

MENDIP CAVING GROUPNEWSLETTER NO. 60SEPTEMBER 1967.HALF YEARLY GENERAL MEETING.

The Half Yearly General Meeting will be held in the cottage at 4p.m. on Saturday, September 30th.

Copies of the agenda should have reached all members. Copies of the proposals to amend the Constitution and Rules are now available from me. They include proposals to fix age limits for members and guests and to increase subscriptions.

Brian Mee. Secretary.

NEWS AND INTEREST.

Tony Knibbs extends a plea to Group Members. "The Group Yearly Journal is in action again and articles, on any caving subject are needed".

Eastwater. The Group has offered the winch to help with the reopening of Eastwater Swallet.

Ta! On behalf of those members of the Group who went on the Yugoslavian Meet, I would like to thank Brian Hilman for undertaking the large job of running and organising the Holiday.

Mike Brace

Stop Oil Dumping Cave Polluters. Oil and liquid waste are being tipped into swallets and mine workings in the Mendips. The Bristol-Avon River Authority is anxious to stop it but can't watch every hole. You can Help.

If you see oil or waste being tipped, or notice that it has recently happened - tell the Authority. Reverse the charges and ring between 8.45 a.m. and 5.30 p.m. (mon-Fri.) Mr. Knight, pollution and fisheries department tel. Bath 24275.

Award. A medal to Allen Wicks for foiling an attempt to heave him up the entrance of Notts Pot, by tying a large rock on the end of the lifeline; instead of himself.

Mike Nightingale was made a Full member of the Group at his last meeting of the Committee. Welcome Mike.

Books are now on sale from Peter Mathews - Caves of Mendip @ 9/- etc. (Approx. 12½ % off).

Brian Prewer has permission to assist the Group effort at the Knapp Hill MCG Dig.

LIBRARY ADDITIONS.

'Lascaux', by A. Lamming (200 pp) -description and theories of the cave drawings.

British Regional Geology.

'South Wales' by Pringle George (100 pp).

'The Penines and Adjacent Areas' by Edwards and Trotter (100 pp).
Confirms what I've always thought, that these areas are made of limestone with 'oles in.

Speleological Abstracts (Vol 1: No.3, for 1964): BSA (143 pp).

A guide to speleological literature for '64. also contains author index for Vol.1 (1964-62).

NPC Journal (Vol 5, No.1, 1967: 40 pp).

'Gingling Hole extension (qv) and 'Caverns of Silverband' are of main interest. Minor caves are described in Mallerstang Dale, Ravensdale, Newby Moss and Penyghent. Surveys of most caves described are included.

Shepton MCC Journal (Vol.4, No.3, June '67: 22 pp).

Hyatts Hill Cave; the club dig, an account of progress so far.

Holwell Cave: Brian Ellis gives notes on his new survey (simplified version is included). He also makes a comparison with the two previous survey of the cave. The full survey will soon be available from Joan, at approx. 3/6.

Sydney SS: 'Stop Press' (Vol.11 Nos.6-8).

'Foul Air' notes on the physiology, detection and removal of air containing high levels of Carbon dioxide.

Chelsea SS. (N/L Vol.9 Nos.11-12).

Contain notes on passages at Otterham and Godstone (reprinted from 'Local History Record Book 2' by Bourne Soc.)

Peter Mathews.

2,000 TONS OF CAVERS BREAKFASTS.

More than 2,000 tons of mushroom compost are to be used at Priddy Hill Farm to try to convert land at present grass and scrub to all-the-year-round corn production. If you don't know where Priddy Hill Farm is, you soon will - by the smell. And by the way mushrooms almost always continue to grow in the compost!

Ogofwr Ddu.

NO QUOTE AT ALL. Mike Brace Couldn't say anything before Sump 4 in Swildons: he was too petrified!

COOPERS HOLE.

Over the last few months a considerable amount of work has been carried out on the dig. The effort has been directed to a trial trench behind the car park bench. The aim is to see if another passage can be found in this direction.

