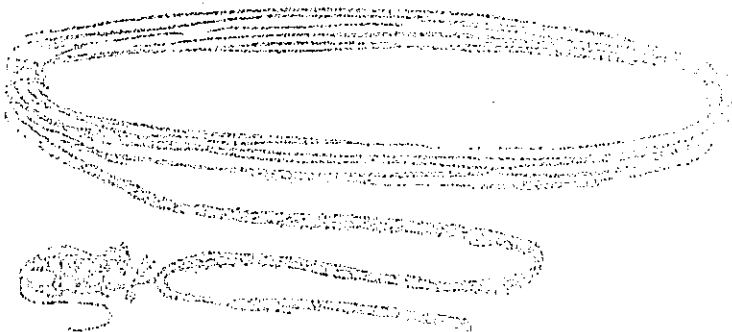


MERRY CHRISTMAS

M.C.C.



MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 70

DECEMBER 1968

COVER COMPETITION

There is going to be a cover for the Newsletter! So we need a design and perhaps you have one in mind. If you have, then put it on a piece of quarto paper and send it to the editor before the end of January. Remember there is free booze for the one who does the winning entry!

VISIT TO A SLATE MINE

During a cultural visit to North Wales a short while back, we visited a slate mine in Blaenau Efestiniog. We drove up a 1:4 hill on the side of a waste slate tip to the offices of the Maen Slate Mine. We chatted to the clerk who said that we could see around the surface works, but not underground. After a ten minute walk up the waste tip, we arrived at the workshops.

The slate comes from the mine in slabs up to 8ft long, 4ft wide, and 2ft thick. The first operation is to split the slate into slabs not exceeding 8 inches thick. This is done by men with big chisels, hammers, and wedges. The 8 inch thick slabs are placed on a table and moved around until the foreman is satisfied there will be a minimum of waste. The slab is then sawn up with a diamond tipped circular saw into blocks 2 inches bigger than the slate required. These blocks are then passed to a man who sits on a stool. This craftsman leans the block against his leg and with a chisel and mallet, splits the block in two and then in two again. He continues this until he ends up with slates $\frac{3}{4}$ inch thick. The slates are then passed to a lad who crops them to size on a flying shear guillotine. An experienced man can produce 1000 slates a day.

After Sheila batted her eye-lids at the man who was showing us around, we went down the mine. The slate lies in four beds about 20ft separated by layers of granite. The rock dips at about 45 degrees, and an inclined shaft is sunk into the bed. Descent is by means of a trolley running on rails and lowered by a cable winch at the top of the shaft. To the right and left of the shaft horizontal tunnels are driven into the slate bed. The workings are from the floor of the tunnels upwards. The whole bed of slate is removed until they break into the tunnel above. When the whole bed of slate is exhausted another tunnel is driven at right angles to the first, through granite into the second bed of slate. Another inclined shaft is sunk and the whole process repeated. The first inclined shaft was 150 yds long, and the second 200 yds long. The method of mining was for the rock

men to work in pairs. They find a bedding fault in the slate and then open it up with a Kango drill. Black Powder is poured into the hole and the slate blasted off in slabs weighing up to 2 tons. At times the working face is 60ft high and the workers then drive a spike into the wall, and fix a chain to it. They climb this chain, take a half turn round their thigh and "stand" on the rock using both hands to work the Kango drill.

All the people at the mine were friendly, but I could not help feeling that some of the Welsh conversation was uncomplimentary.

B.S.H.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Mr Smith Reveals He reveals that he was named Gregory because when he was a baby he bit his nurse's nose and was thence known as Grefory the Peck.

Mug Once upon a time a long time ago, Mike Brace had a 21st Birthday and was given a pewter mug as a present. Now by and by he took his mug to the Royal Oak where alas he lost it. Any way a fairy godmother took pity on Mike and abra cadabra the mug appeared inside the piano. I wonder what wicked witch made the mug vanish?

Robbie Chacnoak is planning to give caving lectures in the U.S.A. He would like to make up a collection of slides which he could show at the lectures. Therefore he would be very pleased if members with slides that they could let Robbie have copies of would contact either Arthur Cox or Brian Hillman.

Journal Joan Goddard has taken over from Tony Knibbs as Journal Ed. as Tony has had to resign due to pressure of other commitments.

Where has our tilley lamp gone? It has disappeared from the cottage. Ken would be very pleased to hear from anyone who can through any light on the subject. (The disappearance of the lamp I mean)

Carbide for sale 1/- per lb or 3d per fill. However tins are required to put it in. If you have any empty "Marvel" tins don't throw them away, give them to Ken.

Congratulations to Ken Newcomb and Ann Sumpton on getting engaged.

T

The Committee is to consider Pete Johnson's application for Full Membership at the next committee meeting.

Food for thought Is it that members don't like prototype ladders or aren't they doing much caving these days? The new ladder has not been used yet!

