procedure of splitting the search party in half at each junction, and into half again at the next, we all got lost. But, fifty minutes was long enough for Dave to join the search party, looking for him, and a party two, four, six, seven, wriggled out into the sunshine. --- Meanwhile back in the mine --- I won't go into details but four of us got out fifteen minutes after the rest.

Pete Mathews

YUGOSLAVIA 1967

All monies are required by June 29. It is recommended that all members of the party have Tetanus, Typhoid, and Smallpox inoculations. These may be had from your doctor or from Brian Hillman, (who uses a fountainpen as a syringe!) Two injections are required for Tetanus with three weeks between them, so you've not much time left. Everyone should have their passports by now if not get them at once, otherwise they may not arrive in time. Everyone taking camping stoves please see Mike Nightingale. Colour films can be obtained from me at 25/- for 36 exposures and 17/- for 20 exposures, the film being Agfa Colour CT18 35 mm transparencies. I must have your orders by the end of June.

Brian Hillman

P.S. As you all know the last phrase given was a warning to others, and can be used either Literally or Metaphorically. This month's phrase must only be used in emergencies, then only if you have plenty of money.

"Racun molim vas!"

OXLOW'S CAVERNS Mon 29th May

After getting permission from the farmer a party consisting of Mike Brace, Mike Nightingale, John and Pete Virgo Greg, Jim, Colin, a fellow from Stevenage, three others from Sheffield and myself, went over to the entrance, Pat Walsh and Arthur Spain having been refused admission.

The party spent a short while laddering the first pitch, an awkward 55ft, when they were interrupted by the farmer who accused us of leaving a gate open. Once down the party was split up into three groups, Mike Brace, John and Pete Virgo being the three leaders. After the first pitch, we walked down to a small chamber, then down a slide to the second pitch. This was about 30ft and lead quickly into another of 40ft depth with a fixed ladder and a small stream tumbling over it. From there we went along a large rift chamber 100ft by 20ft by 50ft. One of the Sheffield cavers decided to return to the surface at this point. A cold wet and gritty scramble now ensued down some flowstone, along an old stream passage, down a 10ft and then an 80ft fixed ladder to another chamber, I then walked down to a bolder-choke through which a tunnel had been dug into another chamber: this rising to 120 ft high 20 ft wide and 200 ft long. Pearl Chamber started at the bottom of a 40ft at the end of this chamber; however we did not enter it as an Orpheus member told us it would be flooded after the rain that had fallen.

Just before the final chamber a small stream passage entered which leads to a 40 ft ladder pitch. Only three of us proceeded beyond this point; it was found to lead to an upper stream series. The passage was joined after half a mile by a muddy crawl from which another stream flowed. From here we crawled down the tight wet passage and into a large avon. This disappeared downwards out of sight and we think that it is the link to Giants. After thrashing back along this passage we finally met the last of the others, climbing the entrance pitch. A very sporting trip which concluded a very enjoyable Bank-Holiday weekend.

Dave Hankin

From a talk by Pete Livesey

----- On arrival in Jamaica we found we couldn't meet the customs duty. So, we asked to see the Prime Minister. He said everything was alright by him ----. We had nowhere to stay. But there was a rather fine house up in the hills. Eventually we traced the owner; told him we were thinking of buying and asked if we could try it out for a while ----. Kingston is the capital of Jamaica and is a city of some half million people of whom about 250,000 are prostitutes.

SAFETY

Those of us who have stayed at the cottage regularly will have noticed the large parties of novices often in residence. With this point in mind, a word or two of warning may not come amiss to those who lead novice parties underground. These points may seem very basic, but they are easily overlooked in the scrum that develops when sorting out parties to leave the cottage.

Lighting equipment is very prone to neglect. Although the Group is able to supply novices with a helmet and an acetylene lamp, this does not entirely fill the bill. A secondary form of lighting must always be carried. For preference this should be a type which may be worn on the helmet. A simple head torch is more readily available, but should be fitted with a lanyard, by which it may be attached securely to the wearer. Candle and matches will not do. Members bringing novices to the cottage must take it upon themselves to ensure that they are properly equipped.

Particular attention should be paid to clothing. At risk of being almost a nursemaid, a party leader should inspect the clothing, especially of first-timers, for potential warmth and protection. There is nothing like a good soaking in the Longwood-August system to diminish the strength of even the most ardent novice. A good layer of woollen garments is essential.

Food is a good morale and strength raiser. Whether it's a cheese sandwich or a bar of chocolate, it is advisable to ensure that some nourishment is available.

It may be unpleasant to reject a novice from a caving trip on the grounds of unsuitable equipment. Nevertheless, as leader, it is your job to do just that, if, and when, the need arises. Better to be rejected in this world than accepted into the next. The leader is responsible for the progress of his party underground. On no account should cavers of little experience be allowed to wander around in ones and twos. Individual morale rarely benefits from being singled out for assistance. Keep a tired party together and moving steadily.

Tony Knibbs.

ELDON HOLE Sun 28th May

A half mile trek up Eldon Hill brought us to the pot-hole's boundary fence. A great discussion followed which decided that the 200ft direct decent would be laddered in preference to the two alternative routes. When everything was prepared, with some approximation Greg Smith started to descend. Ten minutes later Colin started anxiously on the decent; then Jim followed. By this time Greg was ready to come up. Fifteen minutes later he emerged, collapsed, and having recovered, blurted "We have laddered the b----- the wrong b----- side. It's all against the wall!"

At this point some Wessex cavers who had laddered the opposite side of the Hole shortly after us, started to climb. Now confusion reigned. We had two belayers facing each other across the void tugging to see who got the best result whenever a whistle blast was heard from the depths.

Eventually it was my turn. The first ten feet were against the wall (as was the final 40 feet), the next 70 feet was free hanging down to a ledge. As I went lower I found the ladder became very springy. The final 20 feet was free hanging in a petal shaped rift. It was 20 ft wide and 40 ft long, filled with rubble and decaying animal remains. I alighted in this chamber with arms aching and glad of a rest.

A small crawl lead to a chamber 90 ft high 40ft in diameter in which were good flowstone formations and a wonderful blue-grey wall. After the crawl back and a few choruses of "Down Below" it was my turn to come up. It's not easy, the less said the better, although I wasn't one of the three who were hauled up the last 40 feet!

John and Pete Virgo, Wally, Greg, Colin, Jim, Arthur Spain, Mike Nightingale, and myself then retired to the "Quiet Woman". There an Orpheus member was heard to exclaim, "Oh we only do that one in desperation".

Dave Hankin

MEET PROGRAMME

July 22nd/August 6th Yugoslavia- Postojina/Ljubiana area.
Fourteen-day visit travelling in mini-buses. Now fully booked.

BANK HOLIDAY
August 28/28

ESSEXSHIRE-Notts Pot, Gingsling Hole
(Fountains Fell). Camping at Newby Cotes.

September 16th/17th MENDIP - Swildons I - IV or Longwood/
August system.

September 30th/Oct 1st MENDIP - HALFYEARLY GENERAL MEETING

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, Eynfleet, Surrey.
Cottage Warden - Pete Goddard, 11 Whynon Park, Uxbridge, Middx.
Tacklemaster - Greg Smith, 151 Hagdon Lane, Watford, Herts.
Recorder - Pete Mathews, 155 Radcliffe Way, Northolt, Middx.
Editor - Mike Brace, 8 Foxfield Close, Northwood, Middx.

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