

MENDIP CAVING GROUPNEWSLETTER No. 73APRIL 1969Swinsto Hole, Yorkshire Easter meet

On Easter Sunday we drove up Kingsdale, and parked opposite Braida Garth, to change for the day's caving. One party consisting of Bill Jones, Don Booth, and Sion Hookins was going in the Valley Entrance to explore the Kingsdale Master Cave; Greg, five N.P.C. chaps and myself prepared to descend the Master Cave via Swinsto Hole and emerge from the Valley Entrance.

We embarked on a fairly steep climb up the Scar Face, and after a short search found the entrance to Swinsto. The entrance hole drops into a low active stream passage, which descends quickly into the first pitch of 20ft. This done, we continued along the stream passage for about 1000ft, the passage now varying in height from a flat-out crawl with your lower lip creating a bow-wave, to a stoop where a 'cossack crawl' seemed to be the most appropriate way to proceed. At the end of this passage was the second pitch which was climbable but for the waterfall pounding over the edge. Much time was spent there damming the waterfall and then releasing it to cascade into the pool at the bottom of the pitch with a roar like a thousand cisterns being pulled.

The next pitch was of 30ft and followed on after about 40ft of passage and is not classed as particularly wet, however to our dismay the ladder dangled right in the waterfall so that the happy dry speleos were transformed into wet and miserable sun worshippers, who were doing that thing about hot bricks, in anticipation of the wet pitch. A few steps and the fourth pitch was reached which was laddered out of the water. Another short length of passage brought us to the fifth and nastiest pitch.

I now produced the piece of equipment every self-respecting potholer should carry—a breadknife—(didn't you know!) The intended use of this had been of some concern, but it turned out that it was used quite innocently to cut off a piece of rope to make a belay. The pitch was 60ft deep terminating on a large rock ledge above the 40ft sixth pitch. We all made comments about 'sexual practices in hell' while descending but we managed to derive some consolation from the spectacle of the next chap descending through the water that was falling down the whole pitch. We had brought 60ft of ladder, a 150ft and a 100ft rope. Up to this pitch the last person had been able to drop the ladder and descend on the rope. For this pitch however, when the last

man was ready, one rope was tied to the top of the ladder, taken round a natural belay and sent down the pitch to be secured at the bottom, and the lifeline passed through the rope ladder and also sent down the pitch. The last man then descended the pitch and the ladder was then pulled down bringing the rope with it, the lifeline being hauled down from the rope belay, which was left up there. This procedure was repeated for the next pitch which was also in the water for much of its length.

From the pool at the base of this pitch we followed a long passage of rift cross section at times leaving the stream, leading to the seventh pitch of 25ft, noting on the way the pitch into Swinstō from Simson's Pot. We dropped into a chamber back in the stream once more and carried on via a short wet climb of 12ft to the connecting crawl to the Master Cave.

The crawl was mainly in a gravelly bed and about 200ft long altogether, but not flatout, which brought comforting thoughts of 'lovely' Mendip thrutches to Greg and myself.

We emerged in a very low and very wide section of the Master Cave and plunged on through the magnificent passages to the sump where the other party had left the pitch laddered. There followed a brisk walk to the Valley Entrance, slowed only by the necessity of passing the canals with a neck high muddy water level, and spurred on by visions of pintas (of milk of course!) and FOOD!

Roger Wallington.

### Journal 1969

As stated at the Annual General Meeting in March, I have started preparing the 1969 Journal. However until I receive more articles there is little I can do. I require articles to be given to me between now and the end of June. They may be in manuscript so long as they are legible, although I would prefer them typed if at all possible. Diagrams and surveys should be used to illustrate articles wherever feasible. As long as they are clearly drawn and labelled, one of our numerous professional draughtsmen or illustrators will be able to make the final neat copy.

In July I will send the material to be typed, and I should like to make it clear that the Journal cannot wait for late articles, because delay would result in the Journal not being ready for distribution at the planned time.

Joan Goddard.

A.G.M.

The Annual General meeting of the Mendip Caving Group was held at the cottage at Nordrach on Mendip on 22nd March.

The Treasurer Tony Fitzgibbon said that Thursday subscriptions instituted last autumn had made a great improvement to the Land Purchase Fund, however income from the cottage had declined as there had been fewer guests. Brian Hillman Meet Sec. announced the leaders for the club digs, also that he had to report the news of the impending caving restrictions in Cheddar Gorge. (The implications of which I think all are now more aware.) In reply the Secretary Brian Mee said that he would be persuing this matter with the parties concerned. Brian Hillman also said that the Blackmoor Lid would be installed this summer.

The Editor appealed for more material for both the Newsletter and the Journal. Judgement of the Newsletter Cover Competition is to be deferred until June, owing to the lack of any outstanding entries. However the production of the Newsletter had been greatly improved by the introduction of the new duplicator.