At the start of operations recent backfilling put there when the concrete wall was constructed, was removed. Digging lower, a mass of clay and charcoal was found on the up Gorge side. At 9ft a stal floor was found and beneath it blackish earth. Because of the existence of the stal floor it seems likely that we are below a level never open before.

The spoil from this new section has been put round the car park to divert water away from the lower dig. The success of this measure is witnessed by the extremely low water level in the lower dig. It should now be a relatively easy matter to drain and continue digging. The work on the bench trench has been carried out by Dave Mitchell, Don Searl, Ken Newcombe, Dick Peat, Don Vosper, James Glover, Derick Hancock, Bill Jones and Leslie Taylor.

Malcombe Cotter.

EXTENSION AT GOATCHURCH CAVERN.

After a trip down Cuckoo Cleeves, Mike Quartermain, Dave Hodby, Richard Peat, and Myself decided to visit the recently discovered Goatchurch extension.

We quickly descended to the Water Chamber and split up to try and find the extension. I luckily dropped through the right hole in the boulders and landed in a tiny space with a hole in the floor that had been excavated. Getting down this brought me to a tight vertical slit, through which there was a small chamber about six feet across and just high enough to stand in. Up in the roof there was a small fine white cascade formation. The stream from the water chamber reappeared here, and disappeared through the floor of gravel and silt, which looked a promising dig.

I went back and informed the others and everyone had a look, and Mike stopped to take a photo of the cascade.

On our way out near the entrance we met a bod tightly clutching his only piece of caving equipment - a pencil torch, and wearing a corduroy jacket and suede shoes, gasping with awe and wonderment at a tiny, filthy mud covered stalagmite. Extending greetings to him we rushed out and quickly made tracks for home.

Roger Wallington.

Axbridge Caving Group opened the small Goatchurch extension.

MDB.

THERE'S MONEY EVEN IN DEFUNCT MINES.

Someone has found that money can be made out of Welsh Gold mines, even if it is uneconomic to mine the gold - by taking tourists round.

Michael Hardy, of Surrey has been taking people around the mine at Fairy Glen, Bettws-y-Coed at half a crown a time. Any ideas as to who will be the first Mendip mine land owner to copy?

Ogofwr Ddu.

BLACKMOOR.

Excavation of the rift in Dons Chamber continues (16/9/67), Mig and myself broke up some large rocks. Now only one large boulder is holding up progress.

In the lower dig (17/9/67) Dick Peat, Ken Newcombe, Roger Wallington, Dave and myself removed all the loose boulders and a large quantity of grit. One session devoted to clearing the remaining grit will allow more vertical progress to be made.

The site is now developing into an interesting phase, most work will reveal something new. Anyone digging now stands a real chance of breaking through.

M.O.C.

BEGINNERS AUGUST.

As the Rover Scouts in the East Grinstead District were clamouring for more caving, I decided to give them a taste of some rough stuff. So armed with their temporary Indemnity permits we started towards the August Longwood entrance in sweltering sun, some of us in wetsuits. The descent down the chimney and through the Letter Box must have reduced our weight by pounds, but with such a large party (eight) we all gradually cooled off at the bottom of the ten foot drop.

There were many swear words to be heard through the drainpipe, incidently bone dry, but there were no losses. At the fifteen foot, one or two of the party experienced difficulty descending the first few rungs but soon they forgot their worries with a little horse play at the twin pools.

The one girl in our party, Jane was a little bit apprehensive at the traverse with consequent delay, but nevertheless everyone made it to the final pitch.

The return was made via Christmas Crawl and by this time the carbide lamps were fading, so they were refilled at this point. Then to the Traverse in Longwood much to Jane's consternation. Much grunting and heaving to the water chamber and thence out to pouring rain!

Next day we frittered away down Pinetree, a reasonable place for pitch practice. Needless to say I personally did not venture down Easy Street, just sending the others down with instructions.

The return climb up the pit was eventful as one of the lower rungs slipped. Fortunately it was so near the bottom that it could be avoided. So out to glorious sunshine, and more satisfied customers.

Arthur Spain.

SWILDONS SIX.

