

JCG

MENDIP CAVING GROUP

NEWSLETTER No. 74

MAY 1969

Mike Nightingale in Australia.

I made contact with the West Australian Speological Group, who hang out in Perth, and made arrangements to go on their Easter meet to one of the better limestone areas 200 miles south of Perth near a town called Augusta. My friend John Mugridge and I travelled down in a very large Ford Falcon station wagon driven by the secretary of the club Geoff Moor on Thursday night, to their hut which they share with the Forestry Dept, right in the thick of the forest and bush which cover the whole area.

Arising the next morning at the unearthly hour of 7.30 we cooked breakfast over a wood fire. Then after the usual mucking about which seems common to all caving clubs, we set out for 'Giants' cave, which was reached after a hair raising drive at 60mph over a loose gravel road, something like a ride with Brian Hillman. The cave was a series of very large connected caverns, and to our surprise very rich in formations of every sort, mostly undamaged. There were also some very large calcited drip holes measuring between 4 and 6ft across in the sandy floor. We emerged after about an hour at a back entrance in the bush and made our way by compass, back through the thick scrub to the cars. In the afternoon we visited a cave called Moondine, a very easy cave but even more richly decorated, the like of which I have never seen before, with a profusion of straws, curtains, heletites, and suchlike covering large areas. We visited a newly discovered section, a crawl through a labyrinth which was once under water in which calcite had been formed and dropped to the bottom leaving a thick deposit of what can only be described as calsite sand. The air was not all that good here so we didn't stay long.

Saturday morning was spent visiting some tourist caves for free, I'm glad to say. In the afternoon twelve of us went 'bush bashing' through the extremely thick scrub looking for a cave, the exact location of which we were not sure. However we were unsuccessful. Talk about looking for a needle in a haystack! We gave up when it started to rain and returned to Augusta for a shower and a much awaited trip to the pub. Sunday found a party of five of us making our way down Easter Cave, one of the few active river caves in the area. It was discovered in 1964 and is still in the process of being explored. Our aim on this trip was to attempt to push the terminal sump, and explore the surrounding area a place where only one party had ever been before. We entered the cave at 11am, and descended a 40ft shaft into yet another beautifully decorated cave. We made our way, mostly through chambers waist deep in water, twisting in and out of the profusion of straws and helectites. Near the sump we had to swim across a lake. On arrival in the sump chamber, some exploratory dives soon proved that an aqualung would

be required if we were going to push the sump, and that it was in fact a wide underwater passage. So we turned our attention to the surrounding area, which was to reveal several small extensions often at the cost of straw and stal barriers. We felt that a lot more could be found there as strong draughts were noticed, but as we were all getting cold due to our soaking, we started to make our way out, and reached the entrance at about 5.15pm.

Mike Nightingale

### Non Show Caves at Cheddar.

We have received a letter from M.N.R.C. informing us that we may not visit the caves on the east side of Cheddar Gorge (including Coopers Hole, White Spot Cave, Reservoir Hole and Long Hole) without a permit issued by M.N.R.C. at the cost of 1/- per caver per cave. These caves may not be visited between May and October and may not be dug at any time.

### LIBRARY ADDITIONS

#### Wessex C.C. (Jnl No. 121)

The centrally heated caving palace at Upper Pitts is to be finished this summer. Drew and Atkinson cave in Jamaica for ten pages and Tony Oldham spends six pages on Rumania.

A little gem is 'A Visit from Rudolf'. Rudolf comes from Switzerland and is a caver. As luck would have it he visits a cave in Cheddar Gorge. "That is very interesting. I have never seen so small a cave," he commented.

#### Northern Cavern and Mine Research Society (Memoirs 1968 100pp)

The Wharfedale Lead Mines were never very important, and stopped working during the middle of the 19th century. Best known are the Starbottom and Dowber Gill Mines which connect with cave systems. There are also extensive notes on some of the mines in the Lake District. (A possible trip?)

#### Journal Société Spéléologique de Namur

The work of this Belgian club is covered from 1965 to 1968. Very interesting if you can read French. A great deal of time seems to have been spent diving long sumps.

#### Fifty Years Old

The U.B.S.S. are celebrating their fiftieth birthday this year. In the course of this period they have made more discoveries than any other group. Almost the whole of the Burrington area, for example, was first explored by them. We should like to wish them

every success for the next fifty.

By way of a celebration U.B.S.S. have produced a Jubilee Issue Proceedings (130pp). Appropriately enough it contains a detailed history of the society and its work, as well as many photographs of caving during the twenties. In late 1919 they erected their hut. Snow was falling, and in the haste the roof went on a bit crooked. It's still like that today.