The Tacklemaster Ken Newcomb reported that the test ladder was satisfactory and production would go ahead with the manufacture of the new ladder. He also reported that the Tilley lamp was still missing and that all the club carbide lamps had been cannibalized for spares and their availability was to be restricted from now on.

Greg Smith the Cottage Warden said that recent Cottage Work Weekends had been badly supported. A new stove is required and is to be installed this summer. (Anyone who knows of a suitable stove should contact Tony Fitzgibbon the new Cottage Warden)

The club Secretary Brian Mee criticised the current members of the club for showing insufficient interest in the club.

Two amendments to the Constitution and Rules were proposed.

1 That from 1970 amendments to the C.&R. will be considered at annual meetings in 'even' years only.

This amendment was abandoned.

2 That the Mendip Caving Group does not wish the power of the National Caving Association to be extended.

This amendment was carried by an overwhelming majority.

A motion was also proposed that :- This meeting deploras the action taken by M.N.R.C. regarding access to caves in Cheddar Gorge. This was carried unaimously.

The new list of committee members will be found on the back page of this newsletter.

Note Regarding the N.C.A., it is my opinion that events in the recent past and in the near future may well prove the necessity of the body. Possibly with increased powers. For, this may become the only practical way in which caving interests may be protected effectively, in a situation in which external interests are turning against the sport.

Bryan Pittman

### Easter Escapades in Yorkshire

After various delays, nine members left Greg Smith's house at Watford at 9.30pm on Thursday 3rd April. We were travelling in Dave Hodby's mini-bus which was limited to 50 mph max speed, and we finally arrived at the N.P.C. cottage at 4.30.am. We felt that we were justified in having a late breakfast, so we rose at 10 o'clock. No one felt like caving so we took a leisurely trip to Pen-Y-Gent. Four of our number ascended the peak while the rest stared in awe and wonderment at Hull Pot and Hunt's Pot. After tea a brisk walk down the railway line by chance lead us to the Flying Horseshoes inn.

Saturday saw a further lay in until 11 o'clock. The excuse this time for not caving being that the Meet Sec was ill. However he valiently overcame his sickness and urged the others underground. After a slight disagreement with an old woman, in which she nearly beat up Greg, some members descended the underworld. A total of four people went caving, two on a photographic trip down Long Churn, and two accompanied four N. P.C. members into Upper Long Churn. This trip took a very short time but it was very sporting. The cave consisted of a rather watery stream passage which connected with Doctor Bannister's Hand Basin in Lower Long Churn.

On completion of the upper series, the four intrepid spelios met in Lower Long Churn, and whilst Pete Mathews and Don Vosper took some photos, Sion and Roger proceeded down into Alum Pot. The 50ft pitch was negotiated and on reaching Alum Main Shaft it was decided that a quick trip out was in order as we were already an hour over due.

Meanwhile the surface party had visited White Scare Cave. After a pleasant evening down the Bub we all got to bed about midnight

Sunday dawned fine and we proceeded after breakfast to Kingsdale. Some of our group entered the Valley Entrance of the Master Cave. Others went with an N.P.C. party, entered Swinsto Pot and proceeded with the aim of emerging from the Valley Entrance. It was estimated that the trip would take about 4 hours. However they had not returned after 6½ hours. Brian Hillman then put the C.R.O. on stand-by and started to plan a jumble-sale of Greg and Wally's gear in aid of the Land Purchase Fund.

The C.R.O. wanted a further 1½ hours before they would take action. However the party arrived half an hour later unaware that they were all that overdue. The remainder of the evening was spent in the Flying Horseshoes, where we were greeted by Mike Brace and company who had just come down from the Lake district.

Next morning we arose at 10 and departed for home at noon. The weather throughout the weekend was very pleasant, and some people enjoyed themselves.

B. Hillman & S Hookins.

#### Membership

The committee wish to welcome Roy Stevens and Alan Jackson, as Probationary members of the M.C.G. Roy Stevens' membership has been backdated from 1st January 1969.

#### Newsletter.

This month's Newsletter is a week late! The editor apologise, however on the final date for accepting items 28th March, the editor had received none whatsoever! Next N/1 will be issued on 1st May, two weeks time, and all material for incertion must be submitted by next Thursday.

#### COMMITTEE

Secretary: Brian Mee, 91 Evelyn Drive, Pinner, Middx. 01-428.1975  
Treasurer: Greg Smith, 131 Hagdon Lane, Watford, Herts.

01-92.29606

Meet Secretary: Brian Hillman, 22 Linley Court, Thicket Rd  
Sutton, Surrey. 01-643.2933

Recorder: Peter Mathews, 155 Radcliffe Way, Northolt, Middx.

Tacklemaster: Ken Newcomb, 29 Clonmel Rd, Fulham, S.W.6.

01-383.3965

Cottage Warden: Tony Fitzgibbon, 265 Eastcote Rd, Ruislip, Middx.

Editor: Bryan Pittman, 39 Boston Gdns, Brentford, Middx. 01-560.6595