Party:- Tony Ingold, Brian Hammond and Allan Wicks. We planned a trip to sump six everything prevailing, and that is exactly what we did.

Due to the fact that we were first at the top we got down to Tratman's Temple quite quickly, after some small hesitation to exactly where it was. We climbed up to Tratman's and Allan Wicks assured us that he knew exactly where he was (did he hell?). After Tratman's we kept to the right wall, to avoid disappearing down Shatter Pot, but somehow missed the real mud sump by going through miles of extremely grotty, smelly passages. In fact we went through half a dozen mud sumps, which we later learnt, were no better than the real mud sump.

Eventually, (somehow) Allan 'recognised' the Greasy Chimney - and was immediately lost on the other side. After travelling through many more grotty passages and mud ducks (most unpleasant) we got to muddy passages which had chamber like appearance and boulders on the floor. We then went through many, many more grotty passages until finally, eventually, and at last, arrived at the junction of Blue Pencil and the Double Troubles. Here we found that we could actually stand up. We then climbed the awkward rift on the right to the first Trouble, and started the Siphon going.

Allan then sent Tony Down 'Blue Pencil'?! It was not, needless to say. Brian then tried a hole at the bottom of the awkward rift, whilst Tony was extricating himself from a position suspended over a 20ft deep hole by fingers and toes. Of course Brian had found the proper Blue Pencil, so off we went.

Apart from the other account of Blue Pencil, we found it to consist of a small trench, something like the Primrose Path in Eastwater, but somewhat easier. The passage sloped down fairly rapidly to two 10ft. drops, one after the other, which were fairly easy to negotiate, but which should be treated with caution first time through. The passage continued to a tightish right angle bend towards the right. About 15ft. from this was the chained 10ft. drop into the streamway, which also required some caution for larger people. (One has to go head first down the rift, but to go down the chain one has to go feet first, which entails a considerable acrobatic feat from those unable to turn around in the rift.)

Handshakes all round, we had reached Swildons streamway. We then proceeded downstream towards sump 4. Swildons 4 streamway was quite large, with interesting scolloping and potholes. We reached sump 4 and each bravely

decided that someone else should go through first. We decided the matter whilst donning the lead weights and Allan Wicks set off through the sump. We found the four weights was about enough to balance our weight with wet suits on. The sump proved no difficulty at all, but in reality it is about 20ft. long, due to the constricted air space on the downstream side. On the Downstream side, however, be prepared for the nauseous odour of cowsh.....

Swildons 5 was low and Buxtons Horror a deep watered low roofed duck, but remember that the conditions down there were quite dry. Under normal conditions the water could have been a few inches higher.

Compiled by ; Allan Wicks, Brian Hammond, and Tony Ingold.

Watch out for next months thrilling continuation of the Swildons Six adventure.

GINGLING HOLE - Or Take Me To Your Ladder.

It is early morning on Mendip or two in the afternoon everywhere else including Fountains Fall. A group of completely clapped-out cavers arrived at the entrance of Gingling Hole. They look well shattered. But, this is the way the MCG usually look before they go caving - especially when they go to parties at Greenclouse the night before. The ladders having already been kindly arranged according to P.U. by various NPC and Craven and we having arranged to get them back.....

Pitch the First: 25ft of ladder threaded through baulks of timber and wire netting. Then, it says in the book, down a 12ft. ladder; but we never found one. A paddle along a canal and

Pitch the Second: Only 16ft. of ladder hanging down a rift. At the top of the pitch is a squeeze which continues down to the bottom. As normal people can't get within six feet of the ladder anyway it is best descended by keeping as far away from the ladder as possible. This sound procedure also avoids the loose chock stone to which one belayed the ladder.