Other articles include Geo morphology and Hydrology of the Central Mendips as well as History of The Dig at Manor Farm Swallet. Some notes are given on the Great Flood, with special reference to G.B. Cavern. A revised survey of the cave is included showing the drastic changes in the cave, and that while the Elbow Route and the Easy Way are still open the Ooze however is now blocked.

Pierre St Martin ( Summary of a translation in the Belfry Bultin)

The Gouffrede la Pierre St Martin became famous during the early fifties when it was claimed as the deepest cave in the world. This exploration is retold in the books of Tazieff and Casteret. Since then the Gouffre Berger has come into prominence as the World's deepest. ( It never was the deepest, only the worst surveyed). However a huge extension in the Pierre St Martin discovered in 1967 has settled the matter once and for all.

In 1959 an artificial tunnel was driven into one of the large chambers in the cave, and the underground river channell-ed off to a hydro-electric plant. After completion of the tunnel the great entrance shaft fell into disuse. With easier access to the depths of the cave, exploration slowly continued, and a few further chambers were discovered, mostly downstream. Exploration was not continued upstream as there were little prospects of extending the depth of the cave in that direction.

Higher up in the Pyrenees Roger Marconelles and Jean Claude Alibert, in 1967 explored a pot known as Bassaburuko. They reached the bottom at 234ft. But, on the way out Roger noticed a crack in the side of the shaft, and swinging himself into this found himself at the top of a 180ft pitch. This they descended; pitch followed pitch and they ran out of ladder at 900ft. A party of four returned and reached 1300ft before descending the final pich into a gigantic river passage in black shale. It could only be the Pierre St Martin! Indeed it was and the complete Bassaburuko/Pierre St Martin system involves a total descent of 3744ft!

## Stream Tracing American Style

Put 3 lbs of fluorescein into the stream to be traced. Then see where it goes. At least that is what a lecturer told Robbie Charnock at a Washington Grotto lecture on stream tracing!

## Jumble Sale

The club jumble sale was held at Ealing Town Hall on Saturday 12th April. We wish to thank Joan Goddard for the splendid effort that she put into it, and also those few members who did come along that Saturday to help. The nett profit after deductions was £13 10s. 0d. This will go into the Land Purchase Fund which now stands at £218 10s. 0d. inclusive. It had been expected that more assistance would have been forthcoming from club members on this occasion. Remember this is your club and it requires your help!

## Membership

Gina Sharp, 28 Wood Rise, Eastcote, Pinner, Middx.  
Vic Ingram, Chippings, Sheerwater, Woodham, Weybridge, Surrey.

and Pete Eldridge, Orchard Dell, Breakspear Rd, Ruislip, Middx.

will all be considered for Probationary Membership at the next committee meeting. Also Barry Milner and Tony Buchan will be considered for Full Membership.

## Subscriptions

Letters have been sent by the secretary to all whose subs for 1969 have not yet been paid. A list of these former members will be published next month.

## Address

Pete Munt moved secretly three months ago to :  
Kelway, Upper Butts, Brentford, Middlesex. He regrets that due to his extreme distance from the Royal Oak, he has not been seen lately.

## Access to Caves in Cheddar Gorge

M.N.R.C. are proposing to withdraw from their recent agreement with Cheddar Caves Ltd by which they controlled access to caves in Cheddar Gorge.

Until a new arrangement has been worked out permission should be sought from Mr G. Robertson, at Gough's Cave. He may wish to see evidence that you are covered by third party insurance, and he will probably be prepared to accept C.C.C. permits for this purpose.

## Meet Programme

The Derbyshire meet arranged for 3rd/4th May has had to be cancelled owing to lack of support.

May 24/25/26 (Whit.Meet) S.Wales. O.F.D., D.Y.O. etc.

June 14/15 Mendip. St. Cuthbert's.

Brian Hillman is not now organising the Austrian Expedition. However club members are still going there, and are taking at least one mini-bus. All those interested should contact Don Vosper, Greg Smith, or Dave Hodby any Thursday.

## National Caving Association

Bryan Pittman wishes it to be known that his opinions expressed in the last newsletter are his own and do not represent Group policy, which remains as resolved at the A.G.M. He does hope this removes any doubts that some members may have had, but respectfully suggests that, if the April N/L is read thoroughly, it will be found that Group policy states that the M.C.G. is opposed to any extension of the powers of the N.C.A.

## COMMITTEE

Secretary: Brian Mee, 91 Evelyn Drive, Pinner, Middx. 01-423.1975

Treasurer: Greg Smith, 191 Hagdon Lane, Watford, Herts. 01-92.29606

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

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

Tacklemaster: Tony Fitzgibbon, 265 Eastcote Rd, Ruislip, Middx.

Cottage Warden: Ken Newcomb, 29 Clommel Rd, Fulham, S.W.6. 01-383.3965

Editor: Bryan Pittman.