

MENDIP CAVING GROUPNEWSLETTER No. 69NOVEMBER 1968NEWS AND INTEREST

Skeleton which may be 10,000 years old has been found by workmen excavating outside caves in Cheddar Gorge.

The Committee wish to state that Allan Wicks is not a scoundrel.

Cottage Weekend This was held on 2nd/3rd Nov and although it was well publicised only seven members attended. Remember your cottage needs your attention

Journal The editor has been reading a copy of the last Journal and has found it very interesting reading indeed. There are still some left so if you have not already bought one, buy one now and see for yourself.

Important Please note that the tackle cupboard is now locked. The key is kept in the library at Mendip, and any committee member will open the library on request. However all members are advised to check that there will be a committee member present at the cottage before they go to Mendip. If not, then they should see Ken Newcomb the Tacklemaster.

New Ladder 20ft of it is going to be taken to Mendip this week end. It is a prototype and can be identified by the blue araldite in the ends of the rungs. Greg wants it to be used as much as possible so that it gets the fullest testing before the rest of the planned 300ft of new ladder is made.

Membership Roy Stephens of 2 Camberwell Road, W.7. has applied for Probationary Membership and his application will be considered at the next committee meeting on 3rd December. Pete Johnson's application for Full Membership will also be considered at that meeting.

Meet Programme For December

Sat 14th Dec - Rescue Practice

Sun 15th Dec - Lamb Leer & G.B.

Members are reminded that permits are necessary for G.B.

Next Year's Meet Programme will be published with December Newsletter

An expedition to either France or Austria is to be arranged for July 5th to 20th next year. Please send any comments or preferences to the Meet Secretary as soon as possible.

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

U. B. S. S. Proceedings (Vol II No.3) 100pp + photos, surveys, etc.

"A Romano - British Settlement at Row of Ashes Farm Butcombe", "Examination of Ammonites and other fossils from Areline's Hole" and "Archaeological Notes" contain a wealth of information dealing with the society's archaeological work, most of which is on Mendips.

Dealing with caves in Ireland (a favourite hunting ground for U. B. S. S.) There are articles on the Cave of the Wild Horses, Kilarney, Co. Clare, and Poll Kilmoon East, Co. Clare, U. B. S. S. are shortly to produce a guide to the caves of Clare.

The U. B. S. S. Expedition to Czechoslovakia was a bit of a disappointment for their divers who made thirty dives and discovered little except water. Useful notes are given on caves in the karst areas.

There is also another version of D. Drew's paper " A study of the the Limestone Hydrology of St Dunstan's Well and Ashwick Drainage Basin", which deals with this extremely complex drainage area on Eastern Mendips.

Wessex Journal (No.119) "Caving in Bulgaria". 12pp of amusing but informative tales of Tony Oldham's exploits in Eastern Europe.

St Cuthbert's Swallet Part A The Discovery and Exploration.

The first diggers on the scene weren't the B. E. C. but the Romans, however they were after lead. Priory's lead mine is more famous for the 19th century works of St Cuthbert's Minery, who's furnaces closed in 1908. The minery will, perhaps, be best remembered for the law suit Emnor v Hogkinson in 1860. Nicholas Emnor the then owner of the mine crossed his ore and washed the waste down the swallets. The Hogkinson Paper Mill were not at all keen on this for they used the water from the resurgence at Wokeky and needed it to be pure. The resulting injunction forbidding the contamination of the swallets is still in force today and accounts for the strict restrictions on entry to the cave.

The later diggers looking for a way into the cave started in 1944. This work was continued by the B. E. C. in 1949 and they succeeded in getting down the entrance rift in 1953. In those days the rift was much tighter and wetter than it is today; one reason why the sagas of the exploration lasted so long. And, is still continuing for the B. E. C. still recon to find a few hundred feet of passage each year.

St Cuthbert's Swallet is the most complex cave on Mendips and it's exploration (and re-exploration as long forgotten passages in the fare reaches are rediscovered) is a fascinating story.

(Further copies are available from Brian Ellis at 6/-)

Found in the Mendip Caver

New Charterhouse Caving Committee Secretary

your humble editor (A.D.Oldham) allowed his name to be put forward for the new secretaryship but, alas, only to be outvoted by an 'outsider' Tony Knibbs of the Mendip Caving Group. I say alas, because all the M.C.G. want to do is to legalise their digging activities in the Charterhouse area.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Threat to Lascaux Caves

A decision by the French Army to test explosives near the caves with their 22,000 year old paintings was opposed by the French National Federation for the protection of Historic Sites and Monuments.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1968

During two weeks shortly before the Russian invasion Pete Mathews, Ken Newcomb and Don Vosper completed a grand figure of eight tour of Czechoslovakia. We visited all the main karst areas and included photographic trips to many caves.