Cottage Gets Christmas Presents.

By the time this newsletter is distributed, the cottage kitchen should be better off to the tune of 1 kettle, 1 frying pan and 3 saucepans - the result of our green shield stamp collections so far. This should act as a spur to save more and more - and more - stamps in order to complete the kitchen restock. Remember: Don't delay Give me your stamps each Thursday

A new coke - hod and washing up bowl have recently been purchased, and are in use.

Joan Goddard.

7th/ 8th December

On arriving at the cottage, it appeared from the bed book that a full house was to be expected. However it did not finally materialise.

By some strange fate (or was it the full moon?) ten, yes ten, people set off for Swidon's on Saturday morning. As we approached the entrance a strange apparition appeared before us. It turned out to be a painted mail bag, allegedly from the Great Train Robbery, which scarcely covered the torso of a near naked man. This caver, for that is what it was, told us that his friend was too tired to climb the Twenty Foot pitch. Four of our party hurried down the Wet Way and helped to haul said 16 stone caver up the pitch, whilst the rest of us, including a couple of novices, followed the Short Dry Way

Once up the pitch, the sixteen stoner was able to continue out unaided and we were able to carry on with our shamble down to the sump. Here most of us looked on in cowardly delight as Greg, Mike, Fitz and Barry disappeared under the sump. They soon returned however - cries of shame! - and we all tramped out again via the Wet Way. It was a most enjoyable trip, especially for those of us who came out of retirement for the occasion. (Does that make you happy Ken?)

Sunday seemed to be a day of recovery, except for those who had arrived too late for the previous day's Swidon's trip. They not wanting to lose face, set off to cave in Burrington.

Joan Goddard.

MEET PROGRAMME

Jan 4/5 G.B. Jan 18/19 Cottage Work Weekend.

Feb 1/2 Derbyshire:- Giants & Ecton Copper Mine

Feb 15/16 Mendip Rescue Practice.

NOTE Last weekend's Rescue Practice had to be cancelled at the last moment, and Oliver Lloyd informed by telegramme, because several members backed out at the last moment. Bad!

LIBRARY ADDITIONS

£ More Secret Tunnels in Surrey

No caver based in London can be without it. Here is a companion volume which gives more details of recently discovered passages. Godstone Mines receive particular attention.

You cannot miss this! A snip at 7/6d. Further copies from Brian Hillman (One of the Authors)

P.R.M.

Craven P.C. Jnl (Vol 4 No2 further copies 10/6d)

London University C.C. (Jnl No.8. 25pp. further copies available @ 2/6)

A fine collection of earlier journals from 1950 onwards has been received from Tony Knibbs. These contain among other things, complete year by year accounts of the exploration of such systems as Dowber Gill Passage, and Mongo Gill.

COMMITTEE

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Editor: Bryan Pittman.

" M E N D I P C A V I N G G R O U P "
" M E E T P R O G R A M E 1 9 6 9 ".

JAN.	4/5	MENDIP
JAN.	18/19	MENDIP - WORK WEEKEND
FEB.	1/2	DERBYSHIRE - OXLOW-GIANTS-ECTON.
FEB.	15/16	MENDIP - RESCUE PRACTICE.
MAR.	8/9	S. WALES - D.Y.O; OFD; TUNNEL ETC.
MAR.	22/23	MENDIP - ANUAL GENERAL MEETING.
APRIL	4/5/6/7	YORKSHIRE
APRIL	19 TH	LONDON MEET - COAL MINE?
MAY	3/4	DERBYSHIRE - NETTLE POT; JACK POT
MAY	24/25/26	S. WALES - LITTLE NEATH RIVER CAVE, O.F.D; D.Y.O.
JUNE	14/15	MENDIP - CUTHBERTS.
JULY	5 to 20	<u>EXPEDITION</u> TO AUSTRIA.
JULY	26 /27	DERBYSHIRE - OXLOW-MASKHILL MINE
AUG.	9/10	S. WALES - AGEN ALLWEDD.
AUG.	30/31/1	YORKSHIRE
SEPT.	20/21	S. WALES - D.Y.O; O.F.D. 1 & 2, TUNNEL.
OCT.	11/12	MENDIP - HALF YEAR GENERAL MEETING.
OCT.	25/26	MENDIP - RESCUE PRACTICE.
NOV.	8/9	S. WALES - AGEN ALLWEDD.
NOV.	22/23	MENDIP - WORK WEEKEND.
DEC.	6/7	DERBYSHIRE
DEC.	20/21	MENDIP - CUTHBERTS.

NOTES: In view of the large number of people attending away meets it is essential that members inform the meet Sec. of their intention to join the meet.

All members are reminded that they are responsible for seeing that their guests are properly equipped for any proposed trip, this includes adequate footwear.

Any member can have the key to G.B. or Lamb Leer at 1 months notice to meet Sec. Brian Hillman.

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B.S.H.
December, 1968.