Hurrying along 0

ops.. Pitch the Third: is quickly reached and descended, being an easy 20ft., even if you use the ladder. The passage from here reaches great heights and narrow widths. Although the rift, for that is what it is, is about forty feet high only a little bit in the middle is negotiable. Having left behind the people with short legs a smaller party arrived at

Pitch the Fourth: this pitch should only be attempted by cavers with an extreme sense of humour; The descent of 41ft leads directly into the main chamber: the 35ft ladder being freehanging all the way - this apparent discrepancy being

accounted for by the ~~xxxxxx~~ being six feet short. The result of this means return up the ladder is impossible even if one should want to which is, I suppose, just as well because the ladder is needed on the next pitch. Said ladder is quickly retrieved by following an easy traverse at the top of the boulder pile. One narrow tube and bedding plane later.

Fool's Paradise: this is what we really came for, it's the pretty bit containing masses of straws. On and on, along now wider passages stuffed with formations of a fine metallic black. Two quick pitches and the reader is at 'Ammered Ole'. If you insist in going on a 45 through the floor followed by a quick twenty and

Pitch Finale: 200ft, they must be jokeing. The first 50 lead to a resting ledge and then follows a crack in the corner of the pitch which gradually opens out leaving the last 50ft. free (to read this, anyone that didn't know him better might think Peter actually did this pitch). The explorer stepping off the ladder and finding himself looking at the terminal sump mutters... turns about and returns by the way he came.

He who is last out carries the ladder.. visions of Barry Squibb lightly running across the moor with 300ft. of ladder under his arm. But, he reached the happy ending at Hill Inn befor closing.

Moral 'Keep to the true path and don't be laddered astray'.

Peter Mathews.

QUOTE. Simon, when asked at 11a.m. "Why are you up so early?" replied: "because I'm too tired to stay in bed!"

TKALCO JAMA, Yugoslavia 1967.

After being suitably staggered by Postojnska Yama the previous day, and most unsuitably staggered by Slivovica the previous evening, the Group set off in a body for Tkalco Yama, part of the Rak river system. On arrival, we were delighted to discover that it was situated in a huge doline that we had seen on our way to Postojna two days previously, and in which we had been much interested. Whilst standing around in the huge entrance hall, we were introduced to the Yugoslav attitude to caving, which consists of ignoring any passage under five feet high "Unless it looks promising". We asked our guide Rado, where some obvious galleries went, and received the following reply..... "I don't know, nobody's ever been down them, after all they're not very big, are they?".

Everybody having descended, we set off down a very large passage, covered with peculiarly slippery rocks. Passing through another local phenomenon..... a log choke.

A little later a large cavern was reached, which contained a sizeable lake. Rado was anxious to complete his survey of the cave by having the lake plumbed, and this was duly done. However, interest was centred on a big passage some way above lake level that had not been entered previously, and after some consideration, Mike Nightingale succeeded in entering the new gallery. Others swarmed after him,..... on a ladder. A short distance in, a log choke was bypassed via a roof traverse, and entry was made into a chamber containing a clear pool, swiftly christened "Mendip Lake". A choice of routes led up through the roof to an unpleasant stony crawl, very reminiscent of the English Passages that we had come all the way to avoid. A short drop and scalloped magnificently a crawl which led to a mud slide, ending in a large boulder. Imperfect technique on this section, regarding leg position might have led to interesting results, but all passed safely, and another lake was found. Two short tunnels off this lake both sumped. Another tunnel however, was seen above the lake, and then another climb was attempted. The passage unfortunately choked, and the climber has good reason to remember his descent! The apparently imminent fall was avoided, however, and all returned to the lake chamber.

A mud coated aven was climbed just off the entrance to the new series, and a narrow crawl entered, but lack of time prevented a second look. The total length of passage discovered is a little under 300ft.

This minor discovery provided an excellent excuse to visit a local hostelry for delicious Rainbow trout and much booze, and another good day ended with Jugoslavian bowls and English songs (Notably by Peter Mathews).

Mike Quartermain.

MEF.

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

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

November 11th./12th. SOUTH ALES - Penwylt. Tunnel Cave,
Dan-yr-Ogof II, Lygad Lluchwr
SACC accommodation.

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 Godard, 11 Lebanon Park, Twickenham, Middx.

Tacklemaster - Greg Smith, 131 Hagdon Lane Watford, Herts.

Recorder - Peter Mathews, 155 Radcliff Way, Northolt, Middx.

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