Our first and final campsite in Czechoslovakia was the International in Prague. From there we made our way to the Moravian Karst near Brno. Then we moved north to Liptorsky Miklas and the caves of the Demanova Valley in the Low Tatras. Next we moved further north into the High Tatras before heading south to the Slovakian Karst visiting the superb Dobšina Ice Valley enroute. This was the limit of our journey and a slow return was made to Prague, visiting several caves on the way.

Czechoslovakia Slide Shows

If you want to hear more about the Tatra or how we came back with a flugel horn and a clarinet, then come along to our slide shows. There should be three or four of these, each dealing with different aspects of our visit.

The first show will be on Thursday December 19th at 8.30pm, at the Royal Oak, Brentford. Don Vosper will be showing slides and talking about the Demanova Caves, Prague, and also the Czech Car Industry.

The Magnificent Seven

At last the Cottage Work Weekend had arrived, unfortunately the cottage workers had't. Only seven people turned up for the Saturday. They were, Julian Lash and Susan, Pete Mathews, Ken Newcomb, Greg Smith, Don Vosper, and Roger Wallington. The kitchen was taken over for redecoration and was filled with tables and ladders. The colour scheme was quickly decided by the bloke with the biggest brush. Democracy also accounts for the two

tone door, and the orange and white striped wall. Ken fitted up his smart water heater, although this still awaits connection. On the Sunday their numbers were boosted by Simon and Val Knight, Val to help and Simon to supervise. But where were you? Don't be too disappointed if you missed your chance; the remaining 7/8ths of the cottage still awaits you.

4+1-1 on Mendip

W----- Wicks alias Tojo told Jumper alias the editor that Deano, alias Stephen Dean and Dave Heddon were taking some scouts caving the weekend before last. Anyway in the end Deano caught the flu, and the scouts caught cold feet. Then there were only three.

Dave called on Jumper on the Friday and they both drove down to W-----'s, picked him up, and went on down to Mendip for a quiet weekend festering down at the cottage. However, they arrived to find a whole host of visitors from Croydon U.C. and the Y.H.A. complete with benches and guitars and in their midsts the elusive Bryn Davies not to mention sundry members of the M.C.G.

Eventually, after Bryn had given up trying to stop Jumper from going to sleep by trying to drag the poor wretch out of his pit; the comotion died down and they all went to bed. Next morning Jumper awoke, and on seeing Bryn's hair sticking out of his sleeping - bag by the window, he slipped out of his pit, pinched W-----'s talkum powder, and poured it all over Bryn's hair. Then the truth dawned on a still sleepy Jumper that it wasn't Bryn as he heard Bryn laughing his head off behind him.

They finally got up and Dave and Jumper started looking for the bag of food they had brought for the weekend. They soon were to be heard swearing that the other had forgotten to put the bag in the car before they came. W----- came to the rescue with some of his leftovers from a previous weekend.

After breakfast the whole hut upped and descended upon Longwood August like a plague of locusts all eighteen of them! I believe some of them descended upon Burrington. However as we were just about to leave the cars at Longwood Bryn was heard to curse, W----- had given him two left boots.

Jumper was one of the last to descend as usual, and found himself near the end of a large queue waiting to descend the 10ft. With his usual enthusiasm for long trips unabated he pushed to the front of the queue, rerigged the ladder and took his party down August, emerging at the 16ft almost at the front of everyone! He then went down to Renolds Passage and after a short rest started the return trip via August, finally emerging from the entrance shaft in front of everyone. He and his pack then returned to their lair to recover from their quick slick trip, and to await the others, some of whom took another two hours to return.

That evening at the Hunter's there was some fantastic singing. There were two groups singing in the Cavers' Room and Manchester U. C. C. were singing in the Cavers' lounge. Much merriment was later to be had at the cottage.

Sunday proved to be of mere relaxed tempo. Bryn's car had clutch trouble, and the time spent trying to replace the slave cylinder seals consumed the morning. Eventually we gave up and retired to the Queen Vic satisfied that we had at least avoided going caving, cops shouldn't do things like that! Mid afternoon saw us going our separate homeward ways after what had been a very entertaining weekend.

B. A. Pittman.

COMMITTEE

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